

**Neoliberalism and City Hall in Lima and Mexico City:
Comparing Mayors Ebrard, Mancera and Villarón**

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Occasional Paper 98

September 2014

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Paper prepared for presentation at the annual conference of the North Central Council of Latin Americanists (NCCLA), St. Olaf College, September 26-27, 2014.
(Winner of the 2014 NCCLA Raquel Kersten Professional Research Award)

Abstract

In Latin American countries guided by national neoliberal economic policies, how do center-left mayors pursue urban development? Through field research in Mexico and Peru, our project examines the urban development policies of three mayoral administrations: Susana Villarán (Lima, 2011-present), Marcelo Ebrard (Mexico City, 2006-12), and Miguel Ángel Mancera (Mexico City, 2012-present). Although center-left mayors in both cities have challenged national economic policies, their reception has varied dramatically. In Mexico City, anti-neoliberal stances by city leaders garnered rewards ranging from international recognition to becoming competitive presidential candidates. In Peru, however, Mayor Villarán faced a punishing opposition from her first day in office, lost months narrowly fending off a recall election, and headed into her 2014 re-election bid politically weak and expected to lose.

We investigate three questions: 1) Do center-left mayors confronted by neoliberal national leadership retreat from their policy ambitions and consequently lose support among their base?; 2) Within a neoliberal, pro-privatization context, to what extent do center-left mayors embrace public-private partnerships and how does this benefit or damage them politically?; and 3) To what extent do center-left mayors embrace the scapegoating of informality for the city's woes, and how do such moves affect them politically? Through these questions, our paper thus anchors national economic development debates in the concrete setting of metropolitan governance.

Introduction

In Latin American countries guided by neoliberal economic policies, how and with what results do mayors elected on a center-left platform pursue urban development? Mexico embarked on a neoliberal trajectory following its debt crisis in 1982, but beginning in 1997 a series of democratically elected leftist and center-left heads of Mexico City diverged from the neoliberal policies of right-wing Mexican presidents. Likewise, Peru abruptly plunged down the neoliberal path in 1990 under President Alberto Fujimori, but in 2010—a quarter century after Lima’s last leftist mayor—Lima elected the center-left Susana Villarán and she articulated a progressive vision that contrasted with national neoliberal policy.

In Mexico City and Lima the trajectories of mayors elected on center-left platforms have varied dramatically. In Mexico City, elected executives of the city garnered rewards ranging from international recognition—Mexico City’s Marcelo Ebrard won the 2010 World’s Best Mayor award—to becoming competitive presidential candidates with national clout.¹ In Peru, however, Mayor Villarán found few capable allies, faced a punishing opposition including a recall election she narrowly beat back, and approached the October 2014 mayoral elections expected to lose by a large margin.

Whereas Lima presents a single possible case study to examine (the Villarán administration, 2011-present), Mexico City offers four viable cases, including the administrations of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (1997-99), Andrés Manuel López Obrador (2000-05), Marcelo Ebrard (2006-12), and Miguel Ángel Mancera (2012-present).² Grounded in 40

¹ “Best Mayor” prizes notwithstanding, the chief executive of Mexico City is technically not a mayor, but rather the *Jefe de Gobierno* or “Head of Government” of the Federal District of Mexico City. Nonetheless, scholars of urban Latin America appropriately treat the executive of Mexico City as the analytic equivalent of the region’s other metropolitan mayors.

² Both María del Rosario Robles Berlanga (1999-2000) and Alejandro Encinas Rodríguez (2005-06) were substitute city executives who served only short periods when Cárdenas (in 1999) and López Obrador (2005) vacated City Hall to run for president.

interviews in both cities in 2013 and 2014, as well as news articles and secondary sources, we have focused our analysis on three recent cases: Villarán in Lima and Ebrard and Mancera in Mexico City. Whereas the older and more prominent cases of Cárdenas and López Obrador provide important context, scholars and journalists have amply studied both. By contrast, the newer administrations have received limited scholarly attention. All three of these elected mayors described themselves as leftist, but their leftist credentials were soon dismissed by a significant part of their base once in office.

Comparative analysis of these mayoral administrations helps identify three causal claims. The degree to which these causal trends apply to each case is uneven, but collectively our case studies suggest the relevance of these trends in explaining the fate of center-left mayors in a neoliberal Latin America. First, when the metropolitan government and the national (or federal) government are held by non-allied or hostile political leader or parties, the battleground between them is incredibly unbalanced, leading to a rude awakening for most newly elected metropolitan leaders, who find their capacity to govern the city even more limited than they had anticipated, with their initiatives potentially blocked not only by the far more powerful national government, but also checked by local factions. Thus, they are prone to adjusting their agenda and lowering their sights to easier and less progressive policy targets—a move likely to displease their base.

Second, center-left leaders either favor private-public partnerships or they are initially neutral to them, but soon gravitate toward such pragmatic strategies for advancing a metropolitan agenda. This often dilutes the commitment of their base, some of whom are more ideologically motivated to pursue a progressive agenda.

And third, mayors succumb to the dualist trap described by Angotti (2013: 14) as “...the simplistic discourse advanced in press exposés of Latin America’s slums, which they consider a

wasteland of uniform poverty and desperation that is overrunning the world...Amidst the rhetoric and myths, the slums always turn out to be the problem. The ‘rational’ solution, therefore, is getting rid of them. If the informal city is the problem, then the formal city is the solution.” For officials with an eye on re-election, the urban renewal “bulldozer” thus emerges as a tolerable or even appealing option. Such initiatives, however, routinely remove possession of land from those in need and reallocate it to those who benefit from the capitalist model. Angotti argues that this trend is rooted in orientalism (Said 1979) and other-ization, where poor people are labeled as “the problem.” In our cases, we see evidence that this trend can signal to popular movements that they should cut their support for nominally leftist or center-left leaders.

We observe a stark contrast among the center-left mayors we analyze. In Lima, Villarán appeared to be “the real deal,” with a sincere and deep commitment to progressive ideals. Yet the aforementioned trends intersected with Lima-specific factors—such a well-financed and aggressively disloyal opposition—to torpedo her administration. Because Villarán’s advisors and allies shared her genuine enthusiasm and idealism, many felt betrayed by decisions the Villarán made in her bid for political survival. In Mexico City, by contrast, despite significant differences between them, Marcelo Ebrard and Miguel Ángel Mancera each emerged as a savvy politician whose deep pragmatism was generally shared by their advisors and key allies. Thus, a long list of compromises was par for the course for them and their respective teams, permitting them to navigate the changing political terrain with minimal internal dissent. Villarán’s inner circle felt let down and even betrayed; Ebrard and Mancera’s advisors always knew “who they worked for” and could thus absorb the bumps in the road.

Neoliberalism in Latin America: National and Metropolitan

In Latin America, the concept of neoliberalism aims to capture three related phenomenon: 1) economic, military, and social policy favorable to large corporations, both domestic and transnational; 2) reduction of the unionized workforce and privatization of government-owned enterprises (especially media, telecommunications, and natural resource extraction industries); and 3) selective deployment of the rhetoric of “free markets” to *reduce* government’s role in some segments of the economy (e.g., education, pensions, health and human services) while simultaneously *increasing* public spending and subsidies in other arenas (e.g., commercial housing development, infrastructure benefiting the financial sector and industry, military spending on domestic security and internal challenges—branded “terrorism”—that threaten the executive branch).

Although neoliberalism exhibits general policy continuity across national and metropolitan contexts, the vernacular used to sell and justify such policies varies. At the national level, neoliberal talking points emphasize macroeconomic growth and “a rising tide that lifts all boats” (see Pradilla 2012: 152). In the Latin American metropolis, however, this rhetoric is complemented and often superseded by a focus on crime and urban blight and a need for housing and transportation policy that supports “safety and security” (Davis 2006: 174-198). A growing literature on Latin American urban development suggests that neoliberalism’s legacy at the metropolitan level is a fortress landscape or “city of walls” defined by spatial segregation that concentrates urban development problems, rather than resolving them (Caldeira 2000; Angotti 2013). Additionally, Pradilla argues that given the high levels of centralization in Latin American countries, national neoliberal policies are almost always implemented first in the capital cities (Pradilla 2014, interview).

In *The Left in the City*, Goldfrank (2004: 194) argues that in Latin America's neoliberal era, the "left in the city still matters, and arguably matters most." Building on the volume's analysis of a variety of city case studies where left parties have challenged neoliberalism through participatory governance and "inverting economic priorities," Goldfrank summarizes five key challenges the urban left confronts (pp. 196-201). These include internal division over political strategy, hostile national-level opponents, meager municipal budgets, the difficulty of designing successful participatory institutions, and managing social movement support while leading a city government that moves far too slowly to satisfy movement demands. In our examination of Villarán, Ebrard, and Mancera, we conclude that these findings are also relevant to the center-left, especially Goldfrank's claims regarding hostile national opponents, limited city funds, and the challenge of retaining progressive support while pursuing centrist or conservative policies.

In "The Securitization of Urban Space and the 'Rescue' of Downtown Mexico City," Anne Becker and Markus-Michael Müller (2013) argue that Marcelo Ebrard's failure to honor his promises about local spending on social services was rooted in four factors, all four of which drew him toward operating in a neoliberal framework. First, they find that Mexico City's budget depends heavily on its own income generating initiatives, which has tugged many leaders in a neoliberal direction. Second, Marcelo's effort to rejuvenate the city's historic downtown area focused on public-private alliances. A mayor aligning with downtown business interests is a familiar story with predictable consequences: downtown business interests guide such initiatives for their own profit and thus away from social services. Third, as described in detail below, Ebrard's commitment to urban renewal often manifested as anti-informality. And fourth, like López Obrador before him, Ebrard found himself caught between a progressive social agenda of poverty alleviation and pressure from U.S.-dominated bond rating agencies that pushed for more

aggressive policing to drive out drug-smugglers and street vendors. We consider how successfully Becker and Müller's argument explains the case of Ebrard, and also investigate if their argument helps explain outcomes under Mancera and under Villarán in Lima.

The Villarán Administration: Progressive Defeat on the Neoliberal Battlefield³

In 2010 the capital city of Lima elected Susana Villarán—Lima's first Leftist mayor in a quarter-century and first female mayor ever—and she encountered a political environment defined by neoliberal policies that had gone largely unchallenged by post-Fujimori presidents or mayors. Since her first day in office, Mayor Villarán faced unrelenting opposition focused not on opposing her policies, but rather on aborting her administration through a recall election and other tactics characteristic of a disloyal opposition. She attempted to change city governance with new projects on entrepreneurship, women and children, and education. She also provoked vocal opposition by attempting to reform the public transportation system in Lima. Yet as the October 2014 municipal elections approached, most observers doubted Villarán could hold on to City Hall, and criticisms of her legacy echoed even in neighborhoods that once supported her.

In 2010, Villarán's unexpected election provoked enthusiasm from diverse sectors dissatisfied with previous Lima mayor Luis Castañeda Lossio's (2003-2010) leadership. Former City Councilmember Marisa Glave explains that Villarán's team had expected to garner perhaps eight percent of the vote, but when the candidacy of governor of Callao Álex Kouri was invalidated for failing to meet residency requirements, Villarán emerged to capture 38.4 percent of the vote, beating out establishment favorite Lourdes Flores (Glave 2014, interview).

³ This section draws from our recent article, Paul Dosh and Julia Smith, "What Happened to Progressive Politics in Lima? NACLA.org (August 27, 2014).

Under Mayor Villarán, opponents and allies made choices to support or oppose her in part based on how such moves would affect their national political profile and support base. Lima politics thus continued to evolve in relation to national contests, though national political battles perhaps did not quite so directly define the threats to her administration. Villarán's enemies targeted her in their cross hairs even before her inauguration. Efforts to discredit and undermine her agenda coalesced into a sustained effort to remove her from office via the ballot box. In 2012, Castañeda Lossio covertly launched the recall effort through Marco Tulio Gutiérrez, the nominal face of the campaign and an attorney with the Peruvian Institute of Municipal Management. As the well-financed signature-gathering campaign got underway, former President Alán García (1985-90, 2006-11) as well as former presidential candidate Keiko Fujimori publicly joined the effort, but Castañeda tried unsuccessfully to keep his own hand hidden. Castañeda's central role eventually came out, provoking mild controversy, but the recall campaign absorbed this hiccup, collected the requisite 400,000 signatures, and appeared on its way to victory.

For Villarán's team, the battle to retain City Hall became all-consuming, exacting high costs in time and resources and weakening its administrative capacity. Rather than focusing on public works and fully realizing Villarán's vision of democratic and inclusive community consultation, the Villarán administration was forced to assume a permanent "war footing," cashing in a stream of political favors in order to defensively forge a coalition to stave off recall. Villarán assembled a temporary camp of unlikely bedfellows. Some were her rivals, yet all preferred a (de facto) Castañeda loss. Unsurprising allies included her own center-left *Fuerza Social* (Social Force) party, President Ollanta Humala, and former UN Secretary General Javier

Pérez de Cuéllar. Topping the list of unlikely allies was Villarán's metropolitan and national rival, Lourdes Flores.

Under siege, Villarán doggedly publicized her record of planning and initiatives as well as her transparent and corruption-free style. However, according to Anel Townsend (2014, interview), director of the campaign against Villarán's repeal, the protracted recall battle consumed the mayor's political and financial resources, stalling her agenda. Beating the recall earned Villarán a brief spike in popularity, but it did not last, and she had lost precious time during her first term. A survey about *limeños*' perception of the quality of life in the city showed that whereas in 2012 Villarán registered a 44.9 percent disapproval rating, in 2013 disapproval worsened to 50.1 percent; by contrast, in 2010 only 17.2 percent of those surveyed disapproved of the outgoing Mayor Castañeda (Lima Cómo Vamos 2013: 52).

Well before Castañeda launched the recall campaign, the opposition vilified Villarán through a media sector dominated by right-wing economic and social interests. Early on, opponents asserted that the mayor-elect was a "slacker" and not doing anything for the city. The Executive Director of the Metropolitan Institute of Planning, Jorge Arce Mesia (interview, 2014), recalls that during their first year in office, Villarán's young team struggled due to lack of experience in governance. Eduardo Zegarra (interview, 2014), Senior Researcher at the Group of Analysis for Development (GRADE), adds that despite initiating numerous projects aimed at systemic change, Villarán had little to show for it at the end of her first year in office. Opponents successfully portrayed this in sharp contrast with Castañeda's record. Although widely viewed as corrupt, Castañeda was simultaneously known for visible and quick-to-implement public works such as concrete staircases up and down the densely populated hills of Lima's poor districts.

Villarán adhered to an ideological commitment to broad and inclusive participation, yet without established party machinery to convincingly launch such a participatory project this vision did not advance. For example, early in her administration Villarán planned broad outreach, with special attention to the voices of women, minorities, the elderly, and those with disabilities. The full-court press of anti-Villarán forces coached by Luis Castañeda did momentarily provoke increased mobilization of Lima's left to defend their champion, but since such efforts were ultimately about mayoral regime survival and not about building an enduring participatory project, this burst of organizing energy faded swiftly after Villarán won the recall. Thus, Villarán never built a participatory framework.

Whereas most leftist leaders adopt a permissive approach to informality, Villarán sought to tame informality. For example, her administration saw regulation as a way to help low-income commuters forced to endure a chaotic, crowded, and dangerous transit network. Her relocation and formalization of the La Parada wholesale market, however, proved costly. Mayor Castañeda had begun the process, but had no stomach for finishing the job. Villarán approached the thorny task methodically, but the October 2012 relocation resulted in police clashing with a mix of protesters and thugs, leaving over 100 injured and four dead. Once in its new Santa Anita location, the market became a rapid success, but the former site plagued Villarán, with police failing to evict the last of the die-hard vendors until May 2014.

Transportation policy under Villarán illustrated her unconventional challenge to the neoliberal paradigm. Villarán inherited a city transit system whose privatization had been deepened in the 1990s by President Alberto Fujimori and consecutive mayors of Lima through the expansion of roads and services for private vehicles. Villarán set out to make transit genuinely public—under the purview of the metropolitan government. Her transportation

proposals aimed to formalize and modernize public transit by requiring that buses have fixed routes, stops, and schedules, and that transportation companies pay taxes and salaries.

Given the reliance of over 75 percent of *limeños* on public transit, Villarán's team initially objected to the norm of tax dollars subsidizing private vehicle use. As Marisa Glave said: "No one cares if people travel squished, get in accidents or even if they die on the public bus because they are poor... people who ride on public transportation are second-class citizens and therefore they suffer, they have a horrible time [in transit]" (Glave 2014, interview). Instead, Villarán and Glave envisioned a policy where virtually all transportation funds would support light rail, bus rapid transit, bus, bicycle, and pedestrian transit, with private investors engaged to support road projects primarily benefiting private vehicles.

This embrace of public-private partnerships appeared neoliberal to some, since opposition to neoliberalism typically means expansion of the public purse. But in the face of a limited metropolitan budget, Villarán saw the use of private funds to support objectives of the city's elite as a way to free up metropolitan (public) funds for an array of social and infrastructure projects, such as the expansion of activities in public spaces and increasing programming in public parks.

As she continued to lose support in August 2014, Villarán's chances of retaining City Hall appeared slim, but her dwindling pool of supporters pointed to 2010, when she won despite even worse odds. Though she veered away from her initial vision when confronted by potent opposition, we nonetheless find this to be an important idea to consider when examining what progressive politics can look like in metropolitan Latin America today. Though her pragmatism pulled her agenda away from her objectives, she still articulated a potential path for metropolitan leaders to prioritize access and inclusion.

Whether Villarán would get the chance to lead such an effort looked doubtful. When journalist Rosa María Palacios (2014) asked Glave whom she would vote for on October 5, she responded simply: “[I’ll vote for] whoever can beat Castañeda and I’ll decide that on October 5th. The important thing is that Castañeda does not return to Lima.”

The Ebrard Administration: Pragmatic Progress, Limited Scope

In July 2006 Marcelo Ebrard was elected *Jefe de Gobierno* of Mexico City, receiving 47 percent of the vote. He was elected with the support of a coalition of leftist parties, led by the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Party of the Democratic Revolution, or PRD). In this same election cycle, former *Jefe de Gobierno* Andrés Manuel López Obrador, also of the PRD, ran for president and lost in what many condemned as a fraudulent election.

Ebrard originally entered politics as a member of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Party of the Institutionalized Revolution, or PRI), working as part of Manuel Camacho’s team while he was the appointed leader of Mexico City (1988-1993).⁴ Ebrard was one of Camacho’s closest political allies and was considered to be his political “son” (Ross 2009; Nava 2013, interview). In 1995, they co-founded the now-defunct Partido de Centro Democrático (Party of the Democratic Center, or PCD), but eventually switched their affiliation to the PRD. In 2006, when Ebrard was elected as *Jefe de Gobierno*, López Obrador led the PRD; tapping Ebrard as the PRD nominee to lead Mexico City was thus seen as payment for Camacho’s support of López Obrador. During López Obrador’s term as *Jefe de Gobierno*, Ebrard had served as police chief, a position from which he was fired by the federal government for failing to prevent the

⁴The PRI held the presidency for 71 years until the year 2000. Until 1997, the president appointed the governor of Mexico City.

lynching of three federal police officers (Ross 2009).⁵ One of Ebrard's first acts as *Jefe de Gobierno* was to lend support to López Obrador in his condemnation of the results of the 2006 presidential election. Ebrard remained loyal to López Obrador, refusing to publicly greet or accept as legitimate Calderón⁶ in his role as president (Reveles Vasquez 2013).

One aspect of Ebrard's governance that is frequently noted is his pragmatic and business-oriented nature. Given his prior experience in the PRI his vision was more technocratic. For example he created pacts with business owners (Azuela 2014, interview) and founded a school for best practices in public administration (Canto 2014, interview). Ebrard's vision has also been described as incorporating ideas from European social democrats (Aboitiz 2014, interview) and in general his elegance and bourgeoisie background made him significantly more palatable for the city's elites (de Alba 2014, interview).

Ebrard was often recognized as a "green" leader (Llerenas 2014, interview), but his plan to improve the environment was neither aggressive nor radical and drew support from business owners (Azuela 2014, interview). In practice this meant that Ebrard focused his energies on a transportation plan that prioritized pedestrians, cyclists and mass transportation, rather than private vehicles. He built the new "Linea 12" line of the subway system as well as three Metrobus lines (bus rapid transit) and even a bicycle-sharing program. These projects were supported through public-private partnerships that allowed him to stretch the municipal budget, but many pointed out that Ebrard's private economic interests also profited from these initiatives (Flores 2014, interview; Goldman 2014, interview). Ebrard also utilized private-public partnerships to fund the expansion of the *segundo piso* ("Second Floor"), an elevated second

⁵ The President continues to control some aspects of Mexico City governance, including the ability to fire the city's police chief.

⁶ Felipe Calderón was President of Mexico from 2006-2012 and represented the right-wing Partido de Acción Nacional (National Action Party, or PAN).

level of the main city beltway. This road was built primarily by private capital, with investors granted a three-year concession to operate the toll road, before turning it over to the city to manage as a public road (Goldman 2014: Ch. 3).

López Obrador gained popularity in the city due in a large part to his social programs, especially the provision of pensions for anyone over age 68. Ebrard continued and strengthened López Obrador's social programs and also introduced new initiatives. He began an unemployment insurance program for city residents as well as a program called "Prepa Sí" ("Yes to High School") which provided stipends for talented students to continue their education at the high school level (Llerenas 2014, interview). In his own words his most successful social program was free mammograms:

"Women didn't use to have their breasts checked; they didn't think it was in their power to go for an examination, because, let's say, of conservative cultural ways. We went door-to-door in the neighborhoods. Now they didn't have to ask their husbands for permission. Women got together with other women in their neighborhoods to go to the clinics. It was a great change." (Goldman 2014: Ch. 3)

Ebrard also worked to reclaim public space in the city's central plaza, the Zócalo. The Zócalo has typically been utilized by leftists as a space for protests, but Ebrard further opened the space by organizing entertainment for the public (Azuela 2014, interview). He placed value on the use of public space as a place for all who live in the city to gather (Aboitiz 2014, interview). These activities included a free ice-skating rink as well as concerts by artists such as Paul McCartney and Britney Spears. Yet all of these activities were funded via public-private partnerships, deepening the ominous trend of public spaces and events depending on private money.

Ebrard also gained fame throughout Mexico by taking on leftist social issues, including abortion, gay marriage, and smoking as a public health issue. In 2007, under Ebrard, abortion

during the first trimester was legalized in Mexico City (it remained illegal elsewhere in Mexico) and low-income women without insurance became eligible for city-financed abortions (Alianza Nacional para el Derecho a Decidir 2014). In 2008, Ebrard restricted where people could smoke in public. And in 2010, gay civil unions became legal in Mexico City.

Given his former position as chief of police, security constituted an important policy arena for the Ebrard administration. During López Obrador's administration, Ebrard had coordinated the visit (and \$4.3 million consulting fee) of "zero tolerance" former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani (Davis 2013: 54, 58). The celebrity mayor's visit bolstered political support for police spending, police training, and led to new crime rate measurement tools (Llerenas 2014, interview). Ebrard inaugurated a new police academy and raised the minimum required educational level for officers (Goldman 2014, Chap. 3). He also installed security cameras throughout the city, which, whether or not they actually deterred crime, increased perceptions of security among some citizens (Llerenas 2014, interview). Under Ebrard, crime rates in the city dropped while rising nationally (Llerenas, 2014, interview). For example, in 2011 the crime rate in Mexico City was 12.5 percent lower than national crime rates (Pantoja, 2011). Some observers found Ebrard moderately more effective at controlling the notoriously corrupt Mexico City police, perhaps helping lower crime rates (Goldman 2014, interview).

Ebrard continued the work of his predecessor in "rescuing" the historical downtown as well as other blighted areas of the city. These policies were pursued through public-private partnerships, most notably working with telecommunications magnate Carlos Slim to restore the historical downtown. This restoration involved removing all street vendors in order to lure tourists back downtown. In the same vein Ebrard restored monuments that had fallen into disrepair as well as the area around La Merced market (Aboitiz 2014, interview). The La

Merced neighborhood was considered perfect for this process since it contained notable cultural sites, but prior to the Ebrard administration, it had been a site of prostitution and the drug trade. The city installed a police presence that often harassed and harmed street workers, both those selling legal and illegal goods (Becker 2013). Beyond working to change physical infrastructure, Ebrard also inaugurated programs to strengthen the neighborhood social infrastructure (Aboitiz 2014, interview).

A general perception of Ebrard is that he represents a modern vision of the left. He demonstrated his ability to incorporate initiatives that play into what left-leaning leaders in the developed world look for, such as a focus on the environment. In fact, the majority of his advisors were internationally recognized figures, rather than local ones (Llerenas 2014, interview). According to Francisco Goldman, Ebrard conceptualized a modern world city that aimed to show its citizens that although it cannot resolve all of their problems, it is sympathetic to them and will find small ways to improve their lives. For this reason Ebrard focused on public spaces and ensuring that members of his city felt a sense of community (Goldman 2014: Chapter 3). He aimed to create a 21st century city that was economically and socially modern (Azuela 2014, interview). In late 2014, Ebrard was not publicly involved in politics, but it was speculated that he would run for the Senate in 2015, representing the borough of Itztapalapa as a platform for seeking the presidency in 2018.

The Mancera Administration: An Abrupt Shift to the Right

In 2012 Mexico City elected Miguel Ángel Mancera to follow Marcelo Ebrard as *Jefe de Gobierno*. The PRD struggled to find a party militant who both wanted to follow Ebrard and could placate the party's competing factions. Mancera, who had served as the Chief Prosecutor for the city under Ebrard, was chosen in anticipation that he would cause minimal internal

dissension. Mancera had no previous experience in governance and was not a PRD militant. However, many factions within the PRD believed he would thus be easy to manipulate (Flores 2014, interview). Additionally, he was well liked by the public due to his confident and swift response to a situation in which nine lower-class adolescents and three police officers were killed due to police error. As Francisco Goldman commented, Mexico City's residents love a crime fighter (Goldman interview, 2014).

In July 2012 Mancera won the city in a landslide victory, winning 66.6 percent of the votes in Mexico City. His victory was viewed not only as a reflection on him as a candidate but also a comment on how previous PRD governments had governed the city over the previous 15 years (Goldman 2014: Ch. 2). In the 2012 elections, upper-class voters supported Mancera more than in the past, given that the PRD's governance of the city had benefitted them (Canto 2014, interview). Upon taking office Mancera shocked PRD militants by refusing to be manipulated (Flores 2014, interview) and by catering to the rich (Canto 2014, interview). He filled his government offices with academics and people with little experience in governance (Flores 2014, interview; Urbina 2014, interview). He even brought in some government employees from Mexico State—a PRI stronghold where President Peña Nieto was governor in 2005-2011 (Canto 2014, interview; Goldman 2014, interview).

Prior to his election Mancera was known for his media savvy and positive public image. In office, however, he struggled to craft much of a public profile and has shied away from the spotlight (Goldman 2014, interview). He focused on emphasizing that despite being elected with PRD support, he is not a PRD member (Nava 2013, interview). This posture damaged his communication with the left, leaving PRD insiders to comment that they can't even identify his vision for the city (Llerenas 2014, interview). Throughout our interviews we heard differing

theories to explain this lack of vision. One is that his predecessors did so much for the city that Mancera now struggles to make a mark beyond continuing their programs (Llerenas 2014, interview). Others believe that he is simply not interested in the city (Azuela 2014, interview) or that he has been working to favor the wealthy (Canto 2014, interview) and business owners (de Alba 2014, interview). In fact his Secretary of the Economy was a member of the right-wing Calderón administration. Some even believe that he is secretly working for the PRI, given his especially close relationship with the national government (Goldman 2014, interview; Nava Polina 2014, interview; Proal 2014, interview).

Unlike Ebrard, Mancera has worked well with his national political opposition, President Peña Nieto. Mancera surprised many by repressing protesters who demonstrated against Peña Nieto's inauguration. Mancera was soon criticized by leftists for being the president's favorite (Casilla 2013, interview). Compared to his more ideological predecessors, Mancera emerged as far more strategic in his relationship with the national government (Llerenas 2014, interview). In some ways this paid off, such as obtaining more national funds than any previous city government (Nava Polina 2014, interview). However, this relationship also generated criticism from his base. Additionally his status as an outsider with both the PRD and with the opposition has left him isolated and unable to form strong alliances with anyone (Flores 2014, interview; Goldman 2014, interview). For example, Mancera was reprimanded by the PRI when *los chuchos*—PRD insiders that helped Mancera win election—changed certain pacts they had made with the PRI (Goldman 2014, interview).

Mancera sustained and strengthened a number of social programs. However, given the popularity of these programs it likely would have been costly if not nearly impossible to eliminate them (Canto 2014, interview) and thus Mancera's motives remain murky. For

example, he strengthened the city's pension program for the elderly by creating schools in which they can participate and by providing free movie passes and other free outings (Barcena 2014, interview). Barcena, the general director of the Institute for the Elderly, comments that the majority of Mancera's changes to social programs were to provide a "right to culture" (Barcena 2014, interview).

Although Mancera's lack of original programs has been attacked by critics, Rosa Rodriguez Velazquez, the Secretary of Social Development, explains that continuing with the same programs strengthens these programs, allowing them to improve (Rodriguez Velazquez 2014, interview). This might explain why the only noticeable new social program that Mancera created is *Capital Social*. This initiative targets residents ages 18-67 and provides free and discounted services, such as life insurance and medical benefits.

Mancera began to stand out in 2014 via a push for increasing the daily minimum wage in Mexico City from 67 pesos to 171 pesos—a 155 percent increase. However, he has been criticized for collaborating with the national PRI government to achieve this change. By one count, adjusting the minimum wage would require changing 300 federal laws and 100 local laws (Milenio Digital 2014). Despite this fact many leftists believed that he should simply have changed the minimum wage without federal input.

For Francisco Goldman, the "Heavens Case" is essential for understanding Mancera's term as *Jefe de Gobierno*. The Heavens Case refers to an incident in May 2013 in which 13 youth, all from Tepito—a neighborhood known both as a power center and a hub of illegal activity—were kidnapped from outside the Heaven afterhours nightclub at 11:00 am. The Mancera administration's response to this case was disjointed and insisted that "organized crime" (international drug cartels) was not involved (Proal 2014, interview). A few months later,

the bodies were found burned in Mexico State. The general public viewed Mancera's handling of the case favorably, but the families of the victims were unhappy with Mancera's response, which criminalized the victims and denied the families information and agency in the process. Crime rates, which had been declining, increased in the months after Heavens (Goldman 2014: Part 2). Whereas Ebrard was considered to have the police reasonably well in hand, Mancera is thought to lack this control, since increased crime is thought to reflect increased crime *by* the police (Goldman 2014, interview).

Another way in which Mancera has made his mark on the city is through the creation of ZODEs—Zones of Social and Economic Development—that are exempt from normal planning and zoning regulations. Favored by private capital, Mancera has created five of these zones, which focus on vertically developing a higher-density city. The ZODEs initiative has swiftly erased citizen participation in these areas, with ZODEs pushing out the poor who can no longer afford their gentrifying neighborhood. One ZODE even threatens the existence of an indigenous population that has been located there since Aztec times. Demands for relocation assistance have been met with a “free market” approach of doing little to nothing for displaced community members (Pradilla 2014, interview).

Comparative Analysis

Considering our three hypotheses in comparative perspective, we observe varying support across the three case studies. Here we examine each claim in turn, with attention to the three cases. As summarized in Table 1, we find modest to strong support for each of the hypotheses.

Table 1: Strength of Evidence in Support of Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Villarán	Ebrard	Mancera*
Limited budget and capacity to govern shifts agenda toward easier policy targets.	Strong	Strong	Modest
Use of private-public partnerships dilutes progressive support base.	Strong	Modest	Strong
Labeling informality as “the problem” shifts agenda toward urban renewal and anti-informality.	Modest	Strong	Modest

* Note that Mancera is only two years into a six-year term.

First, we hypothesized that when the metropolitan government and the national government are opposed, center-left metropolitan mayors find their capacity to govern restricted and are likely to retreat from their ambitious plans and seek easier victories, often to the frustration of voters who elected them. In the case of Susana Villarán, President Humala was not an opposition figure and even supported Villarán in her campaign to stave off recall, yet Humala’s centralized control of national funds allocated in Lima nonetheless kept the fraction of the budget controlled by Villarán quite limited. Intense opposition manifested instead from the camp of former Mayor Luis Castañeda, who pulled out all the stops in his efforts to disrupt Villarán’s agenda. He succeeded and the ambitious plans articulated by Villarán never got off the ground, forcing her to settle for a far more modest series of minor infrastructure, social, and cultural projects; this scaled-back agenda delighted opponents and disappointed allies.

In Mexico City, Ebrard inherited an environment of incredible national-metropolitan hostility. This conflict dated to the political reform of 1997, when the authoritarian PRI begrudgingly permitted democratic elections in Mexico City for the first time. The PRI correctly anticipated it would lose control of the city and preemptively shifted a great deal of budgetary power away from the newly created *Jefe de Gobierno*, undercutting the PRD, which easily captured the position. Presidents Vicente Fox (2000-06) and Felipe Calderón (2006-12) of the PAN upheld this arrangement, much to the frustration of consecutive PRD heads of Mexico

City. Aggravating the situation, Ebrard logically sided with PRD candidate López Obrador over the contested 2006 election results. Calderón managed to seize the presidency, leading to six years of bad blood between President Calderón and *Jefe de Gobierno* Ebrard, deepening the trend of Mexico City depending on its own income-generating initiatives (Becker and Müller 2013) which sharply limited the scope of Ebrard's agenda. Thus, in the case of Ebrard, we see strong support for the claim that a hostile federal government can force the city's executive to retreat from its core agenda and settle for less.

Mancera's election as head of Mexico City coincided with the surprising return of control of the presidency to the PRI, under Peña Nieto. Rather than intensifying federal-metropolitan hostility, however, a thaw in relations occurred, with increasingly friendly connections between Mancera and Peña Nieto such as joint public appearances. Mancera's cautious alliance with Peña Nieto, however, may still be consistent with our first hypothesis—i.e., Peña Nieto is hostile to the PRD's social agenda in Mexico City and Mancera (though he seems content with the situation) has not made progress on that social agenda, instead focusing his efforts on initiatives that frustrate the left and center-left voters that supported him in 2012.

Second, we hypothesized that when center-left mayors utilize public-private partnerships, support from their progressive base is likely to diminish. We observe strong support for this claim in the cases of Villarán and Mancera, but less support in the case of Ebrard. In Villarán's administration, public-private partnerships were mostly used to fund the construction of new roads. Villarán argued that this freed up metropolitan resources to be used for projects that supported leftist aims, namely providing city services for the poor. In particular she focused on the transportation reform which sought to make public transportation more comfortable and efficient. Although Villarán envisioned her use of public-private partnerships as a way to stretch

the municipal budget, her plans to help the poor did not have an immediate impact. This meant that she lost much of her original base who only saw her work on projects that helped the wealthy.

By contrast, Ebrard utilized public-private partnerships to fund almost all of his major initiatives, ranging from new forms of public transportation to free downtown concerts, yet his embrace of business owners—which also enriched him personally—did little to diminish his support, except among hard-core leftists, who were never particularly gung-ho about Ebrard in the first place. Yet the initiatives did provide immediate benefits for Ebrard’s base, thus placating them regarding his use of public-private partnerships, and sustaining strong approval ratings.

The Mancera administration has mostly utilized public-private partnerships in the creation of the ZODEs, but his cozy relationships with business leaders have already proved costly in terms of his base supporters, who feel betrayed. His use of public funds to create economic zones that support private and foreign capital has contributed to this pro-rich image.

Finally, we hypothesized that center-left governments are prone to shifting from progressive promises on the campaign trail to conservative policies of urban renewal and anti-informality. Of our three cases this attitude is most evident in the Ebrard administration. In his fight to “clean up” neighborhoods that were in disarray he labeled informality and street vendors as the problem. His strategy focused almost exclusively on trying to end informality and change the appearance of these neighborhoods, rather than recognizing root causes of the problems that neighborhoods throughout Mexico City experience.

Villarón identified informality as an important problem to address—as seen in both the relocation of the La Parada market and her transportation plan—but she steered clear of classic

urban renewal, gentrification, and superficial urban beautification. She believed that formalization would help the poor, who were most likely to suffer due to the abysmal urban conditions that informality would never resolve.

To understand Mancera's relationship with informality and urban blight we must again refer to his creation of the ZODEs. Unlike Ebrard, Mancera did not view informality as the major problem facing the city. His placement of the ZODEs has not focused on locations where there is a high level of informality. However, his placement of ZODEs was mainly in decaying neighborhoods that underwent superficial beautification and gentrification due to the ZODEs.

Conclusion

Whereas most discussion of neoliberalism occurs at the national level, we explore how three metropolitan mayors—Susana Villarán (Lima, 2011-present), Marcelo Ebrard (Mexico City, 2006-12), and Miguel Ángel Mancera (Mexico City, 2012-present)—navigated a national context of neoliberal economic policy. We find modest to strong support for three related claims: 1) upon their inauguration, center-left mayors are likely to find the political and budgetary context so challenging that they retreat from progressive campaign promises; 2) center-left mayors are prone to embracing public-private partnerships as a route forward in a context where budgetary constraints make it impossible for to advance their agenda based purely on public funds, and this pragmatic move is likely to alienate part of their base; and 3) even when elected by voters who work in the informal sector, center-left mayors often embrace an anti-informality stance, albeit one usually presented as pro-poor.

As Angotti suggests, the common opposition to informality is rooted in widespread acceptance across the political spectrum that informality is the problem, rather than a symptom. Echoing Goldfrank, the recurring phenomena of hostile national opponents, limited

city funds, and retaining progressive support while pursuing centrist policies prove important for understanding the trajectories of center-left mayors. Likewise, Becker and Müller's emphasis on metropolitan government having to be its own breadwinner and the related embrace of public-private partnerships and "urban renewal" emerges as important not only for the case of Ebrard, but for the other cases as well.

Yet of even greater interest may be how these claims intersect and reinforce each other. The shrinking ambitions of newly elected mayors can accelerate their embrace of private-public partnerships, and this in turn can deepen a commitment to anti-informality since the private business interests that drive such partnerships support an array of anti-informality policies including aggressive policing. Thus, in exploring the applicability of these hypotheses for other administrations and other cities, it is important to examine not only their individual relevance but also how they interact and inform each other.

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