

# Introduction: For an egalitarian and sustainable mobility

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With this fourth Report from Valladolid we tackle one of the most embedded and uncomfortable rights of the current times: the right to mobility. A multi-faced issue which, in one way or another, is present in the political agendas of all countries, specially in the richest ones. Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights establishes the two main pillars that define this right: "Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state" and "Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country". That is to say, all human beings, without exception (since everyone is "born free and equal in dignity and rights" according to Article 1 of the said Declaration) have the right to the establishment of the necessary conditions so that the urban and interurban spaces become suitable and equitable for the internal mobility of all the inhabitants of a territory; in addition, and above all, in order to guarantee the freedom of movement of people beyond the borders of states. As reflected in literature specialized in this issue, and as reflected in the articles included in this Report, the compliance with both faces of the right to mobility is threatened (by all accounts it seems like increasingly so) in its totality.

The most serious consequences (and in some cases the most dramatic ones) is that in both cases this non-compliance generates inequality and affects the weakest parties: poor people, elderly, children, disabled people and women, all of them human beings that are far from the prototype that serves as the base to design cities and define the rules of the social game: male, white, economically solvent, fully capable (physically and intellectually). "The right to mobility is not a universal right (...) it is becoming increasingly more restricted" (Grijalvo). The right to mobility is much more efficient for those who drive a vehicle than for those that do not even own one. In the same way than having economic means eases access to any country, whether it is to study, to work or as tourists (the relationship is directly proportional). Inequality and discrimination, therefore, for reasons beyond one's own will which taint a person for the mere fact of having been born in one place and not in another: "Immigrants are victims of their own birthplace" says R. Zapata, just as it was in Medieval times. And in the issue of displacements, T. Litman adds: "The decisions taken in the area of mobility have a great impact on equality", since many groups of the population have no access to a car, although they contribute towards its costs and suffer its effects. Inequality is also evident in the so called informal city, an phenomenon specially outrageous in Latin America (C. Torres and B. Baranda). Thus, the world divides people into two categories: first class and second class citizens, the latter being the ones that see their innate rights violated.

However, human beings are sometimes displaced against their own will, both in the urban sense (due to the absurd planning of cities that we are currently experiencing) and in the international sense (when conditions in the countries of origin do not allow a dignified existence). E. Bericat makes it clear in his article: "In our civilization we have taken the logic of mechanical mobility to such an extent that, without even realizing, we have cut our fundamental rights of pedestrian mobility, de facto ruining the possibility of living in reduced, dense and close territorial contexts". And regarding immigrants: "Are they really free when they decide to leave their countries, when they decide to leave their home towns, leaving family and friends behind? Is it a free will mobility or is it merely a mobility to make them free, i.e., a mobility forced by the lousy conditions present in the places from which they fly?"

Among States, borders are more impassable than ever. Borders that in Medieval times enclosed cities, and that in modern times were translated into the confines of the States. These States practice contention policies that are doomed to fail or that constitute a great farce. They do not stop immigration, they actually generate clandestinity and criminalize those people that are forced to leave their home countries. Migrations became more frequent in Europe when this continent decided to close its borders in the early 70s, coinciding with the economic crisis. C. Witold de Wenden is categorical when he says that a stronger reinforcement of borders creates a greater migratory pressure and S. Castles exposes several reasons for this failure in his article. The closing, on the other hand, forces those who manage to enter into establishing themselves in the destination country for good and

bringing, in turn, their families, as opposed to allowing for a temporary migration. The lock policy, therefore, reveals itself as useless in every respect. “A door opens both ways. To enter with hope and to leave without it. A closed door is a trap” (B. López in *El País*, 5-Oct-05). To place higher fences, impregnable walls, sophisticated detection systems: “this seems to be the logic that dominates how this great drama is being treated, showing that the only exit we seem to practice is to close our eyes, feeling impotent when faced with the certainty that the ones that arrived will be followed by others and cynically thinking that maybe they will give up in the presence of the very high and shameful wall we have constructed between welfare and poverty” (B. López, once again).

It is quite indecent, on the other hand, that the mobility of goods and capital is appreciated and encouraged by the States while the migration of people is restricted and is only allowed when it is beneficial to the countries of destination, even though both processes are sides of the same coin, that of globalization. In Europe, as pointed out by Y. Schibel, there are only three types of legal immigration (refugees and asylum seekers; members of domestic families and immigrants; and economic immigration) and three very restricted ways of mobility for these immigrants (for family reunification, for long term residents who come from third countries, and by exit and entry between their home and host countries). Policies which, once again, generate illegality: traffic of immigrants, fraudulent marriages and adoptions, etc. Nonetheless “the right to mobility is an essential component of equal treatment”.

We must propose, therefore, extending the right of settlement, the person’s freedom to move and stay wherever he prefers. We must talk about generalizing it, since this right is already in effect for rich people. A proposal that must be done, not only for its obviousness (“a country organized around democratic and liberal values should not have the moral capability to refuse the admission of immigrants”, says R. Zapata), but also due to its consequences. It has very little to do with fears, and a lot to do with extending justice and with rationalizing processes, with the consequent improvement of urban conditions. For this, first and foremost we should discard any idea of uncontrollable invasion. Nothing authorizes us to think that many more than those coming today would come. Who remembers nowadays, for example, the renowned “migratory risk” which, apparently, threatened Western Germany after the reunification? Would the welfare state be at risk? We must remember the contribution to the sustainability of this very state due to the revenue created by immigrants. Would the load capacity of the territories be at risk? We cannot seriously talk about ecological problems derived from a decision such as the one proposed.

According to R. Zapata “A fair distribution of wealth and an interpretation of human rights which supersedes the iron cage of States are at this moment in time the only real ways of finding possible solutions” (since in an international process, such as the one concerning immigration, international policies must be assured by an institution that guarantees their compliance).

On the other hand, mobility understood as the capability of moving from one place to another is one of the main objectives of sustainability, both on a local and on a global scale. Transportation, in light of how world economies are currently structured, means development, growth and wealth, but it may also mean the ecological collapse of the territory. Sustainable mobility must stop being a politically correct concept and become a useful concept. For this, it must be reformulated from the beginning, and it must be considered as a transversal issue that implies several areas, disciplines and governments (at local, national and international levels). To consider mobility globally: an idea shared by almost all the authors of this Report, such as R. Montezuma: we have to “act (jointly) in respect to the non-motorized and motorized subsystems”, A. Perona, A. L. Flechas or C. Miralles-Guash, when they say that “the policies and initiatives in the transportation sector are sectorial, and, therefore, no significant changes have been introduced”. A. Sanz insists in that in the mobility issue “sustainability makes us reformulate the object of study, the method and instruments of analysis and the intervention tools.”

The European Urban Charter (1992) was already categorical regarding possible solutions: “The car or the city? This over simplistic view is very nearly the case. Slowly but surely cars pollute cities. By the year 2000, a choice will have to be made: it will be one or the other; both cannot be kept”. The document already pointed out the two basic principles under which we could divide the many sectorial current proposals for improvements (many of which are included in this Report, among all the authors): to drastically reduce the number of cars in circulation; and to impose rules and ways to reach a harmonious, egalitarian and peaceful co-existence between the different mobility modes within the space in the streets.

In the first group we should adopt measures regarding the ordinance of territory, the planning of cities, the ordinance of uses, residential density, and regeneration of obsolete neighbourhoods.

According to S. Tjallingii maybe technological advances will mitigate environmental problems derived from cars, but territorial de-structuration and the alteration of natural and urban systems derived from the infrastructures necessary for the circulation of vehicles are unavoidable. In order to alleviate this, he proposes the creation of spatial structures that create clearly differentiated transport conditions for spaces of great accessibility and for other calmer ones (flows and areas placed around the traffic and water networks).

Other authors defend the need to apply several types of fees: for owning and using a car, for the conditions under which it is used, for the access to particular facilities, etc. (Ole Thorson, Winston Koh). For positive discrimination measures towards alternative transportation: "improvement of alternative means of transportation must be accompanied by instruments that affect the cost of using the car (fees, decreasing the speed limit simultaneously to increasing the speed of public transportation, limiting parking spaces" (C. Miralles-Guash)).

In any case, we need to dismiss the false premise that traffic problems may be solved by extending the network "Building more infrastructure does not improve congestion problems, it actually worsens them (P. Segura)". In this sense, A. Estevan quotes in his article research projects undertaken in Europe regarding the reaction of the system as a result of the reduction of the capacity of the infrastructures. They concluded that a reduction of the road network "evaporated" traffic. Maybe we could start from here: "An active management of congestion (today I cancel a lane here, tomorrow I cancel an underground passageway there...) could be the inoculation against the disease of transportation."

Regarding the second group, logically inseparable from the former, reconquering the street as a social space means designing urban mobility plans which are based on the premise that all citizens (those who drive and those who don't) have the right to equally enjoy the public space (and the streets constitute the main expression of this public space, even though they are usually claimed by private vehicles, either in motion or parked). Therefore, we need to reconsider the egalitarian distribution of available public space, contemplating road networks that take into account an adequate design of the space for pedestrians, co-existence roads, space for bicycles, space for public transportation, modal interchangers, necessary parkings (not car magnets), etc. The Charter of pedestrian rights already contemplated, in 1988, a good deal of guidelines that are still valid, and have not been generalized.

It is true, on the other hand, that the new technologies allow, and will continue to allow even more, other types of mobility, other types of nomadic movement (Articles by A. Dagnino and V. Silva) but, again, and in today's world, this type of "mobility" also widens the gap between first and second class citizens. Since, although never before could we enjoy so much mobility, this mobility never before separated so much one group of citizens from the other.