Cultures of Urban Mobility: Public Transportation in Bogotá, Colombia

Zachary Hernandez

Fall 2012

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Recommended Citation
http://openscholarship.wustl.edu/vol8_iss1/62
This project examines how competing forms of public transportation in Bogotá, Colombia serve as a platform for understanding shifting notions of urban planning in Latin America as well as how processes of globalization have influenced government decisions to implement new and formalized systems of transportation in developing countries. Public transportation in Bogotá has traditionally been structured as an informal system of small municipal buses called *busetas* or *colectivos* that are still widely used today, especially among low-income workers who dwell in many of the city’s informal peripheral settlements. In 2000, under the leadership of Mayor Enrique Peñalosa and his vision to “recover public space”, the city began a process of formalizing its system of public transportation and established a modern public bus system called *TransMilenio*, a bus rapid transit system (BRT) that was hailed as a safe, environmentally friendly and efficient mode of public transportation that would improve urban mobility and lower the cost of public transit. Using ethnographic methods, the project tracks the formalization and modernization of Bogotá’s public transportation to offer insights on the changing nature of urban planning in Bogotá and the extent to which public transit acts as a segregating or unifying mechanism within a fragmented and socioeconomically divided city.