

SciencesPo
URBAN SCHOOL

MEXICO CITY

GLM STUDENT REPORT 2019



El Ángel de la Independencia, Paseo de la Reforma. Credits: Franck Giraud



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MEXICO CITY IN THE MIDST OF CHANGE: “MODERNITY FROM BELOW AND FOR ALL”?

BY ERIKA WITT

The interlacing overpasses give way to views of concrete and brightly colored bungalows. The air sits heavy and overcast over the long corridor of the Paseo de la Reforma, where skyscrapers rise above the jacaranda and palm trees. Starkly juxtaposed with the American restaurant chains that dominate the neighborhood, on a corner, a man with a small cart sells elote, corn on the cob; a few steps away, two young children try to entice tourists to buy their candy bars and bubble gum. Stepping out into Mexico City, one discovers a city bound to the car, a city that spent the 20th century building itself around its highways and a prominent oil industry, a city that in “managing” its lakes over centuries squandered its natural resources and produced an arid urban environment, prone to subsidence, drought, but also flooding. As the city grows, it has become a palimpsest of people and its past, and the city may falter in fears of earthquakes and informality, crime and the consequences of corruption. Though this suggests Mexico City may face insurmountable crises in the future, it is both in these struggles that a vibrant metropolis has not only persisted, but that the structurally embedded and pervasive problems have been met by innovation as well as the agency of political actors, organizations, and individuals. While such features of Mexico City may constitute its downfall, it is perhaps not so much a city in flames, but a rather a city in flux. The recent political change that is taking place in Mexico has reinvigorated the country, and on the urban scale, it may be said that Mexico City is a phoenix of sorts: from its ashes, a viable metropolis is emerging again.

In January 2019, the 2018-2020 cohort of Sciences Po’s Master’s program, Governing the Large Metropolis took part in a weeklong study trip to Mexico City. While the cohort had spent

the previous semester preparing for this trip by contextualizing the historical and emergent issues Mexico City faces as the largest metropolis in North America, the arrival was embedded within a political changeover – President Andrés Manuel López Obrador and Mexico City’s Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum both having assumed office only a month prior. While meeting different figures who were involved directly or indirectly in the governance of Mexico City, this collective inquiry was structured around the question: what are the policy consequences of political change?

As urbanists’ oft-quoted author Italo Calvino wrote: “You take delight not in a city’s seven or seventy wonders, but in the answer it gives to a question of yours.” Yet the answers provided were strikingly irresolute. As though echoing one another, the consensus among the actors of Mexico City seemed to be that policy consequences resulting from these changes were at too early of a stage to adequately assess. Nevertheless, over the week the cohort became cognizant of some of the challenges posed when opening a window vis-a-vis political restructuring. While the policy consequences will resonate in the Mexico City of the future, in this early stage their impact manifest primarily in terms of the shifting repertoire of actors’ actions, which at times evokes innovation inasmuch as it evokes the revival of previous political trends, and aspirational rhetoric.

President Obrador has been outspoken against corruption from his inauguration on December 1, 2018. He has taken action in manners that aim at a visible shift and symbolic shuffling of power – from his 100 Promises, which he opened with the idea for “modernity to be forged from below and for all,” to his critique of the past economic neoliberalization of Mexico, and finally, his fight

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against fuel theft and corruption more generally. Obrador's zealousness, can perhaps be summed up by journalist, Raymundo Riva Palacio, of *El Financiero* who described the end of Obrador's first one hundred days in office, as "in a rush to implement the new and demolish the old, like none of his predecessors before him." The party alignment of the newly elected mayor of Mexico City, Claudia Sheinbaum, also offers a possibility to sustain momentum and partake in concerted efforts at different levels of government. This study report does not intend to gloss over the durability of previous policy paths, but indeed move beyond the duality of political regime change as merely a response to past choices, and ask whether such political change, spoken of with tentativeness and speculation, possesses the capacity for ushering in a paradigmatic shift.

Mexico City is in a unique position because of its designation as a federal district, which yields complications in terms of political jurisdiction, accentuated by limits to the autonomy in its decision-making given its embeddedness within a larger metropolitan region. Additionally, how this transition plays out in the city, is attenuated by the uncertainty painting the politicians, community leaders, and other actors who dually find themselves face-to-face with this reconfiguration of power.

Indeed, it is evident that this visit coincided with a unique phase in the policy cycle, and at this precipice it was necessary to sift through rhetoric to determine what constituted tangible change. It became evident that one of the most viable tools to analyze this historical moment was the



Diego Rivera, *Epopeya del pueblo mexicano*, Mural at Palacio presidencial de México. Credits: Franck Giraud.

concept of policy instruments (Lascoumes and Le Galès 2004), which considers a policy composed of at its root, elements which are on one hand technical, on the other, social. Instruments may be legislative and regulatory, economic and fiscal, agreement-based and incentive-based (where the state becomes more of a coordinator of actors, essentially it presupposes the retreat of the state), communication-based and information-based (characterized as an “Audience Democracy”), or *de jure* & *de facto* standards (which derives legitimacy through scientific rationality and technocratic decision-making). Rather than a genuine restructuring of the state, the observed change in public policy instruments seems to reveal not a complete restructuring of governance, nor a revolution in political conduct, but nonetheless has implications for how the matrix of actors in Mexico City are organized, symbolically and socially, in relation to the state. While President Obrador’s instrumentation appears to aim at generating new meanings, particularly with regards to citizen participation and in combatting corruption, it is necessary to question how new strategies may or may not yield the desired effects of widespread reform throughout Mexican society, and on the scale of Mexico City. Adopting this position has enabled the articulation of some of the main themes that emerged throughout the visit, and effectively this yielded the four main axes that structure this report.

The first section, The Obrador Paradigm: New Actors in CDMX’s Political Ecosystem, focuses on the intersection between Obrador’s aspirations and the observable transformations, or lack thereof, occurring in governance structures and political and social repertoires. This section encompasses topics from the divergence with past political regimes, detailed analyses of the

anti-corruption discourse and its dissemination to and appropriation by other actors in Mexico City, while also discussing the diverse participants in political life, from an international development bank, to NGOs, and community participation communities.

The second section, Urban Transformations: Legacies, Challenges, and the New Metropolitan Plan draws out contemporary socio-political dynamics structuring infrastructure projects, service delivery, housing, and mobility. Given the pervasiveness of informal settlements, insufficient transportation, and unsanitary or unreliable water supplies – the engineering and technical challenges of the large metropolis remain intrinsic in structuring social relations and the right to the city. By looking at the role of the new constitution as well as the history of spatial and environmental planning in Mexico City, the feasibility of coherence across multiple-levels of government and the influence of bottom-up processes and civic engagement in the creation of the city’s built-environment can be assessed.

The third section focuses on risk, adaptation, and aspirations of resilience. Mexico City at Risk: Coping with Increasing Socio-environmental Vulnerabilities questions the potential openings for policy change by the new administration. This section highlights three main path-dependent, environmental risks: seismic, hydro, and air pollution. Globally, at a critical juncture in terms of climate change, countries and cities are beginning to address the exponential rise in vulnerabilities this will bring for their citizens. The Obrador Administration presents their government as novel or revolutionary, but how will they react in the face of these compounding challenges? There is a sense of urgency in addressing risk and creating a resilient city, and

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the multi-scalar nature of the challenges posed by climate change renders it particularly difficult to tackle from a political standpoint.

Finally, the last section, Polymorphic Informalities, seeks to begin looking beyond the duality of integration and marginalization of what are classified as “informal” practices in Mexico City, in spite of their omnipresence in the city. In this section, authors examined the strong presence of informal practices, from street vendors, to building practices and squatting, to the precariousness of migration, and the impact of criminal organizations – ultimately looking at how actors step into different roles in the absence of state authority and control. Indeed, this may reveal the limits of a dichotomized legitimate and illegitimate sphere of activities, spaces, and actions, in order to assess the morphology of political responses.

Certainly, the cohort has taken delight in trying to arrive at answers to the initial question behind this trip – knowing however, that a week alone cannot suffice to understand the overall dynamics of a city. Nevertheless, Mexico City, and the many people encountered there, have shaped impressions and interpretations concerning the possible governance outcomes in the face of political change. These encounters during the study trip provided but a limited vocabulary to discuss the complex realities that characterize this place, but nonetheless revealed its potentiality, and underlined an optimism regarding what the future holds for Mexico City.

On behalf of the Editorial Team and the student contributors, we thank you for taking the time to read this report.



Paseo de la Reforma. Credits: Raffaella Basile.

FROM THE CITY OF THE PALACES TO THE CITY OF HOPE: THE EVOLUTION OF URBAN GOVERNANCE IN MEXICO CITY

BY ALIZÉE JIQUEL
ROZENN OLLIVIER
LUCIE VEGRINNE

In the Templo Mayor Museum, visitors pass by a model featuring the city of Tenochtitlan, a tiny urban center positioned on an immense body of water, and dwarfed by surrounding mountain ranges. The unobservant traveller may have trouble, at first, realizing that this is in fact where they are standing — at the heart of Mexico City's ancestor. Founded in 1325 by the Mexica people on a small island at the center of Lake Texcoco, Tenochtitlan gradually expanded through a system of man-made islands and canals similar to the chinampa, an indigenous agricultural technique that is still used today in the Xochimilco area. Tenochtitlan's lacustrine environment consisted of five major and several smaller interconnected freshwater and saltwater lakes resting 2,200 meters (7,200 feet) above sea level, surrounded by high mountains to the south, west and north. Because the Valley of Mexico is an endorheic basin, the lakes often converged during the rainy season, and their waters either evaporated or seeped into the ground to regain

equilibrium (Vitz 2018, 9). During the study trip, many of the actors encountered made reference to the lacustrine origins of Mexico City and pointed to the importance of becoming acquainted with the environmental history of the valley to understand its present challenges. The people of Tenochtitlan, and later of Mexico City, transformed their environment through the creation of dams, drainage systems, transport infrastructure, housing projects and conservation zones, yet these transformations have not been without consequences - these changes have fostered and constrained the emergence of specific social practices and political struggles.

After the Spanish conquest in 1521, the dams built by the Mexica to prevent flooding were destroyed. To overcome the periodic floods that threatened to destroy colonial settlements, the Spanish engaged in massive drainage works. By the mid-nineteenth century, the lake system had been reduced by almost 80 percent (Vitz



The Isle of Mexico in the 16th century, Museo Nacional de Antropología. Credits: Franck Giraud.

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2018, 4). This had major ecological implications. Flooding became more frequent and, dust storms plagued the city when wind swept up the soil of the dried lakebed.

Continuous drainage and deforestation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, accompanied by rapid industrialization and urbanization, further exacerbated these phenomena, while bringing new environmental problems to the forefront, such as air pollution. Although progress has been made during the past three or four decades, ozone and particulate matter concentrations frequently exceed the health limits set by the World Health Organization (WHO) (International Transport Forum 2017). Once again, the geography of the Valley cannot be overlooked — peaks higher than 5,000 meters (17,000 feet) effectively trap pollution over the metropolitan area. Air pollution is not the only challenge posed by population growth and the expansion of the metropolitan area. In fact, many of the major environmental challenges of the contemporary era remain linked to the lake system. The gradual depletion of the aquifer, used to provide water to urban residents has created land subsidence — the city has sunk by 7.5 meters over the last century (National Research Council 1995, 14). Much of the porous soil that formerly absorbed rainwater has been paved over, aggravating the risk of flooding. The ancient lakebed also accentuated the damage caused by earthquakes. The most recent earthquake in September 2017, led to extensive building collapse and the death of more than three hundred people — notably, much less than the earthquake of 1985.

However, the environment of the Valley also constitutes a source of urban resilience, understood as “the measurable ability of any

urban system, with its inhabitants, to maintain continuity through all shocks and stresses, while positively adapting and transforming toward sustainability” (UN-Habitat, 2017). Forests, for instance, can play a role in replenishing the aquifer and limiting landslides. Nearly 60% of Mexico City’s area is officially designated as conservation land for agriculture and forest preservation. This zone encompasses most of the southern part of the municipality (Calderón-Contreras and Quiroz-Rosas 2017).

These environmental challenges, in combination with the expected effects of climate change — intense rains and frequent droughts — pose a devastating risk to the metropolitan area’s infrastructure and the security of more than 20 million people (Kimmelman 2017), constituting a major political challenge for Mexico City. Indeed, tracing the environmental history of Mexico City reveals that “the dynamic interaction between people and their changing environments holds a key to unlocking the social and political character of modern metropolitan development” (Vitz 2018, 7). Nowadays, Mexico City is one of the densest, largest, and most unequal metropolises in the world. As of 2016, the poverty rate was 43.6% (World Bank 2019) with a Gini coefficient of 0.51 in 2010 (UN Habitat 2014). By 2018, the population was measured at twenty-two million people (Conference by CAPSUS, January 19, 2019). Inequalities may be partly attributed to the spatial character of Mexico City, which is characterized by urban sprawl and fragmentation.

Urban sprawl is defined as “the growth of a metropolitan area through the process of scattered development of miscellaneous types of land use in isolated locations on the fringe, followed by the gradual filling-in of the intervening spaces



Carretera México-Toluca. Credits: Nino Kapanadze.

with similar uses” (Whyte 1958). In Mexico City, urban sprawl developed rapidly and discontinuously. The municipality of Mexico City adapts to informal human settlements, integrating these settlements into municipal boundaries within ten years. Yet, the divide between peri-urban areas and Mexico City’s center remains deep, and undermines the equal redistribution of resources in the city (Aguilar 2008). Affordable housing is still dramatically lacking for low-income households (Aguilar and Santos 2011). The multiplicity of housing types, from dwellings integrated with the existing infrastructure and complying with zoning regulations, to informal constructions, which leads to a piecemeal pattern of urbanization in Mexico City.

As a result of urban sprawl and fragmentation, access to public infrastructure is difficult for lower income groups (CAPSUS Conference, January 15, 2019). Indeed, the cost of traveling

is higher for these populations, materially and immaterially. According to the CDMX Secretaría de Movilidad, the average commute time in Mexico City is four hours (SEMOVI Conference, January 18, 2019). Since lower income groups are more likely to walk as their main form of transport, they are exposed to increased risk — accidents involving pedestrians account for 50% of transit-related deaths (ITDP, Conference, January, 2019). Enhancing pedestrian access and safety within Mexico City has been a political priority. A successful example of this policy include the 2010 redesign of Reforma Avenue, a 28.5 km corridor through the city, which not only increased pedestrian access, bus lanes, and bicycle infrastructure, but combined modernist design with a valorization of historical monuments (ITDP, Conference, January, 2019).

Yet, the prominence of private automobiles in Mexico has been increasing with economic

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growth and the emergence of the middle class. The use of private cars in the modal share skyrocketed from 16 percent in 1989 to 28 percent in 2017 (INEGI 2007, quoted in ITDP 2014). Additionally, the impact of car culture also resides in the amount of kilometers travelled, which dramatically increases due to peri-urban sprawl (INEGI 2010, quoted in ITDP 2014). Many goals related to the reduction of inequalities in the metropolis, specifically aim to combat car-culture and the division between wealthier car owners and daily users of public transportation (Meneses Reyes 2015). Transit-oriented-development is the pillar of the process, centered around the inauguration of the Metro Bus in 2015 and the democratization of Ecobici, a bicycle sharing system available since 2010 (Conference, ITDP, January, 2019).

Hence, current urban policies are moving towards public space improvements through incentives for biking and walking. However, these improvements also show the tensions in the occupation of public space between users. For instance, half of the Mexican population is employed in informal trade, like street vending, which although recognized an intangible component of Mexican heritage, is also considered as a nuisance and an impediment to public space improvements (Daniel Escotto, Agencia de Movilidad y Arquitectura, Conference, January 18, 2019). Overtime, informality has been treated with more or less tolerance in the policy agenda. Indeed, clientelist governmental practices may have relied upon informal commerce to get votes from this fringe of the population.

Although multiparty elections enable these forms of patronage, Mexico has long stood under the unique leadership of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) which

took power in 1929 under the name of Partido Nacional Revolucionario, putting an end to the political turmoil of the post-Porfirio Díaz era, initiated by the 1910 Mexican Revolution. As a direct emanation of the Revolution, this party which belongs to the Socialist International, presented itself as a leftist and anticlerical party. However, during its long hegemony, the PRI experienced ideological shift, as an economic liberalization in the 1980s paved the way to its political liberalization. Indeed, after almost 70 years in power, the PRI recognized the victory of its long standing liberal and conservative opponent, the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), in the 2000 presidential elections.

The exceptional duration of the PRI deeply shaped the governance pattern of Mexico and the Distrito Federal, through the 20th century, by fostering a hierarchical and centralized model. Despite its appellation as a « city », Mexico City is not a municipal entity. It is a state, the Distrito Federal, which is divided into 16 municipalities. Under the PRI era, the president would appoint the governor of the Distrito Federal, the Jefe del Departamento del Distrito federal (now the Jefe de Gobierno de la Ciudad de México) who then appointed the 16 mayors or jefes delegacionales, of the sixteen municipalities of Mexico City. Hence, despite the federal organization of the country, Mexico City remained under the multi-level control of the PRI. However, this authoritarian continuity between these different levels of governance, did not lead to a perfect coherence, and in spite of this, municipal-level politicians have been able to exercise some degree of autonomous decision-making. For example the three-term Mexico City Mayor, Ernesto Uruchurtu (1952 – 1965) was able to oppose and to slow down a subway project strongly supported by the president Díaz Ordaz,

which primarily appealed to the private sector and the interests of real estate developers (Smith 1991, 138).

Effectively, the hierarchical organisation under the PRI did not guarantee perfect coordination. The aftermath of the 1985 earthquake revealed that a lack of transparency and an unclear distribution of competencies contributed to the proliferation of corruption within the numerous levels of government. Political authorities were criticized for their lack of reaction to the needs of the public following the natural disaster. To remedy the government's inefficiency a specific entity dedicated to natural disasters, the Centro Nacional de Prevención de Desastro, was created. This additionally translated into the empowerment of civic organizations that had developed spontaneously in response to the emergency (Conference at El Colegio de México, January 13, 2019). By devolving powers to the local level and working towards increased transparency of political decision-making, democratization and decentralization seek to alleviate the problems that emerge through multi-level governance. Likewise, since 1994 the mayor of Mexico City is directly elected by the inhabitants, and since 2000 the same reform has been applied during the election of delegational mayors. Nowadays, three major parties share the Mexican political landscape: the PRI, the PAN and the leftist party Movimiento Regeneración Nacional or MORENA, the party of the current president and governor of Mexico City. The latter has been a substitution to the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD).

Andrés Manuel López Obrador, also known as AMLO, founded the leftist political party MORENA (Movimiento de regeneración nacional) in 2012. He won the 2018 presidential

election, with the aim to fight against corruption through pacified political changes. This event is of historic importance for the whole country because only conservative political parties had won the presidential election since 1929. Additionally, this has impacted Mexico City itself, because AMLO used to be the mayor of the capital from 2002 to 2005, bringing about considerable anti-corruption and social measures on a municipal-level. He also attempted to change the way politicians were accustomed to working, for instance, setting precedent by delivering daily press conferences. The multiplication of political parties and democratization pose challenges by creating increased conflict between local-level decision-makers whose political party or political goals may not align with those of federal-level decision makers. For instance, Andrés Manuel López Obrador was formerly a member of the PRD during his incumbency as the mayor of Mexico City from 2000 until 2005; Vicente Fox, from the PAN served as President of Mexico during this same time period. At the same time, such conflicting positions between president and mayor also existed prior to these decentralization efforts, notably during the hegemonic reign of the PRI. For the first time since 1997, the political parties of the mayor of Mexico City and the president of the Federal State of Mexico are aligned. Mexico City's first female mayor, Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo and president Andrés Manuel López Obrador, both of whom assumed office in December of 2018, are members of MORENA. It is first time this situation has occurred since 1997. This political atmosphere may pose interesting opportunities for the creation, reform, and implementation of current policies. While the various problems of multi-level governance have long been identified, the absence of a metropolitan-region governing authority poses

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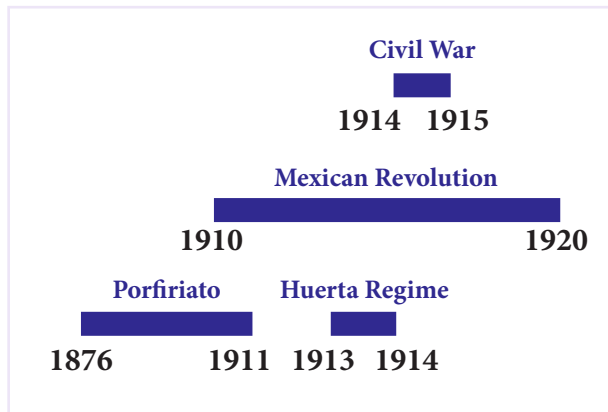
additional challenges in terms of decision-making and coherent implementation beyond the administrative boundaries of Mexico City. In 2018, the previous mayor of Mexico, José Ramón Amieva, launched the first Constitution of Mexico City which in part, recognizes the need to co-construct policies at a metropolitan level. Increasing civil participation within this reform process, implementing new forms of institutional organization, and addressing the pervasiveness of corruption are at the heart of Mexico City's current political projects.

The study trip enabled the examination of how these recent political changes would impact the design and the implementation of policies at various scales, what they would mean in terms of “taking decisions, resolving conflicts, producing public goods, coordinating private behaviors, regulating markets, organizing elections, extracting resources, allocating spending” — all the activities that are comprised in the notion of “governing” (Leca 1995, quoted in Favre 2003). Moving through the metropolis, and becoming familiar with its unique challenges, confirmed that many actors, beyond elected officials and governmental bodies, are involved in steering societal changes in Mexico City. In fact, urban governance, especially in large metropolises, rests upon the autonomous actions and coordinated activities of a plethora of actors — from central state representatives and local authorities, to companies from the private sector, sometimes engaged in public-private partnerships, to consultants, think-tanks and non-profit organizations, as well individual citizens. This approach to governance in Mexico City aims to acknowledge these interactions between various actors, both governmental and non-governmental (Le Galès 1995).

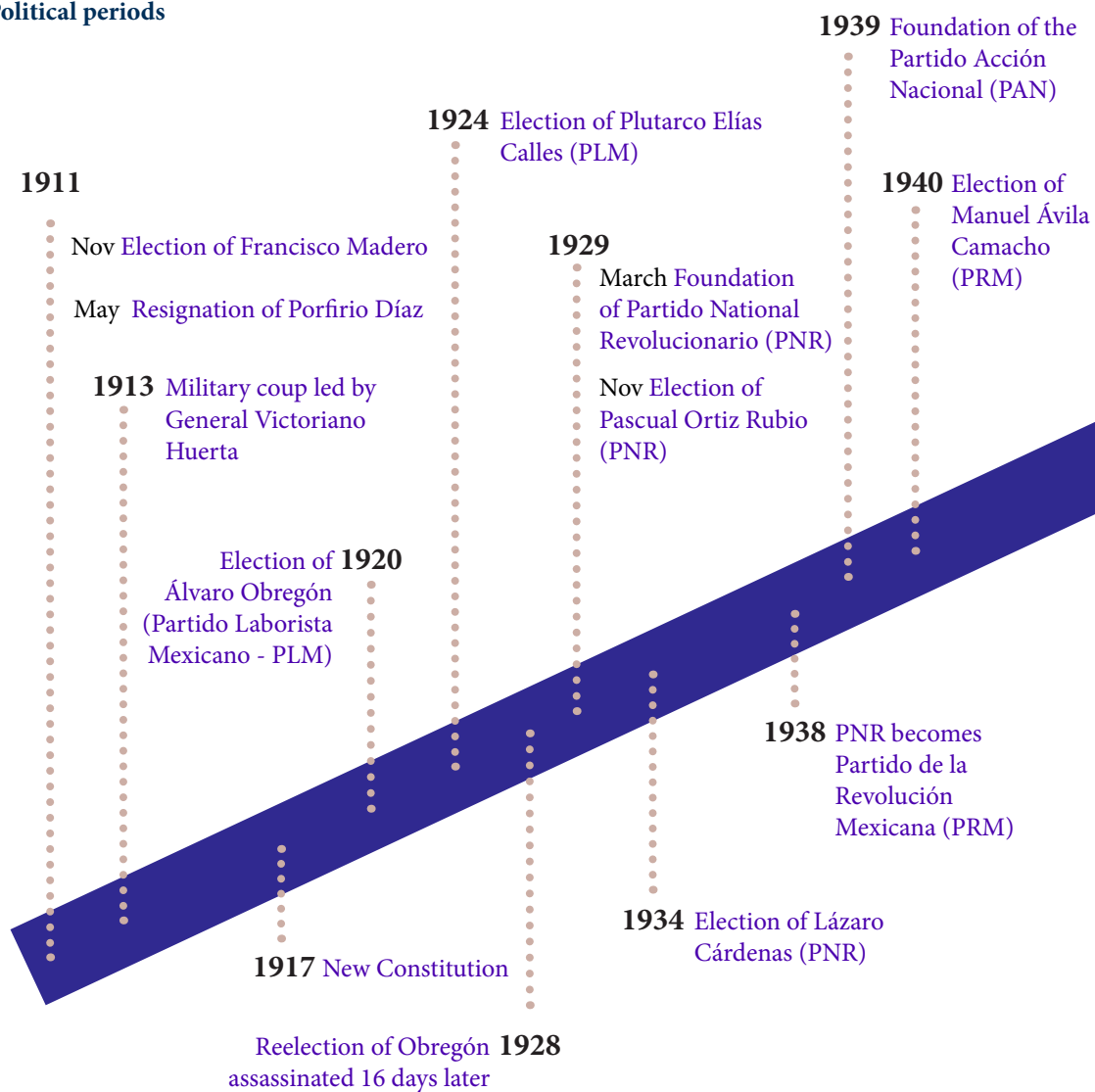
The study trip to Mexico City which took place in January 2019 provided the opportunity over the course of a week, to examine urban governance with a guiding question: What are the policy consequences of political change? During reflections on this experience in preparation for this report, a secondary question emerged: What are the main policy controversies faced by new Mexico City administration and the instruments currently being designed and experimented in response to these? The following chapters will aim to address these questions, discussing the experiences with the different actors, from the representatives of federal and local governmental agencies, to members of the municipal administration, local associations, scholars, research institutes, and other leaders and professionals, and enriched through the analyses of previous academic publications on the subject. This report will attempt to offer tentative answers regarding the impact of the governance schemes emerging in light of the political turnover that has recently taken place in Mexico.

Each chapter introduces a specific aspect of Mexico City's urban governance. First, this report investigates the main political challenges: stability, public participation, institutional fragmentation, corruption, and international development policies (I). This is followed by an assessment of urban planning evolutions in the city, which were mostly related to mobility and housing (II). The third section focuses on Mexico City's responses to environmental risk, regarding pollution, water-management and the potential resurgence of earthquakes (III). Finally, this report attempts to show the different facets of informality, recognizing the potentiality for such activities to be considered beyond their compartmentalization and marginalization within the urban fabric (IV).

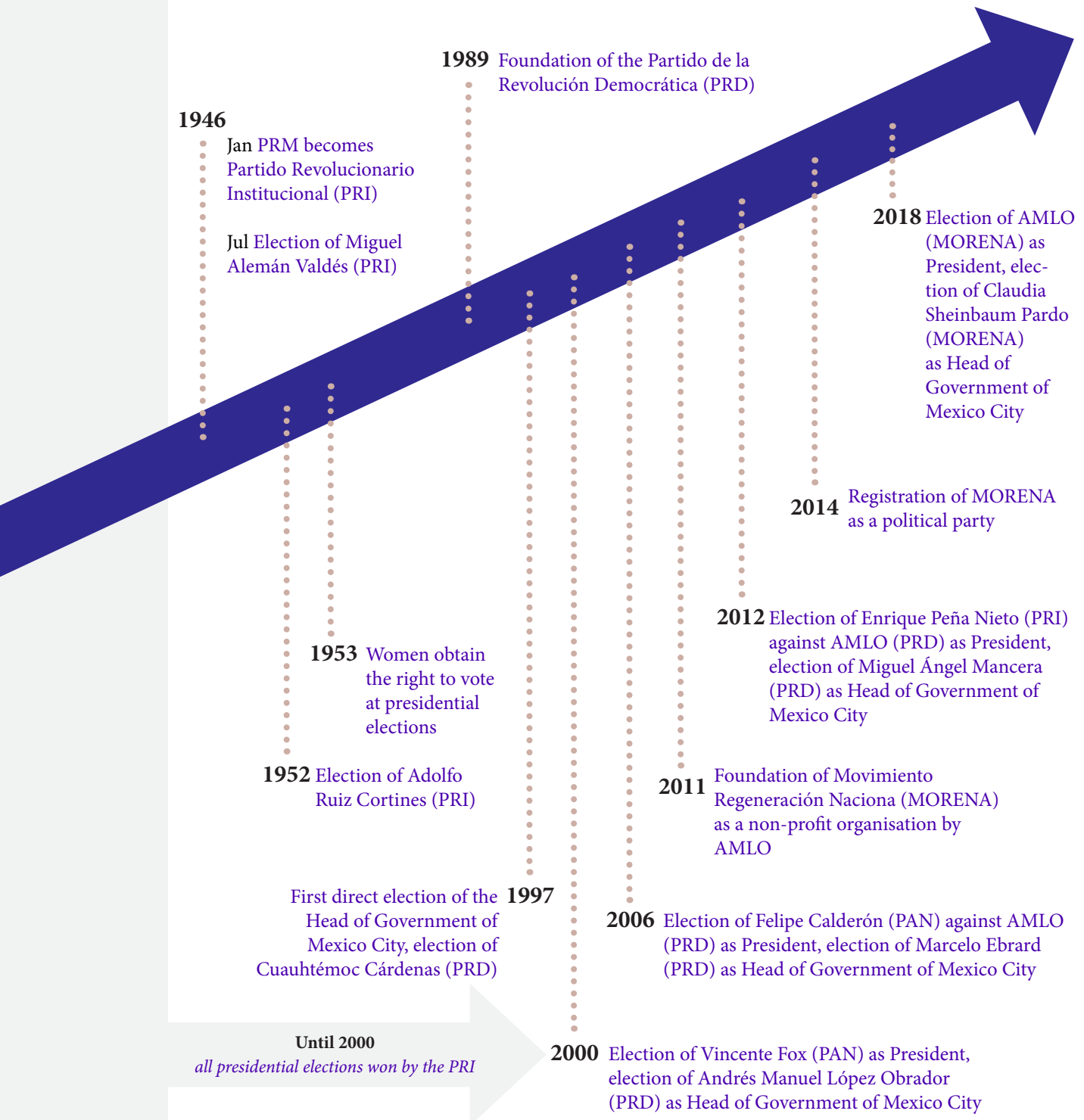
FROM THE CITY OF THE PALACES TO THE CITY OF HOPE



Political periods



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NEW ACTORS
IN CDMX'S
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THE OBRADOR PARADIGM

BY ANNA FECHTOR & MIKI TAKESHITA

On December 1, 2018, the people of Mexico had their voices heard, ushering in Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, founder of the Movimiento Regeneracion Nacional (MORENA), as the 58th President of Mexico. Obrador, or AMLO, ran on a left-wing and populist campaign and promised a historic transformation for the country of Mexico. His policy proposals include cancellation of Mexico City's new international airport, eradication of corruption, universal access to social services, among others intended to undo 70 years of PRI rule and restore power back to the people.

At the same time, Claudia Sheinbaum, also a member of the MORENA party, was elected mayor of Mexico City, assuring a political alignment at the federal and municipal levels. An important role of the municipal government is to enforce Mexico City's first constitution, drafted and implemented in 2017, which includes the right to abortion, the right to same-sex marriage, the right for citizens to create laws, and the right for citizens to run for office without party affiliation. Stakes are high for Mexico City politics as this new administration attempts to make a radical break from the monopoly of elite rule towards a more grassroots and participative democracy.

This section is framed around the constellation of actors and coalitions that have come to constitute the new regime, and their logic of action in this important political moment. It reflects on the transition from right-leaning, one-party rule to a politically leftist administration, with a critical eye to the ways in which new policies interact with those of the past. Articles examine the institutional features of this political ecosystem as they play out in CDMX, with close attention to the gaps they fill, and the vulnerabilities they reveal.

The section opens with a snapshot of regime politics between the AMLO administration and its predecessor. Here, the election of OBRADOR stands out as a critical juncture in the stability that came to characterize Mexican politics under one party rule. Contesting the legacies of PRI rule is a necessary task for MORENA to break with the past, but the everyday work of this project incurs high political risk capable of obstructing the administration's agenda.

The next article complicates the governmental discourse seen in above surrounding community participation. While municipalities have emphasized their responsiveness to citizen feedback regarding infrastructure development and the provision of social services, the case of the Huerto Roma Verde project in Roma Sur illuminates the ways in which resource-stretched community organizations, rather than the municipal government, have taken on the role of ensuring local community participation and empowerment.

Shifting focus from the State to civil society, the fourth article analyzes new strategies used by non-governmental organizations to serve residents, challenge clientelist practices and gain legitimacy in the eyes of the municipal government. The authors highlight how, to earn status, NGO's have shifted their approach away from coffee table politics and towards more frequent, direct engagement with the communities that they serve.

The fifth article examines how forms of contestation seen in the first article play out in the restructuring of public agencies. Taking the case of the public transportation sector, the authors argue that this reshuffling is a strategy to minimize corruption and enhance accountability among service providers. The section closes with further reflection on corruption, and the process of turning anti-corruption discourse into action.

Collectively, the articles offer a glimpse into the apparent tensions involved with implementing AMLO's radical agenda on the ground in Mexico City. The Obrador paradigm constitutes a new political economy of relationships and exchanges that seek to transform a political endowment of clientelism and exclusion into an era of direct democracy. New regulations and organizational restructuring in the first year of MORENA's tenure have proved to crack the hard shell of the PRI's legacy, but a true break from the past will require unprecedented inter-agency coordination and coherence with civil society--features which have yet to emerge in the new administration.





Mexican flag on the Zócalo square. Credits: Anouk Jeanneau

STABILITY AS A “VOCATION:” MORENA’S CONTESTATION OF MEXICAN POLITICS

BY CAROLINE ÇAKIR
LUCAS ANTONIO
CIVIDANES GOMES

This study trip arrived in Mexico City in the middle of a gas crisis about a month and a half after Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO)’s presidential inauguration. The 2018 election of the former mayor of Mexico’s capital city, after two unsuccessful campaigns – in 2006 and 2012 –, resulted from the foundation of a new left-wing party, the Movimiento Generación Nacional (MORENA), and an increasingly populist rhetoric targeting what he called the “power mafia,” i.e., “his enemies in the political and business communities” (Anderson 2018). MORENA’s striking victory gave the party unprecedented powers since the breakdown of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)’s hegemony. This section analyzes how MORENA is concomitantly able, willing and coerced to contest Mexican politics, nonetheless, incurring in high risks in defying its stability “vocation.” We use the example of the “huachicol war” to explore the possibilities and limits of the Obrador paradigm having as a background Mexico City metropolis governance.

Stability as a “vocation”

Mexican political history has a peculiar trajectory concerning Latin American countries. While intense disputes of power were widespread in the region in the second half of the 20th century, the country experienced a long and stable dominance of one political party established during the tumultuous period following the 1910 Mexican Revolution. The PRI ruled the country for more than 70 years as a political machine anchored in a constant process of ideological adaptation. The legacy of such “perfect dictatorship” is manifested in what we call stability “vocation” of Mexican politics where clientelism is the most eloquent feature of its arrangement. The rise of the conservative

“contra la corrupción,
ni un paso atrás”

Andrés Manuel López Obrador,
morning conference,
January 14, 2019

“against corruption, not one step back”

Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), at the turn of the 21st century, was soon retroverted with PRI’s presidency victory in 2012. After one more sexenio, MORENA, a leftist party dissident of Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) – in turn, a left-wing PRI’s dissident – was the great victorious in the 2018 elections conquering the most important Executive position, but also majorities in the Congress and the control of important municipalities and entities such as Mexico City.

The history of clientelist practices in Mexico has been much studied, and can be identified at different levels of governance. “The proffering of material goods in return for electoral support” (Stokes 2007, 605) – a more contemporary interpretation of the phenomenon – is indeed embedded in a complex scenario where decentralization and intense locally-based disputes of power – among caciques – are at the core of Mexican politics since before the revolution (Purcell 1981). More recently, the central role of clientelism can be linked to the development of network-politics and was encouraged by post-war economic development (Hilgers 2008). The PRI instrumentalized those networks in order to ensure its hegemony “probably long after its underlying popularity had been severely eroded”

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(Stokes 2007, 607). Such an arrangement worked to produce a political stability that, after several decades, instated a true “vocation” in Mexican politics, i.e., a strong suitability to an intermediated pattern of power relations. However, placing such an emphasis in this intermediation factor favored the growing inequalities since access to goods was controlled by those “gatekeepers” and, hence, selective. Such derived inequalities are at the basis of AMLO’s electoral success, forging the current paradigm shift of Mexican politics. A change in the ruling elite, inducing the movement from a clientelist- to a populist-centered governance arrangement born out of the rise of MORENA.

The rise of MORENA

MORENA was created as a social and political movement captained by AMLO before the 2012 elections. After the second defeat of the Presidential candidate, the movement was transformed into a party in 2014. Mainly composed of PRD dissidents and closely related to grassroots movements, the party achieved an initial electoral success – especially in the capital – in 2015 elections before reaching its heyday in 2018. As a left-wing party, it occupies a more extremist position on the Mexican political spectrum – despite a certain pragmatism observed in AMLO’s term as the head of Mexico City (Davis 2002). In its program, MORENA proclaims its fight for a “plural, inclusive and supportive Mexico” (Morena 2014, 1) in order to change “the regime of injustice, corruption and authoritarianism” (ibid.) ruling it. PRI’s and PAN’s leaders are described as “oligarchies” responsible for the “decadence” and “anti-democracy” of the country, literally citing former Presidents Salinas, Calderón and Peña Nieto and pointing to “fraudulent elections.” In short, the rhetoric

fulfills the libertarian leftist party requirements with a populist touch characterized by the recurrent reference to the imagery of “the pure people’ against ‘the corrupted elite’” (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017, 6).

Such narrative persisted in the electoral manifesto where the “alternative project of nation” is presented by two very first paragraphs diagnosing a “kidnapped State,” dominated by a “group,” targeting particularly those who “amass large fortunes from night to day, supported by illegality, influence and in the shadow of public power” (Morena 2016, 1) – for instance, one of the first moves of AMLO in office was to review the mega infrastructure investments initiated by former President Peña Nieto such as the new Mexico City airport project and the “robust” fast train line connecting the capital to Toluca. That strategy found fertile electoral ground. The overwhelming victory of MORENA gave the party unseen powers since the decline of PRI. At the national level, considering AMLO, Figure 1 shows how the President virtually won in every state of the country leaving behind the North/South cleavage more or less observed in past elections. In Figure 2, we see how the incumbent coalition share in Mexico’s bicameral Congress – composed by the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies – reached unprecedented levels considering the same period, conquering the majority in both Legislative branches – 54% and impressive 62% respectively. At the local level, concerning Mexico City, MORENA won the mayor, 11 out of 16 heads of *alcaldías* (69%) and the coalition obtained 62% of the seats of Mexico City Congress, strongly impacting the governance of the metropolis as AMLO’s airport project cancellation have shown – the federal government is a central player in the region especially due to its financial capacity



Figure 1. Presidential elections results by state since 2000. Source: authors/INE.

In this context, MORENA's rising, mostly in the figure of its leader, offers a twofold interpretation. On one hand, it is in tune with the global rise of populism mostly supported by a moral backlash that intend to confront “the system.” However, on the other hand, in contemporary terms considering the continent, MORENA is anachronistically leftist in its methods, counting on castronian communication, beveridgean social policies and an ideologically compliant foreign policy – a possible outcome of the less than 0,1% of votes that kept AMLO out of office in 2006. In this sense, MORENA seems, at the same time, able, willing and coerced to contest Mexican politics. If, on the one hand, the party has sufficient power and intentions to intervene in the state of arrangements, on the other, it is strongly pressured by the level of polarization fomented during the campaign. Nonetheless, challenging the stability “vocation” means breaking a crystalized clientelist structure – not rarely associated with corrupted and illegal activities – that comes with a high price as some meetings

we had on the study trip could illustrate – especially with actors closer to the street-level and policy deliverance.

MORENA's contestation

Besides the first contestation moves such as the review of some infrastructure investments in Mexico City, AMLO went further. “Ni un paso atrás” – “not one step back” – was a kind of slogan of the President in the – more than an hour-long – daily morning conference during our field work in the capital. The plan to counter fuel theft was a new measure against “the enemies” evoked in the campaign and, in this case, materialized in the figure of the huachicoleros – thefts and sellers of huachicol, i.e., stolen fuel. The illegal practice consisted in extracting fuel from ducts that connect the refineries and the distribution plants. According to AMLO, 65 billion of pesos – around €3 billion – per year was being illicitly drained, accounting for 4% of the production of Pemex in government

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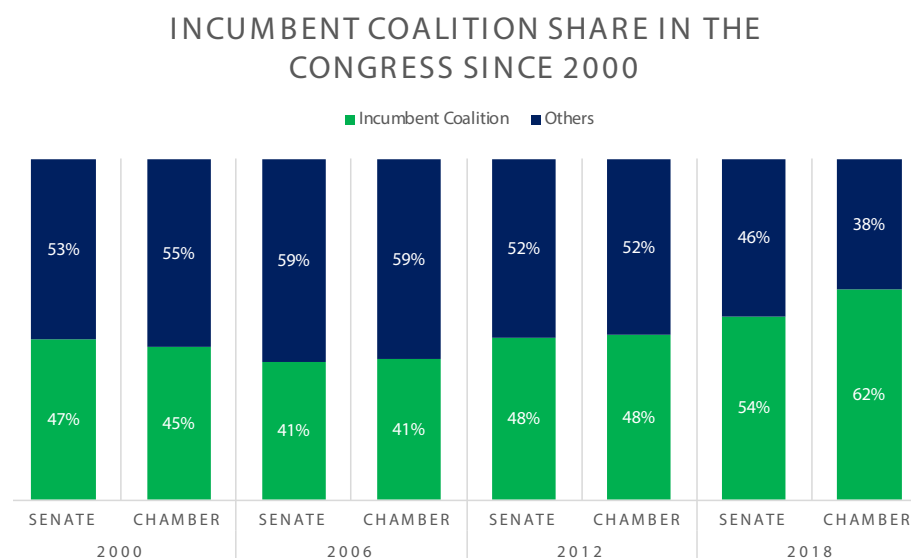


Figure 2. Incumbent coalition share in the Congress since 2000. Source: authors/INE.

estimations (Morning conference, January 14, 2019). The plan, initiated in December 20, 2018, cut the duct supply and used tank trucks for fuel distribution – a more expensive and less efficient means of transportation. The result was a massive gas shortage weeks after, generating long lines of distressed drivers waiting for hours nearby the gas stations in the main cities of the country – as was the case in the car-dependent Mexico City with an unlikely fluid traffic during the study trip. In the news, the so-called “huachicol war” came to the center of the agenda, on the one hand, presenting a determined government despite the erosion of its political capital as a consequence of the shortage and, on the other, exploring the theories behind it, from the alleged connections between the illegal practice with the narcotics trade, to the confrontation of government data and information.

The “huachicol war” may be one of the first examples of the possibilities and limits of the Obrador paradigm. The plan to recover control

over only 4% of the production of the state-ruled oil company shows the government’s determination to fight in the symbolic field. Even if cutting the duct supply unbalanced the market and costed political capital, the apparent deficit calculus, indeed, matches the paradigm configuration – i.e., what’s at stake is a political strategy of disruption of former governance arrangements –, showing the possibilities of the new government. However, the “war” also exposes how corruption and illegality play a social function not easily replaced by the state in the short-term, showing the limits of the “new revolution.” For instance, in the afternoon of January 18, 2019 (El Universal 2019), a hole in a duct in Tlahuelilpan, Hidalgo – North of Mexico City – attracted a crowd of people, in its majority poor ones, trying to carry the leaking gas. An explosion, though, resulted in over 90 fatalities in the incident. “Nosotros no vamos apagar el fuego con el fuego” (AMLO, extraordinary conference, January 19, 2019) – “we are not going to put out the fire with fire” – said AMLO

in a speech maintaining the former determined position, yet emphasizing the role of inequality in what he classified as a “tragedy.” The sad event reveals how the paradigm also faces structural constraints such as the historical reliance of the poor on clientelist and “para-state” solutions for their needs. In this sense, the Obrador paradigm is a two-way relationship, in contesting Mexican politics, it will also be challenged by the stability “vocation.” How far MORENA will be able to go, especially in Mexico City, still an open question.

If we were, in one word, to summarize the meetings with specialists and authorities during the week of the study trip, the word we would choose would be caution. It was certainly a dispersed impression presented in the speech of most of them. “We need more information,” “we don’t know yet exactly how it’s going to be” were fragments appearing across different contexts. Primarily, it indicates the natural uncertainties raised by a new government and the definition of how to implement its political project, but also, we argue, it illustrates the acknowledgment of certain vulnerabilities of it. As we proposed, the contradicting relationship between the heritage of a PRI-centered clientelist arrangement and the rise of a new populist left-wing party under a more radical position prompt inevitabilities and risks that will define the Obrador paradigm. If disrupting the past governance arrangements is an obligatory move, structural factors and the inherited *modus operandi* undermines the reformatory potential. The “huachicol war” is a good example that shows how restructuring Mexican governance will be a necessary, but challenging task. Understanding MORENA’s contestation of the stability “vocation” is, therefore, fundamental to analyze Mexico City metropolis governance.

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NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT BANKS AND AGENCE FRANÇAISE DE DÉVELOPPEMENT IN CDMX

BY ANATOLE REBOUL

In the 2008 financial crisis context, most development banks in Latin America have assumed a countercyclical role by scaling up their lending operations exactly when private banks experienced temporary difficulties in granting credit to the private sector. In 2009, the Mexican government called up for the intervention of the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) in Mexico. Immediately after, the opening of two new agencies, in Colombia and Mexico, responded to AFD's mandate in emerging countries: the promotion of "green and inclusive" growth. In the following 8 years, 1.4 billion euros have been committed through loans, grants, grants and technical cooperation.

Not all projects revolve around climate change; other projects spearheaded by AFD promote sustainable urban development and participatory governance. Mexico's development has led to uncontrolled urban sprawl, which has had negative consequences on the quality of housing, public services and the environment, and fuel inequalities. Therefore, two projects are currently being implemented, first of all, renovating Mexico City's metro to provide high-quality public transport and reduce the number of private vehicles in the capital. Secondly, improving governance in the Mexico City region and rethinking the sustainable development of territories. The AFD and the French Facility for Global Environment (FFEM) are supporting the lake region of Xochimilco for urban planning and improving water reserve management.

National development banks are constantly in direct contact with the federal and municipal governments. Understanding the direction given by politics is crucial. Therefore, the election of Mexico's new president, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, has raised numerous questions. Although the new president and his team enjoy strong popular support, investors are worried about the policies he is proposing for the next six years. This is especially true over the energy sector which lacks clarity. AMLO has affirmed that his priority is national sovereignty when it comes to energy. His intentions mark a step backwards, as he intends to provide greater financial support for the two state-owned companies (Pemex and CFE) and limit the stakes of both foreign and domestic private investors in the sector.

National development banks will continue to closely monitor the national context while trying to extend their action. The AFD will continue to take things further in Mexico by scaling up its action to support the energy transition and to become more involved in the fight against climate change and the sustainable use of natural resources.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION COMMITTEES: THE DISPARITY BETWEEN RHETORIC AND ACTION

BY YOLENI ANDRÉ
MAËL ALONZO
BRITTANY EBELING

At the forefront of the new administration's stated aims is a deepening of community participation mechanisms. President López Obrador's path to his mayoral tenure and current presidency was marked by his early career as a community organizer in Tabasco, a trajectory reflected in the MORENA party's rhetoric concerning citizen involvement in governance (Semple and Villegas, 2018). Having ushered in a new constitution, mayor, and president in swift consecutive strokes, Mexico City hangs in a moment of many 'firsts.' Now enshrined in legal language as a product of the new constitution and born of a participatory process, the "right to the city" demands that the new administration uphold this constitutional aspiration with participatory measures. Under the new constitution, the city has been "subdivided into boroughs," each charged with electing their own local mayors and administrators (Scruggs 2017). These decentralized and ostensibly participatory mechanisms may or may not have the intended effect of allocating policy decisions and resources into the hands of citizens—they are also part of Mexico City's attempt to paint itself as a global and inclusive city, but the effect on the lives of its citizens vary (Scruggs 2017).

Citizen participation committees have a long rooted history in Mexico City. The establishment of "block representatives" in the 1970s and 80s were largely "used as an apparatus of political approval," particularly leading up to the 1985 earthquake, which sparked widespread informal civic mobilization, in contrast to the formalized schemes of the government (Flores 2017). The launch of the Citizen Participation Law by the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) in the late 1990s marked the legal status of community participation mechanisms. While conceived of as a tool for avoiding unilateral, authoritative

decision-making, these mechanisms had limitations. Historically, the efficacy of such schemes was limited by the fact that they held "only a consultative function which made them very weak," and were characterized by "high levels of non-participation, the existence of other participation channels," (such as informal community organizing demonstrations) and their perceived ineffectiveness in achieving concrete systemic change (Guillermo Aguilar 33). More problematic still, the assigning of 'co-responsibility' to neighborhood-level communities may place undue burden on resource-stretched localities for the outcomes of their own service provision. In this way, at their worst, participation "emerges more as a demagogic than democratic process, directed to maintain social and political stability" (Guillermo 44). Conversely, the lack of citizen participation tells a cautionary tale as well, such as in the case of the Plan Verde in Mexico City, for example, where long-term environmental sustainability mechanisms were undermined by the plan's failure to include effective citizen participation (Madero and Morris 2016, 1728). As emphasized by Arnoldo Kramer, former Resilience Director for CDMX under the 100 Resilient Cities program, the lack of participation reflects the breadth of implications for resiliency against climate change—merely technocratic or scientific solutions prove inefficient without the backing of communities.

As discourses and incentives are being created in order to establish arenas for participation, each level of government tries to define a stronger sense of citizenship. Thus, Mexico City and its new administration not only aim to embrace its role as a social services provider, but also intend to construct a universally equal civic society by establishing new ways to embrace democracy. The new constitution for instance commits itself

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to creating mechanisms that guarantee electoral platforms (Art. 56), giving citizens the right to create laws, participating in referendum and plebiscite, and running for election without being affiliated to a party (Art. 57). The 2017 constitution insists on the participation of citizens in the elaboration, execution, and evaluation of public policies, embracing the idea of an open and inclusive local government system (Art. 58). One can find equivalently strong discourses in lower levels of government. The Cuauhtémoc District administration, for instance, purposes programs that are extremely progressive in terms of social inclusion, culture and citizen participation.

However, as these principles, rights, and programs show, the design of policies are often created independently of the budget, which gives no space to visualize or plan for implementation. Thus, creating mechanisms to build

community organization are most of the time handled by associations or squats, such as the Urban Regeneration Alliance (ARU) or the Huerto Roma Verde. The former, for example, focuses on participative process and social intelligence, as the group coordinates among different actors (inhabitants, public authorities, private actors, etc.), with the idea of creating an urban regeneration through social participation. They map territories with the help of the inhabitants and establish list of priorities for each place that they then share with local authorities, citizens and others actors. Their actions derives from the collaboration with a multiplicity of actors, as they collaborate with private entities, universities and scholars, public agencies, and social organizations, even though the voice of inhabitants stays at the center of their diagnosis. Putting regular pressure on local authorities is one of their strategies. When we met them



Visit of the Cuauhtémoc Delegation. Source: Anouk Jeanneau.

in Mexico, they presented the current situation around social housing issues, and they mention the Antorcha campesina social movement. They introduced the movement as an organization of invaders inhabitants; for which they try to create contact and negotiation with the government to allocate them money to deliver services and built schools. Another initiative is the Huerto Roma Verde, on which we would like to focus to understand some of the actions of civil society.

The Huerto Roma Verde project shows how local initiatives can be efficient drivers for linking citizen participation with broader goals. In the aftermath of the 1985 earthquake, a residential project collapsed in La Roma neighborhood, and an 8000-square meter plot of land remained abandoned for 27 years. If it was supposed to become a green area, it was left in ruins, and hosted more drugs and garbage than trees. Then, a local association “La cuadra provoca Ciudad” and the neighborhood’s dwellers decided to occupy the space. This is how, in 2010, the Huerta Roma Verde project was born, so as to “transform the city and improve the community” (Roma Verde, 2019). It not only aimed to improve the quality of life, foster community participation and neighborhood cohesion, but also to create a shared responsibility to maintain community spaces. The project stresses the entanglement of the global and the local, (La Cuadra Provoca Ciudad, 2010) and campaigns for a holistic view of development through one main medium: permaculture. From farming to caring for cats, from artistic performances to house-building workshops, the project seeks to empower dwellers, always giving priority to community participation. However, Roma Verde’s ambition goes beyond Roma’s neighborhood. Indeed, as it hosts Bambuteria, a company that builds houses made of bamboo - a material more

resilient than traditional materials used for building houses - Roma Verde seeks to spread its model of sustainable development across the country and more broadly in Latin America.

Such a project was made possible under a specific political environment that allows for its continued existence. As the project’s land still belongs to its former owner, Institute for Social Security and Services for State Workers (ISSSTE), the Huerto Roma Verde is legally prone to eviction. However, there is a positive juridical context that facilitates its acceptance (Mandujano Carré, 2018). First, the environmental law of the Mexico federal district encourages cultivation systems based on organic farming and respect for the soil. Secondly, the passage of the Urban Orchards and Gardens Law in 2017 paved the way for policies in favor of food security through the development of urban gardens. Thirdly, Mexico City government signed a charter for the right to the city in 2010, which is defined as “the equitable usufruct of cities within the principles of sustainability, democracy, equity, and social justice” (Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City, 2010, 7). Finally, as Claudia Sheinbaum - the current mayor of Mexico city - is known for her commitment for environment, the political context should facilitate the negotiation with public authorities. Therefore, even if Huerto Roma Verde project is illegal, it accounts for all the ambitions of the city’s commitments in the field of environment, social justice and democratic participation. In this context, one grasps the importance of the law’s interpretation and implementation by political powers. However, if its informal recognition prevents the project from eviction so far, its dependence on political will is a source of precariousness. Indeed, Roma Verde is still in perpetual negotiations with the local authorities of Roma, and subsidies to

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continue funding the project are particularly hard to guarantee; especially as the electoral turnover undermines stable rapports with elected representatives.

In a context of large disparities between the government rhetoric regarding citizen participation and mainly failed participation policies, Huerto Roma Verde asserts the agency of local scale in producing participating spaces. As we visited its gardens, we were all impressed by its capacity to address a lack of participation to climate change-related risks. As urban gardens often do, Huerto Roma Verde offers alternative models of urban management, and materializes a certain idea of the right to the city (Reddy, 2018). Therefore, implicit in this kind of initiative is a manifestation of the government's orientation toward its relation with civil society, in some respects leaving civil society to its efforts but in others more actively uplifting them-- such forms of experimentation result from this balance in government discourse, as well. Appropriating the making of the city through a radical action mode - occupation - the project proved successful at negotiating with city institutions so to safeguard its activity. Thus, by introducing non-market rationalities in the city, inclusive participation at the neighborhood level but also alternative urban development through new construction methods, Roma Verde becomes an important actor in making of the city from below. Similar efforts are visible through the work of the Urban Regeneration Alliance (ARU), which defines itself as a think and act tank and is also representative of a bottom-up successful approach, as it insists on focus on the citizens' voice and allowing social participation in the strategies and process of urban regeneration. As urban experimentation, Roma Verde and the ARU highlight the efficiency of bottom-up

“nuestra misión es convocar ciudad y generar comunidad mediante el impulso y generación de acciones ambientales, culturales, sociales, artísticas y ciudadanas”

Huerto Roma Verde

“Our mission is to produce the city and generating community through the generation of environmental, cultural, social, artistic and citizen actions”

initiatives for the future of citizen participation and sustainable urban development, but also depict the way in which they sometimes manifest in spite of governmental aims and rhetoric, rather than as a result of them. In the face of future devastating hazards such as earthquakes, crime-related risks, or other forces which plunge large swaths of the population into a precarious situation, community participation mechanisms will prove most effective in influencing citizen outcomes if they are systematically embedded into governance systems, not anecdotally emergent and forced to consistently justify their efforts to government entities.

FROM COFFEE-TABLE POLITICS TO PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS? How NGOs ARE ENTERING MEXICO CITY'S GOVERNANCE

BY MARIA GIORDA
SONIA LONGUET
JOSÉ PALOMO RIVAS

The work of Mexican NGOs seems to be strongly affected by political contingencies: they rely on their relations with incumbent officials to enter the policy making process. However, in a few instances during our study trip, we witnessed the unwillingness of organizations to partake in coffee-table politics, manifestly refusing to use their personal networks as leverage to be contracted. Instead, they have relied on so-called “social intelligence” to encourage participatory diagnosis regarding the issues perceived as the most pressing by neighborhood inhabitants. This, in turn, not only gains these organizations the sympathy of residents, but it also legitimizes their projects in the eyes of the local administration and provides them with a basis to challenge clientelist practices. Hence, this article will assess the strategies employed by NGOs to impact the governance of Mexico City (CDMX).

Taking Krista M. Brumley's (2010) typology (based on three kinds of NGOs: Policy influencers, Educators and Service providers) as a starting point, three NGOs located in Mexico City will be analyzed and assessed in light of these categories, according to the risks they incur and to the strategies they mobilise to attain their policy objectives. We aim to assess and expand on Brumley's typology while also conducting an analysis of the shifting political climate and its possible consequences on NGOs' repertoire.

The article will first propose a short historical overview of the historical context of NGOs in CDMX; next, it will elaborate on Brumley's work and apply it to three selected cases: 100 Resilient Cities, a network of cities involved in the improvement of their resilience strategy, the World Resources Institute, a think tank operating in several areas including environmental

and mobility public policies, and Alianza para la Regeneración Urbana, an organization coordinating urban regeneration projects in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Our analysis is beneficial to the enrichment of Brumley's (2010) framework in two ways. On the one hand it identifies an additional strategy that NGOs can pursue to safeguard their actions from the wider socio-political context. On the other hand, it shows that not only the political climate, but also financing availability and personal relationships have an impact over NGOs' strategies.

Historical overview

The development of NGOs in Mexico is closely linked with periods of political change in the country. Up to the 1960s, NGOs were essentially working with the Mexican government to advance the country economic growth. With the rise of authoritarian governments in South America, NGOs took a more oppositional stance and expressed their resistance to the regime through the support of small-scale projects, empowering specific disadvantaged social groups. In the 1980s, after the roll-out of structural adjustment policies, the austerity regime left governments unable to provide a wide variety of services to citizens and NGOs intervened as service providers, cooperating with the state or, rather, replacing it as welfare provider. Despite the national government's attempts to include NGOs in the realm of public actions, a number of NGOs continue advocating against governmental action. Despite the importance for NGOs to reach as many people as possible, a goal which would require the government's support, further integration between NGOs efforts and public institutions has been undermined by the lack of legitimacy from which Mexican institutions suffer. As Morris and Klesner (2010) point out even after the fall of the PRI, Mexico ranked 72nd

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in the Transparency International's Perception of Corruption Index of 2007, a negative score that could also impact NGOs working with the government. Therefore, in the last few decades, NGOs have faced a dilemma between the strategies of institutionalization – which would lead to a loss of legitimacy in the eyes of the people – and of independence – which gives way to a lack of representativity.

An operational conceptualisation of NGOs

In her review of Mexican NGOs, Brumley (2010, 393) uses three factors to categorise these organisations: their substantive agenda, the level of risk taken to further their objectives, and the degree of difficulty tied to the advancement of a certain goal within a specific socio-political context. NGOs can simultaneously pursue multiple agendas, which consist of influencing policy, awareness-raising, defined by Brumley (2010) as education, and service provision. Strategies are considered “high-risk” when they involve protesting, marching or communicating messages in explicitly critical forms, medium-risk when they entail lobbying, negotiating directly with adversaries, and forming alliances with other civil society groups and low-risk when NGOs prefer to cater individually to their beneficiaries rather than advocating on their behalf.

According to Brumley (2010, 410), NGOs are not monolithic entities that attain pre-established goals and engage in strategies with the same degree of risk. Rather, NGOs adjust their agenda and their tactics depending on changes in their surrounding environment. NGOs' strategies and agendas are closely intertwined and hinge on the sensitivity of the topic they address with respect to policymakers. Brumley (2010, 405) argues that there is a negative correlation between choice of strategy and to what extent an NGO's

goal represents a political challenge within a specific socio-political context. An NGO wishing to engage in a highly sensitive issue may prefer to individually assist its target groups through low-risk assistance programs, rather than engaging in more explicitly oppositional advocacy work.

We will now apply Brumley's (2010) typology to three NGOs that we engaged with during our study trip: 100 Resilient Cities, the World Resources Institute and Alianza para la Regeneración Urbana (ARU). Our goal is two-fold. We first aim to identify NGOs' current survival strategies and hypothesize how President Obrador's government will influence them in the near future. Lastly, we offer suggestions for the improvement of Brumley's (2010) typology based on our direct observations of and interactions with the three Mexican NGOs.

Mexican NGOs within the city's governance system: 100 Resilient Cities

100 Resilient Cities is an international NGO created in 2013 and financed by the Rockefeller foundation whose mission is not only to facilitate the institutionalization of resilience in Mexico City's agenda but also to encourage local communities to take a proactive stance towards resilience-building so that they will not be overly dependent on the government's action. The organisation targets diverse issues such as fostering regional coordination, promoting water supply resilience, improving the mobility system, and fostering innovation and adaptation in the face of environmental risks, such as earthquakes. Nonetheless, 100 Resilient Cities' will to promote people's empowerment leads the organization to adopt a broader definition of resilience including not only protection against environmental risk but also economic resilience.

100 Resilient Cities is a good example of how a changing socio-political environment can deeply affect NGOs strategies. Following the 2017 earthquake, the organization's lobbying activity was seen much more positively in the policy-sphere. Subsequently, the notion of resilience was incorporated in the new constitution of Mexico City and a Resiliency Agency (ARCDMX) was created. However, since the election of Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo in 2018, the local administration has been less responsive to resiliency goals and the Resiliency Agency was unexpectedly dissolved.

In light of these changes, it was impossible for 100 Resilient Cities to maintain their previous medium-risk strategy of influencing policy through lobbying. The organization therefore moved towards tactics requiring a lower level of risk. Our interviewee from the organization affirmed that the only way for NGOs to consolidate themselves is to exclude the government from its processes (having stated, "We don't need the government"). Concretely, this has meant that 100 Resilient Cities does not engage in collaborations or attempt to influence municipal policy, but only relies on other actors to further their policy agenda.

These partners include academic institutions, international resilience offices, the Empowered Communities Program and, above all, community organizations that are constantly in dialogue with vulnerable groups. The organization is also considering including the involvement of university students in supporting the creation of self-built resilient houses. They call this type of community-level resilience strategy "Network Governance". The organization argues that fostering a locally-based set of actions is the only effective way to overcome political instability, a dynamic which, both according to the NGO and Brumley (2010) makes the pursuit of NGOs' goals prone to disruption.

Mexican NGOs within the city's governance system : WRI

The World Resources Institute (WRI) is an NGO operating in several areas including environmental public policy, mobility, and energy efficiency. Our interviewee defined the organization as a "Think and Do Tank", not only providing to governments independent, objective and innovative policy briefs, but also taking up the responsibility of supervising new policies first implementation stages. WRI's work wide umbrella of objectives has led them to use strategies entailing varying degrees of risk. The most high-risk strategy they follow is the comparison of 140 cities in Mexico and publicly shaming "mayors that are not doing the right thing". On a day-to-day basis, WRI favors the medium-risk strategy of drafting laws on behalf of the national government in order to circumvent the risk of green funds being diverted to 'not-so-green' projects, such as flyover highways. In some rare cases, which exemplify WRI's most successful efforts, the organization has taken over the government's operation of public services, such as the city's Metrobus system. Without denying the difficulty WRI faced in carving a space for itself in this initiative's implementation process, we categorize this action as low-risk, considering that the organization in a way became responsible for the provision of a system of public transport.

Interestingly, the meeting with WRI brought to light two aspects unaddressed by Brumley (2010). Firstly, WRI mentioned that the establishment of the Metrobus was possible not because of changes in the political balance of power but rather the sudden grant received five years after the initial proposal. Secondly, WRI's agenda of policy influencing can be disrupted not only by changes in the government's coalition, but also when the policy of interest is transferred to a level of government or department with

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which WRI has no personal relationship. This happened in the case of a “Green Tax” WRI had hoped to preserve. Responsibility for the “Green Tax” was first transferred to the State of Mexico, which afterwards went from being under the responsibility of the Ministry of the Environment to that of the Ministry of Finance.

Therefore the organization appears to adapt the tactics it uses depending not only on the political sensitivity of the issue addressed, but also the resources available at the time of the intervention and the actors they are looking to influence. Medium-level risks often entail a certain amount of negotiation independent from the wider socio-political context. These negotiations are usually carried out through what another of the interviewees during our study trip termed “Coffee Table Politics”. This implies that, the moment an NGO loses its personal contact within the government, strategies of policy influencing are harder to implement. Similarly, financing is paramount to the carrying out of low-risk strategies. In the case of WRI, even a not highly-sensitive project, such as Metrobus, would have not been successfully brought to completion had funds not been available.

Mexican NGOs within the city’s governance system: ARU

The Alianza para la Regeneración Urbana (Urban Regeneration Alliance) is an association working to renew buildings and urban infrastructure in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Its declared objective is to serve as a link between the neighbourhoods and the different actors involved in the urban planning and construction processes, including Mexican private developers, various state jurisdictions and public agencies. As such, ARU’s approach is - in the sense of Yaziji, M. & Doh, J. (2009) - collaborative, involving interaction with state and market actors. However, ARU upholds political

autonomy and transparency to be of paramount importance in the projects they undertake, thereby refusing to engage in clientelistic practices and corruption.

To translate these core values into actual operational practices, ARU has developed a strategy of participatory diagnosis wherein relevant local actors are identified. The physical, economic, social, and environmental context of a neighborhood is assessed, and the members of the community prioritize its main issues, where action is urgently required. The organization engages in low risk activities, providing formative workshops to private developers, thus shaping their working approach to cater depressed communities. On the other hand, the acquisition of “social intelligence”, that is, the collection of fundamental information about the communities where ARU intends to act, helps to legitimize their role at the local level. The accuracy of ARU’s informations concerning the neighbourhoods, backed up by their constituencies, gives their final products political weight. Through this strategy, ARU enters the local political process, also bypassing partisan power struggles. Following Brumley (2010), the advocacy carried out by ARU involves taking medium levels of risk since it mostly consists of negotiating the implementation of the regeneration plan (stemming from the participatory diagnosis) with local administrations. Nevertheless, ARU’s modus operandi also implies the possibility of engaging in more overt forms of confrontation with local governments, such as opposing the funding of projects developed for clientelist reasons rather than because they are in the community’s genuine interest.

As stated above, ARU operates in a collaborative manner with state and market actors despite the fact that their initiatives are structured as responses to market and regulatory failures. One such significant failure is the consequence of

the former social housing policy, which did not dedicate revenue towards the improvement of the urban environment. The regulation of the land market is another failure, which disincentivized private developers from building in central CDMX, since rising land prices significantly led to the decrease in the construction of social housing. The relationship between private developers and local authorities has involved bribery for access to privileged knowledge, used to inform decisions on land acquisition, for example (ARU, 2019). Corruption and lack of transparency are therefore a part of the institutional context in which ARU operates. By stressing the sheer cost of bribery, ARU tries to persuade private developers to work with their organization instead. Conversely, when interacting with local governments, and by highlighting the support of constituencies behind ARU's agenda, the organization transforms the way the policy making process is conducted.

This framing of ARU within Brumley's (2010) typology allows us to locate the organization in the policy influencing category, even though it also provides educational services to private developers. Political opportunity is a key factor for the success of any NGO; while the window opens, however, the capacity to withstand change is essential for their survival. ARU has displayed a high degree of adaptability in the sense that its strategy varies depending on the local authorities and private developers' level of cooperation: from virtuous collective action at best to constituent backed confrontation. This being said, ARU's course of action seems reactive to the attitude of local authorities they observe on the field. In that sense, its place in CDMX' changing governance system will depend greatly on president López Obrador and the newly elected mayors' way to tackle clientelism and corruption. As such, at the stage of our visit, ARU's new position was still highly contingent,

even more so given the early stage of the new administration's agenda setting. López Obrador gained office making moral claims about "regenerating the country" and denouncing clientelist and corrupt political practices. His agenda is thus expected to encourage the empowerment of the public to enable them to oppose projects they do not approve. If political actions were to be taken in that sense, then ARU would have the opportunity to make a more recurrent and drastic use of its "confrontational strategy", engaging less cooperatively with local decision-makers, hence more recurrently incurring in high risk activities.

Our analysis of Mexico City's NGOs can contribute to the enrichment of Brumley's (2010) typology in two ways. Firstly, the meeting with 100 Resilient Cities uncovered an additional low-risk strategy that can be pursued in the case of an unfavourable political climate: namely a paradigm of Network Governance which consists of putting marginalized communities at the center of building resilience. This tactic is particularly interesting in light of Brumley's (2010) framework because community work is not envisioned as an activity to be undertaken temporarily until the political agenda becomes more favorable to bolder measures, but rather as a long-term strategy that allows NGOs to abstract themselves from the dangers inherent to political instability. Secondly, the meeting with WRI has allowed us to identify two other factors that can help us assess an NGO's choice of strategy: the availability of financial resources to realize an NGO's agenda and an NGO's ability to gain access to policymakers through personal connections. Our analysis, however, does not account for the level of risk undertaken by NGOs, with regards to their sources of financing. To be viable, ARU needs to partially fund its activities through its training programs. The rest of its financing mostly comes from another

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organization: Prohive, whose operations depend on the acquisition of social housing from a public institution, INFONAVIT. On the other hand, WRI's financing predominantly consists of philanthropic funding from foreign countries and donations from large corporations, which possibly makes this organisation freer to publicly express their opinions on Mexican Mayors' policies, considering they are not dependent on them for financing. Considering the current political context in which Mexican NGOs must operate, it is hard to predict the impact the new administration will have on NGOs strategies. On the one hand, Obrador's focus on popular participation and citizens' engagement in the policy-making sphere may open up the opportunity for more NGOs to follow a strategy similar to ARU's social intelligence model, leveraging public consultations rather than personal relationships in the negotiation process. On the other hand, MORENA's will to make tabula rasa of the relationships with NGOs established by the previous administration may lead an increasing number of NGOs to follow 100 Resilient Cities strategies of simply not engaging with the government and to root their efforts primarily in engaging the communities that they work with. Even though all NGOs under consideration relied, or used to rely, on the government's support to enter the policy-making area, at the same time, they also distance themselves to some extent from the government's actions. This is done quite radically by 100 Resilient Cities, which is trying to cut all ties it had with the government, and more ambiguously by WRI, which occasionally re-asserts its demands for social accountability by naming and shaming publicly local politicians. As we have discussed, ARU safeguards its legitimacy by acting on behalf of a community. Following Morris and Klesner (2010) analysis of the 2004 Americas Barometer survey, we hypothesise that, in a country where corruption is endemic, NGOs are as worried as the government to be

accused of clientelism and corruption and therefore make one of their priority not only to denounce clientelistic practices but reinforce their own integrity in the eyes of the people. In this context, ARU's efforts to include citizens in the decision-making process are not only meant to cater the neighbourhood's with better services but also to involve people in anti corruption initiatives, therefore building the foundations of what Morris and Klesner (2010) define as the "new politics of societal accountability."

RESTRUCTURING PUBLIC AGEN- CIES AS A STRATEGY OF RECOVERING STATE CONTROL

BY PAULIN BARCAT
FRANCESCA GAL

Mexico City recently faced two major political transformations embedded in institutional reforms in the wake the presidential and municipal elections that have reshaped the political spectrum of the country. The city acquired the status of Mexico's 32nd federal entity under Partido Revolucionario Institucional rule, ceasing to be the country's federal district and therefore gaining significant legislative autonomy. Such a legal shift is even more relevant considering the change of administration following the election of MORENA's candidate Claudia Sheinbaum as mayor Mexico City in 2018. The implication for policy change is therefore twofold, for the self-declared cuarta transformacion (fourth transformation) initiated by newly elected president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador possesses autonomous political and legal tools in order to engage reforms in the Mexico City Metropolitan Area.

This article analyzes policy change through the restructuring of public agencies as a strategy for the new administration to regain formal control over transport. It stresses the dialectic existing in the dynamics of political succession (Hogwood and Peters, 1982), between new reforms and the legal, as well as informally negotiated, ground set by previous administrations. In order to hypothesize on the consequences of such a dialectic, we focus both on previous attempts to regularize Mexico City's transportation sector and on the reforms recently implemented by the new Secretary of Mobility, Andrés Lajous Loaeza.

The lack of coordination of the public transportation system in Mexico City: a chronic problem entrenched in historical policies

The economic recession experienced by Mexico in the 1980's period tore deeply into

“We speak of creation, birth and innovation as though policies frequently came new into the world. In reality, new policies are rarely written on a tabula rasa, but rather on well occupied or even crowded tablet of existing laws, organizations and clients.”

Hogwood and Peters, 1982.

the metropolitan transport fabric. This period, known as the “lost decade” provoked a switch from public management of buses through the organization Ruta 100 towards the use of a concessionary logic. This logic implies that bus or van owners can buy an equivalent to a taxi license to operate their own unit. Indeed, small-scale transportation units such as taxis and minibuses were granted private concessions by public authority on the use of a route. The decline of public units accelerated with the implementation of replacement policies in the late 1980's. This policy allowed Mexico City's car owners to replace their old cars. Many of them chose to exchange for larger vehicles that could substitute public transports (Negrete, 2010).

After 1995, the definitive disappearing of state-owned Autobuses Urbanos de Pasajeros

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permitted the emergence of the microbuses or the peseros system to cover for a significant lack of collective transportation. But the peseros systems also has flaws that are inherent to its manner of functioning. Every microbus driver pays the owner of the bus a daily fee, and the remainder of the fare-revenue goes towards the maintenance of the vehicle, and their personal income. This means drivers are in permanent competition for income and face difficult tradeoffs between accepting more passengers and ensuring the safety and comfort of those aboard. In short, the non-wage-based character of the system places transportation issues onto passengers, while responsibility for vehicle maintenance falls unto drivers. Consequently, drivers “fight for passengers through a myriad of strategies in which what matters least is driving safely” (Negrete, 2015). Moreover, the necessary orientation towards profitability also

encourages drivers to neglect areas of this city with less demand, therefore feeding exclusionary dynamics. The relation between private companies and public authorities is usually led through institutional negotiations and agreements that, according to Andrés Lajous Loaeza, lack a proper legal framework. As a consequence, concessions are very steady and accountability nearly nonexistent.

Moreover, since Mexico City’s urban sprawl goes well beyond the state borders, a huge number of daily commutes occur between the neighbouring Estado de Mexico (Edomex) and the capital. The Edomex sets higher fares than in the city, making it even more expensive for the urban region’s poorest inhabitants to reach the city center. Moreover, this administrative division creates a border within a continuous built environment where passengers must



Chilpancingo metro station. Credits: Franck Giraud.

switch from one bus system to another. Mexico City's transport system therefore responds to patterns inherited from the lost decade and its privatization wave, as well as to an institutional arrangement inherently resistant to effective coordination, cooperation, and accountability. A change in administration, even with the most reformist views, will see its outcomes conditioned by such settings. After learning of the influence of previous policies, we are going to analyse how the new administration of Mexico City's transport system intends to overcome such heritage in order to achieve profound reforms.

Semovi and administrative shift: a window of opportunity to reverse the trend of losing state control over urban services provision

During a consultation with representatives at the Secretaría de Movilidad de la Ciudad de México (Semovi) - the public agency which is responsible for the development and the management of urban transport and road traffic in Mexico City - Secretary Andrés Lajous Loaeza spoke to the priorities and major challenges encountered by his administration since the start of their mandate. Corruption was a recurring theme in the discussion, which is not surprising given that Semovi is commonly regarded as one of the most corrupted public agency according to Lajous Loaeza himself. Particular attention was paid to the issue of corruption in the context of the political shift, and the Secretary explained that the main priority consisted of restructuring Semovi from within in order to recover control over the metropolitan transport system. Revealingly, Andrés Lajous Loaeza reminded us that after the privatization process of the public transportation provision system, the government realized that the bus operators had established a territorial monopoly. In order

to deal with this situation, instead of condemning their illegal status, the public authorities have tried to re-incorporate them by granting concessions over routes. Still, since the beginning, the negotiations with those stakeholders and their inevitable inclusion in the elaboration of public strategies represent a delicate issue and, according to Andrés Lajous Loaeza, has contributed to the diffusion of opaque practices in the Secretary.

In order to fight against those trends, his strategy consists of a restructuring of the Semovi by pursuing a twin-track approach. On one side, it consists of the centralization of all offices in charge of setting the fees and negotiating with private service operators in one department. The main objective is to mitigate political dominance of private operators by reinforcing the authority of Semovi as the central player in charge of the transport sector. Here, Semovi cuts off the autonomy of service providers to compete for strategies in order to regain central administrative control over the coordination of urban transportation provision. On the other side, the Semovi has been restructured through the separation of the above-mentioned office from the decision-making processes. In fact, as Andrés Lajous Loaeza explained, the private operators used to be allowed to attend administrative meetings, ending up exercising pressure on the administration in the definition of urban projects that could affect their businesses. For this reason, one of the first measures that has been taken by his administration consists in the division of the agency into two sub-secretariats, in order to prevent them from defending their own interests in the elaboration of major mobility projects: one is charged with urban planning, and the other with the administration of the transportation system, including the negotiation

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and the coordination with the service providers.

Apart from those two major measures, Andrés Lajous Loaeza underlined the importance of sharing information among the different agencies in order to make decisions that are more accountable and more adapted to the needs of the City. The atomization of public agencies hampering the definition of concerted actions emerged frequently during this fieldwork. This recurrent issue, together with corruption, seem to have been identified as the most pressing problems by the public administration, but it has not been easy for us to understand which actions they would lead practically to tackle them.

In this respect, the pragmatic action plan already adopted by the Secretary is impressive. The example of the approach adopted by Andrés Lajous Loaeza shows the way in which discourse of reform and break from the past is being put forward by the major exponent of the bureaucratic offices of Mexico City. In this specific case, it can be argued that the Secretary of Mobility's reform is a strategy both to reshape transport policy and fight fueling-corruption practices.

The restructuring of Semovi constitutes a step from the state to recover control of urban transport provision from a period marked by the predominance of private interests in the provision of transport services. From a policy perspective, the administrative reorganization of the Secretariat of Mobility in conjunction with broader political change allows us to interpret and identify what is at stake in this context of political shift. If new elected public authorities stress the idea of breaking with past corrupted practices, the systems in which they operate often limit their actions. Therefore, a structural reorganization as the one carried out by the

Secretary of the Semovi appears to be of primary importance. This strategy demonstrates that even if electoral temporalities can constitute a shock susceptible of triggering reforms (Sabatier, 1993), their outcomes depend on groundwork set by previous policies. In fact, the case of the Semovi shows to what extent new administrations, despite a strong political will, need to implement policy that recognizes a degree of continuity in order to achieve long-standing systemic evolution. Moreover, this example epitomizes the idea that policy problems are rooted in past decisions made as solutions to previous problems. Also, it illustrated that policies made in order to break with the past have to deal with an institutional framework that has served as a basis for previous public action (Hogwood and Peters, 1982). Finally, it provides an emblematic example of the approach adopted by the newly elected municipal administration in order to break with past practices of corruption while recognizing the inevitable weight of continuity and policy inertia.

CORRUPTION DISCOURSE: CONFRONTING AN INSTITUTIONAL LEGACY

BY IRINA GBAGUIDI
LAËTITIA MASCARENHAS
SONIA MOUKILA
MARIËTOU SARAMBOUNOU

Due to its specific political system, Mexico City has a long history of political and societal corruption. This particular topic leads to a conflicted relation between those who govern and those who are governed. Moreover, fearing violent reprisals, the population is in a position of passive acceptance of this situation. However, the recent political elections offered a new political equation and opened new doors. The political party Morena headed by Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador, based its political discourse on anti-corruption measures and opposed his predecessors. The new government is working on dismantling political corruption networks and clientelist practices, seen as a legacy of the former political regime. Charismatic policymakers are working to rebuild political trust with the population by involving, as much as possible, collective actions from the civil society and non-governmental organizations. Nevertheless, despite a strong discourse against corruption, some big projects have developed contrary to the new government's stated agenda. Lastly, anti-corruption policies, exhibit doubt and uncertainty. The majority of the actors and the population encountered during the study trip express that they are expecting a lot from the new government, but they are still waiting for "something to happen".

How do anti-corruption discourses and strategies manifest in the new administration?

Corruption as an institutional legacy of the past

During this moment of political transfer in Mexico, corruption is on the mind of political and civil actors across the board. Different patterns and features of corruption emerged in our fieldwork to offer a broader understanding of these practices in Mexico. While Mexico's political stability in recent decades has been

cemented via shadow practices and back-door agreements between political authorities and criminal organizations, nowadays the normalization of corruption is hotly contested by citizens, civil organizations, and political figures themselves.

Corruption can be seen as a systemic problem and it is part of the history of the country, as well as the city of Mexico. Mexico City sees the most corruption relative to other cities, with nearly 5% of the city's GDP lost in these backdoor deals. In this regard, corruption was integrated into the political system and corruption scandals are part of both political life, and the life of ordinary citizens because of the way it infiltrates all scales of the society. Since the 1990's, anti-corruption programs have entered the political sphere through the emergence of transparency politics during the presidency of Ernesto Zedillo and his 1995-2000 National Plan for Development (Plan nacional de desarrollo). Zedillo waged a vigorous anti-corruption campaign based on strong discourse against corrupt practices, characterized by sweeping arrests of authorities from political figures to Supreme Court judges.

The decades following Zedillo's presidency were marked by a strong return to corrupt practices among the political elites, and a failure to address this issue through political reforms. Until then, low levels of trust in political institutions has continued to grow. Indeed beyond the acceptance at a national level, the widespread corrupt practices have led to a high distrust of politicians and the democratic process itself. During the study trip it became evident that this systemic situation has invigorated civil society and led to political changes with a new will for anti-corruption rhetoric and initiatives to denounce and fight against these patterns. A striking feature of the new anti-corruption

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agenda is the emergence of a new, young, and politically engaged generation alongside the new administration.

Fighting against corruption: the AMLO administration's logic of action

The Mexican State can be characterized as strongly centralized and powerful. The Mexican bureaucracy, is well-known for penetrating activities of social life. The new president Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) was elected due to his anti-corruption stance. His political platform, in opposition to his predecessors, was based on a robust strategy to tackle corruption. The new administration elaborates a specific strategy based on (1) rebuilding trust between the state and the population, (2) wiping out the myth of corruption as Mexican civic and political culture, and (3) design minor project involving the population in order to reduce the risks of corruption scandals. The president is the face and the core of this strategy. For instance, his daily morning speech is one example of this trust-building strategy. He presents the agenda of the day, providing specific comments and answering questions from journalists. By so doing, he fosters transparency and tries to be closer to his constituency. In that respect, he embodies the first principle of a republic; working for his people, making them feel integrated in the state's concerns. This action can be seen as a step forward in fighting corruption by changing politicians' habits of interaction with the media and civil society.

Following the notion of removing the myth of corruption, the Electoral Commission offered a strong example of how different actors outside of the state apparatus demonstrate a strong will to foster transparency. The Mexican Electoral

Commission focuses on building transparency in the voting process, raising awareness among the population, especially through education of the youngest, and deploying new technologies that enhance accountability in the voting process. This type of action is part of public participation strategy. These make the voting process more understandable and accessible for Mexican citizens. Indeed, the Electoral Commission representatives underlined the fact that, in case of an important disagreement regarding the outcomes of the elections, the Commission has the power, by collaborating with the Electoral Court, to influence the decision of validation or cancellation of the elections. Also, under the prism of changes, local authorities are completely involved in managing the electoral process at the local level. This is something new in Mexico and could be a genuine way to reduce the risks of corruption, particularly, combined with the new security programs to ensure the successful completion of the voting process.

The president also looks to new projects as a way to break from legacies of his predecessor. Through policy learning, the new administration realized that big projects were a major source of corruption scandals for the previous government by contrast to smaller projects. As such, MORENA focuses particularly on minor projects that could reduce the risks of corruption scandals. In that respect, they work to engage a multiplicity of actors in these projects, including NGOs and community organizations, instead of relying solely on state agencies and private developers.

Despite these positive steps, questions remain about the long-term effectiveness of this strategy. Based on data gathered as a part of this field-work, gaps in the anti-corruption strategy could

seriously hinder its mission.. Indeed, anti-corruption discourse was targeted mostly within state institutions, and neglected mention of the involvement of criminal organizations in the political landscape and as a hidden actor, the specific problems they represent, and what can be done. Furthermore, inter-governmental fragmentation and lack of communication remain a problem for state agencies, and may continue to facilitate corruption in the future. In spite of actor's optimistic positioning, they offered few concrete paths or solutions to the implementation of anti-corruption policy programs. The election raised new hope within the population, however, this general feeling was coupled with doubt: this is indeed the beginning of a long process.

Challenging corruption: what can be expected for the future?

As explained, there are high hopes from AMLO's constituency that the new government will fight corruption. As the new administration works to build a framework to deal with this issue, new actors from civil society are also becoming audible in this fight.

During a consultation at the Mayor's Office, new measures were discussed regarding gender equity, culture and transparency. The representative of the culture program explain us his willingness to create new formation to give a wider access to all citizens to cultural knowledge and to increase access to some part of the population to culture.. They also expressed their desire to develop data collection, which was also discussed at Capsus, where engineers pointed out the importance of data in the process of public policies analysis. Indeed, it is not possible to study the significance of the policy by

making comparison or analysis without available data. Transparency is also an important initiative to guarantee the population can access information, as well as to raise awareness on certain issues. The Mayor's Office promotes the development of pedagogical workshops and campaigns, highlighting the fact that sometimes some tools are inefficient simply because people ignore their existence.

There appears to be a strong will from agents in civil society to organize with the aim of affecting change. For instance, the NGO Nosotrx, aimed to create a mutual aid platform after the government failed to deliver adequate provisions and services to citizens following the 2017 earthquake. They sought to build a collective demand from the citizens in order to confront the government on this failure. The coordinators of Nosotrx explained how the earthquake and the mobilization generated by it, represented a turning point. The organizations had to deal in direct ways with corruption. The representatives of the organization explained how donations had been embezzled or how even the police confiscated supplies to distribute themselves and win credit for the government by providing aid. However, they stressed the fact that the transition process from the former administration to the new one made it difficult to get help from the government. Indeed, during the transition period from July to December, the government did not have enough resources to concretely support Nosotrx' actions.

Something we can also highlight here is the transformation of Mexican civil society. During our trip, we had the chance to meet with a multiplicity of Mexican NGOs such as "Casa Tochan" (hosting center for migrants), "Intrare" (La Incubadora de Trabajo para Refugiados y

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Retornados), and “Nosotrx” (civil mobilization after earthquake) revealed.

In a consultation with representatives of Nosotrx, founder and president mentioned that this organization has found new energy under the current regime. In the past, high civil society engagement was hindered due to strong repression from the PRI. This explained us that few years ago it was really not common to see this type of actions being achieved or trying to be, or to have projects emerging and a form of an organization of the civil society that permitted real fulfillment to be done such as the help that was provided by Nosotrx to the victims of the earthquake.

This transformation may be due in large part to engagement from a new generation, which has not experienced the forms of repression seen by their elders. Indeed, certain forms of activism were punished under the PRI rule through excessive use of violence against the civil society. Even though corruption is still present at all scales of the administration, what is relatively new on the other hand, is this momentum from the population. At the same time, it was interesting to understand how NGOs have become political actors and are embedded in challenging corruption. Indeed, they are now taking an active part in the organization of the civil society and are trying to lead concrete actions to make a change. Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador's discourse and strategies appear to be a turning point in Mexico City's political environment.

Corruption is an institutional legacy inherent to Mexico City's history, and the bedrock of its political stability. Corruption being widespread at

all scales and normalized in the political system, has led the new administration to acknowledge that tackling this systemic problem is a long-term project. Its strategy to confront corruption consists of building a trust relationship with the Mexican population. In this perspective, the new administration is putting forward mechanisms for transparency and designing minor projects with low risk of corruption scandals. Aware of the various mobilizations and contestations from civil society, AMLO's administration seems to be paying attention to citizens' claims for rights, and appears open to engaging in a dialogue.

However, one doubt should be highlighted. There is low coherence between the AMLO administration's discourse and their actions implemented in the city and the state of Mexico. As a matter of fact, our visit to Toluca and the presentation of the train project is clearly in opposition with the government discourse of focusing on minor projects in order to avoid risks of corruption.

II URBAN TRANSFORMATIONS: LEGACIES AND CHALLENGES IN A FRAGMENTED CITY

1. **Urban services, mobility policies and social inequalities in a fragmented geography**
 2. **Between discontinuity and path dependency: The case of infrastructure projects in Mexico**
 3. **In/formality, public housing, and vacancy: Current dynamics of neighborhood regeneration in Mexico City**
 4. **Planning as a mode of governance: Will the new constitution and metropolitan plan bring change to the urban territory of Mexico City?**
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URBAN TRANSFORMATIONS

BY KATHERINE FINDLAY

In this section, we conceptualize the planning and construction of the built environment as a mode of urban governance. In Mexico City, spatial inequalities articulate the successes and failures of past policies: a marketization of social housing in the 1990s resulted in blocks confined to the peripheries; measures to preserve natural zones deny building permits, transport links, and services to the informal settlements established there; foreclosures on poor-quality and earthquake-damaged housing in the center leads abandoned buildings to be re-occupied informally. A fragmented and corruption-fraught government, with responsibility for infrastructure divided between different bodies, prevented a clear way forward in overcoming spatial disparities.

In February 2017 Mexico city unveiled its new constitution, turning from a federal district into the City of Mexico (CDMX, Ciudad de México) and gaining autonomy similar to that of Mexico's other states. Introduction of government at this scale gave a new understanding of the city and its outskirts; that of a unified metropolitan region. Alongside the new constitution, the city's first Metropolitan Plan (El Plan General de Desarrollo de la Ciudad de México) unified planification for the first time. According to many of those we met on our study trip, these changes are the key to improving infrastructure, curtailing urban sprawl, and raising living standards, especially for the poorest.

In this section, we begin to assess whether the new municipal structures can overcome the legacy of past mistakes and oversights. Our choice of subject was informed by the actors we met and site visits we made on our study trip, presented against background research to understand and contextualise new transformations. The four articles move temporally, from past policies to current spatial dynamics, to new infrastructure projects and the Metropolitan Plan.

The first paper in this section presents the spatial organisation of inequality in the city, notably the poor urban fringes, informal settlements located on protected land and the occupation of abandoned housing in the centre. Looking back in time, the authors discover the policies that brought this arrangement into place, and the fragmented government unable to coordinate a solution. The Toluca Interurban Train is presented as an example of a new urban transformation, with the goal of improving accessibility from the fringes into the centre. However, the true motives and true impact of the line are put into question.

Secondly, we look again at the use of large infrastructure projects in the fast-urbanising metropolis, as championed by the new president, Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador. These are compared with the smaller-scale community action projects praised by many of the actors we visited. Although large projects are ostensibly to reduce inequalities, this paper problematizes the role of political and technocratic interests in their development. Furthermore, the use of community participation in these projects is interrogated, questioning whether its use can overcome the path dependency of clientelist, legitimizing practices. In response to the questionable motives behind massive developments, can the community-based projects praised as a solution compensate for governance failures? Or, does this simply shift the burden of provision onto the community?

The third paper in this section explores how informality is interwoven with formal strategies of housing provision in the city, a dynamic created by past policies. Social housing built on the city fringes, unconnected to the centre, and poor-quality developments damaged by the 2017 earthquake lead to a high vacancy and foreclosure rate. These vacant lots are re-inhabited by the city's poorest, as public housing policies 'inadvertently create spaces for informality to exist and interact within formal urbanization'.

Finally, we look to the new governance of CDMX and their New Metropolitan plan as the potential to overcome the history of a haphazardly-managed built environment by unifying planning at the metropolitan level. However, in an environment of many fragmented government levels, is adding another to the mix a suitable solution? Although many hold a Metropolitan Plan as the solution to the city's inequality, the effectiveness of a top-down plan coming from a fraught political climate is questioned. As this paper argues, planning is never a neutral process.

Those charged with governing the built environment, both in the Municipal government and in communities, are clearly looking forwards with optimism. There is real potential for a metropolitan approach to planning, led by a clearly-defined and accountable government with community support, to build its way to a more equal city. Whether this vision comes into fruition, we can only wait and see.





Informal settlements on the hills of Santa Fe. Credits: Anouk Jeanneau

URBAN SERVICES, MOBILITY POLI- CIES AND SOCIAL INEQUALITIES IN A FRAGMENTED GEOGRAPHY

BY DALIA ASSOUM
JULIETTE FALKEHED

During our study trip to Mexico City, many of the actors we met agreed that one of the major challenges facing the country is inequality. In Mexico, inequalities materialize both between and within regions. The state of Mexico is highly economically fragmented, divisions which deepen when looking more closely at its two metropolitan regions; Greater Mexico and Greater Toluca. As Secretaria de Desarrollo Agrario, Territorial y Urbano (SEDATU) indicated to us in their presentation on the institutional background of urban planning, although regional disparities existed in the 1980's, it was during the 1990s that inequality significantly increased. As of now, the GINI coefficient, measuring the inequality in income distribution, is in range of 0,48 in urban areas of Mexico (ONU- Habitat, 2013), barely above that of an 'unequal' society.

Disparities in income are unevenly distributed across territory. Taking a socio-spatial perspective, this article maps income disparities in Mexico City, evaluating how policies aimed to improve mobility and urban services have intersected and impacted socio-spatial inequalities. We argue that the territorial arrangement of income disparity is furthered by a lack of integrated governance, and the attribution of competencies across different sectors and levels of government (federal, state, municipal). This complex scheme complicates the unification of the territory. Nonetheless, the new government recognizes the importance of integrated action at the metropolitan-level, to tackle some challenges of urban inequality in the region. For example, the Interurban Train Valley of Mexico, in Toluca.

City development: at the intersection of social and spatial disadvantages

Different types of housing intersect with

socio-spatial precarity in CDMX and further informal settlements, through inconsistencies in the provision of urban services. At the city-level, poverty gradually increases and is concentrated towards the fringe of the city, as presented in the research issued by SEDATU (Armando, R.G. Presentation. 17-01-2019). This can be seen in the distribution of social housing, which is located far from the city centre and thus far from employment opportunities. Social housing is allocated in Mexico by the Instituto del Fondo Nacional de la Vivienda para los Trabajadores (INFONAVIT), the federal institute for workers' housing, which offers subsidies for mortgages in certain residences. This system of ascribed remoteness results from a neo-liberal approach to social housing adopted in the 1990's, which liberalized access to the social housing development opportunities. With low-interest rate housing credits, private developers launched projects where land was cheap, further away from the centre (Global Urban Research Centre, 2013). According to ARU's General Director, Louise David, the result of this is that most social housing is concentrated in locations on the northern fringes of the city (Louise David, conference. 18-01-2019.)

This neo-liberal logic of social housing mechanism has contributed to the phenomenon identified by Felipe de Alba (Director of the Research study of the Chamber of Parliament): low-density horizontal urbanization. The State of Mexico's 1986 Urban Development Plan established the "Paint Your Line" program, limiting urban sprawl and intensifying development in 17 municipalities of the State of Mexico (Aguilar and Olvera, 1991). However, the General Director of ARU pointed to the adverse effect of such a restrictive policy, which left some low-income neighborhoods either unfinished or ill-connected to the city center.

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The location of informal dwellings also provides a lens to conceptualize spatial fragmentation; Roberto Rodriguez, a Phd researcher in political sciences at Centre d'Études Européennes (CEE), found that 60% of illegal settlements are located on conservation soil outside the city (Rodriguez, R. Guest Lecture. 14-11-2018). As protected zones dedicated to nature, authorities do not issue building permits in these areas. This hinders infrastructure projects, such as water provision, waste removal, and public transport, to connect buildings in these areas. In fact, this phenomenon was also mentioned and denounced by the Director of Projects at the Secretary of Urban and Metropolitan Planning of the State of Mexico (Alonzo, R. Presentation. 16-01-2019). From this, we conclude that this strategy allows for public authorities to save spending on the public sector. Environmental concerns prevail over social, as a budgetary driven policy on the allocations of funds.

Authorities are facing a similar dilemma in building the Interurban Train Valley of Mexico in Toluca. The train line, now under construction, has been approved to connect Toluca to Mexico City, crossing this conservation area. This change in policy, favouring infrastructure development over environmental concerns, begs the question of which interests actually behind the project. Large-scale developments, such as the Interurban Train Valley of Mexico, seem to be being prioritised over the provision of services to informal settlers, despite the damage to the environment likely being larger. The former was privileged over the latter, informing us on the venue shopping strategy shaping public policy and the instrumentalization of the environmental rhetoric in political discourse. Another phenomenon that was brought to our attention by ARU's General Director, Louise David, is the occupation of abandoned social housing.

These occupation patterns follow social housing abandoned by residents, because of the lack of infrastructure, services and accessibility, as well as their partial destruction following the 1985 earthquake (David, L. Presentation. 18-01-2019). The abandonment brings to our attention another critical aspect of social housing: its exposure to environmental risks through location choice and building standards. Building standards were introduced following the 1985 earthquake, but despite this newly built social housing was destroyed by the 2015 earthquake (Pskowski, 19-09-2018). These results question the enforcement of the safer building standards, and the corruption causing flaws in its implementation (Alcocer and Castano, 2008). Hence, this phenomenon of 'invasion' directly results from an implementation failure, allowing the re-use of this space by an even more precarious social group.

Overall, we have observed that poorer fringes of the population tend to live at the city outskirts, often informally occupying protected land without access to services. Furthermore, a neo-liberal approach to social housing has located lower-income classes further away in the metropolitan region. Finally, poor residents inhabit abandoned spaces in the centre, exposing them to risk in unsafe or damaged buildings. These various dynamics result in the spatial isolation and exclusion of precarious groups.

Decentralization challenging the implementation of integrated metropolitan policy

Spatial inequalities do not manifest only as a result of policy, but result, at a larger scale, from the fragmentation of competencies among the multiple governance layers of CDMX. Most urban services are controlled by the city-government, leaving only little leverage to the

delegaciones. However, mobility concerns are attributed to the state-level. This decentralization of responsibility has hindered an integrated approach to spatial planning, leading to incoherent decision making. Nonetheless, there is a strong political force to address government integration. SEDATU representatives repeatedly stated, during our visit, that “the future of Mexico is Metropolitan. It is necessary to promote processes of metropolitan coordination” (Armando, R.R. Presentation. 17-01-2019). We will now look to how metropolitan integration manifests through mobility policies.

Failure in metropolitan integration manifesting from disruption in mobility policies

The outlined evolutions in mobility policies demonstrate the varied actors partaking Mexico’s process towards the improvement of its transport system. Yet, these different initiatives symptomize the persistent fragmentation which subsequently fail to entrench a comprehensive approach to the integration of Mexico’s metropolitan territory. The evolution of transport development in Mexico City can be seen in the change in terminology, initiated by VI Legislature of the Mexico City Legislative Assembly (ALDF). The integration of the term “mobility” into transport language was furthered by the Mexico City Human Rights Commission, who organized international forums on the Right to Mobility. This sparked discussions on the difference between the terms “transportation” and “mobility”. The transition in terminology is caused by an attempt to redefine what it means to be mobile in society today, an intentional effort to be more inclusive on what we consider transportation. It is a general attempt by policy makers to re-evaluate transportation away from the stigma that transportation is movement

from one location to another in the shortest and most efficient possible manner (Connolly, 4). Most importantly, the term “mobility” included both commuters and non-commuters, as well as analyzing the strong impact that commuting method has on social status (Connolly, 5). In Mexico City, we can identify difference ideas of transportation and mobility, and how this furthers spatial segregation of different classes of people. An array of organizations have emerged to address the issues of spatial inequalities and mobility in Mexico City. SEDATU and ITDP provided insight on the current policy initiatives that are being implemented to overcome spatial inequalities. ITDP works alongside city officials, government and civil society to create initiatives and improve mobility infrastructure. For example, bike systems, BRT planning and optimization, parking policy reform and city revitalization. Past ITDP initiatives focused around emphasizing bike culture through a bike share program, Ecobibi. Alongside advocating for transport alternatives, ITDP works to optimize the BRT through growth of bus routes throughout Mexico City and utilizing ITDP-developed traffic modelling tools to identify suitable routes. Although these actions are a step forward in mobility policy, there is still no concrete initiative for integrating different means of transportation under one coherent body.

The BRT or “metro bus” of Mexico City serves as the primary public transportation method in the city. However, unfortunately it allows for gaps in spatial connectivity. Figure 3 is a map that identifies conservation zones in Mexico, where natural regions are protected and informal settlements emerge. Conservation areas are isolated and have no connectivity to the BRT lines, so residents of the informal settlements are segregated.

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The figure to the right displays the spatial growth of Mexico Cities Metropolitan area. We can clearly identify relatively slow expansion of the metro lines in relation to the growth of the metropolitan areas. Efforts to expand the metro lines have been discussed but the lack of coordination between city officials hinders any optimal decision-making. As a result, the transportation system is highly disrupted in Mexico metropolitan area. Although efforts have been made to diversify transportation modes within the city (BRT, underground, bikes), only little has been done to bridge the metropolitan region outside of the municipality lines, to the city center. Furthermore, initiatives to address remote places' accessibility and mobility – such as the Interurban Train Valley of Mexico that we will now discuss - have been focusing on center-oriented policies. In other words, there have been some efforts to connect the city-center to more remote regions, however no initiative has been launched to connect the remote regions amongst each other. This pattern leaves some regions isolated, such as the southeastern part of the metropolitan region. According to the research director of the Chamber of Parliament, Felipe de Alba, this area presents daily intensive commuting activity, that would have perhaps rendered it more eligible for a railway line than Toluca.

Case-study: The Interurban Train Valley of Mexico development project, promoting inter-metropolitan integration or deepening fragmentation?

The Interurban Train Valley of Mexico presents a compelling example on the intricacies of public policies in fragmented geography. The initiative illustrates public commitment to further metropolitan integration, while triggering the

adverse-effects that a public policy, not accounting for its specific socio-economical context, might produce, in terms of social conflict and the widening of disparities. The Toluca - Mexico City train reveals a will to integrate two metropolitan zones, alleviating the effects of territorial fragmentation for thousands of daily commuters. Although this transportation project will accelerate integration of Estado de México and facilitate the mobility of remote dwellers to employment centers, the initiative has faced some criticism. As previously mentioned, the relevancy of the location choice has triggered some questions and has raised environmental concerns. Consequently, the beginning of construction work sparked protests from residents of Cuajimalpa de Morelos and Lomas del Padre boroughs, who oppose the destruction of El Ocotil natural protected area. Residents attempted to block the construction work from continuing by requesting permits from the Environment Secretariat, occupying the construction area and hugging the trees (Mexico NewsDaily, 21-06-2017).

From a social perspective, the project has not established mechanisms for the municipal recapture of change in land value. Reducing commuting cost and improving accessibility to Mexico City is expected to substantially increase the value of land in Toluca, as well as around other stations. Nonetheless, the municipality has not taken advantage of the existing legal framework to recover some of this increase in value from the landowners benefiting from the development. Such mechanisms could provide additional revenue to municipal funds and, adequately redirected, contribute to the compensation of those negatively impacted by the project.

In fact, although this transportation policy improves commute to a great number, it also presents considerable social costs. The scale of the railway development implies the displacement and relocation of some precarious populations, which has sparked conflicts over compensation. Indeed, corruption among different parties has led dwellers to refuse to leave their settlements, claiming they have not yet received due amount of their compensation package, whereas EDOMEX claims otherwise (Armando, R.G. Presentation. 17-01-2019).

Certain policies and initiatives produce effects opposite to their initial intention, of which the Toluca-Mexico City train is a primary example. In an effort to increase spatial connectedness, the Toluca-Mexico City train might generate the opposite of its intended effect, instead jeopardizing low-income households settled along the line of construction. In addition, the Toluca train line might contribute to urban sprawl which pushes low-income residents further from the centre. In this case, the project would fall short on its initial goals, only contributing to the socio-spatial exclusion of precarious groups. This article reflects on how weak or incomplete public policies for urban integration can produce their opposite effect, increasing fragmentation and exclusion.

Through analyzing policy examples in the city, it becomes clear that the initiatives, although hopeful in theory, create discontinuances that hinder urban integration and perpetuate inequality,

with unequal right to mobility. Public policies must be properly and thoroughly implemented by a committed local actors and not treated as policy suggestions or ideas. This article attempts to utilize the Toluca train case study as an example of the fragmentation and gaps that emerge when weak public policies for urban integration are enacted, in hopes to draw attention to these gaps and improve public policy implementation..

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Field visit of the Mexico-Toluca City Train construction site. Credits: Anouk Jeanneau

BETWEEN DISCONTINU- ITY AND PATH DEPENDENCY: THE CASE OF INFRASTRUC- TURE PROJECTS IN MEXICO

BY MARIA GIORDA
ELEONORA GIORGI

During the length of our study trip, NGOs and state agencies alike highlighted the importance of small programs involving the participation of relevant target groups in the governance of CDMX. This choice of narrative neglects to mention the ongoing larger infrastructure projects, not only in Mexico City, but all around the country. Today, as in the past (Vitz 2018), huge infrastructure development plans aim to present Mexico as an example of modernity in Latin America, and the new president, Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) is also pushing for strong infrastructure investment to foster socio-economic development. However, infrastructural projects can feed certain dynamics of clientelism, used by politicians as a way to secure the loyalty of citizens who are positively affected by the development of such programs. It is for this reason that in the current political period administrations at each level of governance assess the massive projects with scepticism, instead preferring to highlight the importance of small-scale participatory mechanisms. Nonetheless, practices of participatory governance are not exempt from criticism. Namely, they are manifested as a means of informing citizens rather than consulting them, or consolidating existing inequalities in corruption-prone service provision.

Large infrastructure projects and the case of the Toluca train

Last February, the Financial Times reported AMLO's decision to redirect funds delegated to Mexico City's Formula 1 towards the construction of the Mayan Train in the Yucatan peninsula, an infrastructural project aimed at enhancing the socio-economic development of the poorer Southern region (Webber 2019). The

new president's desire is to cut public expenditure in 'wasteful' projects, moving it towards programs able to foster economic development and people's wellbeing (Webber 2019). Similar ventures are also carried out in the metropolitan area of Mexico City, such as the construction of a high-speed train connecting CDMX and the province of Toluca, in the east side of the State of Mexico, whose building site we visited during our study trip.

As confirmed by the Secretary of Mobility, Andrés Lajous, improved mobility is key to cope with territorial marginalization (Personal communication). On Wednesday the 16th of January we had the chance of having an in-depth discussion about one such mobility project, the corridor of the Interurban Train Valley of Mexico-Toluca, with representatives of the Secretary of Urban and Metropolitan Planning of the State of Mexico (EDOMEX). According to EDOMEX, the Toluca train project is an important part of the nation-wide effort towards more inclusive infrastructure, envisioned as a solution to the traffic congestion and long commuting times which characterize poor workers' journeys from the State to the City. As in the case of the Mayan Train, the implementation of the project is justified by the objective of enhancing the development of the fast urbanizing area around Toluca, thus reducing the resource imbalance between the capital city and its surrounding areas.

Nonetheless, two factors put into question the interests the Toluca train project may be serving. During our visit to the Mexican Chamber of Deputies on Friday the 18th of January, we were told the choice of building the train in the east side of the State of Mexico was political, as

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other areas in the state are also under-served by transport. Furthermore, during our visit to the construction site of one of the terminals of the Toluca train, EDOMEX's officials stressed the uniqueness of the railway, as the first high-speed train in South and Central America. In the present as well as in the past, technocrats play an important role in shaping the city's development and have been known for being attuned to international urban planning trends (Vitz 2018). Big engineering projects are an essential part of this techno-bureaucratic rule of the city, often pursued for the sake of showing that CDMX has embarked on the path to modernity. This dynamic has been supported by Mexican policymakers willing to use the plans, emphasizing wide-ranging social benefits, to heavily favor key members of their supporting coalitions. Indeed, according to Montambeault (2011), the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), the head of Mexico for over 70 years, used urban infrastructure provisions to incentivize and retain loyal voters, building patron-client relationships. Other portions of the population were arbitrarily excluded from accessing public services.

It therefore appears that Mexico City continues to be an example of path dependency (Vitz 2018). In the city, planning practices which favor marginalization and social inequality continue to be pursued by planners seeking to advance the city's modernity on one hand, and by politicians looking to consolidate political support on the other. This reality underscores the gap between the new government's projects and its claims towards social justice, in which freshly elected policy-makers aim to distance themselves from past administrations by publicly rejecting clientelist dynamics. In the current

political climate, all levels of government prefer to highlight mechanisms of participatory governance in their official discourse. The remaining section of this paper will offer some examples of how bureaucrats and policymakers plan to advance popular participation and some of the criticisms they could expose themselves to by following this strategy.

Public participation and its risks

Both in the case of the Mayan and Toluca train projects, politicians legitimize infrastructure initiatives by emphasizing the positive impact they will have on disadvantaged communities. As Montambeault (2011) reminds us, participatory governance is traditionally associated with increased accountability, because it allows citizens to monitor policymakers and avoid any abuse of power. Similarly, international organizations such as the World Bank or the United Nations view citizens' participation as an essential element of good governance. However, as highlighted by Lombard (2013), citizen participation in urban development has been subject to extensive contestation by critics of neoliberalism, as a way of depoliticizing citizens' action by giving people responsibility for small decisions, whilst not involving them in conversations regarding the redistribution of resources.

Lombard (2013) argues that the concept of participatory urban decision-making comes from the Global North, where laws regulating participatory processes are integrated into existing formal institutions. The situation is different in the Global South, where institutionalized participatory projects have been developed in conjunction with processes of democratization



Presentation of the Mexico-Toluca City Train project. Credits: Anouk Jeanneau

and structural adjustment. As a result, according to Lombard (2013), participation in urban decision-making is often used by the state as a way of consolidating market-oriented mechanisms of governance without creating dissent. Notably, when asked about the urban development projects that will take place around the newly built train stations, EDOMEX representatives answered that any development initiative would be carefully reviewed before being approved, whereas one of the engineers on-site reported that some private development projects were already underway without the impacted population being informed. Similarly, EDOMEX appears to deem financial compensation as an adequate form of mitigation for residents of ejidos, communal agricultural land, who will be displaced by the construction of the train line. Therefore, it appears that Mexico City planners see citizens' involvement as a mere impediment to the promotion of ordered growth (Vitz 2018),

addressing it by drafting regulations that are not properly implemented, communicating their plans rather than consulting the population, and only offering financial compensation to those affected.

Another criticism directed towards participatory practices of government is that this kind of initiative has only succeeded in re-labelling informal practices of self-help as 'participatory governance', rather than actually involving citizens in democratic interaction (Lombard 2013). It is not without reason that, in the Mexico City Metropolitan Region, participatory projects are especially numerous in the field of service provision and spatial organization. The rapid urbanization experienced by the country, at a time when a democratically elected government had just been established, meant that it was impossible for the state to provide low-income neighborhoods with appropriate infrastructure.

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Consequently, the urban poor were forced to build their own houses, giving rise to large informal settlements. Political powers are taking advantage of citizens' resilience in order to avoid taking extensive action to fill the gap that exists between service provision for rich and poor urban populations. Supporting disadvantaged segments of the population in their self-help strategies is definitely preferable to not fulfilling service provision. Yet, no specific ideas have been formulated on what exactly supporting informal activities may entail.

During our visit to the Mexican Chamber of Deputies, citizens' informal activities were mentioned as an example of innovative thinking and creative problem-solving, but this praise was not accompanied by concrete proposals on how to relieve citizens from the strain of poor or non-existent infrastructure. One of the non-governmental agencies we spoke to during our study trip, 100 Resilient Cities, was skeptical of the government's capacity to effectively engage with citizens. The NGO prefers to focus on building local communities' resiliency, rather than mediating between the people and the government. According to this organization, communities should protect themselves from Mexico's political instability by building their own capacity for action and relying on local universities and transnational support network for relevant know-how. Nonetheless, according to us, the idea of participatory governance entails the idea of multi-actor responsibility, not the government's disappearance.

Another NGO we interviewed, Alianza para la Regeneración Urbana (ARU), has found a good middle ground between empowering local citizens and getting other actors, including governmental ones, to effectively participate

in local infrastructure projects. Corruption undermines participatory initiatives taking place at the local level just as much as larger infrastructure projects. Since 1997, the federal government has empowered local councils by delegating the administration of funds for poverty-alleviation to municipal governments, that, in turn have created a system of councils to involve residents in the debate over particular issues impacting their neighbourhood. Additionally, the Mexican Office for Agrarian Land and Urban Development (SEDATU) confirmed its intention to channel increasing financial resources to municipal governments in order to empower them as the locus of urban economic development. Nevertheless, during a meeting at SEDATU, its representatives told us that funds for economic empowerment are often lost at the local level due to complex networks of corruption. ARU has found a way of addressing this form of clientelism at the local level. The organization supports the intervention of private developers in urban regeneration projects, but only after having defined a neighborhood's real needs following a public consultation, preventing the local government from undertaking clientelist practices in rewarding work contracts. Firstly, ARU carries out a pre-diagnosis, identifying who are the collaborative actors in a specific area of intervention. Secondly, the organization executes a diagnosis of the territory, looking at the physical, social, environmental, economic conditions in the neighbourhood with a strong focus on real estate value. Thirdly, ARU writes a «plan de trabajo colaborativo», a strategy of how to address the problems that the community itself thinks must be solved. Finally the NGO presents these reports to the local administration, holding them accountable in case of misbehaviour. The example of ARU shows the importance of establishing transparent two-way

communication channels between the population and the government, and stands in stark contrast with EDOMEX's approach to citizens' participation. EDOMEX decided for the train line to be built without previously consulting relevant stakeholders; popular participation is only envisaged in the context of deciding how to develop the land around the train's terminals. As Vitz (2018) argues, city bureaucrats continue to believe that they know what is best for the city. On the contrary, ARU considers that infrastructure projects should not simply be approved through public consultation, but it should be the population itself to decide what are the infrastructure priorities. Moreover, ARU does not overestimate the capacity of a community to carry out large-scale infrastructure problems.

Although infrastructure policies continue to be a part of the new government's agenda, public discourse prefers to publicize projects involving popular participation, that are supposedly less prone to be captured by clientelist practices. According to Mason and Beard (2008), community-based programs have higher chances of success when they are implemented in neighborhoods with a history of successful informal collective action. During our meeting with a representative from the Programa Universitario de Estudios sobre la Ciudad (PUEC) the importance of incorporating spontaneous bottom-up initiatives within the design of better resilience strategies for Mexico City was mentioned. However, participatory practices should not consider citizens as the final service providers but should instead see public consultation as the first step towards a more democratic service provision. Moreover, policymakers must keep in mind that the concept of participatory governance is currently being applied by some institutional actors in a very broad sense to include any sort of interaction with citizens. This means that often citizens are simply informed of

initiatives that will affect them, rather than being given a voice in the project. Practices of citizens' participation should allow the population to contest programs that reinforce existing social fragmentation in order to redefine the balance of power between civil society and public authorities.

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Conference with SEDATU. Credits: Anouk Jeanneau.



Constructions on Paseo de la Reforma. Credits: Franck Giraud.

IN/FORMAL- ITY, PUBLIC HOUSING, AND VACANCY: CURRENT DYNAMICS OF NEIGHBORHOOD REGENERATION IN MEXICO CITY

BY HILLARY BIRCH
ANNA FECHTOR

Mexico's government has attempted to curb the growth of informal settlements in recent decades by increasing housing supply, but 25% of urban households across the country remain in this format (OECD 2015: 109). This contradiction reveals important specificities of informality in Mexico City. Namely, the settlements are composed of dynamic communities that are deeply enmeshed with the «formal» urban system through political, economic and social relationships. For instance, settlements house a significant portion of the city's low-wage and service industry workforce. The features of informal settlement seen today can be traced to government policies, and merit further attention to understand how this practice is entangled with the current development surge.

In the mid-20th century, Mexico City became the core engine of a modernization plan initiated by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). During this time, an industrial import-substitution strategy and economic centralization in the capital region drew swaths of rural migrants to Mexico City for work. However, land in the Federal District was strictly regulated through rent controls and bans on land subdivision. These restrictions during a period of intense growth had a twofold effect: private investors shifted their attention toward land development in the greater State of Mexico region (Gilbert & Jong 2015, 522), and inbound rural migrants opted to settle in cheaper, peripheral areas of the city, or in informal settlements (known as *colonias populares*). The outward expansion of Mexico City through “self-urbanization” - that is, driven by the construction of dwellings outside of the city's legal development framework - is well documented (Gilbert & Jong 2015, 520; Levy 2010; Fischer et al. 2014). In the period between 1950 and 1980, for instance, “informal

housing development accounted for approximately 65% of all housing produced in the Mexico City metro area” (OECD 2015, 111).

Amid the economic crisis, and during the aftermath of the earthquake in 1985 that devastated Mexico City, Mexican officials turned to private markets to help mitigate urban sprawl driven by informal settlements. The strategy was part of a broader economic modernization plan to liberalize trade and financial sector markets. A major housing finance reform in 1992 delegated housing construction to private companies, and made property available to salaried workers through public mortgages financed by the public institutions INFONAVIT (Instituto del Fondo Nacional para la Vivienda de los Trabajadores) and FOVISSSTE (Fondo de la Vivienda del Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales de los Trabajadores del Estado).

The reform has contributed to a dramatic increase in formal housing available in Mexico City in the past twenty years. However, consumption of the housing has not followed the intended logic of the policy. Quantitative objectives of the joint public and private housing effort have been met as more formal housing has been provided to salaried workers, but this has been at the expense of qualitative outcomes. Funds for INFONAVIT are generated from “compulsory dues levied on all workers” but the housing policy does not capture the individuals and families most in need of assistance nor does it generate incentives for the development of well-designed and well-connected housing developments within the city (García Peralta and Hofer 2006, 134).

In an encounter with the consulting agency Alianza para la Regeneración Urbana (ARU)

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in Mexico City, the organization's Founder and Director General, Louise David, attributed this failure to the structuring of housing provision that lacked a healthy balance between regulation and market-orientation. Early iterations of public housing policy saw the government create social housing developments in suboptimal locations along the city's periphery, while later deregulation efforts failed to correct for existing structural imbalances. Even after these shortcomings were identified, housing developments continued to be built by private developers in poorly connected areas, and existing developments continued to lack essential services (Torres 2013, 8-9).

Resulting from this failure, much of this public housing remains uninhabited. David explained that buyers are often disincentivized by low amenities and inconvenience of the housing areas, experiencing challenges such as high levels of insecurity, insufficient garbage collection, lack of public lighting, and general neglect of public space. Dissatisfied with these conditions, a great number of people have abandoned the houses they have received through the housing provision, and their mortgages have gone into foreclosure. Indeed, citing a 2010 report from INFONAVIT, Torres (2013) reveals that "one out of four homes placed by the institute from 2006 to 2009 were vacant" and, in over 90% of cases of vacancy, the problem was related to location (Torres 2013, 8). Despite known challenges of vacancy, development continues in the same areas due the stake of private developers in the land.

These empty houses are frequently occupied illegally by users who are ineligible for assistance from the state (e.g. those without formal, salaried employment). In Mexico City, this figure is

significant: the OECD estimates that "roughly half of the population does not have access to a mortgage, and even fewer to a commercial bank loan, and thus relies on their own resources to meet their housing needs" (OECD 2015, 107). This phenomenon points to gaps to the policy wherein the neediest individuals, including the poorest households and people working informally, slip through the cracks of the formal housing market.

Recognizing these failures, significant efforts are being made to improve the quality of public housing stock for existing residents as well as to encourage new families to move into vacant housing. Key to this has been the rehabilitation and return of vacant housing to the market. Private-sector property developers complete both the rehabilitation and marketing of these formerly vacant homes and INFONAVIT appraises the houses before and after the rehabilitation (OECD 2015, 133). It is in this process of neighbourhood regeneration that ARU is embedded, assisting both private and public actors to identify residents' key priorities related to services and infrastructure, at once making communities more liveable while ensuring that property developers and INFONAVIT are able to place vacant houses back on the market with greater efficiency.

Vacant housing and the illegal occupancy of vacant homes has been defined as a key factor in the deterioration of neighbourhoods namely through increased violence and crime (Vilalta and Muggah 2014; Cui and Walsh 2015). For example, vacancy rates have been positively correlated with property crime when abandoned properties are used for illegal activities (Fuentes and Hernandez 2014). However, it was noted in the discussion with David that,

yes, while some illegal occupancy occurs for the purposes of crime, a good number of informal occupants are members of extended family of current (formal) residents, taking advantage of this unused space to establish a home. As such, the overall relationship between informality and neighbourhood degeneration (and subsequently, neighbourhood regeneration) may need to be reconsidered, especially given the significant presence of informality in the city as a whole and the obvious shortcomings of government policy with regard to public housing provisions. Is all informality a problem within these housing developments? Said differently, does successful neighbourhood regeneration necessarily equal the removal of all types of informality in all cases?

Interestingly, the embeddedness of informality within these formal spaces points to how informal urbanization does not occur separate from formal urbanization, but rather informality "...becomes extensions, interpretations and amendments of the formal norms" (Ortiz 2010, as cited in Gilbert & Jong 2015, 525). Viewed from a broad lens, efforts to formalize the informal through mass housing have inadvertently created spaces for informality to exist and interact within formal urbanization. Given this, it is interesting to think of how vacancy is defined. Abandoned homes may be vacant in the sense that they have been foreclosed and are not inhabited by a formal, paying user. However, this housing stock is not vacant in terms of use, as many homes continue to serve the function of providing shelter, albeit informally.

This attempt to "re-formalize" neighbourhoods by the reclaiming of occupied houses and displacing informality beyond boundaries of housing developments speaks to an overall

trend in Mexico wherein programs that expand public housing do so to the exclusion of the poorest households working in the informal economy. Further, returning housing developments to formality leaves open the question of how regeneration will affect the distribution of informality in other locations; for example, will informality continue to spread into the cracks of failures in formal public housing, or will it become further concentrated in certain areas of the city not yet penetrated by the formal market? Here, questions of scale and displacement become central.

Looking forward, Louise David expressed optimism that the new Morena government will be interested in further collaboration with ARU and the private sector on housing improvement. The new administration views neighborhood rehabilitation positively, though it remains to be seen how MORENA's efforts to achieve a greater universalism in its policy will unfold with regard to the entanglement of informal and formal housing. For instance, the administration faces the challenge of creating regeneration programs that retain its strong popular appeal, though without neglecting the issue of informality and illegal housing occupancy. Indeed, some actors in the private sector have reservations about whether or not the market-based strategies of public housing provision will remain given the political climate, fearing a return to previous dynamics of heavy-handed state planned public housing. Neither the government nor the market have fully succeeded in curbing the expansion of informal housing in Mexico City, but the urban dwellers themselves continue to adapt to shifting policy contexts and the gaps they produce.



PLANNING AS A MODE OF GOVERNANCE: WILL THE NEW CONSTITUTION AND METROPOLI- TAN PLAN BRING CHANGE TO THE URBAN TERRI- TORY OF MEXICO CITY?

BY CHLOÉ DEPARIS
SIXAO YANG

Considering the enactment of a new constitution for Mexico City and the change in the government, this article aims to investigate the role of metropolitan planning and new metropolitan institutions for CDMX and the adjacent municipalities in the Zona Metropolitana del Valle de México. In a context of fragmentation and a lack of coordinated action, the study seeks to approach the impact of another level of planning in solving urban issues and prospective urban growth. For that, considerations about urban planning will focus on the new constitution and the new metropolitan plan.

While this study trip in Mexico City was majorly focused on the new government and its ability to steer policy change, another important ground for change in the future of the city appeared in the different meetings we attended: the constitution of the city of Mexico. Published on February 5th, 2017 (for the 100th birthday of the constitution of Mexico), this new legal text came into effect in September 2018. It is a much-awaited step towards reinforced decentralization, local autonomy and democracy. It is worthy to note that the constitution was formed with a participatory approach, where an online platform was created to absorb public opinions, thus “crowdsourcing” some of the articles of the new document (Rasaba 2016). The mayor’s office also coordinated meetings with groups from different actors, such as universities and civil advocacy organizations to contribute to the draft of the constitution. Hence, citizens were encouraged to engage and vocalize throughout the whole process. The new constitution is quite innovative, not only in its production, but also in some of its content, and we aim here to understand if it can bring new opportunities for change in the field of urban planning.

Urban planning in the new constitution

First and foremost, the new constitution changed the status of Mexico City. What was a federal district became an entity very similar to the 31 Mexican states, shifting the name of the city from the Federal District (Distrito Federal) to the City of Mexico (CDMX, Ciudad de México). The city thus gained autonomy over its internal system and its political and administrative organization. Indeed, Mexico City does not belong to any state in particular, but to the federation, being the capital of the country and seat of the powers of the Union. Formerly, it was closely controlled by the federal government which is based there. Under its new status, it acquires some of the same functions as Mexico’s 31 states: Article 29 gives the legislative power to the Congress of the City of Mexico (Congreso de la Ciudad de México), which is also in charge of public finance. Article 32 cedes the executive power to the mayor, officially called Head of Government of the City of Mexico (Jefe o Jefe de Gobierno de la Ciudad de México), who thus becomes a quasi-state governor in all but name. Finally, Article 35 puts the judiciary power in the hands of the Supreme Tribunal of Justice (Tribunal Superior de Justicia), the Judiciary Council (Consejo de la Judicatura) and the tribunals. Finally, the constitution’s Article 53 turns the 16 boroughs (alcaldías) into entities similar to municipalities, with their own mayors and councils. Those changes towards reinforced decentralization and increased autonomy had already started with a reform in January 2016 but were formally completed and implemented with the new constitution.

When it comes to urban planning, the constitution specifies that municipalities are the most

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important planning authorities. As stated in Article 53, which details their functions and prerogatives, they can decide on land use, as long as they take into account other constitutional provisions and guidelines of higher levels of government. They have several instruments at their disposal, including the ability to develop plans that control land-use changes and to decide whether or not to issue building permits. Exceptions to this rule are mining and water extraction activities, which are regulated by the national government. Municipalities are also responsible for land administration within their jurisdiction. Furthermore, they can set property taxes and are responsible for the provision of public services and infrastructure.

Moreover, the new constitution establishes the creation of a General Metropolitan Plan (El Plan General de Desarrollo de la Ciudad de México) to define the city's long-term plan, programs, projects, and public policies for the next 20

years. Alongside the Metropolitan Program of Government (El Programa de Gobierno de la Ciudad de México) and the General Program of Territorial Planning (El Programa General de Ordenamiento Territorial), the General Metropolitan Plan will be elaborated by a new planning body: the Institute of Democratic and Prospective Planning (El Instituto de Planeación Democrática y Prospectiva). Bearing the hope of the citizens and government to solve long term problems of Mexico City such as congestion, urban sprawl or socio-spatial inequalities, this new institutional body and the new General Metropolitan Plan seem to be strategies inscribed in the constitution to define solutions through urban planning. Thus, during our meeting at the PUEC (Programa Universitario de Estudios sobre la Ciudad, University Program of Studies on the City), the speaker highlighted the fact that this new constitution, by creating a metropolitan level of planning and a new body, is a good opportunity to rethink the planning



SEDATU Conference. Credits: Anouk Jeanneau.

of Mexico City. During the meeting with the SEDATU officials, they also stressed the importance of urban planning as a solution to urban sprawl or infrastructural insufficiency and inefficiency, which have been produced by the abandonment of strategic planning in recent years. Indeed, in the 1990s and 2000s, the urban sprawl dynamics in Mexico City occurred without planning or with inefficient and obsolete planning. In fact, on the national level, 84% of the municipalities with more than 100,000 inhabitants need updates of their urban development plans. Thus, the newly created plans have opened windows for change in the city.

New plans to steer change?

Although the new constitution sets an interesting basis for new opportunities in urban planning, it is necessary to interrogate the real potential for change with respect to its legal structure, and the potential for change under the new master plans more broadly. Despite opening a window for change, the new constitution, and especially the creation of the new planning body, inserts itself into an already complicated structure. There is a hierarchical Mexican planning system with multiple existing plans at the national, state, and municipal levels. At the national level, the National Development Plan contains general objectives for the economic and social development of the country and related spatial aspects. It contains guidelines for land-use policies in urban and rural areas and links them to development goals. Within the framework of this National Development Plan, the new General Law of Human Settlements, Land Use Zoning and Urban Development (LGAHOTDU) was adopted in 2016 with an emphasis on coordination to improve the efficiency of metropolitan governance and planning. Under the supervision of SEDATU, it created new metropolitan planning programs, metropolitan governance

bodies (the Metropolitan Development Council, the Metropolitan Planning Commission and the Advisory Council), and a metropolitan fund. In alignment with the National Development Plan and the LGAHOTDU, the Program for the Promotion of Urban, Metropolitan and Territorial Planning (PUMOT) further aims at improving the development and updating planning instruments at the state, metropolitan and municipal levels.

At the state-level, there are four development plans coordinated by the SEDUYM (Secretaría de Desarrollo Urbano y Metropolitano): the State Plan for Urban Development (Plan Estatal de Desarrollo Urbano), the Municipal Plans for Urban Development (Planes Municipales de Desarrollo Urbano), the Partial Urban Development Plans (Planes Parciales de Desarrollo Urbano) and the Regional Urban Development Plans (Planes Regionales de Desarrollo Urbano). Thus, the structure of urban planning in Mexico is already extremely complex with multiple plans and multiple institutions. Inserting new plans and bodies into this fragmented system is a delicate procedure, and their creation seems to be impeded by institutional inertia: even though the constitution was published in February 2017, it only came into effect in September 2018. The Institute of Democratic and Prospective Planning will be installed in July 2019 for the new General Metropolitan Plan to come into effect in January 2020. The speaker at the PUEC also highlighted that the conditions for the creation of this new planning body remain unclear.

Moreover, considering the complex structure described above, the new General Metropolitan Plan and the Institute of Democratic and Prospective Planning created by the Constitution of Mexico City may intensify the already significant problems of fragmentation in the field

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of urban planning. Indeed, the SEDATU officials brought to light the difficult coordination between the multiple levels of plans and the lack of cooperation between the planning bodies at each level. The visit to the Toluca Train Corridor site revealed these problems of cooperation in urban planning: in some municipalities, sections of the Train Corridor's tracks and even stations are almost finished, while in others construction has barely started. In light of this, new plans and planning bodies will most likely worsen those problems of coordination.

While some of the speakers we met attributed importance to master planning, viewing it as a mode of governance able to solve various problems impeding the development of Mexico City, the ability of urban planning to have such a great impact is also questionable. Officials and planners consider urban planning as an expert discourse that describes the future based on disciplinary knowledge. It "disentangles the complex urban fabric into an ordered space in which symptoms can be differentiated from origins, and causes are distinguishable from effects" (Kornberger 2012, 87). By separating the technical aspect of cities from their political aspect, planning can almost be considered as a mode of top-down governance from planners and experts who not only control and design the built environment but also the people that use it. However, urban planning as such has been heavily criticized: "Planning fails everywhere it has been tried...[T]he failures of planning are not peripheral or accidental but integral to its very nature" (Wildavsky 1973, 128).

Indeed, designing and planning cities are profoundly political activities. There are no purely value-free or 'technical' solutions to urban problems like planners state: all decisions in urban development are political decisions insofar they must involve choice, negotiation, friction and divergence and occasionally agreement that

enables action. The figure of the neutral and unbiased planner or designer who has ready-made solutions for urban problems is thus problematic. Moreover, the ability of a plan to have a positive impact on a city heavily depends on its implementation: as long as the plan is not enforced and implemented, it stays a vision in the eyes of planners. However, in the case of Mexico City, as coordination between planning bodies seems compromised due to fragmentation, the implementation of current and future master plans has to be questioned. Hence, as we question the efficiency of urban planning as a mode of governance able to solve urban problems, we also need to challenge the opportunity for change brought by the multiplication of urban development plans, as is currently the case in Mexico. Nonetheless, including non-expert knowledge in planning and designing processes would help produce more relevant, valid, and realistic knowledge. However, even though the constitution of Mexico specifies the existence of participatory aspects in the new metropolitan plan, those aspects are not further detailed. The speaker we met at the World Resource Institute also highlighted that sometimes economic incentives are much more efficient in steering change than urban planning.

To conclude, while the new constitution generated momentum for rethinking how to plan Mexico City, the newly created General Metropolitan Plan and Institute of Democratic and Prospective Planning might lack efficiency and worsen institutional fragmentation in the field of urban planning. Moreover, considering the limits of urban planning per se, the ability of the new metropolitan plan and planning body to solve some of Mexico City's problems might also be limited. If the new constitution did change the status of Mexico City, giving it more autonomy, the urban planning provisions designed by the constitution seem like mere legislative rhetoric.

III MEXICO CITY AT RISK: COPING WITH INCREASING SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL VULNERABILITIES

1. Mapping socio-environmental vulnerabilities in Mexico City
 2. Corruption practices and the promulgation of seismic risks: Assessing community-based strategies for resilience in CDMX's building sector
 3. Sustainable mobility policies: A strategic stake in coping with air pollution risk
 4. Challenges for water provision and the governance of hydraulic risk in Mexico City
 5. Towards a gendered perspective on CDMX's environmental risks management strategy
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CDMX AT RISK

BY CLÉMENT DA CRUZ

In continuing our investigation of the structural deficiencies clogging channels for profound policy change in Obrador's administration, local political actors we met during our study trip repetitively raised environmental risks as major obstacles to public action. In this section, we thus invite our readers to consider the path-dependent environmental risks of CDMX to fully understand the real opportunities for change within reach of the new federal and municipal administrations. From our field investigation we identified three main challenges to the new administration in terms of environmental risks: seismic, air pollution and hydraulic risks.

First, because of its location atop the converging North American and Cocos tectonic plates, the country as a whole is in a position of geological precariousness. Mexico City experienced two major earthquakes in its contemporary history both on September 19th, the first in 1985, and the second more recently in 2017. The latter, nicknamed the "19S", resulted in 228 casualties, 73 thousand damaged buildings, including 5,765 houses and 973 schools, yielding an overall economic impact estimated to be between 0.1 to 0.3% of the national GDP of 2018 and reconstruction costs around \$3.4 billions (ARCDMX, 2018). In addition, the ongoing depletion of the aquifer upon which the capital sits, is causing the city to sink with alarming rapidity. In fact, the fragility of the lacustrine sediment accentuates seismic waves - which explains why the historical city-center was one of the most damaged neighborhoods in the 2017 earthquake.

Second, Mexico City has faced mortal air pollution levels for decades, named the "most polluted city on the planet" by the United Nations Environment Programme in 1992. In the 1990s, pollution was the cause of 1,000 deaths and 35,000 hospitalizations each year (International Development Research Center, 2011), mainly due to an unfavorable geographic location obstructing the dissipation of pollutants but worsened by a car-centric model of urban development beginning in the 1950s. Though progress in terms of pollution mitigation and overall air quality had been made through proactive policies in public transit and industrial standards issued by local governments since the 1980s, the metropolis has shown increasing air pollution rates for the last three years.

Third, increasing extreme weather events across the country and in Mexico City have led to predictions that both massive droughts and flooding will be commonplace by the end of the 21st century. Such paradoxical yet entirely plausible situation of environmental risk will certainly put further strain on the water management network system of the metropolis, already unreliable for 1.4 million people due to lack of water pressure and leakage caused by decaying pipes. Indeed, the city, after successive alterations to the waterways in the Basin of Mexico, nowadays relies on a two-tier water system, whereby most vulnerable populations (often located in the hilly east or in poorer, informal areas where such water scarcity is more recurrent) lack the proper infrastructure to receive potable water.

Therefore, all contributions to this section aim to raise awareness concerning the necessity for the new administrations to consider urban resilience strategies in their goal to govern a city facing increasing socio-environmental vulnerabilities. By juxtaposing case studies dedicated to each of the three main environmental risks identified during our study trip (seismic, air pollution and hydraulic risks), this section offers a comprehensive framework to assess actual capacities for major policy change in Mexico City, taking into account the fragmented governance schemes and sometimes ill-planned project implementation processes highlighted by the previous sections of this report. The first article considers the intersection of seismic, hydraulic and air pollution risks in Mexico City, using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and the cross-referencing of Mexico City's open data on the matter. Such a geographical approach aims at concretely illustrating the uneven spatial distribution of risk in Mexico City and the resulting questions it raises in terms of environmental justice and resilience. Our second article tackles how corruption practices, endemic to the construction sector, play a substantial role in increasing infrastructural developments' exposure to seismic risk, mainly through the violation of building codes and laxity regarding the use of cost-cutting materials and informal additions to houses. It then addresses the new administration's ostensible responsiveness to such risks through community-participation mechanisms as a particular kind of street-level strategy for urban resilience. The article explores the efficacy of such methods, the rhetoric surrounding them, and the challenges to implementing them. The third article chooses to approach the

Car-free Sunday on Paseo de la Reforma. Credits: Rafaela Basile



challenge of air pollution mitigation in Mexico City within the local policy sector of mobility and transit. Its authors highlight how mobility policies have always been at the forefront of mitigation strategies formulated by the local government of CDMX regarding air pollution. By exploring two study cases – one concerning pro-biking policies as a tool of sustainable mobility promotion, and the other, discussing the socio-environmental benefits of the intercity train between Mexico City and Toluca – this article sheds light on the many obstacles that the new administration could face in making Mexico City a “breathable city”. Our fourth article of this section starts from the observed territorial fragmentation of CDMX’s water system across administration boundaries (notably, between the Federal District and the neighboring State of Mexico) and explores how such deficient governance structures enforce conditions of informality in water provisioning, which in turn lead to practices of hydraulic clientelism in vulnerable communities. Given the embeddedness of these infrastructural and social practices, it begs the question of how the new Lopez-Obrador administration can disrupt these path dependencies in order to avoid worsening the water crisis in the capital city. Finally, the last article of this section adds yet another layer of complexity to the tackling of environmental risk by offering a gendered perspective on the three main challenges we identified. Indeed, gender-biased vulnerabilities often heighten the stress of path dependent environmental risks on local administrations’ capacities for action. Thereby, this article brings to the discussion the question of intersectionality within resiliency strategies and locates itself at the heart of the idea of cumulative vulnerabilities – yet another complex challenge for the new administration in charge of the city.

In sum, the 2017 earthquake acted as a true catalyst revealing such cumulation of environmental vulnerabilities. They are unevenly distributed throughout the city’s social structure and weigh heavily on CDMX’s policy arenas and governance structure. Those three environmental risks – seismic and subsidence risk, both water scarcity and flooding, and finally air pollution – are the main challenges through which Obrador’s regime must navigate when tackling its top-of-the-agenda issues like social inequality or the fight against corruption. Indeed, those environmental risks contribute to the shaping of policy arenas in Mexico City and will frame all opportunities for eventual policy change by the new administration.

However, local actors engaged in CDMX in environmental advocacy, resilience crisis assistance or climate change adaptation programs shared their concerns regarding recent public discourse, framing environmental risks as a problem characteristic of past administrations alone and as if political changeover was sufficient for disrupting decades-long path-dependent environmental risk. The suppression of the ARCDMX (Agencia de Resiliencia de la CDMX – local administration within the City Hall in charge of urban resilience strategies) reduced to a sub-secretary within the Municipal Secretary of Civil Protection (SMPC – Secretaría Municipal de Protección Civil) attests to such policy reframing by the new administration, characterized by decreased interest in environmental risk mitigation and climate change adaptation policies.

Nevertheless, the impending climate crisis anticipates an increasing frequency of natural disasters in CDMX (and worldwide), which will be similar or even more costly than the 2017 earthquake. We therefore locate our approach within this movements of “alarmist” scholars perceiving a critical juncture in today’s politics: time is ticking and the need for planning sustainable, resilient, and environmentally-just cities is of increasing urgency.

MAPPING SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL VULNERABILITIES IN MEXICO CITY

BY SAMUEL FERRER
SAM GAGNON-SMITH
HAFSHAH NAJMA ASHRAWI

Environmental and social challenges are, in Mexico City and elsewhere, strongly interrelated, and policymakers must take into account their complex interactions if they are to make meaningful and durable impacts on a city (Swyngedouw 2009, Lerner et al. 2018, Nygren 2015). Mexico City is characterized by its exposure to various environmental hazards, and its history is marked by dramatic manifestations of those as disasters, notably earthquakes. Thus far, policy initiatives have been constrained by social and technical dynamics of path-dependency and have been unable to affect durable reductions in vulnerability to environmental risks (Vitz 2018). This article illustrates the spatial intersection between different types of environmental risk faced by the city's population. The city's new government has expressed the desire to break with past failures, in its efforts to reduce social and environmental risks - to overcome historical path dependencies, policymakers will have understand how certain sections of the population are exposed to multiple environmental risks.

This article builds on risk atlases produced and made available as part of the City of Mexico's open data program, cross-referencing the incidence of three environmental risks - earthquakes, flooding, and extremely high temperatures - using Geographic Information Systems (GIS). In addition, it infers the relationships between social and environmental risk and the spatial distribution of inequality in the city more generally by considering the resulting geographic data in the light of relevant research (for instance Vitz 2018, Ziccardi 2016). This article is built around the series of maps spread across on the following pages that document the socio-environmental profile of the city. It shows how flooding, earthquake and urban heat-island risks linked to air pollution are all concentrated

in the north, and to a lesser extent the east, of the city, which are also its most densely inhabited regions.

The majority of the cartographic data used in this project, and notably all of the data relating directly to social and environmental risk, comes from the City of Mexico's open data program. Topological background was taken from the United States' Geographic Survey global maps, as these were the highest quality relief maps available. Unfortunately, though the State of Mexico also has an open data program, their available data is much narrower in scope and lower in quality, and does not provide information on issues of political ecology. Therefore, this study is unable to consider the metropolitan region except in the broadest terms and instead focuses on Mexico City proper. This has had important implications for our conclusions. Though we have had to focus only on the city itself, the data provided by the City of Mexico's open data program is characterized by a high level of resolution - the city is divided into no less than 4908 geographic units. This has allowed for a certain level of nuance in our analysis of the city's political ecology.

The risk map comprises three natural hazards: flooding, earthquake, and maximum temperature. The final risk map will be computed from each risk map using scoring methods to identify which part of the city are more exposed to the aforementioned natural hazards. Since this study is using governmental data, thresholds and definitions have been set by governmental agencies. Unfortunately, the city's data services do not make explicit the definitions they use to distinguish, for instance, 'very high flood risk' from 'high flood risk'. We cannot, therefore, provide quantitative analysis of the risk levels. Furthermore, it is of course possible that local



Maximum Temperature Risk

Mexico Valley is also exposed to increases in extreme temperature due to expanding urbanization and air pollution, via urban heat island effects. This will likely be compounded by the global increases in extreme temperatures. The map shows that extreme temperatures are concentrated in the city center in the northern part of the city. Approximately 21.4%

of Mexico City's area falls under the high risk of maximum temperature class, while the average and low risk areas constitute, respectively, around 4% and 73.8%. While extreme temperature risk zones cover less of the urban area than flooding or seismic risks, it is important to note that they are concentrated within the city center where population density is highest.

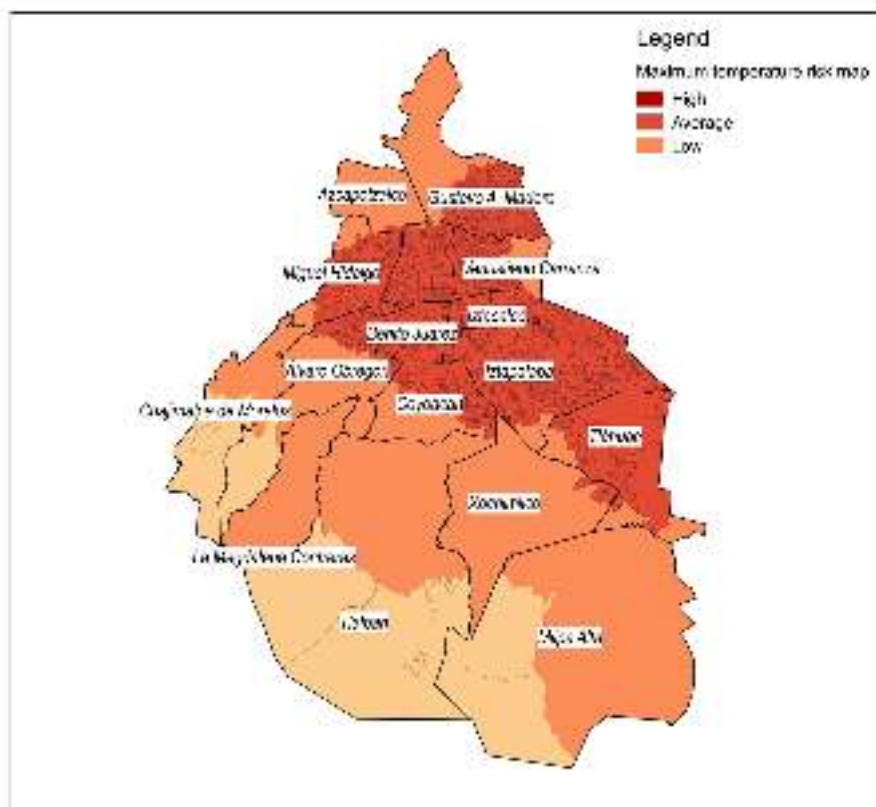


Figure 7. Maximum temperature risk in CDMX.

Overall Environmental Vulnerability

After considering the above three maps individually we offer an intersecting map highlighting those areas most affected by environmental risks in general. In order to make a simultaneous scoring system, the final risk map also contains compounded levels of vulnerability ranging from very low to very high risk class.

Most vulnerable areas where environmental risks clearly cumulate are located in the city center. Specifically Coyoacán, Iztapalapa, Iztacalco, Benito Juárez, Gustavo A. Madero, and Cuauhtémoc are the alcaldías scoring in

the highest vulnerability class, along with certain parts of Xochimilco, Tláhuac, and Miguel Hidalgo. With regards to the percentage of total vulnerability, the very low to the very high risk classes make up approximately 60.5%; 7.7%; 3.5%; 8%; and 20.3% of the City's area, respectively. In other words, the percentage of high vulnerability class, is the second largest area following the very low risk class. This high level of risk is concerning in itself, but all the more so considering that they are concentrated in the most populous alcaldías.

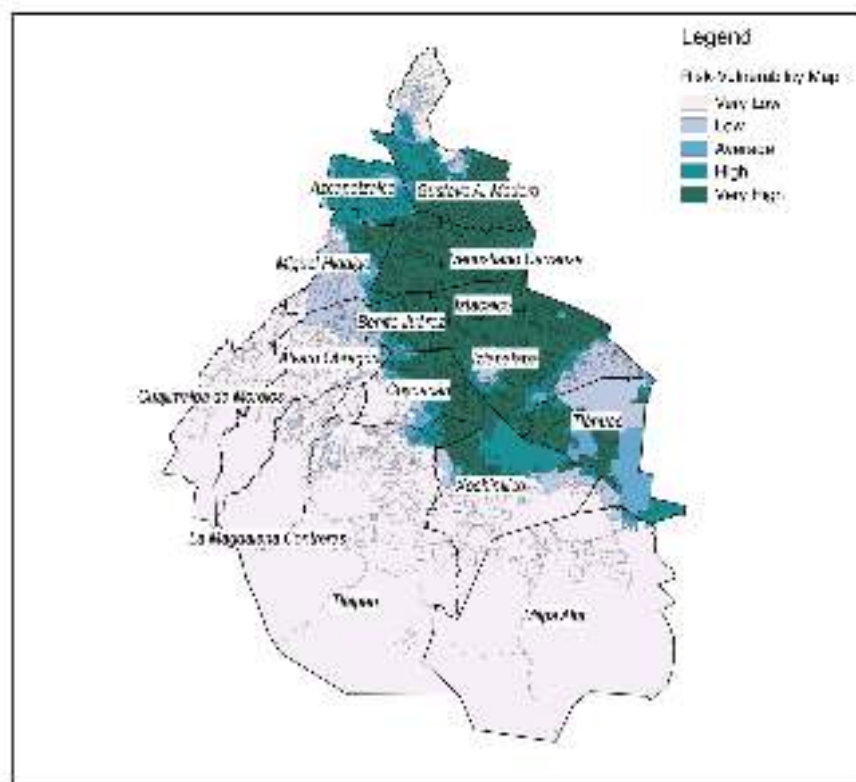


Figure 8. Overall environmental vulnerability in CDMX.

CORRUPTION PRACTICES AND THE PROM- ULGATION OF SEISMIC RISKS: ASSESSING COM- MUNITY-BASED STRATEGIES FOR RESILIENCE IN CDMX'S BUILD- ING SECTOR

BY CLÉMENT DA CRUZ
BRITTANY EBELING

Situated atop the converging North American and Cocos tectonic plates, Mexico is in a position of geological precariousness from the risk of earthquakes (Santos-Reyes, Gouzeva, and Santos-Reyes 2014, 663). Its capital, Mexico City, is subject to compounded risk due to ongoing depletion of the aquifer upon which it sits, causing the city to sink with alarming rapidity. Corruption endemic to the construction sector plays a substantial role in exposing infrastructural developments to further risk of damage from earthquakes.

Following the 2017 earthquake, corruption was highlighted by citizens and civil society as a driving force behind inadequate building standards which did not adhere to existing regulations. While building codes exist and would have ensured resilient structures during the earthquake, corrupt and politically-motivated appointments to leadership positions in housing and real estate government offices led to a lack of foresight and rigorous review of final proposals by engineers and architects. Given the potential for repeated incidents under conditions of increased environmental vulnerability, the change in administration marks a critical juncture-- both politically and in terms of physical environmental risks-- which must break from a long history of neglect should the administration usher in a period of rigorous, transparent building standards.

Interestingly, the new administration's national and local officials we met during our fieldwork were marked by rhetoric that prioritizes community-based implementation of urban development projects as a means of fighting systemic corruption in CDMX. Community-participation thereby allied resilience programs with anti-corruption strategies. Starting with a brief situational analysis of

systemic corruption in CDMX's building sector, this article seeks to establish the link between such practices and the promulgation of environmental risks in the city -- as revealed by the 2017 earthquake. It then address the new administration's ostensible responsiveness to such risks through community-participation mechanisms as a strategy for resilience, exploring the efficacy of such methods, the rhetoric surrounding them, and the challenges to implementing them.

Urban resilience, in this sense, refers to both a concrete policy goal (the structural durability of urban infrastructure and technologies in the face of socio-environmental pressures) as well as an analytical tool (assessing the consolidation of viable and sustainable urban futures for all, or some, social groups). Disentangling the different components of "urban resilience", as both a material object and a lens of analysis, is paramount to understand the gaps between policy rhetoric and effective outcomes of those policies and to account for all social, political, environmental and technological challenges at stake in Mexico City's political ecology.

Drawing the Link between Corruption and Infrastructural Vulnerabilities

While geographically predisposed to natural hazards, Mexico City citizens are further subjected to risk due to the quality of their infrastructure. While cutting corners on construction codes may go unnoticed at the time of a building's erection, particularly during housing booms under substantial demographic pressures to expand residential space, earthquakes and other natural disasters illuminate these covered-up practices, highlighting where ostensibly up-to-code buildings were in fact severely lacking.

In 1985 and again in 2017, earthquakes in Mexico City have highlighted the extent of these disparities between building codes and practice, making it clear that history has repeated itself against the backdrop of the city's landscape. These inadequate building practices have translated into the substantial loss of human lives—in 2017, the September earthquake killed 228 people in Mexico City (Sherman 2017). Despite the existence of sedulously-constructed, rigorous building codes, it appears that something transpired in the construction of these buildings that led to their systematic structural deficiencies. Jorge Macías, of the Mexico City branch of the World Resources Institute, emphasized the importance of oversight in implementation, saying, “the way in which master plans are built is important, but so is the way in which they're enacted.” At the heart of the disparity between planning and enacting is corruption, which has the effect of subjecting citizen's lives to profound danger in the case of infrastructural weaknesses. In fact, as in the case of these earthquakes “such collapses reveal corruption, which otherwise would be occult, concealed by its perpetrators” (Alexander 2017, 4.)

In the wake of the 2017 earthquake, much attention was paid to the efficacy of the disaster response, “the problem [was] not the 60 seconds after the earthquake, it [was] the 30 years we had before the earthquake,” according to a representative of El Programa Universitario de Estudios sobre la Ciudad (PUEC). In the years between the city's 1985 earthquake and its most recent one, the prevalence and extent of corruption, particularly in the administration of public services and infrastructural construction, has received substantial public attention. The construction process provides a host of entry points for corruption—through the appointment of friends, family members, and political

allies to managerial positions for which they are not qualified, through bribes in exchange for ‘turning a blind eye’ to shoddy assembly, and through awarding contracts due to personal ties, to name a few. A 2015 OECD report documenting the effective delivery of large infrastructure projects (specifically, the airport which was slated for construction in Mexico City) describes several ‘red flags’ of corruption, as articulated by the World Bank. These include “multiple contracts below [the] procurement threshold,” “unusual bid patterns,” “repeat awards to the same contractor,” “poor quality works and/or services,” and a host of other features exhibited by the affected buildings in Mexico City (OECD 2015, 151).

A highly-circulated report published by the organization Mexicans Against Corruption and Impunity (MCII) entitled “Por que se cayó mi edificio?” (“Why did my building collapse?”) implicated engineer, Max Tenebaum, in the extensive damages incurred after both the 1985 and 2017 earthquakes as a result of his designs and approval of buildings not constructed to code. Despite being charged for his crimes, Tenebaum's license to practice in Mexico City was reinstated not long before several more of his buildings crumbled during the 2017 earthquake (González Caraza 2018).

However, it is not for lack of citizen initiative and the voicing of grievances concerning these structural deficiencies that building codes have been overlooked in construction. From 2013 to 2018 alone, over 7,190 complaints for violations of construction norms were submitted by residents to the Environmental and Territorial Ordinance Attorney's Office (PAOT) (Pelcastre, 2018). The organization NosotrX, founded in 2017 works towards, in their words, establishing a “collective demand of our rights.” It has classified the

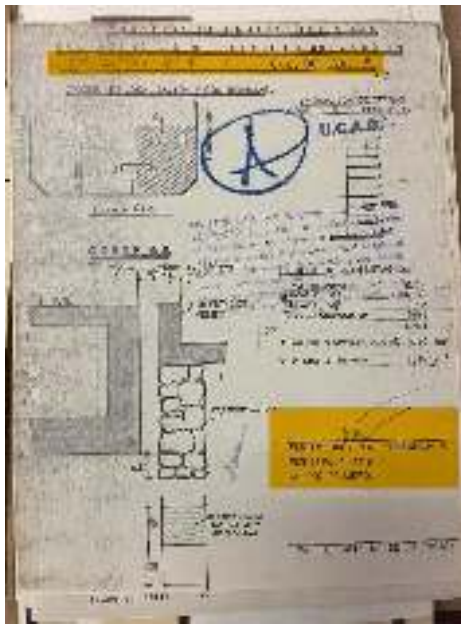


Figure 9. Documentation of Tenebaum's signature of approval on a building that was destroyed in the 2017 earthquake. Source: González Caraza 2018.

ongoing risk factors of still-standing but tenuous buildings, stating during our fieldwork consultation that over 40% of buildings in the city are at a serious risk of falling in the short-term, even if unprompted by another earthquake. They turned to citizen-led organization in light of the difficulties reaching government officials who were willing to act upon their grievances concerning pervasive structural risks.

Existing incentives for politicians to uphold anti-corruption policies challenge accountability mechanisms. "Most of our politicians work for the cover page of the newspaper," said Macías of the World Resources Institute—emphasizing

that political will is often scarce in tackling such a widespread, multifaceted monster of corruption that runs rampant in many facets of planning and implementation. Nonetheless, Manuel López Orbador's party, MORENA, campaigned in Mexico City and the country at large on an anti-corruption platform, charging the new administration with more stringent adherence to corruption-free construction practices. Of the new government, a NosotrX staff member expressed hope concerning the government's political will to direct change: "I actually believe there is the incentive to do it," he insisted. However, path dependency upon years of well-rehearsed interactions of 'turning a blind eye' to corruption is a challenge to dismantle. While the administration brands its approach to corruption as a break from the past, a 'brand new' turning point, it is notable that previous administrations have employed similar rhetoric (to varying degrees of success). Facing pressure on corruption issues, former president Nieto "agreed to the creation of a broad anti-corruption system," (Ahmed 2017) the effects of which have been feeble enough for the public refrain decrying corruption to sound again.

Assessing community-participation as a resilience strategy against such corruption practices

Interestingly, the new administration's national and local officials we met during our fieldwork were repetitively adamant in their discourses to prioritize community-based implementation of urban development projects as a means of fighting systemic corruption in Mexico City. This rhetoric is present, for example, at the level of the Secretaría de Desarrollo Agrario, Territorial y Urbano (SEDATU, Secretary of Agrarian, Territorial and Urban Development at the federal level) which laud citizen participation as an

effective instrument not only for building legitimacy, but also for promoting environmental resilience as a consensual issue. Indeed, environmental resilience has been praised by local actors interviewed in Mexico City as a politically safe issue for citizen participation without inducing social conflict.

In addition, MORENA's profound mistrust towards the participation of speculative private developers' in civil society highlights a potential alternative for a new contractual type of relationship in urban development (moving away from Public-Private towards "Public-Civil Partnerships"). After the 2017 earthquake, NGOs and spontaneous social movements demonstrated substantial capacity in terms of immediate mass-mobilization and coordinated action, a stark contrast to the time-consuming institutional fragmentation and corruption practices observed in the private sector. Direct cash transfers towards civil organizations were therefore fostered by international organisations (e.g. \$750 thousands from 100 Resilient Cities - ARCDMX, 2018) under national or local governments' approval.

The pilot-project called "Bairros Resilientes" was one of the key programs led by ARCDMX in this regard from May to November 2018. It aimed to develop adaptation capacities to environmental risks at the neighbourhood-level in all social groups, mainly in the delegaciones of Cuauhtémoc, Álvaro Obregón and Iztapalapa. Creative means were deployed as to foster post-emergency education workshops for local residents; voluntary brigades were formed to assist residents in the daily tasks of reconstruction; a voluntary working committee was also established to promote the neighbourhood's self-governance of its reconstruction

(ARCDMX, 2018). In the meantime, the second pilot-project "50 Viviendas" promoted from May to December 2018 the auto-reconstruction of most vulnerable settlements in the delegaciones of Iztapalapa y Tláhuac, through the public provision of resilient materials and resilient building workshop to locals.

In many regards, the operational tenets of community-based resilience programs similar to "Bairros Resilientes" or "50 Viviendas" demonstrate viability in opposition to corrupt practices, although not explicitly framed as anti-corruption strategies. Local participation often implies smaller-scale projects for organizational purposes, facilitating accountability mechanisms against corruption. Efficient participation-based implementation also requires enhanced transparency between developers and citizens, involving new information dissemination practices to aid in the fight against corruption. However, the strategic focus on community-participation by the new government remains subject to important limitations.

First, Obrador's government has now narrowed the scope of its action as to only tackle the reproduction of socio-economic inequalities as a whole with broader social policies. Thereby, since the political changeover, environmental resilience as a policy goal was downgraded to a less proprietary issue - justified by policy framing that has regarded environmental risks as a problem of administrations prior to "S19" earthquake. The suppression the ARCDMX (the local administration within the City Hall in charge of urban resilience strategies) and transfer of resilience agenda to a sub-secretary within the Municipal Secretary of Civil Protection (SMPC - Secretaría Municipal de Protección Civil) a few weeks after our investigation in Mexico

City, attests to such policy reframing by the new administration. However, during his presentation, Arnoldo Kramer, former member of ARCDMX, explained to us that, though the earthquake had generated political support making of environmental resilience a legitimate policy issue to be addressed, mobilization efforts by policy coalitions promoting resilience would not necessarily be sustained over time, not without further embedding resilience goals into CDMX's urban society - mainly through a process of bottom-up agenda setting and a community-level approach to resilience strategies.

Secondly, PUEC highlighted for us the risk of manipulation practices (Arnstein, 1969; Cooke, 2001) when attributing responsibility to citizens for the self-provision of public goods, including housing, very common to all Latin American metropolises like Mexico City. Though MORENA has been deeply critical of past government's liberalization practices, such a strategy of service provision by civil society is coherent with MORENA's current, and paradoxical austerity policy, promoting neoliberal type of cost-effective mechanisms for public goods provision, oddly familiar to those implemented throughout Latin America in the 1990s under the recommendations of the IMF's "Washington Consensus" (e.g. programs of community-employment in service provision in Buenos Aires in the 90s like *Agua + trabajo* and *Cloacas + trabajo* - De Gouvello, 1999, Díaz Langou, 2012; Besana, 2014). On the whole, none of the institutional representatives encountered during the study trip were able to illustrate their resolute rhetoric on citizen participation with concrete programs or mechanisms towards achieving it, in contrast to extra-institutional organizations with extensively developed and detailed community-based participation strategies, like 100 Resilient Cities

(cf. *Estrategia de Resiliencia de la Ciudad de México*, 2016) or *Agencia para la Regeneración Urbana* (e.g. the "RUPS" methodology for urban regeneration with social participation through collaborative project diagnostic, planning and evaluation).

Finally, fostering citizen participation might not necessarily translate into less corruption. Unless MORENA is able to consolidate a renewed local structure for community participation, forces such as gang influence and local party politics might sabotage such a strategy and instead heighten the prevalence of clientelism and corruption in infrastructure projects. What is at stake for the new administration, beyond the promotion of a more resilient city, is the territorial control over local participation and its impact on Mexico City's resilience capacities. Community participation in Mexico City would then, through such cooptation of civil society organisations by local political actors, be an opportunity for the "tyranny of participation" to unfold (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Hickey and Mohan, 2004), possibly resulting in the division and weakening of civil society.

On the whole, Mexico City still faces severe seismic risks, partly aggravated by frequent violations of construction codes by private developers. Widespread corruption on a multitude of fronts has created path-dependent patterns of corrupt building principles, despite the existence of rigorous building codes. While the new administration lauds a break from the actions of the past which have permitted such structural deficiencies to prevail, these claims should be weighed with a dose of skepticism, given the difficulty of making a sharp break from firmly-instilled institutional patterns of corruption. The historical record reflects the

fact that previous administrations have purportedly pursued similar aims, facing the same ingrained resistance to change. To truly break from such patterns, the Orbador administration will need to organize the political will necessary to act upon the pressing environmental critical juncture, by garnering support and strategic approaches through community-based approaches.

Regarding community-based project as a strategy for resilience, we have discussed both its benefits and limits in terms of risk mitigation and the fight against corruption. However, such gains are conditional to thoroughly planned and concretely designed mechanisms for community-participation - which national and local officials interviewed during our study trip have not demonstrated in spite of their resolute rhetoric to employ participatory implementation to legitimize their future policies. We look forward to knowing in more depth, the specificities of the tools for community-participation that the new administration intends on implementing. The matter is of crucial relevance when considered the unforeseen consequences a promotion of civil participation could generate in terms of opportunities for cooptation and clientelism, in spite of community-participation being a perfectly laudable objective to seek.



Figure 10. Voluntary reconstruction of buildings under “Bairros Resilientes” pilot-project led by ARCDMX. Source:ARCDMX.

SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY POLICIES: A STRA- TEGIC STAKE IN COPING WITH AIR POLLUTION RISK

BY RAFAELLA BASILE
EMMA PACCHIO
PAULINE TREMBLAY

Mexico City has faced air pollution issues for decades and a lot of improvement has been made since the United Nations named in 1992 Mexico City as «the most polluted city on the planet» (World Health Organization and United Nations Environment Programme 1992). In the 1990s, the pollution was the cause of 1,000 deaths and 35,000 hospitalizations each year (International Development Research Center 2011). Due to its geographic location that obstructs the dissipation of pollutants, Mexico City air condition was also worsened by its major use of individual cars, its ever increasing population and the urban sprawl linked to this demographic issue. But due to the government's initiatives started in the 1980s, in 2011 the air quality in the capital improved and was at similar levels as other metropolises, such as Los Angeles (Parrish and al. 2011). These government initiatives have varied from metropolitan policies to management in mobility, car use and, public transportation but also with the creation of constraints for the city's industries. Some examples are the Hoy No Circula program, that started in 1989 to forbid personal vehicle one weekday per week and was expanded in 2008 to Saturdays, and the Metrobus system, implemented in 2005 as 6-line 'Bus-Rapid-Transit' fleet proposed to decrease emissions by substituting deregulated buses.

Nevertheless, the metropolis is still facing some challenges. After annual improvement since the 1990s to 2015, the Mexico City has faced an increase in air pollution for the last three years. In April and May 2016, O₃ had reached levels that were worrying, even if the danger remained lower than in the 1980s (Hernández Paniagua and al. 2017). Since 2017, the government has activated the program for air quality

regulation eight times (Gobierno de la Ciudad de México 2019). Following the effectiveness of past initiatives, the role of mobility in mitigating air pollution re-gained importance, especially because public transport radically helped to transform the quality of life of Mexico City (Gobierno de la Ciudad de México 2019). During Miguel Ángel Mancera's previous mandate, the mobility policies also addressed climate change and natural risks, indicating its environmental benefits in addition to its transportation functions. However, nowadays, the authorities are facing issues to implement all their policies to improve air quality. Indeed, some, as the bike paths, have been successfully implemented, whereas others, such as car regulations and Euro VI standards, are still struggling in terms of their enforcement (OECD Report May 2017). In order to understand the continuities and discontinuities of mobility and air pollution governance, both local and metropolitan level will be discussed through bicycle policies and the intercity train, respectively.

Overview of local policies: Mexico City track on pro-bike policies

In the past years, the Federal District implemented several programs and policies to encourage cycling, recognizing the potential of a modal shift in a city with a high rate of short distance trips (Suárez Lastra et al., 2008). Interventions in favor of bicycle were first promoted by Marcelo Ebrard, from the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), as the Head of Government of the Federal District between 2006 and 2012. The commitment for environmental and sustainable matters was pursued by Miguel Ángel Mancera between 2012 and 2018, also from PRD (López, 2017). In 2007, the

formulation of a Green Plan included one axis aimed at improving mobility through bicycle policies, defined by the government as playing an important role in reducing GHG emissions and air pollutants. Together, both the Government of the Federal District and the Ministry of the Environment launched a strategy to progressively increase bicycle trips in the city through developing a network of bicycle lanes, integrating the bicycle into the public transport, making it accessible to the population and promoting a bicycle culture (SMA and UNAM, 2012). The government published a new Metropolitan Traffic Regulation that recognized the bicycle as a vehicle with rights and obligations, enabled the construction of a cycling infrastructure, including the 6.8 kilometer bicycle lane of Paseo de la Reforma, and implemented bicycle programs like the Muévete en Bici and the Ecobici (López,

2017). After that, new laws and regulations were implemented such as the Mobility Law of the Federal District, the Integral Mobility Program and the Traffic Regulation of 2015, all making reference to the role of a cycling mobility in the sustainable development of the city.

Within the new institutional framework and the political change in Mexico City, the role of the bicycle in the policies is expected to remain on the agenda, especially considering the left-wing character of Morena's party and Claudia Sheinbaum's background as Secretary of the Environment of the Federal District from 2000 to 2006. Within the government's first signs, Sheinbaum presented herself as committed to bicycle mobility (Almazan, 2018), also reiterating the importance of the topic in the 2019 Strategic Mobility Plan. Despite this evidence,



“Muévete en Bici” program during a typical Sunday. Credits: Rafaella Basile

official's discourses, such as the Mobility Secretary, Andrés Lajous, indicate a strong focus on public transportation investments while emphasizing the role of active mobility in connecting subway stations to the peripheries. As for Mexico City's cyclists organizations, like Biciteka, the share and extent of bicycle policies under this mandate are unclear, although expectations remain positive. For them, the proximity of the Ministry of Mobility with the bicycle mayor Areli Carreón, is reassuring, especially because she is one of Bicitekas' founders.

Regarding planning, the 2019 Strategic Mobility Plan is recognized as still insufficient and too concentrated on bicycle infrastructure. Today, Mexico City counts 242 kilometers of bike lanes, which are disjointed and concentrated in the municipalities of Miguel Hidalgo, Cuauhtémoc and Benito Juárez. Actually, since its initial development within Ebrard's mandate, the network of bike paths, bike parking, and the Ecobici have

been installed in the center of the city, in a polygonal form within the central neighborhoods where economic activity as well as job density are the highest. The objective of the new government is, therefore, to expand the cycle path network by 15% and increase 100% of the bicycle parking spots next to mass transit stations to favor intermodal transport (Plan Bici 2018). But the decision of where to expand the network is always made following the number of transfers arriving in the area observed, rather than observing the areas where the bike is already a privileged mode of transport. Even if the number of journeys made by bike have increased three-fold within ten years, reaching 298,000 daily journeys (Plan Bici 2018), according to the analysis of bicycle integration, the government faces two challenges to improve the implementation of bike infrastructure in Mexico City. First, to extend the infrastructure in the most marginalized territories, in the second and third rings of the metropolis' areas where the inhabitants



Bicycle lane in Paseo de la Reforma. Credits: Rafaella Basile

are naturally more inclined to use the bicycle as a primary mode of transport. Second, to promote the image of the bicycle to include the upper classes among the users. This is at stake in the Muévete en Bici program, which tries to promote a cultural shift and the use of bicycle for all, including an effort to improve Mexico City's resilience.

As for the governance of the bicycle policies and programs, the new administration aims to tackle fragmentation given the dispersion of planning and disjointed actions among several departments. For instance, the programs implemented in the past governments, as the Muévete en Bici and the Ecobici, are still ongoing under the management of the Ministry of the Environment, while the rest of bicycle policies are in charge of the Ministry of Mobility. Also, the lack of adequate coordination between sustainable mobility and territorial occupation and land use policies and programs and between the city and the metropolitan area, led to the establishment of a goal to transfer the coordination of the entire sector to the Ministry of Mobility (Plan Bici 2018).

Overview on metropolitan policies: case study of intercity train Mexico-Toluca

The mobility strategies implemented in the metropolitan level to face high CO₂ emissions and persistent local air pollution in the Mexico City Metropolitan Area (MCMA) need to be understood within a historical context of political rivalry and lack of coordination between Mexico City and the State of Mexico. Traditionally, these two levels of government are governed by different, often opposing political parties, and transport planning involve different ministries and departments in addition to other

institutions, such as the environmental department and private companies (Steurer & Bonilla 2016). The MCMA mobility is also governed from the state level through the Department of Communications and Transportation (SCT), in charge of transport infrastructure, and the Department for Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT), responsible for clean transport.

Within this multi-level scenario, the intercity train Mexico-Toluca appeared as an intervention in a priority area driven by a federal coordination during Enrique Peña Nieto's mandate. At the time of the agreement for the train coordination, state and local levels were governed by opposing parties, with the federal represented by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) while Mexico City run by the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), thereby indicating the intergovernmental collaboration to invest in sustainable mobility and improve the current fragmentation of the metropolitan public transport system in the region. The alignment has also been highlighted within different levels of planning, especially in consideration to the National Development Plan of 2013 to 2018 and the Development Plan of the State of Mexico from 2011 to 2017. In these documents, the intercity train is addressed as a means to facilitate mobility between the valleys of Toluca and Mexico (Gobierno del Estado de México 2012) and to improve connectivity and safety with public transport infrastructure (Gobierno de la República 2014).

When in operation, the train will connect the 58 km between the Metropolitan Area of the Valley of Toluca with the Metropolitan Zone of the Valley of Mexico consisting of two terminals and 4 intermediate stations, with a traveltime

of 39 minutes, and 230,000 passengers per day. The opening of the trainline, that has already been delayed several times, still does not have a new date, in part, due to the lack of financial resources available to complete the construction. According to the Federal Department of Communications and Transportation (SCT 2014), the main objectives in the construction of the train included reduced travel time between the regions, fewer road accidents, and less air pollution, as well as improving economic and communication conditions among the affected populations. In a context of high car use and informal minibuses-use (Steurer & Bonilla 2016), the train can have, on one side, an important impact to environmental mitigation

in the region if it become a viable and affordable substitution for the population. During our visit to the train construction site, the engineers in charge of the works affirmed that the fare would be less costly than the current buses that cover the same trajectory. On the other hand, the impact of the train construction, especially on the surroundings of stations, where several buildings were destroyed, can contradict the positive sustainable effects by pushing populations further from this transport network, and calls for a nuance on the repercussions of constructing this train.

In regards to the new institutional framework and the political change in Mexico City, the



Field visit of the Mexico-Toluca City Train construction site. Credits: Anouk Jeanneau

unprecedented alignment between federal and local parties brings continuity to the train project, and new studies are being conducted in order to verify the addition of one more station to reach popular neighborhoods (Suárez 2018), following the mobility initiatives to mitigate air pollution. On the other hand, the State of Mexico and Mexico City have recently announced a joint working group for a new program focused on improving air quality in the MCMA (Campos 2019), but the role of mobility is still to be addressed.

In this article we have studied the issues faced by Mexico City looking at air pollution and mobility over the last decades. After having been named «the most polluted city on the planet» (World Health Organization and United Nations Environment Programme 1992) the capital implemented a wide range of policies to improve its resilience to air pollution. A great emphasis was given to bike policies which appear as invaluable so far as they allowed the city to shine on the international scene as the first Latin American city to offer free bike sharing facilities.

Nevertheless, as we have seen, CDMX is still facing several challenges and efforts remain to improve air quality. Multilevel governance is at stake. Local and metropolitan level still face difficulties in terms of coordination. An agreement has been passed at the beginning of March to elaborate a new Air Quality program (Pro Aire) together with the states of Mexico, Hidalgo,

Puebla and Morelos (Zamarron 2019). Claudia Sheinbaum acknowledged that “pollution didn’t have frontiers” and that the commitment should be made hand in hand at the metropolitan level. Social integration and gender equality are also critical stakes to be taken into account for the efficiency of the mobility network. These challenges should therefore continuously be acknowledged in order to effectively shift away from a car-centered mobility system towards a more sustainable inter-modal one.

CHALLENGES FOR WATER PRO- VISION AND THE GOVERNANCE OF HYDRAULIC RISK IN MEXICO CITY

BY HILLARY BIRCH
LEILA CABIAC
FRANCK GIRAUD

CDMX faces increasing vulnerability to its water system in an era of climate change. Our collective investigation through this study trip, which included site visits and discussions with experts, illustrated how the fragmentation of CDMX's water system across administrative boundaries (for example, between the Federal District and the neighboring State of Mexico) has enforced conditions of informality in water provisioning.

This informality has in turn allowed for continued practice of clientelism in the city's informal settlements. Given the embeddedness of this infrastructure and social practices, the new Lopez-Obrador administration faces a significant challenge in disrupting these path dependencies to avert a water crisis and manage emerging risks associated with climate change.

Climate Change and Hydrologic Risk to the CDMX

In this era of climate change, there is significant evidence of increased hydrologic variability which will have profound impact on the water sector in Mexico, including changes to the hydrologic cycle, water availability, water demand, and water allocation (World Bank 2009). In a presentation during this study trip by Dr. Arnoldo Kramer, CDMX's former Chief Resilience Officer, it was detailed how the city will experience dramatic yet opposite effects of climate change on its water system. For example, more frequent and severe flooding will take place within the city. This flood water will be pumped outside CDMX boundaries given the current configuration of hydrologic infrastructure. At the same time, drinking water will

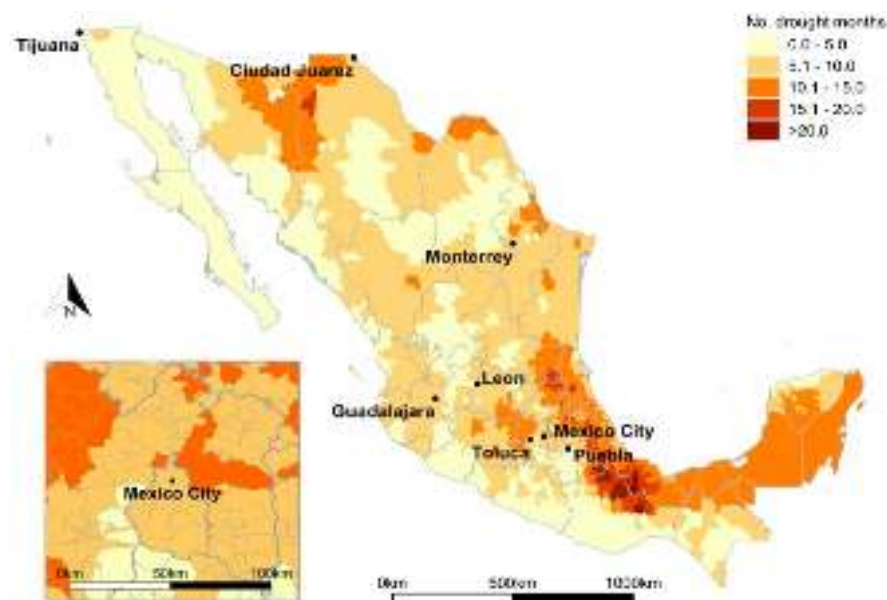


Figure 11. Spatial distribution of drought for Mexican municipalities as mean values across climate measures computed for census years 2000 and 2010. Source: Nawrotzki et al. 2017: 249.

CDMX AT RISK

continue to be pumped from outside districts into the city with much effort, financial cost, and wastage through ill-maintained pipes (Ibarrarán 2011, 10). In surrounding areas, it is predicted that periods of drought comparable to the massive droughts in the region during the 1930s and 1950s will by the end of the 21st century become commonplace (Wehner et al. 2011, 1376). These droughts will negatively impact the available quantity and quality of water in affected areas (see Figure 11) inducing further rural migration as people are forced to move to the city due to their declining livelihoods, which will in turn place even greater strain on the water resources in CDMX itself (Nawrotzki et al. 2017). This influx of new arrivals will occur in a city which is already divided into a two-tier water system as wealthy citizens are able to access drinking water through existing infrastructure or by paying for

private water provisioning, while a large portion of the population does have a reliable connection to the city's water system (Romero Lankao 2011, 173). These communities are located in the hilly east or in poorer, informal areas where water scarcity is recurrent. It is these communities that will become particularly vulnerable to climate change's impact on water in CDMX.

Fragmentation of Water Governance in CDMX

Increasing extreme weather in Mexico will place significant pressure on CDMX's water management system that is today constrained by centuries of successive alterations to the waterways in the Basin of Mexico which at one time contained a number of large lakes. These alterations began as far back as 1381 with the construction of the city's first wooden aqueduct

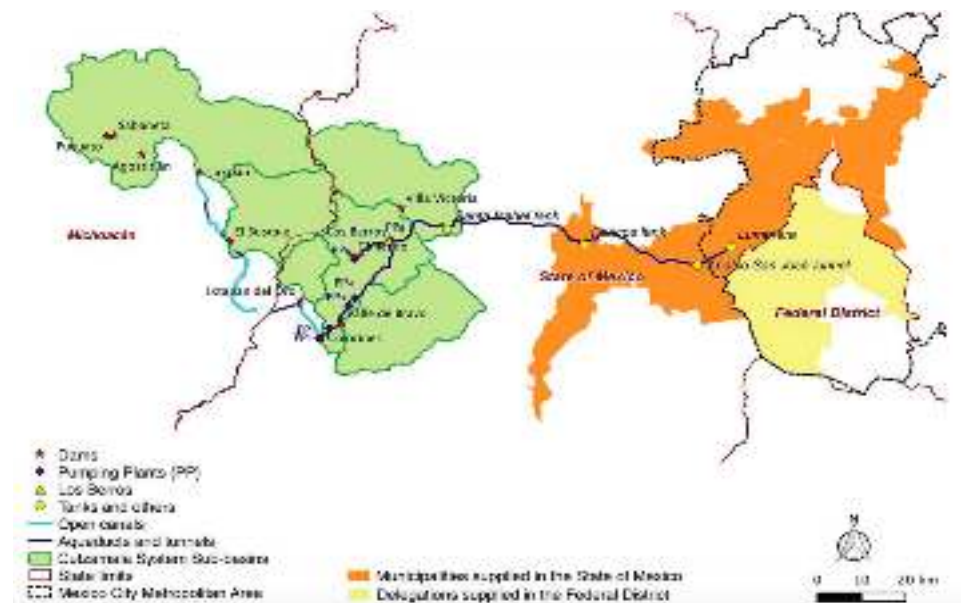


Figure 12. Inter-basin transfer connecting the State of Michoacán, the State of Mexico, and the Federal District. Source: World Bank 2015: 4.

(Vitz 2017). Much more recently, in the 1950s, the city chose to pump water into the federal district from outside areas in order to supply resources to emerging urban industries as well as the city's rapidly growing population. This enforced a system of water governance whereby much of the city's water supply is drawn from beyond its administrative borders (Tellman 2018, 6). This dynamic was further entrenched in the 1980s as engineers turned away from technologies that would have allowed for greater water treatment and reuse in CDMX itself, instead preferring to continue to import surface water from afar, this time from the district of Cutzamala (Tellman 2018, 6). The Cutzamala System (see Figure 12) supplies water from the Cutzamala River to the CDMX as well as the Valley of Toluca Metropolitan Area, stretching hundreds of kilometers (World Bank 2015).

The gap between the fiscal capacity of CDMX and the fiscal capacity of surrounding administrations is important in the context of this widely distributed water infrastructure. Today, the Federal District receives more tax revenue than all other states and municipalities and the Federal District spends almost twice as much per capita as, for example, the combined municipal and state spending in neighboring State of Mexico (Romero Lankao 2011, 169). This suggests that while CDMX may be able to better allocate spending to address inefficiencies, the municipalities from where water is sourced may be less able to respond to increasing stress on water supply given their limited fiscal capacity.

Furthermore, in Mexico, while municipalities have been delegated the responsibility to raise revenue through the setting of fees on water services, local political leaders have limited incentives to increase tariffs as this is politically

unattractive given the short-term mandate of mayors (Sanchez 2013). This political disincentivization is added to the fact that federal subsidies for water provision are disconnected from municipalities' performance in providing water services, making it even less likely that a local politician would be willing to undertake politically damaging increases to water tariffs. Tellingly, in Mexico, tariff increases in water services have only taken place where states are responsible for tariff regulation or where tariffs are adjusted automatically over time (Sanchez 2013). Furthermore, there is limited capacity and incentive to coordinate effectively with different administrations even though such links are necessary given the interconnectedness of the water management system and the dynamics of urbanization that extend beyond CDMX's boundaries (Romero Lankao 2011, 169).

Dynamics of Water Provisioning in Informal Settlements

The above mentioned fragmentation of infrastructure and water management across administrative boundaries contributes to gaps in access to water for people living in CDMX's informal settlements. Today, informal settlements represent a large component of current urban expansion in Mexico City, especially since the 1970s (Aguilar 2008). Providing urban services to areas developed illegally without building permits is particularly challenging for local governments, leading to a tension between the obligation of universal public services and the notion of illegality. For example, the 1917 Mexican constitution considers water as a public good, providing the federal state with the power to regulate groundwater extraction if "unregulated pumping adversely affects the public interest or benefit" (Diaz 1995: 490). This was

In CDMX, issues of environmental risks and



already in the zone (figures from 2010, Wigle 2013). This link is made clear in a 2017 qualitative study of key actors engaged in water provision in CDMX, where informants indicated they perceived informal settlements to be environmentally damaging and “capturing” land that should be used to renew aquifers through filtration (Lerner 2018, 66). In this study, it was also a common perception that the phenomenon of urban expansion is inevitable and hard to control (Lerner 2018, 66).

Consequently, informal settlements are rarely connected to formal water networks and mainly rely on tanker trucks (pipas) provided by public authorities. In the case of dwellings connected to fixed water infrastructure, the network remains unreliable for 1.4 million people due to lack of water pressure and leakage. Managed by the “tandeo system”, a method of water delegation that authorities use to ration limited water supply by opening and closing of valves in a district, this infrastructure provides water only during a few hours of the day. Both tank trucks and the tandeo system are unreliable, with delivery times varying without notice or subject to the “goodwill” of truck drivers who expect a tip upon water delivery. Strategies employed by people in these settlements to deal with such uncertainty include increasing households water storage capacity (using cisterns or tanks), relying on private/informal water delivery service when public ones fail, tapping into local springs with homemade plastic pipe networks (resulting in variable water quality and system fragility) as well as water rationing, often organized by women (Lerner 2018). As a result of fragmented sectoral responsibilities and the framing of water vulnerability as a purely environmental issue, the risks and burden of water shortage, flooding, and other natural hazards in informal settlements are

placed on informal dwellers, who already occupy fragile socio-economic positions (Eakin 2016).

The Burden of Clientelism on the Water System in CDMX

The refusal to fully formalize service provision in informal settlements, justified as a means of environmental protection, is intertwined with informal institutional practices fueled by clientelist dynamics. Mexico’s democratization process in the latter half of the 20th century marked by the end of the hegemonic reign of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in 2000 and prompted a new effort to govern local communities more directly (de Alba 2017, 184). While promoting more participatory democratic practices, this shortened the distance between elected officials and citizens but also had an effect of making some amenities “clientelizable” resources. As Veronica Herrera (2017) argues, political control of water and its distribution is due to the fact that local politicians are seeking to be re-elected and water provisioning influences voting patterns given its importance. Politicians who are responding to low-income citizens, rather than industrial users or middle-class communities that want better quality services, prefer to offer low-quality services that are free and universal but of increasingly poor quality and supply. As such, there is an exchange of poor water services for continuous political support. Herrera does note that throughout Mexico there are considerable disparities between these clientelist practices, as some cities have benefited from the double-dynamic changes (i.e. democratization and decentralization) to develop a harmonized and efficient water supply system, while other cities have seen their systems becoming more and more deteriorated (Herrera 2017).

In CDMX practices of water clientelism are particularly effective given the short, three-year length mandates for local politicians in boroughs. These representatives are only responsible for mapping difficulties in water provisioning but they are not responsible for the implementation of infrastructure programs that would address inefficiencies in water services. This encourages short term planning practices and promises given that problems can be identified without any local actor taking responsibility to provide tangible solutions. Additionally, it is a common practice of urban development in Mexico City to “ask for forgiveness rather than permission,” including building without permits followed by later regularization by local authorities, practices that are tolerated and even encouraged by certain local political figures (Lerner 2018, 69). The public system of *tandeo* and *pipeo*, is also subject to clientelistic practices, with delivery schedules and itineraries relying on discretionary management by truck drivers (de Alba 2017, 184-185). Thus it is important to keep in mind that in the case of CDMX and particularly with regards to the provision of urban services in informal settlements, the boundaries between the formal and the informal are blurred, multiplying the vulnerabilities of informal dwellers to risks linked with water.

Looking Forward to the Obrador administration

In sum, territorial fragmentation of CDMX’s infrastructures exacerbates inefficiencies in water provisioning and supports the continuation of informality in the water sector. It then foments clientelistic practices capitalizing on such inequalities and hydrologic vulnerabilities. As such, these embedded social practices and infrastructural barriers present a significant challenge to Mexico as it attempts to adapt to

the impacts of climate change. Newly elected President Mr. Lopez-Obrador draws an important part of his legitimacy from a large, popular electoral base, defeating two historically dominant parties, the National Action Party (PAN) and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). From our understanding based on actors met with during this study trip, Obrador’s anti-establishment discourse has fostered hope among vulnerable sections of the population that their demands might be heard by public institutions. These demands include the improvement of water management and infrastructure for citizens living in both formal and informal settlements. Perhaps most crucially, CDMX must develop a long-term vision for coping with environmental changes that will be brought by climate change, as this will have significant consequences on the already fragile configuration of water governance in the city.

TOWARDS A GENDERED PERSPECTIVE ON CDMX'S ENVI- RONMENTAL RISKS MANAGE- MENT STRATEGY

BY ALIZÉE BARIOULET
GILLES CALVEZ
SYLVIE LEE

Today CDMX is at a critical juncture, because of climate change that will increase environmental risks, and bring an exponential rise in terms of vulnerabilities faced by the population. The new Obrador administration presents an ambitious desire to address this critical juncture and try to include a gender perspective to achieve this. Women are indeed more likely to face disruptions in their livelihoods because they already suffer from unequal opportunities and precarious situations.

In 2017, the earthquake unveiled challenges women face in CDMX in terms of vulnerability to natural disasters resulting from the cumulation of risk. These old time long risks existed prior to the new Obrador administration, but indeed, are likely to constrain its capacity to act. These environmental risks shed light on women's vulnerability in CDMX. This article aims to show:

- (1) How, given the gendered bias of environmental risks in Mexico City, women's vulnerability, such as social vulnerability, is reinforced.
- (2) Furthermore we will show why, despite the willingness of administration to solve the problem of women's vulnerability, the main environmental risks will continue to constrain the implementation of policy programs, showing that administrations are unfortunately facing forces beyond their control.
- (3) At last we will emphasize women's strategies to face and go beyond this potential incapacity of political actors to bring about change, eventually showing that beyond the administration there is still room for action and the potential to improve the life of women in CDMX.

Even though environmental risks in Mexico concern all the population, women are more vulnerable

Gendered vulnerability to natural disasters and environmental risks are often overlooked when talking about environmental hazards, yet it is a crucial issue that needs to be taken into account. Structural gender inequalities are made even more visible by natural disasters (Neumayer and Plumper 2007). Women are also more vulnerable to environmental risks (WHO 2014). Female casualties are more numerous than male, and women are affected in the long run by the aftermath of the events. Because of their gendered role, women are more prone to suffer from direct and indirect effects of environmental risks (WHO 2014). This phenomenon is not absent in Mexico City. In fact, we can observe the gendered vulnerability to natural disasters and environmental risks in CDMX drawing on 3 risks. Seismic, hydraulic risks and air pollution highlight women's precarious position. The Obrador administration arrives at a critical juncture as the long-lasting environmental risks are likely to increase with climate change.

First, air pollution has been a long term issue in Mexico City. Even though air quality was better at the time of our visit (paradoxically because of the oil crisis, less cars were circulating in the city), overall, conditions have improved since the 1990s, but the issue remains to be tackled. Socio-economic conditions of women reinforce their exposure to air pollution. Focusing on outdoor air pollution, women with lower income are more likely to walk within the city since they might not be able to afford a car. They typically travel shorter distances to go grocery shopping, or bring the children to school. However, this

active mobility exposes them to traffic pollution (ITDP meeting). Gender roles make them more vulnerable to air pollution.

Secondly, seismic risk is another long-lasting issue in Mexico City, illustrated by the 2017 earthquake. Climate change is likely to worsen the effects of natural disasters in the future, considering the sinking nature of the city and its dwindling water reservoirs. Women suffered from both direct and indirect impacts. This included higher mortality rates among women who represent 228 out of 369 fatalities, and long lasting consequences of the earthquake on their daylife. According to the Mexican sociologist Patricio Solis the “numbers of casualties is due to the segregation of women and the gender roles.” It is important to note that the earthquake struck at 1pm on a weekday and affected mostly residential buildings (Ascencio 2017). Data shows that 52.8% of the victims were at home. In Mexico city, 77% of the domestic work is done by women, among the domestic help, only 5% are men (Mexican National Institute of Statistics). Women are also very much involved in the care economy, hence they remain at home to take care of children or elderly inside the family. (Meeting at Delegacion de Cuauhtemoc) Unsurprisingly, women represent $\frac{2}{3}$ of the fatalities since they were more likely to be at home at the moment of the earthquake (Ascencio 2017).

Moreover, women participate in the informal economy in Mexico City (Meeting at Delegacion de Cuauhtemoc), and related precarious working conditions might reinforce women’s vulnerability. Despite the relative sparsity of data on the earthquake damage and casualties of those working in illegal factories, we can argue that the earthquake highlighted the danger faced

by women working in the informal economy. Twenty women perished in the collapse of a factory in the neighborhood of the Colonia Obrera for instance (Uson 2017). Many women, including undocumented or migrant workers, make a living by working in illegal factories in CDMX, often suffering from hazardous working conditions which they are unable to ameliorate due to the informal status of their employer’s business, on top of their own inability to seek remedy from public authorities (Uson 2017). Moreover, these factory buildings do not always conform to construction regulations, making evacuation in case of emergency very difficult.

Additionally, the spread of informal housing in Mexico City might reinforce women’s vulnerability to seismic and hydraulic environmental risks. In CDMX, women in situation of social precarity and poverty, who are likely to live in informal housing, suffered the most from the earthquake. Indeed, the areas most affected by the earthquake were residential areas situated in the periphery of CDMX (Valette 2018). The southern periphery of the city, which is host to many informal settlements and low-income families was among the areas most harmed. In Xochimilco, the number of damaged structures was around 4800, most of which were residential buildings. Because of the informal nature of the settlements, 1600 houses were deprived of public assistance in this delegacion following the earthquake (Valette 2018). Informal housing as well as the lack of provision of services by the public authorities in these areas of the city is a long lasting issue in Mexico City. Women residents’ precariousness is worsen by the natural disaster. Improvement of living conditions in these areas of the city is something that would need to be considered by the new administration.

Finally, risks related to water can also be analyzed through a gender perspective. Even though water access was diminished by the earthquake (Meeting 100 Resilient Cities), the problem has been increasing over the years. Overall, there is an issue with water quality, quantity, and its frequency of distribution. According to an official at the Chamber of Deputies, fragmented water governance, aging infrastructure and strong lobbying from bottle companies have prevented any improvements in suitable water provision throughout the years. The aftermath and the recovery following the earthquake has exacerbated the problem. According to Arnoldo Kramer from 100 Resilient Cities, infrastructure such as the water networks were very affected. Leakages led to a 40% loss of potable water. Nezahualcóyotl, La Paz, Iztacalco, Iztapalapa, Tláhuac and Xochimilco did not have functional water service for several weeks. It partially started to be functional again in December 2017, three months after the natural disaster (Valette 2018). Women mostly bear the burden of the infrastructural damage since water is a crucial issue for them. Indeed, gender roles in domestic life often render women responsible for providing the household with water, since it is necessary for domestic tasks such as cooking and cleaning (Water.org). Women's caring role inside the family as well as hygiene and sanitation purposes also makes access to water crucial for women as highlighted by "Unidad de Fomento de la Equidad de Género" of the delegación Cuauhtémoc.

Mexico City's vulnerability to environmental risks and hazards is amplified by climate change and remains a challenge for public authorities. Women are the first victims of it. However, the Obrador administration's discourse shows a will to tackle these durable environmental problems.

Beyond the necessary understanding of gender within broad social programs to reduce environmental risks by administration, the persistence of a strong environmental risk slows down capabilities of public administration to go forward.

Today in CDMX, vulnerability linked to gender is an issue that concerns many urban actors. Among the institutions visited, two of them spoke about gender in their presentations, including the Delegación Cuauhtémoc on January 16th and the CDMX Mobility Secretariat met on January 18th. The attitudes of public institutions towards both the question of women's heightened vulnerability in CDMX and the actual strategies being implemented to concretely improve women's condition will here be called into question. The issue of women's vulnerability to natural disasters is not necessarily posed directly by local actors, and must be understood as part of an intersectional approach to gender, considering inequalities as mutually reinforcing. So, to question the capacity of Obrador administration to address gender problem requires a transversal approach embedded within broader social strategies, that reinforce and go beyond existing environmental risk.

The social, gendered, and ecological environments are closely linked in CDMX. The eastern part of CDMX has historically been facing economic difficulties and as it is built on the former lake, the soil is more unstable. For example this makes it impossible to build an underground subway, and harder to build buildings, causing this area to be somewhat disconnected from the city. To go beyond the environmental risks' path-dependency administrations must put in place strategies that allow women to enjoy greater autonomy and physical mobility, which in return facilitates increased social mobility. In effect, strategies aimed at combating isolation

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and furthering women's participation in the public sphere vis-a-vis spatial mobility must be an intrinsic part of tackling environmental risks strategies. In order to avoid these areas with higher environmental risks, women must first enjoy a greater capacity for social mobility, since this conditions their spatial mobility. This is why it is important for local administrations to prioritize social improvement strategies for women.

In recent years, the Mexican Government has taken significant steps and made noteworthy progress to address women's social vulnerabilities. The National Programme for Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination against Women (Proigualdad) was introduced as a key part of the National Development Plan 2013-2018. President Peña Nieto headed the first meeting of the National Gender Equality System which aims to embed gender-equality objectives into the formulation, implementation, and oversight of public policies. While this program is not primarily part of an environmental

risk reduction strategy, it does strengthen de facto opportunities to implement strategies that increase social security, and thus environmental security, for women, as it gives them greater empowerment. Most of the policies put in place for women are in fact part of a larger social program. Reduction of environmental risks is rarely asked in terms of gender itself, as there is a need to understand social and environmental problems of the city through intersectional perspectives that goes beyond the consideration of women alone.

Young Mexican women face particularly serious challenges. Mexican women have one of the greatest unpaid workloads in the OECD, in terms of childcare and housework for example, and also face higher levels of violence, which restrict their freedom and safety. Some 67% of Mexican women have been victims of gender-based violence. The National Strategy to Prevent Teen Pregnancy presented by President Peña Nieto in January 2015 moved in the right



Woman feeding her child outside a cafe near Zócalo square. Credits: Nino Kapanadze.

direction, and the National Commission to Prevent and Eradicate Violence against Women (CONAVIM) and INMUJERES have promoted initiatives to create awareness of, prevent, and eradicate violence against women, as exemplified by the Gender Violence Against Women Alert (AVGM) and the Strategies to Spread a Culture of Non-Violence and Promote Women's Human Rights (OECD 2017). To that same extent the Delegación Cuauhtémoc seeks to provide assistance across various social groups. They have developed different programs to help, among others, children, trans-sexuals, and women, such as the Mother's program (Madres de familia) and a program for pregnant teenagers. The Mother's program (Madres de familia) consists of economics incentives for the mother to find employment. Indeed most of time, women do not have the time or resources necessary to combine family life and access education. The idea here is to remove the financial and labor burden for mothers, and to enable them to follow courses in addition to upholding their families well-being.

All these initiatives to tackle social issues that directly affect women are extremely important in reducing environmental risk, as social mobility affects physical mobility. But if these initiatives are necessary and can partly help to reduce women's vulnerability facing environmental risks, they are not sufficient. Indeed for environmental risk reduction policies to be effective, they must be understood within the framework of wider policies to reduce social inequalities, and in this sense we can hope to see improvements. The challenge remains today for the administrations in charge of the reduction of the environmental risks, to take into account high risk groups in their policy design, in the face of the earthquakes, the hydraulic pollution, or air pollution.

What appeared in the meetings we had with local administrations, is that if gender disparities are now widely understood within broader social programs and even more broadly within political discourse, it is less often the case when talking about technical issues concerning environmental risk reduction. Today there exists a challenge to better identify the public these policies want to target. Women are more exposed to environmental risks like water pollution or air pollution, but still are not presented as a priority vulnerable group. To that extent environmental risk reduction policies follow the continuities of previous administrations regarding gender. Indeed, a better understanding of gender within broad social programs is crucial to overcome the risk linked to the environmental condition of the city. However, the governmental administrations are not the only actors in CDMX, and what their agenda cannot address, can be directly tackled by civil society and women's agency. This was particularly true after the earthquake of 2017 as women's efforts were crucial to improve resilience on the micro-level of communities.

Women's agency in resilience strategies contribute to reduce both environmental and social vulnerabilities : An example from the 2017 earthquake

The earthquake highlighted women's agency in constructing resilience on a community or micro-level. Not only did they enact resilience strategies in response to their own needs and those of their communities, but the earthquake provided an opportunity for women to call attention to the vulnerabilities stemming from their gender and other inequalities they face. Not only were they the main victims in this natural disaster, but they were often the main actors in the rescue and the political denunciation of the government's perceived incompetence in terms of disaster-related response. The aftermath of the earthquake was characterized by the

involvement of the civil society in finding and assisting victims. The government was slow to react, leading citizens, associations and organizations to manage the crisis independently. Among them, women-led movements took shape only hours after the earthquake. One of them, 'la Brigada Feminista', consisted of more than 500 members. The organization participated in the rescue efforts by sharing crucial information on social media like their Facebook page, and organizing the collection of food and medicine, and helping with the search for victims. Their main objective was to advocate for the marginalized women working in the collapsed factories that had been poorly maintained and neglected by former governments.

For the Brigade, 'allowing an unsafe factory environment is another form of violence against women': "The people in this factory are women, and they are immigrant women in a country where they are very much discriminated against, in a country that doesn't care much about them. Knowing the treatment that they face in the factories, it was up to us as feminists. We are women defending women. We have demanded our right to defend our female comrades and their human rights" (Mar Cruz, member of the brigade). Indeed, institutions' negligence caused vulnerabilities and eventually deaths. For the brigade's members, their negligence is comparable to murder: "We are here as feminists because we are fed up with being murdered. Femicide is one way of killing us, but this is also a way of killing us: in a collapsed building that doesn't have proper working conditions." (Dominique Draco, also member of the brigade). Although the mobilization of women went unobserved after the 1985 earthquake, it was not the case in 2017. Not only does the recognition of women's role in post-earthquake Mexico City shape perceptions on women's agency, but it brings to the fore

the wider concerns and challenges of gender equality. This illustrates how gender-related inequalities may soon be at the forefront of political organization and action towards concrete policy changes in Mexico City. Perceptions are changing and feminist movements are indeed already gaining visibility and weighing in on the debates emerging during this period of political transition. Despite discontinuity between different administrations with different political agendas, civil society associations and movements like 'la Brigada Feminista' are ensuring continuity at least in raising awareness about, and fighting against, social inequalities and environmental vulnerabilities. These efforts complement the public administration's actions, while complex policies addressing perceptions and behavior take time to be implemented, civil society associations are directly embedded in the everyday life of the city. These initiatives have significantly contributed to compensate for the potential incapacities of the administration to reduce the vulnerability of women during events like earthquakes, and more generally contributed to increasing the political awareness of the public administration on the higher vulnerability of women to environmental issues.

Finally, we see that the environmental risk weighs more heavily on women. They are more exposed to daily risk related to water and air, but also, to more exceptional events like earthquakes in CDMX. There is a political awareness today of the greater vulnerability of women, which is taken into account in the formulation of policies by public administrations. However, governments cannot fully address environmental risk, and when facing natural disasters such as the earthquake of 2017, women's agency has proved to be a crucial and decisive point for improving the lives of these women.

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1. Addressing migrants' rights through the grey areas of governance
 2. International criminality, migrant flows and the city in the middle
 3. (In)Formality in the face of modernization
 4. Contribution of traditional knowledge to contemporary practices in CDMX
 5. Huerto Roma Verde, a space of local militantism embedded within the specific dynamics of a historic neighbourhood: What if formalization is not the answer?
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POLYMORPHIC INFORMALITIES

BY NAOMI ODIGBO

As Mexico enters a new era of politics, old arrangements with coalitions risk erosion and new ones may be formed. These coalitions involve not only legally recognized companies and associations, but also street vendors, migrants, intentional communities and indigenous peoples. These people's activities operate in legal frameworks that may or may not cover them, cover them partially, or cover them selectively. The new regime offers the opportunity for some of these members of society to explore new avenues of engaging with the state in order to protect their livelihoods; issues of economic, political and environmental security and cultural preservation are at stake. In light of the variegated nature of legal arrangements with regards to certain economic and social activities, coupled with the changing political landscape, in this section we will discuss these issues in depth, through an exploration of the notion of "informality".

This section opens with a discussion migrants' rights, focusing on the challenges the government faces in offering constitutional guarantees to migrants, in despite of their legal status. The variety of arrangements that have been found by civil society and the government are presented, illustrating the various forms of assistance (or lack thereof) migrants have available to them in Mexico City.

In our second article we will focus on what appears to be a more clearly legally-demarcated aspect of migration: the protection of migrants from criminal groups. The challenging context of Mexico as an important informal transit point is presented, while questioning the scope of policies made in the past and by the new president. Throughout the paper we realize that CDMX's security forces have been working towards protecting these migrants from criminal groups in silence, until last year Mayor Jose Ramon Amieva recognized the existence of narco cartels. So far, the current president is building upon this progress through several policies, in line with his commitment to fight corruption.

CDMX's street traders are one of the most ubiquitous characteristics of the urban landscape. Indeed, their stands and food trucks are an important part of the built environment: it is estimated that half of the employment in Mexico City is informal. The ephemeral character of their activities is related to their dependence on a variety of processes; seasonal, macroeconomic, and religious to name a few. The process we are mainly concerned with here is that of political change. In the third article we discuss how our conversations with officials tell us that this new government seeks to continue endeavours to rationalize their trade. While in alignment with its positioning as a break with a past, it seeks to dismantle the corrosive extra-legal practices which these

activities are bound to. The current administration now inherits a new dilemma of balancing the 2017 Constitution's right to the city and right to the public space, and the potential for loss of tradition and spatial displacement.

Indigenous knowledge is another discipline having an ambiguous role in the built environment. Since Spanish colonization, indigenous building practices have been dealt with in official discourse as, at best, a source of philosophical reflection rather than as a legitimate part of the repertoire of building techniques. With the mounting environmental pressures Mexico is facing, companies such as Systema Biba-Bambuterra are responding to the need of practical solutions through indigenous building methods. After all, indigenous peoples of the past, were also earthquake survivors. The fourth article looks at how in this context, the stage for the new government has been set by its previous administration's, pioneering advances in incorporating culture as a framework of reference for human development, notably as per the adoption of the Fribourg Declaration.

This section ends with insight into a new form of civic engagement being explored by the community space called Huerto Roma Verde, which also acts as a field of experimentation for Systema Biba-Bambuterra's building technologies. Through our discussions with its members, we learn that the 2017 earthquake gave impetus to recognizing not only the importance of indigenous knowledge but also to engaging with associations that take on the responsibilities attributed to the state. Taking a historical approach, the authors give a critical appraisal of the new forms of governance that are being diffused through the activities of Huerto Roma, highlighting its situation as being at the edge of the formal-informal dichotomy.

Through this section we see clearly that the formal-informal binary obscures real challenges the government faces in protecting the livelihoods of migrants, informal workers, indigenous peoples, and environmental disaster survivors. Indeed, the environmental history of Mexico City reveals that, as per Vitz's statement, these boundaries appear to evolve not necessarily through passing bills, but noticeably through grappling with recurrent near-crisis states. The latter states are shared by many governments across the world, but in Mexico City, entail economies with major informal components, proximity or integration to transnational criminal networks, a heritage of marginalization of indigenously produced of knowledge and increasing environmental risk.

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Juice street vendor in Coyoacán. Credits: Dalia Assoum

ADDRESSING MIGRANTS' RIGHTS THROUGH THE GREY AREAS OF GOVERNANCE

BY ADRIENNE EVANS
KATHERINE FINDLAY
POLINA TOPOLYAN

Leaving the Observatorio Metro station, we found ourselves under a canopy of white tarpaulins. Stands piled high with brightly colored wares clamoured around the exit; clothes, electrical equipment, children's backpacks, and sizzling food stalls. We crossed a highway on a concrete footbridge, and sprawled out before us was the neighbourhood of Observatorio. One- or two-story houses lined quiet residential roads, stacked and sweeping up the hillside in the distance. The whole scene burst with joyous reds, yellows and blues, a Coca-Cola sign waving gently next to some quietly rusting cars. Most of us excitedly pulled out our cameras, inspired by the patchwork of colors. We were conspicuous here in a way we were not in the center; an old woman stopped to watch us pass, and a young boy, dressed as Spiderman, shot imaginary webs at us from behind his front gate. We stopped at a low door, topped with coils of barbed wire. A man leant out the neighboring window and inquired what we wanted. Our professor explained, the man disappeared and, after a few moments, the door was opened. This was the furthest from the city center we had come so far; we were headed to Casa Tochan, one of the civil society organisations that provides services for primarily Central American migrants in Mexico City. The casa is a male-only residential center, offering a stay of up to three months. Inside, the building rises steeply and sharply, stairs connecting each level set progressively further up and back into the hill. Dormitories, offices, a kitchen and meeting rooms lined the stairwell, creating a steep warren of small rooms, one having to squeeze against muraled walls to allow another past. Here, capacity is limited.

Due to a lack of government-provided aid, these organizations offer the majority of services to

migrants in CDMX. Casas del migrante, like Casa Tochan, primarily provide services by lodging migrants, for a few days to a few months. The organizations constitute an informal network, collaborating to provide a variety of services; they may provide essential information on crossing Mexico, the status of the borders, medical services, and legal services (Candiz and Bélanger 2018). During our tour, the proprietor explained to us that when Casa Tochan cannot provide sufficient resources, they can direct individuals to an appropriate contact in the city (personal communication, 2019). When the caravan of over 4,000 migrants arrived in November 2018, there was a collective effort from organizations to provide aid. Casa Tochan played their part; this was the only time their doors were opened to women and children (personal communication, 2019). These organizations work together apart from formal institutions, and must find ways to overcome limited financial resources.

Halfway up the stairs, we were ushered into a room heavily decorated with photos, drawings and tokens from around the world, and central table and chairs. We sat down and were swiftly served vegetarian tacos, delicious fried vegetables, and fruit juice, joined by an American member of the Lutheran church, who was on a residential placement at the center. We inquired whether they receive groups often. "Yes", she replied, every few days, receiving paid visits being one of their main sources of income (personal communication, 2019). Rather than being funded by the government, they are funded by these independent visits and church associations like many other civil society organization (Marzorati 2017). After our meal, we split into two rooms, each joined by six or seven residents of the center, who relayed their stories to

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us in turn. Their tales were harrowing: of gangs, violence, pursuit, and of endless days spent travelling by train or on foot. As students of urban policy, we were interested to understand how official authorities fit into their narratives. When we inquired how they would characterize interactions with the police, the government or border control, the migrants responded unanimously: “bad.”

Migrants’ rights have been promoted by the federal and local governments since 2011, but action is limited by institutionalized violence, favoring deportation. Migration through Mexico was largely ignored by the national government throughout the 1990s, but political pressure from the United States and increasing numbers of arrivals resulted in the formation of the Instituto Nacional de Migración (INM) to detain and handle migrants’ cases. However, interactions with the INM are often negative: 75% of those detained are not notified of their right to claim asylum, despite it being a legal requirement, and the majority of deportation interviews carried out last under 10 minutes - an insufficient amount to determine a migrants’ claims for asylum status (Amnesty International 2018). Other structures both formally and informally overlap the INM’s functions, but lack the necessary knowledge of immigration proceedings to work effectively alongside the institution. For instance, federal police are authorized to work in an auxiliary function at the request of the INM. Federal or municipal police involvement, however, can result in arbitrary detentions and officials robbing or extorting migrants (Amnesty International 2018; personal communications 2019). When migrants are detained illegally, unaware of their rights to asylum, illegality is perpetrated by formal institutions. New arrivals

are in a grey zone of governance in/formality, leaving them vulnerable even after contact with authorities. Our narrator’s stories finished, the majority of us sat shocked into silence.

Carrying our chairs up another narrow stairway, our group emerged onto a wide roof-terrace, offering a spectacular view over the valley below. “This is a wonderful place for photographs” explained the director, as the residents perched around us on the edge of the terrace, listening distractedly. We were told again of the migrant’s terrible journeys, and the limited involvement of city or national government in their protection.

Recently, official rhetoric places emphasis on upholding migrant’s human rights. At the federal level, the Ley de Migración in 2011 made significant progress; it decriminalized undocumented immigration and expanded rights for migrants (Alba and Castillo 2012). In accordance with international laws placing migrants under protection of non-refoulement, prohibiting the return of people who face a real risk of persecution or other human rights violations, the Ley de Migración qualifies migrants for Mexican visas in three cases: humanitarian reasons, expired visas or unauthorized jobs and family reunification (Amnesty International 2018; Basok and Weisner 2018). However, while the approval rate for receiving residence status appears high, this is undermined by the recent reduction in fee waivers distributed, a requirement for formal documents, long delays in application review and the online application process (Basok and Weisner 2018). As such, many migrants are unable to even apply. Despite the formal institutions’ adopted lexicon of human rights, they fail to challenge illegal deportations and limited visa accessibility. Recent governance changes

have attempted to challenge this duality: the formal lexicon in favor of migrants' rights and informal lack of protecting these rights. The new Mexico City constitution, introduced in 2017, further committed to providing an open and welcoming space for migrants (Ciudad de México 2017; Marzorati 2017). The constitution guarantees that "independently of their legal situation, [migrants] will have the protection of the law and will not be criminalized for their migrant status" [independientemente de su situación jurídica, tendrán la protección de la ley y no serán criminalizados por su condición de migrantes]. Civil society, including those serving migrants, was given a large voice in forming the constitution, through a plural editorial group of 28 'expert' citizens, open feedback processes and public debates (Flores 2017).

The election of Mayor Shienbaum and President López Obrador further supported these commitments. In 2018, CDMX was branded as a 'sanctuary city' by the mayor (Romero Sánchez 2018). Meanwhile, the federal government reduced deportations, with 44% fewer deportations in the first three months in spite of a surge in migrants (Semple 2019). Finally, coordination between local and federal governments has improved. When migrant caravans arrived in the city, federal and local officials provided them services together (Clemente 2019; Durán 2019). Thus, these governments deepened commitment to migrants and improved their coordination for more efficient provision of services. Despite these changes, federal and local governments only play a peripheral role in providing services to migrants as NGOs remain the major actor. Still sitting on the roof terrace, we were shown on laminated maps the centrality of Mexico City as a stopping-point in migrant's journeys across the country. Many of the migrants, she

explained, would eventually continue north to the U.S., whilst others would remain in the city for months or even years while they awaited improved relations at the border, accumulated money, or planned their trip. Both federal and local governments treat migrants as "in-transit," reflecting the desire of most migrants to go to the U.S. This "in-transit" treatment has not changed under the new governments and CDMX constitution. The potential to earn a salary ten times larger in the United States remains a major incentive for migrants to continue their path to the U.S.-Mexican border (Basok & Weisner 2017). In 2016, only 2% of the 400,000 migrants crossing Mexico applied for asylum in Mexico (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2016).

Considering these trends, the city and federal governments have increasingly provided short-term services, such as to caravans (Bobes León & Pardo Montaña 2016; Nájera 2016). Even while one-year visas are provided, the migrants are expected to cross to the U.S. during that time. Yet, Mexico should also be increasingly seen as a place of destination, due to a reorientation of initial trajectories. Migration patterns are shifting in response to the tightening of the U.S.-Mexico border, the rising cost of travel to the U.S., deportations from the U.S., cultural-linguistic similarities with their countries of origin, and the desire or inability to return to their country of origin (Faret 2017; Kirk 2019; Semple 2019). Mexico City will likely be a longer-term destination for Central American migrants, as they attempt to gain funds, wait for favorable border policies or even decide to remain in Mexico (París-Pompo 2016).

In addition to the government, the city environment also prevents easy insertion. Migrants

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face significant difficulty finding employment, a barrier to financial security in the city as well as to integration in Mexican society. Employers are less likely to hire migrants, even with a visa, pushing jobseekers towards the U.S. or the lower-paying informal market (Faret 2017). Their first source of employment is often found near their arrival point in the city, working short-term jobs or service work, which provides very limited insertion into social or professional networks. Further job opportunities are present but hard to access, particularly in automotive, chemical, or the waste recycling industry. These occupations are considered undesirable among Mexicans outside the formal labor market, yet provide higher relative pay for migrants in comparison to the short-term jobs (Faret 2017). In order for more migrants to be accommodated, as stays become extended, access to steady employment is essential to ensure their rights.

While civil society has potential to encourage a long-stay in CDMX, they play a limited role due to financial limitations and lack of integration into government structures. While the wider civil society network can sometimes offer legal assistance, access to public transport, lodging and even personal connections, allowing migrants to integrate, the civil society does not operate on a sufficient scale (Candiz & Bélanger 2018; Faret 2017). Civil society does not have the resources to provide for longer stays than a few months or perform extensive functions for migrants. Nor, on the other hand, do they sufficiently shape governance of migrants. For instance, the civil society only played a limited role in forming the constitution, subject to government approval of their suggestions, and are not included in implementation of policies (Marzorati 2017). Thus, with limited support from civil society and prohibitive federal policies, in policing and visa

provision, migrants face deterrents to stay, resulting in physical and psychological insecurity.

We were encouraged to move back into the central space of Casa Tochan where we arranged ourselves, along with the residents, for a big group photo. “It’s tradition!” we were assured “we have a photo here with all the groups that visit.” When we had finished posing, those of us who spoke Spanish chatted with the migrants, whilst others browsed and purchased small wooden keychains the craftsman had produced in a makeshift gift shop. We were led back down the long stairway by a resident, who spoke fluent English. He had earlier relayed to us that he had been to the U.S. multiple times before, running a business there long-term, before being deported. He was adamant that, this time, he would get in, and get in to stay. Kindly, he led us all the way back to the metro station, where he kissed each of us goodbye, wished us a good trip, and saw us on our way.

Looking deeply into these governance structures surrounding migrants, the duality between formality and informality must be dismissed. Instead, these terms become polymorphic. Migrants exist in a cycle of grey areas, between unconsolidated actors. Undocumented migrants are legal under Mexican law, but treated illegally by formal institutions who police them. As the various Mexican governments fall short of claims to uphold human rights, civil society organizations play an unusually strong role outside the government. They exist in a grey area as well: unintegrated, at the sidelines of governance. These plural ways in which migrants are governed must be recognized in order to improve their marginalized experience in Mexico.

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINALITY, MIGRANT FLOWS AND THE CITY IN THE MIDDLE

BY ADRIENNE EVANS
KATHERINE FINDLAY
POLINA TOPOLYAN

Mexico City is an important node in the trajectory of migrants between Central America and the United States, and those entering Mexico City are diverse: from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras (the ‘North American Triangle’); men, women and minors travelling with or without family; with diverse reasons for leaving their country (Nájera 2016). The migration rate through the city is growing progressively due to the continuous activity of gangs and narcotics cartels in Central America (Noriega 2015). This paper will explain the situation of gangs in the center of the continent, with respect to how it sustains migrant flows to the North, and how Mexico City is implicated in this journey. Furthermore, it will question how much influence the city government can have in a network of illegality that stretches across Central and North America. Findings will be informed by the personal stories related to GLM students during a visit to Casa Tochan, a residential center for male migrants in Mexico, in January 2019.

While poverty is generally seen as the principal reason motivating emigration from Central America, the causal relationship between gang activity and migration is clear. The residents we met detailed stories of the threat they felt in their home countries and the pressure to join cartels; one explained the violent photos of mutilated bodies that flood his Facebook feed (personal communication 2019). The lack of legal employment opportunities combined with low support from unstable governments make drug trafficking a tempting source of income. Those who do not consider joining cartels face everyday violence and continuous threats (personal communication 2019). According to UNODC, approximately 500,000 gangs are operating in Central America, making it almost impossible

for the local authorities to provide citizens with effective policing, or to politically oppose criminal groups (Rodgers et al. 2009).

Crossing the southern border of Mexico, the migrants discussed how their arrival into and journey across the country takes diverse paths. Most took trains, a passage that involved disembarking and walking long distances to avoid official checks. A young man explained that he and his companion had chosen to make the journey alone through unfamiliar territory. “How did you know your way?” we asked, our question translated into Spanish. “Google”, came the reply, leading to a ripple of laughter crossing the room. Otherwise, migrants pay for their passage with traffickers, they explained, who facilitate border crossings. However, this choice comes with a risk; traffickers are known to kidnap migrants.

As soon as migrant caravans leave their countries in the direction of the Mexican border, they automatically become an easy target for the gangs operating in non-urban territories. The absence of any legal status leaves migrants open to exploitation, such as gangs keeping them as prisoners for drug and sex trafficking (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2016). Reportedly, groups of more than 100 migrants have been kidnapped on their way to the Northern Mexican border (The Telegraph 2018). During our visit, the migrants relayed harrowing tales of their incarceration and torture at the hands of captors, including witnessing the murders of their friends. We were visibly shocked. “Yes, killed, beheaded,” a man confirmed, sorrowfully drawing a line across his throat to illustrate the point.

Although Mexico City offers a low crime rate relative to the rest of the country, the capital

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is not a safe haven. Inside the casas, migrants' vulnerability can actually increase; shelters such as Casa Tochan make migrants more visible to 'coyotes', people smugglers working in conjunction with criminal organizations, reflected in the rolls of barbed wire that line the roofs of the building. Coyotes can infiltrate the casas and befriend the migrants by offering passage to the United States, then kidnapping or extorting them (Candiz and Bélanger 2018). This fear was evident in the casa's infrastructure, coils of barbed wire topping high walls, and in resident's stories. One man said he did not ever feel safe, and was resigned to his fate even in the shelter; "I have accepted my death," he explained to us emotionally, "I have accepted that I will never see my family again, until I am on the other side." (personal communication, 2019). The security issues at the nonprofit organizations leads some migrants to avoid them, using them only for obtaining food. This leads to circular causality; migrants are pushed into areas where they receive fewer services, becoming more dependant on the criminal organizations they had sought to avoid.

Protecting migrants in a city where violence is an everyday reality is an overwhelming task. The homicide rate in CDMX has dramatically increased since 2014, the year 2017 seeing a record high (Foreign Policy 2019). The variety of forms and scales of street gangs, narco cartels and youth criminal organizations active in Mexico City makes it difficult for the local authorities to address the issue with universal policies (Jones 2013). As a federal district, Mexico City has its own security forces which operate in the capital: the Secretariat of Public Security of Mexico City (Secretaría de Seguridad Pública de la ciudad de México), uniformed 'preventative' police, and the Office of the Attorney General of Mexico

City (Procuraduría General de Justicia de la ciudad de México) for plainclothes detectives. Despite not having national reach, these forces are significantly larger than those of other states. In addition, Mexico city houses the headquarters of the the Federal Police (Policía Federal), under the Secretariat of Public Security.

Despite the presence of significant security forces, evident violence and some cartels operating out of the capital, officials in Mexico City have historically denied the influence of national cartels in the Capital. As such, their policies towards the problem have been soft (Assman 2017; Ditmar 2018). The previous Mayor José Ramón Amieva, during the election period, broke the silence and recognized the existence of narco cartels in the CDMX (Univision 2018). Claudia Sheinbaum, the current mayor of Mexico City, accepted that cartels have been in the city for years (El Universal 2018). During this period of denial, the scope of the issue became too large for the local government to cope with it. Additionally, local policing is not sufficient to address the scale of the criminality, with roots across the country and internationally. Consequently the local authorities mostly rely on federal army forces to assure the security on the street of Mexico City (Time 2018).

At the beginning of his term in 2006, president Felipe Calderon declared a national war on cartels (Cara Labrador et al. 2019). Since then, the Mexican government has been trying to handle the activity of youth gangs and drug cartels by augmenting security forces. Peña Nieto, the then President, unified the municipal and national police to create a national gendarmerie for domestic security operations (Insight Crime 2017). However, this has not been entirely effective: although spending on security operations

in the federal government increases every year, the homicide rate continues to increase as well (Ethos 2017). The operations provoked the reverse effect - instead of decreasing violence, the armed forces aggravated the conflict between the cartels (The Conversation 2019). Furthermore, security forces also faced accusations of impunity and corruption, entangled in gang-related crime themselves (El Universal 2018; Murray 2018).

Since the beginning of his presidency in 2018, López Obrador has spoken out against criminal activities, cartels, and corruption, campaigning along pacifist lines. A 'first message' was sent in December 2018, as the government investigated three businesses and seven individuals, with the goal to bring down the finances of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (Eschenbacher & O'Boyle 2018). It is notable that these new policies do not directly address the experiences of migrants at the hands of cartels, whether their lot will improve, too, remains to be seen. In February 2019, the state senate approved the creation of a new national guard, a central piece of Obrador's new security policy, forming a civilian-controlled police force to tackle the corruption and militization of the original system (Orre, Graham & Torres 2019; Sieff 2019). Nevertheless, the new policy initiatives are still in the formulation process, and their impact cannot be anticipated.

The issue of the narco cartels is international in scale. The cartels are omnipresent in the trajectories of migrants from their home countries, along their journey, and in their stay in the capital. Political silence on the issue of cartels in the city has resulted in an increase in homicides and a level of danger which cannot be fully addressed by civil society organizations nor by the city

government itself. Following the failure of previous national measures to decrease the impact of cartels through policing, it remains to be seen whether the new force introduced under López Obrador will be more effective and appropriately cater to the experience of migrants, rather than overall criminality in Mexico.

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Casa Tochan entrance mural. Credits: Urban School.



Casa Tochan visit. Credits: Anouk Jeanneau

(IN)FORMALITY IN THE FACE OF MODERNIZATION

BY ZOE DURRUTY
PAULINE LESCH
DOMINIKA MOCOVÁ

With about six million workers in Ciudad de México lacking formal employment contracts, the question of informality is common in the policy agenda of the Mexican government and among international organizations that often propose “best practice” solutions to formalize activities. However, in practice this has translated almost exclusively into actions concerning street vendors, for example, the program at the national level “Crezcamos Juntos” in 2014, aiming to make such informal entrepreneurs enter the regulated tax system (Zepeda; 2014). Hence, this shows a very limited approach to a diverse landscape of everyday practices, that ignores activities that are heterogeneous in nature, size, legality and visibility. Since the 1990s, despite varying political orientations, central districts of Mexico City have undergone changes in the name of neoliberal practices. In order to attract much needed foreign investment, the government concentrated its power and influence in the hands of police pursuing a ‘zero tolerance’ policy against street vendors, and securitization of neighbourhoods serving as Mexico City’s “business cards”, notably in the financial district of the Paseo de la Reforma

The timing of our visit was key as we arrived amidst political turmoil, shortly after the victory of the Juntos Haremos Historia political movement that is now leading not only the government of Mexico City with Claudia Sheinbaum (MORENA), but also the country, with President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (PRD). The discourse of this left-wing socialist party indicates a greater tolerance of informal activities, as it rejects the previous neoliberal right-wing direction. This article will explore how the government approaches informality in Mexico City. We argue that the official response of the city depends both on the type of

the activity, as well as on the physical area where it is being exercised. The underlying aim of our reflection is to question the use of the general term “informality” in public policy and governance as it includes a vast range of practices and meanings, further we question whether a paradigm shift may be underway.

According to WIEGO, an NGO whose aim is to empower informal actors through judicial and organizational support, 24% of the city’s economically active population is working in the informal sector (WIEGO; 2019). Street vendors, musicians, shoe shiners, domestic workers, informal bus drivers and many more are included among this segment of the population. The following article will focus primarily on street vendors, who are the main target of public policies. Emphasis will be put on the forms of regulation of the street vendor in iconic and economically relevant public spaces. We will conclude by questioning the new government’s change of perspective.

Although characteristic of Mexico City’s landscape, street vendors have historically been the target of policies aiming to ‘clean’ the central district. One of the most comprehensive of these policies is the Programa de Rescate, targeting the historical center of Mexico City, which was initiated in 2001. These policies have been particularly strong in those areas considered to be key spaces for foreign investment, such as the historical center, which is protected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. These spaces constitute the visible face of the city and carry a symbolic importance for the government to make itself present and assert its authority. Street traders are key actors in the negotiation of the right to the use of public space, and are particularly relevant given their visibility and number.

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Unfortunately they are rarely taken into account in urban renewal and modernization efforts, and coerced relocation is a common practice. Daniel Escotto, the former director of the Authority of Public Space between 2008 and 2012, described street vending and pedestrians' uses of public space as mutually exclusive. According to Escotto, organizing vendors meant giving the street back to the public and making it walkable and easily accessible. Organizing and relocating the vendors resulted in significant changes to the landscape of particular areas, for example around the Monumento de la Revolución or the Paseo de la Reforma, where the redevelopment works aimed at making space for pedestrians and opening up the streets corridors both by controlling traffic and impending street trading. Such changes are immediately visible, and demonstrate the city's ability to take action.

Public spaces in Mexico City are constantly

negotiated between private and public, informal and formal actors. Street vendors do partake in visible political organization. They group mostly in registered civil associations and are represented by leaders who are institutionally recognized, (Gomez Mendez; 2012). This protects traders as a community and facilitates the opening of channels of dialogue with the authorities. Since the 1940's their leaders and delegados are key actors in the negotiation of the uses of public space. One of the oldest associations of informal actors is the Union de Aseadores de Calzado, a union of shoe shiners that was founded in 1936. However, it should be noted that the representatives of such associations are not necessarily invited to meetings regarding the uses of public space, at least not to the same extent as representatives from formal enterprises. The negotiations take place in a differentiated manner for these organizations, through different channels. The willingness to



Woman selling street food. Credits: Nino Kapanadze

negotiate the informal actors' access to public space comes into conflict with the authorities' desire to construct the ideal of an organized city - an ideal they hope will be beneficial to attract foreign investment, this being the main motivation behind the action against informality from the former ruling party. Clearing street vendors from visible and iconic public spaces demonstrates the feasibility of a policy program to deliver rapid results, and requires lower investment than what would be needed to address other informal activities, such as clandestine manufacturing or domestic work. As opposed to street vending, such informal practices are excluded from public discourse regarding informal economic activity and exist almost invisibly. Veronica Crossa, the academic coordinator of the Urban Studies Master at El Colegio de México, A.C., mentioned that clandestine clothing industries supply international supply chains such as Walmart, suggesting that political agenda-setting in combating the informal economy is subject to processes of definition and framing, leading to many issues being overlooked. We can thus argue that, by focusing on street vendors, the government merely takes action to address a small fraction of the 57.7% of the national economic activity that exists in the informal sector (INEGI).

If the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) - the previous administration of CDMX - tried to address informal vendors, the answer was not be 'formalization' per se. Rather, the aim was to organize their activity and regulate the vendors. The outcomes of these approaches are significantly different for the workers, as they do not access the benefits of formal employment, such as social security or minimum income, but they are constrained by regulation. Street traders require permits to conduct their activities, are

limited in terms of space, numbers, and pay a fee to the local government. In many cases they are removed from the spaces where they work and are relocated into enclosed markets that are not necessarily sought out by their existing clients. Overall, the PRD approach was not fully efficient, as the big number of traders, as well as the extent bureaucratic requirements for a short term trading permit made it difficult both for the traders to obtain permit and for the public authorities to fully control the situation.

The change of mayor has not so far appeared to bring about much change regarding this topic. Mayor Sheinbaum announced programs to regularize traders with emphasis on permitting access to housing and financing of commercial projects (López; 2018). This view remains on the same track as those that have been implemented before. Nonetheless, at the national level, the new administration insinuated in their campaign that the focus would change to tackle entrepreneurial illegality rather than informal economic activities, assuming that the latter will naturally decrease as the economy grows (Navarro; 2018). Such policies and their implementation are yet to be seen, but the new paradigm seems promising.

According to Crossa, some visible effects of regulation include the possibility to measure informal jobs through the national survey for employment and occupation, and formulate a typology according to size of the stall, products sold, or whether they are part of larger organizations. Another effect would be the changing relation between traders and public authorities. Even if these workers are widespread across Mexico, there are key areas where their presence is particularly problematic to government officials. Thus, this relation varies across location.

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During our visits to the city center, we witnessed a scene where the street was occupied by several military trucks in the historical center. A blanket with merchandise occupied a small fraction of the sidewalk and many people gathered around, observing or participating in an intense discussion between police officers and the woman who was illegally selling these wares. On the contrary, in areas further away from the Zocalo, vendors were peacefully operating on public benches or parts of the sidewalk with the police passing by undisturbed. The fact that there are locations where the government is hyper-present, might indicate a dichotomization of public spaces.

Despite the government's continuous efforts of formalizing and regulating the vast informal sector through constant negotiations it keeps flourishing in other less central areas where informality fills the vacuum left behind by a public sector not interested in protecting and providing services to local communities (Becker & Müller, 2013). Perhaps, the dualist approach placing informality in opposition to formality practiced by policy makers is flawed, as in practice formality and informality exist in the same "ecosystem" and are interconnected (Recio et al., 2016).

In the context of political change, many expectations were evident during the campaigns. However, the scope and complexity of such activities makes intervention difficult. Targeting specific aspects makes sense and the new government seems to be going in that direction - at least discursively. This discourse and the fact that Mexico City's 2017 constitution holds the potential of providing a more inclusive legal framework through its mentions of the right to the city and to the public space (WIEGO; 2019), points towards a positive change. On

the other hand, it is clear that in many ways previous practices persist, as our meeting with Daniel Escotto, as well as some of Sheinbaum's actions that followed our visit demonstrate. Escotto, who currently works with president Obrador, and was involved in many projects transforming public space in Mexico in the past, made clear that the common response to informality was relocation and displacement. Even if Obrador's government is adamant about the desire to rely less on private sector investment in urban redevelopment and infrastructure projects, this might not necessarily translate into a more lenient policy towards informal actors. Indeed, it should be noted that it was Obrador, in his position as mayor of Mexico City between 2000 and 2005, who initiated the modernization and embellishment efforts in the historical center that displaced so many street vendors. This leaves us hesitant to expect substantial change in terms of the authorities' approach to governing informality.

CONTRIBUTION OF TRA- DITIONAL KNOWLEDGE TO CONTEMPORARY PRACTICES IN CDMX

BY NAOMIE BOKETA
JEFFREY BUNDUKI
ANSELME GOUTTE-BROZE

When walking on the streets of Mexico City, one can easily see the influence of western inspired urban planning practices resulting from its colonial history. It is clear that both the colonial influenced architecture and the city planning are some of the most striking examples of the declining influence of traditional knowledge in CDMX. The fact that the colonial plan of Mexico City followed the pre-conquest system of canals separating Chinampas (Robertson 1959) is one of the few examples of the preservation of traditional practices in CDMX. Overall, the development of the city did not take into account traditional knowledge but rather has been the result of successive waves of urban planning processes transcribed from Western cities, from the appointed group by Cortes to design the city, including Alonso García Bravo the “good geometer” (Stanislowski 1947) to Emperor Maximilian’s reconstruction of Mexico City in the 19th century, borrowing from Parisian styles of urban planning (Beezley 2012). The use of violence has been another aspect of the colonial influence in the decline of traditional knowledge. This violence has been physical, with generalized forced labor that came with the construction of the new city of Mexico. This was displayed in Diego Rivera’s murals presented at the Palacio Nacional, depicting violent practices used against indigenous peoples as well as slaves from the African continent when constructing colonial buildings such as the Palacio Nacional itself (‘The History of Mexico’ 1935).

This violence has also been highly symbolic. From this perspective, the visit of the historical city center made clear the contrast between the ruins of Templo Mayor (Symbol of Tenochtitlan) and the Plaza de la Constitución buildings, the Mexico City Metropolitan Cathedral, and the Palacio Nacional.



View of the Cathedral from Templo Mayor.
Credits: Franck Giraud.



Diego Rivera, *Epopéya del pueblo mexicano*.
Credits: Franck Giraud.

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Thus, this article aims to examine to what extent, at a time of drastic political change in Mexico, traditional knowledge may be recognized and contribute to contemporary practices in CDMX. Drawing from our study trip experience, we will first look at the intersection between resilience strategies and the opening it creates for recognizing traditional techniques. Then in the second part we will discuss the benefit of including ancestral knowledge in the urban planning of a city. Finally, we will see what the current situation tells us about the perspective and evolution of the use of traditional knowledge in the current context of political change.

Current climate change mitigation strategies have included a discussion around the benefits of integrating traditional knowledge and techniques in policy making. The knowledge sharing and learning platform Evidence and Lessons from Latin America has produced a clear synthesis on the subject. Funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development, this consortium of Southern and Northern researchers aims at learning from Latin America's experiences. It tries to build up capabilities in the Global South by enabling knowledge transfers between governments, civil organizations, and scholars. A special edition has focused on disseminating evidence about Latin American climate change mitigation practices based on traditional knowledge. Owing to the fact that indigenous communities have been experiencing high climate variability for a long time, they have developed place-based coping mechanisms. For instance, the indigenous Otomí people are able to sustain agricultural production despite water scarcity in the Mezquital Valley thanks to traditional soil and water management practices. This source of knowledge has gradually been recognized as valuable because it provides practical solutions to

climate hazards. Indigenous adaptation practices have, for example, been explicitly incorporated in the National Climate Change Strategy 10-20-40 Vision. The federal government adopted what it calls a "landscape level" approach to preserve forestry for example. One of the best practices that the report promotes in this field, is recognizing the potential of integrating traditional knowledge "to increase the establishment of agriculture, livestock and forestry production schemes with a greater mitigation potential, as well as environmental and social co-benefits" (Federal Government of Mexico, 2013).

We had the opportunity to learn about the effectiveness of indigenous technologies during our visit in the community space Huerto Roma Verde where we met with Verónica Correa. With her sister, Correa founded a company named Systema BiBa – Bambuterra that produces an alternative form of housing based on bamboo wood and other recyclable materials. They successfully mix indigenous Colombian knowledge and scientific expertise in order to respond to the challenge of building affordable and resilient dwellings. She humbly stated that they did not invent any groundbreaking technology but simply drew inspiration from Colombian thousand-year-old bamboo houses that resisted seismic events. The importation of the bamboo results in a slight increase of 10% in terms of construction costs. Systema BiBa has unfortunately lost its funding with the political change, even though they proved the efficiency and resilience of their bamboo house prototypes. They are currently negotiating with the new government to participate in the post-earthquake reconstruction of Xochimilco, a neighborhood in the South of Mexico City that was severely damaged.

Amartya Sen, an Indian philosopher and economist, has said that “cultural matters are integral parts of the lives we lead. If development can be seen as enhancement of our living standards, then efforts geared to development can hardly ignore the world of culture.” Indeed, by acknowledging culture in the manner suggested by Amartya Sen, we can see that in Mexico City, the culture and by extension, the ancestral knowledge and heritage, has played and still plays an important role today in its development.

The main issue that can be highlighted firstly, is the representation of culture. In fact, how can a government take into account traditional knowledge in today’s society? To do so, and in a top-down approach, the Mexico City government is the only of the country to have incorporated culture as a framework of reference. In fact it was in 2018 that the government adopted the Fribourg Declaration stressing that both the private and public sector must respect cultural rights. Therefore, there are many ongoing projects that follow this declaration. In 2017 (two years after its creation) the Ministry of Culture created the first Mexican cultural aggregator also known as the Mexican Cultural Heritage Data Model. Due to the fact that Mexico City is the city with the highest number of museums in the country, they wanted to collect information on the national museum by cataloguing and archiving it on a platform where information on Mexican culture could be easily accessible. Having access to this knowledge is a way of reminding Mexican people, on a daily basis the heritage that they have. On the other hand, if we take a bottom-up approach, the Milpa system that has been passed down for generations is important to the understanding of traditional knowledge in contemporary Mexican Society. This agricultural technique was initially

used by indigenous people and consists in the combination of three vegetables: corn, beans and squash. By growing these crops using the Milpa system, the assets from one yield benefits to the two others. More recently this system was promoted by the “Global important agricultural heritage systems” (GIAHS), highlighting that there are alternative ways of using biodiversity for production found in recovering traditional agricultural knowledge. In addition, the Milpa system allows for the reduction of the consumption of water.

Also, as trivial as it might sound, one of the most important factors that has to be taken into account is food, and the maintenance of Mexican ancestral knowledge through its consideration of food as both ceremonial and ritual. Because some plants such as cactus grow in very specific areas its culinary use is linked to cultural identity. In their article “Identification, collection and consumption of weeds and wild vegetables in Mexican communities: institutionalized local ancestral indigenous knowledge as ecological literacy, place and identity” the authors stresses that “places speak to who we are, reflect our identity and our sense of abandoning or belonging to a place” thus the food and the agriculture component of culture has to be taken into account while working towards institutional acknowledgment of the heritage of ancestral knowledge in Mexico City. Seeing food as a form of heritage future research should highlight the impact of food and its social-symbolic importance to the people of Mexico City and Mexico more generally.

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Boat ride on Xochimilco Lake. Credits: Franck Giraud.



Nino Kapanadze, *Xochimilco Lake*. Pencil and watercolor on paper, 2019.

HUERTO ROMA VERDE: WHAT IF FORMALIZATION IS NOT THE ANSWER?

BY ANOUK JEANNEAU
VÉRA MANOUKIAN

La colonia Roma is a neighborhood of Mexico City, strongly rooted in institutionalization of popular culture since its creation. Indeed, circus owner Edward Walter Orrin, along with Mexican politician Pedro Lascurain, engineers, and a famous clown, bought the land to establish the small town Potrerillos de Romerita and create a Paris-inspired residential subdivision, a project later approved and supported by the city government (Once TV 2004). The streets were named after the places where the circus had performed. Following the Mexican revolution, Colonia Roma encountered a construction boom and became a privileged neighborhood inhabited by Europeans and Mexican aristocrats. Only after World War II and the freezing of rents in Mexico City did the area start to attract lower income residents, as wealthier populations fled to newer exclusive neighborhoods in the west of the city. Population declined dramatically in the colonia between the 1970s and the 1990s, and it progressively became a commercial area (Ayala 1996). However, many new commercial buildings collapsed during the 1985 earthquake, Colonia Roma being one of the most impacted neighborhoods in Mexico City. In reaction to the event, neighborhood associations started fighting to restore and conserve the colonia's heritage and succeeded in particular in preventing the construction of an underground parking lot in the area (Valasis 1997). This struggle of local actors against commercial projects highlights land-use conflicts present in Mexico City. Beyond the debate between historical preservation and neoliberal development, it is interesting to analyze more generally the governmental regulation of land-use, especially the discretionary way in which it arbitrates access to land through the distinction between "informal" and "formal" patterns of development. The labelling of a development project as informal is

not directly linked to its legality or its violation of planning objectives. While incremental, self-built settlements by poor residents are almost always framed as irregular and informal, projects conducted by developers outside of the legal framework do not tend to be considered as informal (Connolly and Wigle 2017).

In this matter, Huerto Roma Verde stands at the edge of the "formal versus informal" dichotomy. Since 1949, the space has been occupied by an ambitious and innovative housing project with green spaces and artistic spaces, but it was completely destroyed in 1985 along with large parts of the colonia. The choice was made by the Institute for Social Security and Services for State Workers not to rebuild the housing project, but rather to create green spaces in homage to the initial project (Roma Verde Espacio comunitario, n.d.). However, site was left untouched for 27 years, and faced problems of vandalism and pollution as a result from illegal dumping of waste. In 2010, the space was reappropriated by neighbors, entrepreneurs and architects, supervised by three associations, La Cuadra, Cultiva Ciudad and Factor Eficiencia, working to promote organic ways of living and "green cities" (Travesías 2014). Their main goal was to take back and preserve these green spaces, thus creating another «lung» in the city, such as Chapultepec - the greatest urban park of Latin America. They created a self-directed, open space based on the involvement of volunteers. They also engaged in teaching permaculture in the neighborhood to promote self-sufficiency (Choperena 2018). The 2017 earthquake was a pivotal event in terms of concretizing their relation to the local community. Huerto Roma Verde reacted immediately to the disaster, organizing as an emergency center open 24 hours during the first nine days following September

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19th, 2017, thanks to the involvement of 14,537 volunteers. They offered food, shelter, medicine, childcare, judicial help and more broadly, a space for citizen action and solidarity. Moreover, Huerto Roma Verde is involved with other community-based projects in Mexico City, such as Cooperativa Palo Alto, created when its 2,250 residents obtained land rights to the space they had occupied for 30 years by collectively buying it in 1972 (Aßmann, Bader, Shipwright and Talevi 2017, 190). Huerto Roma Verde's political commitment is also reflected in their support for the autonomy of the Chiapas state which organization is based on indigenous laws and traditions. This inscribes the project in a national movement for an alternative model of society.

Thus, it appears interesting to compare the dynamics at work within the space Huerto Roma Verde within the broader history of the neighborhood, politics of displacement, economic and commercial gentrification of the city center, and competing claims over the right to public spaces that have shaped local political conflicts. The urban revitalization of the neighborhood that followed the 1985 earthquake was marked by renewed commercial activities taking places in emblematic cultural spaces, along the development of leisure zones and redesigned working areas. Significantly, the penetration of the residential space of the colonia Roma by an “outsider” population has tended to crystallize conflict over the meanings of belonging within a historically politically engaged middle-class



Entrance to Hurto Roma Verde. Credits: Franck Giraud.

area, that has been resistant to processes of densification. This raises the question of an eventual clash between established practices of solidarity and local activism, and growing neoliberal tendencies regarding the commodification of iconic spaces in Mexico City. The transformation of radical community-oriented political spaces into displays of bourgeois values and trendy lifestyle habits in the everyday use of public space seems to be a manifestation of this pattern.

Paradoxically, Huerto Roma Verde has imposed itself as a force in social-engineering, offering a concrete possibility for community-building over the years. However, the recent processes of formalizing the space and activities taking place within it, have reshaped it, therefore redefining it with regards to new inhabitants' lifestyles and uses of the space. Significantly, the ongoing project led by the architect Taller David Dana exemplifies such patterns of neoliberalism and, ultimately, gentrification and greenwashing of local political places. These illustrate a tendency towards the convergence of an agenda increasingly modelled and defined by the local government and the formulation of new models of consent regarding the use of the space by locals, or in other words the articulation of local militancy and polymorphic forms of neoliberal governance.

As highlighted by local activists during our visit of the space, interactions with politicians have always been a political exercise of negotiation which ensured a stabilized use of the space to prevent evictions and policing by local authorities. The newly elected municipal government raises the question of the continuity of such relationship, whereas the social, community-built project carried out by Huerto Roma Verde could resonate with and inspire new models of

governance, or alternatively, be used as an instrument of gentrification and depoliticization of community-based activism through a tendency towards the replacement of local political representatives and economically exclusive practices of politics. The need for a multilayered analysis of these observed dynamics can only enrich our understanding of how a radical, territorialized space such as Huerto Roma Verde, is a translation of both localized historical practices and more globally inscribed tendencies of neoliberalization and restrictive uses of the city.

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Huerto Roma Verde community garden. Credits: Franck Giraud.

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Urban detail: Window in the Colonia Roma neighborhood. Credits: Nino Kapanadze.



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