

State actions in the field of urban transport in the city of Rio de Janeiro: a reflection on rationalization of public bus fleet

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Since the definitive end of trams operation in the 1960s, metropolitan public transport of Rio de Janeiro has been dominated by the bus. Currently, approximately 100 million trips are held monthly, adding transport through traditional bus and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). The preponderance of this mode and the tiny presence of rail transportation set that 12 million inhabitants metropolis highly dependent on them. For instance, buses carry passengers five times more than the subway.

The huge imbalance between the modal supply characterized on the one hand, for the high dependence on buses and on the other, the dramatic increase in individual motoring, is at the heart of mobility crisis in the Rio de Janeiro. Currently, Rio de Janeiro has the highest average time shift between the major metropolitan areas while the number of cars has increased by over 70% in the last decade.

In response to the crisis, government has submitted a transport policy that includes projects related to the mega sporting events. In addition, a series of State actions in the urban transport field team with the reorganization launched by the municipal bus system in the city of Rio de Janeiro. It began in June 2010, the year its City Hall held a bid concerning the provision of public service collective passenger transport. Among the recent changes, it is worth mentioning a bus system rationalization project, materialized in the implementation of Bus Rapid System (BRS) corridors that removed and shortened several itinerary bus lines.

The aim of this paper is to review the plan concerned to sectioning municipal bus system by extinguishing bus lines, especially those that connect North Zone and South Zone. The relevance for such reflection is justified by the fact we have a State that acts historically in promoting inequalities throughout the promotion of public policies that induce socio-spatial fragmentation or poor people expulsions from wealthier neighborhoods.

This paper is based on the hypothesis that the rationalization of bus routes is not only a technical issue, but at the same time a mechanism to let the wealthiest neighborhoods in the city even more blocked off from others supported by a kind of “invisible fortification” that reinforces the historically self-segregation symbolized in the city of Rio de Janeiro.