

Caribbean nations, and thank you too for all the other fascinating, provocative (yes, you haven't lost it!) and genuinely wise observations that fill this book to the brim.

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Sebastián Ureta, *Assembling Policy: Transantiago, Human Devices, and the Dream of a World-Class Society*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015. Photographs, figures, abbreviations, bibliography, index, 224 pp.; hardcover \$39, ebook \$27.

Transantiago was an extreme redesign of the public transportation system of the Chilean capital city implemented in 2007. This was a very infrequent example of the application of a policy that radically restructured the backbone of the daily life of five million people. After a disastrous beginning, the operation is now normalized. This project can be seen as a rare natural experiment, a unique laboratory in which the core assumptions of various disciplines were put to a stress test. Valuable lessons could be learned in many dissimilar fields. Ureta's *Assembling Policy* examines this natural experiment from a sociological perspective, putting the analysis of "human devices" at the center.

The research method Ureta used was a "genealogy" from which he drew hypotheses and proposed recommendations for policy design and implementation. Following Foucault, Ureta understands a genealogy as a detailed record of some of the human devices that emerged from Transantiago. This meticulous record was built from the analysis of official policy reports, archives from mass media, more than 80 in-depth interviews, followings of complete trips of single users, and observations of particular devices, like *zonas pagas*. Despite the inevitable subjectivity of nonprobabilistic data collection, the firsthand records in Ureta's genealogy of Transantiago constitute by themselves a unique documental source of this rare public policy intervention.

Ureta describes various facts and anecdotes in his genealogy of Transantiago. A few examples are the "forgotten book" that authorities were preparing to highlight the expected success of the project, the story about how a preschool teacher organized small demonstrations of discontent, and the impressions obtained from the couple who, because of their different heights, reported a very dissimilar picture about the quality of the system. All these stories are relevant accounts by themselves, but the main contribution of Ureta's book is how it uses these observations to sustain various research hypotheses and to suggest some proposals for public policy design and implementation.

The main hypothesis Ureta raises, which I can highlight as a transport engineer, has to do with the ontological politics of modeling. Just as an architect builds mock-ups to understand and test preliminary prototypes of a building, the design of large transportation policies relies on computational models. These models are fed with field data, and try to replicate the behavior of the relevant agents and their interaction, combining various principles from economics, statistics, and computer science. The high complexity of the urban system and of the human behavior calls for sim-

plifying assumptions in the implementation of the models. Ureta asserts that these simplifying assumptions become a form of politics when the subject of modeling is the individual. Following again Foucault, Ureta states, "any kind of knowledge is not innocent or merely descriptive but always an expression of power; it always creates a new kind of ordering out of the messiness of the world."

For Ureta, modeling ontological politics starts with the data collection stage, a survey in which public transport users were asked to declare the details of their trips. The hidden expression of power at this stage derives, according to Ureta, from the fact that those users who were not able to do a proper report of their trip were eliminated from the sample. This resulted in "the enacting of an individual who behaved in the way transport engineering's theory on user behavior... expected her to behave," as a "calculative agency" making rational choices involving fare and time. The author argues that the problems were exacerbated in the specification of behavioral models, where it was assumed that users were strict "fare and time optimizers," building by this a particular type "human device" within the model.

The "human device" considered in the modeling stage translated into various practical features of the new system, the most evident being a dramatic change in the layout of the buses that resulted in a large reduction in the chances of getting a seat in the new vehicles. Since comfort was supposedly irrelevant for the "human device" assumed in the model, and the reduction of costs was a must to run a non-subsided system, the new buses considered fewer seats for being able to carry the same people with fewer buses. But in reality, besides the "fare and time optimizer," an unplanned type of "human device" emerged: the "comfort seekers." Those individuals were observed at *zonas pagas* willing to wait for long periods of time to get one of the now very scarce seats. In Ureta's eyes, this dissociation between the modeling and real "human devices" sustains his hypothesis about ontological politics behind modeling. I agree.

The reasons behind the initial disaster of the Transantiago project are numerous and still a matter of debate. In my opinion, from an engineering perspective, there are two main reasons: the project never reached the detailed engineering stage, and it was forced to do the impossible: maintain the fares of the old system and offer a higher level of service with no subsidy.

Ureta analyzes the reasons behind the initial failure of Transantiago from a sociological perspective. He resists the temptation to center his analysis on a critique of technocratic and top-down government planning because "democracy and the valuation of local knowledge in themselves are not enough answer to the issues raised by Transantiago." Instead, on the basis of his genealogy of the process, the author identifies critical pitfalls and translates them into various clever recommendations for the design and application of public policies involving human devices. Ureta's recommendations are summarized in four concepts: heterogeneous testing, continual porosity, modes of coordination, and ontological politics. The first two have a direct link with general engineering practice, while the latter two seem to be more specific to the work with human devices. In my opinion, these recommendations should be taken into serious consideration by any society facing similar challenges.

In engineering language, by proposing heterogeneous testing, Ureta highlights the importance of prototyping. He asserts that policy assemblages like Transantiago are always experiments, the results of which are never secure, especially when working with human devices. Thus it would be wiser to implement the various components of the policy first at a smaller scale and use the lessons learned there to adapt them for larger systems.

The recommendation for continual porosity can be understood as saying that the design of policy assemblages like Transantiago should be resilient. It should be open to the potential appearance of multiple strange behaviors and conditions that may arise. Particularly when working with human devices, potential outcomes could only be guessed *a priori*, regardless of the sophistication of the models and the data collected. Thus, any policy assemblage should be flexible enough to handle unexpected outcomes that surely will arise.

The recommendation for modes of coordination arises from noting that the heterogeneity of human devices that will emerge from the implementation of a policy will probably not converge into a consensus, into a single entity to deal with. Thus, for the policy to be successful, it should be able to coordinate the needs and wills of these heterogeneous agents that will probably emerge.

The final recommendation is a call for all the agents to seriously consider their own ontological politics on the issue. This call is directed not only to the government officials in charge of the design and implementation of the policy but also to expert consultants, to the media, and to the daily users. Ureta postulates that policy assemblages like Transantiago should always be a reflexive effort built around four basic questions: why are we doing this? What types of entities (e.g., users, organizations) do we expect to participate in it? How are we going to coordinate them? Who is going to pay if we lose the bet?

This book makes three valuable contributions. The first is to be a documental source for future analysis of the events that emerged from the rare natural experiment that was the implementation of Transantiago. The second contribution is to the formulation of scientific hypotheses aimed to explain the sociological phenomena that resulted from it. The third is in proposing practical recommendations for the design and implementation of policy assemblages such as Transantiago. In my opinion, although this book is not the final word on the topic, it is undoubtedly a must-read for social scientists and transport engineers alike, and it should be included as a basic reference in any graduate course from the latter field.

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Carlos de la Torre, *De Velasco a Correa: insurrecciones, populismos y elecciones en Ecuador, 1944–2013*. Quito: Corporación Editora Nacional, 2015. Tables, bibliography, 243 pp.; paperback.

The recent rise and current decline of the populist left in Latin America has renewed the importance of understanding populism and its political and social implications for countries across the region. In *De Velasco a Correa*, Carlos de la Torre contributes essential insights to the understanding of populism, identifying populist patterns in Ecuador that appear generalizable to its Latin American neighbors. Through detailed historical and qualitative analysis of four elections in Ecuador (José María Velasco Ibarra vs. Galo Plaza in 1960, Abdalá Bucaram vs. Jaime Nebot in 1996, Rafael Correa vs. Álvaro Noboa in 2006, and in 2013 Correa against the “infantile left,” the *partidocracia*, and the right), as well as the ouster of Presidents Bucaram, Jamil Mahuad, and Lucio Gutiérrez, de la Torre deconstructs the manner in which these politicians utilize populist rhetoric to gain power and how they rule once in office. Most important, through this analysis, de la Torre illuminates populism’s ambiguous consequences for democracy. The text raises a number of themes that warrant deeper examination—populism’s impact on the left, and the political economy of populism, for example. Yet in the final analysis, de la Torre has produced an empirically and conceptually rich study that should help frame the scholarly discussion of populism in Latin America going forward.

Among the most compelling aspects of de la Torre’s analysis is the astute way he captures populism’s ambiguous, or perhaps contradictory, consequences for democracy. On one hand, de la Torre notes, the rise of populist rulers has the potential to deepen and revitalize democracy by mobilizing and incorporating into political participation society’s poor and marginalized. By giving voice to the democratizing dreams and hopes of the masses, and by attacking established political elites as betrayers of popular interests, populist rulers inspire “the people” to follow their lead in the fight against a corrupt status quo.

Yet despite these democracy-enhancing characteristics, according to de la Torre, the discursive appeal of populist leaders carries within it the seeds of authoritarianism, to which populist regimes ultimately fall victim. Populism’s latent authoritarianism emanates from the manner in which it frames the competition between the people and the oligarchy. In liberal democracy, opposing sides are adversaries that compete within established institutional boundaries that, in principle, protect fundamental human rights and liberties. However, populists threaten or undermine liberal democracy in a number of ways. First and perhaps most significant, they present the essential struggle in society not as one between adversaries with legitimate rights and interests but rather as a Manichean clash between good and evil. On the side of the good we have the people and their leader, who by definition is the embodiment of authentically popular values and projects and who seeks to redeem the excluded from the oligarchy’s domination. On the other, we have the oligarchy, who, given their corrupt abuse of power and privilege, are not simply political adversaries but enemies of the people and the state.