

Worlding Ciclovía

From Urban Experiment to International “Best Practice”

by
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“Best practices” are either celebrated as inspirational examples that can spur policy change and learning in other places or critiqued as “one-size-fits-all” models that do not consider the complexity of local contexts. Less is known about the forms of power, governance, and legitimacy that are embedded in the construction and mobilization of certain policies as world policy models. Critical examination of the concept of “best practice” in the case of Bogotá’s Ciclovía, a weekly 70-mile street-closure program to promote urban biking and physical exercise, sheds light on the shifting rationalities and constellations of local and transnational actors, networks, and agendas that have shaped the program from its experimental beginnings in the 1970s through its construction as an international best practice in the 2000s.

Las “mejores prácticas” son presentadas como ejemplos inspiradores y creativos que pueden impulsar cambios políticos en otros lugares o criticadas como modelos “universales” que no toman en consideración la complejidad de los contextos locales. Pero se sabe relativamente poco sobre las formas de poder, gobernanza y legitimidad que están insertadas en la construcción y movilización de ciertas medidas como modelos de política mundial. Un examen crítico del concepto de “mejores prácticas” en el caso de la Ciclovía de Bogotá—un programa semanal de cierre de calles que promueve el ciclismo urbano y el ejercicio físico—arroja luz sobre las racionalidades cambiantes y sobre la red de actores locales y transnacionales y los lazos y agendas que le han dado forma al programa desde sus tímidos comienzos en los años 70 hasta su construcción como una mejor práctica internacional en los últimos años.

Keywords: *Best practice, Urban policy, Bicycles, Ciclovía, Bogotá*

In recent decades, several Latin American cities have become policy models for progressive planners and advocates in cities around the world. As scholars examined the ways in which these urban policy and planning innovations emerged, there was new emphasis on the transformative possibilities of innovative urban planning. Analyses ranged from those that linked urban policy

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change to bigger forces in the region such as neoliberalism (Portes and Roberts, 2005), globalization (Castells and Borja, 1997), and democratization and decentralization reforms (Campbell, 2003; Grindle, 2007) to those that associated it with an emerging group of Latin American leftist cities (Carrión, 2007) or socialist urban policy regimes (Goldfrank and Schrank, 2009) and others that studied particular Latin American cases in which progressive urban policies took place. This last strand of literature has been particularly fruitful in the past 15 years, and many articles and monographs have analyzed the key actors, sociopolitical contexts, and institutional factors that allowed, for example, the emergence of environmental planning and transportation innovations in Curitiba in the 1970s (Irazábal, 2005; Rabinovitch, 1996), participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre (Abers, 2000; Baiocchi, 2005), the Brazilian Statute of the City (Fernandes, 2007; Holston and Caldeira, 2005), changes in public space and transportation policies in Bogotá (Berney, 2011; Gilbert, 2006; Martin and Ceballos, 2004), and the so-called social urbanism of Medellín (Brand and Dávila, 2011; Sotomayor in this issue). **FAQ: 1**

While pointing to specific cities risks overlooking less internationally recognized and perhaps more important urban policy changes that have happened throughout Latin America, in this article I am particularly interested in the relationship between urban planning and world recognition. World recognition is important in the context of urban policy and planning because it legitimizes certain models as appropriate ways of governing, organizing, and managing urban space both in the cities where they originally appeared and in the ones that have adopted them (Bulkeley, 2006; Davis, 2013; Roy, 2011). Furthermore, many of the currently celebrated Latin American models of urbanism are not necessarily new and are often based on decades of urban experiments and ideas originating in Latin America and elsewhere. If policy novelty or effectiveness is not sufficient to explain world recognition and circulation, what is it that makes a particular urban policy experiment or planning mechanism a world model? I suggest that, in addition to policy effectiveness or the unique sociopolitical circumstances in which new urban policy models emerge, a revealing path of inquiry is analyzing how those models are legitimized and mobilized. One way in which this “worlding” (Ong and Roy, 2011) happens, I will argue, is through the elevation of a particular urban policy or planning mechanism to the category of international “best practice.”

BOGOTÁ, FROM URBAN DYSTOPIA TO WORLD POLICY MODEL

Traditionally portrayed as an urban dystopia and a city of fear during the early 1990s, Bogotá became a world model of urban planning in less than a decade. In 2007 the American Planning Association dedicated its keynote address to the capital of Colombia under the title “The Miracle of Bogotá.” A year before, the Venice Architecture Biennale gave the city its prestigious Golden Lion Award. The Biennale’s (2006) official web page read: “The city provides a model for streets that are pleasing to the eye as well as economically viable and socially inclusive. Bogotá is, in short, a beacon of hope for other cities, whether rich or



Figure 1. Ciclovía in Carrera Séptima, Bogotá, 2008.

poor." The transformation of Bogotá during the 1990s and early 2000s, based on the promotion of public space, non-car transportation alternatives, and a *cultura ciudadana* (citizens' culture),¹ has been internationally celebrated and has become a reference point for many cities in the North and the South. Images of bicycles and red rapid buses with dedicated lanes are what now often come to mind for city planners, bicycle advocates, and mayors around the world as they think of Bogotá, even though Bogotanos are skeptical of the wonders of their city's planning given the deterioration of transportation infrastructure in recent years (Ardila, 2007; Bassett and Marpillero-Colomino, 2013; Gilbert, 2008).

While much has been written in the past decade about Bogotá as a model of urban transformation both from a celebratory (Cervero, 2005; Gilbert, 2006; Gilbert and Dávila, 2002; Martin and Ceballos, 2004; Montezuma, 2005) and from a critical (Berney, 2011; Duque Franco, 2008; Gilbert, 2008; Pérez, 2010; Salcedo and Zeiderman, 2008) perspective, less is known about the mechanisms and policy circuits that allowed certain urban interventions experimented with in Bogotá to become international best practices and circulate around the world. In this article, I develop a critical analysis of one of Bogotá's most internationally revered best practices: Ciclovía, a weekly street-closure program to promote urban biking and physical exercise. During the event, 70 miles of streets in the capital of Colombia are closed to car traffic from 7 a.m. until 2 p.m. and reserved for cyclists and pedestrians (Figure 1). About 1 million people participate in Ciclovía every Sunday, more than the whole population of Amsterdam. Since 2001, cities as diverse as Guadalajara, Jakarta, and Los Angeles, among more than 200 others, have referenced Bogotá to implement similar street-closure programs. Yet, despite its discovery and celebration in international policy and advocacy circuits in the past decade, Ciclovía has a history that spans more than 40 years during most of which it remained unknown to the rest of the world.

The impetus for this paper emerges from a paradox: while Ciclovía has been happening in Bogotá since the 1970s, it was only in the early 2000s that it became widely known in international urban planning circles. The aim of the paper is not a comprehensive history of Ciclovía or a detailed account of the changes in laws and city planning codes that allowed the launch and improvement of the program over the years (see, e.g., Del Castillo et al., 2011; Gomezcásseres, 2003;

IDRD, 2005; Montezuma, 2011; Ortiz, 1985). Starting from the social constructivist assumption that increases in policy effectiveness do not necessarily explain international policy recognition and circulation, I seek instead to answer two key questions related to *Ciclovía*: (1) How have actors, networks, and agendas in and outside Bogotá shaped the emergence and reinventions of *Ciclovía* over time? (2) How and when did *Ciclovía* emerge as an international best practice in urban planning? Although the recent work of Montezuma (2011) has quantified and created an interesting typology of the hundreds of cities that have adopted Bogotá's *Ciclovía* around the world, this article seeks to move beyond quantification and typologies to provide new conceptual and methodological tools for critically examining the specific articulation of local and transnational actors, networks, and agendas that allowed *Ciclovía*—and, therefore, Bogotá—to emerge as a world policy model for cities in the North and the South. In the following sections, I explore different academic debates and theoretical frameworks that can help us answer these two questions.

TOWARD A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF URBAN POLICY CIRCULATIONS

The circulation of urban policies and planning mechanisms is not a new phenomenon, certainly not in Latin America, where, already in the sixteenth century, the Law of the Indies constituted a comprehensive and codified urban planning model that Spanish colonists followed in locating, building, and populating human settlements in the New World (Socolow and Johnson, 1981; Solano, 1996). Urban historians have shown that, even before that, pre-Hispanic societies in Latin America such as the Inca, Aztec, and Maya used and mobilized particular urban planning models in the founding and building of cities (Hardoy, 1968). While it is by now widely acknowledged that the travel and mobilization of urban planning policies is not new (Harris and Moore, 2013), many urban scholars have also noted that the circulation of policies has accelerated in recent decades (Healey, 2013; McFarlane, 2011; Peck and Theodore, 2015). In this context, certain Latin American urban policy models have also started to circulate widely in recent decades. For instance, Porto Alegre's participatory budgeting has been referenced by more than 1,000 cities around the world (Goldfrank, 2011) while many cities in the North and the South have referenced Curitiba or Bogotá in implementing changes in transportation planning (Hidalgo and Gutiérrez, 2012).

Urban scholars in a variety of disciplines have tried to make sense of these accelerated policy exchanges between cities by developing new critical approaches to urban policy formation and travel. For example, Peck and Theodore (2010) have sought to move beyond the policy diffusion/transfer approach (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000; Rose, 1993; Simmons, Dobbin, and Garrett, 2008), which they see as trapped in the rational-choice assumptions of policy makers as maximizers and good policies' eventually driving out bad policies "in a process of optimizing diffusion" (Peck and Theodore, 2010: 169). Instead, speaking of "policy mobilities," they explore policy travel and transformation as a politicized, power-laden, and socially constructed process that

can happen at different levels of government. Policy actors are also more broadly defined than the policy elites that often inhabit political science studies and include nongovernmental organizations, consultants, media, planners, advocates, and neighborhood associations, among many others. Looking specifically at *urban* policy mobilities, McCann and Ward (2011) propose to focus on the way policy is co-constituted by connections to other places and situated political contestations. Similarly, planning scholars have argued for critical approaches to the transnational flow of planning ideas (Healey, 2013; Healey and Upton, 2010). For Healey (2013), looking at these flows from an actor-based and evolutionary perspective that focuses on the complex dynamics, situated contingencies, and micro-practices of urban policy actors rather than analyzing whether a policy or planning mechanism is good by itself can help planners move away from the modernist perspective that has often prevailed in the discipline. While the travel of policies and planning mechanisms is not their main unit of analysis, the work of Aihwa Ong and Ananya Roy (2011) on “worlding cities” is important given the emphasis of this article on the relationship between urban planning and world recognition. Looking specifically at city-making strategies in contemporary Asia, Ong and Roy (2011) have sought to shift the debate on contemporary global urbanism from world cities and world-systems to particular “worlding practices.” In this context, they see the circulation of urban models and intercity references in and between aspiring “world-class” Asian cities as contested practices used by different actors “that go beyond local improvements to participate, however implicitly, in a bigger game of winning some kind of world recognition” (Ong, 2011: 13).

While coming from different academic traditions, these three critical approaches share a concern about the importance of examining urban policy exchanges as a socially constructed, uneven, and power-laden process rather than a rational transfer of the “best” policies between context A and context B. To do so, they advocate qualitative and ethnographic methods of inquiry that stay close to the everyday practices of urban policy actors without losing sight of the actors, networks, and agendas in which policies and actors are embedded (Cochrane and Ward, 2012; Healey, 2013; Peck and Theodore, 2010; Roy, 2012).

CRITICAL APPROACHES TO BEST PRACTICES

The idea of best practice can be traced to the 1980s, when “benchmarking” became a popular management practice among companies seeking to improve their production processes. As noted by Francis and Holloway (2007: 172), “best-practice benchmarking” consisted in “identifying aspects of an organization’s activity that could be more efficient or effective by comparison with other relevant organizations’ performance.” With the rise of the “new public management” in the late 1980s, the idea of best-practice benchmarking was increasingly adopted by governmental agencies in many countries (Aguilar, 2006). While many volumes, databases, and web sites on best practices for public administration have appeared in recent decades, Francis and Holloway (2007) have argued that critical studies of best practices have been slow to take hold among scholars interested in public policy. As noted by Bulkeley (2006),

participants in the lesson-drawing and policy transfer debates were among the first to critique the concept of best practice in the context of public policy, highlighting the difficulty of replicating a successful policy in another policy context. For example, Radaelli (2004) has critiqued best practices as decontextualized and advocated learning from evidence-based actions (Rose, 2002). Practitioners and planners have also often pointed to the impossibility of naming a policy “best” or better than others; as whether one policy is better than another depends on the context in which the policy takes shape. While these critiques are valid and powerful, they cannot explain the increasing popularity of best practices among mayors, planners, advocates, and other decision makers or why international development and philanthropic organizations continue to create best-practice guides and fund study tours to influence policy change around the world. It seems, then, that there is something powerful about best practices that the contextual critique is unable to capture.

Using a Foucauldian approach rather than the conceptual tools of lesson-drawing and policy transfer, Harriet Bulkeley (2006) has argued that best practices in the area of urban sustainability can be better understood as a “technology of government” through which the policy problem of urban sustainability is framed, defined, and eventually territorialized. Drawing on examples from British cities, she sees the “practice of best practice” as an inherently unstable discursive process that “serves as a means through which actors seek both to understand the messy politics of policymaking, and to lend legitimacy to their interpretations of urban sustainability” (Bulkeley, 2006: 1030). Building on Bulkeley’s critique, Vettoreto (2009: 1078) has highlighted that the process of making practices into best practices “not only constructs a repertoire of models as guide for local actions, but also demonstrates the empirical possibility (and rightness) of certain principles” such as the idea of international competitiveness, the “good governance” approach, or the European Union concept of territorial cohesion. More recently, Susan Moore (2013: 3) has shown that the New Urbanism proliferated in Toronto because various networks of actors recognized that, by converging around the idea of the New Urbanism as a best practice, they could “constitute a socio-political force for achieving ends.” In other words, as local policy actors recognized the power and legitimacy that a best practice provides, new networks and collaborations of actors and interests were created around it. Others have recently pointed to best practices as an important governance mechanism for identifying the joint mission of governance networks. For example, Sorensen and Torfing (2009) have argued that storytelling through the dissemination of best practices can be an effective tool for aligning the goals of diverse actors and convincing them of the urgent need for coordination and joint action. These critiques of best practice share a focus on the “practice of best practice” as the key object of analysis rather than on the possibilities and limitations of best practices for successful policy transfer. In doing so, they go beyond the traditional contextual critique and point to new forms of power, legitimacy, and governance in the circulation of policy knowledge and models.

The remainder of the paper is divided in two parts according to the two key questions that organize this paper. To answer the first question, the first part examines the emergence and transformations of *Ciclovía* in Bogotá as a result



Figure 2. The Great Pedal Demonstration, Bogotá, December 15, 1974 (photo provided by Jaime Ortiz).

of a tension between globally circulating ideas, forces, and agendas and situated political struggles. To answer the second question, the second part examines the constellation of local and transnational actors, networks, and agendas that aligned at a particular moment to world Ciclovía as an international best practice. In order to reconstruct how the program has been relationally constituted and reinvented over time, I have relied on archival research and interviews with key policy actors involved in the launching and expansion of Ciclovía in Bogotá as well as on interviews with bicycle advocates, transportation planners, and consultants in other cities who have contributed to the mobilization of Ciclovía outside Colombia.

THE EMERGENCE AND REINVENTIONS OF CICLOVÍA

1974: "THE GREAT PEDAL DEMONSTRATION"

The origins of Ciclovía can be traced back to an experiment² organized in Bogotá on December 15, 1974, by Pro-Cicla, a bicycle organization led by three young bike enthusiasts—Jaime Ortiz Mariño, Fernando Caro Restrepo, and Rodrigo Castaño Valencia. They wanted to do something about the rapid and sprawling growth that the city was experiencing at the time (Ortiz, 1985). Using their family and political connections, they were able to get permission from Bogotá's transportation and planning departments to close to motorized traffic 80 blocks of the city's two main arteries, Carrera 7 and Carrera 11. They called the event "The Great Pedal Demonstration," and about 5,000 people participated in it (Figure 2).

Ortiz (1985) and Montezuma (2011) have argued that the popularity of cycling in Colombia and the fact that Colombian cyclists had won important international competitions created a favorable disposition toward the initiative among local politicians and potential bicycle users. However, while other street closures and organized bike rides had taken place in Bogotá before this event (Gomescásseres, 2003; Montezuma, 2011), the novelty of Pro-Cicla's experiment

was that it sought to shift the meaning of the bicycle from sport, competition, and recreation toward a legitimate way to move around the city. In doing so, the bicycle became a political instrument for making claims about the organization of urban space (*El Tiempo*, December 14, 1974):

The Great Pedal Demonstration, “with the purpose that everybody ride a bike” . . . will not benefit any charity, and you do not need to register to participate. There won’t be a starting or finish line or trophies. . . . Fundación Pro-Cicla, which with this event makes its first public appearance as the organizer of the great pedal demonstration, is convinced that Bogotá is a city that needs bike pathways.

That same day, Pro-Cicla members announced the creation of *The Power of the Pedal*, a magazine to keep Bogotanos informed about future bicycle demonstrations. However, the next bicycle demonstration would not take place until almost a year later, on December 14, 1975.

While most historical accounts of Ciclovía briefly describe these two experimental events and quickly move on to the institutionalization of Ciclovía in 1976 and its expansion in the 1980s and 1990s, it is worth pausing here and analyzing in more detail the context in which this early politicization of the bicycle happened and the actors, political connections, and circulating discourses that were assembled to legitimize this new way of using urban space in Bogotá. A key person behind it was Jaime Ortiz, a young professor of architecture at the Jesuit Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, one of the founders of Pro-Cicla, and one of the owners of Almacenes Ciclopedia, a famous bike shop in Bogotá. An upper-middle-class Bogotano, Ortiz had studied architecture at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, from 1966 until 1970 thanks to a fellowship from the Latin American Scholarship Program at American Universities, a program established in 1965 by Harvard University, the Ford Foundation, and the Colombian Institute for Credit and Technical Studies Abroad to promote university education for Colombian students in the United States. During his time in the United States, Ortiz was influenced by the critiques of suburbanization and urban renewal programs that were in vogue in U.S. architecture and planning schools at the time. While in Cleveland he saw the Cuyahoga River catch fire in 1969 (a major event behind the emergence of the environmental movement in the United States) along with numerous racial and Vietnam War–related riots (Jaime Ortiz, interview, Bogotá, September 2012):

My first approach to American culture was to the crisis of the American city, to the process of suburbanization, to the deterioration of the city center, to the creation of ghettos, and to the counter-movements happening there. . . . My stay and studies in the United States radicalized me, and when I came back to Colombia in 1970 I realized that Colombian urbanization patterns were following the same characteristics of American urbanization. . . . I found in the bicycle a symbol to discuss that urbanization pattern. Why the bicycle? Because of the importance of the environmental dimension and also the history and popularity of the bicycle in Colombia at the time.

Although the great pedal demonstration was one of the earliest attempts to politicize the bicycle in Colombia, it was not a “grassroots” initiative. Low-income Bogotanos had been using the bicycle to move around Bogotá for

decades before this demonstration happened, and, although they were not excluded from participating, Ciclovía was implemented through the personal and political connections of Pro-Cicla members. Their ties to high-level bureaucrats in local government agencies made the event possible even though Bogotá planners were skeptical at the outset. Therefore, more than as a grassroots initiative or a bicycle movement, the emergence of Ciclovía can be better conceptualized as an urban experiment, influenced by both local urban conditions and transnational ideas that started to link environmentalism and urbanization. This, however, should not undermine the historical relevance of the event. It attracted 5,000 people to the streets, and, in highly segregated Bogotá, it was able to draw people from diverse social groups.

1976–1983: RAPID URBANIZATION, LACK OF RECREATIONAL SPACE, AND THE OIL CRISIS

In 1976 the City of Bogotá hired Jaime Ortiz to advise the transportation department on the institutionalization of the Pro-Cicla bike experiments of 1974 and 1975. Ciclovía's official establishment marked both the end of Pro-Cicla as a bicycle advocacy group and the beginning of Ortiz's political career as adviser to a series of mayors, governors, and presidents of Colombia. Significantly, it also represented an end to the politicization of the bicycle started by Pro-Cicla: in the hands of the local government, Ciclovía soon became a project that emphasized the bicycle's recreational aspect over its urban transportation potential. Although Ciclovía was officially institutionalized in 1976 under Mayor Luis Prieto Ocampo, the program lacked regularity during the late 1970s and even disappeared for a couple of years. It was not until 1983 that the newly appointed Mayor Augusto Ramírez Ocampo showed the local government's firm support of Ciclovía by expanding it to 33 miles (54 kilometers) of city streets. But why was Bogotá's local government interested in institutionalizing and expanding these bike experiments, and how was this decision shaped by the larger context of local, national, and transnational planning paradigms in the 1970s and 1980s?

Until 1930, Bogotá preserved the urban organization patterns of a small colonial city (Jaramillo, 1979). In less than 50 years, the city's population experienced a tenfold increase, from 218,116 in 1928 to 2,718,546 in 1973. Urban growth rates were particularly high during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, when Bogotá saw an influx of rural people searching for better job opportunities and refuge from the increasing violent activity of guerrilla and paramilitary groups in rural areas of the country. By 1970 the urban population was 70 percent of the total population of Colombia. Neither the state nor private developers were able to serve this rapid urbanization. For instance, between 1964 and 1973, a period in which Bogotá added 1 million new inhabitants, the state produced only 35,000 social housing units while private developers continued to serve the middle and upper-middle class in the North of the city (Jaramillo, 1979). The lack of affordable housing drove most new migrants to build their own houses in the South and Southwest parts of the city, where land prices were low because of the lack of public service provision and the absence of recreational spaces. By 1970, resident-constructed housing in poor areas of the city represented 42 percent of Bogotá's total housing stock (Vernez, 1974).

When Augusto Ramírez Ocampo took office in 1982, he thought that “one of the major problems of the city was related to the use of free time and the huge difference [of options] between people with high and low income levels” (Ramírez Ocampo, interview by Adriana Díaz and Olga Lucia Sarmiento, Bogotá, 2009). While rich Bogotanos had private clubs and cars, the poor were stuck in a city that did not offer recreational options other than “some enclosed [sports] pitch or drinking beer.” After returning from a New York trip, where he was impressed by the street closures of Central Park, Ramírez Ocampo became a firm supporter of *Ciclovía*, and in October 1983 Bogotá organized the first national seminar on *Ciclovías*, to which the mayor invited local and national political representatives. In an introduction to a book published for the occasion, Ramírez Ocampo promoted the benefits of *Ciclovía* and explained that the example had already spread to other Colombian cities (Alcaldía de Bogotá, 1983).

Together with the rapid urbanization and the lack of recreational spaces for the poor that characterized Bogotá in the 1970s and early 1980s, there was also a paradigm shift in Colombia’s urban planning. This was a shift from the modernist planning of the 1940s and 1950s, which privileged functionalist divisions of the city, modernist urban design, and the construction of high-capacity roads, to an integrated planning paradigm that understood urbanization in terms of national economic and social development goals (Salazar, 2007). While European architects such as Karl Brunner and Le Corbusier were influential references in Bogotá during the first part of the twentieth century (Tarchópulos, 2006), since the 1960s and particularly the 1970s they have been overshadowed by North American and Anglo-Saxon economists and planners. U.S.-trained planners brought with them new ideas such as economic and community development, and, unlike modernist architects, they were concerned about the impact of the automobile on the urban form as the oil crisis had given them a negative perception of U.S. suburbanization patterns. The influence of the economist Lauchlin Currie on city planning in the 1970s was remarkable. Currie, a former adviser to Franklin D. Roosevelt, came to Colombia in 1949 as part of a World Bank mission and eventually became the director of Colombia’s National Planning Department (Sandilands, 1990). His many writings on urban planning frequently draw upon three city models: U.S. suburbanization and car-dependent sprawl, as a model to avoid, and Singapore’s public housing programs and the British New Towns, as models to follow (Currie, 1976; United Nations, 1973). Currie saw suburbanization as a way of life whose inappropriateness and extravagance the 1973 oil crisis had eventually made evident (Currie, 1976: 21). Therefore, the expansion of *Ciclovía* during this period became an inexpensive and expedient alternative by which the local government could provide recreational spaces in poor areas of the city and attempt to prevent social unrest in an increasingly segregated city. At the same time, it was viewed favorably by Colombian high-level planning experts such as Currie, who, in the face of the oil crisis, encouraged dense and bicycle-friendly urban design.

1995–1996: URBAN VIOLENCE AND PUBLIC SPACE

During the 1980s, as oil prices decreased and concerns over the oil crisis faded, automobility and suburbanization ceased to be a main worry for city planners in

Bogotá. During this decade Ciclovía lost momentum, and by the early 1990s its length had decreased to only 12 miles (20 kilometers). However, in the mid-1990s its meaning and practice underwent a substantial makeover under another kind of local and national concern: urban violence. In the early 1990s, Bogotá and Colombia registered the highest rate of homicides in their modern history. This was triggered by a significant increase in the drug trade that fueled both guerrilla and paramilitary activity across the country. During this period, the high homicide rate and the massive disappearance and killing of street children and prostitutes earned Bogotá the title of “city of fear,” and avoiding urban public space became common (Martín-Barbero, 2003). At the same time, important decentralization, democratization, and neoliberalization reforms took place in the country. After the democratization of local governments in the late 1980s and the decentralization of urban planning responsibilities to the local level in the 1990s, a new generation of ambitious and charismatic elected mayors emerged in Bogotá that chose to promote public space as a key strategy for reestablishing the city, regaining citizens’ trust in local institutions, and reducing urban violence. For mayors Antanas Mockus (1995–1997, 2001–2003) and Enrique Peñalosa (1998–2000), public space became a central instrument for teaching and molding citizens in an effort to transform the city (Berney, 2011).

Antanas Mockus took office in 1995 and became the first elected mayor of Bogotá who was not affiliated with either of the two major political parties. A philosopher, mathematician, and university professor, he was concerned with the notion of a *cultura ciudadana* (citizens’ culture). His approach to reducing Bogotá’s high rate of homicide and its citizens’ fear of violence and lack of hope was to teach Bogotanos civic values. His goal was “to achieve self-regulation in the behavior among citizens” (Mockus, 2001: 3), and he placed particular emphasis on citizen encounters in public space. Ciclovía, among other public space interventions, received a lot of attention and significant amounts of public funds from the local government. Indeed, Ciclovía became one of the central components of the implementation of Mockus’s citizens’ culture (Paul Bromberg, interview, Bogotá, 2012). In 1995, Mockus named Guillermo Peñalosa commissioner of parks and recreation. Guillermo Peñalosa, who holds an M.B.A. from the University of California, Los Angeles, brought his previous experience in the private sector to Bogotá’s local government and introduced three key innovations to Ciclovía. First, he moved the management of the program from the transportation department to the Recreation and Sports Institute, a decentralized unit of Bogotá’s Mayor’s Office. In this less bureaucratic and more professional environment he had the flexibility to partner with various agencies, nonprofits, and the private sector to supplement the agency’s limited budget, and starting in 1997 Ciclovía received approximately 25 percent of its funding from private sources (Del Castillo et al., 2011). Second, in collaboration with different local institutions and nonprofits his team was able to increase the attractiveness of Ciclovía to the general public by introducing *Recreovía*, a program that offered free activities such as aerobics and dance workshops during Ciclovía events. Third, he introduced a volunteer program that allowed the expansion of Ciclovía without having to increase the number of employees. By the late 1990s Ciclovía was 75 miles (121 kilometers) long and had 1 million users every Sunday.

In 1998 Enrique Peñalosa (Guillermo Peñalosa's brother) took office as mayor of Bogotá. Although he continued some of Mockus's citizens' culture policies, he gave a more central role to the physical improvement of public space and transportation infrastructure. Whereas Mockus had focused on teaching civic values to the citizenry as a means of transforming its behavior and reducing violence, Peñalosa focused on the construction of parks and transportation infrastructure alternative to the automobile. Drawing on Curitiba's transportation planning innovations, the Barcelona model of public space, and the Dutch bicycle networks, he built Transmilenio, the largest bus rapid transit system in the world, and 82 miles of bike lanes and rebuilt more than 1,000 public parks (Berney, 2008). Since 1995 Bogotá mayors have maintained the length of Ciclovía, although it has lost some miles in recent years because of the construction and operation of new bus lines. As of 2010, Ciclovía's total length was 60 miles (97 kilometers), annual costs were about US\$1.7 million (75 percent coming from public funds), and attendance ranged from 600,000 to 1,400,000 users per event (Del Castillo et al., 2011).

WORLDING CICLOVÍA

2003–2005: SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH ADVOCACY

From 1974 until 2003, some cities in Colombian and Latin America started a Ciclovía program based on Bogotá's example (Montezuma, 2011). However, it was not until the mid-2000s that Ciclovía emerged as an international best practice and started to circulate widely in and outside Latin America. In this section, I argue that four key actors and networks were key in the worlding of Ciclovía: (1) former Bogotá mayors and local officials who traveled the world to speak about Bogotá's urban transformation; (2) a transnational network of advocates of sustainable transportation and public health funded by international development and philanthropic organizations that sought to reduce emissions and increase physical exercise in cities around the world; (3) a network of Ciclovía experts who implemented Ciclovía initiatives in their home cities and shared the technical and administrative details needed to organize such events; and (4) the digital technologies that made possible the instant circulation and viral spread of photos and videos of Bogotá, which constituted a key *actant*, in the terminology of actor-network theory (Latour, 2005), that has contributed to the circulation of Ciclovía around the world.

Enrique Peñalosa is key to the emergence of Bogotá's new imaginary worldwide. After he left office in 2000, he moved to New York to prepare for his presidential candidacy and, as a visiting scholar at New York University's Center for Latin American Studies, to reflect on his experience and write a book on alternative urbanization strategies in developing countries. Thanks to an Eisenhower fellowship, during the first months of 2001 Peñalosa visited various U.S. cities to learn and to broaden his network of contacts in the area of urban planning and public space. Later that year, he was invited to give a speech for an event sponsored by the Institute for Transportation and Development (ITDP), a New York-based nonprofit that promotes sustainable transportation in developing countries. While the ITDP directors had heard of

him and Bogotá before, during his presentation they were impressed by his charisma, his rhetorical ability in English, and the powerful story of urban transformation he told with the help of pictures, statistics, and aphorisms such as his famous “A quality city is not one that has great roads but one where a child can safely go anywhere on a bicycle.” ITDP, which was growing at the time thanks to the increasing availability of funding from USAID and from philanthropic organizations such as the Hewlett Foundation, saw in Peñalosa a perfect messenger for its sustainable transportation message. Just as he had become Bogotá’s ambassador worldwide, he became ITDP’s ambassador, and it funded many of his travels to developing cities, particularly in Asia and Africa. On these trips he worked to convince mayors and local officials of the benefits of building bus rapid transit systems and bike- and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure. As Peñalosa became embedded in international transportation policy circuits, Bogotá’s transformation story became abstracted from the many legal, budgetary, and citizens’ culture reforms undertaken in the 1990s to the simplified story that nonmotorized physical infrastructure had transformed the city in the three years that Peñalosa served as mayor. This boiled-down story of urban transformation played well among the many mayors and planners in developing cities who were seeking to change and build an iconic infrastructure during their limited time in office.

Many cities around the world sent delegations to learn from Bogotá after Enrique Peñalosa talked to their political leaders, and several built a bus rapid transit system or established a Ciclovía initiative using Bogotá as reference (Hidalgo and Gutiérrez, 2012). Yet, ITDP was conscious that cultural, political, and legal variables were important in policy replication. For instance, they sought to build at least one bus rapid transit system on each continent so that these would become best practices for smaller culturally proximate cities. For example, to inspire Guangzhou officials to build a bus rapid transit system, they paid to send Peñalosa there several times along with sending Guangzhou officials to Bogotá to see Transmilenio. With the eventual building of a bus rapid transit system, Guangzhou set the stage for the construction of dozens of others in China. Now, instead of sponsoring visits and study tours to Bogotá, ITDP would send Chinese officials to Guangzhou. The effectiveness and success of this best-practice strategy for promoting BRT systems around the world resonated among its funders, and some years later the Hewlett Foundation adopted a similar strategy to promote its environmental objectives of reducing carbon emissions by focusing on urban policy change in China and in Mexico’s largest cities (Hal Harvey, interview, 2013). Soon, other international institutions interested in transportation and international development including the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and philanthropic and nonprofit organizations such as the Rockefeller Foundation and the World Resources Institute/EMBARQ also started to use the Bogotá story and Peñalosa’s presentations to promote transportation policy changes in many developing cities at once.

In 2003, ITDP, together with the local nonprofit Ciudad Humana, organized a four-day international seminar in Bogotá that brought hundreds of city planners, elected officials, academics, transportation planning consultants, and representatives of civic organizations from more than 30 countries of the North

and the South. The objective was for other cities “to witness [Bogotá’s] successes firsthand” (ITDP, 2003). A 2003 ITDP press release called “Bogotá Shares Urban Revolution with the World,” shows the kind of Bogotá’s successes that ITDP was interested in sharing with other cities:

Latin America’s largest network of bicycle routes of 150 miles long (250 km); a world-class Bus Rapid Transit system of dedicated bus lanes called TransMilenio; the world’s longest pedestrian-only street, spanning 10.2 miles (17 km) and hundreds of miles of sidewalks, many through the city’s poorest neighborhoods; Car-Free Sunday, when many streets are closed to motorized traffic to make space for thousands of cyclists and pedestrians.

Together with Enrique Peñalosa’s travels around the world, this 2003 ITDP–Ciudad Humana international seminar was an important step in worlding Bogotá’s nonmotorized infrastructure and policies as international references in sustainable transportation planning and urban design. While Ciclovía was only one of the Bogotá best practices that ITDP was interested in promoting and certainly secondary to bus rapid transit, this seminar helped plant important seeds that spread Ciclovía around the world. In particular, the attendance of Enrique Jacoby, from the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), led to the construction of a transnational collaboration of sustainable transportation and public health advocates around Ciclovía. Since the World Health Organization’s Ottawa conference in 1986, international public health strategies have been shifting to a new strategy centered on health promotion (Kickbusch, 2003). This new strategy sought to move away from a risk-factor approach—based on pedagogical strategies to modify healthy risk behavior—toward a renewed focus on the contexts or “settings of everyday life” that determine health habits (Kickbusch, 2003: 385). Simultaneously, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched the Healthy Cities initiative, which sought to localize this health promotion strategy and to create a “strong lobby for public health at the local level” (Kickbusch, 2003). Key elements of the Healthy Cities strategy included the creation of intersectoral participatory committees at the local level with an emphasis on urban policy change. This new strategy made public health advocates more concerned with the dynamics of urban planning and with urban policies that they saw as appropriate for health promotion. Given increasing concerns over obesity and sedentary lifestyles worldwide and new scientific findings that recommended at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity per week (WHO, 2010a), Ciclovía was perfectly aligned with this new public health promotion agenda focused on cities (Cervero et al., 2009; Sarmiento et al., 2010).

In 2005, partnering with Ciudad Humana, PAHO and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) held a Ciclovía seminar in Bogotá. This collaboration between advocates of sustainable transportation and public health was a fruitful one and resulted in the creation of the Red de Ciclovías Recreativas de las Américas (Network of Recreational Ciclovías of the Americas—CRA), a network of cities that hold regular Ciclovía events. The network holds an annual congress and has a web site with an “official” Ciclovía manual in Spanish and English downloadable free. Illustrated with case studies from Bogotá and Guadalajara, the manual contains administrative and logistical

details for persuading politicians to implement Ciclovía, and obtaining funding and recruiting and managing volunteers. A regular speaker at CRA events and conferences aimed at bicycle advocates such as Towards Car-Free Cities's annual gatherings is Guillermo Peñalosa. Since leaving his job in Bogotá he has also traveled the world promoting the benefits of Ciclovía, emphasizing the changes in the mid-1990s under his management and branding Bogotá a model of urban success. He has given talks in more than 150 cities and, in 2006, created a consultancy through which he has advised officials and planners around the world interested in implementing Ciclovía initiatives.

Another set of actors that has been influential in constructing Ciclovía as a best practice around the world consists of local leaders who have implemented Ciclovía initiatives in their home cities. For example, Susan King, former director of Sunday Streets, San Francisco's Ciclovía, told me that she had a spreadsheet with 32 cities that she has advised since San Francisco started its program in 2008 (interview, San Francisco, 2010). By the summer of 2013 her spreadsheet included 72 cities (interview, San Francisco, 2013). Although most local leaders in other cities of the San Francisco Bay Area who have attempted to replicate the program have not been to Bogotá, they have seen videos of the city's Ciclovía and experienced San Francisco's program firsthand. Some cities in the area have implemented a program and kept the Bogotá reference, as in Oakland's Oaklavía, whereas others, such as Berkeley, have named it "Sunday Streets" in a clear reference to San Francisco's program.

Randy Neufeld, of the Chicago's Alliance for Walking and Biking, has also been an important promoter of Ciclovía in the United States. After attending the 2003 ITDP seminar in Bogotá, he came back and gathered several community leaders to push the local government to establish a similar program in Chicago. Whereas the Chicago program has run into many obstacles, the Alliance for Walking and Biking was key in spreading the idea of Ciclovía to other U.S. bicycle advocacy organizations through the organization of conferences and retreats. More recently, this organization helped launch the Open Street Project, a U.S.-specific city network that seeks to promote Ciclovía programs by addressing their biggest barrier in the United States: their high cost. In contrast to Bogotá and most Latin American cities, U.S. cities have to pay for police during the time the event takes place and for private insurance because of the risk that citizens will sue the city if there are any accidents.

Finally, because of the increased use of digital technologies in the past decade, there is not only a mobile infrastructure of city networks, conferences, traveling consultants, and study tours that help mobilize policies but also a virtual infrastructure in the form of blogs and social networking sites where policies are increasingly mobilized by advocates and other policy actors. Of particular importance for Ciclovía is Streetsblog, a very influential blog among sustainable transportation and bicycle advocates (Stehlin, 2013). Streetsblog's strategy for promoting sustainable transportation policies in the United States takes the form of provocative blog posts and short videos of cities with innovative sustainable transportation policies. Its nine-minute Ciclovía video, published in 2007 on its sister site Streetfilms, has the site's record of visits with more than half a million hits since posting. A collective of New York bicycle and transportation activists from Streetsblog and the

influential New York advocacy organization Transportation Alternatives shot the video in Bogotá in 2007. Sustainable transportation advocates in cities around the world have used this video to explain the Ciclovía concept to their communities and to convince mayors and key urban decision makers of its potential value. Streetsblog illustrates a new and successful form of transnational advocacy based on the circulation and viral spread of sustainable transportation best practices. Similarly, the WHO has also made use of online material and short videos to effect policy change in many cities at once. For instance, in 2010 the WHO hired Guillermo Peñalosa for the campaign “1,000 Cities, 1,000 Lives.” Using videos and visual material from Bogotá and other cities with Ciclovía-type events, it sought to “open up public spaces to health” (WHO, 2010b) and convince urban decision makers around the world of the health benefits of street closures and policies that promote physical exercise in urban environments.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

In an article titled “A Global Sense of Place,” the geographer Doreen Massey (1991) argued that studying how the economic, political, and cultural relationships of a place with the rest of the world change over time was a fruitful area of investigation that could give us a more progressive sense of place than thinking of places as having a unique character, identity and history. Massey’s argument can open up new paths of inquiry in Latin American urban studies. While much has been written in the past two decades about certain Latin American cities as innovative examples of transformative urban planning, less attention has been given to the local and transnational actors, agendas, and networks that allowed certain urban experiments and policies to be legitimized as world policy models that circulate while others are rendered immobile despite proven effectiveness. A critical approach beyond focusing on the difficulties of successful policy transfer—the contextual critique of best practices—can help Latin Americanist urban researchers reveal less evident forms of power, governance, and legitimacy embedded not only in policy innovation and travel but also in the construction and circulation of urban best practices.

Using Bogotá’s Ciclovía as a case study, this article has examined policy formation, transformation, and mobilization as a dynamic and relational process constituted by actors, networks, and agendas that are both local and transnational. Assuming that policy novelty or effectiveness is not sufficient for world recognition and circulation, I have argued that one way in which a particular policy or planning mechanism is worlded is through its elevation to the category of international best practice. While advocates of the “policy mobilities” approach have long recognized that policy mutation and transformation is key for policy mobility, this paper has explored policy mutation in the original site of policy experimentation. I have shown that changes in the main rationalities behind Ciclovía over time allowed the policy to survive in Bogotá and eventually emerge as an international best practice in the early 2000s. Policy mutation therefore facilitates not only policy mobilization but also policy alignment with transnational actors and networks and their agendas. When this alignment occurs, certain policies become international models of planning at

a particular moment in history. The alignment of Ciclovía in the mid-2000s with a transnational network of sustainable transportation and public health advocates in search of policies to materialize their global agendas of reducing emissions and promoting nonmotorized transportation and physical exercise in urban environments is at the core of what allowed Ciclovía, after 30 years of almost anonymous existence, to be constructed as an international best practice and circulate widely.

Finally, while the adoption of Bogotá's Ciclovía in other cities in the global South has often been celebrated as South-South policy exchange, this article has shown that the construction and circulation of Ciclovía as a best practice has often been mediated by North-based organizations such as ITDP, U.S. bicycle advocacy groups, the WHO, the PAHO, and the CDC. This suggests that Southern policies that reach world recognition are also deeply entangled with Northern policy networks and agendas. Jennifer Robinson (2006) has argued that urban theory needs to move beyond dual conceptualizations of cities as belonging to either a modern North or a developing South. The analysis of the actors and networks that have constructed and mobilized Ciclovía as an international best practice suggests that we also need to move beyond ideas of Northern vs. Southern policy networks toward consideration of the multidirectional traffic of policy models and collaborations between policy actors situated in the North and the South. This conceptualization of policy and best practices can help us reveal less evident local and transnational power relationships and collaborations that shape urban policy and connect cities in complex but not incoherent ways.

NOTES

1. This term was introduced by Bogotá Mayor Antanas Mockus and guided his interventions in the city during his two administrations (1995–1997 and 2000–2003).
2. I retain the term “experiment” employed by Ortiz (1985).

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