

Panel Proposal for the 2020 Latin American Association (LASA) Annual Conference
Guadalajara, México, May 13-16, 2020

CALL FOR PAPERS

Environment, Knowledges and the Politics of Infrastructure in Latin American Cities

Panel organizers:

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In recent decades Latin American cities have seen how environmental concerns increasingly mediate the linkages between urban politics and infrastructure development. For example, in Mexico City air quality and environmental conservation have framed controversies around road construction (Dolútskaya, 2018), while mass transit and alternative transportation systems have gained political support due to their alleged contribution to fight climate change (Salazar & Lezama, 2008; Levy & Davila, 2017; Sosa López & Montero, 2018). In São Paulo, the management of water and sanitation infrastructure has led to the emergence of new state-citizen governance networks in which social actors claiming technical expertise are creating new arenas of dissent (Keck, 2002). In Bogotá, infrastructure provision in peripheral informal settlements has been framed in terms of risk assessment and environmental hazards (Zeiderman, 2015). Similarly, environmental law is playing a decisive role in the framing and resolution of urban conflicts over land use, infrastructure, housing, and urban development projects in a variety of cities across the region (Azuela, 2016; Merlinsky, 2016).

These developments show that knowledge plays an increasingly central role in the politics of public infrastructure development (Collier, Mizes, & von Schnitzler, 2016). Indeed, in Latin American cities the mobilization of *the environment* as a public concern points to the emergence of a new governmentality (Foucault, 2004) in which good governance requires sustainability as a visible policy goal. However, rather than eliminating conflict, technical, legal, and scientific environmental knowledge is shaping a variety of disputes around infrastructural problems, urban crises, and policy solutions that ultimately shape public action (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2014) and further complicate the landscape of Latin American urban politics.

This panel aims to advance our understanding of this renewed political landscape by posing the following questions: How are environmental arguments used by different actors to shape projects and policies? What are the sources of knowledge about the environment used for political dispute and how do these sources generate legitimacy? What are the spaces, channels and mechanisms through which actors mobilize environmental expertise to influence and/or contest projects and policies? And ultimately, what new linkages between the environment, urban politics, and infrastructure development can be drawn from the cases presented? The panel welcomes empirical and/or theoretical approaches from any discipline and aims to identify the commonalities across the cases and point to new directions in urban politics research and theorization. The panel will accept presentations in English, Spanish and Portuguese.

*Please send a 250-word abstract, with a title of no more than 25 words, to David López García (loped438@newschool.edu) and Oscar Sosa López (sosalopo@newschool.edu) by **September 4, 2019**.*

All panel participants are required to be current LASA members at the time of the panel proposal submission (September 5, 2019).

References

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