Transportation Governance in Latin America: BRT as a tool for structural change or as a tweak over existing conditions?
What is a BRT?
Not all BRTs are created equal
55 BRT systems in Latin America
20.5 million passengers per day

...but they are not the same
THE KEY DIFFERENCE

Does BRT disrupt existing power dynamics in the transportation system?

Public and private?
Source and control of funds?
Levels of government?
Controlling agencies?
BRT Curitiba

1974

BRT Quito

1995

BRT Bogota

2000

BRT Mexico City

2007

1960s

Bus system is privatized in Buenos Aires

1991

1st structural reform of transport in Santiago

1995

SPTrans is created

2007

Transantiago is launched

2011

1st Metrobus corridor in Buenos Aires
TRANSFORMATIVE AIM

BRT as Structural Reform

• BRT is a disruptive, transformative, and scalable technology
• BRT as the first step – the backbone – of a process of modernization of public transport
• BRT is part of a physical, institutional, operational, and financial reform

BRT as a Tweak

• BRT is implemented after an acceptable governance framework of transportation systems is well established
• BRT is an improvement of a previously structured system. BRT intervention is only physical.
TECHNICAL ASPECTS

BRT as Structural Reform

- Closed corridors. Trunk + feeder services
- Buses usually adapted to specific corridors (high platform, doors on the left)

BRT as a Tweak

- Open corridors. Many lines transit all along or part of the corridors
- Corridors adapted to the characteristics of existing buses
CLOSED SYSTEM | BOGOTA – QUITO – MEXICO CITY

OPEN SYSTEM | BUENOS AIRES – SANTAGO – SÃO PAULO
INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

**BRT as Structural Reform**
- New institution, separated from transport agencies in charge of traditional transport system.
- BRT system has its own image.

**BRT as a Tweak**
- One institution is in charge of the whole transport system. No special agencies needed for BRT.
- BRT has the same image than the rest of the other bus services.
**OPERATION**

**BRT as Structural Reform**
- New companies (either private or public) are created to specifically operate the BRT systems
- New private operators are usually companies comprised by former small operators who come from the traditional transportation system

**BRT as a Tweak**
- Buses that run in BRT corridors are operated by existing companies that already count with concession contracts
- Operators are consolidated companies. Small operators were already absorbed by operators who count with stronger financial and organizational structure
FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

BRT as Structural Reform

- BRT Usually does not consider subsidies. BRT is implemented only in those corridors whose operation is financially self-sustainable.
- Corridors might be treated as independent business units (Mexico City, Quito).

BRT as a Tweak

- Subsidies for all the components of the system.
- Cross-subsidies: Trunk services subsidize local services that are not financially attractive.
- Companies that operate in corridors do not count with differentiated contracts.
• Since there are different types of BRT systems, we should evaluate them with different perspectives (the problem of standards)

• The type of BRT system to be implemented highly depends on the state of the art of the transportation network

• There are cities that are implementing structural reform processes of their transportation systems, but they are not on the radar because they don’t start by transforming infrastructure