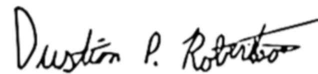
Democracy in movement: Mobility and Participation in Bogotá—Limitations and contradictions

A dissertation submitted to the City, Culture, and Community Program in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the School of Liberal Arts of Tulane University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy



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Summary

As cities around the world continue to grow and constitute an increasing majority of the world's population (UNDESA 2019), it is important to understand the status and prospects for urban democracy in the 21st century. True urban democracy means that people have equal and equitable opportunities and means of participating in the decisions and processes that affect their lives. This dissertation studies participation in urban mobility in Bogotá Colombia to explain why, despite decades of discourse about increasing participation and some signs of movement in that direction, it remains a far-off goal.

Once the domain of activists and leftist politicians, today "participation" has become a widely accepted and promoted norm found in many different policy sectors. Across the globe, there have been increased calls for publics to have greater agency in decisions that affect them beyond traditional electoral democracy. If taken seriously and implemented in a robust manner, participation has the potential to democratize society, improve policy outcomes and empower marginalized populations. However, in many cases, participation becomes just another policy buzzword with little positive impact. It may even cause negative outcomes such as allowing active elites or authoritarian rulers to control policy in self-interested ways. Although some pioneering research has been conducted on why participation fails to live up to its promise, there is a need for interdisciplinary work that examines and explores participation across all policy sectors, and at the city level.

This dissertation focuses on participation in mobility/transportation. Despite being a quotidian aspect of urban life that literally affects everyone on a daily basis, this area

has rarely been considered from the perspective of participation and democracy. Yet glimmers of urban democracy are visible in official planning workshops, at voting polls, and on the streets, so there is a need for research that can capture these diverse forms and meanings.

Bogotá Colombia is an ideal site for this research for a number of reasons including its recent experiences and innovations with both urban democracy and mobility policy. This study was conducted over approximately five years during which I analyzed the relevant literature on participation and mobility. I also carried out fieldwork in Bogotá in three trips, seeking to better understand the local context and collect primary data through interviews, participant observation, and informal conversations.

My main findings are organized in five empirical chapters, each of which explores a different perspective on participation to demonstrate how it can be studied in relation to mobility as well as why it remains seriously limited. The first empirical chapter examines the inclusion of participation in mobility planning. Urban planning is one of the primary means through which urban space is developed and governed. Although historically exclusionary and restricted, in recent decades there has been a push to make planning more democratic and "participatory." Since the 1990s Colombia (and Bogotá) has seen an increase in the prominence of participation in policies and planning documents, as well as a resurgence in urban planning. However, such an increase in discourse does not automatically translate into enhanced participation and empirical research has shown that important obstacles remain. I review literature on participation in planning, then present findings from a qualitative content analysis of key planning documents from Bogotá over the last few decades to show that despite appearances, the

impact of “participation” in mobility planning remains severely limited. I find that participation is inherently exclusionary in ways that are structural, discursive, and deliberate. Furthermore, the majority of the discourse on participation in planning documents is vague and ambiguous which may hinder actual participation outcomes. However, I also show important qualitative and quantitative differences between mayoral administrations suggesting that participation is not constant or unidirectional and is instead related to the political orientations and wills of different leaders. Overall, planning in Bogotá has become somewhat more participatory than in earlier eras, but the factors and processes described in this chapter mean that it remains only partially participatory and democratic.

The next chapter explores perceptions of participation. I show how stakeholders from multiple groups (e.g., government, experts, civil society actors), understand participation as well as its current state in Bogotá. According to the existing literature, perceptions can be categorized into two broad groups 1.) an authority-centered view that limits the scope and impact of participation and 2.) a more people-centered/empowered view in which citizens play an expanded and decisive role in decisions. Generally, the former view is associated with government actors while the latter is more common in non-government/civil society actors.

Based on interviews with 40 individuals I was able to collect data that show that while many perspectives on participation support what literature finds about government vs. non-government actors, there are important overlaps on both sides which challenge simple binaries. That is, we see government actors (especially at lower levels) who hold critical and skeptical views about the government’s approach to participation. At the

same time, there is a diversity of perspectives on the non-government side as well. Some civil society actors propose a strong vision of participation where citizens play a central role in decisions, while others call for more circumscribed and limited participation in official spheres.

Chapter 4 presents a particular type of struggle over mobility—contesting infrastructure projects. In Bogotá, especially under Mayor Enrique Peñalosa, mobility is not only a supporting service and infrastructure, but a primary means by which the city is expanded, organized, and ordered. In this chapter, I examine how and by whom mobility infrastructure is planned and contested through two different urban corridors where bus rapid transit (BRT) routes were proposed. In one case (*Carrera Séptima*), the project was suspended and eventually canceled. In the other case (*Carrera 68*), however, despite similar efforts, local opponents were unable to stop the project. I show how class and politics combined to produce different abilities to participate in and contest mobility construction and ultimately led to divergent outcomes.

In the next chapter, I analyze Mayor Enrique Peñalosa's vision and discourse about urban democracy and show how it fundamentally lacks participation. Although decentralization is generally described as a positive democratic development, it may give rise to subnational authoritarianism and "hyper-mayors." One of the ways that mayors have exercised their increased power is the development of urban infrastructure and the built environment, an area that can yield both personal and political benefits.

Enrique Peñalosa, a two-term mayor with presidential aspirations is a polarizing figure who is praised by some (especially international) observers for his seemingly progressive urban development policies. Others denounce him for his exclusionary

policies and interventions. I argue, however, that both of these literatures offer incomplete analyses because they fail to consider the role of participation in urban democracy. I combine perspectives from stakeholders with discourse analysis of Peñalosa's own words as well as the policies created under his two administrations to show his fundamentally non-participatory and ultimately undemocratic orientations. However, the increased expectations for participation meant that he could not completely discard the concept. Instead, he incorporated limited versions of participation into his discourse and policies.

Chapter 6 examines an emerging form of participation—e-participation, which has been on the rise in recent years and is expected to play an increasing role in the future. Optimists hope that e-participation can deepen democracy and empower the public by giving them a greater role in decision-making. However, based on examples of e-participation from Bogotá Colombia during the second administration of mayor Enrique Peñalosa (2016-2019), this chapter shows how government agencies implemented limited and constrained forms of e-participation that failed to deliver on this promise. Beyond the perennial digital divide, e-participation was designed and operationalized in ways that restricted the scope for actual democratic improvements in order to maintain control over a key policy sector. These included limiting participation to superficial decisions, failing to link participation to specific actions, and creating rigorous participation protocols which exclude a majority of the population and avoid dissent.

Conclusion and contributions

Each empirical chapter includes its own research questions and findings. However, considered together, some broad takeaways can be gleaned that are widely applicable beyond this case. First, this dissertation shows the importance of studying participation in the mobility sector. This is an overlooked area of inquiry with important theoretical and practical implications. Because mobility is so central to daily life, it is a crucial element of urban democracy which includes formal and informal actions as well as electoral participation. Second, a city such as Bogotá has significant evidence of the rise of participation. That is, it is easy to find policies and discourse about participation. In some cases, this may be the result of external influences from the global rise of participation. However, Bogotá, and Colombia have their own history of participation and democratization that are also influential. Nonetheless, despite talk of participation and a seeming consensus that it should be an important part of policy processes, actual power shifts and deepening of democracy are limited. Furthermore, there is not a unilinear movement towards participation. The extent to which participation is actually implemented, and the impacts it has depends on the political will of those in charge as well as those who are participating. Some leaders push governments and societies closer to deepening democracy, but others may move in the opposite direction. Finally, despite its potential to increase and improve participation, e-participation is subject to many of the same constraints and can be implemented in limited ways that do not significantly deepen democracy.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Participation—An instrument or device that is both technical and social, that organizes specific social relations between the state and those it is addressed to, according to the representations and meanings it carries (Baiocchi and Ganuza 2016).

Mobility—The large-scale movements of people, objects, capital, and information across the world, as well as the local processes of daily transportation, movement through public space, and the travel of material things within everyday life (Hannam, Sheller, and Urry 2006).

Participation—rise of prominence without substance

Participation is not a new concept. In recent decades, the idea of citizens having an increased role to play in decisions that affect them has been promoted and spread across the world.[1] Once the domain of activists and leftist politicians, today "participation" has become a widely accepted and promoted norm found in many different policy sectors. Participation has become a central component of pledges by politicians (León and Smilde 2009), government policy (US EPA 2015; US Government 1964), demands of civil rights organizations/social movements (Right to the City Alliance 2018), strategies of private companies (Baiocchi and Ganuza 2016), and best practice recommendations of multilateral institutions (Alvarez et al. 2017; Horta 2002; O'Meally 2014; Polletta 2016; Rosenberg and Korsmo 2001; World Bank Group 2009, 2018). Describing the increasing prominence of participation, some authors suggest we

[1] For a visualization of the increasing prevalence of "participation" over time, see the Ngram Viewer results in Appendix A.

are witnessing a "participatory revolution" (Lee, McQuarrie, and Walker 2015; C. Smith 1996) or a "participatory turn" Goldfrank (2011). Kapiszewski et al. (2021) frame the rise of participation as part of a broader inclusionary turn in Latin America in recent decades which also includes increased recognition for previously marginalized groups and policies of redistribution.

And yet, despite the increased prominence and prevalence of participation, there remains frustration with existing participatory mechanisms, dissatisfaction, and a common perception that governments continue to operate in a top-down fashion while the majority of the population is excluded. This is observed across many different contexts, including places where participation has been strongly promoted. Faced with this paradox we must ask: Despite the meteoric rise of "participation" discourse, why is there not more actual participation in society?

Another way of stating the question is to ask why the proliferation of participation is not "deepening" democracy (Alvarez 1993; Balderacchi 2017; Fung and Wright 2003; Goldfrank 2011). Over the years, literature has identified some of the obstacles and factors which hinder and inhibit more robust participation. These include cooptation by governments (Abers 2000; Hanson and Lapegna 2018; Prevost, Campos, and Vanden 2012; Selznick 1948; Wampler and Touchton 2015) class inequality, and the outsized role that highly motivated sections of the population can play (Balderacchi 2017; Eidt, Pant, and Hickey 2020; León and Smilde 2009; Rigon 2014). This literature provides partial explanations for why participation does not achieve stated goals. However, these explanations only capture some of the dynamics in play.

Participation and mobility—an underexplored and poorly understood sector

There have been pushes for greater general participation in society as well as enhanced participation in specific policy sectors. One area in which participation has been found insufficient is mobility.[2] Despite being an area in which virtually all urban inhabitants have at least some interaction and exposure on a daily basis, opportunities to participate in this sector are generally limited. Historically, power and decision-making about urban mobility are controlled by a relatively small group of techno/bureaucratic government institutions (under varying degrees of public and private influence), while the vast majority of the population is excluded. As in other policy sectors, discourse about participation has increased over recent decades. However, the actual implementation of participation in most places remains relatively low. Overall people are unsatisfied with the decision-making processes related to the movement of people, objects, and information. In fact, there have been waves of protests across the world which began based on grievances about mobility policies and/or to large extent involve mobility infrastructure and technology.

Although these protests have diverse grievances, objectives, and demands, the importance of transportation/mobility infrastructure is a common theme (Nguyen 2019; Saad-Filho 2013). For instance, in the case of Santiago, Chile anti-government protests (known as the *estallido social*) began in 2019 with students who began jumping metro

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[2]In this dissertation I tend to use the term mobility rather than transportation. Traditionally research in this domain was dominated by transport engineering and transport economics. However, mobility scholars have pushed against these paradigms and advocated for a more people-centric vision. However, the distinction between mobility and transportation may be in some ways an academic construct. In my research, I have found that the two terms are often used together and/or interchangeably. In terms of government agencies, at the national level Colombia has a *Ministerio de Transporte*, but at the municipal level Bogotá has a *Secretaría de Movilidad*.

turnstiles *en masse* as a form of protest against increases in subway fares. In the same year, anti-government demonstrations and strikes erupted across Colombia. Transportation and mobility infrastructure also played a prominent role with many marches occurring in the streets and bus stations blocked as a key tactic by protesters. The use of these physical objects and spaces can be viewed as a form of participation by urban dwellers to achieve political and social goals. More recently, in January 2022, masked organizers across Bogotá organized protests which were described as a *colatón* (mass fare evasions) in response to increases in TransMilenio fares.[3]

However, protests about or involving mobility are not limited to the Global South. For example, the *Gilet Jaune* (Yellow Vest) movement in France began in 2018 over an unpopular fuel tax and the blocking of roads and intersections was a key tactic (Dodman 2019). And more recently, the "convoy protests" in Canada sought to disrupt traffic in major cities (Younis and Swanson 2022). Again, while the issues, actors, and tactics vary greatly, all of these examples feature mobility as a central component.

However, the current literature on participation mentioned above, as well as works that focus specifically on mobility (Attoh 2017, 2017; Duque 2007; Gamble 2015; Gioielli 2014; Henderson 2013; Paget-Seekins and Tironi 2016; Purcell 2008; Sheller and Urry 2006; Sosa López and Montero 2017), have not adequately studied or understood participation in mobility. One promising work, based in the Global North, comes from Kębłowski, Van Criekingen, and Bassens (2019) is somewhat similar to this study, that is

[3] In fact, the Ministry of Defense and National Police alleged that the protesters in Bogotá were collaborating with Chilean actors in an attempt to disrupt public order by attacking the transportation system (El Espectador 2022). The organizers rejected this accusation (Infobae 2022).

it excavates Lefebvrian notions of participation related to mobility, based on the case of pedestrianization of streets in Brussels. They construct a four-part framework based on the right to the city which seeks to analyze the inherently political nature of any urban development project.

Mobility as a key for understanding participation, publics, and democracy

We must consider mobility as a special and particular policy sector for the analysis of participation which can combine and bridge multiple elements. From a theoretical perspective, this is a unique policy sector because the concept of mobility and specific components of mobility infrastructure are themselves valuable public goods, but they also have the ability to facilitate or inhibit interactions and thus are crucial to the very concept of public. That is, the ability for a person to physically move through space is important on its own, but movement through space is also a requirement for most other aspects of modern life (e.g., to go to work, to go to school, to meet other people, to protest). In practical terms, mobility is important because the stakes for controlling this sector are incredibly high for both citizens and governments. For example, the inherently public and visible nature as well as the large price tags for mobility infrastructure projects and their physical and spatial legacies make mobility one of the most significant policy sectors for politicians, especially at the city-level.

Other policy sectors such as municipal budgeting, health, and education are undoubtedly important, but they do not provide the same opportunities to understand participation. This study allows us to consider mobility and participation from the following perspectives.

1. Mobility as an urban planning topic on which people participate: Many participatory exercises are organized to plan and develop mobility systems and infrastructure in cities around the world. In some cases, these are led by governments such as public hearings, meetings, surveys, workshops, and other similar activities to inform the public and seek inputs about proposed projects. Others are initiated by civil society organizations in collaboration with governments and some are truly grassroots actions such as DIY (Do-it-yourself) urbanism. Some examples in literature are found in Purcell's (2008) work on the Seattle waterfront development and Baoiocchi and Ganuza's (2016) description of transportation committees in Chicago. Beyond individual events and actions, mobility issues can often serve as catalysts for the formation of new organizations and collectives such as transit rider groups (Attoh 2019) or opponents of the TransMilenio in Bogotá (Hunt 2017).

   My research explores multiple forms of participation in mobility as a planning issue, including initiatives and programs organized by governments as well as more grassroots efforts through which citizens and civil society organizations seek to influence mobility in Bogotá.

2. Mobility as a site of participation: Public spaces, roads, bus stations, and other mobility infrastructure in cities are often sites of confrontation and contestation where citizens and governments attempt to assert dominance and control. They have been used for deployment and reproduction of totalitarian regimes (e.g., Perez Jimenez' Caracas and Pinochet's Santiago). But they may also be the places of expression, representation, preservation, and/or enhancement of democracy (Irazabal 2008; Velasco 2015). Although the ways in which they are used vary by socio-political and geographical context,

mobility infrastructure and related public spaces often feature prominently in protests, demonstrations, strikes, and other forms of contentious participation (Furness 2007; Kingsbury 2017; Salmenkari 2009; Staeheli 2013). The importance of mobility as a site and target of these actions is recognized by both protesters as well as the government. From Haussmann's Paris (Scott 1999) to communist China (Zhao 2004) and contemporary American cities (Mitchell and Staeheli 2005) there are numerous ways in which governments attempt to strategically control and channel opposition through policy, design, or counter-action. On the other side, citizens may attempt to resist these efforts and reclaim control of mobility.

This tension was illustrated in the 2019 protests and strikes in Bogotá. Demonstrators blocked and marched along major roadways, and used innovative tactics such as a massive moving concert called *Un canto X Colombia* (A Song for Colombia) that rolled through the streets of the city (Manetto 2019). They also occupied bus stations and creatively used mobility infrastructure as seen in the following photo.

Figure 1: Demonstrator on rope suspended from TransMilenio Crosswalk (Semana 2019)

These actions were largely tolerated by the government. However, the first major conflict between police and protestors occurred when the latter attempted to block

another key mobility site—the international airport (as had been done recently in Hong Kong). It was at this point that police intervened and conflict ensued (Lewin 2019).

The COVID pandemic caused significant changes and raised tensions over public space and control in the city. For instance, in September 2020 protests erupted in Bogotá after police tasered a man to death who was accused of being outside his home after a government-mandated curfew. Subsequently, mobility infrastructure around the city such as TransMilenio buses and city streets were destroyed and at least seven people were killed (Turkewitz 2020).

3. Mobility as political issue: Planning, building, and modifying mobility systems and infrastructure projects generally involve very large investments which not only constitute significant shares of governmental budgets but also impact urban residents in their daily lives (Paget-Seekins and Tironi 2016). Thus they are often key issues in politics, especially at the city level (Gilbert and Garcés 2008; Henderson 2013; Pasotti 2010; Vecchio 2017). because of the scale and permanence of mobility systems and projects, they can also become intrinsically linked with the reputations and fortunes of leaders who create them. A classic example is Robert Moses a public official who, despite never holding an elected office, was able to amass and wield significant power in New York City through his various projects and plans (Caro 1975).

    In an ideal type representative democracy, citizens indirectly participate in decisions about mobility through voting. That is, they select the candidates who they believe will make the best choices for them. Then once in office, an elected official acts according to the needs and wishes of their constituents. This does not always happen, however, as officials may be constrained or influenced in a number of ways. In the

Bogotá case, recent mayors such as Enrique Peñalosa have sought to build their image and advance their careers by radically reshaping the mobility system of the city. These efforts have received praise (Bassett and Marpillero-Colomina 2013; Beccassino and Peñalosa 2000; Montezuma 2005) as well as derision (Carrillo 2017, 2017; Patiño Garcia 2017).

In recent elections in Bogotá, debates about whether or not to construct a bus rapid transit (BRT) route along *La Séptima* and a potential metro feature prominently with leading candidates making opposing promises about mobility as a key part of their platforms (Semana 2019). For example, Mayor Claudia López was elected, in part, because of her promises to oppose some of her predecessor's signature projects and implement a new system of mobility for the city.

4. Mobility as enabler of participation in urban life: Essentially all urban residents rely on mobility every day. Most people move from place to place on a daily basis or at the very least they depend on the movement of other people, goods, and information in order to survive. Whether they are riding public transit, driving, walking, or consuming products people are constantly engaged in mobility. Thus, mobility is an issue to be understood on its own, but its importance is multiplied because it essentially enables all other activities of modern urban life. In some cases, these connections are direct and evident such as vendors who sell items (see figure below) or beggars who ask for money on public buses. Other peoples' reliance on mobility may be less direct but are by no means insignificant. For example, a shop owner who depends on the delivery of products and services or a patient who must travel to the hospital, and a child who travels to school, all rely on and

ultimately contribute to the collective mobility of a city. Although individual contributions are small, by simply moving around, people are participating in mobility. Of course, the exact details of mobility can vary significantly based on factors such as geography and class. For instance, mobility in North American cities, which are designed around cars, feature much less public transit use than European and Latin American cities. Furthermore, the mobility options and patterns of wealthy and poor urban dwellers may vary significantly. Nonetheless, mobility remains highly significant in all cases. This collectively constructed fabric of movement, its "everydayness" (Lefebvre, 2014, 1987; Loftus, 2012) makes mobility a key area in which to understand democracy in 21st-century cities.

Figure 2: Young woman promoting phone plans on Avenida Caracas TransMilenio line (my own photo)

Here we can think of mobility as a key component Henri Lefebvre's (1996) right to appropriation because it provides allows people to access and enjoy the services and

amenities of urban life. Caldeira (2012) explores the ways in which mobility, space, and democracy are intimately linked in São Paulo, citing one graffiti slogan which says "Jump over the turnstile. Free ride now! A city only exists for those who can move around it!!" In a different setting, Attoh (2017) describes how specific transit programs help enable welfare recipients to reach work in Syracuse, New York.

Importance of this study and applications

These four different aspects are intertwined and entangled in significant ways. In this study, I bring them all together to give a more complete understanding and description of participation. They span both the "right to appropriation" and "right to participation" elements of Henri Lefebvre's (Lefebvre 1968; Purcell 2013) Right to the City. In a broader sense, this study offers explanations for why, despite discourse and calls for participation in recent decades, it remains a faraway goal in many respects.

A dominant feature of contemporary cities is that they are vastly unequal places, put simply some people have much more than others. While much attention is paid to the unequal distribution of resources such as money and space, less has been given to the uneven distribution of decision-making power.[4] Just as the wealth in cities funnels into a limited set of hands, so too is power concentrated in particular, systematic ways. This is especially glaring in an age when terms such as "participation," "participatory democracy," and "participatory development," have become ubiquitous mantras among

[4] Of course, these two features are interrelated as increased resource wealth often brings more power and vice versa, but they are distinct phenomena and deserve individual treatment.

governments, multilateral agencies, civil society organizations and activists (Baiocchi and Ganuza 2014; Pateman 2012).

This dissertation does not necessarily explain participation in all contexts and policy sectors however, it offers new insights and ways of thinking that are relevant to anyone interested in participation, mobility, and urban democracy.

Approach

To define participation, I draw on a range of literatures from multiple disciplines including political sociology, political science, urban studies, and development studies. I understand participation as **the ways in which people engage in activities intended to influence the operations and policies of government (at varying levels)**. Although neoliberalism and other factors may have altered the power and role of government (Mirowski 2015), it remains a common and dominant entity across all societies. Thus, a basic requirement for participation in this study is that it involves the government.

Said another way—Baoicchi and Ganuza (2016) describe participation as “an instrument, a device that is both technical and social, that organizes specific social relations between the state and those it is addressed to.” Explaining what is (and is not) participation, Van Deth (2014) writes that it is 1.) an activity 2.) done by people in their role as individuals 3.) voluntary 4.) deals with government, politics, or the state.

Of course, there are many ways in which people participate in society on a daily basis such as in family activities, churches, and sports leagues (Putnam 2001). And although some scholars claim that everything, including everyday life and personal

relationships, is political (Mahler 2014), my main focus is the point at which decisions are made by the government, thus these types of participation are considered only to the extent that they influence larger processes involving the state or other institutions (e.g., community organizations mobilizing in support or opposition to government policy).

Much of the research on participation is optimistic about its prospects to deepen democracy. That is, authors begin with a relatively favorable perspective on participation and seek to show the benefits it can provide. On the other hand, this is also more critical literature that treats participation as an unrealistic and fanciful endeavor (Michels 2016; Purcell 2008) or even a nefarious threat to democracy (Cooke and Kothari 2001; Y. M. González 2019; Mitchell and Staeheli 2005; Santini and Carvalho 2019).

Other literature suggests the rise of participation may come with significant tradeoffs. David Smilde (León and Smilde 2009) writes of a "dilemma of participatory democracy in Latin America" wherein the (neo)liberal strategy of state reduction allowed a robust civil society to develop. However, this civil society is usually dominated by middle and upper-middle classes. On the other hand, government-promoted participation can empower and expand opportunities to excluded groups, but this comes with the constant threats of government co-option or increased totalitarian reach into society.

A more flexible view, and the one I generally use in this dissertation, sees participation as neither inherently positive nor negative for democracy. McQuarrie (Lee et al. 2015; McQuarrie 2013) writes that participation is not automatically anything; it is a "flexible signifier" that might serve democratization or might help legitimate elite authority, depending on how it is applied. Furthermore, the motivations and contours of participation, within a single context, can change over time. Van Dijk & Hacker (2018)

reach a similar conclusion and caution against any assumptions about automatic democratization, arguing that new forms of participation can improve democracy (e.g., creating open, transparent, and service-oriented government) or reduce it (e.g., generating closed, bureaucratic government and a surveillance state). Finally, Caldeira and Holston (2015) find that participatory processes in Brazil produced mixed results—opening some new opportunities but entrenching some un-democratic conditions.

My study, completed in the City, Culture, and Community program adopts an interdisciplinary approach, which according to Lefebvre (1996), is essential for our understanding of cities. Cities and urban processes are highly complex, and a singular approach would not suffice. Instead, I draw on literature, theories, and methods from multiple traditions including urban studies, political sociology, political science, and mobility studies. Unlike more positivistic studies which begin with fixed questions and hypotheses to support or disprove, qualitative research projects such as mine are more iterative and interactive and often evolve over time (Maxwell 2013). My project began in 2017 with a broad research question "How are decisions about mobility in cities made and what are the implications for land use, space, and the non-human environment?" As I have reviewed literature and collected data, my focus has narrowed to several more specific questions.

I did not use pure grounded theory (Charmaz 2006; Strauss and Corbin 1997). For instance, I conducted significant literature review before collecting primary data. However, I combined inductive and deductive reasoning and maintained an open mind toward my research questions and the types of data I considered. Furthermore, rather than adopting an instrumentalist approach in which I formulate questions only in terms of

observable and quantifiable data, I take a realist approach that treats unobserved phenomena as real (Maxwell 2013). Thus, while much of my data is based on evidence from policies, documents, and texts I am also attentive to equally important concepts such as feelings, beliefs, ideas, and intentions of the stakeholders involved.

Bogotá

While mobility is a pertinent issue in virtually every city on Earth, I focus my research on Bogotá, Colombia[5] for several reasons. First, participation and democracy are particularly interesting in the context of Colombia—a country that has an important history of participation over the last forty years and is described as a "frontrunner" (Nickson 2011) and "pioneer" in Latin America—embracing participation before it became an internationally promoted best practice (Mayka 2019). In terms of legislation and discourse, participation entered the Colombian scene in a big way with the 1991 Constitution which itself was brought about by a civil society movement in Bogotá.

At the city level, multiple authors describe significant changes over the last few decades as well. Hernández (2010) describes a large expansion in citizen participation in

[5] It will be noted that this dissertation has little direct focus on violence. Rather than studying violence directly, which is an expectation of many who do research in Colombia (Zeiderman 2016), my work addresses it only obliquely, as a sort of setting detail that must be recognized, but was not found to be a major factor in the processes and phenomena I describe. However, Colombia is a country that has endured decades of violence in an ongoing conflict between a combination of state (police & military) and non-state actors (including guerrilla groups, drug cartels, and right-wing paramilitary groups). Numerous descriptions of the conflict and its devastating impacts are to be found in journalism (Sontag 2016; Yuhas 2016), scholarly research (Bell et al. 2012; Franz 2016; Gordon 2017; Otis 2014), and fiction (Contreras 2018; Vasquez 2014). I would prefer to report that my ability to conduct a research study in Bogotá that has little to say about violent conflict is due to a historic peace deal signed in 2016. Unfortunately, the reality seems to be that rather than ending, the conflict is evolving and while it may be sparing large cities such as Bogotá, it persists or increases in small towns and villages around the country (Casey 2019; Mendieta 2011; Tomaselli 2020).

Bogotá between 1991—2007, as evidenced not only by new discourse but also by a cascade of laws and legal decrees. He describes participation led from above—with new institutions and procedures created—but also from below with increased participation from new civil society organizations and movements. Further research on participation in Bogotá is found in Gilbert and Garcés (2008), Schneider and Welp (2011), and Rueda Rodríguez (2012). Thus, Bogotá's recent history, experiments, and experiences with participation make it a fertile place to study the subject.

On the other hand, Bogotá is a large city in the Global South with a population that has grown tremendously in the past century from around 630,000 inhabitants in 1950 to over 7 million today.[6] This growth has occurred in highly unequal ways, leaving a highly segregated and unequal society. For example, beginning in the 1940s the city saw a bi-polar expansion in which wealthier populations shifted to the north of the city and poorer ones moved toward the south (Parias Duran and Luna Del Barco 2002). This north-south divide is evident in the landscape of the city today. In *Delirium*, novelist Laura Restrepo (2018) writes "…you know it's farther from the north to the south of Bogotá than it is from here to Miami…" Bogotá's multiple social and spatial inequalities also make it an interesting and significant site for the study of participation.

Second, having gained fame for mobility (involving both physical infrastructure and social policies) innovations including weekly *ciclovias*, bus rapid transit (BRT)[7], an

[6] According to the most recent UNDESA World Urbanization Prospects report, Bogotá and the surrounding region has recently surpassed 10 million inhabitants classifying it as a "megacity," joining Lima, Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo—the other megacities in the region (UNDESA 2019). However, it should be noted that calculating exact totals is difficult, especially in large cities of the global south which have significant migrant/floating populations (Rukmana 2020).

[7] The concept of BRT did not actually originate in Bogotá. Instead, it was introduced decades earlier such as in Curitiba Brazil in the 1970s under the mayoral administration of the Jaime Lerner (Equipe ArchDaily Brasil 2021).

extensive network of bike paths, and, most recently, the largest fleet of electric buses in the Americas, the city is promoted and viewed as a global leader sustainable mobility (Sengupta 2021). Scores of cities across the Global South as well as Global North have imitated and replicated Bogotá's models (Angotti and Irazábal 2017; Bertolini 2020; Cifuentes Quin and Fiori 2012; Gilbert and Garcés 2008; Lederman 2020; Montero 2017, 2017, 2018; Oviedo and Guzman 2020; Paget-Seekins 2015; Silva Ardila 2020; Wood 2015). Montero (2020) writes that more than 100 cities have implemented BRT systems inspired by Bogotá's TransMilenio and mayors as well as bicycle advocates in more than 400 cities have referenced the *Ciclovía* to pass similar street closure programs. In fact, I witnessed a local case of "best practice referencing" (Whitney Forthcoming) at a 2020 event on Esplanade Avenue in New Orleans. City council member Jason Williams referenced Bogotá as an inspirational model for open streets and bicycle safety inviting those present to help "make New Orleans the new Bogotá." Thus, the city is not only representative of cities of its size and geography but is also a global trendsetter (Myers and Dietz 2002; Roy 2011; Zeiderman 2016).

However, the current state of mobility in the city is hardly ideal and there are many serious issues including air pollution and congestion (Silva Ardila 2018). By some measures, Bogotá ranks among the most congested cities in the world (INRIX 2020; TomTom 2018),[8] and there is general dissatisfaction with mobility. In addition, research in the city has illustrated the highly uneven and unequal access to mobility, especially for marginalized and vulnerable populations such as the urban poor (Oviedo and Guzman

[8] According to INRIX, Bogotá saw a 31% decrease in 2020 (largely due to Covid-19). However, it still ranked as the most congested city in the world.

2020; Oviedo Hernandez and Dávila 2016; Oviedo Hernandez and Titheridge 2016), women (Kash 2019; Quinones 2020) and people with disabilities (Pinzon-Rondon et al. 2020). Furthermore, there is an ongoing debate about whether to extend the current bus network or completely revamp the system with a new metro (Tellez 2018). To summarize, Bogotá is a place with significant mobility issues, but one that has experimented and innovated to meet challenges over the years.

Finally, the timing of this study is also significant for several reasons. My research, largely conducted between 2016-2020, corresponded with the second term of mayor Enrique Peñalosa whose first term was between 1998-2001. Thus, I could make interesting comparisons between the administrations of the same mayor but under different contexts. Furthermore, the city's *Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial* (POT—the most significant guiding plan) was being proposed and debated during the last two years of my research which gave important data about the perceptions and use of "participation" in planning.

Research Design and Methods

Broadly my project consists of the collection and analysis of secondary and primary data gathered through ethnographic methods (Andranovich and Riposa 1993) related to participation on mobility in Bogotá. This combination allowed me not only to show a more complete picture of the subject than a single source could provide, but it also revealed some of the important nuances and contradictions inherent in the subject. In terms of temporality, this project was somewhat historical—examining a specific place

(Bogotá) during a specific time (approximately the last 20 years) similar to other historical research on cities such as Cronon (1991) and Davis (2006a). However, the issues I study are also very much alive and unfolding on a daily basis. Thus, my project combines historical as well as contemporary events and issues. While this creates some challenges (such as the task of hitting a moving target), it also created useful opportunities like the ability to formulate and test hypotheses and predictions.

Policy vs. Reality

Any research on policy in Latin America must acknowledge the potential for significant discrepancies between policies and actual implementation—what Kapiszewski et al. (2021) call a "parchment-practice gap" and Brysk (2008) refers to as a "citizenship gap." There are many factors and reasons behind such gaps across various policy sectors. In some cases, it may be that the government is out of touch with the realities and conditions of everyday life (Garcia Ferrari, Smith, and Calderon 2018). Gaps may also result from state weakness, corruption, or political calculations as described by Alisha Holland (Bozçağa and Holland 2018; Holland 2015) in her work on forbearance (when government actors intentionally act differently than prescribed by law to ensure they win elections).

The main point here, though is that passing legislation does not guarantee genuine participation. There are many instances of Latin American participatory institutions that exist only on the books but are otherwise nonexistent (Mayka 2019). Some research tends to focus more on the policy side (i.e., what gets written down) while other literature is more concerned with outcomes (i.e., what actually happens). Throughout this study, I tried to include and consider both perspectives. For example, although much of my analysis is based on review of policies and documents, I also used observations and interviews to compare how participation actually happens in reality. In some places, discrepancies between policies and implementation are directly addressed such as the discussion on "*participación incidente*."

In this section, I introduce and summarize three main methods employed in this project—A.) participant observation B.) interviews C.) review and analysis of policies, documents, and online content. These are each separate research activities, but they are interrelated in multiple ways. For example, my familiarity with documents and policies from prior review informed my interviews and discussions. At the same time, interviews helped me to identify relevant materials as well as opportunities for participant observation. Furthermore, regarding my analysis, the combination of these sources allows me to triangulate my data and findings (Maxwell 2013). Relying on one method alone would be insufficient because it would portray a partial explanation of the situation. For instance, the prevalence of "participation" in official policies and documents can lead to incorrect assumptions or oversimplification about the subject. This must be combined with a deep ethnographic exploration to truly understand and describe the reality.

This combination of methods is consistent with similar research on mobility in cities (Caldeira and Holston 2015; Montero 2015; Paget-Seekins 2015; Quimbayo Ruiz 2019). Below is an overview of the methods used. However, there are further details in each chapter about the methods that were used for that chapter.

Participant observation

In my research, participant observation comprised several different activities, the first of which was physically traveling through Bogotá and making observations. This can be described as a "windshield survey" (Andranovich and Riposa 1993), which may be undertaken in a car, taxi, on foot, bicycle etc. This method allows the researcher to become acquainted with the research area in terms of its physical layout as well as the socio-cultural processes and events that take place. For example, Attoh (2019) regularly

took public transit in order to understand the system he was researching for his book *Rights in Transit: Public Transportation and the Right to the City in California's East Bay*. Similarly, Butcher (2011) spent significant amounts of time exploring the Delhi metro for her study on the system and its impacts on daily mobilities for users.

However, this was not simply an exercise to familiarize myself with the context. It is also a way for me to understand the "everyday" life in the city. To record observations, a researcher can take notes and/or create a survey to record what they see. Over the summers of 2017, 2018, and 2019 I traveled to Bogotá and spent significant amounts of time traversing the city via the TransMilenio and SITP buses (although less of the latter category because many are not accessible) as well as rolling in my wheelchair and less frequently in taxis and Uber cars. I took photographs according to best practices as described by experts such as Brittenham et al. (2021) as well as descriptive notes about what I saw. I compiled these notes in an ongoing document (ultimately about 70 pages). These notes allowed me to capture information that would be otherwise unavailable about the physical features of the city as well as socio-cultural events. Following David Smilde's recommendations, my notes are more descriptive than analytical. That is, I record details of everything I observed in an effort to "show," rather than just "tell." That is, I record the Who? Where? What? When? How? as well as conditions such as weather, sounds, etc. However, I do not try to analyze or theorize on the spot.

A second category of participant observation was more deliberate and involved attendance in organized events through which people "participate" in the city. This is an area in which my partiality/bias may be questioned. Although I do not go so far as describing my work as an "advocacy research" (Pellow 2004), I realize that my mere

presence at such events can be interpreted as a form of support or agreement. However, I do not view this as a major limitation to my research because I do not lead or significantly influence these events and furthermore, I make no claims about impartiality on the subject of mobility in cities.

Examples included:

Event/observation	**Brief description**
Community workshop on transport and infrastructure	Various representatives from TransMilenio and *Secretaría de Movilidad* held hours-long session with community members.
Marcha por los Árboles	Demonstration in 2018, along *La Carrera Séptima*, against the cutting of trees in different parks around the city.
Ciclopaseo por los miercoles anniversary party	A celebration of 13 years of activity by a group of bicycle activists who promote cycling in the city. Several of the leaders have been recruited into various government agencies and thus represent a blurring of lines between government and civil society.
School visits with "Social Manager" from TransMilenio	I accompanied a TransMilenio "community manager" as she met with community leaders at local schools. They coordinated subsequent events during which teams from TransMilenio would come to "*socializar*" students and parents about the system. I also visited a site where residents had requested a new bus stop to be installed.

Table 1: Participant observation activities

Interviews

Another highly prevalent method for this type of research is the in-depth interview which is ideal for explaining and exploring trends as well as how they are

understood and experienced by the people involved. Constructing and managing mobility systems involves an array of actors including those from government, civil society, and everything in between (Harvey and Knox 2015). On participation, Benjamin Goldfrank (2011) writes that scholars of development tend to focus on state bureaucracy, sociologists on civil society, and political scientists on the mayor/party in power. My research incorporates all three of these groups.

According to Cochrane, writing in *Researching the City* (Ward 2013), there are two broad approaches to interviews: 1.) **Extracting**—Speaking with relatively powerful/knowledgeable people to elicit information from them such as their networks of power, ways of working, knowledge, expertise, etc. 2.) **Co-creating**—Allowing people to speak for/express themselves. This involves more active collaboration between interviewer and interviewee. I employed both of these approaches in my research as I engaged a range of stakeholders. However, I did my best to recognize and respect the multiplicity of knowledge, wisdom, and expertise on the subjects I was studying. For example, in the domain of mobility, engineers are often perceived to be impartial experts who use scientific approaches to find the "correct" answers, while the everyday experiences and knowledge of lay people are devalued (Harvey and Knox 2015).

I wanted to avoid reinforcing or reproducing hierarchies of knowledge, not only out of respect for my interviewees but also because this could seriously limit the data I was able to collect. Thus, I treated all descriptions and perspectives as valid and relevant and never contradicted or argued with my interviewees. On some occasions, if an interviewee gave an opinion about a controversial or debated topic, I might suggest that there were competing ideas about the subject. This was not done to negate their

knowledge or provoke them. Instead, I wanted to understand their awareness of alternative ideas and how they reconciled them in their own minds.

Over three summers I conducted around 45 interviews spread across the following categories[9]:

- Government officials and employees (N=18)
- Civil society/organization representatives and employees (N=15)
- Experts including consultants, engineers, professors, etc. (N=12)

However, this coverage was not merely an attempt to gain the most complete picture of the issues I was researching. Based on my initial research, I suspected that each of these groups had fundamentally different perspectives on the subject of participation and so my goal was to capture and analyze these differences. This approach of studying the same issue from multiple perspectives is not easy (for instance because of time constraints and possible tensions and animosity between participant categories), but it can be highly effective as Matthew Desmond (2017) demonstrates in his Pulitzer Prize-winning *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*.

My first contact with interviewees came from either recommendations or cold-call emails using publicly available email addresses. Subsequently, I used snowball sampling to identify and contact other participants. Interestingly I found (especially during my third visit) that WhatsApp was the method of contact that interviewees preferred and was

[9] This is a rough categorization. In fact, an interesting aspect of my research is the way in which interviewees fit into multiple categories. For example, some government employees also consider themselves activists and a number of former government personnel/politicians join civil society organizations or causes after leaving government.

the most effective way of establishing connections. Emails often went unread or did not receive quick replies, but when I messaged people via WhatsApp, I often got responses very quickly. Such rapid and somewhat sporadic responses brought benefits as well as difficulties. For example, my general approach was to do background research on my interviewees before meeting them. This often involved reading any articles they may have published or visiting their organizations' websites. This helped me ask specific, targeted questions and not waste either their or my time with questions about basic publicly available information. I found this to be a generally useful strategy. However, on some occasions, it was not possible. For instance, one morning just as I was finishing one interview, another potential interviewee who had not responded for weeks to my request for a meeting proposed I meet him that same morning and gave me an address across town. Not wanting to lose the opportunity I said yes, got into a taxi, and went straight there. Thus, I had very little information about him and had not prepared any specific questions, only a few notes I was able to scratch together in the cab. In the case of government officials, there were several cases where I would communicate and arrange a meeting with one person, only to be handed off to someone else (usually a subordinate) once inside the door. These sorts of things happened a few times, but I was generally able to schedule interviewees at least a few days ahead of time and interview the person I expected.

My identity as a white male PhD student from an American university undoubtedly influenced the ways some interviewees perceived me and approached our conversations. In some ways, these influences may have been beneficial but in others, they were perhaps detrimental. In the first place, it may have been easier for me to get

interviews/appointments, even with high-ranking officials than for researchers from Colombia, or other contexts (Lederman 2020). There may be less suspicion or assumptions about political agendas with a foreigner. Furthermore, some people simply like to speak with people from other places. On the other hand, though, there could have been negative effects such as increased defensiveness or concern for self-presentation on the part of my interviewees (e.g., not wanting to portray themselves or their country in a negative light).

I generally conducted interviews in public places such as restaurants, cafés, and libraries, or as in the case of some government officials or organization representatives the interviews were conducted in their offices. Generally, the interviews were one-on-one (myself and the person I was interviewing). However, in some cases, there were multiple interviewees which proved quite challenging as it amounted to conducting two different interviews at the same time. That is, I had to be conscious of how much each person was speaking, making sure everyone remained engaged and interested. In a few other cases, however, it was more like conducting a focus-group discussion.

Interviews lasted about one hour on average with the shortest being thirty minutes and the longest one hundred minutes. Interviews loosely follow a semi-structured protocol with varying questions for different types of stakeholders. The general pattern was to begin with introductory questions where I asked interviewees about themselves and their work. Then I moved to understandings, perceptions, and experiences with participation. I would end with specific (and sometimes controversial) topics such as the case of the *Carrera Séptima*. All of my interviews ended amicably, and I would feel

comfortable contacting any of my interviewees again. I am connected with a handful via Facebook and/or WhatsApp and would consider a few to be my friends.

During my first two visits to Bogotá, my research was classified as "Not human subjects research" by Tulane's IRB[10] because I was primarily conducting participant observation and my interviews were with non-vulnerable populations and concerned publicly available information. For example, if interviewing a government representative, I would ask how their department functioned or what types of policies guided their work, instead of personal questions such as their opinions, feelings, and criticisms of their department. Instead of recording these interviews, I took notes by hand, then typed a detailed account of the interview and the information shared the same day.

However, for my third visit (Summer 2019) I modified my proposal to the IRB and my research was classified as "Exempt." This allowed me to explore more topics and to record the interviews. I also received a waiver for written consent and thus only needed to obtain oral consent from participants. These interviews were recorded with a digital recorder, then transferred to my computer. I then transcribed them for coding and analysis in Atlas.TI.

Out of 45 interviews, 12 were primarily in English and 33 were primarily in Spanish. Processing and analyzing qualitative data in multiple languages can be very challenging, often requiring researchers to improvise and devise a strategy that works best for their situation (Halai 2007). Because English is my strongest language and also the language of my dissertation, I decided to transcribe all notes and interviews into

[10] All IRB documentation is available.

English with certain exceptions (e.g., place names, government departments, and certain words or phrases that do not have appropriate translations or which are particularly meaningful in the original Spanish).

Document/Policy analysis

A third and final method is a systematic review and analysis of relevant policies, documents, and materials pertaining to either participation or transportation/mobility development in the local context. This is an approach used by urban scholars (Beuf 2016; Norton 2008; Tilaki and Marzbali 2014). Following an interpretist approach, I conducted critical discourse analysis which means examining texts to understand how issues are related to power relations in society. This approach involves rigorous content analysis of documents and materials to understand how issues are related to power relations in society and attempts to link micro details of texts (wording, grammar, etc.) to wider structural processes such as conditions under which some texts rather than others are produced (Bista, Hollander, and Situ 2021; Fairclough 2003). I conducted both close reading as well as "distant" reading using tools and techniques collectively referred to as "digital text analysis" (Pinzino 2019). As mentioned, there can be significant gaps between policies/plans and their actual implementation. Norton (2008) writes that planning is somewhere between a vision statement and a rigid blueprint. It was important for me to keep this in mind throughout my study. According to this approach, a text is a sustained piece of communication that can include communicative events (written or verbal) or even symbolic systems such as photographs, buildings, and organizational uniforms for example.

In addition to this analysis, I also reviewed relevant press sources such as *La Silla Vacía*, *El Tiempo*, *Semana,* and *El Espectador*.

Chapter 2: Participation and Mobility Planning in Bogotá

Participation and Mobility Planning in Bogotá

Introduction

Urban planning is one of the primary means through which urban space is developed and governed. Although historically exclusionary and restricted, in recent decades there has been a push to make planning more democratic and "participatory." In cities across the Global North and Global South, we see the language of participation in numerous areas of urban planning, including mobility. However, an increase in discourse does not automatically translate into enhanced participation and urban democracy. A closer analysis of participatory planning is needed. Since the 1990s Colombia (and Bogotá) has seen an increase in the prominence of participation in policies and planning documents, as well as a resurgence in urban planning. However, empirical research has shown that important obstacles remain.

In this chapter, I review literature on participation in planning, then present findings from a qualitative content analysis of key planning documents from Bogotá over the last few decades to see if and how participation and democracy have been enhanced. I find that participation is perhaps inherently exclusionary in ways that are structural, discursive, and deliberate. Furthermore, the majority of the language on participation in planning documents is vague and ambiguous. However, I also show important qualitative and quantitative differences between mayoral administrations suggesting that participation is not constant and is instead related to the political orientations and will of different leaders and their administrations. Finally, I give a description and my interpretation of a particular phrase that I encountered in the planning documents as well as interviews—*participación incidente*. Overall, planning in Bogotá has become

somewhat more participatory than in earlier eras. However, the factors and processes described in this chapter mean that it remains only partially participatory and democratic.

Participatory planning

Henri Lefebvre's "right to the city" calls for those who live in cities (*citadins*) to play a central role in decisions that contribute to the production of urban space (Kębłowski et al. 2019; Lefebvre 1996; Purcell 2002). Algostino (2016) writes that "a democracy without involvement is no more than a simulacrum of true democracy." Urban planning is one of the main processes of the production of space in the modern city. Although planning is often imagined/promoted as a neutral field where professionals such as planners, architects, and engineers work objectively towards the "public interest," planning has existed since Latin America's colonial period with generally low participation and highly unequal outcomes, meaning some urban dwellers enjoy the benefits of urban life while others suffer hazardous consequences (Angotti and Irazábal 2017; Irazábal and Foley 2010). This chapter examines participation through content analysis of recent Bogotá planning documents to determine whether or not democracy is being enhanced.

Historically the notion of planning concerned not only the built environment but also political, philosophical, and religious affairs. In ancient times planning processes blended with philosophy and visions of how the world should be. Thus, planning was generally considered something beyond the reach of common people or perhaps all mortals (Firley and Groen 2013). In Colonial Latin America, planning was focused on maintaining "order" based on strict social and racial categories. The focus on order would

continue through the 20th century as modernism and logics of "technomoral" rationality predominated (Jacobs and Appleyard 1987; Pérez Fernández 2010).

With the rise of participation in recent decades, the concept has become an omnipresent mantra in many areas of society and government (Goldfrank 2011, 2020; Lee et al. 2015) and urban planning is no exception (Irazabal 2008). As the terms suggest "participatory planning" or "participation in planning" refer to the incorporation of different actors and groups into planning on issues that concern them. Exactly which new entrants are engaged varies significantly and can include individuals (with varying levels of technical expertise and relationships to the project in question), organizations, interest groups, business groups, and diverse government entities. Proponents of increased participation highlight multiple reasons and benefits which may be related to procedure (e.g., operating in more just and democratic ways) and or outcomes (such as improving solutions by drawing on collective intelligence and ensuring sustainability).

In recent decades there has been a significant rise in the prevalence of participatory planning. A simple Ngram[11] from Google of the terms "participatory planning" and "participatory urban planning" show sharp inclines in the second half of the 20th century.

[11] An Ngram is a search engine that shows the frequencies of uses of a term in print over the past 500 years. This is not a perfect tool and there are multiple possible biases (for instance an abundance of certain types of literature and incorrectly scanned/read words). However, it can be useful to give a general sense of how much a word or phrase is used at different points in time. In this dissertation I use several different Ngrams, not to give detailed quantitative figures about usage of terms, but to show broad trends.

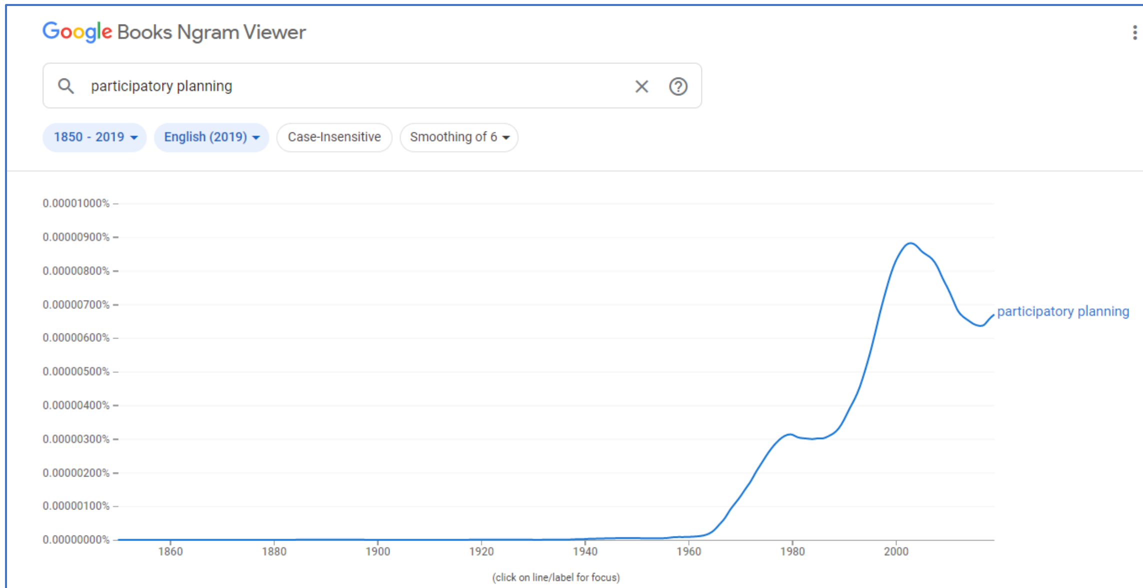


Figure 3: [Ngram]() of "participatory planning"

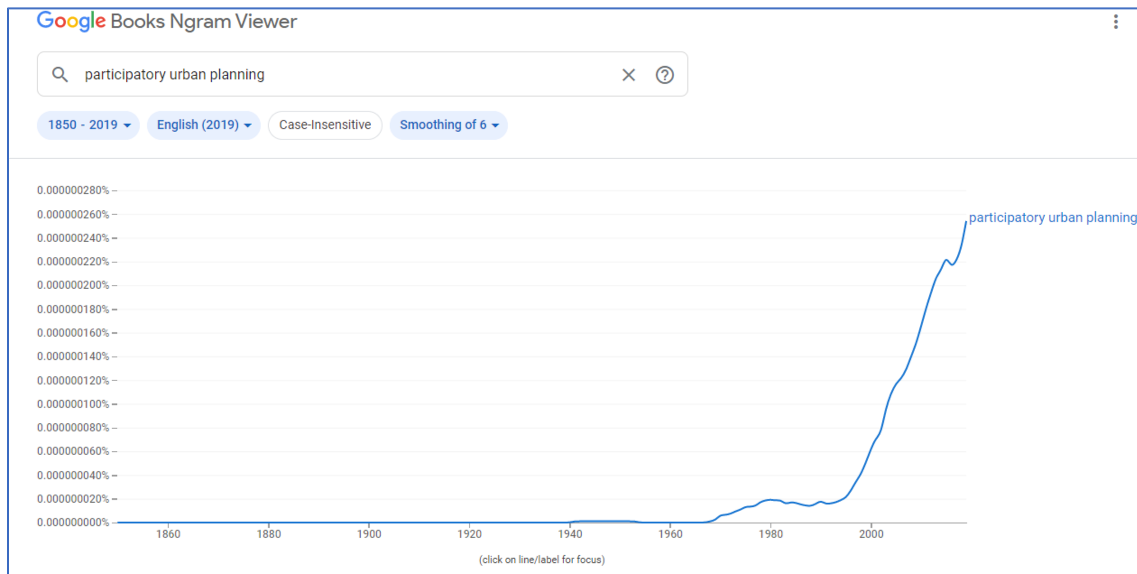


Figure 4: [Ngram]() of "participatory urban planning"

These Ngrams show that "participatory planning" and "participatory urban planning were essentially unused terms until the mid-1900s. Then there are steady inclines from around 1960 onwards and especially sharp rises. This is consistent with what literature states about the rise in participation or participatory revolution. The

Ngrams suggest some interesting dynamics such as a leveling around the 1980s, However, the move toward participation is not necessarily linear or unidirectional. Polletta (2014) describes the "pendulum-like character" of participation meaning its prevalence and prioritization can increase and decrease over time. For example, agencies such as USAID funded cooperative institutions in the 1960s then abandoned them in favor of industry and agriculture in the 1970s, then re-embraced participation in the 1990s. However, without further data, I am unable to speculate about the exact dynamics and contours of these trajectory lines.

Of course, these terms encompass a wide range of activities and practices which can vary significantly depending on the issues being addressed, the types of knowledge used, the actors involved, and the degree of power being shared (Lane 2005). Participedia (n.d.),[12] a crowdsourced platform originally founded by Archon Fung and Mark Warren that documents and highlights examples of participation around the world, identifies over 500 cases in which the public participates in planning and development.

Participatory budgeting

Experiences with participatory budgeting are among the most prominent examples of participation across Latin America. As the term suggests, participatory budgeting comprises a range of activities that allow community members to decide how public budgets will be spent. The exact processes involved, and the proportions of the budget involved can vary significantly. The most famous case comes from Brazil, beginning

[12] Participedia's website describes it as "A global network and crowdsourcing platform for researchers, educators, practitioners, policymakers, activists, and anyone interested in public participation and democratic innovations." There are currently 1880 cases identified on the website. The majority are from the Global North, but there are cases from the Global South as well. For example, there are 31 from Colombia. Whether the North-South disparity is a reflection of the actual prevalence of participation or just what people have submitted is unclear. Examples from all contexts include community mapping, hackathons, consensus forums, townhalls, participatory budgeting, public debate, citizen juries, workshops, and more.

with the city of Porto Alegre (Baiocchi 2005; Hilmer 2010). By the late 1990s, participation had become a global phenomenon and prominent international agencies such as UNDP, World Bank, and USAID were declaring it "best practice" and promoting it across the globe. Baiocchi, Heller and Silva (2011) explore the ways in which participatory budgeting has traveled around the world. They clarify that PB is not a model or a blueprint, but rather an assemblage of participatory practices and ideas adapted to local conditions. Some instances are found to continue the radical tradition that began in Brazil, while other examples are far less transformational.

Pateman (2012) warns, however, that many of the so-called "participatory budgeting" exercises that have come up around the world are not really "participatory" and they risk diluting the concept (e.g., NGO organized exercises or government distributions of trivial extra funds without significantly changing the overall budget).

Examples of participation in planning from the literature include traditional participatory practices such as focus-group discussions, surveys, community hearings, and workshops (Fernandez Milan and Creutzig 2017; Ibeas, dell'Olio, and Montequín 2011), as well as newer technology-based mechanisms based on GPS, GIS, web 2.0, mobile applications, Online Participatory Tools and even platforms including Facebook and Second Life (Brabham 2009; Conroy and Evans-Cowley 2006; Evans-Cowley and Hollander 2010; Glaas et al. 2020; Wilson, Tewdwr-Jones, and Comber 2019). Some of the literature focuses on participatory processes that have actually been implemented, while other work highlights experimental practices which could be put in place (Zegras et al. 2020).

A common framework that captures the diversity of participation is Sherry Arnstein's (1969) "ladder of citizen participation" which breaks activities into three

categories (citizen power, tokenism, and nonparticipation) and ranges from citizen control at the top to manipulation at the bottom. Arnstein first proposed the ladder in an article while working for the US Department of Health. The article "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," published in the *Journal of American Institute of Planners* has been cited over 25,000 times according to Google Scholar.

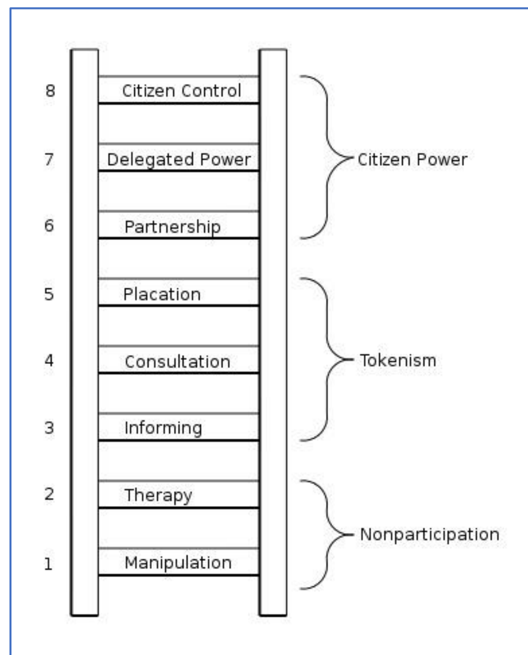


Figure 5: Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation

As the Ngrams above show, the literature in English on participation and planning first emerged in the 1960s-1970s and generally promoted a more inclusive paradigm of planning which moved away from the traditional, technocratic, and top-down approaches common in most places (Damer and Hague 1971). Today participation has become a common/core concept in contemporary planning (Brabham 2009; Rukmana 2020). But within this field, we can discern elements of several different traditions that can be traced to broader ways of thinking in social sciences that are described by Mäntysalo (2005).

“Rational comprehensive planning” is linked to Auguste Comte’s sociology, placing emphasis on objective analysis by a neutral planner in the pursuit of “public interest.” In this tradition, there is little room for participation. In response “advocacy planning” critiques this supposed objectivity and public interest. Instead, it sees the planner as an actor who should be intentional and open about their work. They should engage with representatives of different organizations and interest groups, recognizing that there may be conflicting and competing interests. “Incrementalist planning theory” is another variant that seeks to incorporate pluralism. However, it is modest in its scope and aspiration, focusing on the short-term and incremental adjustments. As much as possible it proposes the incorporation of as many voices as possible into planning but does not generally seek a reconfiguration of power relations. Finally, there has been a more recent shift towards “communicative planning theory” which includes one variant emphasizing Habermas’ theories about communication as well as another wing that sees conflict and inequality as inherent (perhaps in line with Foucauldian thought) and seeks to manage conflicts to the extent possible. Each of these currents (in varying degrees) can be found in the practice of planning and scholarly literature about it.

Regardless of the exact contours of participatory planning, it is an inherently political activity that inevitably involves a struggle for power (Damer and Hague 1971). The degree to which the practice brings emancipation or oppression/tyranny/despotism is debated in the literature. Some authors show how societal asymmetries and inequalities are reproduced or exacerbated in participatory planning (Chattopadhyay 2015; van Holstein 2018; Kundu 2011; Santini and Carvalho 2019). Other research, however, describes practices closer to the top of Arnstein’s ladder, showing how participatory

planning allows diverse and previously excluded groups to play more active roles (Fernandez Milan and Creutzig 2017). Brownill and Carpenter (2007) suggest that researchers should avoid this binary perspective and focus on the “messy” micro-politics to reveal the ways in which different actors and interests interact.

Empirical scholarly literature based on case studies from around the world shows that participatory planning is implemented in both the Global North (Abbot 2020; Brownill and Carpenter 2007; Evans-Cowley and Griffin 2012; Hou and Kinoshita 2007; Leino 2012; Maier 2012) and Global South (Avritzer 2009; Caldeira and Holston 2015; Halkatti, Purushothaman, and Brook 2003; Livengood and Kunte 2012; Majale 2008; Rukmana 2020; Swapan 2014). There is significant diversity in the scale of participatory planning with some exercises focused on particular small-scale projects such as the development of a single street (Brownill and Carpenter 2007) or a pocket park (van Holstein 2018) while others deal with larger scales such as city master plans (Avritzer 2009; Caldeira and Holston 2015; Torres 2020) or regional development plans (Sayce et al. 2013).

Much of the literature cited here refers to official processes of participatory planning that are led by (or at least involve) government entities. However, while it is always important to consider the role of government in planning, it is not the only actor. Critical geographers argue that under modern capitalism urban planning emerges as a means to deal with inherent contradictions created by urban systems. They often point to private and elite actors who may influence planning directly or indirectly. However, the government, and planning processes, are never totally controlled by either capital or society. Instead, they are pushed and pulled in ongoing relations of authority and

subordination (Dear and Scott 1981). Authors such as Belik (2020) describe how civil society groups can push back and influence planning processes. De Souza (2006) shows that in some cases (such as informal urban settlements) civil society may be a leading actor in urban planning and development. Of course, on the other hand, we should not neglect the influence exerted by private interests. Some research has shown that private actors also "participate" in a number of formal and informal ways in planning processes (Duque Franco 2010; Koch 2015).

Finally, several authors have sought to expand the government-civil society dynamic by highlighting the increasingly important role played by private consultants in participation. For a number of reasons, and as part of larger processes of privatization, governments increasingly bring in consultants to facilitate participatory processes which can significantly alter the way participation is conducted. Although these are external actors and thus may be perceived as impartial or objective, research in this domain emphasizes that they are ultimately responsible to the actors who hire them and thus do little to ameliorate pre-existing inequalities and imbalances in power (Lee 2015; Stapper, Van der Veen, and Janssen-Jansen 2020).

Participatory planning and mobility

In the realm of mobility planning, public participation/involvement is considered an essential element for a number of reasons (Sosa López and Montero 2018). For example, it can ensure acceptability of mobility interventions. If mobility systems are perceived as having been created through fair and just processes, the public is more likely to accept them politically and in their daily life. Participation can also increase

consistency between expectations and outcomes (Banister 2008) and reduce resistance and protests (Paget-Seekins 2015).

Literature on participatory planning around mobility has revealed some of the same dynamics as with participatory planning more broadly as well as others that are specific to this sector. Based on literature, participatory planning in mobility appears to be a more established and common (even if not fully realized) practice in Global North settings, especially Europe (Bickerstaff, Tolley, and Walker 2002; Gil, Calado, and Bentz 2011; Lindenau and Böhler-Baedeker 2014; Loukopoulos and Scholz 2004; Mouter, Koster, and Dekker 2021). It does occur in Global South settings such as Latin American cities (van Holstein 2018; Zegras et al. 2020), however, in this region, issues such as inequality and marginalization seem much more prominent.

Literature in this domain also reveals certain ideological leanings of both the researchers and planners involved (who are sometimes one and the same). In particular, there seems to be a tendency to view participatory planning as an opportunity to advance and promote more sustainable forms of mobility. That is, rather than simply acting as spaces where the public can give inputs to the government, it is also a space where change can (and should?) occur. For example, Maier (2012) describes "persuasion architects" who seek to encourage sustainable mobility adoption by blending citizen participation and non-neutral technologies. Gil et al. (2011) write "In Portugal, where the use of a motor vehicle as a means of transportation still enjoys a deep approval in the society, a participatory approach is an opportunity to change perceptions towards more sustainable transport modes." I am no huge fan of automobiles myself and do not object to this type of intention, but it clarifies that the planners (and researchers) in this case

were not merely objective actors collecting perceptions and ideas from the public. Instead, they were interested in participation as a means to lead the public towards a particular position or vision. Similarly, the fact that "learning" is a key outcome in Zegras et al. (2020), suggests that change was expected to occur in both directions in participatory planning exercises (i.e., government would learn from public and members of the public would learn from government and each other). Although encouraging more sustainable mobility through participatory planning does not seem as nefarious as other types of manipulation, it does suggest that participation may be a space for government to further its agendas.

Along these lines, there is a tendency to blend participation with other contemporary mobility transport goals such as environmental sustainability. Fernandez Milan and Creutzig (2017) suggest that transit planning, if conducted with genuine and robust participation, can make cities more equal as well as more climate-friendly. However, Hunt (2017) warns against uncritically valorizing participation in planning, and erroneously imagining civil society as apolitical and altruistic. Her study shows that even with active and engaged civil society, development projects can still go awry. Thus, while there is an increasing consensus (or at least acceptance) that participation is important in this domain, successful participatory planning must address and overcome a number of underlying issues (Booth and Richardson 2001; Evans-Cowley and Griffin 2012).

Legal framework and empirical cases in Colombia/Bogotá

Early instances of urban planning in Colombia in the 20th century such as those by Le Corbusier[13] and Lauchlin Currie[14] and were very much top-down and in the rational/technical tradition. That is to say, they were essentially devoid of any considerations about participation (Álvarez, Guiot-Isaac, and Hurtado 2019; Currie 1965; Tarchópulos 2006; Uyaban and Daza 2008).

However, as described later in this dissertation, in the late 20th century Colombia became one of the Latin American countries which took significant actions to increase participation through decentralization and a proliferation of participatory mechanisms. In contrast to other Latin American countries such as Chile where the central government controlled planning, in Colombia cities themselves played a larger role and had departments in city government dedicated to this activity (Dávila 2005). Mayka (2019), writes that Colombia (along with Brazil) was at the forefront of participatory legal frameworks in the region, pioneering participatory laws and policies about a decade before international donors began promoting participation in the late 1990s-early 2000s. The 1991 Constitution, itself a result of a student-led initiative known as *la Séptima Papeleta*, was a watershed moment in this history. The new Constitution declared that participation is one of the fundamental principles of the Colombian state and created 29

[13] Le Corbusier was one of the most famous and influential architects and planners of all time. Le Corbusier first came to Bogotá in 1947 and proposed a master plan known as the *Plan Piloto* (1951) which was to regulate the growth of the city. This was built upon in 1953 by Sert and Wiener in the *Plan Regulador* (Meléndez 2011). Le Corbusier was not the first foreign planner to propose modernist plans for Bogotá. In the 1930s Karl Brunner directed the city's Department of Urbanism (Castro 2013).
[14] Laughlin Currie was a Canadian-born economist who worked for several decades in the United States before he was accused of being a Soviet spy. He left the United States for Colombia where he would spend the rest of his life and be a highly influential academic and advisor on a range of policy sectors (Salazar 2003). He taught courses and wrote produced influential works about economic development and urbanization in the country. His *Operación Colombia* was rejected by then-president Lleras, but he would continue promoting his ideas and a decade later he put forward a new plan, *Four Strategies Plan*, which was implemented in 1972 (Álvarez, Guiot-Isaac, and Hurtado 2019).

types of participatory mechanisms including consultative planning councils, local administrative juntas (*Junta Administradora Local*—JAL), citizen oversight committees, and consultative planning councils for indigenous territories (Peruzzotti 2012). Other, national-level laws dealing specifically with participation have been passed since such as the *Ley 1757 de 2015: Estatuto De La Participación Democrática En Colombia* (Statute of Democratic Participation in Colombia). Furthermore, laws such as *Ley 1454 de 2011: Ley Orgánica de Ordenamiento Territorial* (Organic Law of Territorial Organization) include important provisions about participation. One of the guiding principles of this law is participation which should allow citizens to take an active role in decisions.

Planning at the city level also changed significantly during this period and played a key role in what Ferro (2011) describes as Bogotá's recovery from a crisis of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The landscape of participation in Bogotá has been transformed as well. Some changes were brought about by progressive mayoral administrations, but the importance of bottom-up pressure from civil society also played an important role. Hernández (2010) writes of a "cascade" of participatory laws, decrees, and policies related to participation since 1991. Among the more significant examples include *Decreto 503 de 2011: La Política Pública de Participación Incidente para el Distrito Capital* (Public Policy for Significant Participation in the Capital District). However, he also finds that although this proliferation held promising signs, it did not necessarily lead to significant changes in the real world due to multiple obstacles including low awareness among the public, power asymmetries, clientelism, and institutional weaknesses. Similarly Torres-González (2012) shows that despite some improvements in participatory planning since 1991, progress seems to have stalled because of multiple obstacles and the

city risked regression away from participation. Martínez (2019) writes on the *Encuentros Ciudadanos* (Citizen Meetings), introduced by *Acuerdo Distrital 13* of 2000 (during the first Peñalosa administration) as opportunities for communities to dialogue and collaborate with authorities in the creation of local development plans. Initially, they tended to favor participation by organizations (e.g., universities) or individuals (e.g., those with planning experience) who already had significant resources and experience while excluding the more disadvantaged sectors of the population. Over time, each mayoral administration would add its own spin on the exercises. For instance, Petro changed them from "*Encuentros Ciudadanos"* to *"Cabildos Abiertos"* (Open Town Halls). When Peñalosa came back to power the second time, he changed them back to *Encuentros Ciudadanos*. The results of these instances of participation have been mixed. This mixed picture is also reflected in a 2009 work titled *¿Quién ordena a quién, y qué se ordena en el territorio? A propósito de la revisión del Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial de Bogotá*, concerning the proposed revision of the city's POT (Universidad Nacional de Colombia 2009). The diverse authors in that publication point to some positive examples of participation in Bogotá's planning history, but also find that processes are generally exclusionary and much remains to be done.

Empirically the annual surveys by *Bogotá Como Vamos* known as the "Encuestas de Percepción Ciudadana" to relatively low participation in planning processes. The questions on the survey vary from year to year, but by analyzing all surveys I was able to approximate some findings about participation. I reviewed the surveys for any questions related to participation, then I identified two common questions that appeared in multiple iterations of the survey. In the years where questions were included, a large portion of

respondents said they were unaware of opportunities to participate in plans such as the *Plan de Desarrollo Distrital* (PDD) or *Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial* (POT). The following table shows those results:

Survey Year	Percentage of respondents who were aware of opportunities to participate	Percentage who actually participated
2001	12%	17%
2004	23%	4%
2012	56%	8%
2013	43%	3%

Table 2: Results of Bogotá Cómo Vamos surveys related to participation. My own creation based on data from their surveys (Bogotá Cómo Vamos 2020).

As the table demonstrates, awareness of planning seems to fluctuate significantly over time. Again, these are not perfect data since the figures come from somewhat different questions and were asked to different samples of the population. However, they give some indications about participation in Bogotá. The column about awareness seems to suggest that people are becoming more aware of the opportunities to participate. However, the second column suggests that actual participation remains incredibly low (and is perhaps even decreasing over time).

Some of the obstacles to participation are illustrated in empirical case studies. For example, Oviedo Hernandez and Dávila (2016) show how affluence and political power lead to uneven and splintered development of mobility infrastructure. Van Holstein (2018) finds that because they were relatively small and failed to seriously address the most pressing needs faced by residents, some participatory exercises in Bogotá resulted in mixed outcomes and frustration rather than empowerment for participants. Martínez

(2019) writes that Bogotanos were dissuaded from participating in *Encuentros Ciudadanos* due to inconvenient timings, insufficient announcements and information about them, and significant changes from one administration to the next. Perhaps most significantly though, there has been significant skepticism that proposals will be taken seriously and not be a simple "mockery of the citizens" (*burla a la ciudadania*).

Thus, the discourse of, and legislation about participation is certainly present in Bogotá, however, as the literature suggests these alone do not guarantee implementation of participation, much less robust increases in democracy. The remainder of this chapter gives a closer inspection into participation in planning, specifically around mobility. It shows that although the most prominent planning documents include some references and provisions for participation, they ultimately fail to shift power dynamics in urban planning and development.

Methods

My findings in this chapter are based primarily on content analysis of documents (Bista et al. 2021) related to planning in Bogotá approximately between 1997-2020. The first step was to identify and locate the most pertinent documents, the majority of which are available online as PDFs. In some cases, I had to request documents from government entities (either via email or through a more formal request). Once I had the documents, I imported them into ATLAS.ti 8. The final collection, which can be seen in table 3 comprised legislation (such as the constitution and relevant laws which were passed since the 1990s) as well as city planning documents such as the POTs and PDDs of different mayoral administrations. These documents are among the most important/relevant for urban planning and development in Bogotá. Furthermore, because PDDs are created by

each mayoral administration in a relatively consistent way, it was possible to make comparisons across time (Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011). This was not a comprehensive collection of *all* documents created during this time, but I tried to a.) capture the most important ones b.) gather enough to understand and characterize the topics in question during the time period of my study.

I then coded the documents in ATLAS.ti. identifying key and common concepts. I read smaller documents in their entirety, but for larger ones (which comprised hundreds of pages) I read the most relevant parts (e.g., those concerning participation and/or mobility) while scanning and conducting keyword searches for the rest. Thus my approach was a hybrid between classic content analysis and a computer-facilitated approach as suggested by Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011). In addition to coding the documents, I also created a standardized form in Microsoft Word which I completed about each one. This facilitated comparison across a diverse set of documents.

My analysis of planning documents to understand participation in mobility planning was a useful but by no means easy exercise. To begin, many of the documents are quite lengthy, easily running into hundreds (or thousands) of pages. Furthermore, because participation in planning has become such an omnipresent principle, almost all documents include at least some mention of participation. But because they are so large, they contain a wide range of information on diverse topics and at times may seem contradictory. Writing on planning processes in São Paulo, Torres (2020) finds a similar "patchwork of ideas, strategies, and propositions derived from several branches of the public sector, presenting a rather disjoined set of goals, objectives, and targets, all put together into a plan."

Without wanting to commit sacrilege, I would compare this task to analyzing the bible which, because it was written by numerous authors, under various influences contains inconsistencies and even contradictions. The planning documents reviewed contain large quantities of information, recommendations, and rules about various aspects of urban development. For example, one part of a document may emphasize participation and local community control while another section of the same document might emphasize other (and perhaps contradictory) themes such as global competitiveness and urban renewal. This inclusion of multiple discourses is noted by Cifuentes Quin and Fiori (2012) in their study of urban transformations in Bogotá. They find neoliberal discourses (such as urban competitiveness) along with others (such as social inclusion) which can create ambiguities and contradictions.

Thus, it was generally not possible to simply declare—"this document is participatory, and this one is not." Instead, like Elvy (2014) I used a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to capture and characterize participation in each document. Quantitatively I counted the number of relevant uses[15] of participation in each document. I also took a more qualitative approach to examine uses of the term. For example, how does it depict the relationship between the public and the government, what are the implications for deepening democracy, etc? Finally, I examined the

[15] In Spanish the word "*participación*" is polysemous and can be used in a variety of contexts. Thus, it was not posible to simply count and compare all uses of the term (Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011). For example, many documents refer to *participación en plusvalía* (the right of public entities to share profits), or participation referring to the proportion of something (e.g., "*Reducir en 10% la participacion de menores de edad en los delitos…*"), or participation by multiple government entities *("Desarrollar proyectos de cooperación para el desarrollo con la participación de entidades del distrito")*. These and other uses are significant, but they are not the type of participation under analysis in my study.

placement and prioritization within documents. Is participation front and center, transversal, or only mentioned in a few obscure sections?

Table 3: Documents reviewed

Document	**Year of creation/issue**
Constitución Política De Colombia	1991
Ley 152 de 1994: Ley Orgánica del Plan de Desarrollo	1994
Acuerdo 12 de 1994: Estatuto de Planeación del Distrito Capital	1994
Ley 388 de 1997: Ley de Desarrollo Territorial	1997
Acuerdo 6 de 1998: Plan de Desarrollo 2016-2020: Bogotá Mejor Para Todos	1998
Decreto 619 de 2000: Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial para Santa Fe de Bogotá, Distrito Capital	2000
Decreto 469 De 2003: Revisión del Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial	2003
Plan de Desarrollo 2005-2008: Bogotá sin Indiferencia	2004
Decreto 190 De 2004: Compilación del Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial	2004
Memorias del Foro el Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial de Bogotá (Camera de Comercio)	2006
Plan Maestro de Movilidad para la ciudad de Bogotá	2006
Plan de Desarrollo 2008-2012	2008
Plan Nacional De Desarrollo 2010 – 2014 (Sector Transporte)	2010
Ley 1454 de 2011: Ley Orgánica de Ordenamiento Territorial	2011
Balance General Plan de Desarrollo 2008-2012	2011
Decreto 503 de 2011: La Política Pública de Participación Incidente para el Distrito Capital	2011
Plan de Desarrollo 2012-2016: Bogotá Humana	2012
Ley 1625 de 2013: Ley de Áreas Metropolitanas	2013

Decreto 364 De 2013: Modificación del Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial	2013 (eventually rejected)
Plan Nacional De Desarrollo 2014-2018	2015
Ley 1757 de 2015: Estatuto De La Participación Democrática En Colombia	2015
Balance de Resultados del Plan de Desarrollo Distrital 2012-2016: Bogotá Humana	2015
Acuerdo 645 de 2016 Concejo de Bogotá D.C.: Plan de Desarrollo 2016-2020	2016
Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial (proposed)	2019 (did not pass)
Plan Nacional De Desarrollo 2018-2022	2019
Estrategia de participación PDD	2020
Acuerdo 761: Plan de Desarrollo 2020-2024	2020

I supplemented this analysis with my interviews with stakeholders as well as news articles and other relevant materials. Although I conducted research over multiple years, the amount of time I was able to collect data in Bogotá did not permit me to attend or observe many participatory planning processes. Thus, my knowledge of actual events in most cases is based on second-hand accounts by people who attended or led such exercises or media coverage about them.

Findings

Planning is inherently exclusionary

As mentioned, there have been some important advances towards making planning more participatory and inclusive in Bogotá over the past thirty years. Laws and policies at the national and municipal level, mandate greater inclusion of the public and marginalized groups. Once finalized, most planning documents are relatively easily available to the public, and some citizens have opportunities to participate in official planning processes.

However, there are multiple aspects of the planning process which may be inherently exclusionary and limit what we may call robust democratic participation (Alfasi 2003; Ferilli, Sacco, and Tavano Blessi 2016; Mahjabeen, Shrestha, and Dee 2009). Put differently, there may be systemic obstacles to achieving participation that would rank at the top end of Arnstein's ladder—citizen control and citizen power. Agger and Larsen (2009) describe three different forms of exclusion in planning: structural, discursive, and deliberate. Based on the review of Bogotá planning documents, there is evidence for all three. For example, planning documents themselves are often incredibly long. Mayor Peñalosa's development plan (2016-2020), as adopted by the City Council is around 65 pages, but the full proposed document comprises two volumes that are over 750 pages combined. Furthermore, planning documents often use language that is technical and/or legalistic which can alienate the average citizen. Regarding the thousands of pages of documents involved in the POT proposed by Mayor Peñalosa, an experienced architect and urban designer jokingly stated, "only a psychopath like me would read this amount!" He also stated that although the POT claimed to strengthen instances of participation it is really structured to do the exact opposite. Its size and nature guarantee that nobody is going to read it and if they do, they will not understand it.

Again, in some ways, the creation of such planning documents may be inherently exclusionary. It would not be reasonable to expect a government could produce a two-page document, written in simplistic language to cover all necessary aspects of urban planning for a city the size of Bogotá, so the challenge for governments is to find a way of including sufficient information, but doing so in ways that are accessible to all members of the public.

Each administration talks about and includes participation to some degree, but there are qualitative and quantitative differences

As mentioned, participation has become an important component of urban planning in most parts of the world, including Colombia. That is, when making plans, participation must at least be acknowledged. Thus, most of the documents reviewed include at least some discourse about participation, community involvement, public engagement, and other iterations of the concept. However, closer quantitative and qualitative analysis reveals important differences in the ways participation is addressed.

First, participation appears much more frequently and centrally in some documents than others. To illustrate we can compare the development plans (*PDD*)[16] of each mayoral administration over the last two decades. For example, in the development

[16] Development plans are mandated at the national level by law 152 of 1994 (*Ley Orgánica del Plan de Desarrollo*) and in Bogotá by Agreement 12 of 1994 (*Estatuto de Planeación del Distrito Capital*). According to the latter, upon taking office, each mayor creates a development plan which should be based on the *programa de gobierno* which they presented during their campaign. In this sense, theoretically, citizens vote not only for a candidate but also for the proposals put forward in their program, and failure to carry out proposals can be grounds for holding a recall election (Ardila 2004). However, to ensure broader representation, the mayor appoints a Territorial District Planning Council (*Consejo Territorial de Planeación Distrital*) to review the draft. This is a relatively large body with representatives from various sectors including business associations, civil society organizations, and leaders on a range of issues (e.g., health, environment, sports, seniors, women, LGBTI, etc.). Eventually, a condensed version of the plan is submitted to the Bogotá district council for approval.

plans of leftist mayors Garzón, Moreno, Petro, and López, participation appears to be a transversal concept that permeates the entire document. While others (especially Peñalosa) seem to give it less importance. A simple quantitative comparison is insufficient because the development plans are of varying lengths (i.e., a longer document may include more uses of the participation, even if they are relatively less frequent). Thus, to give a representation of how the documents compare to one another I divided the number of relevant uses of the word "participation" by the total number of words in each development plan. The following chart shows this comparison.

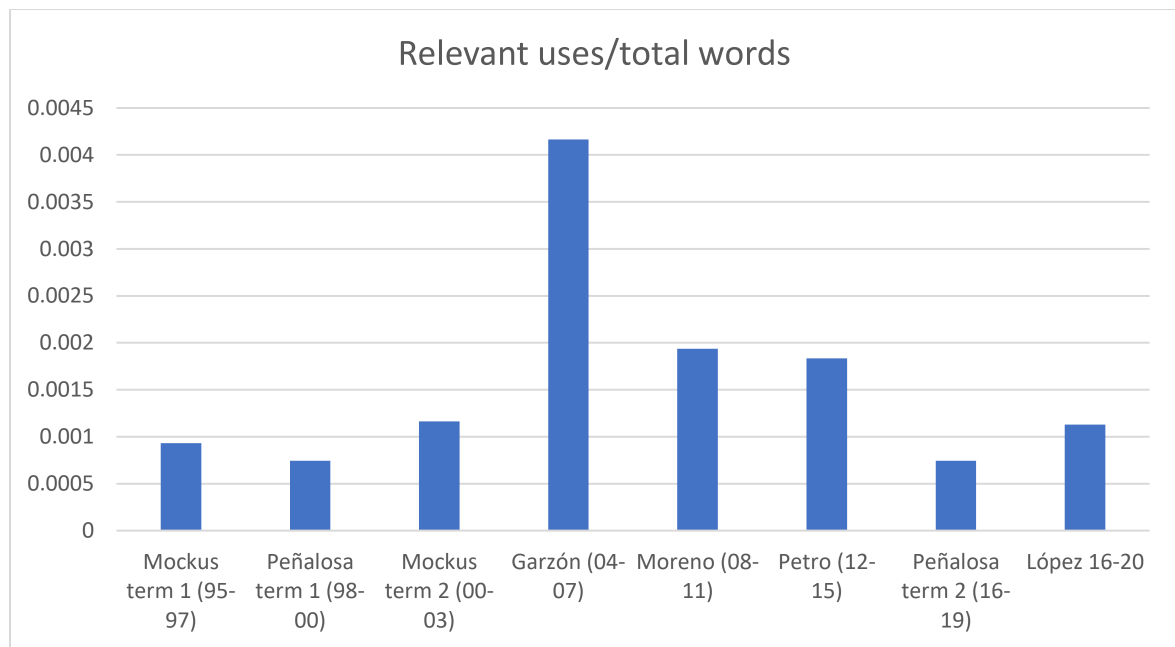


Figure 6: Inclusion of "participation" in PDDs

This basic comparison tells us a number of useful things. First, the inclusion of participation varies significantly between the documents created by each mayoral administration. The development plan with the most uses of participation was by the Garzón administration (2004-2007). His plan included 70 relevant uses of participation which equates to an average of more than one use on every page. In contrast, the lowest

usage was in mayor Peñalosa's 2016-2019 development plan which included only 19 relevant uses of participation. This plan has some references to participation, but it appears far less frequently and less prominently than other priorities. These differences suggest that each administration prioritizes participation differently. Furthermore, the fact that Garzón's administration came a decade before Peñalosa's suggests that participation does not show a consistent increase over the last two decades. Although the sample of just six mayors is insufficient to draw definitive declarations about the political ideology of mayors and their inclusion of participation, it will be noted that the more leftist mayors used participation more frequently than Peñalosa and Mockus. Analysis of Peñalosa and his relation to participation is included later in this dissertation.

A comparison of POTs shows similar variations over time and between administrations. The following breakout box gives an overview of POTs in Bogotá.

A POT (Land Use Plan) is the main planning tool for territorial development in Colombia (UN Habitat 2018). This medium-term planning document is mandated by Law 388 of 1997 (Law of Territorial Development). The POT designates areas in which the city can expand, identifies zones to be protected, dictates the relationships between the city and the surrounding region, controls use of land by different sectors, and also establishes guidelines for transportation, parks, utilities, and other urban elements (Zeiderman 2016). By law, all Colombian cities of over 100,000 people must create a POT. Once adopted a POT should be active for 12 years (approximately three political terms). However, a mayor may decide to revise the POT during that time.

In Bogotá, the first POT was passed in 2000 under Mayor Peñalosa. However, it was then significantly revised in 2003 by Mayor Mockus. Later mayor Moreno Rojas suggested revisions (Universidad Nacional de Colombia 2009), but these efforts did not get very far. In 2013 Mayor Petro tried to pass a new POT by decree after his initial

proposal was struck down by the City Council. However, just a few months later it was struck down after a ruling that he did not have the power to do so. Peñalosa tried to get another approved in 2019, but the Council struck it down as well. Thus, the city has essentially operated under the 2003 revised POT. Currently Lopez is trying to get hers approved (Secretaría Distrital de Planeación 2021).

In terms of participation, POT creation and revision were largely devoid of participation in the early years. "Participation" that occurred took the form of the government informing citizens about the POT. Later efforts made some progress towards genuinely incorporating citizens in more robust participation, but significant obstacles have persisted (Duque Franco 2010).

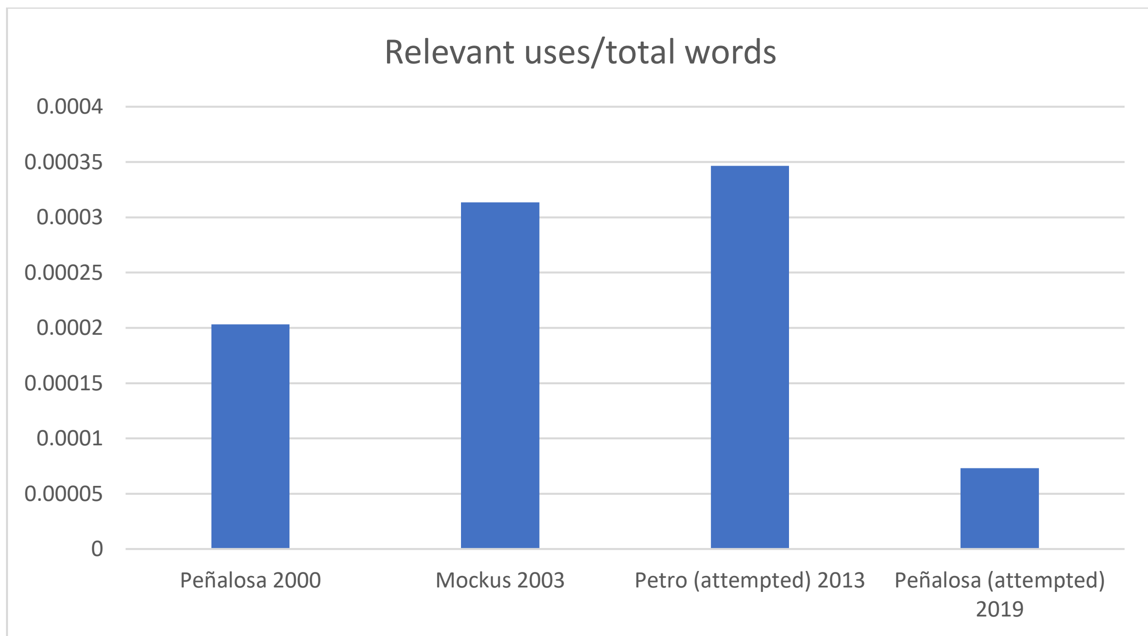


Figure 7: Inclusion of "participation" in POTs based on my analysis of POTs

As with the PDDs, I created this table by dividing the total number of relevant uses of the word "participation" by the total number of words in each document. As we see in the figure, there is variation from one mayoral administration to the next in terms

of participation in POTs, and there is not a gradual increase over time. Peñalosa's most recent attempted POT stands out with only eleven relevant uses of the term "participation" in the entire document of 381 pages. As with the PDDs, Petro has the highest of these three with Mockus slightly less.

Specific versus vague references to participation and mobility

Mayka (2019a, 2019b) shows that in the history of Colombia, legislation about participation does not automatically translate into implementation. She describes how the pioneering participatory frameworks created in Colombia did not, in most cases, result in viable institutional changes that shifted the balances of power from the government to the public. Without clear and specific directions, targets, and indicators for the implementation of participation, it can be easy for the government to neglect or repress it. I found that planning documents reviewed were often more vague than specific regarding participation and mobility. That is to say, the rules, procedures, and instructions are not generally spelled out in explicit terms (Nunn 1996), which lowers the obligations for government to follow through.

Furthermore, the two concepts often appear in different locations and rarely overlap or come together. Despite the emphasis by scholars on participatory mobility planning, the planning documents reviewed include few instances where these concepts are combined. The separation is visible in Bogotá's Mobility Master Plan (Decree 319 of 2006). As may be expected, the document includes numerous components about mobility development in the city such as specific details about the width of sidewalks, streets, and bike paths. However, the final decree has only three real components related to participation, and they are rather vague and unclear about when or how they should be

applied. The ninth policy from the plan (article 7) is that mobility should be "result-oriented mobility: the adoption of a gradual management model is essential to achieve the objectives of this plan under a principle of participation." Later article 62T states: "Citizen participation-planning, implementation and operation of transport infrastructure should guarantee citizen participation and attention to the users and residents living near the system." And finally, article 107 addresses the mechanisms of citizen participation: "district entities will guarantee citizen participation via various instances and legal mechanisms based on an adequate and complete disclosure of the present Master Plan to facilitate intervention in communities." These passages are quite vague and ambiguous, they could lead to significant implementation or very little. So, while the Master Plan is very specific about some things such as specific projects as well as technical specifications and rules for mobility, the provisions for participation are much less detailed.

A recent and rare exception is the case of the green corridor to be built on the *Carrera Séptima* as described in the development plan of current mayor Claudia López. As chapter 4 explains, Enrique Peñalosa's plans to create a TransMilenio trunk line on this route were blocked by a confluence of factors. In her campaign, López promised to find alternative solutions for development and mobility along the *Séptima*. Her PDD suggests a green corridor as an alternative and Article 105 specifies:

"…The city government will design and construct a green corridor on the Carrera Séptima. Unlike a traditional corridor that prioritizes fossil fuel-based transport, mass transit, and private vehicles, this green corridor will prioritize clean energy, public space for pedestrians, and alternative means of mobility like bicycles.

Furthermore, the corridor will be designed with impactful citizen participation, as a safe space with zero tolerance for deaths caused by accidents…"

Although the details here are still somewhat vague, the fact that the article calls for citizen participation in design makes this a rarity among the documents reviewed. This could be an indication that mayor López has recognized the criticism leveled at her predecessor for lack of participation in planning by journalists, politicians, and members of the general public (Semana 2019).

Participation in planning vs. planning for participation

Categorically my analysis allowed me to distinguish two types of "participation" in the documents I reviewed. First, there are many instances of what I call "participation in planning." These are passages where documents describe the participatory processes, events, and mechanisms that have gone into their creation. Basically, these are references to past forms of participation. These sections are often found at the beginning of a document and serve to highlight and legitimize the processes used to create the plans. For example, the POT that Gustavo Petro attempted to pass by decree in 2013 described the elaborate strategy used by his administration to amplify citizen participation in the construction of the POT which included holding town halls (*cabildos*) in each locality, as well as workshops, meetings, debates, and many other events. It also mentions a web page that was created where over two hundred citizen proposals were recorded. And most of the uses of participation in mayor Peñalosa's documents are of this nature. As chapter 6 on e-participation explains, his PDD boasts of multiple forms of participation that went into the creation of the plan, especially emphasizing an e-participation platform called *Bogotá Abierta*. However, the extent to which this participation was actually incorporated

or led to significant action was questioned by critics (K. González 2019). Because this type of participation has already occurred in the past, its inclusion in planning documents seems to serve as legitimization for the plan. Put differently, it is in the interest of the government to give the appearance that their plans are in line with the wishes and needs of the people. Describing participatory processes is one way to increase this perception. Another means of doing so is by referring to the mandates implied by a mayor's electoral success. For example, Peñalosa's PDD states that the plan conforms with his government plan "for which a majority of Bogotanos voted in the last election."

A second significant, forward-looking, form of participation is what I call "planning for participation." These are the passages where documents refer to participation that should occur in the future. For example, Mayor López's PDD refers to the POT which was to be created with "continual, permanent, and impactful citizen participation…" As mentioned earlier, the same document also calls for participation in future projects such as the construction of a green corridor on the *Carrera Séptima.* However, such instances of planning for participation, with any clear guidance or details about when and how participation should happen and who it should involve were extremely rare. As in the previous section, almost all references to future actions remained rather vague and ambiguous meaning they may translate into actual implementation or not. An example of such language is from Mayor Peñalosa's 2000 POT. Objective 7 is titled "citizen participation" and states that—an urban culture will be formed in the citizenry which promotes a shared vision about the future of the city and the region. The following policies will be adopted in the long term: a.) create a social mobilization around the POT which captures the scope of policies of the occupation, use,

development, and growth of the city. b.) create a Planning Advisory Council to strengthen the organization and mechanisms of citizen participation related to the POT c.) create mechanisms that inform the citizens about the advances in the implementation of the POT and allow measurement d.) facilitate community participation for the control and compliance with urban.

Participación Incidente

Another interesting finding from my research is the use of the phrase *"participación incidente*" which appears in the documents reviewed as well as in my interviews and essentially means impactful or meaningful participation. I do not find a common exact English equivalent of the concept although some approximations from the literature may be "influential participation" (Herman 2020; Koivurova and Heinämäki 2006; Rosen and Painter 2019), "authentic participation" (Orosz 2002) or "meaningful participation" (Ruwhiu and Carter 2016). Basically, the idea is that participation should have a real impact and not simply be a formal or superficial procedure (Kębłowski et al. 2019). In some ways, this distinction has been present since the beginning of "participatory planning." In her aforementioned article, Arnstein (1969) points out the difference between "going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process."

Numerous examples can be found in Bogotá's planning documents, especially in recent years. For example, the documents created under the Petro administration use the language of "*incidencia*." One of the rare uses of "participation" in Mayor Peñalosa's PDD describes an effort to use ITC-based programs to promote "*participación incidente*." And Mayor López also uses the phrase in describing its general vision of

citizenship ("These actions unfold in the framework of processes of impactful citizen participation and the recognition of new citizenships.") as well as for specific projects such as the aforementioned *Carrera Séptima.* Mayor Garzón's PDD, does not use the exact phrase *participación incidente* but it does clarify that participation "should not just be a formal or declarative thing, but rather a real, deep, increasing and permanent construction." And in the end-of-term document produced by the Moreno Rojas administration[17] we see an explanation of the importance of impactful participation. According to that document, if the government does not tie action to the choices/participation of the people they will become disillusioned and feel as though they are just spectators.

Based on Google and Google Scholar searches for the phrase it seems almost all uses of the term "*participación incidente"* are exclusive to the Colombian context. Almost all of the uses of the phrase refer to Colombia and Bogotá specifically (with a few instances in Chile). Furthermore, almost all results date from the past 10 years. Although the concepts described here are not entirely new, the use of this specific phrase seems to be especially common since the passage of Decree 503 of 2011 (*Política Pública de Participación Incidente para el Distrito Capital*), a short policy that codifies "*participación incidente*" for the Capital District. It states that "participation is a right that should be a transversal component of public policies of the Capital District government which promotes impactful leadership of the population, ensures recognition,

[17] Samuel Moreno Rojas was removed from office because of his involvement in the Nule Group corruption scandal also known as the "Contract Carousel." This involved multimillion-dollar commission negotiations and embezzlement related to public works projects including the TransMilenio. Moreno Rojas was removed from office and sentenced to prison. He was replaced by Clara Eugenia López Obregón so this document was actually created under her watch.

and reestablishes individual and collective rights. It facilitates access to opportunities and the development of freedoms. However, this decree fails to include an action plan or indicators. Essentially all documents created after that date at least acknowledge the importance of the concept, some using the exact terminology while others may use variations such as “*participacion con decision*” or “*participacion decisoria*.”

My interpretation of these facts is that the “*incidente*” has been added in recent years to indicate a distinction from earlier experiences with participation which were found to be insufficient and unsatisfactory by citizens as well as other stakeholders. As described earlier, participation has become an important legal requirement thanks to legislation such as the 1991 Constitution. However, over the years it has commonly amounted to a mere formality, a superficial box to check, something that some critics describe as “*participadera*” (participation-ish). This distinction is made clear in an article by Jaime Rodríguez Azuero (2012), a former member of Bogotá’s territorial planning council. He exhorted the incoming Petro administration to implement “real” participation, rather than simply holding meetings, filling out forms, and passing out refreshments as occurred under previous administrations. He also indicated frustration with the fact that although participatory exercises were conducted, and civil society in Bogotá had much to offer in terms of experience and expertise, the efforts of citizens rarely made it into the hands of those responsible for planning.

Similar sentiments were expressed many times during my interviews by citizens and representatives of civil society organizations, but also by government representatives themselves. Members of an organization that advocates for the rights of people with disabilities described how at one point they were involved in seemingly serious

participation exercises (regarding a new accessibility plan for the city). However, when a new mayor took over, this engagement ceased, and they were unsure of the actual impacts of their participation. As discussed later, the opponents of the TM project on the *Carrera Séptima*, expressed frustration at the superficial forms of participation about the project. The fact that public meetings were held during working hours and were not broadly publicized indicated that the government was more interested in fulfilling the requirements for participation and getting approval for desired projects rather than meaningfully engaging the citizenry. Other criticisms of the government's approach to participation focus on the lack of deliberation or two-way communication (approximately the "informing" rung of Arnstein's ladder). That is, basically, the government tells people what they are going to do, asks them to sign something indicating their approval, and perhaps takes a few photos for evidence that participation occurred. In these cases, the only recourse for citizens is to file complaints which the government can ignore or respond to at a later date, thanking the citizens for their inputs, restating their justifications and moving ahead.

One of the individuals behind the court case against the TransMilenio, a sociologist and experienced human rights defender, described his understanding of participation as follows:

> *If you look at the constitutional standards that should regulate the right to participation, you will see that they say that for participation to be "real" and "impactful" it should be ample, informed, and with a real and effective invitation to participate (convocatoria). This means you should make a map of the key actors, have them georeferenced. You should establish a direct communication*

> *strategy. In the case I'm telling you about, I learned, by chance. There was not a systematic invitation. There in the building, a flyer appeared. One flyer, in a building where there are 130 apartments. And I learned about it because I was part of the advisory council, and this flyer showed up in the administrative office. I saw it by chance. I realized—this project is going to happen, this project is going to affect us. We have to know what is going on.*

Although they did not put much faith in such superficial participatory processes, many of my interviewees engaged in them as much as possible. That is, they entered such processes without significant expectations about their ability to actually participate, but felt it was important to take part, nonetheless. This could be a result of some surviving optimism that their participation could be taken seriously. It could also be to ensure that they have exhausted all avenues available to them and to strengthen their subsequent arguments against the government.

On the governmental side, most of the interviewees spoke of *participación incidente* as an important concept, but some defended the government against accusations by suggesting that citizens perhaps had exaggerated expectations of how much impact they could or should have. Others suggested that *participación incidente* is actually occurring in some areas. For instance, one *funcionario* from IDPAC described how bicycle users have been able to make some meaningful contributions to policies and planning.

However, as mentioned, even government employees and representatives recognize the shortcomings in participation. After one public workshop (*mesa de trabajo*) I attended meant to engage citizens around issues of transportation and infrastructure, I

asked an employee of the TransMilenio who had been sitting beside me and alternating between taking notes and using her phone, what she thought of the meeting. She shrugged and said she hoped the government would implement some of the things that had been discussed but that honestly, they always hear the same proposals and complaints from people, and nothing really happens. Another *funcionario* who had previously worked as a *gestora social* in the SDM described her own frustration after collecting data for over a year for an important report about people's preferences and needs, only to see the report ignored when actual plans were developed for mobility in the city. Although her job mainly centered around participation, she stated that in Colombia there is participation, but it is not "*incidente*."

The fact that planning documents include such phrases as *participación incidente* reflects the history of participation in the country and seeks to assure anyone who may be skeptical or cynical about it. It is similar to putting "authentic," "genuine" or "real" on a consumer product—which recognizes the existence of artificial or inferior versions.

Participation—not just for citizens

As mentioned earlier, the term "participation" can be understood in multiple ways. The meaning that my research focuses on, participation by citizens in government decisions, is present in most of the documents reviewed. However, citizens are by no means the only actors who participate. Writing on earlier stages of transportation development in Bogotá, Kash and Hidalgo (2014) found conflation about who actually constitutes the public. When asked about public participation, officials would often cite negotiations and interactions with bus companies. Similarly, in the documents, the sections on participation can sometimes blend together multiple forms of participation

including participation by citizens, different government entities, companies, organizations (e.g., community organizations, labor unions, and Chamber of Commerce) as noted in earlier iterations of participatory planning by Duque Franco (2010). One of my interview respondents suggested that when private interests (such as builders and labor unions) get involved, the possibility for corruption increases as they attempt to direct things to their benefit. However, it is not possible to confirm this based on document review alone.

Budgeting for participation

So far, this chapter has focused on planning primarily by analyzing the content and concepts of urban development plans. However, another important perspective is the proportion of budgets dedicated to participation. Martínez (2019) analyzes the amounts dedicated to the main types of participation spending.[18]

Figure 8: Budgeting by account type—amount for participation programs in PDDs. Created by Martínez (2019) based on data from the Secretaría de Hacienda Distrital

Plan de Desarrollo	Monto total	Monto Programas Participación	%
Plan de desarrollo 2001-2003	13.201.600.000.000	20.702.000.000	0,2
Plan de desarrollo 2004-2008	21.892.800.000.000	759.728.000.000	3,5
Plan de desarrollo 2008-2012	30.621.300.000.000	140.358.000.000	0,5
Plan de desarrollo 2012-2016	53.065.402.000.000	777.781.000.000	1,5
Plan de desarrollo 2016-2020	88.321.584.000.000	839.697.000.000	1,0
Total	**207.102.686.000.000**	**2.538.266.000.000**	**1,2**

[18] Calculating exact amounts in this domain is difficult, especially when it comes to spending allocated to different departments which then may use the funds for participation (defined in various ways). Thus, the analysis by Martínez is useful, but should not be interpreted as a measure of all resources budgeted for participation.

From this table, we can see that the mayors generally allocated minuscule proportions of their development plan budgets to participation (an average of around 1.2%). Only Garzón (3.5% in 2004-2008 plan) is deemed to have allocated adequate resources to participation. However, comparing his findings with my analysis in this chapter suggests that discourse does not necessarily correlate with budgeting. While Garzón used the most discourse about participation and allocated the highest percentage of the budget, the other mayors show discrepancies. For instance, Petro and Moreno use more discourse of participation but allocated smaller proportions of their budgets to participation than Mayor Peñalosa.

Discussion

Although some important changes have been made to make urban planning in Bogotá more participatory over the years, current planning processes are limited in multiple ways that do not enhance robust democratic participation. This chapter has described some of the main urban planning processes in the city which, although not the only influences or factors in urban development, do have significant impacts on development in the short and medium terms.

Participation is not a foreign concept in Bogotá planning documents as essentially all of them include the concept in one way or another. However, inclusion is by no means equal and varies quantitatively and qualitatively from one administration to another. Some mayors have made participation a central component of their agenda while others include it in a much more marginal way. Such variation suggests that participation is linked more to political strategies than to changes in perceived needs. Of course, the

analysis in this chapter is based mainly on stated policies which may or may not translate into implementation. That is, a mayor whose planning documents include high levels of participation (e.g., Garzón may not in practice have been more participatory than others).

Overall, though, the inclusion of participation in planning documents appears vague and somewhat ambiguous. It is often described as a principle or guiding component, but actual specific details are rare. That is, the who, what, when, and how of participation are left unstated and thus could lead the concept to be implemented or ignored in practice. Specifics about how participation should occur with regard to mobility are extremely scarce as these components are generally separated in the documents. This lack of specificity can also leave the door open to a blurring of definitions of participation. For example, the term participation may be used to refer to involvement of multiple stakeholders beyond the general public including private sector or special interest groups.

An interesting characteristic of participation in the planning documents reviewed is the inclusion of the phrase *participación incidente*, which seeks to distinguish it from typical forms of participation in Bogotá which have been found in many cases to be a superficial formality. This clarification is somewhat promising in that it offers an ambitious view of participation, but it is also perhaps a recognition that most participatory processes do not fulfill their stated goals.

Finally, although decentralization efforts in the 1980s-1990s gave mayors greater autonomy they still face significant checks from the City Council on various issues, and planning is no exception. Although each administration attempts to present its plans as legitimate based on participatory (people were involved in the process) and representative

(I won the election so the public supports my agenda) logics, planning can engender intense political fights. Both Mayors Petro and Peñalosa saw their proposed POTs eventually sunk (*hundidos*) because of opposition in the City Council.

Thus, planning in Bogotá has become somewhat more participatory than in earlier eras such as the plans of Le Corbusier and Currie which were primarily closed to non-experts. However, the factors and processes described in this chapter mean that it remains partially participatory/democratic at best.

Chapter 3: Perceptions of Participation in Bogotá

Perceptions of Participation in Bogotá

Introduction

Research on participation, including successes and challenges, often examines either the external/institutional factors (e.g., government structures and legislative framework) or internal factors— those more associated with the people involved (Swapan 2014, 2016). In chapter 3, I explore and analyze some of the institutional factors, but here study an important, but often overlooked, aspect on the internal side— perceptions about participation. That is, I explore how stakeholders from multiple groups (e.g., government, experts, civil society actors), understand the concept of participation as well as its current state in Bogotá.

Research on the subject is relatively scarce, but from the existing literature, perceptions can be categorized into two broad groups 1.) an authority-centered view that limits the scope and impact of participation and 2.) a more people-centered/empowered view in which citizens play an expanded and decisive role in decisions. Generally, the former view is associated with government actors while the latter is more common in non-government/civil society actors.

Based on interviews with 40 individuals (some interviewed multiple times) I was able to collect interesting data that shows that while many perspectives on participation support what literature finds about government vs. non-government actors, there are important overlaps on both sides which challenge simple binaries. That is, we see government actors (especially at lower levels) who hold critical and skeptical views about

the government's approach to participation. At the same time, there is a diversity of perspectives on the non-government side as well.

Perceptions of participation in literature

Although there is a significant body of literature about participation, including on issues of mobility (Whitmarsh, Swartling, and Jäger 2009), most of the research focuses on either the processes of participation or mobility rather than perceptions of participation. Several scholars have pointed to this important lack (Berner, Amos, and Morse 2011; Donders, Hartmann, and Kokx 2014). In this section, I review the limited scholarship that has been published about perceptions of participation.

To begin, perceptions of participation are important, that is to say, what people think matters (Grisez Kweit and Kweit 2007; Kokx and Van Kempen 2010). Although relationships between participation as it occurs on the ground are not necessarily straightforward and there may be gaps and disparities between what people perceive and what actually happens, what they think does have an impact on the way things unfold. As mentioned multiple times in this dissertation, there is today a broad and increasing consensus among various stakeholders that participation is an important component of urban planning and development (Swapan 2016). Most actors support (or at least accept) the notion of allowing people to participate in decisions that affect them. However, beyond the abstract/theoretical level, we begin to see ambiguities about what participation actually means (Swapan 2014) as well as differences and variations in the levels and extent of participation that are expected or desirable (Grisez Kweit and Kweit 2007; Mohammadi, Norazizan, and Nikkhah 2018).

From the literature, we see that differences in perceptions of participation are often correlated to the identity of the stakeholders and their position/role within participatory processes. Of course, perceptions may be influenced by a number of other factors such as the history and culture of the setting involved as well as individual characteristics such as age, race/ethnicity, and gender. However, within the literature, there is a tendency to compare perceptions by categorizing people into different groups—most commonly government (and associated actors) and non-government actors (Berner et al. 2011). These two camps are portrayed as having different and often opposing views on participation.

On one hand, government actors are found to have an authority-centered view, which views governments as the ultimate arbiters of power that seek to minimize the role of citizens, especially those who oppose their agenda. This top-down view could be characterized as a "government knows best" attitude (Evenhouse 2009). This position may be especially prevalent in matters where "expertise" is involved. For example, in the cases of Chicago and Córdoba, (Baiocchi and Ganuza 2016) observed clashes between government and citizens over who had the right to exert expertise. Drawing on Rancière, Swyngedouw (2009, 2010, 2015) makes the distinction between "police" (activities that create order by distributing places, names, and functions) and "politics" (the contentious efforts to disrupt police order) showing that governments seek to maintain control and limit any genuine opportunities to share power. In their efforts towards "depoliticization," governments attempt (and are largely successful) to limit politics and push any type of participation into the realm of police. That is to say, preventing dissent and contention in favor of consensus-focused alternatives.

To use Miraftab's (2004) terminology, governments promote participation in "invited" spaces (ones which they create and control) and discourage "invented" spaces (those created and controlled by the people). Stapper et al. (2020) expand the government-citizen binary somewhat by considering the role of external consultants and professionals who are increasingly involved in participation (sometimes for their perceived objectivity). While are not officially members of government, they ultimately come down more on the side of authority and control. Although they show some diversity in perceptions of participation among consultants, at the end of the day the relationship with those that hire them is inescapable and their view of participation remains limited.

Examples of this type of perception may be seen in the government's emphasis on participation through official channels of representative democracy. That is, people should participate by electing people to make decisions for them (Berner et al. 2011). Other variations in authority-centered views of participation may be described as "government knows best." That is, the role of citizens is to simply express their needs while governments and/or other experts provide the solutions (Glaas et al. 2020). Furthermore, some government actors are found to hold condescending or disparaging perspectives about the ability of citizens to even participate, especially on technical issues. Put another way, the people lack the knowledge, experience, or capacity to play any significant role in decision making. In addition to doubting the capacities of citizens, some government actors may also impugn the motives and good faith behind citizens seeking to participate. For example, they may accuse them of acting based on limited self-interest and NIMBY-ism (Swapan 2014).

At the opposing end of the spectrum from an authority-centered view of participation is what may be called a people-centered or empowered view of participation—which argues that people should be involved in all aspects of government activities. According to this perspective, citizens are capable, active participants who can and should take meaningful decisions (Mohammadi et al. 2018). Whereas the authority-centered perspective recognizes and promotes mainly official/formal, and increasingly consensus-based participation, a people-centered view can include both official as well as unofficial forms of participation, contestation, and dissent. In Miraftab's (2004) terms, these could be "invented" spaces where citizens take the initiative and create their own interventions or they could be "invited" spaces where government actually cedes a significant amount of power and follows the demands of the people. In either case, citizens play a significant (perhaps even leading) role. Unsurprisingly, the literature finds this perspective is more common among citizens than government actors. Of course, some government actors may hold these views as well, but their roles can limit their ability to act on them.

That citizens should play an active role in society is a commonality among people whose views fall in this category. However, just what type of role can vary based on a number of factors (Brownill and Carpenter 2007). For instance, Koontz (1999) writes that citizens may think differently about participation, and adopt different strategies depending on if they are primarily motivated by economic versus non-economic reasons. To give an example—in the case of urban mobility, we might expect someone's views on participation to vary if they are concerned with exchange rather than use values. For instance, a store owner concerned with their business, a commuter who drives through an

area, and residents (homeowners, renters, and homeless) may all have different understandings and expectations about participation.

Trust

A recurrent theme in the literature is the importance of trust which significantly impacts not only whether or not a person decides to participate, but also how they understand participation if they do engage (Lee and Schachter 2019; Swapan 2014).[19] Trust is a feeling at the individual level, but it is created out of dialectical interactions and historic relations between the government and society. In many places, governments are viewed with general skepticism, and people may view them as disinterested at best and threatening at worse. Even among those who have sought to engage with the government through participatory processes, there can be significant burnout or disillusion if they perceive that their participation was not seriously considered. That is, the government is simply going to do whatever it wants anyway (van Holstein 2018). However, the socio-economic status and social capital of people seeking to participate are also important in their levels of trust and confidence about participatory processes (Swapan 2016). For example, individuals in a poor informal community in a post-colonial setting who have difficulty accessing urban services or who have been subjected to aggressive policing may have less trust and confidence about engaging in government-led participation. At the other end of the spectrum, we see examples of more affluent and professional individuals who feel emboldened and may seek opportunities to participate, even in areas outside their realm of expertise. For example, Von Schneidemesser and Stasiak (2019)

[19] Åström (2020) points out that concerns about trust run in both directions as in many cases planners may not trust citizens in participatory processes. As mentioned in the authority-centered section, government actors may doubt citizens' abilities and motivation to participate.

show how a group of bicycle advocates, who were mostly male professionals with university degrees, were successful in pushing the Berlin government to adopt Germany's first bicycle law. Although none of the people involved had experience in lawmaking, their professional status in society (e.g., architects, engineers, sociologists, etc.) increased their expectations about participation, their ambitions, and ultimate success.

Contentious participation

A final observation is a diversity in views about how contentious participation should or should not be. As mentioned, those with a more authority-centered promote primarily official and consensus-based participation (e.g., following the rules and playing nice in invited spaces). On the people-centered side, however, there is more diversity. There are some who view participation in terms of civic participation, in line with Robert Putnam's (1993, 2001). He writes that the key to a successful functioning democracy is civic life or "the civic community." In his widely cited (but also criticized) *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. he uses the term "civic engagement" rather than "participation" to indicate a broad category that includes many types of joining/collective activity from bridge clubs to alumnae associations to the NAACP to voting.

Others, however, argue that participation must be political and that necessarily involves dissent and contestation (Alvarez et al. 2017). However, Hays (2007) finds that perceived differences between these two may be more significant for researchers than for people in the real world, as many activists engage in both types of participation at the same time.

Perceptions on mobility participation

While there is some existing literature on perceptions of participation, there are few studies that analyze the intersection of mobility and participation. Furthermore, there is a tendency to treat groups (such as government and civil society) as fixed and permanent. However, the possible perspectives on this topic are diverse. Policy sectors such as mobility often involve people who move from one side to the other such as activists who are incorporated into government, including bureaucratic activists as described by Abers (2019) and Rich (2019), or those in government who leave for civil society. There are also expert citizens (Sosa López and Montero 2018) who position themselves as intermediaries between the public and the government. Finally, there are ground-level government employees whose work involves frequent interactions and liaisons with the public. The perspectives of these actors are crucial because this is where civil society and government come together, but so far, they are largely understudied. Although my research cannot comprehensively answer all questions about perceptions of participation, I hope it can expose some of the perspectives given by a relatively diverse set of stakeholders.

Bogotá Cómo Vamos—data

Although my primary methods in this project are qualitative and I seek to understand perceptions of participation through interviews which provide richer data than simple surveys, it can be useful to consult a readily available quantitative source—the *Encuesta de Percepción Ciudadana* (Citizen Perception Survey) [20] conducted annually by

[20] This is a large-scale survey (>1,000 respondents) that gauges citizen perception about various aspects of life in Bogotá such as public services, health, mobility, security, etc. (Bogotá Cómo Vamos 2020).

Bogotá Cómo Vamos (a non-profit organization dedicated to monitoring and evaluating the quality of life and governance in Bogotá). The questions included in the survey vary from year to year, so it is not possible to map exact changes over time. However, some surveys include questions about participation that are relevant to this chapter and give some useful perspectives about how Bogotanos perceive participation. This data is also useful because it is collected from a relatively broad sample of the population of Bogotá, rather than the narrower sample of stakeholders I engage through interviews. Some of the most pertinent findings are as follows:

1.) Low awareness and participation

Several survey responses over the years suggest that Bogotanos generally have low awareness of participation opportunities and/or low participation rates. For example, in the 2012 survey, when asked about the mayor's "*encuentros ciudadanos*" for the creation of the *Plan de Desarrollo Distrital* (PDD), only 8% of respondents said they participated and 44% said they were not even aware of these events (Bogotá Cómo Vamos 2012). In the following year's survey, when asked if they had participated in the creation of the new *Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial* (POT), only 3% said they had participated in some form and 57% were unaware of opportunities to do so (Bogotá Cómo Vamos 2013).

There are various ways in which Bogotanos may participate, so it is difficult to capture all of them in a single survey. Some questions asked whether people participated in some sort of community organization (more along the lines of Putnam). In 2005, 2006, 2009 and 2010, only 15%, 11%, 8% and 6% (respectively) affirmed such forms of participation. Together this data suggests that awareness about participation and rates of

participation are generally low. In some years, the survey asks those who participate about their motivations for doing so. In 2012 and 2014, the most common response (>50%) was that participating was their responsibility as citizens.

2.) Disillusion and pessimism

Some survey responses suggest a lack of optimism and perhaps general disenchantment with the concept of citizen participation. For example, in the 2009, 2010 & 2011 surveys, views on participation were generally very negative. Large majorities felt participation had not reduced clientelism or corruption. Similarly, most felt participation had not helped solve issues or helped people influence politicians. In a 2012 survey on urban inequality, 50% of respondents felt that citizen participation strengthened the power of politicians. 68% of respondents felt that participation did not help to solve issues faced by the people and a further 67% felt that people are not able to influence the decisions of local authorities (Bogotá Cómo Vamos 2013). Regarding the deficiencies of participation, some survey results suggest that citizens blame the government.

Methods

The meanings and perceptions can be approached in a number of ways. This chapter uses primarily qualitative methods. Similar to (Berner et al. 2011; Hays 2007; Mohammadi et al. 2018; Stapper et al. 2020), I conducted in-depth interviews with a range of stakeholders who have experience or knowledge of participation in issues of mobility in Bogotá. This method allowed me to capture the complexities and even contradictions involved in perception of participation. Participation is a normatively

accepted principle, which almost no stakeholders would openly disagree with or criticize, thus probing this concept and eliciting meaningful data required some finesse. In my interviews, I would begin by asking a question like "What does citizen participation mean in a city such as Bogotá?" Then depending on their responses, I was able to probe deeper with follow-up questions. For example, if they expressed negative views, I could ask what participation "should" mean. In this way, interviews provide more flexibility and can capture nuances than a survey or closed-ended questions. However, there are some drawbacks for which a survey-based approach such as those used by Holland (2021) could have been useful. For example, my smaller, and somewhat specific sample makes it difficult for me to quantify the trends I observed. As with other chapters, my analysis here is based primarily on transcribed and coded interviews in Atlas.Ti.

My sample was non-random and not intended to represent the entire spectrum of possible stakeholders. However, through purposive sampling, I was able to capture an interesting range of views which span from the authority-centered view to a more people-centered one. Often these views correlated with government versus civil society categories, but not always. As mentioned, there is some interesting variation in the middle ground.

Findings

Findings in this section are divided into two sections. The first describes views on what interviewees felt participation should be ideally. The second addresses views on participation as it currently happens in Bogotá. This latter category is analyzed along the

authority-centered and people-centered divisions as previously described. Again, I reiterate that my sample is by no means representative of all Bogotanos. These are primarily views of stakeholders who have some connection to participation, either as participants or facilitators.

What participation should be

Participation is important—Among interviewees, there was general agreement that participation is an important concept and should be part of policymaking and governance. Not all interviewees addressed the importance of participation directly, but among those who did, all affirmed that participation is very important, and none offered contrary views. As mentioned, this concurs with the general agreement found in the literature that participation is viewed as a laudable concept in urban planning and general urban politics. Interviewees from all categories described the importance of participation and supported it with several different justifications.

One simple explanation offered by Paola, a *gestora social* (social manager) for the TransMilenio, is that participation is important because it is the law. She stated "It's part of the law too, isn't it? So, it's something the government has to guarantee the communities." That is, since participation is in the constitution and other policies, it must be important.

Gestión sociale

In my research, I encountered the concept of *gestión social* (social/community management) in several different government entities. *Gestión sociale* broadly refers to the communicative interface between a government entity (such as TransMilenio or SDP) department and the community. The *gestores sociales* (community managers) are public-facing actors responsible for

transferring information from government to the public and vice versa. At the time of my research, the TransMilenio had 14 gestores sociales (each with a different jurisdiction in the city). They were professionals but from relatively diverse backgrounds (sociology, psychology, social work, business administration, etc.). They are organized from the TransMilenio headquarters but spend significant time in their respective parts of the city (including in *Centros Locales de Movilidad*). Examples of tasks and duties towards the community include teaching school children about how to properly use the TransMilenio system or informing communities about changes in service. Examples towards the government include identifying issues and problems (such as protests) and communicating them to relevant departments within TransMilenio.

Because of time constraints, I was not able to conduct in-depth research with as many of the social managers as I would have liked, but I conducted two interviews with the person who oversees them and was able to meet and interview several and accompany one (Paola) in her day-to-day work which illustrated the ways in which information flows to and from the government.

I met Paola at an elementary school she wore a bright official TransMilenio jacket. When we entered the school, we met another gestor social who wore the light blue jacket of the *Secretaría de Movilidad*. Several respected community members joined as we met with the school's rector. Paola's main objective for the day was to discuss and plan a trip for the school's students to visit the new TransMiCable. She also distributed materials such as coloring books from the TransMilenio. After this meeting, we were led by the community members to another elementary school where a similar meeting was held.

After these meetings, I was given a ride by the two *gestores*. Along the way, we stopped at a place where a local resident (she emphasized it was only one) had requested a new bus stop to be installed. She got out of the car, took several pictures of the location then returned. She said that further investigation and consideration were needed as the location was near a school and could cause congestion problems.

Other interviewees suggested that participation is important because it can improve policymaking. Several government workers from different departments suggested that participation can help generate more and better ideas about issues because people who face these issues on a day-to-day basis are best positioned to address them. Similarly, several others stated that participation is important because it can optimize the efficiency of projects and improve their long-term sustainability. For example, if people are involved in projects from the beginning, they are less likely to resist and more likely to take ownership going forward. Beyond this seeming consensus that participation is important, however, we begin to see divergences.

Participation as a right (and duty?)—Several interviewees described participation as a right. Diana, a constitutional lawyer, evoked the 1991 Constitution which establishes participation as a fundamental principle.[21] She also suggests that in some ways participation is also a duty. This vision of right and duty of participation was expressed by several other interviewees as well.

Several interviewees also specified that participation must go beyond voting in elections. Instead, it is an ongoing set of actions. For example, Julian, a young activist described participation as "a state of active consciousness of all citizens where we are all together, evaluating and proposing, for the collective. It's being aware, in everyday life what is happening…This privilege depends not just on you, but on everybody doing some work…." In some ways, this conceptualization of participation as a right and duty gives

[21] For example, Article 2 of the constitution states that one of the essential goals of the government is to "facilitate participation by everyone in the decisions that affect them and in the economic, political, administrative, and cultural life of the nation…" Article 40 states that "Any citizen has the right to participate in the establishment, exercise, and control of political power."

agency to citizens because it suggests that the public has significant impact on the way things work in society. However, on the other hand, it also somewhat shifts the burden away from government onto the public. If things do not work well, lack of participation and interest from average citizens can be blamed.

This perspective was perhaps best articulated by Gustavo, a representative from an NGO that is generally supportive of the government agenda. He stated that participation is:

> *…It's not just about behavior, but 'what can I do for the city?' It's not just about behaving well and throwing away my trash. You have to also construct citizenship and what it means to be citizens. And this is not just in the hands of the mayor… Mayors can make decisions about whatever, but the only way that these decisions will last over time and be sustainable is with participation….I'm the only guarantor who can ensure the sustainability of the actions of any government or mayor. That's why participation plays a fundamental role, and I might change the term. Instead of participation, we can think of civility (civilidad). For me, civility is much broader and integral than going to a meeting and giving an opinion. I have a bigger responsibility.*

Participation can take multiple forms—In my interviews, I asked about the meaning of participation and the different forms it can take. I first asked what my interviewees understand participation to mean. If they had difficulty answering or if their responses seemed too brief, I would probe further by giving some common examples of participation (as I understand it) and ask if they should be considered participation or not. For example, I asked several interviewees if marching in a street protest constitutes a

form of participation. Overall, there was diversity in responses to this question. Examples of participation ranged from formal mechanisms such as government-led meetings, official complaints, and petitions to more informal actions such as protests and strikes. Examples also varied in terms of scale from local level complaints or requests for information to large-scale collective actions such as referenda and recall elections.

Among civil society members, there was a broader range of possibilities for participation. For example, Julian, one of the founding members of *Defendamos la Séptima*, suggested that in his view, disruptive actions such as strikes and protests can be effective means of participation, as long as they are non-violent and do not harm people. He referenced the Yellow Vest movement in France and stated that whether or not one agrees with them, it is clear that they were effective. Regarding the range of actions, one should use to participate (specifically to check the misguided intentions of autocratic leaders) a veteran architect and urban designer named Iván stated "…we have to rely on everything…because there are always Roberts Moses and Enrique Peñalosas. There are always Stalins." From their statements, it was clear that participation can include a wide range of actions that may fall outside of formal, civic participation.

For their part, government personnel were more likely to mention the formal participatory mechanisms with which they have direct experience and knowledge. For example, when asked for examples of participation a mid-level *funcionario* in IDU named Juan Pablo, described the technologically-mediated as well as face-to-face interaction that his department manages with the public. Similarly, two technical employees of TransMilenio described the public complaints system which has strict rules

(e.g., government must reply within a certain time period) and occupies a significant amount of time and effort.

As the literature suggests I found that conceptualizations of participation and examples largely corresponded to the government vs. non-government category of the interviewee. Government representatives seemed to mention and favor more formal and civic participation. While non-governmental actors recognized this form of participation and sometimes engaged in it, they had a broader view of participation that included alternative and contentious forms.

Opposition vs. Proposition—There was also a difference in terms of whether participation should be in support of the government or in opposition to it. In some ways, this is in line with the contrast between civic participation and confrontational (uncivic) collective action as described by Alvarez et al. (2017). Responses can also be divided along a range from “naming and shaming” to “knowing and showing” which some authors have examined in other contexts (Kemp and Vanclay 2013; Scheper 2015).

Some civil society interviewees expressed very confrontational stances towards the government, especially mayor Enrique Peñalosa and openly aimed to do whatever they could to oppose or resist his agenda and projects. Although their objections were not uniquely political, they began most engagements with the government with resistance or at least skepticism.

There were other civil society members and organizations, however, who were nearly the opposite. They were largely supportive of government projects and sought to make valuable contributions whenever they could. Among representatives of the

organizations with whom I conducted interviews, those from ProBogotá, Bogotá Como Vamos, and CorpoSéptima all expressed this sort of stance. At times they used the term "*propositiva*" which roughly translates to purposeful or proactive. This perspective was most clearly expressed by a representative from CorpoSéptima named Gustavo. He stated that his organization is about doing "*propositiva*" things, rather than simply "complaining." He recognized contentious actions such as marches and protests and said they are welcome, but he doubts their contributions to "city-making." In his view, participation and city-making are about what we do every day, and one cannot be out marching in the streets every day.

Similar to Hays (2007), I also encountered individuals and organizations who advocated a combination of contentious forms of participation along with more positive and collaborative efforts actions toward government. This combination was expressed by one of the members of *Veeduría Ciudadana de la Reserva van der Hammen*, a collective of citizens who organize to preserve and promote the Thomas van der Hammen Natural Reserve. Fabiola explained that on one hand, the group expresses their opposition to any plans to develop or urbanize the reserve. This includes protests, marches, and legal actions as well as some effective online organizing such as a "Twitterathon." The group has also deployed some innovative tactics intended to apply public pressure on the government while also appearing to be collaborative rather than oppositional. One of the group's priorities is planting trees in the reserve (which is currently largely unforested). Through donations, they were able to amass over 2,000 saplings which they delivered to the mayor's office and the *Corporación Autónoma Regional de Cundinamarca*. These two offices essentially refused the donation (suggesting that the trees could be diseased

and would need to be inspected by experts) so the group placed the trees in the Plaza de Bolívar creating a somewhat embarrassing spectacle for the city government (López 2017; Osorio Ardila 2020; Rodríguez 2017).

However, the group also uses what they consider more *propositiva* strategies. For example, the government has an environmental management plan for the Reserve, and the group seeks to help the government implement it. In some cases, this may mean collaborating with the government, and in others, they take actions on a voluntary basis (such as planting trees themselves). This suggests that the two sides of participation may not be mutually exclusive but rather complementary instead.

In the following table, I group the organizations I engaged with into three different categories:

Table 4: Organizations interviewed in terms of their approach to participation

Confrontational/oppositional	**Both**	***Collaborative/propositivo***
Defendamos la Séptima	-Cebras por la Vida -Veeduría Ciudadana de la Reserva van der Hammen -Ascopar - SUBAse A La BICI	-CorpoSéptima -Bogotá Como Vamos -ProBogotá

While the preceding table does not represent all organizations in Bogotá, it does show some of the diversity in terms of participatory approaches. Rather than simply acting as opponents who work against the government, some civil society groups are highly aligned with the government and seek to collaborate in a positive manner.

Participation should have limits—An authority-centered perspective was suggested by the responses of several government officials about the limits and boundaries of participation. This was to be expected based on the aforementioned literature. The director of IDPAC (an institute dedicated to fostering participation in Bogotá) stated that he believes participation is fundamental, but that it should "enrich" decision-making rather than serve as the sole basis for it.

> *…it is always fundamental to work hand in hand with the citizens. And participation must serve to enrich project—enrich proposals. Hear arguments in favor or arguments against. But not simply become something that the citizens decide on whatever type of process. Because this will become a little demagogic. If it were this way, it would not be necessary to have, at the level of the administration, nor entities, nor plans of the government. So, participation is fundamental, but it must serve to constantly enrich and improve public processes.*

He added that in his view individual people have inherently limited understandings and positions on issues, so it is up to the government to take a broader view. Thus, for him, government ultimately is the rightful decision-maker and through participation, people can contribute to this process but never take the central role.

A senior official from TransMilenio offered similar views and suggested a "necessary limit" to participation. He stated that individuals have a constrained perspective, based on their own self-interests. "Because there's a limit—not everyone can comment on things yes or no. Because we all have a somewhat limited view of things, based on our own interests." Thus, it is up to the government to open up the spectrum and put the general good above these more limited interests. Taken together the

perspectives of these two officials suggest that the government should remain the ultimate power wielder and participation can be brought in to enhance, but not fundamentally alter decision-making. This authority-centered perspective was not surprising because sharing increased power through participation would be perceived as decreasing government control.

What was somewhat unexpected, however, was that limits to participation were also suggested by a civil society actor, specifically Alejandro—one of the plaintiffs in the case against the TransMilenio on the *Séptima*. While he believed in the importance of participation, he added that "participation can't be co-governance. There should be a line between public administrator (who makes the plans and takes decisions) and the participation of society. This line may be diminished, but it doesn't go away."

Participation should be "incidente"—As described in chapter 2, I also encountered the term "*participación incidente*" (impactful participation) during my interviews. This essentially means that participation should have a real impact and not simply be a formal or superficial procedure. Such expectations were expressed by citizens and civil society organization representatives, but also by government representatives themselves. Members of an organization that advocates for the rights of people with disabilities described how they were involved in seemingly serious participation exercises regarding a new accessibility plan for the city. However, when a new mayor took over, this engagement ceased, and they were unsure of the actual impacts of their participation. As mentioned in chapter 4, the opponents of the TransMilenio project on the *Carrera Séptima*, expressed frustration at the superficial forms of participation about the project. For example, the fact that public meetings were held during working hours and were not

broadly publicized indicated that the government was more interested in fulfilling the requirements for participation and getting approval for desired projects rather than meaningfully engaging the citizenry. Other criticisms of the government's approach to participation focus on the lack of deliberation or two-way communication (instead reflecting approximately the "informing" rung of Arnstein's ladder). Essentially the government tells people what they are going to do, asks them to sign something indicating their approval, and perhaps takes a few photos for evidence that participation occurred. In such instances, the only recourse for citizens is to file complaints which the government can ignore or respond to at a later date, thanking the citizens for their inputs, restating their justifications, and proceeding.

Alejandro, of the individuals behind the court case against the TransMilenio, a sociologist and experienced human rights defender, described his understanding of participation as follows:

> *If you look at the constitutional standards that should regulate the right to participation, you will see that they say that for participation to be "real" and "impactful" it should be ample, informed, and with a real and effective call/invitation (convocatoria). This means you should make a map of the key actors and have them georeferenced. You should establish a direct communication strategy. In the case I'm telling you about, I learned, by chance, that there was not a systematic invitation. There in the building, a flyer appeared. One flyer, in a building where there are 130 apartments. And I learned about it because I was part of the advisory council, and this flyer showed up in the*

administrative office. I saw it by chance. I realized—this project is going to happen, this project is going to affect us. We have to know what is going on.

Although they did not put much faith in such superficial participatory processes, many of my interviewees engaged in them as much as possible. That is, they entered such processes without significant expectations about their ability to actually participate, but felt it was important to take part, nonetheless.

On the governmental side, interviewees also spoke of *participación incidente* as an important concept, but some defended the government against accusations by suggesting that citizens perhaps had exaggerated expectations of how much impact they could or should have.

Views on current participation in Bogotá

The preceding section examined the views of different stakeholders about the concept of participation and what it could or should not be in an ideal situation. However, I was also interested to understand how they perceived participation as it actually exists in Bogotá, specifically regarding mobility.

Critical views (mostly civil society)

People unaware or skeptical of opportunities to participate—Many interviewees were dissatisfied with the way participation occurs. Among respondents who expressed critical or negative views some were either unaware of opportunities and mechanisms for participation or believed they did not exist. These were views mostly expressed by non-governmental interviewees which is logical because government employees would obviously be aware of any programs for which they were responsible. Another criticism,

which blamed the government for the low quality of participation was voiced by Ana Maria, an NGO representative who stated that the government does not do a good enough job at developing and articulating the rules, objectives, and expectations about participation. She contrasted this with examples in other places such as France where participation is more advanced in her opinion.

However, there was a sharper accusation that I frequently encountered which held that the government operates in a top-down way and will either ignore public participation or use it to advance its own agenda. Essentially the government will do what it wants regardless of the people's wishes and their participation. Unsurprisingly, this view was expressed primarily by civil society members, including those who directly opposed the government. For example, Fabiola, an activist and community organization leader accused the government of being "straight out of the 1950s." That is to say, it is too old-fashioned and technocratic, and that it assumes that only technicians and technocrats should be able to speak and define things. She mockingly imitated the government saying, "the people—poor souls who don't know what they want, who don't know what is good for them…and we the technicians are the experts, and we will decide how the city should be."

Another NGO director named Jorge described the Peñalosa administration as "dictatorial" and said that in the timeline of infrastructure projects, people are only invited to participate at certain (and not decisive) moments. Another interviewee, Diana, characterized the government's approach to participation in the POT as "we hear you, but this is what we are going to do, and we have many technical documents that support what we're saying…"

Alejandro, one of the plaintiffs in the case against the TransMilenio project on the *Séptima* expressed resentment at government attempts to justify its agenda on representative grounds (participation was already done because the people elected a mayor). He also stated that the government confuses (although perhaps not unintentionally) participation with "*socialización*" an ambiguous term without a direct English translation in this context. It essentially refers to the process by which government introduces a new project or action. In the context of Bogotá, it often means a one-way form of communication rather than robust participation or engagement (Sotomayor, Montero, and Ángel-Cabo 2022). While information provision is an important prerequisite for participation (Le Blanc 2020), in this interviewee's mind, this does not constitute actual participation.

Snapshot of a public meeting about transportation

A fascinating illustration of how perceptions of participation manifest themselves in a real-world setting occurred at a "*mesa de trabajo*" on infrastructure and transport that I attended in 2019. This meeting was held in a school in a northern neighborhood of Bogotá and involved government representatives from city as well as national government. The meeting was open to members of the public interested in the subject (and free on a Monday morning). Because the meeting took place in a classroom, it was impossible for me not to associate people with different roles (audience in seats=students/children and those at the front=teachers/adults).

Figure 9: Layout of the Mesa de Trabajo with members of the public sitting at school desks and government representatives standing at the whiteboards (my own photo)

The dynamics of the meeting were tested, however, when an elderly gentleman in a newsboy cap sitting in the front row tried to take the floor. He had been raising his hand off-and-on throughout a long, one-way presentation by one of the government representatives from the TransMilenio and eventually grew frustrated, stood up, and moved to the board. A representative from the Ministerio de Transporte told him to go back to his seat which created a bit of a commotion among the crowd who seemed to be restless by this time with some people seizing the opportunity to speak among themselves and about 10 choosing to leave the room. After a relative calm had been restored the TransMilenio representative began speaking again. However, the same gentleman got up again and another TransMilenio representative told him to sit back down adding *"esta es la parte de usted"*—essentially that is your place, and this is ours.

Figure 10: Exchange between agitated citizen (man with cap) and government representatives at community workshop (my own photo)

This brief anecdote illustrates that the government officials clearly conceived of a certain, limited form of participation in which they would be in control and would provide (mostly one-way) information to the public.

Instead, as authors have described in Bogotá and other contexts, participation in the form of *socialización* may be used as a subsidiary instrument of the planning process which lends some legitimacy to processes that are largely closed and undemocratic in nature (Torres 2020). Atuesta and Davis (2020) describe how participatory exercises related to a social housing project in Bogotá under the Petro administration were more of an attempt to assuage opposition to the project rather than a genuine participatory process to understand the needs and concerns of surrounding communities.

Several other interviewees in my research also pointed out that participation and *socialización* are not the same thing. This perspective aligns with the findings of

Martínez (2019) whose analysis of spending on participation in development plans from 2001 to 2020 indicates that the largest amount 44.6% is dedicated to "consultation" while much smaller amounts are dedicated to "decision-making" (12.4%) and "management" (8.9%).

However, my interviews and conversations with lower-level government employees and *contratistas*[22] also suggested some interesting examples of critical views. For instance, Paula, a middle-aged *gestor social* of the TransMilenio, expressed her own disappointment and frustration with some of the outcomes of participation. Previously she had worked for another government agency in a similar role. Over the course of a year, she worked to gauge public opinions and priorities about a range of issues, only to see the report they created essentially shelved and ignored by the government. For her, this was evidence that in Colombia and Bogotá there is participation, but it is not "*incidente*."

In another instance Alejandra, a twenty-something enthusiastic IDPAC employee gave me a detailed explanation of the problems with the city's transportation system and how she would redesign it. When I suggested maybe she should propose such views she said that nobody would listen to her, and besides "*son proyectos de gobierno*" (those are government projects). On another occasion, as I was sitting in a park reading, I was approached by two surveyors who were working for the IDU to gauge opinions and views about proposed changes to the park. I spoke with them about the survey and asked what would happen if all survey respondents opposed the project and said it was a bad

[22] The city government employs a large number of people as "*contratistas*" which translates approximately to consultant or temporary employee. These people are hired on a limited-term basis as opposed to full-time staff "*personas de planta*."

idea. They laughed and admitted that the project would probably happen anyway. It is possible that the relative distance from government gives these workers more freedom to express critical views. It is also possible that their experience and observations of actual participatory mechanisms in action have led to disenchantment.

Overall, I found many critical views of the way participation currently works (or does not) in Bogotá. These perceptions often placed the blame on the government, either with specific agencies or the state in a more general sense. Such views were generally expressed by civil society members or actors outside of the government. However, I also found some critical views from low-level government workers which upset the expected binaries.

In defense of government or shifting blame

However, not all views of current participation in Bogotá are negative, and not all stakeholders assign blame for shortcomings to government. Such views came from government as well as civil society stakeholders.

Government has made some progress—Several interviewees suggested that, while not perfect, the status of participation has been improving in Bogotá and the government is actively trying to increase and improve it. Providing a certain positive spin, they pointed to actions and programs that are ongoing, progress in comparison to the past as well as certain highlights. These perspectives came primarily from government stakeholders.

Pamela, a senior official in the IDU with decades of experience, spoke of a gradual improvement in the relationship between the IDU and the people over time. She

also referred to the larger context such as the 1991 Constitution to show improvements over time. She described how her agency went from simply informing the public and trying to mitigate negative impacts to developing a model of participatory relations with citizens.

> *When you look at the functions of the office of citizen attention, from more or less 1999-2009, there was a collective learning that the office wasn't just about doing communications—by telephone or written…. that had been shown to be very insufficient. You have to be there—in the areas where projects were happening, talk with people, manage things. And from 2009, the decision was made to take the two offices of environmental and social management and make the office of citizen attention.*

Pablo, a mid-level *funcionario* in the Veeduría Distrital described the government's progression from "participation" to "collaboration." He was proud that the directors of different departments and government entities are committed to this progress. Furthermore, he felt that capacity is being built in the personnel and institutions so that rather than ending with specific programs or projects, ideas and efforts about participation and collaboration can live on. Gabriel, an early-30s *funcionario* in the *Secretaría de Movilidad* was similarly enthusiastic about levels of participation in certain sectors. However, referring to bicyclists, he gave a more bottom-up perspective, suggesting that bicycle activists have been successful in pressuring the government to meet their demands. He shared that cyclists took actions such as complaining to the government about inadequate infrastructure and unsafe parts of the city. As a result, new amenities such as bike paths and bicycle parking have been added. Furthermore, he felt

that citizen pressure was crucial in the city government creating an office of the bicycle. In fact, went on to make a lengthy contrast between the impact of cyclists and other groups who were less influential.

> *The participation of cyclists is very significant (incidente), and I think it could be even greater. Because we're lacking some intelligence in some of our leaders. But if I compare it with other social sectors, like…. those who support football clubs—supporter's clubs (las barras futbaleras)…They have lots of demands, like more space. Those who paint graffiti in the streets have lots of demands, but cyclists say anything, and the answer is "yes!" The answer is always yes. In Bogotá, the answer is yes! We want to do a ride through the whole city, blocking streets to do a festival—yes! 'I have friends from the neighborhood, and we have a group of elderly folks, and we want to do a picnic…no!'*
>
> *…It's incredible. Incredible.*
>
> *This place, (a bar/restaurant where the interview was taking place)—I imagine you've already talked to him. He's the owner. He and his organization do some of the craziest things in the world about bicycles. And the person who allows it is me. The person who deals with the police and all that is me. They've done everything. Look, last year they hired a crane/truck and put a speaker as big as this room, it was crazy! So much noise, it blocked everything. It was a Saturday afternoon. And it was fine. Nobody said anything!... But the center of Bogotá. They took a park, smoking, music, buildings, 9 at night. It's incredible how they don't say anything to cyclists in Bogotá!*

Today is Wednesday, you can go to Heroes, there's a group called CicloCannabis, they get together 800 people to smoke marijuana in the Heroes Monument. That's the gigantic statue of Simon Bolivar—the liberator of America. The flags of Colombia, Bolivia, Peru. It's a beautiful place, I don't know if you've seen. They are cyclists, but they smoke all the marijuana they want. What I'm telling you is pretty funny. Bogotá is a pretty strict place—you can't drink a beer in the street…. it's really strange. It's not written anywhere, but Bogotanos have lots of affection for bicycles.

These are good people…so yea. I think it's reached the level where cyclists have a special layer of protection in Bogotá. It's very interesting. For example, in other cities of Colombia, they try the kinds of things we do here, and they bring out the police and say 'you're causing a traffic jam. We're not going to let you do that.' That has never happened here.

On a few occasions, I mean two times in 40-something years, there has been conflict with the police, it was because the cyclists had started blocking the TransMilenio stations. You understand, that's the limit (laughs).

Enrique, an urbanist working for the Peñalosa administration as a *contratista*, gave a measured, but positive, view of participation. He acknowledged that in the past the city government had not been very participatory, but he believed that the Peñalosa government was at least moving in a positive direction. He believed that the mayor had a strong technical, and not political, team which is helping things move forward.

Finally, César, a senior official in the TransMilenio seemed relatively content with the status of participation in his agency stating that from what he could see, all processes include participation. Any decisions they make, such as changes to routes, have participation from the communities involved. In his view, participation in Bogotá is actually relatively high, better than many other places.

> *I think the big difference is in the definition of participation. In many places, they talk about participation as the first element in a project—to get everyone at the table. And the integration at this point is relatively high, but in terms of participation, it's in the middle. What I've found is that participation is often limited to a specific period in a project, and then people don't have any more real opportunities to participate. In Bogotá and Colombia, what I've found, and this is an extremely personal analysis, it's not based on what I've read or anything, but rather… Participation is much higher than in other places. So much that people have the opportunity to give opinions about projects at basically any stage.*

Again, the fact that government officials would portray the efforts of government in a positive way is not surprising considering that it reflects directly on their work and a negative assessment could suggest they or their colleagues were doing something wrong.

Citizens/Colombia at least partially to blame—Rather than a simple situation where government actors blame civil society for the shortcomings of participation and vice versa, my interviews revealed a variety of perspectives that at least partially spread responsibility to civil society. For example, one senior official in the TransMilenio stated that polarization and politicization were detrimental to participation. He suggested that rather than positive and productive participation, citizens are inherently self-interested,

and some will participate to intentionally cause problems, using the term "*participacion en buscada de destruir*" (participation in search of destruction). This is a very authority-centered view that suggests that participation should somehow be apolitical and non-contentious.

However, multiple interviewees outside the government also stated or insinuated various ways in which the mindset of Bogotanos is to blame. Nelson, a late-30s consultant who previously worked in the SDM stated that the people do not have the mindset for participation. He claimed that Colombia is democratic in some ways such as elections, but when it comes to participation, people do not really show up. Similarly, Ana Maria, a representative of an NGO stated that "the city is still in diapers" in terms of participation, and the mindset of the people was part of the problem. She compared the people of Bogotá to Medellín which in her opinion has a stronger collective spirit and a more positive outlook. Another NGO representative, Gustavo, also compared the people of Bogotá with those in Spain or Medellín and found that citizens in those have better behavior and mindsets and lamented that Bogotanos are not better.

> *I recently did a big tour around Spain…and obviously the sentiment…For example, here the city that is a bit more advanced is Medellin. The respect for the city, leads people to behave differently, towards the city…It's evident in other cities… The respect…if I step foot in the street, cars stop. But that doesn't happen here. If you do that here cars will drive right over you.*

One other NGO representative, Elisa, described Colombia as a "passive society" where people like to complain about things like transportation, but do not do anything to fix it. Although she acknowledged that lack of trust and perceived corruption in

government probably feed into this mindset. Another woman, Tatiana, wondered if Colombia's history of conflict and pain creates animosity between people and inhibits participation. While not assigning blame, Ernesto, a senior urbanist and activist suggested that many people in the city are simply trying to survive so participation is not necessarily a priority for them.

All of these perspectives shift blame away from the government or at least diffuse it somewhat. It is not surprising that government actors would seek to do this, but to find multiple non-government stakeholders doing so troubles the expected directions of blame and criticism.

Other factors are to blame—Several interviews, especially with government stakeholders, also revealed perceptions that factors other than government or civil society inhibited participation in Bogotá. For example, several government stakeholders suggested that participation in technical matters such as mobility infrastructure is inherently difficult because the general public does not have the requisite information or expertise. Another challenge mentioned was turnover within departments, especially related to elections and new administrations. One *funcionario* simply pointed out that successfully implementing programs is difficult and sometimes expectations can be too high. He suggested that there is no tolerance for failure.

None of these factors were given as reasons not to do participation, but they did serve to soften the perspective that government is to blame for shortcomings in participation.

Conclusion

This chapter explored perceptions of participation, starting with the assumption that the perceptions of the stakeholders involved matter. That is, they can significantly influence whether or not people will participate as well as how participation will unfold. As mentioned, multiple times throughout this dissertation, there is an increasing consensus about (or at least acceptance of) participation as an important part of urban governance in the 21st century. However, when one digs beyond this surface level, we see differences in what participation should actually mean and why it is important. Based on my interviews with stakeholders as well as participant observation, I explore these perceptions.

In terms of why participation is important, some of my interviewees described it as an essential right/duty of urban citizenship. However, others pointed out the pragmatic importance of participation—basically projects and policies work better if done in a participatory manner. When describing what forms participation can or should take there was also some diversity as governmental actors tended to mention official channels and forums while civil society actors and activists described these as well as more contentious and informal actions. There was also some diversity regarding the limits of participation. Several government officials sought to place bounds on participation, there was also one civil society actor who did the same. There was also reiteration that participation should be *incidente*, as various actors pointed out that it should have real, meaningful impacts and not be a mere surface-level formality.

This chapter also explored perceptions of participation as it actually exists in Bogotá. Whereas civil society actors often criticized the government for its poor

commitment to, and implementation of, participation, the severity of these critiques varied. Some were sharply critical and accused the government (and certain politicians in particular) of operating in authoritarian ways. On the other hand, some critiques seemed to shift blame somewhat by suggesting that Bogotanos or Colombians, in general, did not have a participatory mindset. On the government side, there were similar efforts to diffuse criticism or give explanations for why the government was not more participatory. There were also instances where government representatives spoke positively of progress by the government in terms of participation.

In many ways, these perceptions of participation conformed to expectations. That is, civil society holds a broad view of participation and blames the government for its shortcomings while the government defends and/or seeks to justify itself. However, there were also multiple exceptions where each side expressed views that would be expected from the other.

Chapter 4: Stopping the bus: Contesting bus rapid transit infrastructure projects in Bogotá

Stopping the bus: Contesting bus rapid transit infrastructure projects in Bogotá

Introduction

Rather than evenly-distributed in ways that unite and integrate urban areas and populations, research has shown that urban infrastructures such as mobility, telecommunications, and electricity are highly unequal, inequitable, and political (Graham and Marvin 2001; Oviedo Hernandez and Dávila 2016; Steele and Legacy 2017). Shifts towards neoliberal governance have only exacerbated these characteristics in Latin American cities (Pírez 2013). Among urban infrastructure, however, I argue that mobility deserves special consideration because it not only provides essential, everyday services (Trejo Nieto, Vasquez, and Niño Amezquita 2018), but also because it is a fundamental means of ordering, organizing, and governing cities of the 21st century (Fernandez Milan and Creutzig 2017). Mobility gives insight into two interrelated questions: how does urbanization occur and who governs the city (Nevarez 2015)? After introducing relevant literature on mobility infrastructure, I provide an empirical comparison between two different proposed mobility projects in Bogotá, Colombia.

While both routes studied here include some lower-income/lesser-developed areas with high potential for development, the one which was highly prioritized by the mayor was blocked, while the other is going forward. This study provides interesting insights into who is able to make or resist decisions about mobility infrastructure and how. Ultimately the article outlines some of the dynamics of fights over urban space in middle and upper-class areas, a relatively rare perspective compared to the more common literature on lower-class areas (Nogueira 2020).

Literature

Mobility infrastructure is crucial but unequal

Mobility infrastructure must be considered one of the most important aspects of urban life. It shares commonalities with other infrastructure and services but is also unique in certain ways. Building and modifying mobility systems/infrastructure projects generally involve very large investments which constitute significant shares of government budgets. Furthermore, the mobility infrastructure available in cities directly impacts urban residents in their daily lives (Paget-Seekins and Tironi 2016). Essentially all people in cities have to regularly move from one place to another, whether for work, study, recreation, or other reasons (Jensen 2009).

However, mobility infrastructure has been shown to be unequal from a variety of perspectives and can be both a cause and effect of social disparities (Bullard, Johnson, and Torres 2004; Vecchio, Tiznado-Aitken, and Hurtubia 2020). Access to mobility options is unequally distributed in cities as wealthier and more privileged populations often have more and better options for moving around (McKenzie 2013). These inequalities in access deserve attention in their own right, but they also have multiplying effects because access to mobility often directly impacts access to other amenities and services such as education, health, and employment (Blanco et al. 2018; Oviedo Hernandez and Dávila 2016).

In terms of impacts, marginalized and vulnerable populations often suffer negative impacts as a result of their relationship to mobility infrastructure. These include

increased exposure to pollution (Clark, Millet, and Marshall 2017), segregation (Caldeira 2012), accidents (Schmitt 2020), and increased travel/waiting time (Hernandez and Rossel 2015). Many other disparities exist based on factors such as gender, age, and physical ability. Mimi Sheller (2018) draws attention to uneven mobilities/immobilities and shows their relation to global issues including climate change, refugee crises, and urbanization. In response, she proposes a paradigm of "mobility justice" which can be conceived across scales (i.e., body, street, city, nation, planet).

Mobility infrastructure is contested

Although they generally remain highly unequal spaces, mobility systems in Latin America are increasingly contested. In a special issue of the *Journal of Transport Geography*, Blanco et al. (2018) describe "contested mobilities" as disputes and struggles over conditions of transport services and investments. While these contestations may be linked to other forms of struggle, mobility contestation has its own logic, institutional actors, and political economy. That is to say, it can bring together unique constellations of actors who use a variety of means to exert their influence over mobility projects. The same journal edition includes eight articles highlighting cases of contested mobility across Latin America. Other authors have highlighted similar struggles across the Global South (Strauch, Takano, and Hordijk 2015) and Global North (Algostino 2016; Legacy 2016). Mobility infrastructure is a key sector of conflict throughout the Latin American region. Colombia has been host to many such cases in recent decades. Watkins et al. (2017) identify fights over a proposed metro in Bogotá and Medellín as well as a BRT line in Cali and others.

Figure 11: Mural declaring "No decision about us without us" a mural created by a community organization in Bogotá (my own photo)

The literature demonstrates that contestation is influenced by a number of factors including class. For example, differing socio-economic status and resources available can determine the strategies adopted by different groups (Brownill and Carpenter 2007). Nogueira (2020) also highlights the differences that class can make among residents who attempt to claim their rights to the city. Specifically, she shows that middle-class residents are able to draw on social capital and other resources to influence development projects, at times to the detriment of private interests or other social classes. Abbot (2020) writes about the importance of access to legal resources, especially in cases of “have-not” community groups who confront powerful development actors. She argues that battles over planning are often David vs. Goliath struggles, and costly legal resources required often put underprivileged communities at an even greater disadvantage. In the Colombian context, Sotomayor et al. (2022) and Angel-Cabo (2021) also write of the importance of legal actions as well as the class-based inequalities in who can wield this power. That is,

legal actions seem to be concentrated in certain areas and emanate primarily from middle and upper classes.

Mobility infrastructure is political

Although the creation of mobility infrastructure is often dominated by engineers who are perceived to be impartial, driven by technocratic, top-down, and scientific logic, we should not overlook the inherently political nature of such projects (Kębłowski et al. 2019; Levinson and King 2019). Mobility infrastructure is a key site of politics. At the very least such projects are often implicit expressions of modern nation-state creation (Harvey and Knox 2015). Beyond this, however, infrastructure projects often become explicit central issues in electoral politics (Bassett and Marpillero-Colomina 2013; Glaeser and Ponzetto 2018; Strauch et al. 2015; Vecchio 2017). Despite some efforts and tendencies to depoliticize urban planning and mobility infrastructure development such as the use of 'managerial logic' which concentrates decisions in the hands of experts in non-state or quasi-state agencies (Swyngedouw 2010), mobility infrastructure creation remains inherently political (Legacy 2016).

Mobility infrastructure is complicated, contingent, and takes a long time to build

Another important dimension of mobility infrastructure is that while it involves complex social and political processes, it also includes very physical, tangible elements and processes (Parks 2015). In addition to their large price tags, many infrastructure projects have lengthy timelines spanning many years. In fact, transportation is said to move and develop in decades. This means that projects are not created all at once, and although governments may attempt to present them as a "done deal" (Legacy 2016), in

reality, such projects are often contingent and can be modified or even canceled at numerous points along the way. Latour explores this contingency in *Aramis, or the Love of Technology* (1996), a fascinating book-length narrative about an aborted personal rapid transit system in Paris. Latour declares that all technological projects such as a mass transportation system are fiction since at the outset they do not exist. Signatures on paper may make it harder to terminate a project (For example, as we see in the Bogotá case, the awarding of contracts for a project is an important milestone that seriously increases a government's commitment). However, even that does not definitively guarantee the timely completion or survival of a project (Hidalgo and Graftieaux 2008; Watkins et al. 2017).

Here there is an important dynamic between an infrastructure project's timeline and the duration of political terms. In most democracies, a single government administration is generally limited to just a few years (Bogotá mayors are elected for 4 years and cannot be re-elected to consecutive terms). Thus, a project can easily extend beyond their time in office making continuity, which has been found to be essential to successful implementation of infrastructure projects (Flores Dewey 2018), a constant concern. If a new mayor takes over, especially from a different political party or orientation, they may terminate or at least de-prioritize the projects of their predecessor. A well-known example from the U.S. is the border wall that Donald Trump promised to build. This was an important (if perhaps fanciful) promise made by Trump throughout his campaign and presidency. However, when he lost the 2020 election the project was far from complete and because President Biden does not share President Trump's views and priorities on immigration it is unlikely to see much more development during his term.

On the other hand, because mobility infrastructure projects involve significant investment and major spatial interventions, if completed they can be literally and metaphorically path-dependent (Bernhardt 2020; Hull et al. 2012). Although the concept of path dependency is not applied as much by scholars in urban studies as much as in other fields such as economics and historical sociology, Pflieger et al. (2009) argue for its applicability. In terms of decision-making, economists and planners illustrate the "sunk costs" and "lock-ins" of infrastructure—the escalating and excessive commitments of decision-makers to an ineffective course of action as a result of path dependency (Cantarelli et al. 2010). For her part, Hommels (2005a, 2005b) writes of the "obduracy" of urban infrastructure. Taken together, if a major infrastructure project is successfully completed, it is likely to survive or at least leave a significant impact on the city.

Urban Political Economy

Urban political economy argues that a city's form, economy, and political structures comprise a dynamic, contradictory mechanism for the appropriation of wealth (Nevarez 2015). Influenced by Marxist traditions, scholars such as David Harvey (2006) and Neil Smith (1996) analyze urbanization and introduce concepts such as "creative destruction" and "accumulation by dispossession." They argue that through a variety of means the elites in a city (or increasingly those living in other places) further processes of urbanization by dispossessing/displacing the poor and remaking the city in ways that are most profitable for themselves. In some cases, these actions may be justified as "urban renewal" (Molotch, Freudenburg, and Paulsen 2000; Schmid et al. 2018) or transit-oriented development (TOD) (Cervero and Dai 2014; Suzuki 2013).

Urban political economy of mobility in Bogotá

Mobility and urbanization are deeply intertwined. Rather than simply moving people and things from one place to another, mobility systems can influence how cities urbanize (Cervero 2013; Correa Restrepo 2017). For example, in Bogotá, trams (*tranvías*) historically played an important role in the city's northern expansion. Development expanded around the tram lines creating a connected series of neighborhoods and changing not only the size, but also the shape of the city (Berney 2017; Correa Restrepo, Jimeno, and Villamizar Bacca 2017; Montezuma 2000).

Similarly, in the Bogotá of recent decades, mobility has been not only supporting service and infrastructure, but also a primary means by which the city has been expanded, organized, and ordered. The city's transport policies since the late 1990s have influenced land prices, motorization rates, accessibility, and social inclusion which have widened already large gaps between social groups (Oviedo and Guzman 2020; Vecchio 2017). A key figure in shaping this history is Enrique Peñalosa who made mobility and public space key priorities of his two mayoral terms (1998-2001 & 2016-2019). Most notably he introduced the TransMilenio—a bus-rapid transit system (BRT) that was largely constructed during his first term (Skinner 2004). The system consists of large, separated avenues dedicated exclusively to buses that are accessed through elevated stations placed approximately every 500 meters. These lanes are called trunk lines and they are served by feeder lines that circulate throughout the city in normal traffic.

Figure 12: View of TransMilenio bus station and buses (red and yellow ones on the right that are separated from other lanes of traffic) in the north of Bogotá (my own photo)

As with most political decisions, there are surely multiple personal and political motivations behind Peñalosa's push for the TransMilenio (see the chapter on Peñalosa for a deeper dive into his policies). In a general sense, Avellanda (2013) writes that infrastructure projects are often salient for mayors because they offer significant material and political benefits. Unlike less tangible policy sectors (e.g., education), infrastructure can offer lasting physical evidence of a mayor's actions. Furthermore, infrastructure can be more easily targeted to specific areas or neighborhoods.

Regarding Peñalosa specifically, his push for the TransMilenio in both terms can be seen as part of his desire to introduce and solidify the model as a global best practice (Montero 2017, 2017). Between his terms in office, Peñalosa was president of the board of directors of the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP), an international non-profit organization that promotes BRTs around the world. Thus, in

somewhat intangible ways Peñalosa was trying to build the brand of Bogotá mobility as well as his own (Siemiatycki 2006). Berney (2013; 2017) writes that the public space and mobility policies of Peñalosa and Antanas Mockus were also in line with what was needed to attract international capital (such as business and tourism) and make Bogotá into a "world-class" city. However, some critics have alleged more concrete conflicts of interest and describe Peñalosa as the "world's biggest bus salesperson" who benefitted from a reciprocal relationship with bus companies such as Volvo (Akerman 2015; Carrillo 2017).

Another perspective sees the push for more TransMilenio as a means of expanding and developing Bogotá, especially to the north including protected areas such as the Thomas Van Der Hammen Natural Reserve (Beuf 2016). Here too, critics have alleged conflicts of interest because of Peñalosa's connections with powerful real estate/construction sector actors who were the largest donors to his 2016 mayoral campaign (Lewin 2015). Another angle would be to take Peñalosa at his word and believe that he genuinely viewed the TransMilenio as a more democratic solution to meeting the mobility needs of the city and improving the lives of Bogotanos (Peñalosa 2002, 2013).

Regardless of the exact prioritization of these and other motivations, it is clear that expanding the TransMilenio and solidifying it as the central axis of mobility in Bogotá was a top priority for Peñalosa during his second term in office (Osorio 2019). During this term, he proposed and promoted a number of expansions to the network. This chapter compares two different cases and explains the somewhat surprising outcome—his signature project, the one with higher profile as well as significant support from some

influential actors (the *Carrera Séptima*) was eventually blocked, while another (*Avenida Carrera 68*) is going forward.

Materials and methods

The primary methods for this chapter were literature review, participant observation, interviews, and analysis of publicly available documents. I conducted in-depth interviews with a range of stakeholders including activists and community organizations, government officials, and experts such as planners and professors who had direct experience and/or knowledge about the proposed TransMilenio expansion projects. Interviews were transcribed and coded in Atlas.Ti.

Results

Carrera Séptima

La Carrera Séptima (Seventh Avenue), sometimes referred to as the backbone of the city, is one of Bogotá's most important and emblematic transit routes (Pardo 2020). Based on a historic indigenous route that led from what is now central Bogotá to the villages of Usaquén and Zipaquirá to the north, throughout nearly 400 years of urban development in the city the *Séptima* has been an important path, edge, and landmark (and perhaps also district and node) to use Lynch's (1960) terminology. In the early days of the city, it connected the two initial urban nuclei—*la Plaza de San Francisco* and *la Plaza Mayor* (today *Plaza de Bolívar*). Over the centuries, many important buildings and

spaces for religious, commercial, political, and recreational activities would be constructed along the *Séptima.* Thus, the route represents an important center of power and plays a prominent role in the consciousness and imagination of many Colombians.

La Séptima has also been the site of some of the key events in Bogotá's history, including some tragic ones such as the assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in 1948 at the intersection of the *Carrera Séptima* and *Avenida Jiménez* which sparked a violent period known as the *Bogotazo* (Mendieta 2011). Six years later, in 1954 under the military dictatorship of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, a student protest was violently repressed at the intersection of *Carrera Séptima* and *Calle 13* killing at least 12 or 13 and wounding scores more (Villar Borda 2019).

On the map of the contemporary Bogotá, the *Séptima* is approximately 23.4 km long and runs North-South along the city's eastern border. From the dense, commercial city center, the *Séptima* travels north through middle-class neighborhoods before reaching Chapinero which contains the city's financial district and then the affluent neighborhood of Usaquén. Beyond that, it continues through rapidly urbanizing land as Bogotá expands longitudinally.

Mobility along the route

In terms of mobility, the modes, and practices of transportation along the route have changed significantly over time. While foot traffic has been a constant along the route, at different times bicycles, cars, horse-drawn vehicles, buses, and trams have plied the route in varying levels. Some of these changes may have occurred gradually over time, but in the last three decades, decisions about mobility along the *Séptima* have been

highly contentious and controversial (Hidalgo 2016; Hunt 2017). In recent years, the *Séptima* has consisted mostly of three-lane roads in each direction, dominated primarily by private vehicles and buses, with bicycle lanes in some places. However, a number of new projects have been proposed to transform the route including a metro line, a TransMilenio trunk line, a light-rail train, and a "green corridor." Numerous studies have been conducted but, in the end, none of the projects advanced beyond that stage.[23] In some cases, public participation and opposition played an important role in deciding the fate of these projects. For example, between 2009-2011 a group was organized to block TransMilenio expansion along the *Séptima.* This group was called "*La Séptima Se Respeta/No+Improvisación en Tm7*" (Respect the Seventh/No more Improvisation) and it sought to influence the proposed expansion through various actions including filing requests for information, meeting with experts, collecting petition signatures, and disseminating information through various means including YouTube videos. These efforts were ultimately successful in blocking the proposed expansion and also helped advance the political careers of some of the organizers, including Angélica Lozano—senator and spouse of current mayor Claudia López (Hunt 2017).

A recent round of contestation over the route concerns a plan to create a 19-km BRT trunk route on the *Séptima.* The project, outlined in attractive graphics and renders on city government websites, would create a new trunk line with 21 new stations from 32nd street to 200th street. The Peñalosa administration presented the project as a necessary expansion of the BRT system with multiple benefits including improved

[23] A local radio host Manuel Salazar jokingly suggested that the *Séptima* should have a degree by now, after so much study (Salazar 2020).

mobility and reduced pollution. It claimed that upon completion a trip between those streets would take just fifty minutes versus the normal two hours without it. Furthermore, the government claimed the project would create new green spaces and bike paths (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2017).

Figure 13: Projected TransMilenio trunk line on Carrera Séptima in the north of Bogotá (image from city government website—Maldonado 2019)

Figure 14: Proposed route from IDU website

In terms of public engagement, the administration tried to strike a balance between appearing to welcome citizen participation on one hand and presenting the project as a "done deal" on the other (Semana 2018). For example, a government website stated that the project was led by "Mayor Peñalosa in partnership with the citizenry" and also included testimonies by citizens who provide justification for the project (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2017). Various government entities including the *Instituto de Desarrollo Urbano* (IDU) and *Secretaría Distrital de Movilidad* (SDM) conducted participatory exercises to gather community input and "socialize" the project (Cuevas 2018). For example, the IDU conducted a survey to gauge citizen perceptions about the proposed project. A critical reading of reports based on these exercises, as well as testimonies from participants, however, calls into question whether these efforts were genuinely about engaging the public or simply mitigating opposition.

On the other hand, the government also suggested that the project was an inevitability and was already happening. A July 2019 photo exhibition in the *Plaza de Bolívar* highlighted the “megaprojects” undertaken under Mayor Peñalosa including the trunk line of the *Séptima*. The language used suggested that these projects were already a reality or at least could not be altered. For example, regarding the proposed metro line the sign included a line that approximately translated to “The Bogotá metro doesn’t have reverse.” This same wording was used in the aforementioned report about a survey conducted by IDU about the *Séptima*.

Another interesting example is the following image which shows a large Google Maps-style pin placed on a sidewalk of the *Séptima* to show where the route would go, a physical representation suggesting that the project was already a reality.

Figure 15: Pin along La Séptima (photo by author)

Class composition of the areas along the *Séptima*, reveals significant diversity which perhaps creates mixed motivations and effects from urban political economy perspectives. There are some portions (especially in the extreme north) classified as strata 1, 2, or 3 or that are currently undeveloped.[24] This would suggest an opportunity for government and/or developers to upgrade and covert these areas to higher and more profitable uses. Furthermore, land acquisition may be cheaper and easier in these areas. However, there are also significant sections of the *Séptima* classified as strata 5 and 6. While development in these areas may also be profitable, the high socioeconomic status of the residents and property owners may drive up the costs and effort required to make any changes to these areas.

While the government sought to portray the project as a done deal, like other initiatives along the *Séptima*, this plan sparked controversy and debates between opponents and supporters of the project (Altamar 2018). Fights over urban mobility can unite somewhat surprising coalitions (Henderson 2013; Myers and Dietz 2002). Throughout much of Colombia's history, the political landscape was essentially divided into a two-party system comprising the conservatives and liberals (Mazzuca and Robinson 2009). However, since the 1990s, thanks in part to decentralization, the two-party system has collapsed, and instead we see a multi-party system of shifting coalitions and alliances (Bland 2011; Gamboa 2017; Holmes and Piñeres 2012). For example, since the 1990s there have been two individuals who served two terms as mayor of Bogotá—Antanas Mockus and Enrique Peñalosa, and each one was elected from a different party

[24] Colombia's strata system refers to the buildings found in an area, but this is generally understood as a feature that determines the socioeconomic condition of the people that inhabit them (Secretaría Distrital de Planeación 2019; Vecchio 2020). The system divides areas into one of six strata with one being the lowest and six being the highest.

(or as an independent) each time. Thus, while liberal-conservative divides are still apparent in Colombian politics, they are not neatly mapped across all parties, candidates, and issues. In the following pages, I describe some of the key supporters and opponents of the *Séptima* project and the approaches through which they sought to influence the project.

Many Bogotá residents harbor general distrust about large-scale infrastructure projects which can involve mismanagement, lengthy delays, excessive costs, and in the case of former mayor Samuel Moreno Rojas, blatant corruption (Gilbert 2019; Riveros 2020). On the proposed TransMilenio expansion, opponents of the project included local residents, preservationists, environmentalists, and others who raised concerns about general as well as specific issues. For example, some residents worried about how construction along the route would affect the cultural and environmental balance of their neighborhoods and the city in the short and long term. Some raised concerns that the implementation of the BRT route would lead to urban decay and decreased land values as has been alleged in other parts of the city such as *Avenida Caracas* and in other cities like São Paulo (Belik 2020). There were also mobility advocates who insisted that the city needs an underground metro, and any continued development of the BRT system would be detrimental to that goal. Some of the people I interviewed also expressed deep distrust of and opposition to Mayor Peñalosa himself. As mentioned above, some critics view his insistence on expanding Bogotá's BRT system as more about self-promotion and personal profits than about actually meeting the city's mobility needs. Opponents of the project expressed their views in a number of ways including news media, social media,

and even in street art. The administration generally tried to dismiss opposition to the project as NIMBY-ism or merely "political."

Figure 16: Depiction from a building front along the Séptima of a TransMilenio bus, spelled "Trasmilleno," a play on the word "lleno" meaning full in Spanish (my own photo)

Figure 17: Painted No TransMilenio on the 7 along the Séptima (my own photo)

As with previous attempts to block construction along the *Séptima* (Hunt 2017), some opponents of the project coalesced into a collective, this time a "citizen committee" called *Defendamos la Séptima* (El Espectador 2017). Formed in 2017, the group was organized by a small group of recent university graduates and young professionals. They were highly active online with a website, Facebook page, Twitter, and even raising funds via an online platform. One member of *Defendamos la Séptima* who I interviewed explained that although their focus was on one particular project (stopping the construction of a TransMilenio trunk line), their motivations were multiple including not only the destructive impacts on the areas of intervention but also the ownership and

profit-sharing structure of the public-private partnership (PPP) behind the TransMilenio (Hunt 2017; Paget-Seekins 2015).

While *Defendamos la Séptima* initially attempted to engage with city government through formal participatory mechanisms, they found this was an insufficient strategy and shifted more towards educating and mobilizing the public (thus indirectly pressuring the government). This involved online activities and organization strategies that relied on tools such as WhatsApp. However, the group also organized physical mobilizations including meetings and marches (Murillo Mojica 2017). The group also created and distributed (in exchange for small donations whenever possible) signs to signal opposition to the TransMilenio project.

Figure 18: Figure 4: 'No TransMilenio on the Séptima' sign in a window (my own photo)

In the end, these efforts by *Defendamos la Séptima* (which continues to promote the cause) had mixed results. The group was effective in raising the debate about the

project to a broad audience within Bogotá and beyond. Media coverage, of the case and the role of *Defendamos la Séptima*, has been extensive over the last few years with mainstream outlets such as *El Tiempo*, *Semana,* and *El Espectador* each running numerous news stories and opinion articles. This is a significant achievement in Bogotá where media is influential but can be highly restrictive concerning issues that challenge powerful interests. Furthermore, there has also been significant coverage from smaller outlets such as *El Chapín* (of which one of the founders of *Defendamos la Séptima* is a director), and radio and TV channels have also given the case significant attention. They even received some coverage from international media.

However, their ability to directly stop the project either by formal or informal means was relatively limited. Despite their opposition, the proposed project progressed largely as planned from 2017 through 2019, and in the end, the project was halted through a combination of court cases and political pressure.

When considering these achievements, it is important to recognize who was involved in the opposition and how their identities contributed to their success. Although I did not ask interview respondents about their own socio-economic status or class, there are certain aspects of their story which suggest that status, skillsets, and social capital were important to their ability to participate on this issue (Nogueira 2020). For example, the founding members were recent graduates (some in law) who had attended some of Colombia's most prestigious universities. Furthermore, although they pointed to limited and biased media coverage of their cause, the group was able to effectively use the internet and social media to organize and mobilize. In terms of social media, as of February 2021, the group has more than 6,000 followers on Twitter. Many tweets and

videos shared on the site were retweeted dozens of times. Similarly, the group was relatively effective on Facebook where the group gained nearly 4,000 followers and significant engagement on posts. Although these are tools that the general public increasingly uses, effective coordination requires significant skills, time, and resources that less privileged groups may lack (Abbot 2020; Garcia-Ruano, Pacheco, and Suazo 2013; Harlow 2012). The group was also able to connect with influential figures such as Jaime Ortiz a local mobility expert and activist who co-founded Bogotá’s weekly open streets (*ciclovías*).

Figure 19: Jaime Ortiz wearing "No TransMilenio" shirt (my own photo)

In the end, it was not protests or direct participation in government planning processes that blocked the TransMilenio project on the *Séptima*, but instead another form of participation—lawsuits and legal decisions. This was a somewhat unexpected form of participation that citizens in Colombia have begun to use in recent years (Hernández 2010). The blocking of this case surprised many, including local mobility experts such as Dario Hidalgo (2020).

An *acción popular* is a legal instrument that is common across Latin America, but its use can vary from country to country. Among them, Colombia is perhaps the country that has seen the most robust and systematic development of the concept (Ovalle Favela 2003). In Colombia, it is guaranteed by article 88 of the 1991 Constitution (then later further elaborated in Law 472 of 1998) which describes popular actions as "…for the protection of collective rights and interests related to the homeland, space, public safety and health, administrative morality, the environment, free economic competition, and other areas of similar nature defined in it…." Basically, citizens have the right to intervene on issues that can potentially affect their communities or collectives (for example to prevent harm or infringement of rights). There has been a significant increase in this type of action in recent decades. In fact, it is reported that during Peñalosa's second term as mayor, 69,000 popular actions were filed against the city government (D. Giraldo 2019).

Multiple cases were filed over the proposed TransMilenio expansion on the *Séptima.* One of the cases was filed by a constitutional lawyer and a sociologist/human rights advocate who were affiliated with (but not core members of) *Defendamos la Séptima* (Tribunal Administrativo de Cundinamarca 2019). The case was against

numerous government institutions and argued that the project's implementation would negatively affect the cultural patrimony of the Enrique Olaya Herrera National Park, which they considered an important national landmark that should be preserved (El Espectador 2018). The framing of this effort was important. Although one of the plaintiffs actually lives along the *Séptima*, the case was framed as an issue of the patrimony of the entire city which broadened its appeal beyond the specific residents of the area (which might have been more easily dismissed as mere NIMBY-ism). However, while the plaintiffs opposed the entire TransMilenio project, they concentrated their arguments on one specific component—the National Park. This sort of double framing at the local and broader level was an effective example of the dual task that Abbot (2020) describes as essential for local community groups confronting powerful development actors. It also illustrates the escalation observed by Nogueira (2020) in the case of Musas Street residents who were able to transform a relatively local issue into one of city-wide attention.

In interviews, the individuals behind the case stated that their motivation came from frustration at the lack of other means of participation. They explained that while Colombia has made some progress regarding participation (referencing the 1991 Constitution as an important milestone), in practice the actual implementation of impactful participation remains rather weak. They initially tried to participate in hearings and forums organized by the government but felt these spaces provided at best only limited and superficial opportunities for participation. For example, the government would give lengthy presentations, but citizens were given only a minute each to express themselves. One interviewee described this frustrating imbalance as follows:

Interviewee: So the last part of it. A very small part of it was so that we would have a say. And that would be 80-100 people and not all could talk. Not all could intervene.

Dustin: And they would have a microphone?

Interviewee: A microphone and you have to talk for maximum one or two minutes. It depended on how many people there were. So what can you say about a whole project in one minute or two minutes?

D: Especially considering that the government, the people running it had given much more than one minute to make their case.

Interviewee: Yes! Two or three hours. Then you have one minute as a citizen. So it's not easy to convey or let them know what you want. And you cannot even transmit something technically sustained, because there's no time.

In terms of profile, both people I interviewed in the National Park case were professionals who have spent decades working for or with government institutions, which gave them the confidence and competence to fight such a high-profile case. An *acción popular* can be filed by any citizen, without a lawyer (Personería de Bogotá D.C. 2020), but it is less likely that an average citizen would have been able to carry out such an undertaking—an unpaid fight against government lawyers demanding time, effort and stress (Abbot 2020; Sotomayor et al. 2022).

Two other lawsuits against the *Séptima* project also concerned specific sections of the proposed TransMilenio trunk line, but at different points along the corridor. One case involved the project's impacts on a high-end apartment complex called *Altos de La Cabrera*, located at 84-85th street along the *Séptima*. This entire area is classified as strata

six, the highest classification according to Colombia's system of stratification (Secretaría Distrital de Planeación 2019). A group of residents filed an *acción popular* and the judge ruled that the project lacked the necessary land use and geotechnical studies required for the construction of two bridges in the area. Furthermore, the ruling stated that the risks to the apartment complex had not been sufficiently studied (Semana 2019).

In another case, the Attorney General (*Procuraduría General de la Nación*), ordered a suspension because of a lack of harmonization with an ongoing urban renewal project at 100th street called *El Pedregal*. This project, led by a private company called Aldea Proyectos S.A.S., had already been planned and adjudicated in 2014 under the Petro administration and included two business towers as well as a five-story shopping mall in one of the most desirable and costly areas of the city (Semana 2019).

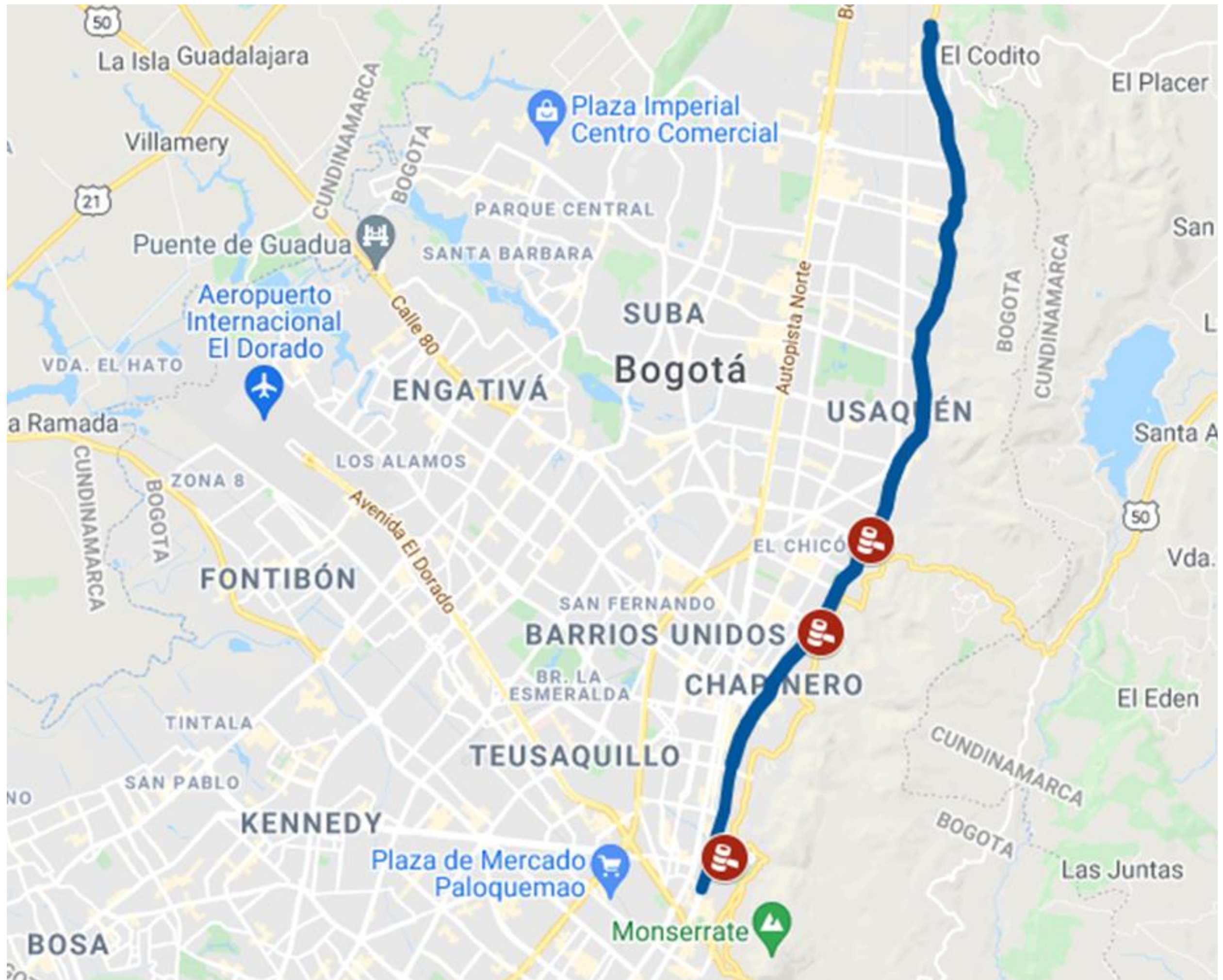


Figure 20: Locations of three court cases along the Séptima (author created via Google Maps)

There were also class-action suits led by politicians including an early one (which was rejected) filed by three senators from different political parties David Barguil (*Partido Conservador*), Rodrigo Lara (*Cambio Radical*), and Angélica Lozano (*Alianza Verde*) (El Espectador 2018). Subsequently, Rodrigo Lara would file another case arguing that the project would endanger the collective rights of the citizens and their right to a healthy environment (El Espectador 2020). And council member María Fernanda Rojas sought an injunction on similar grounds (Rodríguez Gómez 2019).

These court cases did not cancel the project in themselves and indeed some were rejected or overturned. However, the injunctions ordered by judges did prevent the Peñalosa administration from completing the necessary contracts before the end of his term. Canceling the TransMilenio *Séptima* project was one of the key campaign pledges of his successor, Claudia López (2019). So essentially the court decisions allowed opponents of the project to run out the clock on the Peñalosa administration. Together, these cases show how political and economic interests overlap, combine and conflict. The case of *El Pedregal* is interesting because it essentially involves one urban renewal project blocking another.

However, to present this case as merely one of determined civil society against a domineering government would be an oversimplified misrepresentation. While the opposition consisted largely of civil society actors, there were some prominent civil society supporters of the project as well. In the following pages, I describe one organization and an initiative promoted by a collective of organizations.

***Corposéptima*—**(the *Corporación de Vecinos de la Carrera Séptima*) is a community organization founded in 1997 and based along the *Séptima* (the organization has an office about a block away from the route). As the name suggests, the organization is concerned with the entire route, but they focus primarily on the wealthy areas of Chapinero and Usaquén. The organization, whose current director is an architect and urbanist, takes a different approach to projects such as the proposed trunk line and participation more broadly.

First, the director considers the organization as a sort of mediator between the lay public and the overly technocratic government. Essentially it is an “expert citizen” as

described by Sosa López and Montero (2018)—a non-state actor characterized by their mobilization of legitimacy as both experts and citizens to influence urban transport policy agendas. In terms of participation, the organization views it as a fundamental component of urban development, especially at the local level. However, Corposéptima promotes a "*propositivo*" approach rather than an oppositional one. This basically means that rather than acting in opposition to the government, they prefer a more positive and collaborative relationship. In an interview, the director recognized that mobilizations and protests may have some value, but the organization is most concerned about the practical day-to-day issues of city-making, and "city-making is not done through a march."

Regarding Corposéptima's relationship with the government, the director stated "…we've always worked on the side of the Institute of Urban Development, Secretary of Mobility and TransMilenio, as a representative, at least in this part of town…" This is not to say that they are entirely uncritical of the government. The director insisted that the group could point out the positive and negative impacts of any urban development, however, the starting point should be the expectation that a project is going to happen, then the organization (and citizenry more broadly) should seek to make their own contributions. He expressed frustration with the lack of progress in recent decades and blamed the completely oppositional stance of some actors such as those driven by NIMBY (not in my back yard) or BANANA (build absolutely nothing anywhere near anything) mindsets (Schively 2007).

Construyendo nuestra Séptima—Corposéptima was not the only civil society actor that supported the TransMilenio trunk line project. In fact, a number of public as well as private organizations and institutions came together in a participatory initiative called the

Construyendo nuestra Séptima (Constructing our *Séptima*). In addition to Corposéptima, this initiative also included *Bogotá Cómo Vamos*, *Universidad El Bosque*, *Universidad Javeriana*, the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce and the *Veeduría Distrital*. Over the course of several months in Spring 2016, this alliance organized workshops and working meetings about the proposed TransMilenio project with members of the public in different locations along the *Séptima.* The stated goals of the initiative were to identify the perceptions, ideas, concerns, and proposals of different communities that live along and use the corridor. These were compiled in a document to be delivered to the city government for consideration (Bogotá Cómo Vamos 2020).

However, interviews with individuals who worked on the initiative as well as some who attended the workshops reveal the multiple limitations of this exercise. First, unlike the opponents of the project previously described, the participation envisioned in *Construyendo nuestra Séptima* started from the assumption that the TransMilenio project would go ahead, and thus, citizens should be allowed to give certain inputs. To ensure that participants would share this mindset, the organizers recruited only people who were generally supportive of the TransMilenio and who would make positive contributions to the exercise. Rather than making broad invitations to the public, the organizers invited people whom they already knew, or who were recommended to them, by phone or email. This represents a form of deliberate exclusion as described by Agger and Larsen (2009). As Brownill and Carpenter (2007) show, conducting participatory exercises that achieve broad representation from diverse communities (especially harder-to-reach populations including minorities, children, and people with disabilities) is challenging, even in a well-

funded and well-planned program. However, the fact that *Construyendo nuestra Séptima* began with such constrained ambitions ensured that participation would be limited.

In the end, each workshop drew around 40-50 participants which was deemed a desirable number since a larger group would have been difficult to manage. A report was eventually delivered to the city government and the group boasted that 91% of the citizen proposals about the project were accepted (Bogotá Cómo Vamos 2017). However, an examination of these proposals shows that many of them are relatively superficial (e.g., giving the new TransMilenio stations names which reflect the history and culture of the neighborhoods) or things that the government most likely would have done anyway (e.g., ensure universal access for all people including seniors, children, and people with disabilities).

Thus, while this initiative did bring some members of the public together to participate in a major mobility project, the scope for participation, the public involved, and the eventual impact were all quite limited.

Carrera 68

Avenida Carrera 68 (AK 68), sometimes called *Avenida del Congreso Eucarístico*, is a less famed, but nonetheless important road in terms of mobility and connectivity. It has also been referred to as the spine of the city (Barón Leal 2022). Opened in 1968, the road is around 17km long and runs south-north through central Bogotá, serving as the dividing line between the localities of Kennedy, Puente Aranda, Fontibón, Engativa, Teusaquillo, Barrios Unidos, and Suba. The route was originally constructed as a way to improve connectivity between the north and south of the city as

well as spurring development in what was then the expanding western part of Bogotá (Puentes 2018).

Today the urban landscape along the route is varied. Generally, the road includes 3-4 lanes of traffic in each direction with sidewalks and some bike paths on the sides. There are residential areas and an industrial zone as well as the expansive Simón Bolívar Park. In terms of strata along the route, there is a range from two to five, with three and four being the most prevalent classifications. There are no strata 6 areas along the route and only a few small patches of strata 5 (Secretaría Distrital de Planeación 2019). Thus, like the *Séptima* there are some less-wealthy areas in which development can be increased, but fewer high-end areas that can effectively resist unwanted land uses.

Over the years the road has been criticized for heavy congestion and poor maintenance. There have also been proposals for alternatives along the road such as a tramway proposed during the Petro administration (El Tiempo 2015). However, this idea was rejected as "inconsistent with demand and fares" once mayor Peñalosa came back into power in 2016 (TransMilenio 2016).

In late 2017, the Peñalosa administration announced that a TransMilenio trunk line would be constructed along the 68 from the *Autopista Sur* to the intersection of the *Séptima* and 100th street with 21 new stations along the way. The new trunk line, which at approximately 17 km is to be one of the longest of the entire system, was justified as a way to reduce pressure on the inadequate SITP bus system and reduce travel times for the three million people living in the area by up to 50% (Noticias Caracol 2017). However, the potential for urban renewal brought by the project was also recognized. The project

would also involve the construction of new bridges, a bike path, and bicycle parking (El Tiempo 2020).

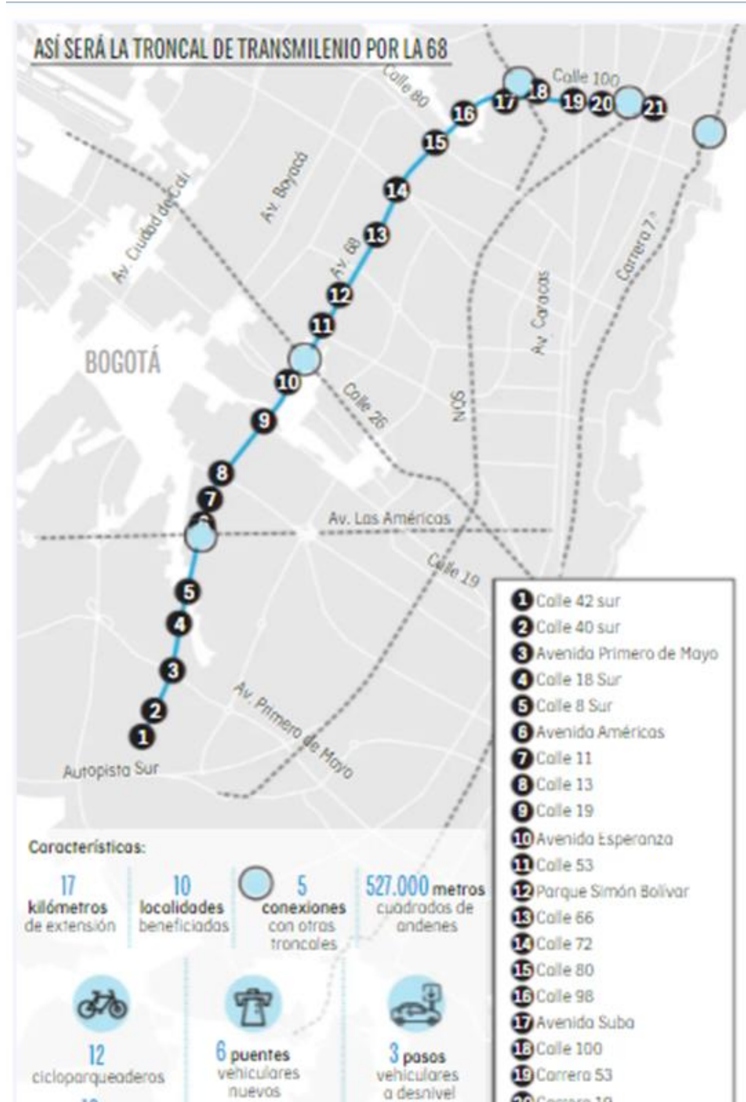


Figure 21: Proposed Trunk Route on 68 (El Tiempo 2020)

Although this project was proposed by the Peñalosa administration in 2017, it was not totally unexpected. The city's spatial planning document (*Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial*) adopted in 2000 and revised under in 2003 calls for a TransMilenio trunk line along the 68 (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, D.C. 2000, 2003).

As with the *Séptima*, the proposed project drew pushback, although less voluminous and with lower visibility. A group known as the *Comité NO TransMilenio por la Avenida 68* (Committee against the TransMilenio on 68th Avenue) was created in 2018 that describes itself on Twitter as a "citizen initiative opposing the construction of TransMilenio on 68th Avenue—the worst public transport policy in Bogotá." In addition to specific grievances about the project's negative impacts, the group insists that TransMilenio is an inadequate solution for Bogotá's mobility issues and that a metro is necessary. Like *Defendamos la Séptima*, the group combined online strategies such as social media posts and publishing online "bulletins" with some in-person meetings and protests. They adopted a logo similar to signs used in protests against the TransMilenio project on the *Séptima*. That is, it features a yellow TransMilenio "T" on a black background with a red interdictory circle around it. These could be seen in the public events organized by the group as well as in some windows along the route.

Figure 22: No TransMilenio on 68 logo from group's Facebook page

In August 2018 the group completed the necessary steps to gain recognition as a *veeduría ciudadana*—essentially a citizen committee that allows citizens or community organizations to oversee government operations. The group held several in-person events between 2018-2020, beginning with a protest in July 2018. In November 2019, they helped organize a march that drew around 70 residents and business owners against the project in the Alquería neighborhood. Referencing the negative impacts the projects would have on industry, business, and jobs in the area, one participant indicated that opponents would file a suit to stop the project (Caracol Radio 2019). Those opposing the project were supported by four city council members who presented an *acción popular*

against the project (El Espectador 2019). In 2020 another march was held along the 68 where residents and business owners expressed their objections to the project and the negative impacts it would cause (Citytv 2020).

However, opposition to this project achieved far less visibility than in the case of the *Séptima*. In terms of media coverage, the project and opposition have received less attention. Many of the mainstream media sources covered the story only in terms of reporting basic events and facts (e.g., proposed plans and contracting) with only a few references to the dispute about the route and opponents such as *Comité NO Transmilenio por la Avenida 68.* The group was also less active and effective on social media. As of December 2021, the group has around 800 followers on Twitter (a fraction of *Defendamos la Séptima*'s following) and their Tweets and posts are generally less frequent and receive less engagement.

The political and financial limits of the opposition are suggested in comments responding to a 2020 Facebook post by *Defendamos la Séptima* about the López administration's decision to not continue the project on the *Séptima.* One user wrote, "help with the trunk line on 68, we don't have resources for lawyers and only one of the council members is trying to fight." This comment may have slightly underrepresented the political support by council members. Nonetheless, it reflects a perception that opponents of the project on 68 were disadvantaged in comparison to the *Séptima* in ways described by Abbot (2020).

During her mayoral campaign, Claudia López stated her intention to move away from Peñalosa's plans to expand the TransMilenio, including both the *Séptima* and the 68 (Osorio 2020). Immediately after winning the election, she asked President Duque and

mayor Peñalosa to discontinue the contracting process for the 68. However, Peñalosa did not comply, and contracting went forward. In January 2020, the IDU awarded contracts for the project which was divided into nine different sections awarded to different consortiums of companies and contractors, with one contractor (Mario Huertas Cortes) present in four. The total cost of the project is $3.2 billion COP, of which the city is responsible for $717 million while the National Government will pay the rest. Mayor López expressed disappointment with the previous administration and described the event as a "bitter day" for her and all of Bogotá. Via Twitter, she blamed the Peñalosa administration and stated, "I do not want this trunk line, and you did not vote for it." However, she explained that there was nothing she could do to stop it. Because the contracting process had already been opened, if she were to not proceed she could expose the taxpayers to lawsuits which could result from the companies who had conducted studies and submitted proposals (Martínez 2020). Furthermore, if the project were suspended or canceled, the city could lose out on the $2.5 billion COP that the national government would provide according to CONPES 3945. The project is expected to be completed by 2025.

Mayor López's seeming backtrack on promises such as the 68 drew criticism from political actors on the left as well as the right (Doria 2020). In the meantime, there have been issues raised within the City Council over the formulas used to calculate property values for acquisition. Furthermore, some residents complained that during the Covid-19 pandemic it was nearly impossible to conduct the steps necessary to find and secure a new property (Carrillo 2020; El Espectador 2020). So far, they have not been able to stop the project, but project opponents continue to fight. In August 2021 a judge

declared an injunction to halt the project over environmental concerns. However, the same judge lifted this injunction just a month later (Semana 2021, 2021).

Discussion

When considering mobilization against unwanted projects we have to consider not only the threat but the characteristics and capabilities of the communities involved (Wright and Boudet 2012). Comparing and contrasting the cases of the *Séptima* and 68 reveals some of the important dynamics that play out in cities over mobility infrastructure. Of course, procedural factors and timing played a role in the divergent outcomes, but I argue that the who of these cases was more important than the what or the when.

Most importantly, differences in class and social capital of those opposing the *Séptima* led to greater attention and public as well as political support. As Nogueira (2020) finds in the context of urban Brazil, class can be a highly significant factor in determining how conflicts over urban space unfold. In my research, I found that both opponents and supporters incorporated class into their arguments against or for the project. The government and supporters of the project raised issues of class regarding the participation of wealthy residents to the detriment of poorer ones. For example, a government official with the SDM expressed annoyance during an interview asking, "how is a neighborhood that is Strata 6 going to use an *acción popular* to block a project that would benefit many people?" In response, the opponents of the project pointed out that the expansion of the TransMilenio on the *Séptima* would be bad for all residents especially middle-class ones and small business owners, not just those wealthy inhabitants of the city center. Furthermore, they pointed to common amenities such as the

National Park which is open to all residents and has been an important urban element for all classes.

In the end, the two cases show a somewhat surprising result. Although the Peñalosa administration prioritized the *Séptima*, which could have resulted in significant urbanization in the northern region of Bogotá, the government's efforts were eventually blocked by public participation and contestation in various forms. However, the factors that enabled this effectiveness were reduced in the case of the 68 which resulted in one project advancing while the other was blocked.

Although this chapter focuses on recent events in Bogotá, a similar approach can be applied to contested mobilities in very different contexts. For example, in the United States, a Robert Moses-proposed expressway passing through New Orleans' French Quarter was opposed and eventually blocked by determined resistance from a diverse range of middle and upper-class stakeholders (Baumbach and Borah 1981). However, opponents of another expressway through a prominent and historic African American neighborhood, Tremé, were unable to stop the project which resulted in symbolic, physical, economic, and social harm to the neighborhood (Campanella 2021; Kaplan-Levenson 2016; Stelly 2021).

Chapter 5: Mayor Enrique Peñalosa: the meaning and importance of urban democracy in decentralized Colombia

Mayor Enrique Peñalosa: the meaning and importance of urban democracy in decentralized Colombia

Introduction and literature

A useful place to begin an examination of urban democracy is the right to the city. Referring to Lefebvre's original proposal, authors such as Fernandes (2007) and Purcell (2013) explain that it involves two principal rights for urban inhabitants:

1.) the right to appropriation—**All** city dwellers should be able to fully enjoy **all** the services and advantages of urban life.

2.) the right to participation—Inhabitants take increasing control of management and decisions about the production of urban space. A radical change in urban governance in which users manage urban spaces, free of control by **both** government **and** the market. The ultimate achievement of this would be what Lefebvre called "*autogestion*."

Methods

This chapter is based on extensive literature review on Latin American mayors as well as relevant literature related to Enrique Peñalosa (including his own writing). I combine this with critical discourse analysis of the planning documents created during the two Peñalosa mayoral administrations. As described earlier, this involved a qualitative and quantitative look at documents such as the PDDs and POTs which were proposed and accepted during his time in office. In particular, I focused on the inclusion

(or absence) of "participation" in these documents as well as the language and treatment of "democracy." This analysis was also complemented by interviews I conducted with experts and relevant stakeholders during field research.

Mayors are increasingly important

In recent decades the prominence of mayors around the world has been on the rise (Acuto and Khanna 2013; Stren and Friendly 2019). Looking at cases from across the globe, Satterthwaite (2009) notes that the crucial role played by mayors in urban development has been increasingly evident in Latin America as well as in Africa and Asia. Instead of simply being mentioned, mayors are now seen as key actors on issues such as poverty, inequality, and climate change. To some degree, this may be an increasing awareness of actors who were previously overlooked, but it is also the result of broader legal and institutional changes at the national levels as well as increasing levels of urbanization. Mayors today matter in realms of local, national, and even international politics, but Satterthwaite points out that they also have a huge impact on the day-to-day lives of urban residents, especially low-income people. The mayor often controls the infrastructure and services that directly influence quality of life.

Some authors such as Barber (2013) are enthusiastic about the increasing prominence of mayors and extol their qualities and capabilities. In his view, mayors are better suited to confront the major challenges of the 21st century for a number of reasons. In some cases, they are able to take action on issues more quickly and efficiently than officials at other levels. Furthermore, they are (at least nowadays) generally from the cities they represent as it is highly difficult to be a carpetbagging mayor. His book is provocatively named *If Mayors Ruled the World* and he proposes a "parliament of

mayors" or a "global league of cities." Assessing responses and recovery to the Covid-19 pandemic, Zapata-Garesché (2021) writes that many Latin American mayors were able to take decisive and innovative actions. Many saw their popularity increase while that of national presidents, often paralyzed by deep partisanship, suffered declines in popularity.

Of course, it should be noted that the roles of mayors are not identical across all political contexts. The amount of power, length of term, and means by which they are selected can vary significantly between countries. Furthermore, the prominence of mayors can also vary. For instance, whereas strong mayors in Latin America are a relatively recent phenomenon, in the United States there were examples of prominent mayors, infamous for their political machines and control over large cities throughout the 20th century (Feiock et al. 2016). Responses to these and other political factors led to reforms of mayoral powers, with some states/municipalities opting for "city managers" as opposed to "strong mayors" (Nunn 1996).

Mayors in Latin America and Decentralization

In Latin America, since the colonial period, there has been a figure of *alcalde* which today is generally automatically translated to "mayor." However, Schwaller (2013) shows that the meaning of this term has shifted and evolved over time. The term *alcalde* comes from Arabic and its root word means "judge." Indeed, in the 18th century, *alcalde* mostly referred to judicial and legal positions and responsibilities. Over time, though, the term *alcalde* took on more administrative connotations.

In recent decades, decentralization has been a crucial turning point in the history of Latin American mayors. In general terms, decentralization refers to the transfer of

power and authority away from centralized government to multiple authorities at lower levels. Falleti (2005, 2010) describes decentralization as a somewhat surprising outcome resulting from macro world changes including the collapse of communism, reforms of societal corporatism in Western Europe, and the demise of the developmental state in Latin America. It fundamentally changed government and politics in a range of countries across, Europe, Africa, and Latin America. Some countries such as Colombia and Paraguay even incorporate decentralization into their constitutions (Nickson 2011).

In Latin America pushes for decentralization began in the 1980s and continued through the 1990s with some surges and declines as well as highly different trajectories in different countries. Some countries decentralized significantly, others less so (Bland 2011; Kersting et al. 2009; Nickson 2011). For Falleti (2005, 2010), important variations in decentralization, especially how much power is actually transferred away from the center, can be explained by the sequences in which different processes occur. She does not take a normative stance on decentralization (that is whether it is good or bad), but she does seek to dispel the myths and assumption that decentralization always increases the powers of subnational government. There are three main types/forms of decentralization:

1. Administrative decentralization—transfer of the administration and delivery of social services (e.g., education, health, social welfare, or housing) to subnational governments.
2. Fiscal decentralization—increase in revenues or fiscal autonomy from subnational governments.
3. Political decentralization—constitutional amendments and electoral reforms designed to open new, or activate dormant, spaces for the representation of

subnational polities. For example, the popular election of mayors, the creation of subnational legislative assemblies, etc.

The order in which these are implemented affects the degree to which power shifts to sub-national levels. Through her sequential theory, she shows that significant shifts did occur in some cases such as Colombia (where the order was political→financial→administrative), while other countries such as Argentina (where the order was administrative→financial→political) showed little change over time.

One of the most significant forms of political decentralization in Latin America was the direct election of mayors (Willis, Garman, and Haggard 1999). Although today mayoral elections are taken for granted, they are a relatively recent addition to the Latin American political landscape. Throughout much of the 20th century, mayors were appointed by officials at higher levels (e.g., presidents or governors). This arrangement had several important implications. First, the mayor and city government were largely constrained in their ability to contradict or oppose the central government. Second, mayors were almost always chosen from the same party (or even faction within a party) as the person who appointed them (Gilbert and Dávila 2002). The benefits of elected mayors versus appointed ones are numerous, and some authors consider elected mayors essential for local democracy and good governance (Bland 2011; Dávila 2009; Satterthwaite 2009).

However, assessing the impacts of these changes, Eaton (2013) writes that mayoral prominence has generated both positive and negative consequences. One th positive side, it has played a key role in improving municipal governance and has made

mayors more responsive to their populations. On the other hand though, reforms can be closely linked with individual mayors and may not outlast them. This can often result in subsequent reversal or benign neglect when a new mayor comes to office (see chapter on TransMilenio on the *Séptima* for examples). Furthermore, extreme mayoral power, for instance when they attempt to sideline municipal councils, is also a risk. Eaton suggests we may be seeing "decentralization of hyper-presidentialism" in some cases—a repetition of debates that took place at the national level in the 1990s about strong presidentialism, which basically means that power is excessively concentrated in the executive branch rather than diffused in institutions (Emerson 2015). This concern also corresponds with other literature on subnational/local authoritarianism. Andersson and van Laerhoven (2007) write that despite common conflation, decentralization and participation/local democracy are not the same thing. Some local leaders are unwilling to share the increased political powers and financial resources they receive through decentralization. The authors describe these actors as "local strongmen." Such phenomena are also described by Basset et al. (2017), Bland (2011), and Gibson (2006, 2010, 2013). A review of five recent books on the subject is given by Eaton (2019). Overall, these works force us to consider authoritarianism at levels other than the national government. Even in a relatively decentralized context such as Colombia, decentralization does not mean that power transfers automatically or smoothly from the center to lower levels.

Today Latin American mayors play important political and administrative roles and have perhaps the most power relative to any point in history (Avellaneda 2013; Dávila 2005; DeNardis 2011; Eaton 2017). But the current roles and image of mayors are not monolithic across the region, nor are they set in stone. Dávila (2009) describes

evolutions and trends such as the shift from "government" to "governance" and the increasingly prevalent concept of the "mayor as CEO." And Nickson (2011) describes two ideal types: "governmental" and "managerial" and suggests that there may be an evolution towards the latter, which is preferred by central governments and multilateral agencies including the World Bank and IDB.

Although there can be a tendency to oversimplify or romanticize complex processes and situations, Latin American mayors, especially in decentralized contexts, are often given heroic status. For example, in accounts of Bogotá's transformations over the past three decades figures such as Mayors Peñalosa and Mockus are sometimes held up as valiant figures who created islands of peace and progress in the midst of conflict (Cifuentes Quin and Fiori 2012; Valenzuela Aguilera 2013). Mayors are also seen as central to the implementation and success of popular initiatives such as participatory budgeting (Fung 2011; Nylen 2011; Rhodes-Purdy 2017; Touchton, Wampler, and Spada 2019).

Colombia

Colombia was one of the earliest countries in Latin America to undertake robust decentralization and is generally described as one of the most successful cases in the region. While Bland (2011) points out the limitations of actual transfer of authority and power in Latin America, he finds that the local systems of Colombia, Brazil, and Chile are the only three examples that can actually be considered democratic. According to Falleti's (2010) sequential theory, Colombia's relative effectiveness with decentralization can be attributed to the fact that it decentralized first politically (1986 & 1991), then fiscally (1991) then finally administratively (1993-1994). Other countries such as

Argentina which followed a different order (administrative→financial→political) were not as successful. The first major step of political decentralization (and the most pertinent to this chapter) came in 1986 when Conservative President Belisario Betancur passed a constitutional amendment (*Acto Legislativo 1 de 1986*) for the popular election of mayors. Falleti describes this as a response to popular mobilization in cities and general discontent with the dysfunctional appointment system. Some additional rules and conditions were subsequently created to make mayors more responsive to those who elect them. For example, the 1991 Constitution (article 259) states that all mayoral candidates must create a "*programa de gobierno*" (government plan) during their campaigns which outlines what they will do if elected. Once elected, if the elected candidate does not implement their proposed plan, they can be removed from office through a recall election[25] (Kersting et al. 2009).

Political decentralization would set in motion processes difficult to reverse as cities and mayors recognized their opportunities to gain prominence and power. For example, following the election of mayors, municipalities began to coordinate among themselves, and in 1989 the *Federación Colombiana de Municipios* was created by the elected mayors of Cali, Cartagena, and Bogotá. Among other changes, they successfully lobbied to extend mayoral terms from two to three years (terms would subsequently be extended to four years).

[25]The use of recall elections has been largely driven by political motivations in Colombia (Welp and Milanese 2018) and Bogotá (Uribe Mendoza 2016). They almost never succeed in removing a mayor from office. According to one of my interviewees, it was actually designed not to work. However, the fact that such mechanisms exist and are tied to the government program creates at least some accountability and pressure on those in office.

Decentralization did not happen overnight, nor did it solve all problems of local governance. Former Bogotá mayor Jaime Castro (2011) describes decentralization as an ongoing process in which there can be advances as well as backsliding. Nickson (2011) observes a general gulf between rhetoric and reality in local governance in the region as well as a lack of continuity from one mayoral administration to the next. Nonetheless, in Colombia, there have been significant shifts in power that see the role of mayors rise from a relatively obscure and inconsequential position to important actors with significant responsibilities and power.

Bogotá

A primate city refers to the largest and most dominant city within a county's urban areas. A common criterion for a primate city is one that is twice as large as the next largest one and is twice as significant economically (Warf 2010). The distribution of Colombia's population across several large and many medium-sized cities as well as regional competition from other municipalities means that Bogotá is not a primate city like other Latin American capitals such as Santiago or Buenos Aires (Dávila 2009). Nonetheless, Bogotá is well over twice the size of the next largest city (Medellín) and is home to the country's financial center, the largest industrial center and according to Gilbert and Dávila (2002) the center of culture. Thus, among Colombian cities, Bogotá certainly reigns supreme (Ferro 2011).

Before the aforementioned reforms, the mayor of Bogotá (*Alcalde Mayor*) was appointed directly by the president (rather than by department governors as in other Colombian cities). This figure was almost always a distant, practically anonymous person who was more responsive to the president than to the citizens. The average time in office

was relatively short, typically 1-2 years. Both of these factors limited the legitimacy of the mayor as well as their ability to undertake significant projects or policy actions. However, following the direct election of mayors as well as subsequent reforms which gave mayors more autonomy (e.g., mayor governs and city council legislates), the mayor of Bogotá became an increasingly significant position. Bogotanos elected mayors who ran as independents, or from different parties than the incumbent president, and the average time in office lengthened to around 30 months (Dávila 2005). As in other Latin American capital cities, it is said that the mayorship of the Bogotá represents the second most important political position behind the president (Myers and Dietz 2002). Furthermore, the mayorship of Bogotá is no longer a career dead end but rather a launchpad for national-level leadership as several former mayors have gone on to seek (although thus far only Andrés Pastrana Arango has been successful) the presidency after serving as mayor.

This is not to say that the mayor of Bogotá today is unchallenged or all-powerful. Increased powers and responsibilities mean that mayors are also subject to significant political pressure and scrutiny. Bogotá's elected mayors must contend with local political competition as well as manage relationships with a diverse and often oppositional city council, the national government, and the governments of neighboring municipalities and the department of Cundinamarca. As described elsewhere in this dissertation, these and other forces can stymie the projects and plans of the mayor. Nonetheless, overall, the power and prominence of Bogotá's mayors have significantly increased since the 1980s giving them an influential role in the Colombian political landscape and certainly in the lives of the seven million inhabitants of Bogotá. In comparison to other large Latin

American cities (such as Mexico City), Bogotá is a relatively compact and concentrated city meaning the majority of the population falls within the jurisdiction of the city proper (Trejo Nieto et al. 2018).

The significance of Bogotá's mayors, empowered by decentralization (Montero and Baiocchi 2021), has been examined by numerous authors, a number of whom give them credit for significant transformations that have occurred in the city since the 1990s (Cifuentes Quin and Fiori 2012; Dávila 2005; Ferro 2011; Kalandides 2011; Silva 2009). In the next section, I examine one aspect of mayoral influence—infrastructure and the built environment.

Infrastructure and the Built Environment

Elected mayors exert influence in a number of policy sectors. In this section, I look specifically at the built environment and mobility infrastructure, an area that some mayors such as Enrique Peñalosa have prioritized. There are ample reasons for mayors to focus on the physical infrastructure of the city (Flores Dewey 2018). Davis and Altshuler (2019) write that decisions about urban transport infrastructure are never merely mechanical and improving travel in the city is rarely the only, or main, motivation behind such decisions. For example, dating back to the colonial era, the built environment of Latin American cities has been a means for governments to legitimize their rule and signal their priorities (Pérez Fernández 2010).

In addition to ostensible objectives (such as improving traffic circulation, reducing pollution and accidents) mayors use projects such as airports, skyscrapers, and mass transit to communicate meanings such as modernization (Myers and Dietz 2002).

Walker (2016) writes that the purposes for which physical structures are built in cities are "manifold, and so are their symbolic overtones." That is, even infrastructures that seem to be mainly utilitarian (for example, a rail or sewer system) also serve as celebrations of industry, trade, social capabilities, or other aspects of society. Furthermore, they almost always also demonstrate the power, wealth, and importance of the builder. Gilbert and Dávila (2002) write that mayors desire, for personal and political reasons to do things for which they will be appreciated and remembered. "Concrete memorials" such as large public works (e.g., roads and bridges) are a good way to do this. Pasotti (2010) describes such strategies as "branding." Satterthwaite (2009) also writes of personal and political motivations as mayors seek to create megaprojects that will create "world-class cities" while also leaving behind a "legacy." Extreme versions of these efforts are described by Deyan Sudjic (2006) as an "edifice complex." He writes that building is the means by which egotism of the individual is expressed in its most naked form. For him, architecture is all about power and totalitarian leaders (and those with totalitarian tendencies) use it to present themselves as being in positions of control. Although he primarily focuses on 20th century national-level figures including Saddam Hussein, Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, François Mitterrand, and Winston Churchill, his arguments can be applied to sub-national leaders and mayors as well.

Avellanda (2013) seeks to empirically measure the salience of different policy sectors for Latin American mayors. Based on her quasi-experimental study, she finds that mayors may prioritize infrastructure (and prefer to handle it themselves rather than delegating responsibilities) over social spending such as education. She suggests that there are more opportunities for rent-seeking and/or political benefits in infrastructure

and also that it can be more easily targeted to specific areas and neighborhoods. Again, mayors stand to gain personally and politically from infrastructure development.

Some of the literature also suggests that these aspirations are incompatible with democracy. Algostino (2016) writes that infrastructure megaprojects often clash with democracy as they leverage profit against people. She writes “A Democracy without involvement is no more than a simulacrum of true Democracy.” Sattertwaite (2009) warns that the more that cities such as Shanghai and Dubai are praised as paradigms, the more participatory democracy gets downgraded. Even in the case of progressive and leftist leaders, participation and democracy can be at odds with megaprojects. Under Bogotá’s mayor Gustavo Petro, who prioritized social inclusion and participation over modernization and rent-seeking, a failure to adequately engage and understand the needs and concerns of neighborhood residents contributed to the failure of his flagship social housing project (Atuesta and Davis 2020). The rest of this chapter will analyze the relationship between urban infrastructure development and democracy (particularly participatory democracy) under two-term mayor Enrique Peñalosa.

Enrique Peñalosa in the literature

Much has been written about Enrique Peñalosa since he took office in 1998. In this section, I give an overview and analysis of the existing literature. This includes works in English and Spanish, primarily from books and peer-reviewed publications, although some other sources such as reports, and press articles are included. In particular, I am interested in literature that addresses Peñalosa and participation/democracy. As the following table shows, some of the literature is very positive (sometimes bordering on hagiography), while others are highly critical. These categories are not absolute, and

some authors (such as Berney) may be critical in one piece but less so in others. A third category of literature portrays a mixed picture or does not significantly address the questions of participation and democracy, but those sources are not listed here.

Table 5: Literature about Enrique Peñalosa

Positive—Peñalosa generally does positive things, improves quality of life and democracy in Bogotá	Critical—Peñalosa acts undemocratically
Ardila and Menckhoff 2002	Carrillo 2017
Bassett and Marpillero-Colomina 2013	Dabène 2020
Beccassino and Peñalosa 2000	Galvis 2014, 2017
Berney 2010, 2017	Garzon-Ramirez 2018
Cervero 2005	Hunt 2009
Dalsgaard 2010	Martínez 2019
Dávila 2005	Munoz 2018
Donovan 2008	Osorio Ardila 2020
Ferro 2011	Patiño Garcia 2017
Fletcher 2008	Ross 2016
Ives 2004	Sotomayor et al. 2022
Montezuma 2005	
Parks & Recreation 2008	
Rojas 2004	
Silva 2009	

Positive portrayals

Much of the literature, especially works focusing on Peñalosa's first term describe him as a strong and decisive leader who set out with an ambitious anti-car and pro-public space agenda and was able to effectively complete (or at least begin) important policies

and public works in Bogotá. For example, he is credited with developing the TransMilenio BRT system as well as creating/restoring over a thousand parks and playgrounds, almost 200 miles of bike paths, and dozens of libraries around the city. He is also praised for controversial actions such as banning parking on sidewalks. Many authors describe Peñalosa as a key figure in the "miraculous" transformation of the city in the 1990s through the early 2000s (Caicedo Hinojos 2018; Gilbert 2015; Silva 2009). For example, Berney (2017) describes Peñalosa as "catalytic" and finds that he (along with Antanas Mockus) transformed Bogotá, socially, culturally, and physically. As a mayor, Peñalosa is described as a corporate manager who favored technocratic approaches and surrounded himself with a highly competent team of professionals, rather than just political allies (Montezuma 2005). Ardila (2004) writes that while Peñalosa was perhaps not as much of a "marketing genius" as Mayor Jaime Lerner from Curitiba, Brazil, he was nonetheless a strong leader who significantly impacted mobility policy in Bogotá.

While descriptions of Peñalosa in scholarly literature are flattering, non-academic portrayals can be downright romantic. They describe him as a valiant crusader who radically transformed a hopelessly polluted and dangerous city into a peaceful, safe, and sustainable oasis (Dalsgaard 2010; Fettig 2013; Fletcher 2008; Parks & Recreation 2008; Solomon 2008).

There may be multiple (and ulterior) motives behind such positive portrayals of Enrique Peñalosa and his policies. Llach and Rehman (2021) write that romantic, and overly simplified depictions of Bogotá's transformation may come from a desire by US and European observers to link architecture and design with solving social causes. They express concern about attributing too much credit or responsibility to individual leaders, a

tendency that can obscure the complicated, negotiated, and messy processes shaping urban policy and cities.

Whatever the reason for these positive portrayals, they show him as a strong mayor and a good leader who worked to make Bogotá a better and more equal city. That is, referring back to the definition of right to the city, by expanding access and services Peñalosa improved the right to appropriation. However, there is very little consideration for democracy and participation in this literature. These depictions focus more on the results rather than the means by which they were achieved. Said differently, Peñalosa was an effective mayor who got things done. In the next section, I give an overview of the literature which examines the "how" of Peñalosa. These portrayals are far less positive.

Negative portrayals

Another collection of writings, which has mostly emerged in more recent years, is much more critical of Peñalosa. They criticize his policies and governing style on a number of different grounds. First, although there have not been allegations of the types of blatant corruption as was seen in previous administrations,[26] there have been questions raised about Peñalosa's willingness to ally himself with ex-president Álvaro Uribe as well as about potential conflicts of interest (Gilbert 2019). For example, over the past twenty years Volvo and Scania, two companies that received major contracts to provide buses to Bogotá have sponsored Peñalosa's travel and appearance at multiple conferences for unknown amounts of money (Akerman 2015). As a private citizen, Peñalosa's travels

[26] However, recently Peñalosa was implicated in the release of the so-called "Pandora Papers" which showed he had two consulting companies in Panama. He denied any wrongdoing and insisted that all operations were reported. It is unclear at this point whether there will be further implications (El Espectador 2021; El Tiempo 2021).

and promotion of BRTs around the world sponsored by multilateral development banks, think tanks, non-profits, and bus companies (Montero 2017) did not necessarily raise eyebrows, but once he was re-elected to a second term, his relationships with these actors and his frequent travels received greater scrutiny (La FM 2019). For his part, Montero (2018, 2020) shows how the Bogotá model has been promoted around the world by powerful actors including the World Bank and big philanthropy in a trend he describes as urban "solutionism." Ross (2016) argues that such activities have deep political and economic motivations. For example, he points out that Royal Dutch Shell funds think tanks and NGOs which promote BRTs as a sustainable mobility solution. Furthermore, there have also been allegations that Peñalosa has promoted policies that favor construction companies that provided significant funds for his campaign (Beuf 2016; Lewin 2015; Osorio 2018).

More pertinent, however, to this study is the literature that shows how Peñalosa's policies and actions in both mayoral terms excluded and repressed certain sectors of the population. For example, in the early days of the TransMilenio, when individuals with disabilities and journalists raised issues about the lack of accessibility in feeder buses, "Go live near the trunk lines!" was his aggressive and shocking response (Valderrama Pineda 2016). Although he preached "inclusionary urbanism" and claimed that his policies would make the city more democratic and equal, a number of authors show that gains in some areas came at the expense of others (Galvis 2017). This includes highly controversial and publicized actions such as the destruction of an area known as *El Cartucho,* in his first term which was replaced by a large park in the center of Bogotá (Galvis 2020; Pinilla and Arteaga 2021). Hunt (2009), Pérez Fernández (2010), and

Munoz (2018) argue that his policies of "recovering" public space, which evoke Neil Smith's (1996) description of "revanchism," produced new forms of segregation in which citizens and street vendors had differentiated places and rights to mobility.

In the first year of his second administration, Peñalosa ordered an immense police operation in another area of central Bogotá known as the Bronx, which involved 2,000 uniformed personnel and lasted several days. This was a controversial intervention that raised questions and complaints about the impact on residents. And some critics also pointed to impacts on other areas to which the negative elements from El Bronx may have spread (Arias et al. 2019; PARCES and CPAT 2017). Elsewhere Dabène (2020) argues that in his second term Peñalosa became aggressive towards street artists, alluding to broken-windows theories of criminality to justify his actions. Berney (2011, 2013) characterizes such inequalities as right to the city for some, but not all Bogotanos. That is, the right to public space exists, but only if exercised in what officials deemed proper behavior, in line with a global neoliberal agenda that favors investment-worthy, stable cities.

Holland's (2015) study of enforcement reveals interesting contrasts between the mayors of Bogotá. She argues that their willingness to police informal activities depend not on the strength of the government, but rather on political calculations. She shows that police budgets and number of operations under Peñalosa and Mockus (centrist or center-right mayors) were much higher than under leftist mayors Garzón, Moreno, and Petro. This was not because the government was much stronger or wealthier during these periods, but rather that the latter three depended on poor voters to win elections. Thus, they practiced "forbearance" to avoid angering crucial sectors of the electorate. Because

Peñalosa and Mockus were not dependent on poor voters they could more easily crack down on informal populations.

In summary, this body of literature argues that Enrique Peñalosa's utopian discourse about a more equal and inclusive city was partial and perhaps hypocritical. While his policies and projects may have increased access and improved conditions for some inhabitants, this was not universal and certain populations such as informal vendors and the homeless suffered. In terms of democracy and right to the city, they suggest that his promises of a fairer and more equal city are imperfect. However, I contend that even this analysis is incomplete because it accepts Peñalosa's definition of urban democracy which consists primarily of access (e.g., a city is democratic if everyone has the same things). What is lacking is an analysis of participation, that is, the ways decisions are made in the city (how do people get things). Some authors such as Rhinehart (2009), Sotomayor et al. (2022), and Whittingham Munevar (2006) and make reference to this, but there is not a thorough analysis of the subject.

My take

Giving people more equal and equitable access and amenities is an important part of urban democracy. However, according to Lefebvre (1968) and the authors that follow his traditions (Harvey 2008; Purcell 2002, 2013), true urban democracy also involves giving people equal and equitable means of participating in the decisions and processes that affect their lives. As I show in the remainder of this chapter, Enrique Peñalosa built

his reputation around a vision of urban democracy which emphasized access while neglecting participation.

Discourse analysis of Peñalosa's own words (in literature and interviews)

During his mayoral terms as well as the 15 years in between, Enrique Peñalosa branded himself as a strong leader who inverts dominant urban models centered around automobiles. In his talks, speeches, interviews, and articles he criticizes such patterns of urban development and proposes more democratic models that prioritize pedestrians as well as marginalized groups such as children and the poor. Two of the most common topics he covers are mobility and public spaces such as parks and plazas. For him, these are crucial elements of making cities more democratic and happy (Peñalosa 2002, 2003, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2013, 2020). I will leave the happiness claim to scholars in other fields such as psychology, and instead, analyze his claims about and vision of democracy. In the following sections, I analyze the most pertinent findings about Peñalosa's discourse (specifically the things he has written or said out loud, rather than what has been written about him) about democracy and participation.

Democracy is equality of access and amenities, participation is absent—Peñalosa frequently refers to democracy. For instance, his 2013 TED Talk is titled "Why Buses Represent Democracy in Action." In it, he argues that the space and amenities enjoyed by each person in a city should be equal and not dependent on how much money they have. A public bus carrying 80 people deserves 80 times as much space as a private car carrying one person, and a person on a $30 bicycle should be prioritized as much as someone in a $30,000 car. This has become a common phrase/tagline that he frequently uses. He also describes public green spaces as "great equalizers" where the rich and poor

(who have few other options for entertainment) can go and interact as equals (Parks & Recreation 2008). Elsewhere he points to the particular characteristics of cities in the developing world. For example, in an interview (Solomon 2008) he stated that “In developing-world cities, the majority of people don’t have cars, so I will say, when you construct a good sidewalk, you are constructing democracy. A sidewalk is a symbol of equality.” Note, here the sidewalk is something that is being constructed for people, but there is no suggestion of the role they play in the decisions or construction.

In terms of policy, he suggests that this discourse should be translated into developing infrastructure and amenities such as public parks, sidewalks, bike lanes, libraries, and public transport (specifically BRTs) and boasts about his ability to do so as mayor of Bogotá. I agree that this discourse signals an important departure from the predominant urban development trends in Latin America and elsewhere. However, what is missing from his ostensibly progressive rhetoric is any suggestion that people should participate in decisions about the city. Instead, the suggestion is that the government (and in many cases Peñalosa himself) was responsible for giving things to the population in a top-down manner. Whereas other mayors have used the language of participation, it is very rare in Peñalosa’s writings, talks, and planning documents.

Participation is not possible in Bogotá and even if it was, people do not know what they really want or need—Peñalosa is not oblivious to the concept of participation, or expectations for it. However, he uses several different lines of reasoning to explain why he did not or could not do more of it. In *Peñalosa y una ciudad 2600 metros más cerca de las estrellas*, a book-length interview between Peñalosa and political strategist Ángel Beccassino (2000), he suggests that decisions should ideally be made in a

participatory manner, but the socio-political context of Bogotá simply does not allow for it. "In Switzerland, each decision would be a process of 10 or 15 years of debates and referendums. Here unfortunately there is no time for that, and one has to make a number of strategic decisions in a rather undemocratic manner." That is, the local conditions in the city necessitated and justified a more top-down approach.

Several other quotes by Peñalosa suggest a paternalistic view of the population in which people are unaware of their actual needs and so a government must provide for them. In an interview (Parks & Recreation 2008), he stated “Many things that people consider needs, they will ask governments to do. But many people do not consider parks a need. So, normally, unless you have a very politically sophisticated community, people will not ask governments to do parks.” From this quote, we see that the people (at least in an “unsophisticated” place such as Bogotá) cannot be trusted to ask for the things they need. In a later interview (Pizano and Ortiz 2015), he accepts that many of the actions he took during his first term were political actions from the government rather than requests from the citizens and admits that many of them would probably have been rejected if citizens were consulted first. Thus, in his view, the government should do what the people need, whether or not they actually ask for it.

We see further confirmation of these views in a book chapter (Peñalosa 2007) titled “Politics, power, cities.” He writes

> *The most vulnerable members of society, such as the poor, the elderly, children, and disabled citizens, are not normally conscious of their interests and rights and do not have much political influence. A democratic government must act as their proxy and confront powerful minorities on their behalf…*

While the recognition that these groups typically have less political influence and thus deserve special consideration is accurate, the rest of the statement disempowers these marginalized populations and asserts that the government must make decisions for them rather than enabling them to make decisions or confront powerful minorities on their own.

Finally, a more complicated argument from the same chapter argues that entrepreneurs and individuals should not be allowed to make decisions based on their own interests. Instead, the government must make decisions based on the interests of everyone, especially vulnerable populations. While the call to limit the abuses of powerful private interests is a welcome one, this argument implies that citizens always act based on individual interests and are not capable of thinking collectively. Furthermore, it reinforces the government knows best vision of urban democracy. His views on these subjects did not seem to change much over the years. In a 2016 interview with *The Guardian*, he repeated many of the same talking points and added that the power of eminent domain should be used frequently (Herd and Peñalosa 2016).

Discourse analysis of key planning documents

Words spoken in interviews and written in articles give us important clues about the ways Peñalosa views participation, but of course discourse of politicians and their actual policies do not always match. Thus, it is important to examine his policies and actions as mayor of Bogotá. For this, I return to the planning documents and policies issued while he was in office. The most relevant and significant planning documents a mayor can produce are the PDD (each term) and the POT (occasionally). As the chapter on participation in planning shows the documents created under Peñalosa feature far less

participation (quantitatively and qualitatively) than the other mayors of Bogotá over the last 25 years. This finding aligns with Martínez (2019) who shows that the second Peñalosa administration made less significant contributions to citizen participation than Petro and far less than Garzón and Moreno.

A close look at the four documents (two PDDs and two POTs) created across the two Peñalosa administrations suggests low prioritization of participation. Whereas more leftist mayors used language of participation frequently, it was far less common in the documents created by Peñalosa. It should be noted that here I focus on the initial documents themselves, rather than the ways in which they were implemented. Monitoring and evaluation documents such as those created by Secretaría Distrital de Planeación and the Contraloría de Bogotá as well as articles (Pinella 2019) show that implementation rarely matches exactly what was proposed in the original plan. Due to a variety of factors, sometimes the city government may exceed expectations, but often they fall short. In this section, I am mainly analyzing the starting points for the Peñalosa with regard to participation because they are the purest representations of the aspirations of a leader. I ask how the documents understand and present participation, in which areas did they envision participation, and what were the goals?

PDD I: *Por la Bogotá que Queremos* (1998-2000)—The first major document of the first Peñalosa administration was the PDD, approved on June 8, 1998, about 5 months after he became mayor. As previously mentioned, he prioritized physical infrastructure and public space and this is reflected in the document which lists five priority projects: an integrated mass transit system, road construction/maintenance, a land bank, a district system of parks, and a district system of libraries. However, these are largely described as

government responsibilities. That is, the government will provide the amenities and infrastructure that the city needs. Overall, there are only about 15 mentions or references to participation (as defined in this study) in the entire document and none of them involve participation in issues of mobility. Instead, descriptions of mobility revolve around other terms such as efficiency and competitiveness.

Most of the existing references to participation are vague and could be interpreted in multiple ways, without specific indicators or targets. For example, under the heading of "Institutional Efficiency" (chapter 4) there is a sub-heading called "citizen participation." It states that:

> *city government will contribute to the promotion and training of organizations (professional, civic, union, community, youth, or NGO) without harming their autonomy so they can constitute democratic mechanisms and improve public management. The government will facilitate participation of people in the decisions that affect them and promote the coordination of civic organizations on issues…*

However, there are no specific targets or details about how this will be done.

One possible example of participation that includes stated goals is "involving communities in 1,500 productive projects that benefit 7,500 people, link 20 private companies and 150 community organizations in the promotion of social organization." However, as the following table from the document shows, the budget for this (*Promoción de la gestión comunitaria e institucional*) is minuscule compared to other items and is by far the smallest amount in the table. This is not necessarily the only area

in which participation is occurring. As a transversal concept, participation can occur in many of the other projects as well.

Overall, while participation is not totally absent in the document it is far from constituting a high priority.

Figure 23: Long-term program planning from PDD

PLAN DE DESARROLLO 1998 - 2001

Programación Plurianual Programas

Millones de Pesos Constantes 1998

Prioridad / Programa	1998	1999	2000	2001	Total
1 Desmarginalización	**257.359**	**560.912**	**566.438**	**448.664**	**1.833.373**
1 Ampliación Y Mejoramiento De La Infraestructura Vial Y De Servicios Públicos	75.856	217.531	209.827	154.514	657.729
2 Ampliación Y Mejoramiento De La Infraestructura Del Sector Social	73.273	233.104	244.595	188.817	739.790
3 Ampliación Y Mejoramiento Del Espacio Público Y La Infraestructura Recreativa Y Deportiva	5.704	5.850	8.214	3.560	23.328
4 Adecuación De Zonas De Riesgo Y Atención A Familias Afectadas	13.803	8.714	6.445	3.309	32.271
5 Promoción De La Gestión Comunitaria E Institucional	0	366	357	350	1.072
6 Fomento A La Inversión Local	88.723	95.346	97.000	98.114	379.183
2 Interacción Social	**889.589**	**928.388**	**957.143**	**934.818**	**3.709.937**
7 Mejoramiento De La Calidad De La Educación	511.494	559.024	572.877	551.853	2.195.248
8 Mejoramiento De La Calidad Y Cobertura En La Prestación De Los Servicios De Salud	301.932	292.841	304.317	309.317	1.208.408
9 Mejoramiento De La Calidad Y Aumento De La Cobertura De Servicios A Grupos Vulnerables	76.164	76.522	79.948	73.647	306.281
3 Ciudad a Escala Humana	**198.034**	**405.131**	**358.678**	**290.657**	**1.252.501**
10 Recuperación, Mejoramiento Y Ampliación Del Espacio Público	30.471	103.721	69.694	74.365	278.252
11 Recuperación, Mejoramiento Y Ampliación De Parques, Infraestructura Recreativa, Deportiva Y Ecosistemas Estratégicos	78.632	183.500	171.608	117.035	550.774
12 Administración Del Espacio Público Y De La Infraestructura Recreativa Y Deportiva	9.019	37.203	34.403	16.406	97.031
13 Control Y Mitigación Del Impacto Ambiental	79.912	80.708	82.973	82.852	326.445
4 Movilidad	**395.529**	**895.061**	**1.049.341**	**748.137**	**3.088.068**
14 Desarrollo Del Sistema Integrado De Transporte Masivo	49.060	292.363	334.185	259.124	934.731
15 Construcción De Ciclo-Rutas	4.000	11.000	24.016	45.984	85.000
16 Fortalecimiento Del Manejo De Tráfico	24.036	34.531	37.003	37.408	132.978
17 Adecuación De La Infraestructura Vial	318.433	557.167	654.138	405.621	1.935.358
5 Urbanismo y Servicios	**679.997**	**459.761**	**751.397**	**689.114**	**2.580.269**
18 Promoción De La Vivienda De Interés Social	20.000	156.900	206.000	226.573	609.473
19 Renovación Urbana	23.926	101.394	101.184	96.204	322.708
20 Ordenamiento De La Expansión De La Ciudad	636.071	201.467	444.213	366.337	1.648.088
6 Seguridad y Convivencia	**84.573**	**118.681**	**106.574**	**75.717**	**385.546**
21 Cualificación Y Fortalecimiento Institucional Para La Seguridad Ciudadana	19.021	28.696	18.139	10.922	76.777
22 Desarrollo Normativo Y Fortalecimiento De La Acción Coordinada Entre Las Autoridades De Policía Y La Ciudadanía	1.173	2.441	1.834	1.400	6.848
23 Promoción De La Solidaridad Y Compromiso Para La Convivencia Ciudadana	29.494	46.527	46.653	28.254	150.928
24 Fomento Al Buen Uso Del Tiempo Libre Y El Espacio Público	22.449	28.037	28.923	26.073	105.482
25 Prevención De Riesgos Y Atención De Emergencias	12.436	12.980	11.025	9.069	45.511
7 Eficiencia Institucional	**261.183**	**190.995**	**137.344**	**106.314**	**695.835**
26 Fortalecimiento De La Descentralización	40.157	45.927	43.666	43.803	173.553
27 Modernización Y Fortalecimiento De La Gestión Pública	212.400	136.118	90.763	60.261	499.542
28 Modernización Del Sistema Financiero Del Distrito	8.626	8.950	2.914	2.250	22.740
Total Prioridades	**2.766.264**	**3.558.928**	**3.926.916**	**3.293.421**	**13.545.528**

POT I—Whereas the PDD allows a mayor to define their urban agenda for several years, the POT represents an opportunity to influence urban and social development in Bogotá over a significantly larger period (at least three mayoral terms after inception). This was an opportunity that Peñalosa certainly wanted to seize, and he began the process

of creating the POT in his first year in office. As with the PDD, the POT, which was approved in July 2000 prioritizes public space and physical works as well as some social policies such as education. Similar to the PDD there is little indication of participation, other than the processes which went into the document's creation (see chapter 2 for the distinction between participation in planning and planning for participation). There are approximately 24 mentions or references to participation in the entire document of 268 pages, and most of these are vague and/or ambiguous (e.g., "inform citizens about progress of the POT" and "facilitate community participation").

PDD II: *Bogotá Mejor Para Todos (2016-2020)*—The second Peñalosa administration's PDD has many similarities with the PDD from his first administration (including controversial items such as development of the Van der Hammen Reserve). To a large extent, it prioritizes mobility and public works and generally uses language of creating a more inclusive and equal city (especially for vulnerable groups). However, in terms of participation, there is little indication that people should actually play a significant role in decisions. The final document includes approximately 19 uses of "participation." One of the main "pillars" of the document is "urban democracy." However, the description of this concept is almost entirely concentrated on providing public space, amenities, and services for all. But there is not a strong sense of democracy in how these would be created or provided. A close inspection of the specific actions towards urban democracy confirms that the vision of democracy here is very limited. In almost all cases, the government is responsible for making decisions and implementing actions for example, regarding the planting of trees article 71 states:

The government will regulate the planting of trees in public space, in a way that all plantings are approved and in line with regulations and relevant authorities.

Other articles which fall under the heading of "urban democracy" have a similar tone wherein the government is clearly the decision-maker. Furthermore, article 24 is about creating a monitoring and reporting system to control spaces that are prone to informal land uses. Here the term "informal" is equated with "illegal," the type of approach decried by the aforementioned Peñalosa critics.

POT II attempted but rejected—In his second term, Peñalosa again had the opportunity to create a new POT for the city. His predecessor, Gustavo Petro had tried to create one by decree, but it was overturned. Before that, mayor Samuel Moreno Rojas had talked of revising the POT but little progress was made. In essence, the city was governed by a POT initially created in the first Peñalosa administration but significantly revised under Mockus in 2003. For the first few years of his second mayoral term, Peñalosa's administration worked to create a plan and in 2019 a proposal for the new POT was released. However, in November, after intense debate, the city council voted down the proposal meaning that creating a POT for the city would be up to his successor Claudia López.

Although it was rejected, Peñalosa's proposal reveals some of the same tendencies with regard to participation (or lack thereof) as the other plans. There is an emphasis on mobility, parks, and public spaces but as in the PDD, the discussion of "democracy" seems to concern equality of infrastructure and amenity provision rather than actual participation. References to participation are extremely rare and only amount to around 11 (in a document of 381 pages). The proposed POT was highly controversial

and criticized on a number of grounds such as its numerous neoliberal elements (such as creating special zones for "orange economy" activities and tourism), failure to recognize the lack of completion of the first POT, unpopular plans to expand the city to the north, especially into the Thomas van der Hammen Reserve (La República 2019) but also insufficient participation (Semana 2019).

Stakeholder perspectives on Peñalosa and participation

A final source of data on this subject comes from testimonies of people with direct knowledge and experience of how the Peñalosa administrations operated. Most of this information comes from my interviews, but some others come second-hand from other sources.

When I asked how decisions are made in Bogotá Jorge, a director of a non-profit organization that advocates on issues of mobility, said that they were mostly top-down, especially under the Peñalosa who was in some ways "dictatorial." Sharply critical views were also expressed by two planning experts with long histories of working with and against Peñalosa in both his administrations. Ernesto, a senior architect who has worked in urban planning at various levels of government, also characterized the Peñalosa administration as top-down. He did not hold back his feelings about Peñalosa himself, calling him a "real bastard" for his plans and efforts to expand and develop the northern parts of Bogotá. He also pointed out Peñalosa's extremely low approval ratings during his second term and suggested that he was using public funds and pressuring the media to boost his own image, a claim I heard from several others as well.

Another highly experienced urbanist, Iván, described Peñalosa and his handling of the proposed POT as follows:

> *So, there's no plan to work with the people. If you want participation you have to work with the people, you have to listen, you have to go and see. Here that isn't done. Our mayor is an imperial mayor. Robert Moses. And the law is not something that supports or protects the citizen. The citizen is an obstacle for the state, when they defend themselves, they are obstacles.*

In this quote, we see more accusations of a top-down approach and comparison to Robert Moses, a name with highly negative connotations in the urbanism literature, particularly for his dogmatic and autocratic approach to urban development (Caro 1975). In a later statement, he continued negative comparisons stating "…there are always Robert Moses, there are always Enrique Penalosas, there are always Stalins." Further, he stated that Peñalosa's view of democracy was based more on representative than participatory democracy stating:

> *Peñalosa says 'I won, so I can do what I want. And when I do whatever I want, I am representing those who elected me. And if someone doesn't agree, it's because they lost, there's nothing doing.' There's no alternative for the loser.*

Other highly critical views came from an activist and industrial designer who described Peñalosa as "authoritarian" and "arrogant." He alleged that the mayor was out of touch with and insensitive to the needs and wants of the people as the following quote demonstrates:

When you tell Bogotanos 'I'm going to make TransMilenio on La Séptima, I'm going to make TransMilenio on 68, Avenida Boyacá, over here, over there, up to Monserrate, whatever…' People understand what that means, and they don't want any more TransMilenio. It's something that's very anti-democratic. And despite the fact that nobody wants the system, the mayor, who has gone promoting it around the world, who earns money from this, who takes immoral income from it says, 'no people, I don't give a damn what you think, I'm going to make more TransMilenio.'

Such critical views can also be found in press articles by activists or opponents of Peñalosa (Castiblanco and El Chapín Prensa 2019). These perspectives come from outspoken critics or opponents so it was not surprising that they would attack Peñalosa. This is not to say that their critiques are invalid because they come from a position of opposition. They could criticize Peñalosa on a number of grounds but the fact that they chose to highlight participation is significant. However, I also encountered several government *funcionarios* (one was currently working in the government and the other had been but was working as an independent consultant at the time of the interview) who expressed similar views although in less critical ways.

Nelson, an engineer who previously worked in the *Secretaría Distrital de Movilidad* recognized that on multiple occasions Peñalosa tried to impose his agenda on communities. However, rather than dictatorial or authoritarian, Nelson argued that Peñalosa was simply bad at communication and selling his projects. Essentially, if he had done a better job of announcing and explaining things, many problems would have been avoided. Furthermore, not everyone views this type of leadership in a negative way. Luis,

a *funcionario* in the TransMilenio, described how the new TransMiCable was planned and implemented in Ciudad Bolívar. For him, this was crucial to successfully developing a new project in one of the poorest areas of the city. Unlike other administrations which were too deliberative or corrupt, he portrayed the Peñalosa administration as decisive and effective.

> *…the previous administration put together the money to make the cable, but only the cable. This administration arrived and said 'we aren't just going to make the cable. We will develop a series of actions so that… something is being created. A gymnasium…a football pitch… a playground for kids, some artwork, in another an office of tourism. In another a multi-purpose sports field.'*
>
> *In each place, we brought people together. And it was a fight. In each place, the people were like 'no, no we don't want…' But the mayor was like 'I'm going to decide what we have in each place.'… 'I'm going to say what goes in each place, and everybody from this entity is responsible for this, and that…' And the government bought the properties. The department of sports was responsible for making the gymnasiums and football pitches, this was a lot of construction. Some are already done, and others are under construction …Okay, and so this is the last station—the lookout point, but in others, we plan to construct as well. They are buying properties, and they will knock down whatever is there to construct a lookout with a pier, something pretty and touristic. It's a zone that isn't that pretty.*

These quotes suggest that the plans of the government were not necessarily in line with the wishes and needs of the people, but through a government knows best approach the

project went ahead. The last sentence and other statements from the interview suggest that these sorts of actions could be justified because they occurred in an impoverished neighborhood.

TransMiCable

The TransMiCable is a recent addition to the mobility system of Bogotá. It was constructed during the time of my research and is an interesting illustration of how mobility decisions are made and how they can reshape entire areas of a city. Unfortunately, time constraints and lack of contacts in this part of the city prevented me from doing a thorough analysis of this case, but here I include a few observations about the case.

Following the successful implementation and positive reception of gondola/cable car systems in other cities such as Medellín, there were calls over the last few decades to implement such a system in Bogotá (Brand and Dávila 2011; Rivadulla and Bocarejo 2014; Vecchio 2017). This would not be completely unprecedented as Bogotá has had a cable car system (*teleférico*) to Monserrate since the 1950s. However, this is primarily for touristic purposes and not a major component of the city's mobility system. Instead, proposals were for a new system that would connect geographically isolated and underserved parts of the city, particularly the poorer neighborhoods of the south. As the quote by Luis suggests, the cable was viewed not only as a means of improving mobility but rather as a way to radically change the areas in which it would be constructed. Indeed some of the literature on cable cars describes these projects as urban transformation or urban renewal, whether in a positive or pejorative manner (Bocarejo, Velásquez, and Galarza 2014; Brand 2013; Cordoba, Stanley, and Stanley 2014).

Serious plans for the system began in 2012 under Mayor Petro who included the cable in his PDD, but disagreements with the city council meant that construction did not actually begin until a few years later (El Espectador 2020). The system which runs

from the Portal Tunal in the south of the city to three different stations as it rises up the hills in the Ciudad Bolívar neighborhood, finally opened at the end of 2018 under mayor Peñalosa.

Figure 24: View of TransMiCable cars and pillar (Barto920203 2019)

On my third visit to Bogotá, I took the TransMiCable (as it was called to show complementarity with TransMilenio) three different times from the Portal Tunal to the very last station (*Mirador del Paraíso*). Again, I did not conduct significant research on this project (for example, I did not conduct interviews). However, during these

visits, I was able to observe several ways in which the project is indeed transforming that part of the city.

Figure 25: Houses painted as part of the TransMiCable project (own photo)

This photo shows a group of houses that were pained in bright colors as part of the TransMiCable project. According to Luis, this was part of the broader urban transformation project. He shared that the government gave residents the paint (which would ensure uniformity) and brushes, but it was up to them to do the work. This was a way to increase ownership of the project but also to make the area neater and cleaner from the cabins (in fact he asked if I was familiar with broken windows theory). He went on to describe many other efforts at community outreach related to the project including presentations and visits by school children, mural paintings, movie screenings, and many others—with the goal of informing people about the system and ensuring they would take ownership of it but also making the area more appealing and attractive for visitors and tourists.

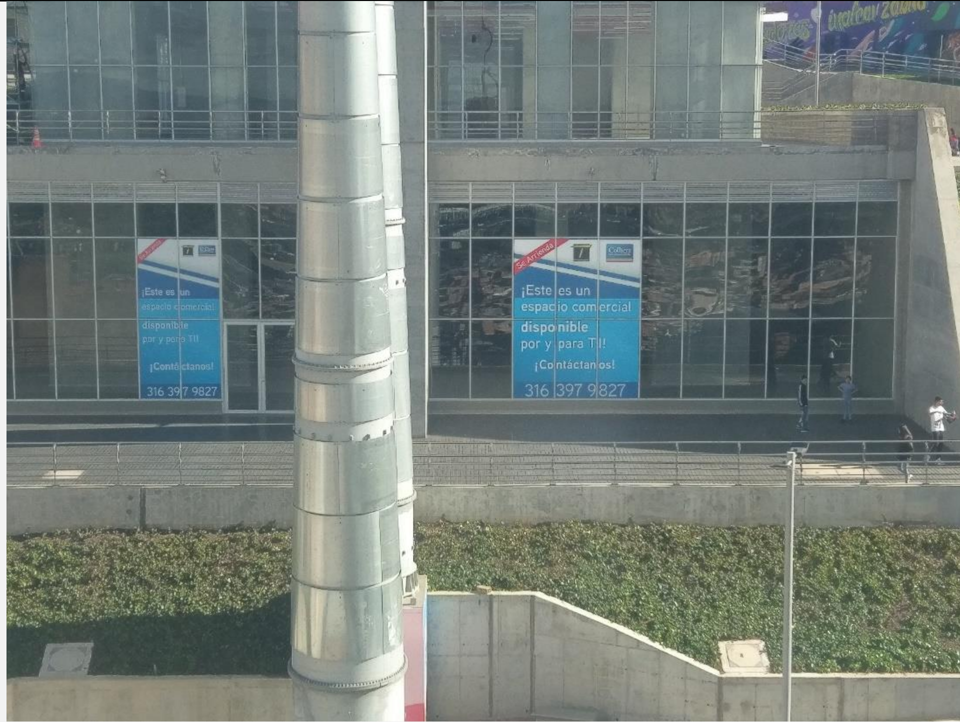


Figure 26: TransMiCable station advertising commercial space (own photo)

Another interesting observation can be seen in this photo. It shows the bottom of one of the stations with a large sign reading "This is a commercial space available for you! Contact us!" This suggests the public-private nature of the project. I do not know how the space is being used now, but the suggestion of using the station for commercial purposes certainly raised questions about the type of neoliberal urban development that critics accused Peñalosa of promoting.

Figure 27: Storefronts at top of TransMiCable (note the top one is for a hostel in an area that most likely would not have had much demand prior to the TransMiCable project)

Another possible transformation was visible upon exiting the final station, Mirador del Paraíso. As the photo shows there is a sign for a hotel/hostel named "*Hostal el Paraiso*." Since I had not visited the area before the station was created, I cannot be sure that this was a new addition but given the nature and location of the neighborhood, it did not seem like a place where many people would come to stay. The presence of this business suggests that there is an influx of tourism in a previously non-touristic area. Several other signs about properties for sale or rent suggested the area might be undergoing changes related to the system as well.

One final observation concerns an impact at the micro-economic/micro-social level. Upon exiting the station, my partner and I were approached by a woman from one of the shops in the photo. She was carrying a small replica of one of the TransMiCable cars which appeared to be made from wood or leather. This was obviously a type of touristic souvenir which could not have existed in that place prior to the station's creation.

The final outcomes and impacts of this system are still emerging and the system deserves further attention which some scholars have begun (Garnica-Quiroga 2021; Padilla 2020; Sarmiento et al. 2020).

Outcomes

Peñalosa's lack of interest in (or perhaps opposition to) participation meant that little change occurred in this regard during either of his administrations. In his first term, the consequences of little participation were not that great, and he was able to accomplish his major priorities such as the TransMilenio and getting his POT approved. However, throughout his second administration, he faced significant opposition which eventually prevented him from accomplishing many of his signature initiatives such as building a TransMilenio trunk line on the *Carrera Séptima*, developing the Thomas van der Hammen Reserve and creating a new POT for the city (Pinella 2019; Sotomayor et al. 2022). In each of these fights, as well as the attempted *revocatoria*, insufficient participation was cited by those opposing him.

Of course, each of these fights was complex and had its own intricacies, but I suggest that the fact that lack of participation was part of the arguments against the projects is significant. First, members of the public were dissatisfied with Peñalosa's approach to participation. Second, by his second term, participation had become solidified as an expectation in the city. Policy feedback theory posits that once policies are created, they shape subsequent political processes as an additional layer to the settings

within which policymaking occurs (Mettler and SoRelle 2018). In this case, as the prevalence of participation in policies increased, including specific ones such as *Ley Estatutaria 1757 de 2015* and *Decreto 503 De 2011* it becomes harder and harder to neglect participation.

This is not to suggest that insufficient participation was the only reason for opposition to Peñalosa. For example, other factors such as his alignment with former president Uribe, the revelation that he does not actually hold a PhD, and questions raised over conflicts of interest certainly hurt his favorability.[27] However, I suggest that it was a significant problem in his urban development strategy and an attack which opposition frequently launched at him, sometimes successfully.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the evolving role of mayors in Latin America. In recent decades Latin American mayors have risen in prominence due to several factors including significant urbanization (throughout the 20th century) and decentralization (especially in the last few decades of the 20th century). Rather than weak appointed political actors who served short terms and had little influence, mayors today (especially in large cities) are often high-profile politicians. In fact, the mayor of Bogotá is described as the second most important political position in Colombia. Among other aspects of

[27] According to Invamer (2021) polling we see two very different stories across the two different Peñalosa administrations. In the first one, he began with about 36% approval rating which oscillated significantly during his time in office including a dive to 18% before soaring to 70% at the end of his term. His second term is much more stable. He started at about the same place with 35% approval with little downs (19%) and ups but never again reaches the 35% with which he started.

urban governance, mayors today play a vital role in implementing participation. Simply put, mayors are pivotal in whether participation is implemented in cities. If mayors possess the political will, capacity, and resources, they can increase and enhance participation.

One of the most important policy sectors where mayors exert influence is mobility infrastructure and related land use. This is not only an area that affects urban residents on a daily basis, it also involves significant resources and also allows mayors to put their symbolic stamp on a city. As mayor of Bogotá, Enrique Peñalosa certainly recognized the potential in this policy sector and attempted to reshape the city according to his own urban model. As previously mentioned in chapter 4, his motivations for these efforts were multiple. Some literature on Peñalosa generally portrays him as a heroic urbanist who helped democratize the city by making mobility and public space more egalitarian. On the other hand, critics depict him as a modern-day Robert Moses who used such projects to mold the city in ways that would exclude certain groups and benefit certain interest groups (and perhaps line his own pockets). However, these two perspectives tend to overlook a key component of urban democracy—participation.

To address this gap, this chapter analyzed the words and policies of Peñalosa to show that his vision of urban democracy fundamentally and consistently lacks participation. My combination of discourse analysis and key policy documents combined with stakeholder interviews show that urban democracy for him consists almost entirely of the government providing things to the population (such as better infrastructure and public space), with essentially no consideration for how decisions are made or how things

are delivered. As in other areas of this dissertation we see only a partial realization of right to the city which fundamentally lacks the component of participation.

Chapter 6: Implementing limited e-participation on mobility policy in Bogotá

Implementing limited e-participation on mobility policy in Bogotá

Introduction

One of the most significant recent developments in participation is the emergence of e-participation—the engagement of citizens through information and communication technologies (ICT) in public decision-making, administration and service delivery so as to make it participatory, inclusive, and deliberative (UN DESA 2020). Based on research in Bogotá Colombia from 2016 to 2019, this study reveals important dimensions of how new technological forms of communication and participation are incorporated into existing dynamics of the relationship between government and civil society.

I show that despite optimism about the revolutionary potential of e-participation on the issue of mobility, actual shifts in power under center-right Mayor Enrique Peñalosa were limited. While the government was compelled by international norms, policy reforms, and political pressure, to give the appearance of participation, it operationalized e-participation in ways that at best share only marginal power and sought to maintain control over mobility policy in the city.

Theoretical framework

E-Participation

In recent decades the concept of participation has become increasingly prevalent around the world and across the political spectrum. Initially pioneered by leftist political actors and parties (Baiocchi and Gies 2019; Van Cott 2008), today, participation can be found in numerous policies of governments from the left, but also neoliberal regimes (Guarneros-Meza and Geddes 2010) and the center and center-right (Hetland 2014). Of

course, these actors do not necessarily understand or promote participation in the same ways. Goldfrank (2020a) finds that while leftist actors framed participation as a means to promote deepened participatory democracy, more centrist or conservative technocratically-oriented actors advocated for participation to improve government efficiency and reduce corruption. Geddes (2010) writes that neoliberal regimes may commonly promote participation, but they do it in a more top-down fashion which is more like a "social management strategy" than a means of empowering citizens or deepening democracy.

Participation also features prominently in the demands of civil society organizations and best practice recommendations of multilateral institutions such as the World Bank (Mayka and Abbott Forthcoming; World Bank Group 2009, 2018) and the United Nations.[28] Participation has become a dominant paradigm in wealthy countries in the Global North, but also poorer nations in the Global South (Baiocchi and Ganuza 2016). Some authors describe this rise as a "participatory revolution" (Lee et al. 2015; C. Smith 1996). The normative consensus about participation forces politicians and government officials to embrace participation, or at least pay lip service to it (Mayka and Rich 2021), and a failure to provide institutional forms of participation can result in negative political consequences such as resistance and protests that have occurred in Latin American cities over the past decade (Paget-Seekins 2015).

[28] For example, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals include language about participation. Goal 11 titled "sustainable cities and communities" includes a target (11.3) stating "by 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human development planning and management in all countries."

While there are many ways in which people participate in society, in the present study I follow the definition of Baoicchi and Ganuza (2016) who describe participation as "an instrument, a device that is both technical and social, that organizes specific social relations between the government and those it is addressed to." Although there is an intuitive connection between participation and democracy, the relationship is complex and influenced by a number of factors. Many authors frame participation as a key to "deepening democracy" which is an alternative to top-down control by governments and experts. Instead, it describes processes that overcome conventional institutional forms to enhance the responsiveness and effectiveness of the state while also making it more fair, participatory, and accountable (Fung and Wright 2001, 2003). Based on successful case studies from both the Global North and Global South Fung and Wright delineate the following principles for deepened democracy:

1.) Focus on specific, tangible problems—unlike social movements or political parties they focus on practical problems such as providing public safety, training workers, or constructing municipal budgets.
2.) Bottom-up participation—Involve ordinary people affected by these problems and officials close to them. The most directly affected people should be involved and the idea that complex technical problems are best solved by experts should be eschewed. Experts still have important roles to play, but they do not have exclusive power to make decisions.
3.) A deliberative development of solutions to these problems—participants listen to each other's positions and generate group choices after consideration.

4.) Action is tied to discussion—although deliberation is an important component, successful cases lead to significant and tangible actions.

As mentioned, e-participation means engaging the public through ICTs. According to the biennial United Nations E-Government Survey, e-participation comprises three main components: e-information, e-consultation, and e-decision-making (UN DESA 2020). Conceptually, e-participation can be understood as a sub-section of the broader concepts of e-governance, e-government, and e-democracy. Alternative terms, such as digital participation, are also common. For a full explanation and distinctions see Van Dijk & Hacker (2018).

E-participation can be implemented in essentially any policy sector and can include a wide range of actions and activities such as online voting, petitions, crowdsourcing, and discussions that allow for interaction between (and among) users and government entities. Scholars in various disciplines laud e-participation for its potential to transform the way people interact with each other and with social institutions (Boudjelida, Mellouli, and Lee 2016; Leith and Morison 2004; Macintosh 2004; Pogrebinschi 2017). However, Fung et al. (2013) describe six different ways in which ICTs may transform politics and the relationships between citizens and governments, some of which are genuinely transformative and empowering while the others are not. Thus e-participation is not an automatic step toward deepened democracy. Instead, the directions e-participation can take as well as the outcomes and impacts are contingent and depend on contextual factors as well as implementation.

Enthusiasm about the potential for ICT to enable participation began in the 1990s with the initial stages of the internet and what can be termed “Web 1.0.” In these early

days, the internet consisted mainly of a collection of web pages connected by hyperlinks. Information flow was one-way, meaning that users were mostly passive and had little scope for interaction. Nonetheless, optimists hoped that new developments would increase access to information as well as improve government efficiency and transparency (Bryan, Tambini, and Tsagarousianou 2002). However, subsequent research showed that despite some improvements, the full potential of ICT-enabled democracy during Web 1.0 did not materialize due to social and cultural factors, as well as insufficiencies in design and implementation (Breuer and Welp 2014).

In the early 2000s, a second wave of enthusiasm began around "Web 2.0"—a more interactive and participatory internet characterized by user-generated content, online identity creation, and relational networking such as social media, blogging, and wikis (Le Blanc 2020). In terms of e-participation and deepening democracy the most important distinguishing characteristic of Web 2.0 was bi-directional information flow between citizens and states, meaning users were no longer simply passive receivers of information on a "read-only" internet, but could also interact and contribute their own ideas without traditional limitations of time and space (Milakovich 2014). Rather than simply allowing users to view information online, new websites and platforms enabled them to give feedback, communicate (either in real time or asynchronous), and share information with other users. Significant examples of Web 2.0-enabled participation include online consultations on policy drafts, collaborative mapping, feedback on public services, e-petitions, and participatory budgeting (Le Blanc 2020). As the Ngram below shows, the term e-participation emerges in English literature in the mid-1990s then rises significantly by the end of the century.

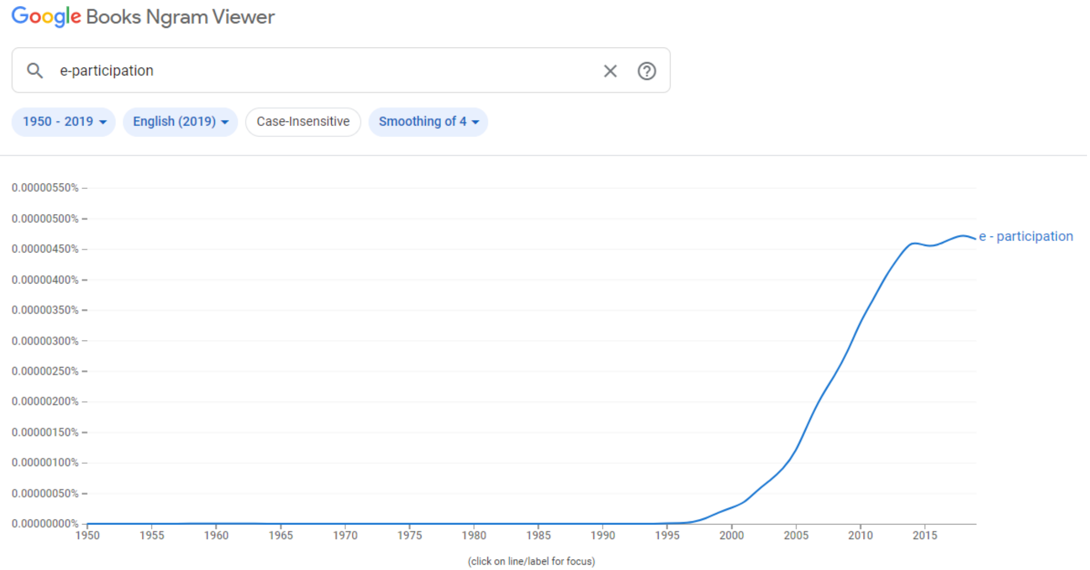


Figure 28: Google Ngram of "e-participation"

However, a review of the literature on Web 2.0, social media, social networking, and their use by governments by Magro (2012) finds that despite initial optimism, Web 2.0 also failed to automatically deliver the expected progress as governments could not keep up with the general public and their use of new technologies. Furthermore, governments did not develop new organizational structures and policies that could adequately implement and manage Web 2.0 applications. Other research has identified multiple obstacles for e-participation (Mulgan et al. 2017).

A commonly-cited, and highly-relevant issue is the digital divide (or divides)—the disparate access to the internet and related technologies based on social, economic, geographic, or cultural factors. Digital divides may exacerbate existing inequalities in society and/or create new ones (Anduiza, Jensen, and Jorba 2012). Based on a meta-synthesis of empirical research, Santini and Carvalho (2019) find that socially privileged groups, such as those that are more educated, have better access to the internet and are thus more able and likely to engage in e-participation. Hopes that digital divides would

simply fade away with development appear overly optimistic, as despite increasing internet use in many parts of the world, numerous digital divides have persisted (Warf 2014, 2018). In fact, van Deursen and van Dijk (2014) suggest that as internet use becomes omnipresent, conceptualizations of digital divides should shift from access and knowledge to internet usage. That is, rather than simply asking how much people use the internet one should ask how they are using it. They show that some marginal groups such as people with disabilities and those with lower levels of education may actually access the internet at greater rates than the general population but do so in different ways than other sectors. Thus, understanding online engagement should go beyond a binary of access versus no access to understand how people are using the internet. In any case, such explanations emphasize the population of potential e-participation users and how the government accounts for differences within it.

A more critical set of explanations focuses squarely on the government's inability to implement e-participation. Some governments appear stuck in traditional models of constraint and information hoarding (Magro 2012). Genuine robust e-participation involves providing citizens meaningful opportunities to participate in government and policymaking processes. A review by Steinbach et al. (2019), however, finds that e-participation in many governments is limited to sending information and self-promotion due to a number of institutional and technological factors including inadequate designs, departmental rivalries, lack of resources and capacities. Such obstacles can produce cases of symbolic or token e-participation. For example, Breuer and Welp (2014) describe cases such as the *Senador Virtual* in Chile where a team of lawyers, journalists, and a secretary selected certain (generally uncontroversial) law projects about which

information was provided on a digital platform to allow for debate by the general public. Users could then vote on the project and the result of the vote would be published and compared to the voting results in the Senate. However, because these results were non-binding, they appeared to serve more as public relations initiatives than actual participation. A similar example was the Peruvian Parliament's website which offered different public discussion forums. However, engagement on this site was rather low and unmoderated and the impact on formal processes of political decision-making was unclear.

Although no government has perfected e-participation, these symbolic or token examples can be contrasted with others which give citizens more significant opportunities for engagement (Copeland 2017). Two examples here are illustrative: First, since 2009 the Brazilian parliament has implemented multiple digital tools for citizen participation and interaction. For example, an e-democracy platform was created with the objective of becoming a social networking platform with virtual communities to encourage engagement and participation in the formulation and discussion of legislative proposals. People can make suggestions to legislative proposals in progress, prepare drafts of bills collaboratively, attend virtual public hearings, and share information (de Barros, Bernardes, and Rehbein 2016; de Faria 2013; Faria and Rehbein 2016). While Bernardes and Bandeira (2016) point to ongoing obstacles to full participation, they find this platform and other tools (including digital public hearings and active social media) allow effective engagement which surpasses the efforts of other governments such as that of the United Kingdom.

At the city level, a prominent example of e-participation is the *Decide Madrid* (Madrid Decides) platform in Spain. Launched in 2015 by leftist leaders and political factions which coalesced following the 15M movement, the platform follows detailed guidelines and procedures. It allows citizens to discuss and debate policies, propose projects of their own, vote in polls, engage in participatory budgeting, and give inputs on various policy processes on an *ad hoc* basis all of which can be translated into policy. This can be done online or in 26 citizen attention centers around the city. If ideas and proposals from these actions receive enough support on the platform, they can lead to binding policy changes (Royo, Pina, and Garcia-Rayado 2020). For example, a 2015 sustainability proposal known as Madrid 100% Sustainable passed the threshold for support and led to policy actions. The people of Madrid also voted in favor of a single ticket system for public transport and significantly contributed to the renovation plans for urban spaces including the Plaza de España (Navarro 2019).

The platform still faces obstacles to full robust participation. For example, the successful projects mentioned above are the exceptional cases while the vast majority of initiatives do not meet required thresholds of support and thus remain at the level of discussion.[29] Furthermore, there are concerns that the platform may skew participation in favor of certain majority issues while neglecting ones that only affect minority populations (Cantador, Cortés-Cediel, and Fernández 2020). Nonetheless, *Decide Madrid* is considered a global benchmark for e-participation and in 2018 was one of the winners

[29] The initial threshold for support was 2% of all eligible Madrid voters. However, because few projects were meeting this standard, the threshold was lowered to 1%. This did not seem to instantly or significantly increase the number of successful projects. However, to me, it suggests that the government was serious about making the platform work and was willing to make changes to encourage participation.

of the United Nations Public Service Award (Royo et al. 2020). The initiative has also inspired similar initiatives in other cities (Alonso and Barbeito 2016; Peña-López 2017).

Neither of these examples has answered all the questions about e-participation and both have room for improvement, but they both demonstrate a more serious commitment by the government and feature intentional designs that promote maximum participation. In some cases, this has resulted in concrete actions. This results in broader and more meaningful engagement by the public.

Another critical explanation comes from Castells' (2007) warning that governments and corporate media have also invested heavily in new technologies and use them in efforts to increase power and control over society. Rather than finding governments unable to effectively implement e-participation, a number of studies argue that some governments seek to use it to further their own agendas. Åström et al. (2012) and (Linde and Karlsson 2013) show that e-participation has been implemented in many authoritarian and non-democratic countries in Latin America and Eastern Europe. Rather than enhancing democracy and improving government, implementation of e-participation in these settings is driven by international norms and need for legitimation and it can actually serve to reinforce the dominance of incumbent regimes. Johnson and Kolko (2010) show that in Post-Soviet states, governments use subtle online methods to co-opt participatory modes of communication and social organization to advance their agendas. Hoffman (2014) argues that since the early days of the internet, the Cuban government has attempted to control and limit access through a variety of actions such as blocking or sabotaging certain sites and sanctioning certain users, and King et al. (2017) suggest that the Chinese government deploys large-scale strategies to manipulate and divert public

discussion online. Even in settings that are generally regarded as more democratic such as the United States, fears of government surveillance can have a "chilling effect" on people's online activities and stifle minority political views (Stoycheff 2016). Concerns about such issues, as well as increasing disinformation can often combine with general mistrust of government, inhibiting e-participation in many settings (Meneses et al. 2017). In Colombia, online initiatives have been hampered by strong bi-directional mistrust between the government and citizens (Berrío-Zapata and Berrío-Gil 2017). Finally, e-participation often replaces or combines with other, older forms of participation. Touchton et al. (2019) show how the addition of e-participation can alter existing forms of participatory budgeting in Brazilian cities. For example, they find it can lead to a shift away from citizen-generated ideas and a lack of public deliberation over projects. The scope for participation is reduced as governments provide options from which citizens can choose.

Based on a meta-analysis of empirical studies of e-participation platforms Santini & Carvalho (2019) suggest a new "participatory despotism" a reference to, but inversion of "democratic despotism" described by Alexis de Tocqueville. Instead of a majority that overpowers and silences minorities, they suggest that a minority (e.g., educated, wealthy, politically motivated actors) may dominate online participatory mechanisms to the detriment of the majority of the population.

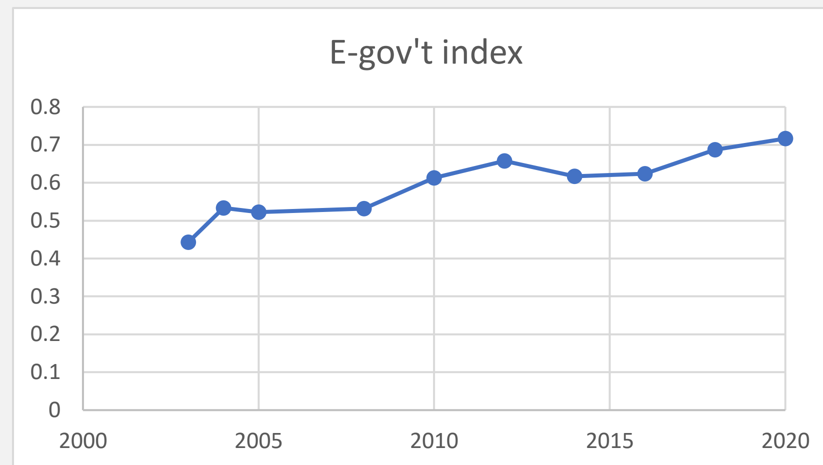
E-participation in context

Geographically, e-participation first appeared in Europe and North America, then later emerged in developing countries along with the increase of internet use and general e-government development (Le Blanc 2020). Today there is a wide range of e-participation initiatives and significant variation in levels of implementation across Latin America (Gascó-Hernandez 2007; Pogrebinschi 2017; Warf 2014). Colombia, despite not having leftist governments at the national level has experienced waves of participation since the early 1990s. The 1991 Constitution was an important milestone in terms of legislation and discourse about participation which paved the way for a number of new participatory mechanisms (Peruzzotti 2012; Silva 2009). In terms of e-participation, Colombia is generally considered one of the more advanced countries in Latin America (Bouzas-Lorenzo and Mahou-Lago 2015; Porrúa 2013), and according to the two latest UN E-Government Surveys the country is classified as "very high" on the E-participation Index (UN DESA 2020).

Breakout box: Colombia in the UN E-Government Surveys over the years

Since the early 2000s, the UN DESA has been measuring development of e-government around the world. This survey originally measured "e-government readiness" but beginning in 2008 it shifted to "e-government development." The focus and measurements included in the reports have varied over time, but there have been two measurements that are of use to my research: the "e-government development index" and the "e-participation index." These scores are composites of multiple factors that combine to tell how well a country is doing on each of these aspects. Of course, some limitations should be recognized such as the inherent subjectivity in such measurements and the fact that the survey does not significantly consider the challenges faced by e-participation initiatives (Le Blanc 2020). Also, the surveys are generally focused on the country-level while my research is concerned primarily with Bogotá. Nonetheless, the surveys provide useful pictures of how e-government and e-participation change over time.

In terms of e-government (which comprises three different components—telecommunications infrastructure, human capital, and online services), Colombia consistently ranks in the upper half of world ranking and is consistently one of the better countries in the Latin American region. The evolution of e-government in the country can be seen in the following chart from the most recent survey:



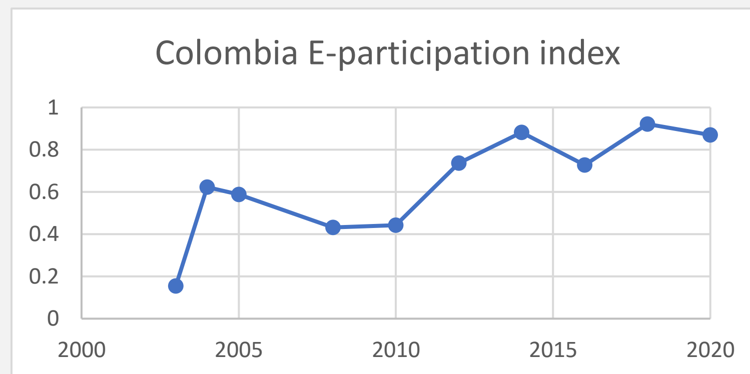
The chart shows a general rise in e-government in Colombia since the early 2000s. There are, however, several sharp upticks as well as a decline from 2012 to 2014.

In terms of global rankings, the following table shows that Colombia is generally in the upper half, but never ranks better than 31st. The country does fluctuate up and down in world rankings, but it is not easy to discern how much this is an effect of change within the country itself or changes in other countries. Beginning with the 2016 report, UN DESA began categorizing countries into four groups based on their E-government development index (Very High, High, Middle, and Low). In the three reports since that time, Colombia has been classified as “High.”

Table 6: Colombia E-Government Ranking

Year	Colombia World E-gov't ranking
2003	57
2004	44
2005	54
2008	52
2010	31
2012	43
2014	50
2016	57
2018	61
2020	67

E-participation comprises measurements about three different stages information, consultation, and decision-making. The e-participation index for Colombia across all reports is shown in the following chart from the most recent survey:



This chart shows much greater variation over the past two decades. Colombia began the century with very low presence of e-participation but now ranks much higher. However, it should be noted that this has not been a perfectly linear progression. There have been several periods of significant decline, suggesting that development of e-participation is not a purely cumulative process.

Year	World E-participation Ranking
2003	28
2004	10
2005	10
2008	25
2010	26
2012	6
2014	11
2016	27
2018	23
2020	27
Average	19.3

Table 7: Colombia E-Participation Ranking

As the table shows, Colombia ranks higher in terms of e-participation. The average across all reports is 19, placing it on the upper end of all countries. In the two latest reports (2018 and 2020), there is a classification system of Very High-High-Middle-Low for EPI (E-Participation Index). In these reports, Colombia ranks as "Very High." Of the three components, Colombia tends to score lower in decision-making than in consultation and information. However, the scores vary widely from report to report, so I do not put too much stock into this finding.

Researchers attribute the country's relatively high development of e-participation to national-level initiatives that created suitable conditions. In 2000 the national government approved the *Agenda de Conectividad* (Connectivity Agenda) which sought to promote the use of ICT to increase competitiveness, modernize public institutions and generalize access to information. In 2008 a national-level strategy known as *Gobierno en*

Línea (Government On-Line) was launched to make the government more efficient and transparent (MINTIC 2021). In 2010, the *Plan Vive Digital* (Live Digital Plan) was created to expand internet connectivity across Colombia's diverse geographies and social groups (MINTIC 2011). In the first four years of the plan's implementation, broadband connections were increased, the number of municipalities with access to high-speed internet grew from 700 to 1,078 and the number of community internet kiosks in rural areas increased from around 2,000 to over 7,000 (Garcia et al. 2020). Although participation and deepened democracy were not the primary goals of these programs, which focused more on development and economic competitiveness, increased access, and use of internet by government and citizens created conditions that were conducive for e-participation.

A prominent and relatively successful Colombian example of e-participation is the *Urna de Cristal* (Crystal Ballot Box)—a platform launched in 2010 combining Web 2.0 technologies with more traditional media (e.g., TV, radio, telephone lines, and SMS) to allow citizens to participate on various policy issues. Within a few years of launching, the platform had reached millions of citizens with messages, received hundreds of thousands of website visits, and had nearly one hundred thousand followers on social media (Líppez-De Castro and García Alonso 2016; Parra Beltran 2015). While the limits and weaknesses of these initiatives, especially their ability to provide meaningful opportunities for decision-making, have been documented (Berrío-Zapata and Berrío-Gil 2017; Silva-Arroyave 2021), Colombia is still considered a leader in e-participation within the Latin America region.

However, with some exceptions (Líppez-De Castro and García Alonso 2016; Martínez 2019), much of the literature on e-participation focuses on the national level, and less is known about the experiences of e-participation at the city level. More research is needed to understand local and sub-national instances of participation generally and e-participation specifically. These may reflect national trends or may vary significantly. From a political perspective, divergences between national and local levels can result from the relatively decentralized shifts that have occurred in the past three decades. For example, leaders in cities such as Bogotá can often contradict or even oppose the president's agenda. However, some characteristics of e-participation make understanding sub-national experiences crucial. Le Blanc (2020) writes that many e-participation innovations originate at the local level because it can be easier to stimulate participation when citizens' immediate concerns are involved. Furthermore, some new technologies (e.g., GIS coupled with web/mobile functions or gamification) can be most easily used for co-production and co-creation at the local level.

The limited research on e-participation in Bogotá suggests a mixed picture. The LATINNO Database[30], which records democratic innovations across Latin America, identifies 22 instances of e-participation in Bogotá in recent years. The majority of these initiatives come from civil society actors, but some are led by or significantly involve, government entities. However, almost all fail to deliver binding decision-making

[30] This LATINNO project is run by Professor Thamy Pogrebinschi. It documents cases of democratic innovations across Latin America from approximately 1990-2020. This includes several "means": deliberation, direct voting, e-participation, and citizen representation. It also classifies examples by "ends": Accountability, responsiveness, rule of law, political inclusion, and social equality. The LATINNO Project is coordinated by Thamy Pogrebinschi, at the Department of Democracy and Democratization of the WZB Berlin Social Science Center. It is funded by the Open Society Foundations.

(Pogrebinschi 2017). Describing earlier instances of e-participation, Duque Franco (2010) writes that an interactive website created under Mayor Moreno Rojas where citizens could raise concerns and make proposals did not live up to expectations as it was not frequently updated and failed to provide the necessary information and materials for meaningful participation.

Enrique Peñalosa and Mobility Planning in Bogotá

Mobility planning is a historically technocratic matter from which the general public is excluded (Sheller 2018). Although issues related to mobility such as traffic, construction, transport fares, and pollution are frequently debated public concerns, the ability of citizens to influence policy is typically limited (Paget-Seekins and Tironi 2016). This has certainly been the case in Latin America, where planning has for centuries been undemocratic with highly unequal outcomes and impacts (Angotti and Irazábal 2017). However, in recent decades, mobilities have become increasingly "contested" spaces (Blanco et al. 2018), and the ability of powerful actors (often in complex elite constellations) to exert their agendas is being challenged. Across the globe, there have been instances of communities and publics pushing back against mobility infrastructure projects. These include Jane Jacobs' famous fights against Robert Moses in New York City (Gratz 2010) and the struggle of activists and preservationists to resist a riverfront expressway through the French Quarter of New Orleans (Baumbach and Borah 1981), but also lesser-known struggles by people of color to resist destructive projects in their communities (Avila 2014; Bullard and Johnson 1997). Similar resistance has been observed across urban Latin American contexts such as Lima (Strauch et al. 2015), Mexico City (Davis and Flores Dewey 2013), and Santiago (Sagaris 2014). The projects,

issues, and actors involved vary by case, but they all involve the expansion of demands and expectations about who should be involved in urban mobility planning and how. In brief, while mobility planning still remains generally top-down there is increasing pressure for governments to accommodate or at least acknowledge other actors. In recent decades e-participation has been implemented around mobility policies (Coelho, Pozzebon, and Cunha 2021; Nash 2009) and sparked optimism that it can enhance democratic control, giving citizens greater say in how people and things move.

In Bogotá, mobility policy has been primarily top-down, led by government actors seeking to impose their urban models on the city. However, it is important to note changes in political structures—specifically the increasing prominence of mayors. Prior to decentralization reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, the mayor of Bogotá was appointed directly by the president. As a result, the mayor was almost always a distant, practically anonymous person who was more responsive to the president than to Bogotanos. The average time in office was relatively short, typically 1-2 years, which limited their ability to undertake significant projects or policy actions. However, after the direct election of mayors in 1988, as well as subsequent reforms which afforded more autonomy and a longer term in office, the mayor of Bogotá became an increasingly significant position (Dávila 2005). As in other Latin American capital cities, it is said that the mayorship of the Bogotá represents the second most important political position behind the president (Myers and Dietz 2002).

A key figure in Bogotá's urban development is mayor Enrique Peñalosa who made mobility and public space key priorities of his two mayoral terms (1998-2000 & 2016-2019). An aspirational politician, in addition to these terms Peñalosa also served in

congress and made two other unsuccessful bids for mayor, one for senate and one for president. He is once again seeking the presidency in the upcoming 2022 elections (El Tiempo 2022). Throughout these campaigns, he has represented a number of different political parties and factions. Peñalosa began his political career on the center-left with the *Partido Liberal Colombiano* (Colombian Liberal Party) in which his father was a prominent figure, but he has since drifted to the right. He was elected mayor in 1997 as an independent candidate in a shifting Colombian political landscape. Later he joined the nascent center-left *Alianza Verde* (Green Alliance) and in 2015 he was re-elected mayor with support from center-right *Partido Cambio Radical* (Radical Change Party) and the *Partido Conservador Colombiano* (Colombian Conservative Party). His perceived shift to the right, increasing support for the private sector (Eaton 2020), and willingness to align himself with the polarizing right-wing populist ex-president Álvaro Uribe, whose vision of democracy hinged much more on security than participation (Acosta 2006; Chumaceiro and Gallucci 2008) and whose two terms were marked harsh "*mano dura*" security policies and human rights violations, has alienated Peñalosa from former allies on the left and weakened his popularity (Gilbert 2019). These factors have also placed him on the right in a polarized field of candidates for the 2022 presidential elections (Fuquen Leal 2021).

Although Peñalosa is considered a center-right figure within Colombia, internationally he has a reputation as a progressive leader. During and after his time as mayor, Peñalosa who is US-educated and speaks English fluently, presented himself as a champion of public space and non-motorized mobility (Montero 2017). In writings, conferences, and internet videos, he criticizes car-oriented development and calls for

cities to be more people-centered (Peñalosa 2011, 2020). As mayor, he claimed to promote urban democracy by prioritizing public over private interests and giving Bogotanos greater access to city amenities such as parks, public transportation, bike paths, and plazas. However, an analysis of his discourse reveals a limited view of urban democracy in which the government is responsible for providing and ensuring equal access to amenities with little indication that development should be participatory, and that people should be empowered to make decisions. A qualitative analysis of the Peñalosa administration's *Planes de Desarrollo Distrital* (District Development Plans, PDD) and his proposed *Plan de Odenamiento Territorial* (Land Use Plan, POT) shows that he used the terms such as "participation" far less than the other, leftist Bogotá mayors Luis Eduardo Garzón, Samuel Moreno Rojas, Gustavo Petro, and incumbent Claudia López. He also allocated only 1.4% of the budget in his PDD for participation and created fewer opportunities for participation than his predecessors (Martínez 2019). Although the mobility innovations for which he is credited, such as the TransMilenio (Bogotá's famed bus rapid transit system) were framed as people-centric, multiple studies have found that in design and operation the public has little scope for participation (Hunt 2017; Kash and Hidalgo 2014; Paget-Seekins 2015).

Beyond discourse, Peñalosa's record as a democratic urbanist has been questioned by authors who argue that while his urban reforms may have been inclusionary for some, they excluded and persecuted marginalized groups such as informal vendors and homeless populations (Berney 2017; Galvis 2014, 2017; Hunt 2009). Peñalosa was criticized during both mayoral terms for harsh policies and tactics used to "secure" and "recover" urban space. These included increased police operations and demolition of

entire neighborhoods that he considered problematic. Berney (2013) characterizes such inequalities as right to the city for some, but not all, Bogotanos. That is, the right to public space exists, but only if exercised in what officials deemed appropriate, in line with a global neoliberal agenda that favors investment-worthy, stable cities.

Holland's (2015) study of enforcement reveals that Peñalosa's willingness to police informal activities depended not on the strength of the government, but rather on political calculations. She shows that police budgets and number of operations under Peñalosa were much higher than under leftist mayors Garzón, Moreno, and Petro, not because the government was much stronger or wealthier under Peñalosa, but rather that the leftist mayors depended on poor voters to win elections thus practicing "forbearance" to avoid angering crucial sectors of the electorate. Because Peñalosa was not dependent on poor voters, he could more easily crack down on informal populations without major political repercussions.

Thus, as mayor, Peñalosa's discourse and policies related to mobility were not participatory. However, the participatory inertia of several leftist mayors who preceded him, international norms as well as pressure from civil society created expectations and calls for participation that he could not completely ignore. E-participation was one of the means by which his administration attempted to give the appearance of participation while maintaining control over mobility policy.

The PDD for his second term called for "digital government and citizenship" to improve administrative efficiency primarily through the use of ICTs, implementing a model of open government that would promote impactful citizen participation. This prioritization was also expressed by the director of the *Instituto Distrital de la*

Participación y Acción Comunal (District Institute of Community Participation and Action, IDPAC) during an interview:

> *When we arrived as an administration. The elections were in October 2015, and when we started in January 2016—Mayor Penalosa told me—"you can have this institute, but I would like to have participation in which ICT plays an important role." Because the city is more and more active on social networks—connectivity, including processes of participation. When we arrived at the institute, it didn't have this area of activity.*

However, the remainder of this chapter will show that this and other initiatives provided only a thin veneer of participation without ceding significant power or control over mobility policy.

Findings

I studied participation and mobility in Bogotá between 2016 and 2020. This involved review of secondary materials as well as primary data collection during three different periods of field research. Data was collected through ethnographic methods such as in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, but also through what mobility scholars describe as "mobile ethnography" (Cresswell 2011). The present chapter is based on these methods as well as qualitative analysis of websites, online platforms, and social media sites of government agencies in Bogotá. Informed by other case study-based research on participation (Bherer et al. 2016) I purposively selected a small number of

cases which illustrate the principles of e-participation and their limitations as implemented in the Bogotá case.

I focus on online mechanisms such as websites and platforms, that allow users to interact with the government. There are many civil society-led examples of e-participation (Pogrebinschi 2017), which deserve attention in their own right but fall outside the purview of this chapter. This investigation revealed numerous ways in which the concept and discourse of "participation" have spread throughout the agencies concerned with mobility in Bogotá. Essentially all government agencies and institutions of city government have at least basic websites which provide information to the public (Web 1.0). And many have interactive websites (Web 2.0) allowing users to access information, and complete online transactions, and some have additional features such as online chat. Furthermore, most government agencies also have an active social media presence on sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. To illustrate, below is a screenshot from the website of the IDPAC which is titled "Participation Bogotá":

Figure 29: Screenshot IDPAC website captured September 2019

This website suggests various elements of participation. In this single image, we can see the blue hashtag #YOPARTICIPO ("I participate") and in the center of the screen is a virtual chat that allows users to ask questions and receive automated responses. The automatic text begins with "You are already participating!" To the right of the chat is a Facebook plugin that, in this image, is promoting a physical event where youth could meet and engage with IDPAC representatives over hot chocolate in a neighborhood park.

However, despite such suggestions of participation, I find that e-participation is implemented in ways that do not fundamentally enhance democracy. Below I present three examples of e-participation in issues of mobility under the Peñalosa administration. The first two are cases of e-participation that accompany other, non-digital forms of participation while the third is completely digital. I analyze and show their limitations in terms of deepening democracy and empowering residents.

Prudencia

In 2019, the *Secretaría Distrital de Movilidad* (District Secretary of Mobility, SDM) of Bogotá purchased hundreds of new "smart" crosswalk traffic signals and installed them around the city. The new signals would purportedly improve traffic flow and reduce accidents.

Figure 30: New traffic signal installed along La Carrera Séptima (my own photo)

To add an element of participation, the SDM held a voting process over two months to name (or "baptize") the female figure depicted in the lights—a low-stakes form of crowdsourcing. In recent years crowdsourcing has emerged as a common approach in mobility planning (Bregman and Watkins 2014; Liu et al. 2016; Maier 2012). Proponents argue that in addition to generating novel solutions that are highly relevant to the public, crowdsourcing can also be useful in legitimizing and promoting those solutions because they are co-created. However, some attempts at crowdsourcing have resulted in complications and dilemmas for public agencies such as in Great Britain when members of the public were asked to choose a name for a new research vessel and the name "Boaty McBoatface" was the landslide winner. The agency in charge faced a

dilemma about whether to accept the humorous name selected by the public. They ultimately chose to override the public's decision and adopted a different name instead (Taeihagh 2017).

In the case of the new traffic signals, participants could either vote via an SDM website or physically drop a paper ballot in a box located at a number of intersections around the city. They could select one of six potential names *Prudencia*, *Electra*, *Rola*, *Cachaca*, *Tránsito*, *Luz*. In the end, the name *Prudencia* (Prudence) was chosen after winning around 32% of the vote and the SDM held a public press conference to announce the results. In terms of deepening democracy, one positive in this case was that participation was directly tied to action. That is, the name with the highest number of votes was adopted. However, the limitations of this exercise are manifold. First, the naming of a figure on traffic signals is a relatively superficial action. The public was allowed to participate in this largely symbolic decision, but not in more significant decisions such as whether or not to purchase the new lights or where to place them. The SDM justified the project based on expected benefits such as reduced traffic congestion and energy use, but there could be opposing views raised such as the cost of the project or concerns about the connections between smart city technology and state surveillance and control. The government avoided such potential opposition by limiting participation to only selecting a name.

Furthermore, the public was asked to select from among six choices. That is to say, they were given options to choose from, rather than being able to propose their own. As a result, the public was limited in choices and did not even have the opportunity to write in or suggest an alternative option. This ensured that the eventual winner would be

pre-approved by the government and may have frustrated or dissuaded potential participants. And finally, although the online voting process was relatively simple, the perennial issue of digital divides must be considered. With as many as a third of households in Bogotá lacking internet access, many residents would have been unaware of the process and/or unable to access it. Furthermore, internet access in Bogotá is highly uneven with rates above 80% in the most affluent neighborhoods and but only 40-50% in some of the poorer ones (Martínez 2019). The final tally of less than 25,000 online votes, in a city of over 7 million inhabitants, represents only a minuscule, and likely non-representative portion of the entire population.

	Digital	Calle	Total
Prudencia	7.603	35.528	43.131
Electra	3.245	14.591	17.836
Rola	1.411	11.261	12.672
Cachaca	5.123	16.301	21.424
Tránsito	5.177	22.549	27.726
Luz	2.023	10.249	12.272
TOTAL	24.582	110.479	135.061

Figure 31: Results of voting (M. Giraldo 2019)

This process was slightly more democratic than an entirely top-down process wherein the SDM simply chooses a name. However, due to the numerous limitations, it would be hard to argue that citizens were empowered to influence significant policy

decisions. Instead, a symbolic gesture was applied to the otherwise top-down *modus operandi* of the government.

LABcapital

A second example comes from LABcapital—an "innovation laboratory" created by the *Veeduría Distrital*, a government oversight body operating at the city level. LABcapital was intended to improve public management through innovative solutions. Specifically, the LABcapital project team met with various agencies of the Bogotá city government to define important *retos* (challenges) which could be solved through crowdsourcing. In the area of mobility, the general manager of the TransMilenio suggested fare evasion in the city's bus system as a challenge. Members of the public interested in contributing to this challenge were invited to do so between May—July 2019 via an online platform where they would a.) register with a username and email b.) and develop their proposals using the specified "design thinking" methodology of "Empathy, Intuition, Action." Each of these steps had multiple tasks, detailed instructions and expected deliverables. Empathy involved actions such as making observations about the problem and mapping stakeholders. Intuition comprised precisely defining the problem and developing proposals to solve it. The final step, action, meant developing a prototype of the solution which could be presented to relevant stakeholders, pilot tested, and eventually uploaded on the platform. Ideas deemed worthy would be shared with TransMilenio for consideration (Veeduría Distrital 2019).

During an interview, one of the LABcapital team members described this type of collaboration as an advanced form of participation—rather than simply informing or involving people, it was giving them a seat at the table and asking them to co-design

solutions. However, despite such aspirations, multiple structural aspects of the program severely limited genuine participation. While this was a more interactive process than the case of “Prudencia,” it also featured numerous limitations in terms of deepening democracy and empowering citizens.

First, although the broad issue of mobility in Bogotá’s zonal bus system is highly relevant and important to a large number of city residents, the specific topic of fare evasion is more of a concern for the government which stands to benefit more from solving this issue than users themselves. The choice of fare evasion suggests an attempt to deflect attention away from any internal deficiencies of the system and place it on the behavior of the public. In fact, according to a well-respected citizen perception survey conducted around the same time, the top priority for Bogotanos about improving mobility in the city was expanding and maintaining the city’s roads (Bogotá Cómo Vamos 2019). This can also be interpreted as an appeal for people to police and control one another in a form of peer monitoring or lateral surveillance (Andrejevic 2006; Reeves 2012). Thus, because the topic to address was chosen by the TransMilenio general manager and not the public, the potential to carry out the will of a broader public was limited from the start.

Second, although the digital platform was intended to broaden the scope for participation and participants, several important obstacles may have inhibited robust participation by a diverse and representative population. As mentioned, digital divides are a constant factor, wherein a large number of residents lack regular access to the internet/ICT required to complete this process. Furthermore, in order for their solutions to be considered by TransMilenio, participants were required to follow a rigorous design-thinking approach which was time-intensive and may have limited their scope for

creativity and expression. In fact, of the 26 ideas submitted, only three were judged to have successfully followed the methodology and thus worthy of sharing with TransMilenio (Veeduría Distrital 2019). Of those three, one was submitted by a university student, and another was by an engineer working in the city government. This low percentage of successful completion suggests that either the methodology was too demanding (Le Blanc 2020) or not suited to the approaches that participants prefer. What appears to be an open invitation to make changes in the city might actually have been a relatively selective system that completely excludes most and frustrates those who try to participate, similar to Mirowski's (2015) description of the supposedly utopian online public sphere—Wikipedia.

Finally, participants were clearly informed from the beginning that TransMilenio was not obligated to accept any suggestions they received. The LABcapital platform considered itself a messenger between participants and the other government entities, but there was no serious commitment in either direction. This may have served as a demotivating factor as potential participants weighed the value of completing a rigorous process that may not even be seriously considered in the end. In this case, the ultimate decision about whether or not to accept proposals from the public remained in the hands of TransMilenio and thus their risk was minimal. If they received solutions suiting their interests, they were free to adopt them. If no such solution emerged, they lost very little time or resources in the process and could still claim they were operating in a participatory manner.

Bogotá Abierta

Bogotá Abierta (Open Bogotá) is an online platform initially created to give input into Mayor Peñalosa's PDD for his second term. In that document, the platform was framed as the central strategy (or "backbone) by which the government would engage the public (Secretaría Distrital de Planeación 2016). *Bogotá Abierta* is managed by IDPAC which invites members of the public, over the age of 13, to participate and "co-create" solutions to urban challenges (*retos*). The platform combines the voting and crowdsourcing elements of the previously cited cases and brings together multiple city government agencies to define challenges regarding urban life in the city. Users who register on the site, or log in using their Facebook or Twitter account, can respond to various challenges by submitting their ideas and proposals, along with supporting materials such as photos or videos. Users are also asked to "vote" for ideas or content by "liking" or commenting on other proposals, similar to Facebook, and the platform also features certain elements of gamification such as points and stars that users can earn. Some of the challenges are distinct and isolated occurrences that may or may not result in an action by the government. Others, though, are claimed to be integrated into larger urban planning processes such as the PDDs created by each new mayoral administration. For example, over 14,000 people reportedly participated online via *Bogotá Abierta* in the creation of the initial PDD for Enrique Peñalosa's administration (Secretaría Distrital de Planeación 2016) in 2016. However, beyond being recorded in an "ideas bank," it is unclear to what extent these participants and their ideas actually contributed to the final document. Furthermore, "participation" in planning processes under the Peñalosa was not limited to citizens. For example, the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce also submitted ideas

and proposals for the PDD. The subsequent Claudia López administration has used the site to create several challenges as well.

Topics on the platform span a wide range of policy issues such as mobility, public space, pollution, and culture. Examples of mobility challenges include how to promote the use of bicycles as a means of transport. Thirty-seven unique users participated by giving suggestions or commenting on proposals by other users. The largest number of suggestions concerned improving safety for cyclists (against violence, accidents, and theft) through measures such as increasing police presence and lighting after dark. The second most common group of suggestions concerned adding or improving infrastructure such as bicycle paths and parking. Another challenge asked users to identify areas in their neighborhood that could be improved to make them safer for pedestrians. This challenge received contributions from forty-four different users who largely suggested improvements to infrastructure (such as adding traffic signals and pedestrian bridges) as well as recognition of special populations (e.g., children and people with disabilities). Some challenges featured rewards that users could earn based on the popularity of their suggestions. For instance, one challenge concerning improving bicycle safety included two cyclist kits which were raffled among users whose proposals received at least 10 likes. Additionally, the five most creative proposals were to be selected to participate in a panel and included in future policy-making processes.

As with the other instances of e-participation previously described, *Bogotá Abierta* is limited in multiple important ways that decrease its potential to bring about democratic shifts and empower citizens. First, because government entities select the challenges and it is unclear whether they actually constitute priorities for the public, or if

Bogotanos would choose different issues under a more open system. A priority for the SDM may not be a top concern for users.

In terms of users, the platform is ostensibly open to anyone, but that does not mean that everyone is able to use it. Digital divides and low awareness may prevent many Bogotanos from using the platform. Even among those who are aware and interested in the site, certain factors such as language abilities could prevent many members of the public from using it effectively. At the time of writing, a counter on the website claims that 41,115 registered users have participated via the site—a not insignificant number. However, this figure covers multiple years, and in relation to the city's total population, it remains quite small. Furthermore, it is difficult to determine to what extent the entire population of the city (demographics, geography, etc.) is represented, but given the differentiated internet access rates and general segregation in the city, it is unlikely that the sample adequately includes marginalized groups such as those with lower levels of education and resources.

The processes of *Bogotá Abierta* are somewhat more deliberative than the other two examples of e-participation, but there are important barriers to it as well. The initial challenges are created by *Bogotá Abierta* in collaboration with other government entities such as the SDM or the mayor's office. Users then respond to challenges with their proposals. There is deliberation between users as they "like" and comment on each other's suggestions. However, while the government agencies may review the content submitted, there is not necessarily communication flowing back to the users. There may be follow-up for certain content, but this is not guaranteed and does not happen frequently.

Finally, *Bogotá Abierta* acts as a sort of go-between that seeks to bridge the communication gap between the public and various government agencies. However, this means that the platform's scope to guarantee action is minimal. During an interview, an external consultant charged with managing the platform stated that several proposals from the public had been successfully incorporated into public policy including the design of a new city government website and a project to improve the safety of children going to and from school (Bogotá Abierta 2016; Paullier 2019). However, *Bogotá Abierta* has no control over the decisions other agencies ultimately make, and citizen proposals and ideas may be completely discarded. There is not an established protocol for translating participation from *Bogotá Abierta* into policy and if this occurs, it happens on a case-by-case basis. This lack of follow-through was also criticized by an NGO leader who points out that during the creation of the 2016 PDD, the Peñalosa administration sought inputs from citizens via *Bogotá Abierta*. One of the highest voted proposals was to put roofs on the bridges of TransMilenio stations to protect riders from rain while waiting in line to pay. However, this proposal was never implemented (K. González 2019). A failure to implement the outcomes of participatory processes can result and disappointment and frustration from those who participated. And the sense that their ideas will not be implemented can dissuade potential future participants.

Breakout box: social media

There has been much research and enthusiasm about social media, especially its potential to act as a mobilizing and organizing tool for civil society. Although my research and this chapter centered more on official channels of e-participation, I was able to make some observations about social media as well. For example, WhatsApp appears to be an essential tool for organizing, and several of my interviewees described

WhatsApp groups they use. And during my last visit, I observed a taxi driver receiving strategic messages and talking points via WhatsApp the night before a taxi drivers' strike.

However, I also observed subtle ways in which the government may diminish, channel, or diffuse offline forms of participation and opposition, for example on the civil society side. An example was the *Secretaría de Movilidad's* use of social media during the same taxi drivers' strike. Taxi drivers across Bogotá went on strike to protest the increase in competition from app-based companies such as Uber, which they consider unfair. Although the *Secretaría* Tweeted and posted messages affirming the right of citizens to protest, they reminded potential strikers that no criminal activity would be tolerated and that perpetrators would be punished. They also shared the following photo showing how the government was monitoring and controlling the strike—a potential discouragement to would-be strikers and reassurance to non-strikers.

Figure 32: Tweet by Secretaría de Movilidad during strike

Furthermore, the *Secretaría de Movilidad* conducted a survey a few days prior to the strike. On Twitter, they invited taxi drivers to complete a survey via Google Forms. A first-year student of social methods could raise questions about the validity and representativity of such a survey. Nonetheless, the day before the strike the *Secretaría de Movilidad* Tweeted a single finding from the survey—that 76% of taxi drivers use at least one electronic device to provide service (it is unclear which device/apps are

suggested, for example, it could be navigation apps such as Google Maps & Waze or ride-sharing apps such as Uber). I interpret this as an attempt to undercut the primary complaint of striking taxi drivers and depict them as hypocritical. If the majority of taxi drivers are using electronic devices to provide service, this has the effect of muddying the waters about who should be using which types of apps.

Figure 33: Secretaría de Movilidad Tweet about taxi drivers' use of apps

Conclusion

Mobility is central to the daily lives of urban dwellers as well as the broader concept of urban democracy. E-participation is emerging as a form of public engagement which has the potential to put people in the driver’s seat by giving them greater control over affairs and decisions in the city. There are certainly theoretical grounds for this expectation. As personal internet and technology use become increasingly common, the idea that all urban inhabitants might efficiently participate from their phones or computers from anywhere (including while moving through the city) certainly has appeal.

Indeed some cities around the world have begun implementing e-participation in significant ways (Copeland 2017).

However, based on the cases reviewed in my study, little transformative action (Córdoba-Pachón and Orr 2009) has occurred in the mobility sector of Bogotá. Adopting e-participation is far from embracing it (Porrúa 2013), and the three examples described in this chapter illustrate the limited ways in which e-participation was implemented during the second term of Mayor Peñalosa.

The success and impact of participatory institutions hinge on the executive branch. In cities, participation can either flourish or flounder depending on the political will, efforts, and capacity of mayors and their administrations (Fung 2011; Nylen 2011). In earlier decades radical leftist mayors rose to prominence across Latin America by embracing and promoting participation. Their cities became icons for resistance to neoliberalism and helped pave the way for the national-level Pink Tide and gave hope to proponents of participatory democracy, following the tradition of theorists such as Rousseau, Mill, Pateman, and Barber (Rhodes-Purdy 2017). However, just as neoliberalism has discovered participation as a social management strategy (Guarneros-Meza and Geddes 2010), Baiocchi & Gies (2019) write that "the Right, too, has discovered the city…" and we are now seeing shrewd politicians using alternative strategies to gain power.

Unlike radical leftist Latin American mayors, Peñalosa sought to build his reputation on more market-friendly interventions such as smart city development, urban renewal, and transit-oriented development. However, because of increasing expectations for participation and traditions established in Bogotá by the leftist mayors who preceded

him, Peñalosa could not completely discard participation. Instead, his administration implemented e-participation in a way that would give the semblance of participation while generally maintaining control over mobility policy. In terms of the typologies proposed by Mayka and Abbott (Forthcoming), the participatory institutions under Peñalosa are best classified as "legitimating" ones. That is, rather than actually trying to deepen democracy, improve governance or build an electoral base, they were implemented to mollify citizen demands as well as donor mandates. This resulted in largely "toothless" symbolic spaces for participation.

Certain contextual factors such as digital divides must be recognized. Although rates of internet and ICT are increasing in Colombia, and Bogotá has higher rates of use than rural parts of the country, there remain important variations within the city as well as other significant gaps such as education and free time to devote to participatory tasks. These discrepancies mean that certain sections of the population are more likely to participate, and do so effectively, while a large portion of the population is excluded. However, most of the limitations in e-participation in this study are directly attributable to the design and implementation of participation mechanisms themselves, which were created to give only a modicum of control to the public, providing a veneer of participation while power and control remain largely in the hands of government agencies. Instead of deepening democracy, they provide "thin" participation (Y. M. González 2019). For example, the scope for people to define priorities and set the agenda is very limited. In the cases described participation generally occurs after the challenges and goals are already identified. Furthermore, there is little robust reciprocal communication between participants and organizers. And finally, the latter stages of

participatory processes are not clear. The government is not bound to accept the suggestions or proposals of the people, and participants are unsure of exactly what will happen with their inputs and proposals. This lowers the stakes for all parties involved and makes participation more of a simulation rather than an official decision-making process.

Although it illustrates important dynamics of the relationship between participation and mobility, e-participation as described in this chapter is only one frame through which these issues can be studied. Furthermore, the research presented here focuses primarily on the technology and structures put in place by the Bogotá city government. Future research should seek to understand the user experience of engaging in e-participation. Other important questions concern the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which has altered mobility and public life in cities across the world.[31] E-participation could perhaps play an increased role if, as some cyber-optimists claim, it allows people a meaningful way to engage in public affairs from the safety of their homes. On the other hand, online and other forms of participation may be reduced as governments scramble to take swift and decisive actions to confront the virus and recovery, prioritizing public health and economics over public engagement. Finally, prioritization of participation and e-participation can shift dramatically from one administration to the next. Mayor Peñalosa's successor Claudia López made mobility a key campaign promise and uses more participatory discourse in her statements and key

[31] Because the majority of my primary data collection was conducted prior to 2019 I was not able to engage the questions and issues raised by the COVID-19 pandemic to the extent I would have if research was conducted later. I did, however, write a short piece at the beginning of the pandemic about the potential implications of COVID on participation in Bogota. I caution that in the context of the pandemic, debates and decision-making largely centered around public health and economics. While these are undoubtedly important areas, there is potential for questions of democracy to be swept aside in favor of these more immediate concerns. I presented at a conference called *Cities and Covid-19: New Directions for Urban Research and Public Policies* (Delgado Ramos and López García 2020).

policy documents (Pardo 2020). However, it remains to be seen what role e-participation will play in her approach to mobility development.

Conclusion

Conclusion

Mobility is important. It matters to people on a collective level—e.g., "should our city have a metro or bus-based system?" But it is also central to daily life at an individual level—e.g., "how will I get to work?" Thus, understanding how people can participate in decisions about mobility is crucial to democracy in cities. This dissertation is a step towards a better understanding of these subjects. It asks many important questions and contributes useful findings.

First, mobility is an under-explored policy sector that is crucial to everyday life and should be studied from a participation perspective. As I demonstrate, this type of study not only matters for understanding mobility policy but also can shed new light on participation. It provides opportunities to connect the political and spatial, the formal and informal, and the individual and collective. Second, whereas it was once the domain of leftist politicians and activists, participation has now become a mainstream imperative that must at least be acknowledged. The last few decades have seen participation move from a fringe demand by radical actors to a more mainstream, although in some cases watered-down, element of policymaking. In some ways, this can be celebrated as an achievement. However, as my research, and testimonies from my interviewees show, there are often important discrepancies between "*participación*" and "*participación incidente*."

Next, mayors, with increasing prominence in Latin American politics, have a crucial role to play in whether participation actually deepens democracy. Once, weak, and largely irrelevant, Latin American mayors are now key actors in many aspects of urban policy and development. In terms of participation, the innovative and impactful instances

of public participation observed across the region in recent decades would not have happened without dedicated and capable mayors. However, there are important differences between mayoral administrations with regard to participation. This dissertation shows quantitative and qualitative differences between administrations. Some mayors embrace participation and make it a central component of their platforms. Others, however, adopt it as a political imperative, implementing only a limited version of participation while maintaining as much control over policy as possible.

I also show that class and resource discrepancies are influential in determining the effectiveness and outcomes of participation. While participation may purport to broaden inclusion and involve marginalized groups in policymaking, the dynamics of an unequal and inequitable society often mean that a utopian vision of fair participation does not materialize. Instead, some groups have more opportunities to participate and when they do, they are more likely to achieve their desired outcomes. In this dissertation, I compare two cases where local groups tried to oppose large mobility infrastructure projects. Although they used similar strategies and tactics, one project was effectively blocked while the other went ahead. I argue that the resources and influence of the area concerned in the first case were decisive in these disparate outcomes.

And finally, e-participation offers new opportunities for deepening democracy, but these may not be realized if it is implemented in a constrained and limited way. Although it can theoretically expand participation by reducing costs as well as increasing efficiency and reach, if e-participation is implemented in a half-hearted way, it will play out like other instances of thin-participation. That is, it will reach a limited audience, in this case, motivated and technologically savvy people, and have limited influence on policy.

By way of closing, I reiterate that this dissertation has provided important findings about participation and mobility. However, much remains to be done. Future research should continue the conversation in a number of ways. For example, the study of participation from the perspective of a broader sample of the public would be useful. In my study, I engaged with government actors involved in participation as well as civil society members who regularly participate in decisions, or who at least seek to. But what about those who cannot participate or who never even consider it as a possibility? What are their perspectives and experiences?

Furthermore, my study provides many critical perspectives on participation in mobility—e.g., what is missing and what does not work. However, it is also important to understand what good cases of participation might look like. Studying more successful cases with robust participation in the same way that earlier scholars analyzed participatory budgeting can help illuminate paths toward more inclusive, fair, and democratic cities. Finally, a close examination of some of the mobility development projects in Bogotá will be instructive. What will happen to the Carrera Séptima? Will an underground metro ever be built in Bogotá? And what role will public participation play in these events as they unfold?

Appendix

A. Ngram viewer results for participation over the years

For an interesting illustration of the rise of participation, we can consider the Google Ngram Viewer which shows the prevalence of search terms within Google Books. This tool should be used with a grain of salt and multiple issues have been pointed out. For example, texts printed in the past that are then scanned may not be correctly read by optical character recognition, and certain texts may be systematically over-represented or omitted (Pechenick, Danforth, and Dodds 2015). Nonetheless, for more recent texts the tool can give some insights into broad trends in word use. Below I include some results that are relevant to the present study:

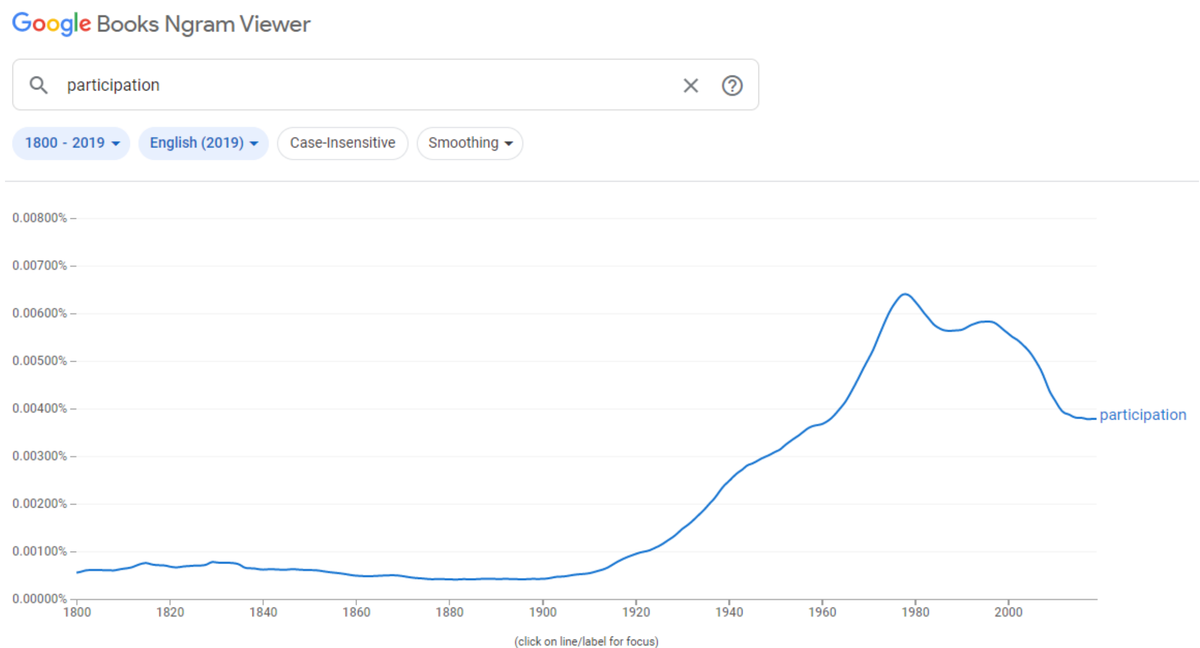


Figure 34: English use of the word "participation" since 1800

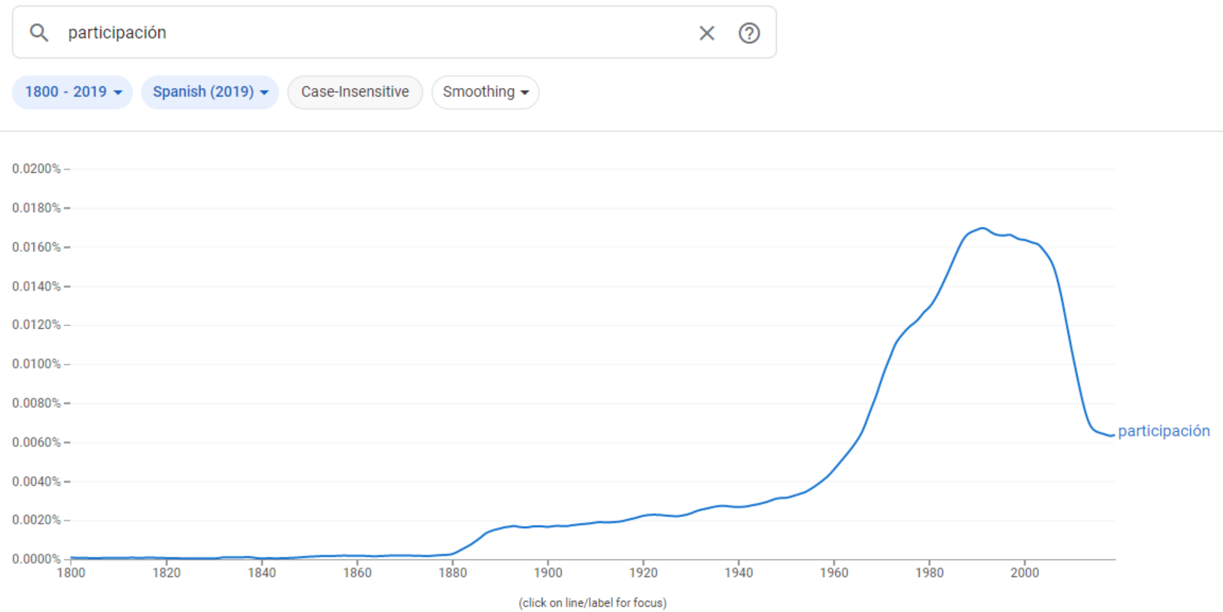


Figure 35: Spanish use of the word "participación" since 1800

As we see in the two figures above, the term begins to be used much more in the mid-20th century, with a steep increase between 1960-2000. To be sure that the rise in participation, as understood in this study, is at least related to the overall increase in "participation" I refined the search with other relevant search terms. The results are seen in the following figures:

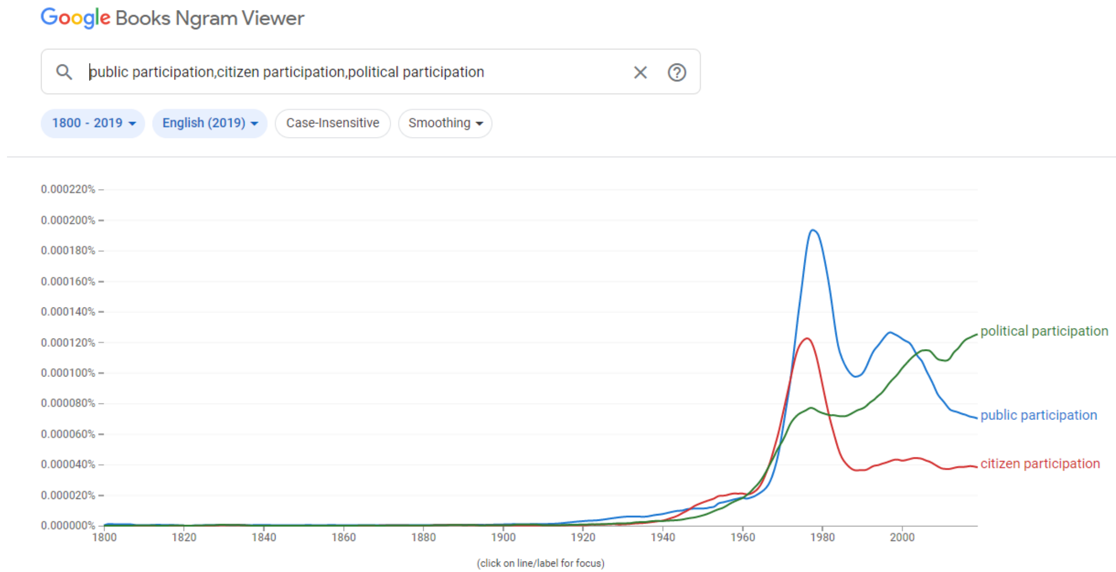


Figure 36: Results for relevant English terms

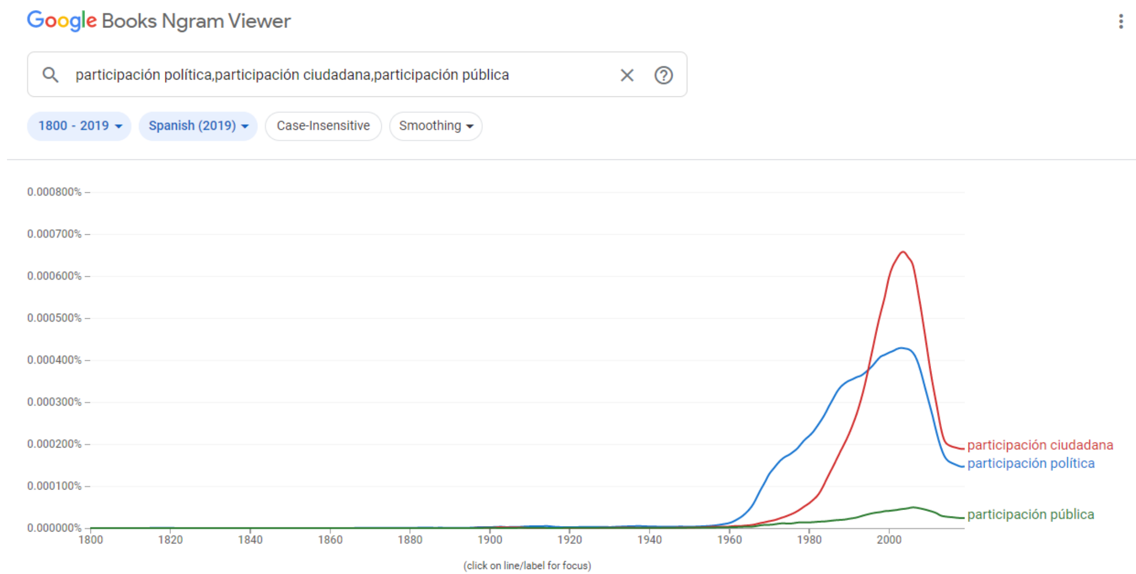


Figure 37: Results for relevant Spanish terms

As the figures show, the terms “public participation,” “political participation” and “citizen participation” show somewhat different trajectories, but all experienced an increase from around the mid-20th century onwards.

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Biography

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