

Taxicab service in Cuba: a Civil Society approach

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Context ...

- Given the almost total preponderance of the State as an economic actor, it is the principal operator of public transport and is fully responsible for the operation, exploitation and maintenance of large-scale public transport, as well as maintaining roads and streets.
- Taxi service is a combination of state and private management, with licenses for transporters and taxi-drivers with their own automobiles, without any uniform identification. They pay taxes but are paid no attention by the State as far as managing their service is concerned, except for basic regulations.

Taxis in Cuba:

- State-run taxis: Controlled by the company *Cubataxi* within the Ministry of Transport. The result of a process of centralization 3 years ago that joined previous managing companies. This is a service that costs a lot to common pockets and has a varied and largely obsolete fleet, ranging from *de luxe* cars to American automobiles from the 50s and Russian Ladas. The service is divided among taxis for tourism (fares in foreign currency and regular taxis that charge in national money).

Private taxis: Mostly “*creole*” taxis: “big almonds”, great consumers of fossil fuel and Ladas, “*vici*” tricycle taxis and horse carriages. There are also informal or illegal taxis.

Services

Radio taxi: State-run



Street taxis: State-run and private

There are no cab stands just for taxis, they are connected to shopping centers, hotels and airports. Mostly used by State-run taxis, but also a minority of private cabs, but these are not allowed to operate at airports).

Social-service taxis: For hospitals, etc, this is a State-run service with subsidized fares.

Environmental vision at *Cubataxi*



- An area dedicated to the environment: in the process of obtaining an environmental license for each cab stand, planning for managing toxic waste, etc. An environmental strategy has been in place since 2010.
- Although the law is contemplating it, the environmental regulations have not been rigorously applied in their sphere of operation, but this process is now starting.
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Guidelines

- “Several experiments are now underway in urban transport, such as with gasoline, and little by little re-motorizing is appearing ... with a different model of management that at the moment implies two types of taxi”.

Guidelines for economic and social policy, 2011.



Infrastructure

- Bad road conditions. Accessory roads in critical state.
- Urban, rural and interstate transport is insufficient, tremendously slow and overcrowded.
- Little growth of the road network in the last 40 years, except for a few works.
- Old and poorly kept fleet, the cars used as taxis are former tourist rental cars with thousands of kilometers on the meter.

How many taxis are there in Havana?

- 2,000 taxis
- For a population of 2.6 million inhabitants.
- 1 taxi for 1,300 inhabitants



Good examples abandoned....

- Extensive use (the bad thing was the intensity and the lack of other options) of the bicycle, creation of bike lanes and infrastructure for cyclists, instituted in the 90s and soon abandoned because it was adopted in a period of crisis and was associated with poverty: when the economic crisis was over, the infrastructure that favored the bicycle was dismantled.
- This should be revived and personal preference respected.
- Also in the crisis of the 90s, methane gas fuel was experimented but soon abandoned with the argument that financing was not available.

Dreams...

- Introduce tests with alternative-energy systems for taxi transport (both State-run and private).
- Start training people to set up and manage this system in cities, on the local and national level.
- Given the scenario of the changes proposed in the new guidelines for the economy in Cuba, with the explicit importance given to the environmental question, study opportunities to promote a green-taxi transport system for Cuba's cities.

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Experiencias with alternative transport in Cuban cities...

