Analysing the implementation of the public transport system Transantiago from a daily mobility point of view

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Urban Daily Mobility and Social Exclusion

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Urban Daily Mobility (UDM) Approach

**Urban daily mobility** refers to the way in which moving about the city impacts everyday living and the way people relate socially (culturally, physically, politically, etc.) to change of place. Thus it involves more than types and forms of transport, and it understands the way new spatial practices are created by mobility:

- Routines or trajectories
- Experience trajectories generate
- Consequences of journeys

...experiences are just as important as travel behaviour
Main Public Transportation Issues in Santiago by 2007

Virtues
- Reached all destinations
- Affordable
- No transfer
- Bus stops within reach of residence

Main problems
- Buses competing on the roads
- Poor service
- Numerous traffic accidents
- Unsafe journeys
- High levels of pollution
- Bad treatment of students
- Unintegrated to Metro
- Atomised system
- Excess of buses: 7000
- 3000 bus owners
Old Public Bus System and Metro in Santiago

There was an urgent and consensual need for new public transport system
Bernardo...

- 40 years old
- Married to Silvia who is a housewife
- 3 children
- They live in Santa Teresa
- Finished high school
- He works in a printing shop
- Enjoys socialising
- Plays the guitar every weekend
He makes it home early during weekdays. His neighbourhood is buzzing with music, laughter, screams, kids playing and people on the street. Inside his house, the noise from outside makes being indoors unbearable, he says its easier to be outside.

His daily routine starts at 6:00 when he gets up. He leaves his house at 6:30 in order to catch the bus from the bus terminal and avoid traffic as much as possible so he can make it in time for his job, at 8:00 am.

He's been taking the same route for years, so although not all passengers are his friends, he knows most of them and, since he enjoys conversation, he always ends up talking to the person sitting next to him.

He's on the lookout for thieves who usually get on the bus on the 15ths and 30ths of the month, when people get paid and the buses are full. He's had his phone stolen. He says people usually signal to each other when a lanza (thief) gets on. But no one does anything.

Soon, his friend Mari, gets on the bus. They talk all the way to work, about their friends, their family, their jobs, other passengers, life... She says Vasilio prefers sitting besides pretty girls and chatting them up, he just smiles. He nods and waves to many passengers on the way. He helps pass money to the driver from those who hop on the bus from the back entrance, he then passes the ticket and change back.

At 6:00 pm he leaves his work, showered. He walks to the main street to catch his bus. It’s a known dangerous neighbourhood, but he knows most of the people who go by. The bus going home is full, so he hops on it from the back.
Transantiago: February 10, 2007

Transantiago was a radical transformation of Santiago’s public transport, involving a complete modification of bus routes, operators, contractual system, quality and accessibility of buses, integration with the Metro and payment system.

A very complex implementation, but Chile had experience with complex restructuring (Health, Pension, Judicial, Concessions system...)

Main objective: increase efficiency in the public transport system through decreasing travel time, improving bus comfort and making the system safer.

Modernisation of public transport system for the city of Santiago.

From an UDM Approach: main emphasis was on system not on people or impact on city. As a major urban intervention it has extremely high impact on people’s lives.

- Efficiency was seen in terms of connectivity, reaching a destination in shortest time.
- System seen as a business opportunity.
- System’s full potentials were not conceived.
- Perfect opportunity for public transport to act as a way of increasing diminishing urban inequality, increasing accessibility (to activities, people and places), sustainability, urban integration.
- Refusal to subsidise
Transantiago
2007

Trunk- Feeder Network

- Where Metro acts as main trunk extended but buses
- Fed by bus system from 10 zones in the city
- Each feeder zone and trunk is submitted to international bid system

From an UDM Approach:
- Complete & sudden modification of existing system
- Lack of local understanding of mobility experiences in terms of differentiated experiences, transfers and place making
- Waiting time
- Lack of understand of transport from a broader point of view including cars, bicycles, colectivos, taxis, walking
Transantiago 2007

Information System (SIAUT)

• Marketing strategy to inform about the new system

• A way of informing bus circulation, routes, times

From an UDM Approach:

• This was a radical cultural modification of daily practices, it required understanding the city as a construct, constructed socially and culturally.

• System required participation, consultation from the outset, not few months prior to implementation

• Need for clear, easy, multiple forms of education

• Understanding of local idiosyncrasy
Transantiago 2007

Infrastructure

• Involved the construction of new roads, segregated ways, bus stops, transfer centres.
• Most was not ready prior to implementation.

From an UDM Approach:

• Lack of understanding of relation between city and transport. Needed to be ready.
• Investment on Metro was greater than on urban infrastructure.
• Over ground investment on better roads & public space.
• Simultaneous investment on urban highways, promoting car usage.
• Lack of urban transport policy.
Transantiago 2007

Financial System

Involved fare integration through electronic payment

International AFT bid to administer system (bus fiscalisation, fare collection, bus validation system)

Technological system was not operating prior to implementation

From an UDM Approach:
- Complete & sudden modification of existing system
- Great change from ticket to card
- People used to cash and need enough to top up
- Those travelling long distance would have increased cost
- No subsidies, inevitably increase price. Aim of system was not equity. Could have applied targeted demand led subsidy (students, lower income, elderly)
Transantiago 2010

- Over US $ 1,000 million losses
- Population still unhappy, 79% disapproves new system
- Constant re-shifting of routes
- New infrastructure still not finished
- Old buses repainted
- Old informal workers back on the buses
- Changes in Ministries and people in charge
- Major Congress Investigation, with political implications
- Increased budget
- Recognised as the worse public policy implementation
- Increase in tariff, considering subsidising
- Metro has collapsed and *popularised*

But what happens to people’s daily lives?
Bernardo 3 years later
Final Reflections

• Initial year of operation of Transantiago was operationally ‘chaotic’, a ‘nightmare’ and “one of the worse disasters of public policies that could have happened to a government” (Interior Minister), it has also generated significant social, economic and political upheaval

• Transantiago is an example of a mega urban intervention, seen exclusively as improving transportation in the city by making it more efficient, comfortable and safe, but not apprehending the experience of living in the city.

• Urban residents experienced extreme difficulties in adapting to a new system.

• Prior to its implementation, difficulties were foreseeable and avoidable. By not understanding what occurs in urban daily mobilities practices, as well as lack of coordination with Santiago’s urban planning system, failure was foreseeable.

• Urban expansion not regarded as part of urban transport plan.

• After 3 years of operation the system is still under constant improvement and modification, long queues, overcrowding, low frequency, congestion

• High costs of improvised modernisation, without local consideration, yet precariousness remains.

• Best part of Transantiago: Tarjeta BIP, Metro, transport infrastructure

• Metro has replaced the old bus system in terms of greater use

• Increase in multimodal transport, mostly by lower income groups, the rich drive more. How is social inequality transformed by mobility

• Need to look further into ways in which old system remains under a new look
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