Social participation and mobility justice in Brazil

Participação social e justiça da mobilidade no Brasil

Aline Fernandes Barata [I]

Abstract

In the pursuit of more sustainable and just mobilities, academic debates have regarded public participation as a fundamental component in transport and mobility planning. However, little has been discussed about the role of participation in mobility justice in the Global South, where mobilities are not always fair and inclusive. Against this backdrop, this paper adopts an innovative theoretical and methodological framework to investigate the practices, dynamics, and significance of participation within and outside state-led mobility planning in Brazil. The findings from Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre provide evidence of a range of spaces for participation and their importance in combating mobility injustices in informal settlements.

Keywords: participation; mobility justice; Global South; informality; urban mobility.

Resumo

Na busca por uma mobilidade urbana mais sustentável e justa, os debates acadêmicos têm considerado a participação da sociedade como um componente fundamental no planejamento de transporte e mobilidade. No entanto, pouco se discutiu sobre o papel da participação na justiça da mobilidade no Sul Global, onde a mobilidade nem sempre é justa e inclusiva. Diante desse cenário, este artigo adota um referencial teórico e metodológico inovador para investigar as práticas, as dinâmicas e os significados da participação dentro e fora do planejamento da mobilidade estatal no Brasil. As descobertas do Rio de Janeiro e de Porto Alegre fornecem evidências sobre diferentes espaços de participação e sua importância no combate a injustiças da mobilidade em assentamentos informais.

***Palavras-chave**: participação; justiça da mobilidade; Sul Global; informalidade; mobilidade urbana.*

Introduction: the complexity of participation in mobility justice

Participation is a topic that has been widely debated in planning literature (Pløger, 2001; Friedmann, 1987). Since the 1960s, participation has gained momentum as an alternative to expert-driven processes in planning and governance (Sandercock, 1998). Although with diverse agendas and purposes, the emergence of debates on participation represents a shift in planning literature and practice towards more collaborative approaches (Innes, 1995; Healey, 2006).

Over the years, participatory planning approaches have been heavily criticised for neglecting conflict, forging exclusionary planning practices and maintaining dominant interests and power structures (Miraftab, 2018; Chambers, 1997; Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Pløger, 2001). Scholars have recognised the limitations, challenges and complexities of participatory planning in promoting more inclusive and just livelihoods (Brownill and Parker, 2010; Mitlin, 2021). In response, planning literature has problematised the very notion of participation. Scholars have recognised that "participation is more than what planners invite" (Thorpe, 2017, p. 577) and shed light on a range of participatory practices and spaces being created within and outside governmental boundaries (Cornwall, 2002; Gaventa, 2005).

These debates and notions of participation have been expanded, particularly with the "Southern turn" in planning theory (Miraftab, 2009; 2020). Drawing on postcolonial and decolonial theories, a Global South perspective has emerged in planning literature criticising 'dominant' ideals and world-views influenced by Eurocentric and North American-oriented urban theories and practice (Watson, 2009; Parnell and Oldfield, 2014; Mabin, 2014; Bhan, Srinivas and Watson, 2018; Watson, 2009; Vainer, 2014). With consideration for the colonial roots and history of inequality embedded in the cities of the Global South, Southern theories brought the phenomenon of 'peripheral urbanisation' (Caldeira, 2017) and informality to the centre of urban thinking (Roy, 2011; Roy and AlSayyad, 2004). They have been challenging misleading notions of illegality and assumptions of "proper planning" while bringing to light the peripheries and informality as an integral part of urbanisation and planning (Miraftab, 2020, p. 435; Roy and AlSayyad, 2004; Caldeira, 2017). A Southern lens has allowed a fresh look at the "insurgent" self--built, advocacy, partnership and cooperation strategies shaping city-making in the Global South and helped to conceptualise forms of participation of marginalised and subaltern groups "as the very practice of planning" (Frediani and Cociña, 2019, p. 148; Miraftab, 2009; 2020; Mitlin, 2021; Watson, 2009).

Using these notions of participation borrowed from planning literature, this paper looks at how participation is understood and practised in mobility planning in the Global South. Unlike the sociological takes on "social mobility" that refer to mobility as the movement of ascending or descending socio-economic classes, urban mobility in this thesis concerns the "spatial movement of humans, non-humans, and objects" within the city scale

(Sheller, 2021, p. 12). In this way, mobility encompasses not only the concrete aspects of movement and transport but also the meanings, sensations and perceptions (Kwan and Schwanen, 2016) related to "all the forms in which people relate socially to the change of place" (Jirón, 2013, p. 31).

In the field of transport and mobility studies and planning, the technocratic and expert-led approaches and debates have a longstanding tradition (Keblowski and Bassens, 2018). With the emergence of ideological and paradigmatic shifts in thinking about mobility beyond technocratic, infrastructural and purely rational approaches, in the early 2000s, public participation has gained attention in transport and mobility studies. This period is marked by the emergence of debates that consider participation as an essential mechanism of governance, transport and mobility planning (Hodgson and Turner, 2003; Dimitriou and Gakenheimer, 2011; Verlinghieri, 2020; Ward, 2001).

In light of the social and environmental issues exacerbated by transport systems and uneven mobility conditions across the globe, participation has been placed as a fundamental component for promoting more just and sustainable futures (Banister, 2008; Pereira, Schwanen and Banister, 2017; Sheller, 2018).

In the sustainable mobility paradigm, for instance, participation was promulgated as a mechanism for identifying people's expectations and promoting the active involvement of different stakeholders (Banister, 2008). The participatory rhetoric is built on notions of participation as a means to achieve public acceptability of policy measures and a catalyst for behavioural and social changes (Verlinghieri, 2019). In transport justice approaches, the notions of distributive justice are prominent and concern the equitable distribution of transport infrastructure and fair access to mobility (Martens, 2012). Later writing, such as the work of Pereira, Schwanen and Banister (2017), has expanded conceptualisations of transport justice to consider procedural justice in transport planning and the importance of participatory planning for more equitable transport systems and decision-making processes.

These participatory approaches chime with the idealised, consensual and conflict-less notions of participation and collaborative theories that have been extensively criticised in planning literature for not changing anything in practice. They limit participation to communicating, informing and 'selling the benefits' of sustainable mobility to the public (Banister, 2008, p. 78). Also, the static and 'sedentarist ontology' of transport justice has been considered inadequate to unpack what constitutes justice beyond the realm of transport and accessibility (Cook and Butz, 2019, p. 13).

In response, a "mobile" approach to justice has emerged explicitly theorising "mobility justice" and seeking to encompass the mobility complexities of different bodies, groups and spaces at local, national and transnational scales (ibid.; Sheller, 2018). Mobility justice approaches have also advanced the notions of participation as explained in the following section.

Mobility justice

Conceptualisations of "mobility justice" have emerged in recent years, seeking to understand and tackle the uneven mobility experiences and politics of decision-making (Sheller, 2018; Cook and Butz, 2019). With no common agreement on its definitions or meanings, the notions of mobility justice incorporate feminist, critical race and postcolonial perspectives to develop holistic, interdisciplinary and multifaceted understandings of mobility injustices and give meaning to differential everyday mobility needs, practices and experiences (Cook and Butz, 2019; Verlinghieri and Schwanen, 2020).

Mimi Sheller (2018) was the first to coin the term mobility justice (Cook and Butz, 2019). The concept of mobility justice emerges in light of a "triple mobility crisis", resulting from climate change, intensive urbanisation and use of automobiles, social inequalities and persistent violence against refugees and racialised populations (Sheller, 2018, p. 3). Mobility justice conceptualisations were developed to think more clearly about the unequal politics, capabilities and rights to move and to stay that involve different bodies, transport systems, national borders and planetary scales (ibid.).

In Sheller's framework, participation has been reinforced as a crucial element for mobility planning and decision-making. The author refers to deliberative justice as the potential for influencing decisions and claims that deliberative processes should acknowledge the vulnerabilities impacting the mobilities of different social groups, address existing power inequalities among participants and recognise the legitimate experiences, inputs and contributions of people on the ground.

This is intertwined with aspects of procedural and epistemic justice. The first is understood as "the meaningful participation of affected populations in the governance of transportation systems" (Sheller, 2018, p. 32). This strand of mobility justice deals with structural complexities of participation, the need for including disempowered groups and promoting open access to information and substantial information and consent. Epistemic justice refers to the need to recognise and create "new forms of knowledge, new facts, and new ways of reconciling seemingly incommensurable ways of knowing" (ibid., p. 33). Additionally, Sheller (2018) highlights that populations affected by climate change, transport projects, natural disasters, displacement caused by the state and the excessive mobility of individuals of dominant classes also require restorative justice to repair any harms caused and address the responsibilities of those causing them.

In light of mobility challenges identified in the Global South (which could be similar to some Global North contexts), transport and mobility planning has been criticised for predominantly amplifying the voices of white, young and middle-class males and homogenising transport users and city inhabitants while the needs and perspectives of women, children, older people and marginalised groups remain overlooked (Oviedo and Guzmán, 2021; Lucas and Stanley, 2013). Therefore, the literature considers the

participation of local populations in decision--making processes, planning and management as a key condition for improving mobilities and transport systems (Dimitriou and Gakenheimer, 2011; Pereira, Schwanen and Banister, 2017). The engagement of marginalised populations in decision-making processes has also been seen as a desirable mechanism for achieving mobility justice (Ritterbusch, 2019). However, these notions of participation in state-led mobility planning do not expand much on or problematise the power imbalances and reach of participatory processes. Marginalised communities were perceived as being disengaged from mobility planning processes, unaware of ways to obtain better mobility conditions for themselves (Maia et al., 2016) and unable to resolve inequalities (Lucas, 2021). Yet little is known about whether/how marginalised populations create strategies to overcome mobility inequalities, exert participation in mobility planning outside the state or challenge narratives of informality in terms of failure and lack of planning (Schwanen, 2018).

Despite the advances and extensive critiques of communicative and collaborative approaches in planning literature, mobility studies remain rooted in idealised, consensual and conflict-less notions of participation. This is the case even with the latest contributions from literature on the conceptualisations of mobility justice. Yet, little is discussed about the limits of participation in mobility planning and the participatory practices beyond governmental spaces.

The complex interplay of participation and mobility remains underexplored, particularly in the Global South context, where mobilities are not always fair and inclusive (Oviedo and Guzmán, 2021; Santini, Santarém and Albergaria, 2021; Vasconcellos, 2001; 2014). While mobility research in the Global South has recognised the exclusionary nature of mobility planning and policies (ibid.), little is discussed about the role of participation outside planning boundaries, particularly in contexts of marginalisation. To fill this gap in knowledge, the next sections present the conceptual and methodological framework adopted in this research.

Conceptual framework

This paper employs the spaces for participation approach to investigate the role of participation in mobility planning in the Global South. Largely echoing Henry Lefebvre's (1991) concept of space, the spaces for participation approach has been adopted in development studies (Cornwall, 2002; Gaventa, 2005) and planning (Carpenter, 2014; Miraftab, 2009; 2020) as a way to understand the forms of participation, the sites where engagements take place and the interactions across spaces. Within the participation spaces approach, power dynamics are also an object of examination. Gaventa (2005, 2006) developed the "power cube" framework (Figure 1) to analyse the levels and forms of power in different spaces for participation.

Figure 1 – Power Cube
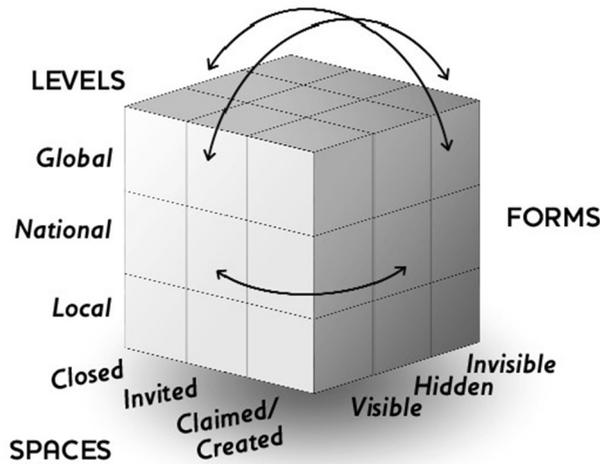
Source: Gaventa (2006, p. 25).

The utility of the approach is that it focuses not only on the channels in which people have been "invited" to participate in decision-making (invited spaces) but also on "claimed" spaces that are created by participants themselves rather than conceived for the participation of others (Cornwall, 2002). The notion of claimed spaces can also take a more radical connotation. Miraftab (2009), for instance, uses the concept of "invented spaces" to designate the collective actions mobilised by the poor that directly confront the authorities and challenge the status quo and the neoliberal system. This approach links with the concept of insurgency developed by Holston (2009) and Sandercock (1998) and highlights the fact that spaces for participation are not confined to sanctioned arenas (invited spaces) by the authorities. This lens is useful because it opens room to conceptualise and examine the significance of participatory practices both within and outside official planning boundaries.

Furthermore, the research draws on the "staging mobilities" model developed by Ole B. Jensen (2013 and 2014) to investigate the spaces for participation in mobility planning (Figure 2). This analytical model originally focused on the dynamics between the governance of mobility planning and designing mobilities "from above" (planning, design, regulations and institutions) and the mobility experiences of individuals and groups "from below" (interactions e mobility performances).

In this study, I use the staging mobilities framework as a guide for exploring the spaces for participation in the staging mobilities from above (inside governmental boundaries) and from below (outside the state apparatus). These approaches form the conceptual basis for exploring the research topic, filling the gaps in knowledge and answering the research questions introduced in the following section.

Figure 2 –Staging mobilities

Source: Jensen (2013, p. 6).

Methodology for investigating the role of participation in Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre

Let me now turn to explain the selection of Brazil for the empirical investigation. Brazil, like other developing countries, is marked by social, spatial and mobility inequalities. In the country, public policies and planning have been accused of perpetuating exclusionary ways of conceiving and shaping urban mobility and reinforcing social inequalities and mobility injustices instead of diminishing them (Vasconcellos, 2001 and 2014). This "elitist planning tradition" (Fernandes, 2018, p.54) is exemplified by the inadequacy of planning towards the growing peripheral urbanisation in the country and the unequal relationships between those who plan and those who suffer from unequal urban and transport planning as well as the question of who influences decisions and policies.

Gender, race and class inequalities have been brought to the fore to criticise how, by whom and to whom mobility and transport are conceived, planned and operationalised in Brazil (Santini, Santarém and Albergaria, 2021) and other Latin American countries (Oviedo and Guzmán, 2021). The literature shows a growing concern that those planning mobilities from above are usually white middle-class men who have a limited view of the realities, problems and solutions ((ibid.; Santini, Santarém e Albergaria, 2021).

Given the country's social, spatial and mobility inequalities, Brazil was chosen as the main site for the empirical investigation. Within Brazil, two cities were selected for the in--depth examination of the role of participation in mobility planning: Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre. The criteria for selecting these two state capitals were: (1) a certain similarity of mobility policies and projects being undertaken; (2) the presence of social movements and non--governmental organisations defending mobility rights outside the state; and (3) dissimilar traditions of participation in state-led planning.

Whilst Porto Alegre is internationally known for implementing the first participatory budgeting mechanism in 1988 (Avritzer, 2006), becoming a model of participatory governance, Rio de Janeiro has a long tradition of popular participation (Souza, 2006). Rio de Janeiro has the largest favela population in Brazil, with over 22% of the inhabitants residing in favelas across the city (Izaga et al., 2019). This research examines whether these traditions strengthen or weaken the capacity for participation and what type of spaces for participation they enable.

One similarity between Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre is that both consist of state capitals that have gone through the development of municipality-led mobility plans, slum-upgrading projects and urban and transport transformations in preparation to host mega-events, such as the FIFA World Cup and Olympic Games. Another similar feature is that these cities have a growing proportion of their population living in territories named Areas of Special Interest (AEIS),

which are considered 'irregular', 'informal' and 'precarious' settlements in the Brazilian planning framework. Therefore, I also selected one favela in each city to explore how/whether marginalised populations engage in state-led participation or create alternative spaces.

For this purpose, Favela Santa Marta in Rio de Janeiro and Vila Tronco in Porto Alegre were chosen for this study. Although with different geographies, political contexts and histories of occupation by its residents and control by the state, Favela Santa Marta (Figure 3) and Vila Tronco (Figure 4) are located within central wealthy districts supplied with a wide range of public transport options and mobility infrastructure. However, both neighbourhoods are socially and morphologically distinct from the "formal" areas around them (Izaga et al., 2019), as they are marked by low income, high rates of informality and unequal distribution of public infrastructure. In contrast to marginalised areas situated in geographical peripheries that have been widely debated with a focus on accessibility and distributive justice (Pereira, Schwanen and Banister, 2017; Pereira, 2018; Pereira et al., 2019; Oviedo and Guzman, 2021; Duarte, Oviedo and Pinto, 2021), the central condition of Favela Santa Marta and Vila Tronco was explored as both a positive and a hindering factor for performing everyday mobilities. In Brazil, central favelas are the object of disputes, evictions and inconsistent state attention (Rolnik, 2013). These neighbourhoods have gone through state-led slum-upgrading – as in the case of Favela Santa Marta – and city transport projects – Vila Tronco – that affected mobilities and the internal functioning of these

Figure 3 – Favela Santa Marta,
Rio de Janeiro

Source: Mau Mau (2021).

Figure 4 – Vila Tronco,
Porto Alegre

Source: Monique (2020).

territories. With the similarities and differences between both contexts, the research explores the significance of mobility and participation within and beyond the confines of state-led mobility planning.

For this investigation, fieldwork was carried out in 2019 and 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic when lockdown measures and public health restrictions were in place. Data was collected through a combination of in-person and remote methods such as discourse analysis of 29 policy documents and official reports, 30 in-person and remote interviews with municipal and state government professionals, representatives of non-government organisations and academics, and 23 online photo-elicitation[1] interviews with residents of case study neighbourhoods. Policy analysis investigated how participation is articulated in mobility policies at national, state

and city levels. Interviews sought to identify the actors, openings and closures of spaces for participation and definitions of participation and mobility justice. Online photo-elicitation interviews explored the fine-grained details of everyday mobility experiences and participatory practices in marginalised territories. The latter was employed as an opportunity to overcome the lack of co-presence in the field and interact with the richness of participants' photographs and narratives (Rose, 2023). Discourse analysis was used to examine documents produced by and for the state and qualitative and quantitative thematic analysis to capture the themes emerging in the interviews and photo-elicitations (Nowell et al., 2017). The findings demonstrate a range of spaces for participation and meanings of participation and mobility, which are presented and discussed in the following sections.

Participation within and outside the state

Through scoping participatory practices in urban mobility, a series of spaces for participation were identified "within and outside the state", ranging from national, city and neighbourhood levels. This section presents and analyses these spaces, the dynamics between social actors and the meanings of participation for mobility justice.

Invited spaces

The investigation of spaces for participation in this research began with the identification of invited spaces in mobility planning at national, municipal and neighbourhood scales, as these receive greater visibility and are better documented. Within these spaces, there are: (1) national policies encouraging public participation in planning and monitoring urban mobility; (2) municipal mobility plans inviting participation from citizens and non-governmental organizations (NGOs); and (3) mobility infrastructure projects promoting spaces for local community participation. Different approaches and dynamics of participation were be observed in these spaces.

Firstly, the analysis demonstrates a growing inclusion of public participation in the Brazilian urban policy. After years of military dictatorship and with the consolidation of democracy in the end of 1980s, national policies began to consider participation as a desirable instrument in planning, developing and monitoring of urban policies, such as the City Statute (Avritzer, 2006). A few decades later, federal requirements sought to open the institutional boundaries of mobility planning, a field dominated primarily by "top-down" technocratic decisions. An example of this is the sanction of the National Urban Mobility Policy (PNMU) in 2012 (Fernandes Barata, 2019; Fernandes Barata, Jones and Brownill, 2023). This legal instrument represents a shift in understanding of mobility beyond transport and the consolidation of democratic management as an instrument of mobility policy. Municipal mobility plans have become the main instrument for implementing the national policy and incorporating participatory procedures.

The policy does not mention the word 'justice' in the text and uses the discourse of 'equity' instead to address even access of citizens to public transport, public spaces and services. Despite this, the policy incorporates some of the aspects of distributive, deliberative and restorative justice discussed by Sheller (2018). As the main principles, Article 5 of the law 2.587 (Brasil, 2012) establishes the need to promote (1) universal accessibility and equitable access to public circulation spaces and collective public transport (distributive justice); (2) democratic management, social control and evaluation of the PNMU (deliberative justice); and (3) fair distribution of benefits and burdens arising from the use of different modes and services (restorative justice). Throughout the text, the policy also includes aspects of procedural justice when it mentions the need for systematic communication procedures and the right of mobility users to be informed in accessible and easy-to-understand language.

Despite the advances in promoting an agenda of mobility in Brazil, the policy per se has been accused of providing unclear legal

instruments to be followed in the development of mobility plans at municipal levels (Maranhão, Orrico Filho and Santos, 2017). The policy only provides a generic approach toward the reduction of social inequalities and the negative influence of motorised individual transport. Moreover, research has identified several barriers in small and medium-sized municipalities that constrain the development and implementation of mobility plans (Bezerra, Santos and Delmonico, 2020). In addition to a lack of integration between public departments (such as transport and land use) and budget constraints, the opening of participation poses further challenges for municipal administrations.

At the municipal and state level, interviews with professionals from Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre demonstrate that creating invited spaces for participation in projects and mobility plans is challenging in both cities, with different reputations and traditions of public participation. Invited spaces, despite their historic opening and genuine attempt to enable contributions from below, still reveal some limitations of what is at stake for participation and who can fully access these spaces.

Furthermore, this research also identified that international and local NGOs occupy the role of experts (Sosa Lopez and Montero, 2018) in both cities, offering materials and data, developing projects and participating and assisting in events, such as preparing participatory workshops for local mobility plans and temporary urban interventions, such as Tactical Urbanism and Complete Streets actions (Figures 5 and 6). These NGOs themselves configure "new spaces of participation", as Cornwall (2002, p. 13) points out, since they blur the boundaries between invited and claimed spaces. However, not all NGOs are

Figure 5 – Tactical Urbanism intervention in Tijuca, Rio de Janeiro

Source: ITDP (2018).

Figure 6 – João Alfredo Complete Street, Porto Alegre

Source: Santos, Samios e Batista (2021, p. 54).

able to obtain this influence within the state boundaries and not all actions they create or participate in encompass some of the critical violations of mobility justice experienced by marginalised populations, as we will see below.

In parallel to these spaces, transport infrastructure projects were being implemented with limited participation in both cities. Favela upgrading projects and urban and transport transformations in preparation to host mega events, such as the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games, are some examples.

The projects deriving from the mega-events' investments have been widely criticised for being the subject of forced evictions, corruption investigations, budget overruns, privatisation of public spaces and uneven expansion of public transport infrastructure (Vainer,et al., 2018; Omena de Melo, 2020; Verlinghieri and Venturini, 2017). This is the case of Vila Tronco, one of the most vulnerable areas of Porto Alegre, which since 2012 faces the widening of Avenida Tronco, now called Avenida Moab Caldas (Figure 7). This 'conflictual' (Vainer, 2018) transport project seeks to improve the city's interior connections but does it through evictions and inadequate planning and housing measures. The invited spaces opened by the municipal authorities, such as meetings and negotiations, demonstrate a frustrated attempt by residents and community leaders to change the direction of a PAC Mobility project that negatively affects the locality, "immobility" and the right to remain (Ritterbusch, 2019).

In light of the inefficiency of existing spaces for participation, others spaces emerged seeking to open closed spaces for participation, dialogue with authorities, confront them or improve mobility despite the state. These actions and their dynamics are discussed below.

Figure 7 – A section of Avenida Moab Caldas

Source: Prefeitura Municipal de Porto Alegre (2018).
Photo credits: Luciano Lanes.

Claimed spaces together with, despite or against the state

In addition to invited spaces, several "claimed" and "invented" spaces were identified in this research, demonstrating that spaces led by society do not hold a single definition and purpose. These actions highlight the broad field of mobility justice and the limitations of the invited spaces presented previously. The examples refer to: (1) movements "against the state", which challenge the *status quo*, such as the increase in bus fares and the forced evictions engendered by mobility infrastructures; and (2) community actions that seek to improve mobility conditions, "with or without the state" (Souza, 2006).

Social movements defending mobility (and immobility) rights are the best "claimed spaces" documented in the literature. One example is the Movement for Free Fare, which mobilised a series of protests against the public transport fare increase in more than a hundred cities in Brazil (Movimento Passe Livre, 2013), such as Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre. Beyond the population's discontentment with transport fares and conditions, the demonstrations contested the political corruption and the violations of mobility and housing rights engendered by the mega-events' preparatory works – the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Rio Olympic Games (Omena de Melo, 2020).

This was observed in the photo-elicitation interviews with Vila Tronco residents, who shared numerous photos and narratives about actions led by the community and local organisations. Noting the mismatch between the timings of the road construction and the execution of the housing units, residents of Vila Tronco and surrounding areas, community leaders and the Comitê Popular da Copa created the campaign "Key by Key" in April 2012 (Mesomo and Domo, 2016), see Figure 8. These invented spaces (Miraftab, 2009), which

Figure 8 – Key by Key movement banner

Source: Comitê Popular da Copa 2014 (2012).

were very emblematic among the participants, became opportune moments to challenge the status quo and react against the uncertainties and vulnerabilities caused by the mobility project. They were deepened through internal discussions, protesting and sharing of photos and videos on social media to denounce the ongoing evictions and publicise the violation of rights (De Araújo, 2014). This example signals the weakening of spaces for participation that articulate with the state apparatus, as Cristina's narrative indicates.

> Today? We are unable to believe it. People don't want to participate. Today, they are not heard; today they don't have the respect to be heard. People have given up; many people are discouraged from being in these spaces. They don't want to participate; they just want to survive. (Cristina, Vila Tronco)

Other community actions, however, are not as well documented. Among them, we can find (1) urban improvements, (2) negotiation tactics and (3) awareness of rights and duties that benefit mobility in contexts of vulnerability and marginalisation. These were identified through interviews and photo-elicitations with residents of Favela Santa Marta and Vila Tronco.

Regarding urban improvements, the research in Favela Santa Marta shows examples of initiatives led by the state government and local communities. The interviews with residents of this favela in Rio de Janeiro and a state government professional demonstrated that the urbanisation projects in the locality were driven by the agency of community leaders who claimed urban improvements from municipal and state governments through 'peaceful means' (Vasconcellos, 2001, p. 81).

The urban project implemented by the state government in 2008 (Figure 9), which included mobility infrastructures in its scope – funicular, ramps and staircase improvements – was made possible by a favourable economic and political context mobilised by the state's interests in preparation for the mega-events. This project was aligned with state intentions in placing Rio de Janeiro's first Peacekeeping Police Unit in the locality and promoting the image of safety associated with favelas. In the eyes of one community leader in Favela Santa Marta, this opening was motivated by the state government's interest in enticing electors in the locality and setting it up as a "model favela". However, this opening did not mean that spaces for deliberation were enabled in the development and execution of the project, as revealed by one of the interviewees:

> In the case of Santa Marta no, they already received the project like this, what would be done, the community received it practically ready. (Public Works Company of the state of Rio de Janeiro)

Despite this, this study has shown that people's mobility and 'dignity' in the steepest favela of Rio de Janeiro were indeed improved after the funicular and concrete staircases were implemented. However, residents and community leaders condemned the distancing and abandonment of the state from the urban issues in favelas after the urbanisation project. Nowadays, long-lasting accessibility and sanitation issues, episodes of violence and arbitrary police behaviour hinder residents' everyday "right to come and go" (as highlighted by Aquiles in the interview below), forcing them to mobilise individual and collective strategies and routine manoeuvres to overcome them.

Figure 9 – Funicular
of Favela Santa Marta

Source: Catarina (2020).

Figure 10 – Staircase maintained
by the residents
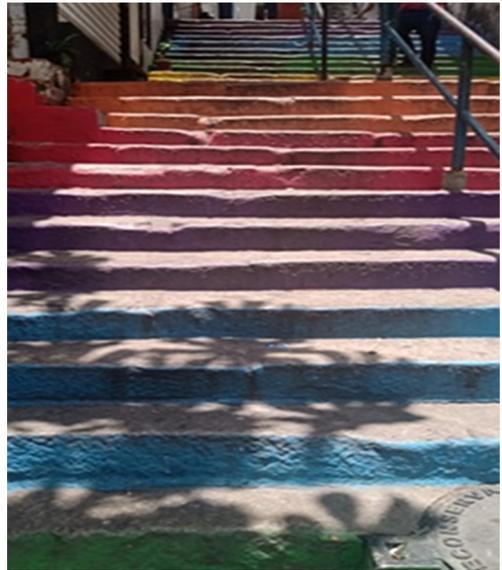
Source: Bruna (2020).

So, in terms of mobility, it gets in the way in this regard, because as we already know, all those studies, the majority of the population in the favela is black [...] Black people dress that way, they have these characteristics, they have to be separated, they have to be searched to see if there is anything illegal. So, when you run inside a community it's different than when you run outside it, so I can run on the seafront of Botafogo and Copacabana because it is normal. Now, if I run inside the favela, I am either a criminal or... it is never going to cross a policeman's mind that this guy is late for university, but he is running away from something, someone, in the matter of the police operation itself. (Aquiles, Santa Marta)

These practices are exemplified by the everyday spaces of material and immaterial activism that are continually reinvented through self-built practices (Figure 10), such as the staircases that were built and continue to be maintained by the residents, as mentioned by Bianca below; negotiations between the residents and the Police to contain police operations and violence (see Fernandes Barata, Jones and Brownill, 2023); solidarity networks, awareness building and campaigning developed by residents, community leaders and local organisations.

I would like to show, perhaps, what the community contributed. Sometimes there is an elderly person who lives here, and his stairs need a handrail, so people go there and put the handrail to help the mobility of certain elderly people. There is a hole that has been open for a thousand years and, as the City Hall is not going to fix it, then people get together and fix it.

At the parking lot, there was a task force of the residents who gathered, made crowdfunding initiative and covered the holes. Because we know that the city hall service doesn't reach here, so we have to do things for ourselves. (Bianca, Santa Marta)

Moreover, social and educational campaigns, such as "I want Santa Marta clean", seek to contribute to general cleanliness, health and dignified mobility in Favela Santa Marta. Another example is the "Holiday Camp", organised by Grupo Eco for over 35 years, which promotes leisure activities for children outside the favela to remind them of their right to be anywhere in the city.

This research also identified educational efforts carried out by community associations in Vila Tronco, which seek to share survival tactics in the peripheries, discuss human rights and overcome structural social problems that, in some way, affect the freedom of movement and the right to exist of residents, as reported by Augusto (below). Rather than participating in wider debates and decisions about ways to physically improve accessibility and mobility, these spaces of immaterial activism found in Santa Marta and Vila Tronco are aimed at subverting unequal social structures that could potentially prevent one from belonging in society, knowing and claiming their rights and having their freedom of movement.

Social participation is what I see there, what the institution and other organisations do. It is an orientation; it is for the well-being of the population in general, children and adolescents in the periphery. Children and adolescents have to be part of society. (Augusto, Vila Tronco)

Furthermore, the findings from the research in Vila Tronco and Favela Santa Marta demonstrate that more than half of the residents and community leaders interpreted participation as a meaningful way to assist the community, fill in gaps left by the state, act outside official planning or, like Juju (Santa Marta) said: "participation is what we do everyday". This notion opposes to the views shared by members of public authorities and NGOs interviewed in this study, but correlates with contemporary definitions and approaches to participation that also see participation as the activity through which less powerful groups contribute to decisions and/or developments that affect their life (Thorpe, 2017; Gaventa, 2005; Frediani and Cociña, 2019). These different meanings, as illustrated by Monique (below), provide evidence of how the multivalence of participation is perceived in contexts of marginalisation and also bring to light a feature of participation little explored in the mobility literature and recognised in mobility planning.

Social participation is exactly about occupying all possible spaces. I think that it is about getting involved, making spaces your own and then being able to positively intervene and dialogue in all spaces. (Monique, Vila Tronco)

These spaces and meanings of participation encompass more than what the literature suggests. Participation becomes the very practice of planning (Frediani and Cociña, 2019): the engagement of residents seeking to autonomously organise and alleviate people's lives and mobilities within the neighbourhood. While some claim participation in planning, others perform participation as a way to

"practice rights to dignified life from below" (Miraftab, 2020, p. 436) and respond to the inadequacy of planning in acknowledging mobility injustices. The perspectives of participation as 'what residents do' are carried into the spaces for participation mobilised by residents and community leaders in Vila Tronco and Santa Marta. Also, these notions subtly denounce the exclusions, epistemic injustices and inability of marginalised populations to access and contribute to more "formal" spaces for participation.

Conclusion

The spaces for participation presented and discussed in this article do not consist of an extensive list of participatory practices, but demonstrate the value of a broader approach to participation for addressing mobility justice. The research brought to light the fluid dynamics of closed, invited and claimed spaces for participation, the multiple meanings of participation and disjunctions between some spaces and mobility struggles in marginalised territories.

The findings support the view that forms of participation in planning "are not always inclusive, fair and distributive" (Frediani and Cociña, 2019, p.158). Many yet remain as mere mechanisms of consultation and legitimisation of governments' interests that make engagement with marginalised groups and their mobility issues difficult. In parallel, outside the official planning realm, there are populations, mobility struggles and spaces for participation constantly being invented and mobilised by "the logic of survival" (Watson, 2009) that challenge the very notion of participation.

The strategies, forms of activism and everyday tactics explored in this study contribute to the understanding that participation with the state "is only one part of the story" (Sandercock, 1998, p. 54). There is a range of participatory efforts seeking to contest, shape, reframe and address multiple aspects of mobility justice, particularly in contexts of marginalisation. This research hopes to inspire researchers, policymakers, government professionals and mobility activists to take into account the participatory efforts and mobility injustices in marginalised territories.

[I] https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5114-2530
Loughborough University, School of Design and Creative Arts, Loughborough, Reino Unido.
a.m.f.barata@lboro.ac.uk

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Note

(1) Some of the photos taken by participants (whose identities were protected through the use of pseudonyms) are presented in this article, such as Figures 3, 4, 9 and 10.

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