



Transport policy: Empowering local community for poverty alleviation in a deprived neighborhood in Colombia

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Informal transport
Community participation
Community transport
Social exclusion
Urban accessibility

ABSTRACT

Social exclusion is directly related, amongst others, to a lack of educational opportunities, transport accessibility or poor transport policies. Social capital can deliver a solution to reduce inequity by providing community transport (CT) to an underprivileged neighborhood. The aim of this paper is to provide a case study on how community participation has proven to be an efficient way of procuring the basic needs of a poor community, such as those involved in providing daily mobility despite the apparent lack of a clear public transport policy. Results indicate that community participation and engagement in a common need can not only provide badly needed means of transportation but also be the impetus to tackle greater transport problems at the policy level. This, as a result, led to better CT which brought about greater accessibility to poor urban neighborhoods and more hands-on government engagement even though it operated only for a short period of time mainly to facilitate the entrance of the public transportation service.

1. Introduction

Cities in the Global South have been undergoing social exclusion for a long time. The tendency is that the neediest inhabitants of the city tend to live on the outskirts of the city. This, in turn, can leave them to their own devices when dealing with the obvious lack of public transport, absence of public services and governance and subsequently a greater sense of insecurity, among other issues. So, community participation can be seen as a means of obtaining these basic needs through grassroots initiatives and outside assistance (Guaraldol, 1996). Furthermore, it also demonstrates how people can actively participate on behalf of their own communities in order to improve low-income situations (Gamble and Weil, 1995) such as lack of public transport policy. A study of the literature on transportation shows that equity is one of the main issues in decision-making on new investments and service provision (Hananel and Berechman, 2016). Considering that, it would appear that little information and few studies have pointed out how community participation can be a solution to the lack of transport policies in the poor urban outskirts in Global South countries. Nevertheless, some important question must be addressed when considering how local participation can lead to positive outcomes for the citizens and community regarding transport policies (Elvy, 2014). There are ongoing and persistent challenges to finding justice within the transport systems (Enright, 2019). Therefore, bringing accessibility through use of social transport

networks can be seen as a means of facilitating the achievement of something that would otherwise be unattainable through any other means (Rajé, 2007). Citizens or community participation in this case translate to community participation and social justice movements which can play a particularly important role in transportation (Enright, 2019).

Social psychologists have been studying for some time how macro-social structural impacts on transport affect social interaction between the individual and his or her family and community (Yago, 1983). Despite mobility research contributing to a focus on the micro-scale of inter-personal interactions, they have not fully explored the apparatuses of power in which these relations of mobility are located and governed (Sheller, 2016). "Connection between spatial mobility and social exclusion has been increasingly considered as a subject of research and policy itself" (Ureta, 2008, p. 270). Previous studies focused on the problems caused by poor public transport access to and from these peri-urban areas (Church et al., 2000), which can be barriers to mobility for transit-dependent riders (Lubitow et al., 2017) or even though public transport is available, the households are disadvantaged by virtue of lower reliability and unavailability of service leading therefore to a direct influence on urban poverty (van Heerden et al., 2022). Thus, this paper aims to shed new light on how community participation can contribute to tackling the dilemma of public transport in needy areas.

Having focused on a case study in a social housing project in

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cstp.2023.101027>

Received 1 September 2022; Received in revised form 23 May 2023; Accepted 31 May 2023

Available online 3 June 2023

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