

Safety and Active Transportation in Mexico City: Giving the Streets Back to Pedestrians and Cyclists



Photo credit: ITDP Mexico & CAMINA

Marie-Ève Assunção-Denis
2017 McBurney Fellow
McGill Institute for Health and Social Policy

Project Overview

Student name: Marie-Ève Assunção-Denis
Department: School of Urban Planning
Organization: The Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP)
Location: Mexico City, Mexico
Mentor: Kevin Manaugh
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About the McBurney Fellowship Program

Through McGill’s Institute for Health and Social Policy, the McBurney Fellowship Program supports students in international service programs related to health and social policy in Latin America. McBurney Fellows serve abroad in organizations working to meet the basic needs of local populations. One key aspect of this fellowship is its mandate to make a significant contribution to improving the health and social conditions of poor and marginalized populations through the delivery of concrete and measurable interventions. Students and their mentors identify issues, make connections with local organizations, and develop a strategy for the fellowship. The views expressed in this document are the opinions of the fellow, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the IHSP.

Contents

Project Overview 1

About the McBurney Fellowship Program 1

Contents 1

Fellowship’s Rationale and Objectives 2

Background/Context 2

Activities 4

Challenges and Successes..... 5

Questions Raised 6

Training and Mentoring..... 8

What did you learn? 9

Community Implications and Further Work..... 10

Program Evaluation 12

Fellowship's Rationale and Objectives

Transportation planning is at the core of cities' functioning. While the 20th century saw the consecration of the automobile as an engine for the development of urban areas and the shaping of modern lifestyles, the 21st century has seen a resurgence of interest towards more sustainable transportation modes such as transit, walking and cycling. With global warming, the constant increase in urban population and urban sprawl, there is an even greater need for solutions allowing cities to grow in a more sustainable, denser and human-scaled way. In such context, active and public transportation specialists play a key role in the development of more efficient and green cities.

As a transportation planning fellow at the Mexican office of the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP), I worked on the Cycling Cities and Safe Routes to School programs. Through these programs, I looked at policies, programs and infrastructure projects that contribute to the development of safer, more pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly streets and cities. The Cycling Cities program addresses issues such as: the lack of network and connection in terms of bicycle infrastructure; actual and perceived safety of cyclists on the streets; bike parking demand and offer; and the integration and application of cycling concepts within urban plans and policies. The Safe Routes to Schools program touches matters such as: safety around schools and surrounding corridors; design of more pedestrian-friendly streets and spaces; as well as the improvement of people's knowledge on road safety and its associated issues.

Background/Context

Mexico City is a metropolis which, in 2015, counted more than 8.9 million inhabitants, with the metropolitan region, including the surrounding State of Mexico, totaling more than 21.2 million inhabitants in 2016 (INEGI, n.d.a; World Population Review, 2017). These numbers were alimanted by high urbanization rates in the country and region, which have grown tremendously during the last century. For instance, between 1950 and 1990, the percentage of the Mexican population living in urban areas jumped from 43% to 71%. As of 2010, this number was close to 78% (INEGI, n.d.b). This influx of people into urban areas engendered immense pressures on cities to increase their offer in terms of housing, transportation and other basic service infrastructure such as sewage and electricity. This often resulted in the construction of badly-designed, poorly-constructed infrastructure that could be built quickly to respond to the increasing demand.

Urban sprawl, combined with a poor public transit offer in peripheric areas of Mexico City and the State of Mexico, as well as other large cities, led to terrible commuting conditions for residents, especially those from non-central areas of town. Long commuting times of 2 or 3 hours one way are very common, not only for low-income populations living in farther neighbourhoods, but also for inhabitants living in central parts of town, many of whom work in areas that are poorly served by public transit, such as the business district of Santa Fe. The subway system, which covers a large portion of the city's territory, as well as some parts of the

State of Mexico, is unable to adequately respond to the large demand, and ends up being saturated and extremely packed during rush hours, engendering efficiency and safety problems. Security issues have also led to gender segregation inside public transport, with some subway cars and Metrobús sections being reserved for women, children and elderly people.

On the other hand, sustainable transportation modes in Mexico City suffered for many decades from a lack of funding and political will, leaving the population with poor walking and cycling infrastructure in many parts of the city. As for transit, while the subway and metrobús system networks are quite developed, they do not reach a substantial part of the population, which in return has access to poorly structured and managed transit options.

The influx of commuters within the city, combined with an increase in the number of cars, also favored congestion and pollution, causing smog and an augmentation of respiratory problems within the population. The geographic position of the metropolitan region of Mexico City, which is located in a valley surrounded by mountains, reinforces even further the creation and retention of smog and pollution. The lack of infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists also puts their safety in jeopardy, while the absence of streetlights, sidewalks and transport facilities strengthens the lack of perception of safety in some areas of the city.

Facing all these challenges, the City of Mexico decided to address the situation, and at the beginning of the 21st century, its then leftist and environment-friendly government started to work towards the improvement of active and public transportation infrastructure and greener streets (Okeowo, 2008). In 2005, it launched the first Bus Rapid Transit corridor¹, called Metrobús, to complement the subway system in several areas of town (Ciudad de México, n.d.a). It started to implement bicycle paths and lanes on both calm and major arteries, and closed Paseo de la Reforma, one of the city's main arteries, to traffic every Sunday. The city's popular bike-sharing system, ECOBICI, was launched in 2010 and has since seen its network more than quadruple in size (Ciudad de México, n.d.b). Taxis older than 10 years, including the iconic white-and-green Volkswagen Beetle taxis, were banned in 2012, and car parking restrictions for new constructions were put into place in July 2017 (Kopf, 2017; Marshall, 2017; Okeowo, 2008; *The Telegraph*, 2012). The City also started to implement parklets and create new public spaces, pedestrianizing zones and redesigning intersections to be safer and more pedestrian-oriented.

The Mexican office of the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy has been involved throughout the years in these urban reforms, providing expertise in transportation planning and urban development, and advocating for safer and more sustainable streets and

¹ A Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor is “a high-quality bus-based transit system that delivers fast, comfortable, and cost-effective services at metro-level capacities. It does this through the provision of dedicated lanes, with busways and iconic stations typically aligned to the center of the road, off-board fare collection, and fast and frequent operations.” (ITDP, 2017)

transport services. Through its involvement with officials and other stakeholders, as well as its studies, analyses, design and publication of guidebooks and other documents, the Institute has contributed to the changes made in the metropolis and has been involved in major projects and policy changes.

Activities

While at ITDP Mexico, I worked on the Cycling Cities and Safe Routes to School programs. I contributed to the design and facilitation of workshops on road safety, which were done in high schools. These workshops asked students to get directly involved in the discourse on road safety, and asked them to produce awareness material to promote road safety. The project involved teachers, schools, students and their parents. On the side, I also got involved in the organization of a conference on the topic of road safety, as well as the organization of a tactical urbanism project related to road safety and street design around schools.



As part of the Cycling Cities program, I was involved in the redesign of ITDP Mexico's Cycling Cities Ranking, which lists the most cycling-friendly cities in the country based on a series of criteria and points. Changes were made, for instance, to the pointing system and evaluation criteria. I also analyzed the different bike-sharing systems in the country, assessing their successes, challenges and particularities, in order to address some recommendations for present and future systems in the region. I also participated in the design of a cycling network for the city of Tijuana, Baja California, and I took part in discussions regarding an update of ITDP's Bikeshare Planning Guide.

I also assisted the ITDP team in the conception of a report and workshop on transit-oriented development areas in Mexico City, and I performed research on policies regarding parking regulations, mandatory helmet laws and funds for sustainable transportation dedicated to metropolises. I also used my graphic skills to create promotional and educational material.

Challenges and Successes

My initial mandate was to “assess the condition of the urban population regarding TOD [Transit-Oriented Development] Standards,” with the following activities being expected:

1. Station Area Planning
 - a. Drafting operational improvements of the underground and surface stations
 - b. Adapting station design to social, economic and cultural conditions of surrounding neighborhoods
2. Transit Oriented Development
 - a. Planning residential and mixed-use buildings
 - b. Designing high-quality environments and infrastructure for walking and cycling
3. Public spaces
 - a. Developing policies that turn physical and cultural spaces into vibrant economic assets
 - b. Developing restoration criteria to prevent structure damage in historic buildings
 - c. Applying conservation strategies to harmonize interaction between old and new infrastructure

Once on the ground, it became evident that my mandate and activities would be different than those planned in the initial support letter from the organization. While the planned activities were quite practical and relied on my design and planning skills, my initial tasks at ITDP turned out to be much more research-focused than anticipated. After discussing with my superiors, I got involved in some of the Safe Routes to School program’s activities which were more practical, even though they were not directly related to my original mandate. The project included many urban planning components and focused primarily on citizen mobilization through awareness campaigns in schools.

As for my involvement in the Cycling Cities program, most of my tasks were research-driven and performed in the office. After a few weeks, I discussed with the person in charge of the Cycling Cities program to see if I could perform more practical activities that would allow me to use more of my knowledge and skills. Following this conversation, I started working on a few projects that were more applied and hands-on, such as the design of a cycling masterplan for the city of Tijuana, or the analysis of potential transit-oriented development areas in Mexico City. My research activities were also maintained, and they kept a central place in my mandate throughout my fellowship.

Differences in the planned and actual activities can be explained by many factors. First, the number of projects run by the organization during my stay was lower than usual, because, for instance, of budgets and timing matters (elections were planned for the following year). As well, most projects already had enough dedicated staff members, and extra help was not necessary. For instance, there were already many people with good graphic and computer skills among the team, and responsibilities and projects were already separated amongst several talented planners and architects. Therefore, my presence was not really necessary, except for some tasks that required a lot of time, such as writing and research.

These changes between my planned and actual activities turned out to be a big deception for me, as I really hoped to use my skills and knowledge and to participate in practical design projects. I did express my expectations during the planning of the fellowship, and I expressed my concerns once there, but even if these concerns were heard by my superiors, it did not change the context on the ground, namely that there was no need for an actual additional employee, except for research tasks. Even as part of the Safe Routes to Schools program, my presence was not a necessity, as the team was already well equipped to reach their objectives. I simply took out a bit of weight on some of the members' shoulders. I did learn new things and had a great time working with every employee at ITDP, but overall I did not feel like I was meaningfully contributing to those great projects, and I often questioned the relevancy of my presence. I felt that my skills and knowledge were not used, which is a pity, because I am aware of my potential and wish I could have used it and developed it. This situation ultimately affected my motivation at work. Thankfully, after discussing with my boss, she acknowledged my concerns and assigned me more practical, varied tasks, which definitely helped rebalance the situation.

Questions Raised

The fact that my initial responsibilities were more research-oriented than expected brought elements of disappointment and frustration, as my experience did not concord with my expectations in terms of professional and learning opportunities, even though I had shared these expectations with the organization beforehand. The tasks did not correspond to the responsibilities that originally attracted me to the opportunity. At times, my presence seemed to not be taken very seriously by some members of the organization. This impression might have been fueled by other factors such as the general lack of time or investment put in interns or fellows. Unfortunately, this reality seems to be quite present in the NGO sector, as I experienced it several times in the past years. NGOs often lack the resources to invest time in their interns. This phenomenon can be even more reinforced when organizations do not remunerate their interns. The relation between an organization's financial investment and the quality of its interns' experience and development seems to be widespread through many professional environments, and it is a definitive challenge for students and recent graduates wishing to acquire meaningful experience in their field of study.

Since the organization already had many qualified transportation planners, the skills and knowledge I had acquired previously were not really needed, and my initial duties consisted mostly of performing basic research on the Internet, for which no degree or experience was needed. This proved problematic for me and affected my motivation at work, even though I knew that these tasks happened to be the actual needs of the organization at the time of my stay. Afterwards, I was assigned to other projects, which allowed me to participate more, thanks mainly to colleagues who agreed to share their tasks with me even if there was no actual need for an extra person. Even though I am extremely grateful to my colleagues for welcoming me into their team, I did realize that my presence was completely optional and often questioned my relevance in their team. After raising concerns to my superiors again, I got assigned to more planning-related activities within the Cycling Cities program.

Trying to improve the situation was difficult because of a few obstacles. First of all, people in the office were extremely busy: many employees juggled both school and work, while also being part of community groups. As a result, they lacked time to train or supervise other members of the organization, even if they were keen to help. This is a very important factor to consider, as it directly impacts the quality of an internship, which should involve feedback, learning and supervision. I personally do not think that an organization should welcome interns or fellows if they do not have the time to supervise or train them. Interns and fellows wish to apply their knowledge and skills and to continue their learning and professional development. If they end up doing tasks that can be done by anyone who has access to Internet, then the exchange is not fair. If members of an organization all have busy schedules and cannot supervise a new member, then they should not take interns or fellows, even if their intentions are extremely honorable. And when they do have interns, they should assign a resource person within the organization that is accessible and has time to act as a supervisor and provide feedback and training when necessary.

My experience at ITDP was also influenced by a major, unforeseen event: on September 19, 2017, the country was struck by a major earthquake, which greatly affected Mexico City, and especially the area where ITDP's office is located. This put a hold on many projects and led to the postponing of events and projects which I was assigned to. It also increased pressure on my colleagues' shoulders, making them less available.

All that being said, there were also many good points to my fellowship at ITDP. Being in a transportation planning organization allowed me to get a new glimpse of how urban planning works, especially in the contexts of Mexico City and Latin America. Previously, I had worked with the African branch of ITDP, whose projects and working strategies are quite different. My fellowship made me realize how organizations can function differently based, for instance, on cultural contexts, history or staff members. Moreover, witnessing the interactions between planners and stakeholders like government staff and officials, external consultants and community organizations, was very interesting and made me reflect about the different processes accompanying projects of various sizes and types. The time I spent with transportation planners, architects and policy advisors who were all passionate about cities and transportation was extremely valuable and rewarding, as our interactions often allowed me to rethink or question elements regarding my profession or planning projects.

This fellowship also allowed me to confirm that this is the field I want to work in, and to reinforce my expectations and desires as an employee for future jobs. The different tasks that were assigned to me also taught me new things on subjects such as planning in Mexico, bike helmet laws and parking regulations. Living in Mexico City also proved to be an amazing experience, despite the earthquakes. Even though this was my third time in Mexico City, the fellowship allowed me to live there for three months and experience a life in the "Distrito Federal," confirming my love for this city and my desire to work there one day. It is a vibrant city, where things are moving forward quickly, especially when it comes to planning and

transportation. It might not seem so at first, but when comparing with other metropolises in both developing and developed countries, it becomes clear that governmental will has led the way for meaningful changes in the Mexican capital, and that the city will continue to change for the best in the near future.

Training and Mentoring

Training/mentoring on site

Because my supervisors and colleagues were very busy and most of my initial tasks were very simple, I did not receive extensive training while at ITDP. People were happy to explain basic concepts and answer my questions when they were available, but they could not spend much time training me. I had to do this on my own, through readings of publications and guides, for instance. Since my supervisors were extremely busy and often traveling, I did not spend a lot of time working with them. But since the nature of my tasks did not require specific training, the lack of mentorship or supervision did not come as evident at first. In the end, many things I learned during my fellowship, I learned by myself, through my desire to continuously learn and improve myself as an urban planner.

Training/mentoring from McGill supervisor

My mentor was not directly involved during my fellowship, since it is a project that I organized myself with the support of ITDP. However, I knew that I could count on his support throughout the project and reach him if need be.



What did you learn?

This fellowship allowed me to reinforce an impression that I had had for years: young professionals have a lot of talent and potential, but unfortunately, many organizations do not seize the opportunities to put their skills and knowledge to use. It is great that interns and fellows take initiatives at work, but this should not occur because they face no opportunities for professional development or accomplishment. Interns and fellows should be given responsibilities that allow them to apply the skills and knowledge they learned in their previous work and academic experiences. If there are no such opportunities for them in an organization, then they should not be hired. It is the responsibility of organizations to welcome new staff only if there is a need, and to choose these new members based on the competencies and interests that are relevant to these actual needs.

Providing feedback is also an important part of supervising interns, and this is something that seems to lack profoundly in many organizations in diverse fields around the world. Most employees' performance at work are related to their perception of usefulness and accomplishment. It is the same for interns and fellows. Recruiting someone for performing tasks that are below his level of knowledge and skills sends a wrong message. Why use a master's degree student to browse the Internet, something that can be done by a very large part of the population? This can lead the person to believe that his/her skills and experience are not valued, and that the organization thinks that putting its name on a resume is enough to satisfy an employee. On a personal level, I have grown tired of being told before starting a job that I would contribute meaningfully to something, before realizing that I had been recruited for the wrong purpose or the wrong reasons.

My experience working with transportation professionals at ITDP Africa in 2016 was very hands-on, involving design projects with government officials, planners and engineers. This provided me with a very good first impression of ITDP and made me curious to see what the organization's other offices were doing, especially in Latin America. This is why I decided to contact ITDP Mexico and ask them if they needed interns. My fellowship made me realize that ITDP Mexico's projects, although as useful and important, relied more on the policy, research and mobilization sides of transportation planning, while design projects were less numerous at that time of my stay. Through this experience, I learned that contexts vary a lot from one firm or branch to another, and that projects and funding fluctuate constantly, meaning that situations within organizations like ITDP can greatly vary from one month to another.

As a recent graduate, I can tell that my fellowship at ITDP provided me with an even greater desire to find a job that will allow me to grow professionally and have an impact as a transport planner. I want to be part of a team, and feel that I am useful and filling a need. I want to receive feedback and keep learning and improving throughout my career. I want to reinforce my strengths and work on my weaknesses, and go to work knowing that every day I get a little bit closer to these goals.

Through this experience, I have also learned a lot about myself as an individual. I know that I can be very naïve sometimes and become very enthusiastic when discussing work and career opportunities. I should be more focused on the actual needs of companies and organizations, and make sure that there are no huge discrepancies between my expectations for a job and the reality on the ground. I should discuss in detail the tasks and role to play before accepting a job offer. This time again, I thought that I would “see how things go once there.” This was a mistake, as every time I adopted that approach, the professional experience turned out disappointing. I should be more prepared before starting a new job, and make sure that the planned mandates and projects reflect the actual needs of the organization.

I should also be more pro-active when it comes to discussing my concerns with my superiors. I tend to avoid conflicts and let concerns grow too much before looking for a solution. This is never good, and even if discussing with a superior might be intimidating at first, it is important to do it as quickly as possible when concerns or problems arise before they start impacting negatively working performances or experiences. I did not do so for many weeks, and as a result, my levels of motivation and productivity decreased considerably during this period, and my overall experience suffered from it.

Community Implications and Further Work

Through the Safe Routes to School program, I participated in raising awareness about road safety amongst students and other residents. Our project was also part of a pilot program that is set to be replicated in other primary and high schools throughout the city. Therefore, its impact could be important in the long run, especially considering that the pilot project



was a success. In the short-term, mobilized students acquired knowledge that they will hopefully apply on a daily basis and transfer to their parents and friends. The tactical urbanism activities also attracted people's attention towards the topic of road safety and street design. Increasing road safety is an important topic in Mexico City, as road accidents are one of the major causes of deaths among young citizens.

My initial work within the Cycling Cities program was more linked to public policy, as my activities focused on providing examples of best practices for government officials, planners and other stakeholders. These documents help decision-makers and practitioners have a clearer and broader vision of the range of opportunities and possibilities, which might eventually translate into actions through policy drawing and implementation. On the long term, this can impact several spheres of city life, such as public programs and services. As for my work on more practical projects, it will influence the development of future infrastructure, for instance Tijuana's cycling network. These projects are still at their very beginnings, so tangible results might appear more in the long run. My contribution to a report on bike-sharing systems, which drew mainly from my master's thesis, should serve to the improvement and implementation of systems throughout Mexico, and hopefully the report will be used as a guide and best-practice tool for the creation of efficient and successful bike-sharing schemes. These systems are important to provide more mobility options within cities, and to encourage intermodality and better and healthier transportation habits. They can also have a significant impact in low-income neighbourhoods, where populations often suffer from lower access to opportunities and destinations because of a lack of transportation options.

How might your fellowship make a difference for the people you worked with?

In the case of the Safe Routes to Schools program, students and teachers were the direct beneficiaries of the program, with the aim that they would later transfer their knowledge throughout the school community and to the people around them. I think this program is fantastic and should be made mandatory in every school, as road safety, and especially safety of pedestrians, students and children, is a crucial element of any urban setting. Raising awareness on this topic is fundamental, and engaging decision-makers from the start of the project is also important, as they are the ones who can enforce this program in other schools and increase its impact.

Through the Cycling Cities program, I worked on documents that might help decision-makers get a clearer vision of transportation-related topics around the world, and eventually help them make better, healthier and more efficient decisions for the society. In the long term, these types of advisory and guideline documents might contribute to make Mexico City a better and greener place to live in. As for Tijuana's cycling masterplan and the TOD report, they will eventually impact cities physically and might influence people's urban and transportation experiences. They will also create precedents that could be replicated in other contexts and towns.

What would the next steps be to translate your findings into policy action (if not already happening)?

Some next steps include presenting the results of the Safe Roads to Schools program to government officials and policy- and decision-makers, after compiling and analyzing the outcomes and impacts of the program.

For the Cycling Cities program, my activities were already linked to the production of documents for decision-makers. They will most likely help them make more efficient and sustainable decisions in terms of urban and transportation policies and programs. As for the more hands-on projects, their impact might influence policies in their local contexts, while also potentially having political repercussions elsewhere in the country.

Program Evaluation

How did this fellowship further your academic or career goals?

This fellowship allowed me to gain more experience in my field. I learned a lot about the issues and processes surrounding urban and transportation planning in Mexico City. I also got to see and experience how some transportation planning organizations and non-profits work. It helped me define my expectations for future jobs as a transport planner.

What did you value most about the fellowship?

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work on projects that are linked to my field of study, with great and inspiring people, in a vibrant city in constant transformation. Mexico City is an amazing place to live and work, and for an urban planner, it is an open book of best and worst practices at the same time, making it an absolute dream! I am so happy to have had the opportunity to experience all this through the fellowship, and I definitely hope to work again in this city in the future.

Any advice for future fellows?

I recommend future fellows to make sure that there is work for them in the organization where they want to go. The reputation of an organization should not be the lead factor behind the decision of doing a fellowship somewhere. What should be most important is to have opportunities to grow and develop professionally, to contribute meaningfully to projects, to use their skills and knowledge, and to receive adequate support and supervision. I would also recommend them to discuss directly with their future colleagues and bosses beforehand to see what the actual projects are in the field, and how they could contribute to these projects. Receiving a letter from an organization is often not enough, since anything can be written on a piece of paper. I would recommend them to also clearly define what their expectations are, and to discuss them beforehand with their future bosses. They should ask them if there would be support, if the mentors/supervisors would be present, if feedback is usually valued and given on

a regular basis in the organization, what types of activities are usually carried (in the field, community-driven activities, team work, or rather individual, computer-based work), etc. The goal behind this is for the fellows to have the clearest and best idea possible of what they would be doing once in the foreign country, and to avoid preventable deceptions and frustrating situations. McBurney fellowships represent important time commitments on the part of the fellows, as well as important investments of time and money from the part of the IHSP and its McBurney program. Fellows deserve to have the best, most rewarding, meaningful and useful experiences.

How useful was it to interact with other fellows?

I have not interacted yet with other McBurney fellows. However, I did interact a lot with another intern at ITDP Mexico, a master's student who experienced similar issues during her stay in the organization. Our discussions helped me define the aspects of my fellowship that were problematic, and to figure out possible solutions to improve them.

Any suggestions for how to improve the program?

I recommend that the people in charge of the McBurney fellowship program at ITDP discuss at least once with the host organizations, and especially the fellows' future bosses, to discuss with them the working context, tasks and involvement of the potential students in the organization. Since the organizations are often selected and first contacted by the future fellows themselves, ITDP could get in touch with the organizations following the selection of the projects, to verify that the fellows' project proposals reflect the actual needs and resources on the ground. This could also allow the future superiors to share specific questions or comments regarding the McBurney fellowship program to the program coordinator. The student could also be present during the exchange.

Obviously, since there are a lot of fellows selected every year, this would require quite some time from the coordinator. However, these meetings could be organized only when a student plans to do his/her fellowship in an organization that never received any fellow in the past. Organizations that previously received students would already have had a contact with the IHSP coordinator and would have a history of McBurney fellowships to refer to when needed. These steps could help fellows to better prepare and have expectations that reflect more appropriately the reality in the field in order to reduce the risks of disappointment and miscommunication. The IHSP could also communicate with the organizations following the end of the fellowships and the submission of the fellows' reports, in order to get feedback from the supervisors as well.

Was your project part of a larger/ongoing program? If so, what are the next steps? If not, would you recommend this placement/organization to someone else?

I overall enjoyed my experience at ITDP, and although it has been frustrating at times, I do think that the organization plays a meaningful role in the development of healthier and more

sustainable cities. That being said, I do not recommend students to do a fellowship at the Mexico office right now, as there are no real needs for full-time interns there. Other ITDP offices, like the African and headquarter ones, are continually looking for people with planning skills and qualifications, and have clear identified needs for additional staff members. I would therefore encourage students to apply for fellowships there (although these would have to be funded through other programs since they would not be located in Latin America). As for the Mexican office, I would wait until they have stronger needs for additional skilled staff members before sending other McBurney fellows.

Finally, I recommend students to not be afraid to “be picky,” ask many questions and do verifications on the works and actual needs of the organization on the ground. Fellows should clearly identify and share what their expectations and intentions are for doing an internship in the organization, and also discuss how their skills and knowledge could contribute to the organization’s projects. If a fellow organizes a project him or herself, I would make sure that he or she receives full support from the organization towards their project once in the field.

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