
INNOVATION WITHOUT CHANGE?

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Abstract

Since the 1980s, urban transportation has been a recurring problem posed to public authorities. The problems linked to this policy field are very diverse and concerned economic, environmental, technical, fiscal, institutional and democratic questions. Local authorities are facing a situation in which they have to modernize their policies through innovative practices. This article deals with the question of innovation in five European cities (Geneva, Lyon, Naples, Munich and Stuttgart) and evaluates their capacity to innovate.

Introduction

The question of urban transportation figures prominently in contemporary political discussion. It arouses numerous political and technical controversies which are not limited to European states, as witnessed by the demonstration in Mexico City, April 11-14, 2000, organised by the association "Cooperation for the Development and Improvement of Urban and Peri-urban Transportation" (CODATU), which brought together more than 500 participants from 40 countries to address the problems of "Urban transportation and environment."¹

Since the 1980s, it has been a recurring problem, which public authorities seem to have difficulty dealing with. Decisions are made—certain ambitious (especially in budgetary terms) programs are launched—yet this policy issue regularly looms large on the public agenda in Europe. The present article seeks to analyse initiatives undertaken in this area of public policy and to examine technical, institutional and procedural innovations in five European cities: Geneva, Lyon, Naples, Munich and Stuttgart².

¹ <http://www.codatu.org>

² This article is based on the results of a comparative research project financed by the

The comparative approach utilised here aims at bringing to light the socio-political and institutional elements at the heart of processes of innovation. In order to leave no door unopened, our approach is deliberately broad. Innovation is understood to involve all modifications of an institutional, technical, judicial or procedural nature whose explicit function is to de-compartmentalise exclusively sector-based and uni-modal approaches to urban transportation. Public policies in the area we are concerned with are, above all, sector-based, thereby reproducing a manner of public action on which modern states are built (Jobert, Muller 1987).

In concrete terms, the issue of urban transportation has long been encapsulated in the sum total of measures taken in domains such as urban roadways, downtown parking, public transport and two-wheeled vehicles. None of this has involved research into true synergies among these sector-based decisions. In many cases, faced with increasing private automobile use for urban transportation, the classic response of public authorities has been to try to reverse the trend through heavy investment in mass public transit (subways, streetcars, regional railroad transit system, etc.) For more than ten years it has been known that this type of policy does not suffice, resolving neither the crisis in public transportation nor the problems of urban congestion and air pollution (Madre, 1987). Experts and scientists regularly restate these disturbing findings, but nothing seems to change. The terms of reference remain the same, with the same disappointing results (Lefèvre, Offner 1990; Pucher, Lefèvre 1996). Similarly, a good many countries have only recently acknowledged the need to take account of public opinion and the preferences emanating from civil society. In fact, civil society has frequently “invited itself” to the negotiating table by means of powerful collective mobilisation at the local level. Thus, to speak of policies of urban transportation, rather than urban mass transit policy, implies a different way of thinking and acting with regard to both the framework and content of public policy. Does such an outlook prevail in the different cities examined? That is the central

“Centre de Prospective et de Veille Scientifique” of the French Ministry of Public Works (Jouve, 2002b), involving B. Jouve, scientific director, (RIVES Laboratory—National School of State Public Works), Floridea Di Ciommo (LATTIS—National School of Bridges and Road), Anaiik Purenne (RIVES Laboratory—National School of State Public Works), Vincent Kaufmann (Department of Sociology, University of Lancashire), Marc Wolfram (University of Stuttgart), Oliver Falthäuser (Technical University of Munich) and Martin Schreiner, SSP Consult, Munich.

question to which this article intends to contribute.

The nature of the debate: policy innovations and choice of urban models

It is no longer necessary to conduct a “trial” of any form of intervention built around a sector-based approach to the decision-making process. It is patently obvious that the mere accumulation of sector-based actions, without establishing linkage between them, is not only insufficient to generate a full-fledged public policy sector but incapable of responding to the problems faced by public authorities. Action in the domain of urban transportation first requires recognition of this area as a legitimate sphere of action for public authority—which, in turn, must be equipped with adequate means of action, institutions and adequate procedures. Above all, a systemic perspective must guide planning for modes of transportation and for various uses of public space. Any action affecting a particular way of getting around in a particular city space must be considered in light of its citywide consequences for all other modes of transportation (Lefèvre, Offner 1990b). Thus, urban transportation is interlinked with general problems involving the institutionalisation of collective action and the need to create local settings for structuring the debate and generating solutions that are closely adapted to local problems (Duran, Thoenig 1996).

Innovation in the domain of urban transportation can be charted on a dual grid:

- A process dimension is embodied in this question: How can public action be produced in a different manner that responds to the need for coherent, integrated thinking about different means of transportation while taking into account the evolving problems facing public authority, notably in terms of participation? Answering this question may involve innovation of different types: institutional (merging local institutions, centralising spheres of authority), procedural (initiating new ways of consulting the population) or technical (creating new expert models that allow travel to be modelled at the functional territorial level of a metropolitan area.) Similarly, innovation can have a more political content when embraced by an elected representative who provides strong leadership and maintains coherence among sector-based projects.

- A substantive dimension refers back to the actual content of choices made by public officials. During the 1990s, did urban transportation become a full-fledged public policy sector in itself, i.e., a sphere of action dealing with different modes of transportation in a systemic manner intended to manage interdependencies and better articulate travel sequences? Or do we remain in a well established sector-based framework in which different transportation modes are planned and managed independently, and efforts are made to limit private automobile use by upgrading the quality and service availability of public transit system, including the construction of mass transit networks such as subways or streetcars?

The concern here is to link consideration of the form and the content of transportation policies. Can the form evolve independently of the content? And vice versa? This questioning is addressed not only to the social sciences but also to decision-makers and citizen-users seeking to understand what is truly changing—particularly in the realm of urban policy—in a world that appears increasingly complex.

In this article, we examine the very foundation of transportation policies in five European cities. We have striven for varied political and institutional contexts so as to bring out similarities, as well as differences, in the ways problems arise and are dealt with. Thus, the five cities can be grouped under three broad institutional headings: a unitary state which, for twenty years, has undergone significant decentralizing reforms (France); a state in the process of federalization (Italy); a federal state which accords increasing authority and political resources to local and regional actors (Germany); and a confederal state (Switzerland). From a classic perspective, these institutional differences are supposed to have a significant effect on the formulation and implementation of public policies—in this case, those concerned with transportation. Indeed, according to neo-institutionalist literature, institutions do not emerge as mere political arenas but as constructs helping to define the preferences of actors and the way they conduct their strategies, permitting certain behaviours while valorising or forbidding others (March, Olsen 1989).

While an urban transportation “sector” as such does not

appear on the organization charts and in the concrete functioning of public authority in European cities—as does, for example, urban planning, economic development, cultural affairs—public authorities are, nonetheless, increasingly inclined to deal with this domain as an integral whole. The first type of questioning developed in this article focuses on specific problems that cities have to deal with. In order for a public policy to exist, the public authority must be already aware and/or “borrow” awareness (one ought to be wary of any approach that tends to make a hard-and-fast distinction between public authority and “civil society”) of a problem that may have several dimensions.

Constructing the problem at hand

When analyzing public policies, the framing of a problem is a privileged moment for examining whether or not the conditions exist for transforming frameworks of action. The “problem” of urban transportation is not purely technical or institutional. It relates to a redefinition of modes of action utilised by the public authority, to the exercise of local democracy, and to the effect of transformed patterns of electoral representation on the functioning of the city in Europe. One of the challenges posed by urban transportation is precisely the need to change our way of understanding its functioning, which no longer corresponds to the classic “European urban model” characterized by centralisation and density. Continued urban sprawl, driven by the quest to own individual property and by private automobile use; changes in travel practices; the proliferation of auto maintenance facilities—all of these factors have inevitably called into question the “European city model” (Levy, 2000)—a model with a clearly defined downtown area and a flux of movement generated by its collective facilities (commercial establishments, amusement centres, places of employment) which can be handled by a type of engineering that is competent enough at resolving problems of rush hour congestion and network saturation (roadway and public transit.)

Such technical know-how, as well as the city model on which it has been constructed, have also been called into question by the sociological, economic and cultural evolution which European cities are currently undergoing. One sees a proliferation of “alternative” or “soft” means of travel (bicycles, modes classifiable as “urban skating,” etc.) which compete for already scarce and limited public space. We are also witnessing a transformation of the city “timetable,” a process

which tends to lessen the impact of rush hour phenomena on usage of public infrastructure and facilities, in favour of usage which is more uniform over time as well as more intense (Obadia 1997). While not completely disappearing, the city's former central core finds itself caught up in increasingly strong polarisation vis-a-vis outlying areas, with all the consequences this is known to entail in terms of the overall city-wide flux of travel.

Thus, one of the problems which urban transportation poses to public authorities is largely societal in nature, as it concerns the way cities are organised and function. Two opposing theoretical camps are known. One holds that the time is already too late, with European cities now in the midst of an evolution that has shaped North American cities since the 1950s. In this view, private automobile use may come to claim an increasingly important share of modal distribution, with all that this generates in terms of consumption of public space and construction of new residential areas. To paraphrase F. Ascher, public transport may be to urban transportation what public baths with showers were to public hygiene in the nineteenth century, when the collective products of a previous age were replaced by the individual and private facilities offered by bathrooms inside apartments (Ascher 2000). On the other hand, J. Levy maintains that it is still possible to exercise choices concerning the shape of society. Urban history may not be finished yet (Levy 2000).

This question of choice will also be examined in the first part of this outline chapter. In terms of the problems at hand, what choices are being put into effect by public authorities in the panel's five cities? Do they express the pre-eminence of the private automobile and the "tropism" of European cities towards the North American model? Or, conversely, do they remind us of the vitality of the "European urban model," notably expressed through concern for better integration of measures promoting, respectively, private auto use and public transport? From this perspective, urban transportation policies constitute a remarkable analytic lens for examining the evolution of European cities.

Urban transportation: What problems for public authority?

Locally and nationally, recent years have seen a growing

awareness of the need for better planning and management of the systemic interdependencies, which exist among different means of transportation, both public and private, at the metropolitan area level. Thus, the debate over the cross-sectoral nature of public policies to be put in place has two aspects: the territorial dimension of planning and the management of urban transportation.

But first of all, we must be clear on exactly what the nature of the problem is. Based on the monographs assembled here, it can be considered to have five dimensions, without suggesting any hierarchy among them: (1.2.1) a problem of public finance and local revenue; (1.2.2) a problem of roadway allocation and—fundamentally—of urban reference model; (1.2.3) a dual problem encompassing the environment and economic development; (1.2.4) a problem of redefining the scope of urban public action; and (1.2.5) an institutional problem.

Urban transportation: a problem of local public finances

As a field for public action, urban transportation policies represent a “budget-gobbler,” at least in terms of the technical solutions generally envisaged. The construction and maintenance of transportation infrastructure—whether involving reserved-lane public transport or a major highway—represents a considerable financial investment by public authorities. In most of the cases detailed in this article, the budgetary amounts are of a magnitude that requires multiple financing, generally within the framework of contracts or agreements between different levels of government. Urban transportation is the archetype of a public policy area which stirs up controversy and which requires different levels of government to harmonise their actions in order to manage budgetary interdependencies in optimum fashion. Given the fiscal situation that prevails at the local level, without massive investment by “higher” levels of government, local authorities are not capable of meeting the expenses to be undertaken. This element is crucial as it brings into relief the weak autonomy of local communities in this domain and, indeed, calls into question the very notion of a “local” policy for urban transportation. This kind of public policy is the result, more or less successful, of adjustments and negotiations between different levels of decision-making.

Another important element affecting local fiscality involves

the sharing of costs related to centralisation. The problems of urban transportation, roadway saturation and environmental nuisances (which we will return to later) have their first effects in downtown areas and the central core districts of large metropolitan areas. Thus, it is no accident that ambitious projects in this domain generally originate with elected representatives from those districts to be impacted first. Most often, this results in the appearance of classic defence mechanisms in the self-interested reactions of outlying municipalities. These latter do not agree—or agree very reluctantly, often under pressure—to participate financially in policies which, they feel, do not bring them any benefit.

The need for a reconsideration of this assessment is suggested by the way travel practices have evolved in European cities. The significance of travel between outlying areas is being measured with increasing precision. With the European city in the midst of transformation, urban transportation can no longer be considered solely in terms of a centre/periphery axis. However, despite efforts by technical analysts to persuade elected officials of the need to change their representational models, this centre/periphery model is deeply rooted and serves to shape, however wrongly, aspects of the debates and conflicts between local actors.

Urban transportation policies: a problem of roadway allocation and urban reference model

In the context of political and administrative practices, urban transportation policy is spoken of in a highly abstract and theoretical manner, at least in speeches given to justify decisions that have been taken. In the cities we studied, the political construction of the problem to be dealt with rests on a theory about complexity. Elected representatives, technical specialists, administrators and local associations involved with public policy all share the same sense of difficulty—and of obligation—with regard to innovation. Systemic interdependencies are to be managed through practical means, which are to be devised.

Nevertheless, one cannot help noticing a striking discontinuity among the initial terms of the debate: construction of a general interest based on complexity; the true stakes; the need to think differently about local policies of urban transportation; the use of new “tools”; and, finally, the central controversy determining the

operational approach to the problem: the allocation of road space. The debate surrounding roadway distribution is certainly not new, often pitting supporters of private automobile use against those in favour of public transport, particularly “reserved lane” projects. This controversy over the classic distribution pattern serves as a complexity-reducer. According to the case studies, when confronted with the actual urgency of problems, decision makers soon shift from rhetoric about complexity and needed innovations to focus, instead, on the “grammar” of the controversy as well as on the action repertoire of which they have greater political and technical mastery. In the situations under study, it is unclear how elected officials’ and technicians’ dependence on the terms of an already outdated debate can foster innovation. On the contrary, the “path dependency”—to borrow neo-institutionalist terminology (Hall, Taylor 1997)—and the replication of technical choices and crystallized forms of expertise seem to hold back real innovation in urban transportation policies.

More generally, the monographs show that during the course of decision-making processes, the overarching question of urban transportation becomes transformed into a choice in favour of public transport, preferably involving reserved lanes in the downtown area. Urban transportation policies in the cities under study are clearly policies of modal redistribution that are weighted towards public transportation. The systemic dimension disappears during the decision-making process. This is most regrettable in terms of putting innovation into practice, even if giving priority to public transportation takes on a strategic dimension in several monographs. This point must be emphasised: innovation often amounts to a clear political choice to launch a policy promoting reserved lane public transport infrastructures at the expense of private auto use.

With regard to the introduction to this chapter, the “European urban model” still appears to survive quite hardily, at least in decisions taken by locally elected representatives, who refuse to endorse an evolution in the distribution of travel modalities, which gives greater prominence to private auto use. Through urban transport policies and the choice of modalities that they implement, local decision makers attempt to restrain an evolution towards the North American urban “model.”

Urban transportation policies: an environmental and economic development problem

As an item on the public agenda, urban transportation generally embodies a tension between economic and environmental concerns. A matter of definite contradiction is clearly evident here, as each of these two outlooks distinctly and increasingly tends to exclude the other in the decision-making processes under study. This is one of the major conclusions brought forward in many North American studies (Clark 1994). In this case—and to return to the debate over competing city models—European cities do not seem to have resolved this contradiction. The economic frame of reference squeezes out the environmental approach, and vice versa, depending on the circumstances and the opportunities presented to the social groups supporting the logic of one or the other approach.

The mutually exclusive nature of these two outlooks highlights the way in which the various political and administrative settings, which structure the debate, are interwoven. In the cases studied, the environmental theme is, in fact, systematically pursued at the national or federal level. It is the texts of national legislation that provide the springboard for local “pro-environmental” associations or elected representatives to “dive” into urban transportation problems by putting previous policies “on trial” for unduly favouring private automobile use. Thus, the way that urban transportation finds its way onto the local political agenda is, at least partially, not subject to the control of the local actors. Utilising the issue of urban transportation to analyse the evolution of intergovernmental relations in Europe makes clear that the taking up of the environmental problem is largely beyond local determination. Despite extensive written accounts of the steady emergence of environmental issues in local public policy, and despite the mobilizations that have, undeniably, taken place around these issues, local forces cannot “impose” this gamut of action without relying on nationally generated opportunities.

One would be tempted to think that the pattern would be quite different in the case of economic development, which constitutes the other matrix shaping local negotiations over urban transportation policies. In contrast to the environmental context, the local actors here seem, at first glance, to enjoy much greater margin of manoeuvre. Nevertheless, this margin turns out to be singularly

narrow upon close examination of the way the agenda is put together in the cities studied. What predominates, as it were, in setting the political agenda is, rather, the “state of health” of the metropolitan economies in question. It is generally in reaction to an unmistakable slowdown in local economic growth that economic development comes to set the tone for action, thereby edging out environmental concerns.

Contrary to what would be expected through structuralist reasoning, the same causes do not inevitably produce the same effects, and comparable mobilisations of private local forces around the issue of urban transportation do not lead to substantively identical demands. Whereas in certain cities a crisis in local production leads local employers and their representatives to call for a halt to investment policies that favour public transit (Geneva), analogous groups in other cities plead for widening the availability of public transit (Stuttgart). In this matter of mobilising private forces—a central theme in the approach of many authors whose works are built around theoretical reflections on urban governance (Jouve 2002a)—the issue of urban transportation serves as a remarkable prism for sorting out differences and similarities in forms of local mobilisation. This article can only mention these differences; analysis will have to be conducted elsewhere, using a conceptual framework better suited to the subject.

Urban transportation: a problem of policy style

There is one remaining element galvanising decision makers (elected representatives and technical experts) around the emerging problem of urban transportation: the renewal of policy styles. This notion comes from J. Richardson for whom it defines the operative conditions surrounding policy implementation and the utilisation of resources available within political institutions (Richardson, Gustaffson, Jordan 1982). These constructs do not “freeze” the behaviours of political and administrative actors. On the contrary, they offer possibilities for modulating operative conditions surrounding the creation and implementation of public policies.

Among these operative conditions, the question of participatory democracy is key. In several cities discussed in this article, development of urban transportation policies is accompanied by deep reflection on local democracy and by attempts to consolidate

new mediating channels with “civil society.” Urban transportation can be considered such a reinforcing vector for local democracy due to the convergence of several dimensions: territorial (through institutional reforms); managerial (through stricter control exercised by “civil society” over the efficiency of local technocracies); political (through the mobilisation of social groups organised around the issue of urban transportation); and strategic (through the legitimatising logic employed by newly elected local representatives).

- There is a territorial dimension to the matter. Urban transportation raises the underlying question about the appropriate territorial scale on which to conduct this area of public policy. It feeds directly into the network/territory dialectic, well detailed by other authors, especially as it relates to the continuing search for the most appropriate balance between functional and institutional aspects of territory (Offner, Pumain 1996). Therefore, raising this question entails questioning the capacity of existing institutions to deal with it effectively. This situation contrasts with the 1970s, an important period for institutional reform in European cities during which the creation of new institutions was carried out in an essentially technocratic manner. Today it is scarcely possible to change a city’s institutional configuration while disdaining democratic debate. Certain recent attempts at metropolitan reform which had not digested this fact ran up against powerful local mobilizations and had to be abandoned (Jouve, Lefevre 2002)
- In many cases, recourse to local democracy constitutes a “management method” allowing organizations to bypass obvious bottlenecks in the decision-making process. During the 1990s, due to partisan polarisation and to conflicts of an interpersonal and/or institutional nature, the cities studied were faced with political situations in which it had become impossible not only to adopt innovative measures but also to make a collective decision about *any* issue, especially in Lyon and Munich. Local democracy then serves as a lever allowing local communities—and, very often, their technocracies—to be brought under popular scrutiny and, thus, reminded of their responsibilities. Similarly, the introduction of new “players,” such as local associations or sector-based interest groups, leads to increased pluralism and, above all, to greater pragmatism. In every instance, it is patently obvious that the entry of new forces into the decision-making

process is accompanied by a clear reduction in ideological or jurisdictional debate, e.g., over competing claims to authority. In this way, the quest for compromise prevails—although, admittedly, this quest is pursued on a technical level, which excludes any social group or community force not equipped with the necessary level of expertise to take part in such a debate.

- As we have seen, urban transportation is generally caught up in the tension between economic development and environmental protection. In both these action contexts, politicians find themselves facing an organized civil society, structured by interest groups and well identified institutions, ranging from ecological organisations to employer associations.
- In certain cities, this organisation of civil society is also congruent with the transformative logic at work in those mediating channels which elected representatives bring with them, especially in Naples and Lyon. In each instance, problems surrounding urban transportation represent an important vector of legitimisation and self-assertion for local elected representatives, allowing them to approach the question of public service organisation at the metropolitan level, to demonstrate their ability to bring out synergies between institutions, and to establish a dialogue with civil society. Overall then, urban transportation issues serve to reinforce the concept of the elected representative as a “project manager” whose legitimacy grows out of his or her capacity to coordinate the activities of different services and institutions. Studies of urban governance have clearly traced the transformation of politics in urban settings in terms of elected officials’ loss of monopoly over public decision making (Mayer 1995). Thus, we can understand that the mayor-as-project manager image is a more appropriate one today than the classic image of mayor-as-builder, in whose person are concentrated the full range of political resources.

It is the convergence of these four lines of logic at the juncture of the specifically political sphere and civil society which make urban transportation a particularly relevant vantage point from which to observe the operative conditions governing transformation of political styles in European cities.

It is still too early to judge the “effectiveness” of the new

political style developing in the European cities studied here. Certain innovative experiments have only just begun. Other metropolitan areas have barely finished implementing plans for reserved lanes, and fine-tuning is required to measure precisely the “structuring” effects this type of action has on the modal distribution in travel patterns. Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that the quest for compromise and pluralism, although satisfying from the point of view of local democracy, can end up as a kind of “lowest common denominator” which social groups involved can agree on but which is not necessarily suited to resolving the problems at hand.

Urban transportation: An institutional problem

The remaining factor contributing to urban transportation problems has been the simplification of the metropolitan organizational chart through institutional reform. The difficulty of constructing a travel “sector” is partly due to the fact that authority over this domain is largely divided among a number of local, metropolitan and regional institutions, with each one jealously guarding its “turf.” This division of administrative authority among different services definitely serves to undermine the rationality of the whole, even when such authority is exclusively allotted to one institution, as is the case, for example, in Geneva where the Canton has sole jurisdiction.

In all the cities we studied, the question of establishing a single organisational authority over matters of urban transportation has arisen at one time or another over the last ten years. Organizational sociology has amply described the capacity of the bureaucratic universe to resist change, precluding the need for extended discussion of the tension between the search for coherence and rationality in travel policy and the preservation of the existing institutional metropolitan order.

Yet the case studies also indicate that this tension can, in certain circumstances, be surmounted through a reform process of substantial magnitude. The most successful reform along these lines has been Stuttgart’s creation of a new metropolitan institution, the Verband Region Stuttgart. The success of Baden-Württemberg reformers in shaking up the metropolitan institutional framework has been due to a conjunction of several economic and political variables.

This begins with the long duration of institutional ferment in the capital of Baden-Württemberg, which, since the 1960s, has witnessed the classic pattern of conflict between the central municipality and the outer municipalities over sharing the financial costs of centralisation. The outlying communities have refused to participate financially in developing and operating facilities and services of citywide scope (e.g., public transportation, hospital services), leaving the central municipality to shoulder the costs alone.

Local fiscal problems took another turn following the economic crisis of the early 1990s, which had a severe effect on the metropolitan economy. With little precedent for mobilising around matters of local fiscality, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry went on to link the issue of local government reform with that of economic development. While employers accommodated themselves to the institutional fragmentation and the absence of regional metropolitan structure, the economic crisis drove home the limits of territorial organisation of this nature, particularly, the lack of a program authority for economic development policy. Thus, local elected representatives were put on notice to resolve this situation.

The way in which the local political system dealt with this “social demand” was made possible by the makeup of a coalition government at the “Land” level, which brought together the Christian Democrats of the CDU and the Social Democrats of the SPD. The CDU—having long politically dominated Baden-Württemberg and the city of Stuttgart and, therefore, not being inclined to change territorial structures—was constrained by the SPD to include in the coalition pact the creation of a metropolitan body, to be elected through direct universal suffrage and proportional representation. For the SPD, it was a matter of opening up a metropolitan political space. This, due to the German ban on the amassing of mandates, would be able to restore balance to its relations with the CDU by creating conditions for the emergence of a new political elite.

Finally, the new institution created in 1994, the Verband Region Stuttgart, owes its creation largely to German federalism. The question of metropolitan area institutions does not fall under the authority of the federal government but under the “Lander.” The “Land” law of Baden-Württemberg, which established the „Verband

Region Stuttgart“, was, in some ways, perfectly adapted to the contingent political relations shaping Stuttgart in 1994. It was not a blueprint statute applicable to all German cities. German federalism unquestionably provides the institutional and political basis for an approach that takes into account the specific situation of each city and the basically contingent nature of political relations, which develop there. In large measure, this is what makes reform possible.

Beyond local and regional political contingencies, one of the lessons to be drawn from Stuttgart lies in the importance of a “crisis” as a vector for reconstruction of the political and institutional order. It may happen that regulatory and adaptive functions which are cut off from the institutions in place seem ill equipped to cope with the local and metropolitan challenges presented by travel, especially as formulated and pressed by social groups and reformers. The institutions themselves must then be modified by consolidating authority and by creating new territories of public action, peopled with new political elites. While particularly visible in Stuttgart, this phenomenon can also be observed in Geneva, where the merger of various cantonal administrations has given birth to the Office of Transportation and Traffic, under the authority of B. Ziegler. It can also be seen in Naples with the institutionalisation of the “Napolipass” Consortium which federates the six public transportation firms and certain local communities, a process led by the new mayor of the central municipality, A. Bassolino. An identical picture emerges in Munich, even though the process is not yet fully realised and currently rests on a public policy network whose “agents” are spread over a total of 26 different institutions. The potential for regulation offered by this network is quite real, but is limited to the extent that (a) its effectiveness depends on a small number of key players whose central positioning in this network is indispensable to its functioning and its replication, and (b) such dispersed regulation does not currently allow the emergence of a new terrain for public action, one endowed with stable and accepted political rules of the game.

Among the cities examined here, Lyon is the only metropolitan area where the issue of urban transportation has not been channelled into a noteworthy institutional dynamic, except for the creation of “Department of Urban transportation” within the framework of Greater Lyon. More exactly, Lyon already has an institution federating local municipalities: the Syndicate of Public

Transportation of the Lyon Metropolitan Area which is composed, on an equal basis, of the Rhone General Council and Greater Lyon. It should be noted, however, that this institution has only one area of authority, urban public transport, which certainly does not address the problematic cross-sectoral aspects of urban transportation. Furthermore, this body may disappear, as Greater Lyon is reassuming the jurisdiction over urban transportation, which it had delegated to this mixed syndicate.

This process may culminate in Greater Lyon's asserting a locus of internal authority over urban transportation, precisely the element lacking when the metropolitan area's urban transportation Plan was set forth and put into effect in 1997. This concentration of jurisdictional authority in Greater Lyon will not, however, resolve the problem of coordinating policies with the Rhone General Council in matters involving highway or inter-urban transportation. Nor will it bring about the necessary integration of policy choices made by the Rhone-Alpes Regional Council, the organisational authority in charge of regional passenger railway transportation. In light of the lessons drawn from other monographs, it will take a significant deterioration of the overall travel system affecting the Lyon urban area to catalyse a serious effort to bring about institutional integration among Greater Lyon, the adjacent General Councils (Ain, Loire, Isere, Rhone) and the Rhone-Alpes Regional Council. At present, this dynamic is certainly furthered by coordinating structures like the Urban Region of Lyon. However, the means of action at the latter's disposal are too limited for us to consider that, under current conditions, this Law of 1901 association really possesses the means to effect an urban transportation policy that contributes to sustainable development.

It is obviously regrettable that it takes a "crisis" to catalyse a travel-related institutional dynamic at the metropolitan level. However, comparison with other European cities serves to scuttle a widely held view that a crisis mode approach to regulating conflict is typically French. In this matter, there is no "French exception" to the pattern of institutional dynamics leading to an assertion of a single organisational authority in the field of urban transportation.

Politics at every step

A strong valorisation of politics buttresses all the procedural,

technical, judicial and institutional innovations under analysis here. These innovations certainly cannot be explained without taking account of specifically political processes related to the transformation of relations between different levels of government and to the transformation of local political leadership. In that regard, urban transportation policies in the 1990s definitely represented a powerful vector of political reconstruction in the cities under study. This reconstruction has certainly not been completed, but it is possible to draw certain lessons that illustrate contemporary forms of governing in European cities.

The weight of partisan configurations

The innovations we examined were part of an ensemble of transformations taking place at the local, metropolitan and regional levels during the 1990s. One sees a dual process at work in the cities making up our research sample.

- In several cities, the historical hegemony of certain political parties over local institutions has been called into question. The opening of executive bodies to new political parties, with the concomitant arrival of new “political players,” has had the effect of dissolving ideological opposition which was often expressed through the choice of urban transportation modalities. The opposition between private auto use and public transportation—especially reserved-lane surface transit—has ceased to be a defining element in political debate. With new political parties demanding the adoption of policies favouring reserved-lane public transport throughout the travel network as a condition for participating in local and regional governmental coalitions, their arrival on the scene often precipitates an impasse.
- In cities not governed by new political coalitions, the terms of political debate evolve nonetheless through the search for compromise and the refusal of local political parties to inject ideological considerations into technical choices and modal orientation.

Thus, urban transportation policies reveal a type of political functioning that is more open to debate and engaged in systematic quest of compromise. Still, this does not add up to a change in tone from a directive, ambitious political style towards a more managerial

style. Various plans, notably those involving reserved-lane public transport, are there to signal the presence of “big ideas.” What has changed is the substance of the urban planning concept. The 1990s witnessed a change from planning as a mark of an individual’s political influence on city government to planning as a mark of an individual’s capacity to coalesce with and mobilise institutions and collective forces to obtain mutual benefit from resources (Pinson 1999).

A number of factors explain this evolution which, based on the analysis in this article, appears to represent a widespread trend in Europe. There has been a convergence of processes involving urbanisation, the nature of metropolitan institutional and political systems in Europe, and socio-political processes feeding into this trend.

- Dependence exists between elected representatives of the central municipality and their counterparts in the outlying areas. This dependence has grown with the pursuit of urban development at the periphery. In contrast to the pattern persisting up to the recent past, councillors from the central municipality can no longer make pertinent decisions involving a city’s functional spaces without bringing representatives from the (sometimes faraway) suburbs into the decision-making process.
- Institutional systems reinforce this dependence to the extent that elected representatives from the central municipality have no legal instrument at their disposal allowing them to impose their plans on an area extending beyond their city limits, even when they preside over inter-municipal structures. The makeup of government coalitions in these institutions seriously limits any autocratic drift. In fact, the logic of central/peripheral confrontation—particularly over sharing the costs of centralisation—has driven many cities into decision-making stalemates. The fragmentation of legal resources obliges central municipality representatives to negotiate.
- There are also specifically socio-political processes, which explain this transition. The content of the monographs assembled here validates certain analyses of transformations in modern societies, which have appeared elsewhere (Kenis, Schneider 1991). These are characterised by: (a) the emergence of

“organised societies”, i.e. increasingly structured civil societies; (b) the growing mobilisation of interest groups vis-à-vis public authority, leading to a saturation of the public agenda and to what some have diagnosed as a “crisis of governability” in cities and, more generally, in liberal democracies (Kooiman 1993); (c) processes of decentralisation and fragmentation in the modern state which make local spaces—beginning with cities—into political territories essential to regulating social and economic contradictions (Brenner 1999; Le Gales 1998); and (d) closer voter attention to the results of public action, i.e., the effectiveness of public policies (Duran 1999).

Altered partisan makeup of the leadership in local and metropolitan executive bodies; reduction in ideological and partisan disputation; out-and-out search for compromise in the decision-making process; increased dependence of representatives of central municipalities on outlying municipalities, on organised social groups and on an electorate which increasingly judges its representatives in terms of “hard facts”—these are the main elements in the political transformation of the cities under study. As reflected in urban transportation policy, it is indisputable that politics is transforming itself throughout Europe. Politics has hitherto been perceived in terms of domination, a hegemonic role for elected representatives in the decision-making process, and partisan conflict. But today, the dominant tone of political action incorporates more and more elements of pragmatism and negotiation.

Urban transportation policy and the (re)construction of leadership

This transformation of politics can also be seen in the process of reconstructing leadership. We will avoid a conception of political leadership as an activity unfolded by a single political player who has gathered the full range of indispensable resources and mediating channels needed to mobilise successfully on behalf of a public policy. The myth of the “mayor-integrator” has arisen (Borraz 1996), not to mention institutional systems in which the collegial nature of executive political bodies considerably limits any autonomising tendencies on the part of their members, Switzerland being a notable example

All the same, our monographs clearly attest to the significant

personal energy, which some local elected office-holders have invested in urban transportation policies, and the importance they accord to developing infrastructures such as reserved lane streetcar operations.

In terms of the political opportunities and the personal political configuration in which they find themselves, leaders have to choose between a logic of going along and a logic of breaking away, a choice largely reflected in the choice of modalities and technical solutions contained in their urban transportation policies. The view here is that adopting the logic of breaking away is a mark of political leadership.

Urban transportation appears to be a cause that is embraced by some elected representatives seeking to give themselves the appearance of leaders. As a domain through which to assert—or, at least, attempt at assert—leadership, urban transportation serves well, given the range and magnitude of problems to be dealt with (pollution, saturation of public space, economic development policy) and the fact that they demand collective action to which institutional fragmentation is not necessarily conducive. Furthermore, as a highly charged symbolic issue with clear public visibility (e.g., construction of a streetcar system), urban transportation invites harnessing by a politician (Offner 2001). When a politician's actions become identified with massive facilities, the way is paved for an impressive entrance on the political scene, as well as for an identification of responsibilities by the electorate.

The political opportunities which local leaders try to seize upon are of several types, the whole “art of politics” (a highly aleatoric activity) being to combine these resources in furtherance of such a plan:

- A major reconfiguration of the local and national political landscape is certainly a rare enough situation, but it has occurred in Italy in recent years, occasioned by the transition to the Second Republic. This process, still largely incomplete, is accompanied by a distinct renewal of local and national political elites, a notable example being the election of A. Bassolino as mayor of Naples in 1993.
- Though no other city in our sample presents a local context so

favourable to the emergence of a charismatic leader, it is clear that the perception of a “crisis” of the local political and administrative system is indispensable to any campaign to assert leadership. To take measures affecting urban transportation, which purport to break with previous policies, a leader’s activity consists of orchestrating this “crisis” to support the need for breaking with the pre-existing equilibrium.

- In order to prevail, leaders must mobilise social groups around their plans and/or put their stamp on ideas initially raised by such groups. They must also focus on mobilising resources, especially budgetary, which are obtained at other decision-making levels
- The final element allowing certain elected representatives to give themselves a leadership image is the mobilisation of codified, standardised forms of expertise. The search for a better synergy between urban transportation policy and urban planning generally disappears during the course of debate, along with the integration of “alternative” travel modes (bicycles, walking, roller skates, skate boards). This reduction in complexity definitely has a direct effect on the search for innovation of all types. Basing themselves on their models, experts respond to the question of how to recalibrate distribution of travel modes in favour of public transportation, by increasing service and improving quality in public transportation, and, in certain cities, by penalising private auto use. We can see it before our eyes. The recipe is complete and well known, and has been in operation for a long time—with the success we are all familiar with. Imagination may not have a place at the table, but expert models are trotted out which enjoy the advantage of already existing. Against the background of a “crisis” in metropolitan travel systems—a crisis of which they are partially the instruments—leaders intervening on this issue deliberately and strategically position themselves as umpires “summoned” to solve a problem: “The ‘good’ government of a city deliberately embodies itself in visible, palpable results. The belief shared by all voters is that an elected representative is there to ‘get things done.’” (Salais 1997). In this way, political leaders hew to the inside track: tried-and-tested technical solutions which have the advantage of being duplicable and which draw on the technical know-how dispensed by a range of educational institutions (civil/ mechanical/computer engineering schools.) The

office-holders are spurred by the election calendar; the experts are on hand with technical solutions which may not be simple but whose implementation has been mastered. Political and technical timetables synchronise perfectly to spotlight the city's "good government" taking action and making decisions, which materialise in the public space. It remains to be seen if they represent the most relevant solutions to the problems being addressed. Whatever the reality of the situation, in the absence of legitimate alternative forms of expertise, the office-holder and the technician remain—despite themselves, to some degree—prisoners of technical and technological know-how. This, in many respects, constitutes the "investments in form" dear to L. Thevenot (Thevenot 1996) which condition decision-making, participate in the social construction of reality and limit innovation in the field of urban transportation. Here, we can only call for a renewal of forms of expertise and for a different way of looking at the content of public policies in this area.

Overall, analysis of urban transportation policies presents a contradictory picture of the way that public policies are evolving. This ambiguity grows out of the contradiction between the evolution taking place in the operative framework in which urban transportation policies are conceived, developed and implemented, and the extraordinary stability in content of these policies and action formulas.

On the one hand, one can only support a much-expanded utilisation of participatory democracy, particularly as expressed in strong local mobilisations, which constitute evidence of cities' status as the pre-eminent territorial components of *Res Publica*. All the same, one is struck by the wide-ranging dependence of even strong mayors: on civil society; on their counterparts in outlying communities; on higher-ranking local bodies, including state agencies, particularly when it comes to obtaining budgetary resources. While valuable political and scientific debate has certainly been stimulated by the thesis that large cities, and especially their office-holders, have come to enjoy greater autonomy in relation to their national political environment, this thesis is nonetheless certainly refuted by the material we collected. Finally, in contrast to a form of political exercise clearly reminiscent of Weber's definition, and involving the exclusive use of force and domination in the interaction between individuals, the urban transportation policies we

examined point to a politics oriented more towards mobilisation and towards compromise. Those whose reading of public policy is structured in terms of urban governance will find support for their position here. Contemporary urban public action involves negotiation, partnership, integration of different decision-making levels, pragmatism and openness to “civil society.”

At the same time, it is astonishingly paradoxical to note the stability that prevails in terms of policy content. In most cases, the opposition between private auto use and public transport remains a continuing theme. The term “urban transportation policy” generally serves as alternative labelling of measures promoting public transport. Faced with increasingly widespread private auto use and continued urban development at the periphery, urban transportation policies amount to an attempt at recreating a centralized city. They promote what has been described as the “European urban model,” based on a densely built-up core and social interaction. Still it is not evident that intervention focused exclusively on one dimension of travel and one particular mode of transportation (public transport) can really be effective in dealing with the problems at hand. Controlling processes of urbanisation in European cities, including the flux of travel generated by homes and businesses, remains to be thought through in different terms and in light of new intellectual schemata and frames of reference. In this case, public authority finds itself confronted with Condorcet’s famous paradox: the conglomeration of coherent individual preferences can lead to a global incoherent result. It is the conglomerate process itself, which needs to be reconsidered when designing and implementing transportation policies.

Seeking to modify individual preferences does, indeed, seem unrealistic, given the widespread aspiration to own property in the suburbs, and the private automobile use entailed therein. This constitutes a massive trend in “modern” societies, along with its well-known consequences for the environment and traffic flow. It is within a framework of renewal in forms of expertise and technical skill that the institutional, judicial and procedural innovations identified in this article will take on their true significance. A change in the way of conducting politics does not always guarantee effectiveness, even if the change tends towards urban modernity and pluralistic democracy. We have to hold on to both ends of the cord: to (borrowing again from Condorcet) “technify” public matters and democratise

technical debate. It is within such a framework that “the content and the container” of urban transportation policy will be able to respond both to the democratic criteria of European societies and to the search for effectiveness in resolving collective problems.

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