Linking Individual Perceptions to Action in the Context of Highly Disruptive Tactics in Bogotá, Colombia[*]

Abstract

Using a mixed methods approach, I analyze the use of a novel disruptive protest tactic that emerged after the implementation of Bogotá's mass transit system, *Transmilenio* (TM). Specifically, I argue that the infrastructure of TM was the source of a social-psychological process of opportunity attribution substantially driven by the perceived effectiveness of a highly disruptive tactic, TM shutdowns. To support my argument, I first conducted 31 semi-structured interviews in Bogotá in order to provide qualitative evidence of the link between activists' perceptions vis-à-vis TM shutdowns and mobilization. Then, to test the generality of my argument, I use panel data that registers all protest events that took place in Bogotá between 2001 and 2010. Based on count regression models, I find strong city-wide evidence that suggests that TM infrastructure did act as a magnet; pulling traditional street protest tactics that used to take place on regular streets and redirecting them towards TM lanes. The relationship between tactical choice, mobilization, and transportation infrastructure in the Global South is also discussed throughout the paper.

Key Words:

Tactics, protest, Latin America, repertoires of contention, social movements.

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INTRODUCTION

On January 29th 2011, activists from the Marsella neighborhood in Bogotá shutdown a special lane on a highway that links Bogotá's southwestern region to the city downtown.[1] This lane was reserved for the operation of Bogotá's bus-based massive transportation system, *Transmilenio* (TM). Protestors shutdown TM to decry the construction of a brothel in their neighborhood. Two months prior, dozens of truck drivers shutdown TM in the same location to dispute national freight-related regulations.[2] These were not isolated events, however. I submit that activists' decision to shut TM down is closely related to the social-psychology of tactical choice in general, and to the perceived effectiveness of highly disruptive tactics in particular. In this context, my aim in this paper is to delve into the relationship between the perceived effectiveness of highly disruptive tactics and mobilization, something that tends to be intrinsically difficult for both activists and academics to assess (Soule 1999; Biggs 2013).

Critically, I aim to study mass transit shutdowns as a tactic perceived as effective, not to assess the actual effectiveness of this tactic to achieve concrete outcomes. This is, therefore, a study on the social psychology of protest since I focus on the implications of activists' perceptions on their own mobilization (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013). In particular, I study mass transit shutdowns in Bogotá to understand how an objective change in the environment (implementation of TM) is related to both the individual-level perceptions of that change (the perceived effectiveness of TM shutdowns) and to aggregate protest behavior dynamics that are consistent with the changes reported at the individual-level (city-wide shifts in tactical choice over time).

I conceptualize TM shutdowns as the result of a social-psychological process. I claim that potential activists perceive there is an efficacy bonus (Wang and Piazza 2016) associated with

TM shutdowns due to the tremendously disruptive nature of this tactic. In this regard, Wang and Piazza (2016) highlight that there is a relentless strategic trade-off associated with the use of highly disruptive tactics because activists have to balance the fact that these tactics can simultaneously alienate supporters and bystanders while also attracting attention from third parties precisely because of their disruptive nature. McAdam and colleagues (2001) also argue that activists have to simultaneously attribute opportunity and threat to their actions, including their tactical choices (see also Karapin 2011). Jasper (2004: 13, see also Haines 1984) refers to a similar strategic trade-off related to the use of extreme tactics, the radical flank dilemma: "[Activists'] extreme words and actions get attention, and often take opponents by surprise, but they usually play poorly with bystanders and authorities." In sum, scholars from different theoretical perspectives argue that activists face a general strategic trade-off inherent to the use of disruptive tactics. I contribute an explanation of the role of the perceived effectiveness of tactics as a way to understand how activists might address this dilemma. Here, I seek to answer the following research questions: how do protestors attribute opportunity to highly disruptive tactics? How does this attribution of opportunity affect protestors' tactical choices and mobilization? I study mass transit shutdowns in Bogotá in order to start providing answers to these questions.

I situate the study of mass transit shutdowns in general, and TM shutdowns in particular, in the literature that suggests the perceived effectiveness of tactics as a prominent incentive for mobilization, as well as for the use and diffusion of tactics (Soule 1997; Lichbach 1998; Francisco 2010; Andrews and Biggs 2006; Biggs 2013; Wang and Piazza 2016; Meyer and Boutcher 2007). I assume that activists' bounded-rationality is a driving force behind both their actions and tactical choices (Walker, Martin and McCarthy 2008), including protestors' tendency

to capitalize on tactics they perceive as effective (Meyer and Staggenborg 2012; Ganz 2000). Importantly, even though the relationship between the perceived effectiveness of tactics and mobilization has been theorized as a strategic process rooted at the individual level (Lichbach 1998), this relationship has been traditionally analyzed only at levels of aggregation beyond the individual (Wang and Soule 2012; Wang and Piazza 2016; Soule 1997; Francisco 2010). Here, I extend the literature on the strategic decision-making of social movement actors by analyzing the key role of individual perceptions to understand the interplay between tactical choice and mobilization.

Finally, it should be mentioned that bus-based mass transportation systems like TM are now highly prevalent throughout Latin America (Campo 2010). This is important since in this region road blockades tend to happen at "a frequency that might surprise scholars in other countries." (López-Maya 2002: 199). Road blockades are in fact a quintessential element of Latin American protest culture (Machado, Scartascini and Tommasi 2011) and one of the most popular tactics used by poor people's movements throughout the region (Silva 2009; Auyero 2006; Almeida 2012). For instance, premier social movements like the *piquetero* movement in Argentina use road blockades, *piquetes,* as both its main protest tactic and as a symbol for collective identity (Harley 2014). Beyond specific social movements, there is consistent evidence of the prominent position of road blockades in the tactical repertoire of countries like El Salvador and Costa Rica (Almeida 2012), Colombia (Archila 2003), Venezuela (López-Maya 2002), Peru (Arce 2008), Bolivia (Arce and Rice 2009), Mexico (Tosoni 2007), and Brazil (Carter 2010). As a result, in this paper I also advance our collective understanding of the Latin American protest culture by studying a novel and highly disruptive version of road blockades, namely, TM shutdowns.

TM Shutdowns as a Feasible Protest Tactic

TM belongs to a broader family of transportation solutions called Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) systems (Wright and Hook 2007). BRT systems are transportation systems where public buses travel through designated lanes of existing highways. To my knowledge, TM was the first BRT system in which systematic shutdowns were used to protest for issues different from the quality of service. Indeed, the first TM shutdown in Bogotá occurred in April 2001, only four months after TM was implemented in December 2000. Colombian authorities progressively reacted to TM shutdowns by preventing them from happening. This is not surprising since tactical innovations are usually neutralized with tactical adaptations from opponents (McAdam 1983). This can be seen when in 2012 the Colombian Constitutional Court ratified a new law that made blocking TM a felony (Decision C-742/12). This law was introduced to Congress in 2010 and enacted in 2011 as part of a larger reform to the penal system developed by the Colombian President. TM shutdowns were, therefore, particularly feasible between 2001 (TM implementation) and 2010 (new law formulation).

TM infrastructure easily enables even small numbers of activists to cause massive levels of disruption. This is possible because TM lanes are bound by cement blocks that are only about 15 centimeters high (see Figure 1). While these blocks allow people to distinguish between regular lanes and TM lanes on a given highway, they also create a system that is particularly easy to shutdown through road blockades because —unlike most mass transportation systems— it is directly accessible by foot. This makes TM subject to all restrictions associated with regular buses (e.g., constrained by traffic lights and/or pedestrian crossings). Moreover, the fact that TM lanes do not have access to secondary corridors, enables rather small groups of activists to block the system. Since TM transports over 2.6 million customers on an average day, I argue that all of

these features (access by foot, absence of secondary corridors, and a massive influx of passengers) make TM shutdowns likely to be perceived as a powerful tactic because activists understand that they can potentially attain unprecedented levels of visibility and disruption through it.

[INSERT FIG 1 HERE]

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Attribution of Opportunity: Linking Macro-Level Changes to Individual-Level Perceptions

Research on social movement mobilization tends to follow two tracks. On the one hand, scholars interested in individual mobilization focus on micro-level explanatory factors, including biographical availability (Corrigall-Brown 2012), resources (Brady, Verba and Schlozman 1995) or political attitudes and behaviors (Schussman and Soule 2005). On the other hand, scholars interested in meso-level explanations focus on factors like political opportunities (Meyer and Minkoff 2004), structural availability (McAdam 1986), or networks (Kitts 2000). Rarely do scholars attempt to integrate these two levels of analysis, despite calls to do so (McAdam et al. 2001; Klandermans, Van Stekelenburg and Walgrave 2014). My analysis is in line with the literature that seeks to link activists' individual-level perceptions and behaviors (e.g., changes in the use of protest tactics) to externally-generated changes in the larger environment (i.e., TM implementation).

My focus on activists' perceptions is based on the insights of Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2013: 886, emphasis mine): "people —social psychologists never tire of asserting— live in a **perceived** world … as social psychology explores the causes of the thoughts, feelings and actions of people —and primarily how these are influenced by social

contexts— it has a lot to offer to the study of protest." In this context, I follow an explicit premise: objective changes in the larger environment cannot affect mobilization, and tactical choice in particular, without individuals favorably reading those changes and the opportunities they might entail (McAdam et al. 2001; Boutcher 2011). The concept of *attribution of opportunity* is thus critical for this paper since it denotes the social-psychological mechanism that allows activists to perceive, through their various individual and collective identities, the objective changes that take place in their environment (McAdam et al. 2001).

It should be noted that the causal path between changes in the larger environment and activists' actions and perceptions based on those changes is not unidirectional. This means that tactics can partially determine the context in which they emerge rather than being a mere epiphenomena (Rojas 2006; Taylor et al. 2009). For instance, the barricade was a tactical innovation that helped reinforce collective identity and bonds of solidarity between rebels in the Paris Commune (Traugott 1995). Road blockades had a similar role in the *piquetero* movement in Argentina (Harley 2014). Importantly, Traugott reminds us that repertoires of contention, and the particular tactics they contain, are circumscribed by "conceptual resources*."* (Traugott 1995: 43). Here I focus on one conceptual resource: the attribution of opportunity to novel tactics perceived as effective.

The perceived effectiveness of protest tactics is not the only relevant factor to explain tactical choice and mobilization. Many other factors like institutional resources, cultural contexts, targets, counter-movements, networks of collaboration, tactical overlap, movement spillover, repression, news media, and bystanders exert an impact on tactical choice, the diffusion of tactics, and mobilization (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Meyer and Staggenborg 2012; Meyer and Whittier 1994; Wang and Soule 2012; Andrews and Biggs 2006; Olzak and Uhrig

2001; McAdam 1983; Biggs 2013; Walker et al. 2008; Meyer and Boutcher 2007). Moreover, activists' perceived effectiveness of a given tactic is not the only social-psychological determinant of tactical choice and mobilization. In the next paragraphs I review other important individual-level factors.

Explaining the Decision to Mobilize

Why are some individuals more likely to protest than others? Here, I consider five different factors present in the literature: biographical availability, resources, political attitudes, community infrastructure, and physical infrastructure. I argue that these factors are limited because they tend to overlook the individual-level perceived effectiveness of tactics —and the social-psychological process of opportunity attribution that these perceptions can activate.

Physical Infrastructure. Individuals do not live in an infrastructural vacuum. Physical infrastructure (e.g., transportation or communication systems) influences collective contention because it serves as a channel to mobilize protest resources (Smelser 1963). A key premise of this study is that, at a social-psychological level, the attribution of opportunity regarding tactical choice should be affected by how activists *envision* using the physical infrastructure around them. Here, the hypothesis that activists in Bogotá might be inclined to perceive TM shutdowns as potentially effective —and therefore would tend to attribute opportunity rather than threat to this tactic— seems particularly plausible for two reasons. First, it has been noted elsewhere that the role played by transportation infrastructure, and more precisely the role of shutting down transportation infrastructure, is critical to understand mobilization in the Global South (Boudreau 1996; Almeida 2012; Zibechi 2012). Second, as mentioned in the introduction, it has also been noted that the strategic use of road blockades in particular is heavily anchored in the protest

culture of Latin America (Auyero 2006; Silva 2009; López-Maya 2002; Harley 2014; Almeida 2012).

Community Infrastructure. Individuals do not live in a social vacuum. Scholars have shown that activists mobilize in social contexts populated by networks and organizations (Snow, Zurcher and Ekland-Olson 1980; DiGrazia 2014). McAdam (1983) argues that tactical innovation requires a community, and its mobilizing structures, to emerge and diffuse (see also Ganz 2000). I expect the mobilizing structures present in a given space to be critical for the attribution of opportunity vis-à-vis concrete tactics. Here, I rely on the concept of community infrastructure, which refers to the set of *mobilizing structures* and *social networks* that can be activated by protestors in a concrete locality (Almeida 2012). I expect activists' community infrastructure to be pivotal in order to understand group-based and network-based dynamics behind processes of opportunity attribution, tactical choice, and mobilization.

Biographical Availability. Potential activists face daily constraints that can make them more or less available for protesting (Corrigall-Brown 2012; McAdam 1988). For instance, individuals who do not have children, are young, unemployed, or have flexible schedules are usually more prone to protest (Beyerlein and Hipp 2006). I posit that tactical choice in general, and using highly disruptive tactics in particular, are likely to be affected by the biographical availability of protestors.

Resources. Potential activists not only face biographical availability constraints, they are also constrained in terms of their resources (McCarthy and Zald 1977). From an individual-level perspective, resources in the form of education or civic skills might make mobilization more likely (Brady, Verba and Schlozman 1995). I argue that perceiving a novel tactic like TM shutdowns as potentially effective is partially related to the resources of a given individual.

Political Attitudes. The literature on mobilization and political attitudes is rich and broad (Schussman and Soule 2005). Political ideology, efficacy, and political awareness are examples of preeminently psychological factors found to be correlated with mobilization and tactical innovation (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermanrs 2013). As with resources, I argue that certain political attitudes (e.g., political ideology) likely influence how protestors perceive, and carry out, tactical innovation or mobilization.

These five factors found in the social movement literature will prove crucial to understand and analyze my qualitative data. In other words, these factors will allow me to understand how, through their various individual and collective identities, activists could indeed attribute opportunity —rather than threat— to highly disruptive tactics in light of objective changes that take place in their larger environment.

Hypothesis

In the second part of the analysis, I will move beyond social-psychological evidence related to the attribution of opportunity in the field in order to study aggregate protest behavior dynamics that are consistent with the changes reported at the individual-level. More precisely, using a robust statistical framework and panel data, I will analyze all protest events that took place in Bogotá in the period 2001-2010. This fully covers the years between TM's implementation (2001) and the year in which TM shutdowns were declared as illegal (2010). In particular, I will analyze yearly counts of the frequency with which different traditional street protest tactics (i.e., street protest tactics *different* from TM shutdowns) were used throughout the city's 19 districts.[3] Knowing that the number of TM shutdowns throughout the city consistently increased during the period under analysis (see relevant data in the results section), I expect to find evidence that TM infrastructure acted as a magnet; pulling traditional street protest tactics

that used to take place on regular streets and redirecting them towards TM lanes. Finding evidence in this regard would provide critical aggregate-level confirmation of the existence of systematic changes in tactical choice in Bogotá, changes spurred by the availability of TM infrastructure. This implies the following hypothesis:

H: The level of TM infrastructure in Bogotá will be negatively associated with the use of traditional street protest tactics in the city.

DATA AND METHODS

I employ a mixed-methods design based on both panel data and interview data. These different data resources allow me to answer multiple parts of the research question. First, activists' perceptions tend to be difficult to capture in quantitative data. My panel data is not an exception to this rule. My qualitative data do, however, shed light on activists' thought processes, thus allowing me to incorporate their perceptions vis-à-vis tactical choice into the analysis. Second, my quantitative data is based on protest event data where the social networks in which activists are involved are not explicitly present. My qualitative data deliver first-hand evidence of how groups and networks are social conduits critical for tactical choice and mobilization. Third, since I collected qualitative in-depth evidence for only one group of activists in Bogotá, my panel data is ideal to test the generality of my argument since it records all protest events that took in place in the city between 2001 and 2010.

Quantitative Research Design.

Quantitative data. I use the *Social Struggles Data Set* (SSDS) —Base de Datos de Luchas Sociales,— which has been developed uninterruptedly since 1975 by the Colombian non-profit organization CINEP.[4] This data set registers all protest events carried out by 10 people or more based on the information reported by three different types of sources: 13 national and regional

Colombian newspapers,[5] 8 Colombian news magazines,[6] and reports from activist organizations (Archila 2002, 2003). The SSDS is, by far, the best data set to the study of protest dynamics in Colombia and one of the best in Latin America (Velasco 2015; Archila 2003). Importantly, this data set keeps track of the particular protest tactic(s) used at any given protest event. The possible categories in which protest tactics are classified in the SSDS are the following: road blockades, marches, strikes, illegal occupations of public or private buildings, and a residual category called 'other' protest tactics.

Dependent variable. I seek to understand the evolution of district-year counts in the use of traditional street protest tactics in Bogotá. Therefore, I initially divided street protests into two mutually exclusive categories: TM shutdowns and traditional street protest tactics. On the one hand, TM shutdowns are protest events in which activists blocked TM and only TM (i.e., activists did not block any of the regular lanes next to the TM lane(s) they actively were shutting down). On the other hand, traditional street protest tactics is simply the sum of marches and traditional road blockades. This coding scheme allows me to develop a conservative test of my hypothesis. This is the case because I always coded TM shutdowns as traditional road blockades when the lanes through which regular vehicles transit were also blocked by the protestors carrying out a TM shutdown, thus effectively inflating the count of traditional street protest tactics vis-à-vis the count of TM shutdowns. Figure 2 provides a graphic example of the important conceptual differences between a TM shutdown (Figure 2, Panel A) and a traditional street protest (Figure 2, Panel B). My dependent variable is, therefore, the count of the number of times **traditional street protests tactics** were used in a given district-year.

[INSERT FIG 2 HERE]

Key Explanatory Variable. When trying to isolate the effect of the attribution of opportunity spurred by TM infrastructure on the use of traditional street protest tactics, the key explanatory variable I use in this study is the number of TM stations in a given district-year. I label this variable as **TM infrastructure**. A powerful feature of this variable is that it varies over time and also varies by district. In short, while some districts never implemented TM, some others adopted TM at different times (e.g., 2001 vs. 2007) and/or to a different extent (e.g., among the districts with TM, by 2010 some districts had 23 TM stations while others only had 2). Figure 3 graphically summarizes the evolution of TM infrastructure in Bogotá over time.

[INSERT FIG 3 HERE]

Fixed Effects. **District fixed effects** control for all time-invariant district-specific features potentially related to the use of protest tactics. **Year fixed effects** control for non-stationary features of protest event data, like the existence of peaks around electoral years.

Control Variables. To account for the use of protest tactics different from traditional street protests, I also include district-year counts of **strikes**, **occupations of private or public buildings**, and of a residual category of protest tactics called '**other tactics**'. These variables make it possible to control for the overall level of contention in each district-year, thus allowing me to see if a decrease/increase in the dependent variable (i.e., the use of traditional street protest tactics) is actually a mere reflection of an overall decrease/increase in the level of contention independent of TM. I also control for the total area and population size of each district by including a covariate that keeps track of the number of inhabitants per Km^2 in a given district-year. I call this variable **population density**. To control for socioeconomic factors, I include a covariate that reflects the level of **poverty** in each district-year.[7] Finally, to control for political factors, I create a district-year dummy to indicate if the different incumbent mayors of Bogotá

during the period under analysis won a plurality of votes in a given district, I label this variable as **Mayor support**.[8] See the descriptive statistics for all the variables under analysis in the Appendix, Table A.1.

Quantitative Methods. Given that I am interested on the effect of a distinctive within-district variable (i.e., TM infrastructure) on the use of traditional street protests tactics, and that my modeling strategy has to account for the inherent skewness of event counts data (Long 1997), I follow exemplary work in the literature by using negative binomial models with one indicator (fixed effect) for each geographic unit (i.e., district) and for each year (Desmond, Papachristos and Kirk 2016). Importantly, the use of negative binomial models to investigate dependent variables similar to the one studied in this article is common in the social movements literature (Almeida 2012; Arce and Mangonnet 2012; Van Dyke and Soule 2002). Effectively, therefore, my negative binomial models estimate a different intercept for each district and year in the panel. Allison and Waterman (2002) demonstrate that this method has desirable statistical properties and they recommend its use when attempting to fit fixed-effects negative binomial models.

Finally, it should be noted that the amount of (over)dispersion in the dependent variable indicated that the negative binomial regression models were always preferred over Poisson regression models. In fact, a key assumption of Poisson regression models is that the variance of the dependent variable must equal the mean (Agresti 2013), something that was not true in my data. In this context, a key advantage of negative binomial regression models over Poison regression models is that the former control for possible sources of unobserved heterogeneity or contagion effects by adding a stochastic component to the model (Van Dyke and Soule 2002; Agresti 2013). In total, I have data for 19 districts over 10 years, for a total of 190 observations.

Qualitative Research Design

Case selection. Protest event data from the SSDS (Social Struggles Data Set) show that between 2000 and 2010 Barrios Unidos and Kennedy were the two districts in which the use of TM shutdowns was most frequent. These data also show that about 60% of the TM shutdowns in the Kennedy district took place between two contiguous TM stations, namely the Biblioteca Tintal station and the Patio Bonito station. Given that the distance between these two TM stations is approximately 500 meters, this particular neighborhood called Carimagua, was an ideal site to develop a qualitative case study of TM shutdowns. Carimagua is a poverty enclave, which is not entirely surprising since road blockades in Latin America tend to be used by poor people's movements (Auyero 2006; Tosoni 2007; Arce 2008; Arce and Rice 2009; Almeida 2012).

Qualitative Data & Methods. From July to September of 2012, I conducted fieldwork in Carimagua three days per week. I deploy my qualitative evidence to understand the relationship between the perceived effectiveness of TM shutdowns and concrete collective actions carried out by activists that used this particular tactic for mobilization. Here, I follow Biggs' insights (2013: 409): "only in retrospect, after the success of a novel tactic, can protesters —and sociologists— fully understand the changing circumstances that made it feasible, legitimate, and effective."

Guided by the principle of saturation (Small 2009), I conducted 31 semi-structured interviews relying on a combination of snowballing and convenience sampling. Eight interviews were conducted in three different residential complexes to gain basic insights into the happenings of Carimagua. I quickly learned that rickshaw drivers in this neighborhood had shutdown TM several times. I then chose to focus on rickshaw drivers, conducting interviews with 22 of them. Interviews were conducted while rickshaw drivers were working thereby making the interviews relatively short on average (20 minutes). All but one rickshaw driver were young men and none

of the respondents had a high school diploma.[9] I was also able to interview an activist while she participated in a TM shutdown in protest of the poor quality of the housing in Carimagua. All the interviews were conducted in Spanish and were fully recorded with respondents' consent. While I replaced respondent's identifying information, I did not alter the name of the neighborhood.

RESULTS

TM Shutdowns in Carimagua: Linking Individual Perceptions to Protests in the Field

I developed a case study using qualitative data based on a set of interviews to activists that have shut TM down repeatedly. My findings show that activists in Carimagua do attribute opportunity to TM shutdowns, that is, they perceived TM shutdowns as likely to be effective and, therefore, worth to be used as a tactic despite possible negative outcomes like alienating the thousands of TM users that live in Carimagua. The data also show that the attribution of opportunity vis-à-vis TM shutdowns is affected by the activists' social networks, biographical availability, and political attitudes, as well as by the local history of past protest events.

The initial interviews I conducted in Carimagua made clear that a key problem of this neighborhood was the lack of a public, legal, and affordable transportation from TM stations to peoples' actual homes. There was only one public and legal, albeit expensive, transportation solution; the so-called yellow buses. In this context, hundreds of pedal-powered rickshaws and dozens of small white vans emerged as informal, flexible, and cheap transportation solutions (see Figure 4).

[FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE]

This situation forged a highly competitive arena between the three different groups (rickshaw drivers, white-van drivers, and yellow-bus drivers). Rickshaw drivers were bullied both by white-van drivers and yellow-bus drivers, as well as punished by the Police. Organized

rickshaw drivers were also cannibalized by informal rickshaw drivers. Organized rickshaw drivers then envisioned, and used, TM shutdowns as a way to achieve legal status by means of pressuring the city government to grant them a license to work. Rickshaw drivers not only relied on highly disruptive tactics, however. They also carried out peaceful, government-protected, marches to the city downtown.

Rickshaw drivers never targeted TM *per se*, their target was the state. Indeed, the very existence of TM is critical for rickshaw drivers since their job **is** to provide a cheap transportation solution to get to TM stations. I submit that, to a large extent, rickshaw drivers conducted several TM shutdowns precisely because they did understand the efficacy bonus at play. In a word, the potential gains of systematically shutting TM down, but also the threats of doing so, were relatively evident for this group of activists. In fact, one of rickshaw drivers' main potential risks was to be labeled in a negative way, and potentially boycotted, by the people living in Carimagua —their very own patrons— due to the disruption caused by TM shutdowns. It is in the delicate balance between alienation and support from the broader community that the role of the perceived effectiveness of tactics was key for the emergence of actual TM shutdowns. I argue that the case of rickshaw drivers in Carimagua could be thought of as a conservative test of the hypothesized relationship between perceived effectiveness and mobilization because these activists put their (rather precarious) economic survival at stake every single time they shut TM down. Even in this context, they still used this highly disruptive tactic. The following paragraphs layout this interesting process.

Three different, albeit highly intertwined, layers of conflict comprised the contentious arena of Carimagua. In the first layer, yellow-bus drivers and white-van drivers were protagonists. Yellow-bus drivers believed they were entitled to block the free transit of white-vans in

Carimagua because buses are legally protected and regulated while white-vans are not. Juan, a white-van driver, succinctly referred to their relationship with yellow-bus drivers: "Well, it is problematic, there are problems here and there because they block us [*nos cierran*]… and because of the way they treat us… and all of that." I immediately asked Juan what he meant by *blocking* in this context. He explained to me: "I mean when they block you because of passengers…when they block you… like to prevent you from picking-up new passengers." (Juan, white-van driver in Carimagua)

The second layer of conflict is characterized by white-van drivers as victimizers and rickshaw drivers as victims. Since both actors operate informally, their fights are more personal and violent when compared to conflicts between white-van and yellow-bus drivers. The third conflict layer is restricted to organized and unorganized rickshaw drivers. Unorganized rickshaw drivers jeopardize organized drivers by taking advantage of the informal nature of this business, serving the patrons of established rickshaw drivers who belong to rickshaw organizations. Struggles in this layer are also highly personal and violent. Mario, a member of a formal association of rickshaw drivers, ASOTRICCOL, commented on this issue when I asked him about the advantages of being a member of a rickshaw driver organization: "The good thing about it is that no one messes with you (…) If you are not a member it's complicated because then the other [i.e., organized] rickshaw drivers just come and beat you up and slash your tires." (Mario, organized rickshaw driver in Carimagua).

Virtually all rickshaw drivers I interviewed were fully aware of the importance of pressuring for a city-granted legal license to work. They strongly believed it will prevent fights with white-van drivers and, especially, with the Police. Indeed, the Police tended to do unexpected raids to confiscate rickshaws because of their illegal status. Even inhabitants of

Carimagua mentioned Police actions towards rickshaw drivers as a motivation for rickshaw drivers to protest and shut TM down. For instance, according to Dario: "The rickshaw drivers also shutdown Transmilenio, right there in Cali Avenue across from Biblioteca el Tintal. They blocked the TM busway for an entire day. Actually, they have blocked it several times because the Police do not let them work, they have not been able to obtain a license to work. That's what you get when you don't let people work…" (Dario, inhabitant of Carimagua).

Dario's account shows positive, albeit indirect, support to rickshaw drivers shutting TM down, which is a common finding in my data. There was one instance, however, in which an inhabitant of Carimagua conceptualized TM shutdowns carried out by rickshaw drivers in a very negative way. In that instance, Arlen, referred to rickshaw drivers as a group of "potheads [*marihuaneros*] that frequently block TM, they see no problem in messing with people's time." This is evidence of the critical balance between alienation and support from the broader community around TM shutdowns.

As mentioned before, rickshaw drivers not only pressured the city government by shutting down TM. For example, Pablo, a rickshaw driver leader, described a legal (non-disruptive) demonstration that rickshaw drivers carried out during April of 2009. This demonstration was called for by a city-wide confederation of rickshaw drivers, an umbrella organization that brings together local associations such as the previously mentioned ASOTRICCOL. According to a note in a prominent newspaper, at least 1,000 rickshaw drivers participated in this demonstration, which took place at the city hall.[10] In Pablo's account, both community infrastructure in the form of mobilization structures such as ASOTRICCOL and resources in the form of flexible work schedules, leaders with organizational skills, and time availability emerged as important assets for mobilization:

> **Interviewer**: How was the march possible?
> **Pablo**: The leadership of the confederation assigned a specific time in which every rickshaw driver working in a given route had to join the march. We [ASOTRICCOL] joined the march at 9:00 a.m. By that time, 8 different associations were already marching. We were marching right after them.
> **Interviewer**: How many of you guys made it?
> **Pablo**: Most of us, I'm pretty sure…. It was kind of easy, it is not like we have office hours [horario de oficina] you know? For the most part, we come to work because we need it, but we have no boss telling us to follow a strict schedule… we own our time, if we want to protest we can do it, cops [*tombos*] permitting (Pablo, rickshaw driver leader).

I then asked Pablo about his role in this large-scale protest. Here, the contribution of social networks to mobilization beyond the membership in formal organizations is clear: "Well, Hernando and Miguel [leaders from a different organization of rickshaw drivers] talked me into it. I then talked to my ASOTRICCOL co-workers [*compañeros*] about it." (Pablo, rickshaw driver leader).

Later in the conversation, Pablo mentioned that rickshaw drivers had also shutdown TM several times. Pablo's words suggest that rickshaw drivers decided to shut TM down not only because of the objective availability of this particular infrastructure, but because they perceived the tactic to be potentially effective. Specifically, I asked him why rickshaw drivers had shutdown TM several times in the past instead of using traditional road blockades or marches. He replied:

> It is said that to gain government's attention, people have to go there directly to TM, to shutdown TM, so that the government finally listens to people. When the neighborhood needs something, when the rickshaw drivers need something, or at least to be heard, TM is the most effective method. (Pablo, rickshaw driver leader).

From this statement, it is clear that Pablo attributes opportunity to TM infrastructure because of the perceived effectiveness of TM shutdowns in terms of drawing government's attention to a pressuring social issue. Although Pablo's choice of language indicates a desire to disassociate from the practice of shutting TM down —probably because the use of highly disruptive tactics

takes away some of the legitimacy of his broader claims— his words show how the perceived effectiveness of TM shutdowns, and the consequent attribution of opportunity, was greater than the threat attributed to partake in them.

This argument was also supported by Carmen, a Carimagua inhabitant and activist I managed to interview in the field during a TM shutdown organized in protest of urban planning policies developed by the city and national governments. When I asked her why was she shutting TM down, she replied: "The media is going to arrive here, this kind of highway [TM lane] is always very crowded. Here we can cause a traffic jam and get media coverage. We hope our actions get public authorities' attention and even the President's attention. We have to shut the damn thing down!" I immediately asked Carmen if this was her first time shutting TM down, she said: "It is, yes. But, have you heard about the mess rickshaw drivers have done here before by shutting down TM? (Carmen, activist protesting in Carimagua). Like Pablo, Carmen clearly conceptualizes the perceived effectiveness of TM shutdowns in terms of their potential to attain high levels of visibility (i.e., get government or media attention) and disruption.

Carmen's words are also important because they remind us of the importance of the perceived effectiveness of protest tactics in the context of time-dependent, and ever-changing, repertoires of contention. Concrete activists capitalize on concrete opportunities, and when they do so, they open up new opportunities (and constraints) for activists to (re)learn, (re)shape or simply forget specific tactics (Ganz 2000). All this happens in a specific context shaped by several factors (e.g., community and physical infrastructure), including past protest events. In short, the qualitative evidence at hand reminds us that the timing of protest events is important to perceive certain tactics as more or less effective.

Several other accounts vis-à-vis the perceived effectiveness of TM shutdowns were provided by other rickshaw drivers. For example, Felipe, a rank-and-file rickshaw driver, put it this way when I asked him why do a TM shutdown: "look at all those people inside that TM bus over there, that's a hell of a lot [*un montón*] of people that will be mad if someone decides to fuck [*joder*] with TM, right?" Indirectly, Felipe is alluding to the relentless strategic trade-off associated with highly disruptive tactics due to their capacity to attract attention while simultaneously affecting large numbers of people. Camilo, another rank-and-file rickshaw driver mentioned this: "If you think about it, blocking it [TM] is the people's right [*es un derecho del pueblo*]. We have to make our voices heard." Santiago, yet another rank-and file rickshaw driver, was also very direct. In his account, Santiago alludes to the role of social influence and social networks: "if they [the government] don't let us work, sometimes we don't let them [TM users] get to work (…) I have tried to convince several of my co-workers [compañeros] about this idea, some of them have followed my lead [seguido la cuerda]." As noted by Santiago, not all of his co-workers believe in the effectiveness of this tactic, however. For example, Carlos, a rank-and-file rickshaw driver, mentioned this: "some radicals think that by shutting TM down they will achieve something. I think I will achieve far more by continuing to work hard to feed my daughter." This statement should not be at all surprising, and could be explained based on the literatures on both biographical availability (given Carlos' reference to his daughter) and political attitudes (given Carlos' pejorative reference to protestors as "radicals").

Even though rickshaw drivers never attained a license to work, the bulk of my qualitative evidence does suggest that the perceived effectiveness of TM shutdowns in itself was key for rickshaw drivers to carry out several TM shutdowns. In this regard, my qualitative data also show the importance of the trade-off that activists face when they have to decide whether or not

to use highly disruptive tactics that can also generate negative outcomes like alienating potential and actual supporters. In particular, the qualitative data show that rickshaw drivers purposefully decided to shut TM down rather than use traditional street protest tactics due to the perceived effectiveness of the former vis-à-vis the latter. The same was true for activists like Carmen, who took part of a TM shutdown to oppose new urban planning policies by trying to replicate the level of disruption attained by previous TM shutdowns carried out by rickshaw drivers in Carimagua. Finally, it should be clear that the perceived effectiveness of tactics is only part of the story. Factors traditionally mentioned in the social movements literature are also present in my data. Specially, the role of networks, personal and organizational resources, ideology, and biographical availability are all important to understand TM shutdowns in Carimagua. In the next section I will make use of panel data to show that the social-psychological process of opportunity attribution spurred by TM infrastructure had observable, durable, and systematic effects on tactical choices made by activists in Bogotá well beyond Carimagua.

Street Protests in the TM Era: Linking New Opportunities to Protests in Bogotá

In this section I will present the results derived from the quantitative data. More precisely, I will show how TM infrastructure negatively affected the use of traditional street protest tactics. I argue that this empirical pattern is consistent with the main tenet of this paper: due to a process of opportunity attribution based on the perceived effectiveness of TM shutdowns, TM infrastructure acted as a magnet; pulling traditional protest events that used to take place on regular streets and redirecting them towards TM lanes specifically.

Figure 5 presents the yearly average count of TM shutdowns and traditional street protest tactics in all districts with at least one TM station in a given year. On the one hand, the number of traditional street protest tactics clearly *decreased* between 2005-2006 and, especially, after

2007. On the other hand, there was a steady *increase* in the number of TM shutdowns after 2003. This visual relationship is also borne out statistically ($r = -0.296$, $P < 0.005$). This represents initial evidence in favor of my hypothesis. I will test this hypothesis in the following paragraphs using a multivariate statistical framework in order to pay close attention to the relationship between an objective indicator of TM infrastructure, the number of TM stations, and counts of traditional street protest tactics in Bogotá. As mentioned above, I expect to see a negative association between these two variables.

[FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE]

Table 1 presents the results of negative binomial regression models estimating the relationship between TM infrastructure and the use of traditional street protest tactics. These models use all the demographic, political, and economic time-varying controls mentioned in the data and methods section. Model 2, the model with best fit, includes district and year fixed effects. Table 1 shows unstandardized coefficients.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Results from Model 2 show that each additional TM station is associated with a 6% percent decrease in the number of traditional street protest tactics, holding other variables constant. This is strong evidence in favor of my hypothesis. In order to see this relationship more clearly, Figure 6 shows the predicted probability of observing a zero count in the dependent variable (i.e., the probability of observing **no** traditional street protest tactics) as a function of the number of TM stations. These predictions are computed after holding constant all controls. Figure 6 clearly shows that as the number of TM stations increases, the probability of observing *no* traditional street protest tactics also increases. For instance, the probability of observing *no* traditional street protest tactics in the presence of 0 TM stations is quite low 0.13, while that

same probability is exactly twice as large (0.26) in the presence of 9 TM stations, which was the mean number of TM stations per district in 2010. Moreover, the probability of observing *no* traditional street protest tactics increases to 0.43 in the presence of 15 TM stations. In 2010, there were 3 districts with more than 15 TM stations: Suba (23 TM stations), Barrios Unidos (23 stations), and Puente Aranda (16 stations).

[FIGURE 6 ABOUT HERE]

It is important to highlight that since negative binomial regressions are non-linear models, assessing the effect of any explanatory variable fully depends on the specific value used for all covariates, including the explanatory variable itself (Long 1997). In this context, holding all control variables at their mean –for continuous variables– or modal values –for categorical variables–, a standard deviation increase *centered around the mean* ($mean_{2001}$ = 5.16 TM stations, SD_{2001} = 4.95 TM stations) in the number of TM stations in 2001, decreases the expected number of traditional street protests by 0.26. The expected number of traditional street protests decreases by 0.57 and 0.64 in 2005 and 2010, respectively ($mean_{2005}$ = 6.89 TM stations, SD_{2005} = 5.23 TM stations; $mean_{2010}$ = 9 TM stations, SD_{2010} = 6.72 TM stations). This is, again, important evidence in favor of my hypothesis based on changes in the use of traditional street protest tactics at the beginning, middle, and end of the period under analysis.

Taking into account that there is an undisputable increase in the empirically observed number of TM shutdowns over time in Bogotá (see Figure 5), and that the number of traditional street protests is indeed negatively and strongly associated with the number of TM stations (see Figure 6), it is very likely that TM infrastructure did act as a magnet; pulling traditional street protest tactics and redirecting them towards TM lanes specifically. This is true above and beyond demographic, political, and economic controls, and especially, above and beyond the frequency

with which all other traditional tactics (e.g., strikes, occupations) were used between 2001 and 2010.

The quantitative evidence presented above is the second and last piece of evidence in favor of the main argument of this paper. Activists in Bogotá seem to have been inclined to perceive TM shutdowns as potentially effective, and therefore to attribute opportunity rather than threat to this tactic. The negative association between the use of traditional street protest tactics and TM shutdowns, as well as the negative association between TM infrastructure and the use of traditional street protest tactics, are strong indicators in this regard. Considered together, the evidence in this paper shows how objective changes in the larger environment (i.e., the implementation of TM) seem to have been the source of a systematic process of opportunity attribution —based on the perceived effectiveness of tactics— that had clear and measurable impacts on the tactical choices made by activists in the Colombian capital.

Conclusion

I have shown how an external change in the larger environment can be the objective source of a process of opportunity attribution spurred by the perceived effectiveness associated with the use of highly disruptive tactics. Indeed, the quantitative data in this study show how TM infrastructure does contribute to explain key and systematic changes in the use of protest tactics over time. In particular, I have shown that TM infrastructure is negatively associated with the use of traditional street protest tactics. This suggests that TM infrastructure acted as a magnet; pulling street protest tactics that used to be used on regular streets (i.e., traditional street protests) and redirecting them towards TM lanes. Moreover, my qualitative evidence shows that protestors in the field do perceive TM shutdowns as highly effective in terms of their potential to attain high levels of visibility and disruption; thus, explaining why they ultimately use this tactic.

Importantly, activists in the field were also fully aware of the negative implications of using highly disruptive tactics due to their potential to alienate supporters and undermine the legitimacy of their claims. In the case at hand, activists still decided to mobilize partially because of the perceived effectiveness of TM shutdowns. In this context, the evidence I compiled and analyzed shows how the social-psychological process of opportunity attribution (McAdam et al 2001) is key to understand how activists can perceive, through their various individual and collective identities, the objective changes that take place in their environment. In doing so, this paper demonstrates how the concept of opportunity attribution can allow researchers to connect mobilization and tactical choice on the one hand, to the social-psychology of highly disruptive tactics on the other hand, all happening in the context of objective changes in the larger environment in which protests usually take place.

Future research should address the expansion of TM-like (i.e., BRT) systems and their relationship to mobilization in other latitudes. This is important because the extraordinary growth of this particular transportation system throughout the Global South (Campo 2010) increases the potential modularity of TM shutdowns. For reasons outlined in this paper, however, each case should be carefully analyzed since the interactions between the process of opportunity attribution, the physical infrastructure of a given place, and its community infrastructure are complex and context-specific.

Finally, the fact that TM infrastructure itself is a central piece of the analysis reminds us of the relevance of physical infrastructure, and space more generally, for collective contention in Latin America. Since road blockades, of which TM shutdowns are a subset, are firmly anchored in the Latin American tactical repertoire (Archila 2003; Auyero 2006; Silva 2009; Almeida 2012), TM-like shutdowns emerge as a novel avenue to explore the strong connection between

social movements and space in Latin America, a relationship that has been noted elsewhere (Zibechi 2012). In particular, the analyses I performed are a reminder of the centrality of transportation infrastructure for existing theories of mobilization and tactical innovation, especially in the Global South (Almeida 2012; Boudreau 1996). In this regard, this paper shows that spatial transformations related to transportation infrastructure are indeed critical to develop a sound understanding of mobilization and tactical choice in the global periphery.

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Figure 1. El Dorado Line, Transmilenio

Figure 2. TM Shutdowns vs. Traditional Road Blockades

<u>Panel A</u>. Graphical Example of a TM Shutdown

Only TM lanes are blocked, while cars transit normally in the regular lanes. In this article, *only* these protest events are understood as TM shutdowns

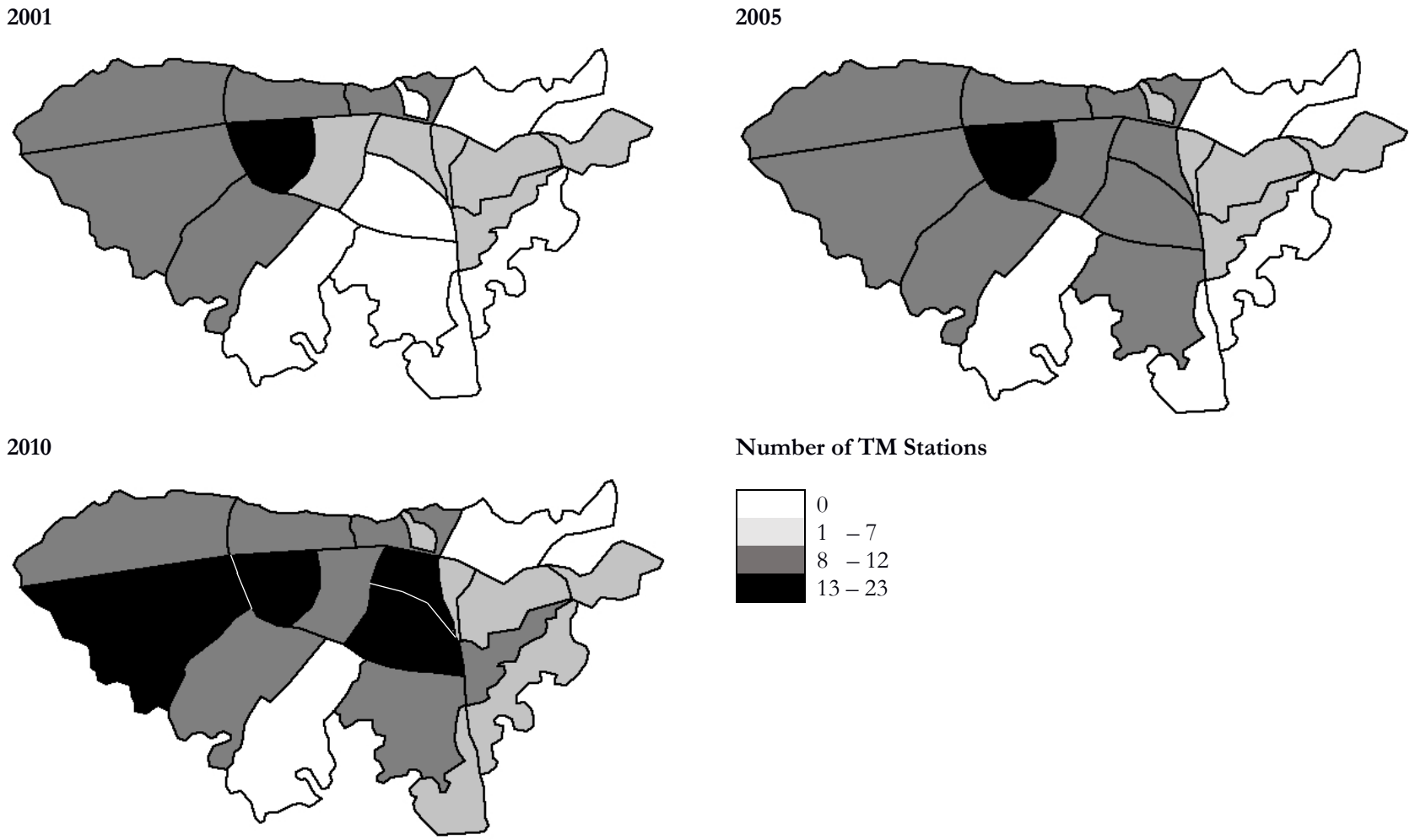
Source: El Univesal Newspaper. Date accessed: 8/14/2017

<u>Panel B</u>. Graphical Example of a Traditional Street Protest in which a TM Lane happens to be Blocked

Both regular lanes –to the left of the yellow line– and TM lanes –to the right of yellow line– are blocked. In this article, protest events like this one are considered to be traditional street protests.

Source: Confidential Colombia News Portal. Date accessed: 8/14/2017

Figure 3. Bogotá Maps Showing the Number of TM Stations per District Over Time (Number of Districts = 19)



Note: Darker shades indicate more TM stations

Figure 4. Transportation Solutions in Carimagua

White Vans

Yellow Buses

Rickshaws

Figure 5. Average TM Shutdowns and Traditional Street Protest Tactics per Year in Districts with at least 1 TM Station, 2001-2010

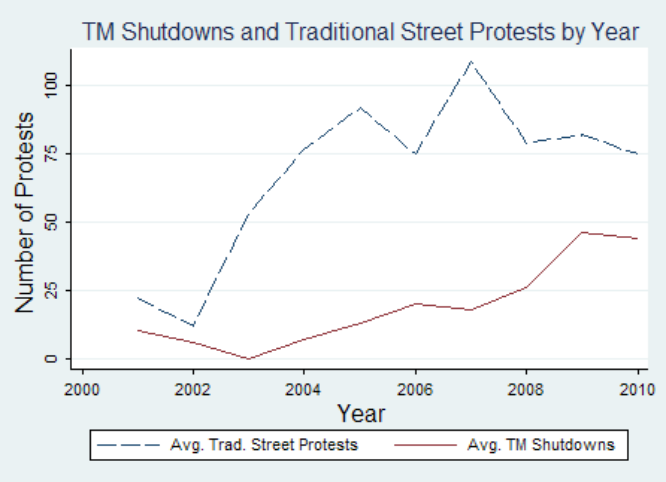


Figure 6. Predicted Probability of a Zero Count (i.e. No Traditional Street Protest Tactics) Based on the Negative Regression Model 2 in Table 1

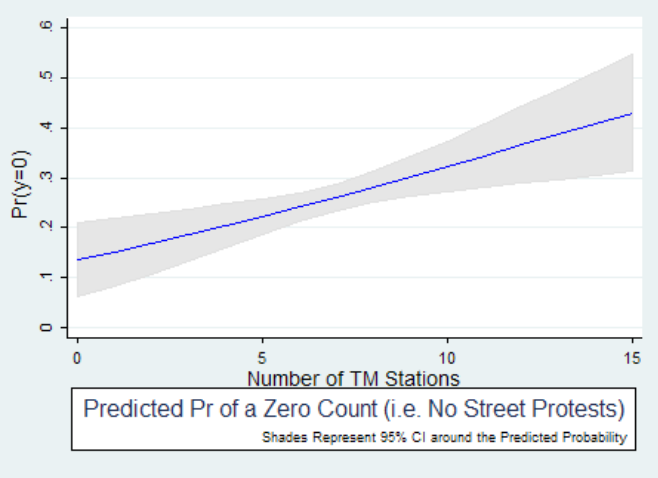


Table 1. Negative Binomial Count Regression Models Estimating the Relationship between TM Infrastructure and the Use of Traditional Street Protest Tactics

Variables	**Model 1**	**Model 2**
Dependent variable (Traditional Street Protests Tactics)	**Coefficients (b)**	**Coefficients (b)**
Key Explanatory Variable		
TM Infrastructure	-0.120*	-0.060**
	(0.057)	(0.021)
Traditional Protest Tactics		
Strikes	-0.054	0.010
	(0.474)	(0.089)
Occupations	0.228**	0.104
	(0.082)	(0.067)
Other Tactics	0.203	0.017
	(0.118)	(0.067)
Other Controls		
Mayor Lost (yes = 1)	-0.349	0.074
	(0.304)	(0.307)
Population Density	-0.001	0.001
	0.001	0.001
Poverty	-0.074**	-0.006
	(0.018)	(0.020)
District and year fixed effects	NO	YES
Constant	4.189	-0.212
	(1.247)	(0.850)
N	190	190
Log pseudolikelihood	-404.486	-295.022
Pseudo R^2	0.073	0.324
AIC	826.972	624.043
BIC	856.972	679.243

*p ≤ .05; p ** ≤ .01; p *** ≤ .001 (two-tailed tests); Adjusted standard errors in parentheses

Appendix.

Table A.1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable		Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	Observations	
TM Stations	**overall**	7.453	6.058	0.000	23.000	N =	190
	between		5.570	0.000	18.600	Districts =	19
	within		2.674	-2.347	13.653	Years =	10
Traditional Street Protests Tactics	**overall**	3.784	9.329	0.000	77.000	N =	190
	between		7.994	0.300	35.400	Districts =	19
	within		5.117	-30.616	45.384	Years =	10
Strikes	**overall**	0.026	0.160	0.000	1.000	N =	190
	between		0.056	0.000	0.200	Districts =	19
	within		0.151	-0.174	0.926	Years =	10
Occupations	**overall**	0.547	0.852	0.000	4.000	N =	190
	between		0.434	0.100	1.500	Districts =	19
	within		0.739	-0.953	3.347	Years =	10
Other Traditional Protest Tactics	**overall**	0.253	0.553	0.000	2.000	N =	190
	between		0.287	0.000	1.000	Districts =	19
	within		0.477	-0.747	1.953	Years =	10
Mayor Support (yes = 1)	**overall**	0.279	0.450	0.000	1.000	N =	190
	between		0.290	0.000	0.700	Districts =	19
	within		0.350	-0.421	0.979	Years =	10
Population Density	**overall**	13423.400	8028.331	1193.825	28842.440	N =	190
	between		8205.386	1425.674	28770.810	Districts =	19
	within		576.072	10604.630	16209.220	Years =	10
Poverty	**overall**	25.314	12.445	2.250	61.070	N =	190
	between		9.897	8.021	41.998	Districts =	19
	within		7.848	0.871	47.101	Years =	10

The overall and within statistics are calculated over 190 district-years. The between statistic is calculated over 19 districts. The information for each variable (x_{it}) is decomposed into a between (x_i) and within ($x_{it} - x_i + X$) component, where X is the global mean

Notes

[1] Two Transmilenio stations are shutdown due to protests in Kennedy district (Protestas en Kennedy tienen dos estaciones de Transmilenio cerradas). *El Tiempo* (newspaper), 29 January, 2011.
[2] Did truck drivers win? (¿Ganaron el pulso los camioneros?). *Revista Semana* (news magazine). (4 April, 2011).
[3] In actuality, Bogotá has 20 districts. One of them, Sumapáz, is an overwhelmingly rural district, however. Because of this reason it is excluded from the analysis
[4] The data set can be purchased here: http://cinep.org.co/Home2/servicios/sistema-de-informacion-general-sig/base-de-datos-de-luchas-sociales.html
[5] El Tiempo, El Espectador, El (Nuevo) Siglo, La República, El Colombiano, El País, El Heraldo, Vanguardia Liberal, Voz (Proletaria), El Pueblo, El Universal, El Diario de la Costa, and El Periódico.
[6] Semana, Alternativa, Opción, Solidaridad, Colombia Hoy, Cien Días Vistos por Cinep, Campo Adentro, Panorama.
[7] Poverty at the district level was calculated using the Multidimensional Poverty Index –MPI– (Alkire and Santos 2010; Alkire and Foster 2011). There are three yearly measures of this index taken by the city government: 2003, 2007, and 2010. In this context Stata's *ipolate* and *epolate* commands were used to estimate the MPI for the years with no data. The data were taken from Hurtado (2014).
[8] Data were taken from Bastidas (2009).
[9] My *in situ* observations showed me that this is a male-dominated activity.
[10] Rickshaw drivers protest because of poor working conditions (Bicitaxistas protestan por falta de garantías para trabajar). *El Espectador* (newspaper), 27 April, 2009.