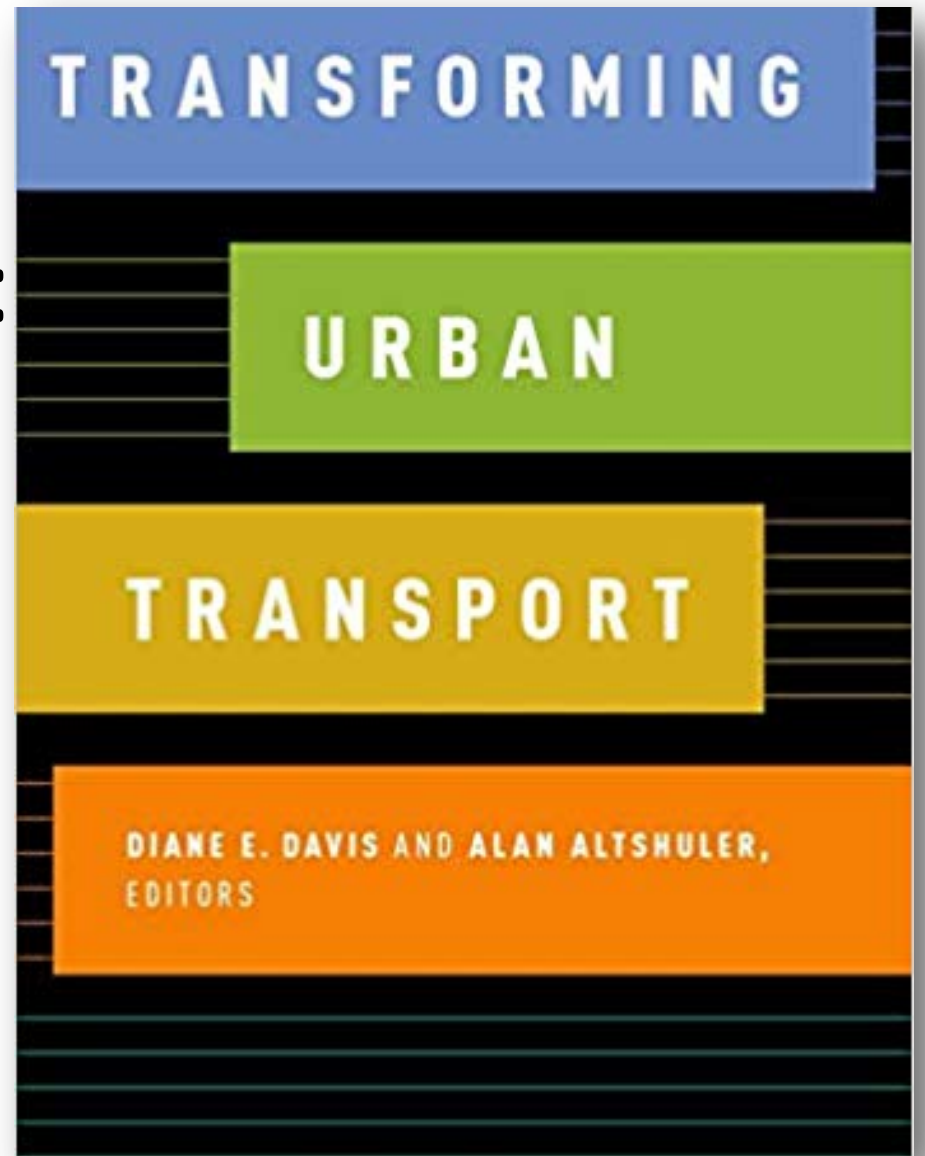


Transforming Urban Transport: The Politics

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Background

- VREF-sponsored, Harvard-based project
- Case research: outstanding cases of UT innovation
- In cities both “global” and democratically governed.
- Focus: the politics of:
 - Public agenda-setting
 - Leadership
 - Conflict resolution
 - Choice

UT Innovation seems exceptionally hard. How come?

- Current practices deeply embedded in:
 - Patterns of mass behavior and thought
 - Capital investments and expertise
- Innovations typically:
 - Disrupt some of these patterns
 - Threaten vested interests
 - Require fresh perspectives and new expertise
 - Often require new taxes, regulations, controversial projects
- Benefit-cost typically disputed and uncertain

Is Innovation harder in democracies (1)?

- Yes for projects requiring controversial govt actions, e.g.,
 - Large public investments
 - New rights of way
 - Restrictions on private motor vehicle usage
- Opponents far more empowered than in autocracies:
 - Free elections and media
 - Dispersed authority, requiring multiple approvals
 - Rules constraining government discretion
 - Can often delay and drive up costs even when they can't veto.

Is innovation harder in democracies (2)?

- Conversely, pressures from below stronger in democracies
- Where capitalist as well, wide scope for private initiative:
 - Shared ride, car, bike and scooter systems
 - Privately financed highways with value (congestion) pricing
 - In near future, driverless motor vehicles
- How about largely capitalist, non-democratic regimes?
 - We can speculate, but did not research.

Our Research (1)

- Eight global cities: democratically governed, high income
 - Western Europe: Vienna, Stockholm Paris
 - USA: New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco
 - Emerging Democracies: Mexico City, Seoul.

Our Research (2)

- Focus on post-2000 initiatives:
 - Cutting edge, even if not first in the world
 - Highly significant locally
 - Viewed favorably by those affected (even if once highly controversial)
- In no case was the entire system transformed

Policy Evolution

- Priority, Late 20th Century: accommodating traffic growth
- 21ST: mitigating motor vehicle dominance
 - To enhance safety, amenity, efficiency, equity
- We did not select cases with these differences in mind
- Rather, sought innovations deemed noteworthy by both locals and review panel
- Some highway expansion projects did make this cut:
 - Components of multi-modal regional packages (Stockholm, Mexico City, Los Angeles)
 - In LA, with elements of congestion pricing (new tolled lanes)

Roles of private service providers

- Salient as innovators, not just as advocates
 - Commercial ride-sharing in San Francisco (where it first emerged)
 - Bike-sharing in both Paris and New York
 - Bus Rapid Transit in Mexico City (subsidies)
 - Computerized, integrated transit-taxi fare collection in Seoul
 - Potential for future study: driverless vehicles, variable congestion pricing, shared electric bike and scooter systems
- In some cases, conversely, providers sought to block initiatives
 - Jitney operators in Mexico City
 - Taxi medallion owners in San Francisco
 - Small retailers in Seoul who worked adjacent to demolished expressways

Patterns of Variation

- Many ways to categorize these cases for purpose of analysis.
- Regional differences particularly salient. I focus on them here.
 - West European,
 - USA,
 - Emerging Democracy

Regional Variations (1)

- Western Europe (Vienna, Stockholm, Paris)
 - All national capitals with strong, centralized governments
 - Very old cities, full of heritage sites
 - Strong traditions of land use planning and regulation
 - Each governed by a socialist-Green coalition during study period
 - Unusually open (by world standards) to motor vehicle restraint policies: economic, such as congestion pricing and high fuel taxation, and/or regulatory, such as large pedestrian zones, traffic calming)

Regional Variations (2)

- USA: New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco
 - “Capitalist” Cities. Weak traditions of planning, regulation.
 - Economic colossi, but not political capitals (even state)
 - Major initiatives required approval, funding, and/or regulatory action at higher government levels
 - No case involved new restraints on motorists
 - Private enterprise unusually prominent as initiator of innovations (e.g., commercial ride-sharing and bike-sharing, value-pricing of new highway lanes)

Regional Variations (USA continued)

- Circumstances do change, though. Cf NYC congestion pricing:
 - Congestion buildup (due both to growth & commercial ride-sharing)
 - Transit service deterioration
 - Severe resistance to new taxes
 - Turnover in elected state officials
 - With all that, outcome uncertain
- Elsewhere in USA:
 - Increased receptivity to new highway lanes with “value” pricing
 - Often, privately financed
 - Reflecting congestion buildup and severe public funding shortfalls
 - More than a dozen large metros

Regional Variations (3)

- Emerging Democracies: Mexico City, Seoul
 - From third to first world cities over past half-century.
 - Recent transition from authoritarianism to democracy (~30 years)
 - Significant delegation of authority by national governments to capital cities
 - Elected mayors, aspiring to national office, have at times pursued crash programs of public investment. Case examples:
 - Current President Lopez Obrador of Mexico (Mexico City Mayor 2000-2005)
 - Former President Lee Myung-Mak of South Korea (Seoul Mayor 2002-2006)

Regional Variations (3a)

- Mayors Lee and Lopez Obrador each undertook a mix of transit and highway projects
 - In Seoul, Lee also demolished 16 elevated highways and overpasses without replacement
 - Leveraged this for downtown renewal and park creation
 - By private contract, also developed world's most advanced fare collection system, integrating all transit and taxi providers.
- Both avoided explicit auto-restraint policies (e.g. congestion pricing)

Strategies (1)

- UT innovation generally involves confluence of the following:
 - A widely perceived problem
 - An inventive idea (which may build on new technical possibilities—e.g., congestion pricing, commercial ride-sharing)
 - An institutional setting at least permissive of change
 - Leadership (in one or more pertinent settings): to mobilize support, conciliate or battle opponents
 - Strategies (and implementing tactics): plans and concerted patterns of action to achieve aims

Strategies (2)

- Seven illustrative strategies from TUT cases:
 - Forging coalitions among groups with quite different objectives (Los Angeles, Stockholm, Vienna, Paris)
 - Shifts in the locus of decision making (SF, Vienna, Paris, Mexico City)
 - Permitting or contracting with private companies (NYC, Paris, Mexico City, Seoul)
 - Piloting, with provision for easy reversal (Stockholm, New York, Vienna)
 - Issue framing (San Francisco, Paris)
 - Benefit sharing by contending groups (Mexico City, Stockholm)
 - Disaggregation, enabling groups with different priorities to make different choices (Vienna, New York City)

Future (candidate) research priorities

- From recent to likely future innovations:
 - Eg: Will driverless motor vehicle and shared ride/shared vehicle systems profoundly affect fixed route transit patronage, and both traffic and parking demand?
 - Will global warming become a major driver of UT policy? If so, with what effects?
- Comparisons of democratic, authoritarian, and hybrid systems.
 - Authoritarian systems carry out capital-intensive projects more quickly and cheaply. How do they compare as sources of innovation? As early adopters?
- Respective roles and strategies in different types of regimes of:
 - Elected officials,
 - Experts in public employ
 - Business interests (as both initiators and opponents of innovation)
 - Community groups (and activists) .
- Elections and referendums as drivers of (and constraints on) innovation.

Conclusion

- Our aim: to provoke creative thinking about
 - Possibilities in urban transport and
 - Strategies that have worked in specific settings to realize them in
 - Settings of urban democracy (recognizing their profound variety).
- We have, to be sure, just scratched the surface.
- May this conference spark fruitful follow-on research!