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## **Towards sustainable urban mobility in the city of Belo Horizonte? The cycling movement and its political opportunity structure**

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*'Towards sustainable urban mobility in the city of Belo Horizonte? The cycling movement and its political opportunity structure'*

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Maastricht, 24 Aug 2018, Diego Pessoa Santos

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## ABSTRACT

The city of Belo Horizonte in Brazil is an example of a Latin America car-oriented city facing many sustainability challenges. Aiming the change of the current reality, urban mobility policies have been formulated focusing the promotion of a more sustainable pattern. At the same time, urban social movements, such as the city's 'cycling' movement that promotes the mobility by bicycle, have been demanding changes in this situation. However, no results have been perceived so far by the 'cycling' movement. This thesis analyzed the Political Opportunity Structure (POS) of the 'cycling' movement of Belo Horizonte, focusing the Urban Cyclists Association - *BH em Ciclo*, in an attempt to explain the divergence between the favorable policy arrangements and the lack of positive results. In this case study, a framework adopting the POS concept to the urban level was suggested, the UPOS, and interviews were made. It was found that the UPOS creates barriers such as weak access points to the institutionalized political system, the lack of accommodation of the cycling theme within society and inadequate governmental structure to cope with the 'cycling' movements' demands. On the other hand, the UPOS offers leverage points such as room for potential alliances with relevant political actors.

**Keywords:** Sustainability. Sustainable development. Urban mobility. Political opportunity structure. Urban social movements. Cycling movement.

## **RESUMO**

*A cidade de Belo Horizonte, Brasil, é um exemplo de uma cidade latino-americana orientada para carros que enfrenta diversos desafios relacionados à sustentabilidade. Com o objetivo de mudar a atual realidade, políticas de mobilidade urbana foram elaboradas com o foco na promoção de um padrão mais sustentável. Ao mesmo tempo, movimentos sociais urbanos, como o movimento ciclístico da cidade que visa promover a mobilidade por bicicletas, vêm demandando mudanças. No entanto, resultados não têm sido percebidos pelo movimento ciclístico. Essa dissertação analisou a Estrutura de Oportunidade Política (EOP) do movimento ciclístico de Belo Horizonte, tendo como foco a Associação de Ciclistas Urbanos de Belo Horizonte - BH em Ciclo, em uma tentativa de explicar a divergência entre arranjos de políticas públicas favoráveis e a falta de resultados positivos. Nesse estudo de caso, um arcabouço adotando o conceito de EOP para o nível urbano foi sugerido, o EOPU, e entrevistas realizadas. Foi encontrado que a EOPU cria barreiras como pontos fracos de acesso à política institucional, a falta de acomodação do tema na sociedade e uma estrutura governamental inadequada para lidar com as demandas do movimento ciclístico. Por outro lado, a EOPU oferece oportunidades como potencial para alianças com atores políticos relevantes.*

**Palavras-chave:** *Sustentabilidade. Desenvolvimento sustentável. Mobilidade urbana. Estrutura de oportunidade política. Movimentos sociais urbanos. Movimento ciclístico.*

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UPOS - Urban Political Opportunity Structure

BH - Belo Horizonte

*BHeC - BH em Ciclo*

*BHTrans - Empresa de Transporte e Trânsito de Belo Horizonte*

BRT - Bus Rapid Transit

CO2 - Carbon Dioxide

*FIFA - Fédération Internationale de Football Association*

*GT - Grupo de Trabalho*

*PlanBici - Plano de Mobilidade por Bicicletas de Belo Horizonte*

*Planmob BH - Plano de Mobilidade Urbana de Belo Horizonte*

POS - Political Opportunity Structure

PPAG - *Plano Plurianual de Ação Governamental*

SDG - Sustainable Development Goals

*STE - Superior Tribunal Eleitoral*

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Cities have been gaining a prominent space in the sustainability debate for many reasons. Concentrating the major part of the world's population nowadays, they are an unsustainable source of resource depletion and pollution, accounting for more than 30% of greenhouse gas emissions and 40% of the world's energy consumption (Van der Heijden, 2014). Therefore, cities must pass through a transition towards a sustainable pattern by both reducing their impact on the environment and becoming more resilient to natural and human-made hazards (Van der Heijden, 2014). The positive aspect is that cities have considerable economic importance and a high potential to decouple quality of life from greenhouse gases emissions (Satterthwaite, 2016). The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 by the United Nations and the New Urban Agenda - Habitat III explicitly address the role of cities in the sustainability debate.

Within cities, the transport system is often one of the main issues regarding sustainability. The challenges involving the sector are hard since it is one of the few in which CO<sub>2</sub> emissions continue to rise (Geels, 2012). Other pollutants released by fossil fuel vehicles affecting the citizen's health and the often observable congestions make the situation even worse, showing an urgency to attack the issue.

The transport system based on the automobile regime has some destabilizing and stabilizing landscape pressures (Geels, 2012). On the destabilizing side, there are the discussions about climate change, the peak of oil (that directly affects fuelling), and the possible shift towards an information society (Geels, 2012). On the stabilizing side, there are factors such as a cultural preference for private property rather than collective ownership and use, the possible time saving and autonomy provided by the car, the physical urban landscape shaped for motorized vehicles, and the macroeconomic growth related to the automobile industry (Geels, 2012).

To find alternatives to the current regime some factors are required, such as the willingness of governments to introduce car-restraining policies, strong local and city governments, a set of innovation strategies regarding public transport and a change in consumers' preferences (Geels, 2012). However, in fact, policymakers are not pushing those alternatives strong enough, in part because they are constrained by the broader public that makes part of the electorate and by the industries of the car chain that generate jobs, taxes, economic growth and new technologies (Geels, 2012). The transport innovation policy is piecemeal concerning financial and coordination aspects (Geels, 2012). Thus, a political issue is part of the urban mobility transition, in which policymakers and firms can be conceptualized as allies in maintaining the status quo (Geels, 2014).

Another difficulty present in urban landscapes is the fact that significant urban structures are seen as permanent, fixed, which creates obstacles to change, becoming more or less obdurate (Hommels, 2005). The government also acts about the city's obduracies, both constraining and fostering technologies using laws, rules and policies (Hommels, 2005).

In many cities, new social movements have been trying to change this reality on the local scale and triggering a transition towards a more sustainable pathway in a bottom-up attempt. Considering 'power' the ability to mobilize resources, the starting point of a transition is represented by

a possible loss of power by the system (Avelino & Rotmans, 2009). However, so far, those movements received little systematic attention in the literature on (urban) sustainability transitions. For instance, many movements trying to promote the bicycle as a means of transport have emerged around the world. However, those movements are often constrained by the barriers and stabilizing factors imposed by the current transport regime.

There are several reasons for promoting mobility by bicycle. In environmental terms, the bike causes virtually no noise or air pollution, and consumes much less nonrenewable resources when compared to motorized transportation modes; the energy required in its use is provided by the traveler (which in turn contributes to his or her health); high potential to reduce congestion since it occupies much less space when in use and when parked; and it costs much less than private cars and public transportation - both the bicycle itself and the required infrastructure (Pucher and Buehler, 2012). Thus, besides being environmentally friendly, the bike is an inclusive, equitable and democratic tool, since it is more accessible to the major part of society when compared to other means of transport (Horton, 2006). The simplicity of bicycle-based solutions and its positive externalities make it a valuable tool for (urban) sustainability transitions.

The use of a bicycle can have different meanings for those who cycle, including commuting, sportive activities, leisure and others (Cox, 2005). Moreover, it is a symbol representing many political claims, such as the women's push for greater freedoms during the 1890's (Holt, 1989 as cited in Horton, 2006). Also, the bicycle is often seen as vehicle part of the construction of a political and green way of life, being both an object used in the environmental discourse and the activists daily life (Horton, 2006). Recently, the bicycle has been playing a role also in claiming the public space back to the people.

One exciting lens to analyze this situation when discussing transitions in the urban context - but often neglected when talking about those barriers - is the *political opportunity structure* (POS) of a given political system and its impacts on social movement's success on the urban context. By political opportunity structure, it is understood the "degree to which groups are likely to be able to gain access to power and to manipulate the political system" (Eisinger, 1973, as cited in McAdam, p.23, 1996).

The political constraints and the specific opportunities of a given national context shape social movements and profound transformations (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996). However, this approach has so far been used to study and compare social movements on a national level - with little attention to local and context-specific variation. However, cities and urban areas have some specificities that make them different among themselves, which means that the political structure may also vary across cities within one country. Consequently, when analyzing the attempts of social movements to change the reality towards a sustainable pattern on a specific *locus*, attention to the local political structure can be valuable to understand the reasons behind the outcomes. This thesis examined how the political opportunity structure of an urban social movement ('cycling' movement) affects the transition towards sustainability on the local level, both positively and negatively, in the specific urban context of the city of Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

## 1.1 Problem statement

Following the path of most Latin American development models, Brazil's most prominent cities face significant challenges regarding urban mobility. The city of Belo Horizonte in Minas Gerais State is an excellent example of how cities have developed in Latin America. With 2,5 million inhabitants within the city and 5,1 million in its metropolitan region, Belo Horizonte has a high motorization rate<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, the transport sector was responsible for 71% of the emissions in the city in 2013 (PBH, 2015). When speaking about cycling in Belo Horizonte, it can be observed that its participation in the mode share has been meager, currently figuring 0.4% of the trips (BHTRANS, 2016a).

From 2010 onwards many actions have been undertaken around the urban mobility. From a policy perspective, the department responsible for the traffic management in the city, *BHTrans*, started a shift in its purpose, expanding its responsibilities and assuming the role of thinking and framing the mobility in the town (Amaral, 2015). The process culminated in the development of the City's Urban Mobility Plan, the *Planmob-BH (Logit and BHTRANS, 2012)*. Considering a 2020 horizon, the plan indicated a shift in the priority that had been placed until then: non-motorised modes should be the centre of the development, focusing on the pedestrians and including cycling, suggesting measures to discourage the use of cars, along with the valorization of public transport (Amaral, 2015).

Here, for the first time an official governmental program to promote the bicycle as a means of transport in Belo Horizonte was released, the *Pedala BH*. To accomplish this objective, the plan forecasted the implementation of a broad cycle path network, integration with public transportation and more (Logit and BHTRANS, 2012).

On the federal level, in 2012, the national policy for urban mobility was released. The principles, among others, clearly put sustainable development of the cities as a primary goal, stipulating the priority of the non-motorized modes over the motorized, and the priority of public transport over the individual (BRASIL, 2012).

Although there have been cyclists since the creation of the city in the 1890s, Belo Horizonte has been witnessing a growth in the 'cycling' movement. Many groups have been organizing themselves with the aim to promote the varied and diverse uses of the bicycle (Campos, Tampieri, & Amaral, 2016). One of those organisations has the goal to interfere directly in policy-making: the *BH em Ciclo (BHeC)*, the urban cyclists association of Belo Horizonte, created from the need for the cyclists to have an active voice in the city's public policies, presenting a more focused political approach (Campos et al., 2016).

Social movements' existence and success rely heavily on their actions, in which the formal organizations who speak on behalf of the movement have a significant contribution (McAdam,

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<sup>1</sup> 677 vehicles per thousand inhabitants (BHTRANS, 2016a).

1996). The *BHeC* does not claim to represent the entire cycling movement in Belo Horizonte, but it is highly recognized in the city (as will be shown later in this report). Therefore, it was chosen to be the focus of this research.

In 2013 a new element emerged in the scene, the *BHTrans* developed the *GT Pedala*, an autonomous open group with horizontal governance that serves as a channel for dialogue between the municipality and those interested in promoting the mobility by bicycle policy in Belo Horizonte (Campos et al., 2016). The group is not official, but through it, the civil society and the public sector maintain a constant and direct interaction in a co-creation process, with the possibility for citizens to make an impact on the choices and directions of the public policy.

A 'cycling' movement and even a 'cycling' culture have been gaining ground within Belo Horizonte, with potential gains to the city in general terms. However, it is still not possible to see significant results in practice. The indicators related to cycling in Belo Horizonte do not show any relevant improvements, regardless of the co-creation process installed between the government and the civil society and the directions placed by the national policy. The participation of the bicycle in the mode share remains very low<sup>2</sup>. The municipal department of transit recognizes that the existent infrastructure is limited regarding extension and connections, and in such conditions that create difficulties to its full use (BHTRANS, 2014).

The absence of results is not only observed through the data related to the infrastructure and the number of trips but also through the cyclists' perception. According to a research conducted by the *BHeC*, the main problems faced by the cyclists are the lack of adequate infrastructure (including paths, bicycle parking spots, and more), the extension and connection of the current cycle path network, and the lack of safety while in traffic (*BH em Ciclo*, 2016). Those problems related to infrastructure and traffic safety are under the government's reach to act.

A research focusing the cycling policy in Belo Horizonte concluded that there is a difficulty in applying the legislation and in investing financial resources in actions aimed at active transportation (Lage, 2017). Moreover, the efforts of the municipality are always cautious and the budget for the cycling policy limited. There is the understanding that the projects developed by the *GT Pedala* are not implemented due to a possible lack of political will from the higher hierarchy within the *BHTrans* and the Municipality of Belo Horizonte (Lage, 2017). Most of the cycling structures are implemented in so-called 'windows of opportunity' (Lage, 2017). In other words, there is not structural prioritization for the cycling policy on the municipal budget, in contrast with the designed federal and local policies. However, Lage's research points to political aspects but does not explain the factors that might be causing this results, which this thesis tried to address.

Considering the entire scenario, it was clear that although there are national and municipal reference documents and directive policies, vibrant civil society, and even a well-established governance structure, very little substantive success/progress has been booked so far. An obvious but uncovered issue is taking place between how the mobility issue is framed and how policies are implemented, preventing the transition to a more sustainable pattern to occur and the success of the

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<sup>2</sup> the last estimative available according to a survey point to 0,6% in 2015 (BHTRANS, 2016a).

social movement in question. The urban political opportunity structure of the Belo Horizonte's political system could be part of the explanation for (to explain) why this situation is taking place.

## 1.2 Aims and objectives

This research had the following aims:

- To analyze the development of the interactions between the 'cycling' movement and the local government;
- To understand the divergence between the favorable conditions in the policy and governance arrangements for promoting the bicycle as a means of transport and the disappointing outcomes, in Belo Horizonte;
- To investigate if the difficulties related to the cycling policy implementation in this particular case are linked to the political opportunity structure/political context and, if so, how the outcomes are being affected by it;
- To gain further insight into how the political opportunities/context can affect sustainability transition and social movements on the local level;
- To develop recommendations for the adoption of new strategies for promoting the bicycle as a means of transport in Belo Horizonte.

The objectives of this research were:

- To develop an analytical framework adopting the political opportunity structure concept for an urban context;
- To apply the analytical framework to a case study of the 'cycling' movement in Belo Horizonte;
- To generate case-based ideas for available/new opportunities for the 'cycling' movement.

## 1.3 Research question and sub-questions

This research aimed to answer the following question and operational sub-questions:

- **Research question:** Why so little progress has been perceived/booked in the implementation of the 'cycling' policy in Belo Horizonte, despite the favorable existing arrangements (local and federal mobility policy design, civil society groups, urban governance landscape/platforms)?
- **Sub-question 1:** How has the interaction between the civil society organizations that make part of the 'cycling movement' and the local government developed since their beginning?

- **Sub-question 2:** To what extent has the political opportunity structure/political context limited positive outcomes for promoting 'cycling' as a means of transport?
- **Sub-question 3:** What are the leverage points that can be explored by the 'cycling movement' in developing future strategies to promote a more sustainable urban mobility system in Belo Horizonte?

## 1.4 Research design and methods

In order to find answers to the questions raised, qualitative research was performed through a case study. This method was chosen because it can provide in-depth, contextualized and, therefore, actionable insights, despite its drawbacks such as problems regarding the generalization of the findings. An analytical framework adopting the political opportunity structure concept to the urban context and the specific case was constructed and applied to the situation. A document analysis of policy documents was done and used mainly in the contextualization of the case, aiming to understand the policy background.

Interviews were scheduled and made to obtain the necessary information for the analysis according to the suggested framework. The researcher tried to reach many actors from different domains/sectors to have a broader landscape of the case. In this sense, contacts were made with four members of the *BHeC* (*BH em Ciclo*, the urban cyclists association of Belo Horizonte) to understand the movement, its strategies, and perspectives better; two members of the *BHTrans* (the city's department for traffic management and urban mobility), one being the manager of the *Pedala BH* Program (that has been in charge since the beginning of the program, on a more technical level) and the other the Director-President (on the strategic level), to figure out the perspectives of the actors responsible for the policy in the city; four elected members of the City Council from different ideological trends, to embrace the entire political spectrum; and the city's Secretary for Planning, Budget, and Management, to gain insights on the formulation and implementation of the government's agenda on the strategic level.

Since the researcher remained in Europe during the research's period and no extra funding was provided, semi-structured interviews were made by video call, when possible, and structured interviews by email, when the video call was not possible or not preferable for the interviewees due to personal reasons or lack of availability. From the total of eleven envisioned interviews, seven were conducted/took place and four not. Two elected members of the City Council did not reply the contact, the Director-President of *BHTrans* replied the contact but has not answered the questions in time to make part of the research, as well as the Secretary for Planning, Budget, and Management. Therefore, from the seven interviewees, four are members of the urban social movement (in which one of them is a former employee in *BHTrans* and dealt with active mobility policies), one is a current employee of *BHTrans*, and two are elected members of the City Council (from different ideological/political trends). Unfortunately, this might create an unbalanced situation on the find-

ings, with the urban social movement's perspectives over-represented in contrast with the views of other actors and stakeholders. Also, the municipality's strategic level is not represented.

In guarantee of the anonymity of the interviewees, letters were assigned to designate each one of them. Interviewees A, B, and C are members of *BHeC*. Interviewee D is a member of *BHeC* and a former employee of *BHTrans*. Interviewee E is an employee at *BHTrans* and the manager of *Pedala BH*. Interviewees F and G are elected members of the City Council. A summary of each interview is available in the annex of this thesis.

To guarantee transparency, an important disclaimer must be made. The researcher also forms part of the Urban Cyclists Association of Belo Horizonte (*BHeC*) and has been accompanying the developments of the case closely since 2016. However, an entirely neutral and scientific approach was taken. All interpretations were made upon the information gathered in the research.

## **1.5 Outline thesis**

This Master Thesis is structured into six main chapters. In Chapter 1, an introduction presents the problem statement, the aims, the objectives, the research questions and methods used. Chapter 2 contextualizes the case with a historical narrative based on document analysis. In Chapter 3, a literature review is performed, and the analytical framework developed. In Chapter 4, the research findings are presented accordingly to the elaborated and applied framework. In Chapter 5, a discussion of the results is performed. Finally, Chapter 6 presents the main conclusions along with recommendations for further improvements that somehow can contribute to a more sustainable pattern in the urban mobility of Belo Horizonte.

## 2. URBAN MOBILITY IN BELO HORIZONTE

The city of Belo Horizonte has passed through a rapid urbanization process, such as many cities in Latin America. Although constructed following an urban plan in the 18th century, Belo Horizonte expanded its area far beyond the space that was initially thought. The lack of investments in public transport and alternative transportation modes resulted in a car-oriented city, in which each year many private fossil-fuelled based cars enter into circulation. This situation has led to increasing congestions, air pollution, accidents, and the destination of public spaces to the construction of viaducts, parking places, and large avenues, diminishing the quality of life within the urban area. To exemplify, besides the already mentioned high motorization rate (second highest in Brazil), the number of days with a considered 'good' air quality decreased from 93.5% in 2000 to 81.5% in 2015 (BHTRANS, 2016a).

From an inter-modal perspective (according to the Origin-Destination Survey), Belo Horizonte has been experiencing a shift in urban mobility patterns, from mobility based on public transportation to individual motorized transportation. This trend is observed in the entire country and can be explained mainly by two factors. First, although an increase in the number of cars does not necessarily mean the more use of it, the individual motorized transportation has been highly encouraged with tax incentives on the purchase of a car and the destination of public space for free parking (Vasconcelos, Carvalho, & Pereira, 2011). Second, at the same time, the urban public transport has been losing competitiveness due to constant raises on the tariff and undermined quality (Vasconcelos et al., 2011). In Belo Horizonte (2002-2012) public transportation had a decrease in participation (from 44.6% to 28.1%), while private motorized means had an increase (cars from 25% to 32.6% and motorcycles from 0.9% to 4%) (BHTRANS, 2016a). Concerning non-motorized transportation, walking went from 28.5% to 34.8%, but cycling remained with very low participation, from 0.7% to 0.4% (BHTRANS, 2016a).

Through the lens of common sense, it's argued that Belo Horizonte has a disadvantage about its terrain, being a city in the middle of mountainous State and presenting many slopes and hills. This fact is frequently used to justify possible unsuitability for cycling. However, the average declivity of the city is 8,28%, within the parameters to build accessibility ramps for people with disabilities, according to the Brazilian National Standards Association (*"Mapa de Declividades de BH já está disponível para consulta,"* 2017). Furthermore, many cases reject this idea. If compared to other city known for its bumpy terrain but not as a reference in cycling, such as San Francisco, Belo Horizonte stands quite behind regarding cycling participation in the mode share. San Francisco has 2% of its trips made by bicycle, which represents proportionally five times more than Belo Horizonte (Travel Decisions Survey 2017, 2017). On the medium to the long-term, e-bikes could also overstep this issue.

Within this context and following a national trend, a 'cycling' movement has aroused in Belo Horizonte in recent years aiming to make an impact on the reality of the urban mobility. First, to secure the right to use the bicycle as a means of transport in a safe way, since the bicycle is officially recognized as one according to the Brazilian Transit Code (BRASIL, 1997). Second, to question the development model that has been adopted by the city so far, that privileges motorized ve-

hicles in detriment of non-motorised transportation. This aim is being related to the idea of 'right to the city'<sup>3</sup> and 'cities for people'<sup>4</sup>. Third, to promote cycling as a clean and sustainable means of transport within the city, focusing the positive externalities related to the act itself, such as benefits for the environment, health, traffic, and more. Finally, to directly impact the public policy regarding urban mobility in Belo Horizonte, which requires active interaction with the municipality and other relevant actors involved.

## 2.1 'Cycling' movement in Belo Horizonte and the policy development

The 'cycling' movement in Belo Horizonte is quite diverse. Although there have been cyclists in the city since its creation, many groups have been organizing themselves with the aim to promote the varied uses of the bicycle (Campos et al., 2016). The initiatives can be seen with sportive and leisure goals, remounting mountain bike groups such as the *Mountain Bike BH*, originated in 2005, night cycling groups, speed race, and triathlon focused groups and the *'Bike Polo' BH*. In cultural sectors, with the *Bloco da Bicletinha*, a carnival parade on bicycles, and the *Tweed Ride BH*, tours dressing tweed clothes through historical sites, both originated in 2013. In the business sector, with bike messengers groups such as the *Dizzy Express* and *Ecobike*. And in social and political areas, with groups such as the *Bike Anjo BH*, the local chapter of a national organisation which aims to promote, mobilize and help people to start utilizing the bicycle as means of transport presenting a more focused social approach but still impacting the policy/political scenario ("*O que é o Bike Anjo*," 2018), and the *BH em Ciclo (BHeC)*, the urban cyclists association of Belo Horizonte created from the need for the cyclists to have an active voice in the city's public policies, presenting a more focused political approach (Campos et al., 2016). Initially, there were many people involved in both initiatives at the same time, but nowadays the organizations are mainly composed of different people, although some of them still make part of both.

Many more groups could have been mentioned. However, the movement itself is diverse and composed of different people with different thoughts and political perspectives. All of them have the bicycle as a common aspect and occupy the city's streets in many different situations to fulfill their will and to exercise their right, each one with its approach. Another essential part of the movement but not formally organized is the *Massa Crítica BH*, the city's version of the 'critical mass', the famous bike ride emerged in San Francisco in 1992 and present in many cities around the world (Blickstein & Hanson, 2001). The first ride of the group in Belo Horizonte took place around 2005.

Although this research had its focus turned to the main organised group that explicitly tries to interfere directly with public policy, the *BH em Ciclo (BHeC)*, other groups and events were cited in specific situations, since their presence in the urban landscape somehow affects the choices and actions of the focused group, even if indirectly. The figure 1 below represents the timeline of essential events to be explained next, both in policy and concerning the 'cycling' movement.

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<sup>3</sup> see Lefebvre, 1968; Harvey, 1973.

<sup>4</sup> see Jacobs, 1961.

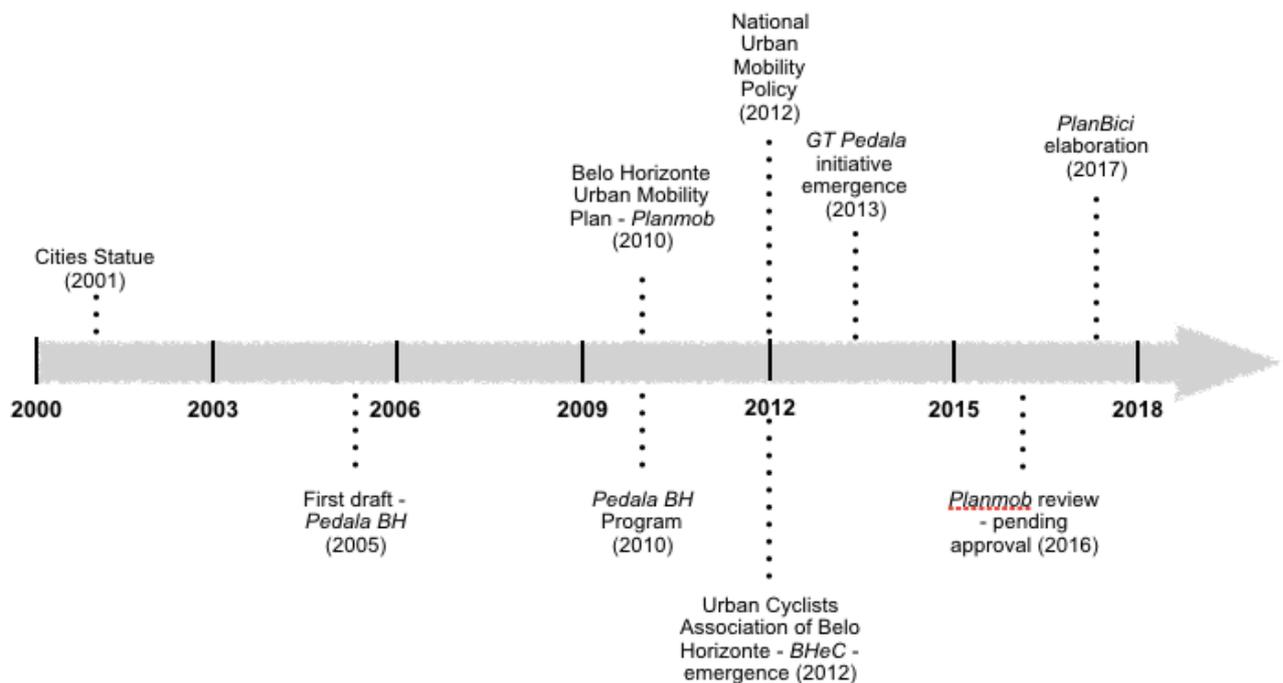


FIGURE 1 - Timeline of essential events

## 2.2 From 2001 to 2010: establishing the ground

Brazil is a federalist country, composed of 26 States and a Federal District. In 2001, it was first created the Cities Statute (BRASIL, 2001), a federal law which regulates the chapter in the Federal Constitution related to Urban Policy. Among other things, the bill institutes instruments for municipal management such as the *Plano Diretor*, similar to a City Master Plan that should be revised every ten years, and the responsibility to the federal government to provide directives about transport and urban mobility.

In 2005, a process started within the *BHTrans*, the municipal department for transit, in the direction of creating guidelines for a specific policy about urban cycling in the city, that is, regarding the use of the bicycle in the daily routines. This process resulted in 2006 in an internal document that is considered the first version (1.0) of the *Pedala BH*, the program designed to incentivize the use of the bicycle (BHTRANS, 2006). At that moment, although not yet official, the reference document first presented a diagnosis and stated the general objective and the aims of the program: to facilitate the use of the bicycle in the city by addressing traffic safety, definition and implementation of infrastructure, parking, financing, traffic education and the relation between public institutions. Here, there was the recognition that to incentivize the use of the bicycle in the urban context actions should not be limited to infrastructure, and other initiatives must be taken in different sectors. From the creation of this document until 2010, not much happened in a structured way, only in isolated actions.

### 2.3 From 2010 to 2018: developments on policy and movement

In 2010, the *BHTrans* remodeled itself, becoming an organization that not only had the responsibility to manage the traffic but also to think and frame mobility as a whole (Amaral, 2015). The process culminated in the development of the City's Urban Mobility Plan, the *Planmob-BH* (Logit & BHTRANS, 2012), following the Cities Statute directives. Considering a 2020 horizon, the plan indicated a shift in the priority that had been placed until then: non-motorized modes should be the center of the development, focusing on the pedestrians and including cycling, suggesting measures to discourage the use of cars, along with the valorization of public transport (Amaral, 2015). Concomitantly, the III Urban Policy Conference of Belo Horizonte approved some changes in the city's Master Plan to incorporate elements designed in the *Planmob-BH* (Amaral, 2015).

The program *Pedala BH* was first mentioned in an official document within the *PlanMob*. Indicators and targets for cycling were stipulated, varying according to three possible investment scenarios (there was the expectation of massive investments in infrastructure due to the FIFA World Cup in 2014. Later, most investments were designated to the Bus Rapid Transit system - BRT - and to new viaducts and avenues). A clear strategic objective was posted in the *PlanMob*: to assure that the interventions on the urban mobility system contribute to the improvement of environmental quality and stimulate non-motorized modes (Logit & BHTRANS, 2012). To accomplish this objective, the plan forecasted the implementation of a broad cycle path network, allowing the integration with public transportation and the direct connection between the city's subcenters (Logit & BHTRANS, 2012).

The year 2012 was a mark for many reasons. On the federal level, the national policy for urban mobility was finally released. The national policy stipulated principles and directives that cities should follow. The principles are related to universal accessibility; sustainable development of the cities, emphasizing socioeconomic and environmental dimensions; equity in access of public transport; social control and democratic management; and more (BRASIL, 2012). The directives, among others, state the priority of the non-motorized modes over the motorized, and the priority of public transport over the individual (BRASIL, 2012). Among other goals, the national policy aims to reduce inequalities and promote social inclusion, as well as to promote sustainable development (BRASIL, 2012).

Embedded in this scenario, some people within the 'cycling' movement in Belo Horizonte felt the necessity to organize themselves to participate in the scene. First, a local chapter of *Bike Anjo* was arranged. The aim, as already mentioned, is to create possibilities so people can start using the bicycle to move throughout the city, going from the most basic step, such as teaching people how to ride a bike, until providing traffic accompaniment, helping to trace better routes in daily trips, and more. With this approach, the *Bike Anjo* also has a social character. Second, a group of cyclists founded the *BH em Ciclo*, an urban cyclists association to deal with the public policy dimension. According to their website, the association suggests, organises and promotes events with other movements and organisations that in somehow has the bicycle as common ground; participates in training for professional or non professional drivers, and in workshops and presentations promoting the bicycle in the urban context; executes direct interventions in the urban

spaces; produces knowledge through participation and execution of surveys and researches regarding urban cycling in Belo Horizonte to subsidise public policy making; and acts directly on the public policy as an interface with the government, being part of the Urban Mobility Municipal Council, exercising social control with monitoring and analysing the municipal budget execution, discussing legislative initiatives with the city council, and collaborating with the municipality on the planning and evaluation of initiatives turned to promote the bicycle in the urban context (BH em Ciclo, n.d.). Moreover, the association creates pressure, which has been done in different ways, such as utilizing social media, writing letters to politicians and municipality, using the press, contributing to demonstrations, and more.

In 2012 more actions from the local government were taken. Even though the efforts were not enough in the cyclists' view, new infrastructure was designed and built. The government was putting the *Pedala BH* to work mainly through infrastructure but without listening to the cyclists, which resulted in big complaints from the users about the quality, location, and routes of the cycle paths.

From this moment, in 2013 the *BHTrans* developed the *GT Pedala*. The *GT Pedala* is an autonomous and open workgroup, with horizontal governance used as a connection to promote a dialogue between the municipality and those interested in developing the mobility by bicycle policy (Campos et al., 2016). In this sense, there is not any regulation that officializes or institutionalizes the group. Through the *GT Pedala*, the civil society and the public sector maintain a constant and direct interaction in a co-creation process, with the possibility for citizens to make an impact on the choices and directions of the public policy. The workgroup has monthly meetings where the civil society can present demands to the government and participate in project choices. The municipality can ask advice to the cyclists and improvements on the projects and actions can happen. If compared to other cities in Brazil, this governance structure around the promotion of the bicycle as a means of transport in the urban context is unique. The *GT Pedala* is much more active and vital than the formal deliberation arenas that the *BHeC* are involved as a participant, such as the Urban Mobility Municipal Council (Lage, 2017). However, the main projects developed by *GT Pedala* comes from the optimization of the space on the streets and with few resources, without strong political support (and budget) to implement the projects (Lage, 2017).

In 2016, a review of the *PlanMob* was proposed by the municipality together with a review of the *Pedala BH* (version 3.0). Here, new indicators and targets were presented, and the plan was structured in eight axes: active mobility; collective mobility; traffic calming; individual motorized mobility; urban logistic; sustainable city; universal accessibility; and operation and inspection management (BHTRANS, 2016b). The horizon of the plan was extended to 2030, and now six fundamental objectives are set. (1) To reduce the number of deaths in traffic; (2) to reduce the trend of increase in greenhouse gases emissions; (3) to reduce the growth in individual motorised transport; (4) to increase the percentage of trips by foot, emphasising trips within 2 km; (5) to increase the current number of trips by public transportation; (6) and to increase the rate of trips by bicycle, accentuating trips within 8 km (BHTRANS, 2016b).

The *Pedala BH* was remodeled in this new version, becoming structured in four objectives. (1) To insert and expand the number of trips by bicycle, to gradually increase its participation in the

mode share; (2) to promote the integration of the use of the bicycle with the public transport systems; (3) to implement cycling infrastructure and to promote actions that can guarantee the cyclists' safety; (4) and to spread the concept of sustainable urban mobility, stimulating the non-motorised means of transport and inserting them in the urban design (BHTRANS, 2016b). It is noticeable that now the program not only aims to incentivize the use of the bicycle, but it is treated as if embedded in a broader concept of sustainable urban mobility, generating alignment with the primary objectives of this new version of the *PlanMob*. Examples of indicators and goals related to the program are the participation of the bicycle in the mode share division (according to opinion surveys conducted by the *BHTrans*), aiming 2% in 2020, 4% in 2025, and 6% in 2030; and the percentage of the implemented extension of the cycle path network compared to the plan, aiming 40% - 400 km in 2020, 75% - 750 km in 2025, and 100% - 1.000 km in 2030. The current situation of these indicators are 0.4% of participation in the mode share and 86 km of constructed infrastructure. The goals can be considered modest if compared with leading cities in urban cycling such as Amsterdam and Copenhagen but also challenging if deemed the current situation of the city.

This last review of the *PlanMob* has not been officially approved yet, due to a formal binding with a review of the *Plano Diretor*, the City's Master Plan that is still in debate in the city council to be voted. However, in practice, it is considered the official one and all the work by the *BHTrans* and the civil society has been based on it. The entire policy architecture is well articulated into a sustainable pathway for the urban mobility in Belo Horizonte, from the national policies to the municipal plans. However, in fact, the actions and practices are not following this direction. This policy architecture is not linked with the municipal budgetary process, discussed every year in the legislative assembly after a proposition by the executive power. The municipal budget is where the political intentions and projections are, in fact, materialized. Thus, the priorities defined according to the technical professionals not always have support from the politicians.

Perceiving this situation, an exciting initiative took place in 2016. Four organizations from the civil society directly involved in urban mobility reunited themselves to create a campaign to affect the municipal elections, focusing the Mayor dispute. This initiative was a result of a process started by an Activism School, based in São Paulo. Both *BHeC* and *Bike Anjo* were involved, along with *Tarifa Zero BH*, a collective movement claiming free public transport to the citizens and *Nossa BH*, a collective movement dealing with sustainability issues in general, such as waste management, water management, urban mobility, and more. The campaign, called *#D1Passo* (or 'Take a Step'), then formulated a sustainable urban mobility plan with general actions to be taken within the next four years (the period of a mandate in Brazil). The plan included actions regarding walking, cycling, public transport, cargo transport, financing, sustainability awareness and de-stimulation of private individual motorized transportation (BH em Ciclo, Bike Anjo BH, Nossa BH, & Tarifa Zero, 2016). The actions were mainly linked with the objectives and indicators present in the *PlanMob*. Thus, the campaign can also be perceived as an attempt to pressure the public sector to implement what has been proposed by itself, since that the administrative structures remain even though a new mayor could take charge every four years.

After the elaboration of the 'sustainable urban mobility government plan', the organizations presented it to the candidates and tried to convince them to formally adopt and register in the Superior Electoral Tribunal (STE). The pressure was made through social media, and even a thematic debate was realized in the second turn of the election, between the two most voted candidates of the first turn. During the campaign, the candidate that won the elections adopted some of the proposed actions but did not register them in the STE.

In 2017, with the new mayor in charge, the urban cyclists association made several requests to meet him, what was accepted. From the meeting, it was demanded to the *BHTrans* and the *BHeC* a plan specifying what should be done year by year, with the respective costs. Then, the *PlanBici* initiative started. This new plan can be considered as an unfolding process from the *PlanMob*, passing through the *Pedala BH* program, and linked with the plan proposed by the *#D1-Passo* campaign, in a logic that goes from the long-term to actions in the short-term. The chosen arena to develop this new plan was the *GT Pedala*, the already established governance structure. Here, for the first time, the co-creation process between the government and the civil society was inverted in the sense that they designed together what should be done comprehensively. Although the demand came by the recently elected mayor, the planning process did not come exclusively from the *BHTrans*. The *PlanBici* covered different areas, recognizing the need for actions that go beyond infrastructure and aiming the target stipulated by the *PlanMob* and *Pedala BH*: 2% of the trips made by bicycle in 2020. Therefore, actions were proposed regarding infrastructure, general public education and communication, integration of the bicycle with public transport and bike sharing system improvements, governance structures, knowledge production, and financing strategies (Plano de Ações de Mobilidade por Bicicletas BH 2017-2020, 2017).

This plan was presented to and approved by the Mayor in August of 2017. However, the plan has not been made official yet, and none of the actions planned to 2017 and 2018 were executed. No budget was destined to promote the use of the bicycle in the municipal budget, even with the attempts of the 'cycling' movement through the traditional channels of participation in the budgetary process. The Municipality of Belo Horizonte just announced a new financing deal with the Federal Government to invest in infrastructure and wants the approval by the legislative assembly, mainly to spend in flooding prevention and more and new viaducts.

### 3. URBAN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE: AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1 Urban Social Movements

Social movements can be conceptualized as a distinct social process in which actors are engaged in conflicts (political and/or cultural) aiming to promote or oppose social change (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). In this sense, their desire to influence public choices is inevitably at play (Hamel, 2014). These movements present some characteristics such as conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents, linkage by dense informal networks, and a distinct and collective shared identity (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). The networks determined by a social movement may include formal organizations depending on the circumstances, but this is not true in every case (Della Porta & Diani, 2006).

Bringing this concept to an urban level, the urban movements have been influenced by the problems faced in the cities and urban regions as well as by local culture (Hamel, 2014). Moreover, if the desire of social actors to influence public choices is inevitably at play, the urban movements aim to change particular aspects of the city that directly affects their lives. Therefore, urban social movements are not those dealing with any problem that takes place in the city, but those dealing with problems of the city, relating to the city's management and planning methods, and its cultural references (Hamel, 2014). Their attempt is to achieve a degree of control of the urban environment, considering as urban environment the built environment, the city's social fabric and the local political process (Pruijt, 2007).

Problems that citizens have responded to with collective action can be found in the literature in categories such as "collective consumption"<sup>5</sup>, comprising housing shortages, insufficient healthcare, water supply and others; problems related to urban planning, comprising displacement and destruction of cityscapes; and more specific topics such as mobilization against migrants, specific taxes, and others (Pruijt, 2007).

Urban social movements reflect new forms of citizen engagement, combining modern and traditional ways of mobilization, and contesting the prevailing models of urbanism and planning (Hamel, 2014). Although the set of actions employed by urban social movements overlaps with traditional social movements, some of them can specifically be found in urban social movements, such as rent strike, squatting and developing alternative spatial plans (Pruijt, 2007). They act within and outside institutions, often agreeing in take part in urban governance, assuming the risk of their actions being channeled by governmental initiatives (Hamel, 2014). Open to debate, institutionalization and cooptation are seen as the beginning of the end of the urban social movements' life cycle (Pruijt, 2007). However, although institutionalization and cooptation diminish the impulse toward change, they can also be a strategy to secure achieved results (Pruijt, 2007).

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<sup>5</sup> See Castells, 1977.

### 3.2 Political Opportunity Structure (POS)

The Political Opportunity Structure concept in Social Movement Theory is a lens (among several others) that aims to analyze the social movement through paying attention to the (political) context and the movement's interactions with it. According to this concept, social movements take advantage of the political opportunity structure of a given political system, which differentiates their development and actions from place to place (Van der Heijden, 1997). By political opportunity structure, it is understood the "degree to which groups are likely to be able to gain access to power and to manipulate the political system" (Eisinger, 1973, as cited in McAdam, p.23, 1996). Therefore, social movements' actions and results are a function of the constraints present in the configurations of the political forces and, depending on the case, of the institutional support of social actors (Nicholls, 2008 as cited in Hamel, 2014).

Social movements emerge from mainly three factors: the structure of political opportunities and constraints the movement encounter, the available forms of organization, and the collective processes used to mediate the opportunity and action (McAdam, 1996). Focusing the first mentioned factor, opportunities often refer to constraints, possibilities and threats originated outside the mobilizing group but in some way affect its chances of attaining its objectives (Koopmans, 1999). These opportunities can, on the one hand, appear in volatile ways, such as shifts in events, policies and political actors, which interfere in movements' strategies for mobilization and demobilization (Gamson & Meyer, 1996). On the other hand, the opportunities are also embedded in the political institutions and culture, with less flexibility overtime (Gamson & Meyer, 1996). However, at the same time the opportunities allow the collective action to take place, the movements can also create opportunities (Gamson & Meyer, 1996). Therefore, the opportunities are in fact fluid and dynamic lens to analyze past or ongoing development processes regarding the social movement trajectory.

The political opportunity structure concept sheds light on the political environment in which social movements act. It alone will never fully explain the origins and development of social movements, but express that not all the collective actions are due only to strategic wit, courage and so on, part of it is structurally shaped by the political context (Koopmans, 1999). After all, society is embedded in a rules system.

The variations concerning opportunities are the most important when talking about collective action, and the relevant ones are a result of the interaction of social movements with the political actors and institutions (Koopmans, 1999). However, these variations are not random, and exclusively a result of strategic interaction, part of them are shaped by the structure of the political context (or system) (Koopmans, 1999). The extent to which that structure influences the variations vary from case to case and is a matter for empirical investigation (Koopmans, 1999).

The political opportunity approach is often criticised for neglecting the fact that cultural and strategic processes are responsible for defining factors assumed as structural (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). In this respect, social movements can perceive opportunities opened or closed through their cultural lens, turning the political context more fluid.

The political opportunity structure of a given political system varies according to some aspects. Different scholars theorized these aspects concerning dimensions, a group of variables, a set of properties, and so on. McAdam et al. (1996) list four dimensions: the relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system; the stability of the broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity; the presence of elite allies; and the state's capacity and propensity for repression. Van Der Heijden (1997) says about four groups of variables: the nature of existing political cleavages in society; the formal institutional structure of the state; the informal strategies of the political elites vis-a-vis their challengers; and the power relations within the party system. Kriesi (1996), in turn, defines three sets of broad properties: the formal institutional structure of a political system (strong state, weak state), its informal procedures and prevailing strategies about challengers (exclusive, inclusive), and the configuration of power relevant for the confrontation with the challengers. To give one more example, Tarrow (2011) indicates aspects of a political opportunity structure such as the opening of access to participation for new actors; the evidence of political realignment within the polity; the availability of influential allies; and the emerging splits within the elite.

The political opportunity structure approach often describes national contexts and is used to compare movements' origins and developments across countries. Applying this approach on an urban context requires some adaptations. For example, when analyzing urban cases in Spain, Taleria and Ahedo (2016) found that the POS has been strongly linked more to local governance and participation than other aspects. To answer the research questions, an analytical framework was developed and will be presented in the next section.

### **3.3 UPOS Analytical framework**

As placed by McAdam (1996, p. 29), "the dimensions of the political opportunity structure vary depending on the question one is seeking to answer." Thus, the suggested UPOS analytical framework considers mainly the aims of this research. Therefore, the framework tries to encompass more the development and results than the origins of the urban social movement in question. The proposed and used framework approaches the political opportunity structure (POS) regarding dimensions, explicitly thinking of the urban environment and considering what scholars have written about the POS. The dimensions themselves are not substantially different from the traditional political opportunity structure frameworks, which shows generalisability of the model. However, some adaptations within each dimension when analyzing the case were necessary. The dimensions should be analyzed in a fluid way rather than a rigid and strict categorization, allowing the comprehensiveness of the entire context. The five are (1) the openness of the institutionalized political system; (2) the presence of allies and power configuration; (3) political alignment and cleavages within society; (4) response strategies employed with challengers; and (5) the state capacity of execution.

### 3.3.1 Openness of the institutionalized political system

This dimension refers mainly to how urban social movements can participate in the institutionalized political system and be a player in the city's political context, and to what extent this participation or play is viable. The more political decisions are dispersed, the more open a political system is (Della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 202). Specifically, in a national context, this concerns territorial decentralization (for example, how autonomous is a local government?) and the balance between the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). The greater the number of actors possessing political power, more access points are created within the system to be used by social movements (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). The capacity of the system to allow non-institutional challengers in producing binding outputs is also considered in this dimension, in the sense that less binding outputs concentrate power (Gamson & Meyer, 1996).

An interesting way to look into citizen participation was given by Arnstein (1969), who dissects the citizen participation in a ladder of eight steps. The first two steps compose the non-participation level when citizens are manipulated (first step) and part of therapy (second step). Here, citizens are treated as subjects to be educated or cured. On the third step, citizens are informed and on the fourth citizens are consulted. Thus, they hear and be heard, but they lack the power to ensure their views. The fifth step is the placation, giving citizens little space but in a manner to keep them under control in boards and councils. From the sixth until the eight step, citizen power really begins with increasing degrees of influence in the decision making. The partnership (sixth) allows citizens to negotiate and engage in trade-offs, and in delegated power (seventh) and citizen control (eighth) citizens have the majority of decision-making seats or complete managerial control.

Within an urban framework, the openness of the institutionalized political system must represent the access points of power that enable the social movements to influence the city's planning and management. That is, how urban social movements can influence the decision makers and their decisions. Therefore, elements such as mechanisms of participation and direct democracy that produce binding decisions characterize less concentration of power, as well as innovative governance structures are sought. Another aspect is how the power is dispersed between the regions of the city also plays a role. Big cities with numerous inhabitants usually face different realities even within themselves, which leads to discussions of power within the city. How are the decisions made within a city, in a centralized or dispersed way?

Another discussion under this dimension is about vertical centralization. From beyond the debate on whether the local government can promote transformations in the cities, naturally, a municipality copes with different topics and dilemmas, such as housing, mobility, land use, water, and more, each one with a specific governmental body to formulate and implement policies regarding the issue. However, the autonomy of each body can vary from system to system, which directly affects the opportunity structure for urban social movements. Moreover, each governmental entity has its own culture and beliefs, which directly affects the results of a specific related urban social movement since the openness can vary even between governmental bodies within the same municipality.

### 3.3.2 *The presence of allies*

The second dimension of the framework is the presence of allies. The alliance structure of a social movement is the one composed by political actors supporting them, and on the contrary, the opposition structure is the one composed by political actors against them (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). An ally can be part of the institutional system (government bodies, political parties, politicians, interest groups), but also other social movements (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Furthermore, economic, cultural and intellectual actors can be considered allies (or opponents) of a particular social movement.

The presence of allies is important for a social movement because they can provide resources and more political opportunities (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Therefore, in a political system with fewer opportunities, the presence of allies becomes even more critical to provide the movement help in gaining access to the decision-making process (Xie & Van Der Heijden, 2010). In the absence of allies, the higher the difficulty in promoting change in the short term, reinforcing the need for more ideological incentives in substitution to material incentives, which can lead to more extreme strategies (Della Porta & Diani, 2006).

Although government fragmentation or differences between the parties composing it facilitate the finding of allies, the chances of policy implementation is lower (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). When considered the public administration itself, government bodies can also support or oppose the urban social movements in their claims, since as mentioned in the previous section, they also have their own goals and interests, that can coincide with the movement goals and interests or not (Xie & Van Der Heijden, 2010).

This discussion on the urban level considers other actors, such as communities, and neighborhoods associations. Urban interventions often influence people's routine, lifestyles, comfort, and convenience. These organized groups of civil society can also play a prominent role.

### 3.3.3 *Political alignment and cleavages within society*

The dimension of political alignment and cleavages within society aims to analyze the room for the specific topic in the polity grid, as well as the political arrangement of the urban social movement and the influence that the claims and movements can suffer from external factors (for example, national and global discussions).

Different issues and problems surround the urban environment. The resources are scarce, which leads to different views on priorities and, naturally, conflict. Therefore, political power is necessary to put the issue on the agenda and create a shared understanding of what should be tackled first.

The space on the political agenda to discuss the social movements' claims is a conditional factor. The chances of development depend if and to what extent old political conflicts are integrat-

ed and accommodated politically (Van der Heijden, 1997). In this regard, the more integrated and accommodated old topics, the more room is available and more competition between parties is centered on new issues (Van der Heijden, 1997).

Another critical issue is the how aligned a movement is with political parties, in the sense that if one aligned political party is in charge, the chances of success are more significant than when another party is in charge (Van der Heijden, 1997).

### *3.3.4 Response strategies employed with challengers*

The response strategies used with challengers try to grasp how the local government responds to the urban social movement's claims and strategies. The state attempts to coordinate the various interests at play, accommodating the different vectors of pressure through persuasion (Souza, 2006). In this sense, many different strategies can be employed by the municipality, such as repression, facilitation, integration, cooptation, and others.

Kriesi (1996) divides the response in 'inclusive' and 'exclusive', that combined with the formal institutional structure (weak or strong) results in strategies such as formalistic inclusion, full procedure integration, selective exclusion and informal cooptation.

From the social movement's perspective, taking part in an institutionalized, state-led participatory process (or governance structures) can be risky (if the state treats the participation only for formalistic purposes, for example) or worth-while (if used to gain access to public funds and for political-pedagogical purposes) (Souza, 2006).

### *3.3.5 State capacity of execution*

The literature does not always assume the state capacity of execution, that is, "the power of authorities to implement adopted policies, regardless of internal or external resistance" (Rucht, 1996, as cited in McAdam, 1996, p. 28), as one dimension of the political opportunity structure. The reason is that, although one fundamental and determinant factor for outcomes, these determinants factors often differ from those of collective action (Brockett, 1991 p. 254 as cited in McAdam, 1996). However, the characteristics of a particular public administration influence the social movements (Della Porta & Diani, 2006), and the impact of the movement depends also on the capacity of the political system to meet the claims, not only on the access points (Kitschelt, 1986, as cited in Xie & Van Der Heijden, 2010). Therefore, aspects such as the available amount of resources, internal coordination, professionalization, and others can both multiply or restrict points of access for social movements (Della Porta & Diani, 2006).

This situation can be even more evident on the urban level since urban social movements try to influence decision-making to solve problems of the city. In other words, they are dealing with specific issues happening on the territory that directly or indirectly will demand physical intervention on the short, medium or long term.

Thus, if one intends to analyze how the political opportunity structure in urban environments is affecting the results and outcomes, the state capacity of execution or the output structure must be considered. This dimension looks for the availability of resources (financial, human, knowledge and others), coherence and coordination, and more.

Figure 2 below summarizes the five dimensions with their main aspects.

### **Urban Political Opportunity Structure - UPOS framework**

<b>Openness of the institutionalized political system</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access points - citizen participation on urban level</li> <li>• Binding outputs due to citizen participation</li> <li>• Power concentration and centralization (or not)</li> </ul>
<b>The presence of allies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence of local political actors supporting the social movement</li> <li>• Political relevance of supporting actors</li> </ul>
<b>Political alignment and cleavages within society</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topic accommodation within society / space on the local political agenda</li> <li>• Political alignment with local political forces / parties</li> </ul>
<b>Response strategies employed with challengers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The strategies and actions employed by the local government in response to the urban social movements' claims and strategies</li> </ul>
<b>State capacity of execution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence of adequate local governmental structure and resources</li> </ul>

FIGURE 2 - Dimensions of the UPOS framework

## 4. THE UPOS FOR THE CYCLING MOVEMENT IN BELO HORIZONTE

This fourth chapter will present the findings of the research done. In order to accomplish this, the chapter is structured according to the analytical framework created, dividing the suggested dimensions into topics when felt necessary to structure the results better. A summary of each interview done can be found in the annex. Some quotes were used to exemplify the arguments and statements better when felt necessary.

### 4.1 Openness of the institutionalized political system

For analyzing the research findings regarding the 'openness of the institutionalized political system', results are divided into two topics: *citizen participation in the urban level*, and *power concentration and centralization* since they can aggregate the core of this dimension.

#### 4.1.1 Citizen participation in the urban level

The political system in which the cycling movement from Belo Horizonte is embedded can be considered relatively open, with many instances for participation available, both formal and informal. However, few (or practically none of them) can be considered effective or produce binding outputs to secure the aimed results.

Formal mechanisms are available from the city council and the municipality. Two members of the city council highlighted these mechanisms during interviews:

"These places (for participation) exist and are open for popular movements and for every citizen of the 'capital' (of Minas Gerais State). The public hearings are the most used mechanism. When there is a bill of interest of the population, the audience is summoned to debate over the subject, with the popular representatives having assured freedom to expose points of view and suggest changes or even the suppression of the bill"<sup>6</sup> (Interviewee F, 2018).

"Movements can participate in the commissions and public hearings and can make suggestions to some bills that arrive at City Council. For example, during the discussion and planning of the city's 'budgetary cycle', when it is opened up space for suggestions from the population"<sup>7</sup> (Interviewee G, 2018).

Other formal mechanisms in which the *BHeC* has a seat or participates were cited by its members, such as the Urban Mobility Council (that is formally responsible for discussing the urban mobility in the city), the Mobility Observatory (that monitors the urban mobility indicators), the Re-

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<sup>6</sup> Translated by the author

<sup>7</sup> Translated by the author

gional Commission for Transport and Transit (that discuss public transport, transit, and urban planning in different regions of the city), the Metropolitan Collegiate (that discuss the mobility in the metropolitan region), and the Urban Policy Council (that deals with urban policies directives. *BHeC* does not participate directly, but in an alliance with other social movements - to be discussed in 'presence of allies' section).

Informal mechanisms also exist. For beyond (the already mentioned and explained) *GT Pedala*, the innovative governance structure created by the *BHTrans*, the city council is also a channel for open participation concerning personal interaction. According to 'Interviewee F', "social movements representatives can arrange meetings with the city council members in their cabinets since all the elected members are open to debate and receive and follow up suggestions and demands from the population"<sup>8</sup> (2018).

There are many access points to the political system. However, when it comes to effectiveness, that is, the degree to which these points successfully produces the aimed results by citizen participation, problems arise. 'Interviewee B' explains that the formal instances of participation are not deliberative. "The reports we have are that these instances of participation serve more to legitimate governmental action than to steer it"<sup>9</sup> (2018). The Urban Mobility Council is an example of ineffectiveness. The meetings used to be in person but then turned to be virtual. Nevertheless, it has never produced relevant results. Exceptions are made for two instances: the Mobility Observatory and the Urban Policy Council. However, the mobility observatory functions as a monitoring instance only, it does not serve to produce decisions. Moreover, although the Urban Policy Council is a deliberative instance, it does not produce concrete and immediate decisions related to mobility by bicycles. Even though most of the instances of participation can be considered weak in decision making, they are essential to creating coherence, alignment, and improvements to the stimulus for mobility by bicycle (plans), since they serve to put the mobility by bicycle into the discussions, according to 'Interviewee D'.

An interesting point of view about the effectiveness of the formal access points can be seen in the following 'Interviewee G' quote. These mechanisms need complementary political pressure / social mobilization if movements want to achieve results. Alone they are not sufficient:

"It is also important to have it clear that the claims that advance are those that conjugate institutional tools with 'direct actions'. That is, as important as to appropriate of the language and of the formal instruments is to keep acting and mobilizing people to pressure the government to implement the changes. This is very clear inside the city council. When the population comes, visit the cabinets, makes noise and pressure for the approval or rejection of a specific bill, it is treated in another manner by the city council members"<sup>10</sup> (2018).

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<sup>8</sup> Translated by the author.

<sup>9</sup> Translated by the author.

<sup>10</sup> Translated by the author.

Although informal, the *GT Pedala* is an important mechanism of participation for the cycling movement in Belo Horizonte. However, its effectiveness is also questioned by some of the members of the urban social movement in question. Many interviewees exposed their discontentment and perspectives about the functioning of this governance structure. 'Interviewee A' said that the "*GT Pedala* is necessary, a reference for other cities in Brazil. However, it is frustrating to see that nothing discussed is implemented or implemented at a high cost"<sup>11</sup> (in the sense of barriers and difficulties encountered). 'Interviewee B' also recognizes the importance and relevance of the *GT Pedala*, but criticize its effectiveness.

"*GT Pedala* is one of the most important instances of citizen participation and is well seen by the rest of the country and even in the World Bicycle Forum. However, it is not effective. There are lots of ideas, lots of discussions, but nothing coming from it is implemented. So we do not produce public policy with citizen participation because it does not happen"<sup>12</sup> (2018).

'Interviewee C' even has a stronger opinion and critique. For him, "the expiration date of the *GT Pedala* expired, in this format, it does not work anymore. It is not effective. It requires a new format, new people. It continues to be something innovative, with discussions between the civil society and public power in a high maturity level but needs a change"<sup>13</sup> (2018).

One example cited by two movement's members was the ecological corridor project. Conducted by the Secretariat for Food Security, the project was multidisciplinary, involving agroecology, urban mobility, education and more. The *BHeC* was invited as a civil society member to contribute to the urban mobility area. One of the actions, the implementation of a particular cycle path had been discussed in the *GT Pedala* for years but had never been approved. Due to this new project, this cycle path was finally approved, indicating that the matters discussed in the *GT Pedala* sometimes do not have the necessary strength, or that people responsible for the *GT Pedala* from the government lack this required strength to follow up what had been discussed.

However, 'Interviewee D', also a member of *BHeC* but former *BHTrans* employee, has a different view on the *GT Pedala*.

"The *GT Pedala* nowadays fulfill its function as a space for citizen participation, but it has failed in achieving results. However, the *GT Pedala* is not an instrument to get results, to design cycle paths, to raise funds. The main role is to promote the dialogue within the policy formulation and to avoid surprises. We put too many expectations on the *GT Pedala* as if it was the *Pedala BH* or *PlanBici* themselves. We can not forget that in less than one year ago the *GT Pedala* was used as the space to construct the *PlanBici*, a key factor on cycling policy nowadays."<sup>14</sup> (2018).

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<sup>11</sup> Translated by the author.

<sup>12</sup> Translated by the author.

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<sup>14</sup> Translated by the author.

Thus, mechanisms for citizen participation are available. However, the formal ones fall into steps four to six in the Arnstein's citizen participation ladder, in which citizens have little or no power to decision making (1969). Informal mechanisms are also available, but the ones main used by the *BHeC* are ineffective in producing practical results.

#### 4.1.2 Power concentration and centralization

This topic will analyze whether power is centralized (or not) in the political system of Belo Horizonte, regarding the mobility by bicycle policy formulation and implementation. Therefore, findings of the autonomy of *BHTrans* concerning the municipality, the autonomy of the *Pedala BH* team concerning the *BHTrans* as a whole, and short exposure of the balance between the executive and legislative powers on the municipal level in Belo Horizonte are presented.

In general, the autonomy of *BHTrans* is different when considering the policy formulation and policy implementation, with the full autonomy for the formulation, and restricted for implementation. However, the opinions about this issue are contrasting between the *BHeC* and *BHTrans*.

The *BHeC* members believe *BHTrans* has autonomy to formulate and implement the mobility by bicycle policy, especially concerning the *PlanBici*, the specific plan for bicycles in the city, envisioning the period between 2016 and 2020. In their view, many times what is missing is initiative. 'Interviewee A' highlighted that *BHTrans* has the autonomy to implement the *PlanBici*, but it lacks initiative since many planned actions do not require monetary resources to be done and nevertheless do not happen (2018).

On the other hand, 'Interviewee E' (*BHTrans* employee directed linked to the *Pedala BH* program) gave another vision:

"Concerning mobility policies formulation, we have enough freedom. We have always had room to discuss the policies with the municipality as a whole. However, in the implementation of some controversy projects, the difficulties appear. (...) The infrastructure for bicycles implementation requires the rethinking of the street. Requires the withdrawal of car parking spots in many times, narrowing the width of the bearing ranges, car-restraining policies, among others. And this will always result in much resistance"<sup>15</sup> (2018).

"Of course there is a dependency regarding the general directions given by the Mayor. No municipal entity is independent, and I do not think this is necessarily bad. When a department is too technical, such as *BHTrans*, it is up to the department to bring the Mayor its accumulated knowledge and technical production to base his directives for the city. We had in the past more

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<sup>15</sup> Translated by the author.

financial independence, and this accelerates things but does not mean political independence”<sup>16</sup> (2018).

This situation exposes conflictual views, suggesting that the *BHTrans* has not enough autonomy to implement the designed plans and, dropping one level, the *Pedala BH* team even less about the *BHTrans*. This view can be confirmed by 'Interviewee D', when he stated that “few people inside *BHTrans* have a notion of what policy for mobility by bicycle means and a few are sympathetic. For every sympathetic, there are two opponents”<sup>17</sup> (2018). Furthermore, he completed, “people do not have faith in the bicycle as a solution for mobility problems”<sup>18</sup> (2018). In other words, the bicycle topic suffers resistance inside *BHTrans*.

One other alleged argument, the financial (in)dependency is also controversial. *BHeC* members recognize the absence of resources. However, they think more could have been done, especially the prioritization of the existent ones. “*BHTrans* allege they do not have resources, but in fact what happens is the non-prioritization of the existent resources in active transportation. If there was an executive power more interested in this public policy, even with financial difficulties, it would be able to do something”<sup>19</sup>, according to 'Interviewee B' (2018). 'Interviewee C' corroborates with this vision. “It lacks financial resources, but the *BHTrans* can raise international funds linked to climate change. It has all to do with the bicycle. Even because, perhaps, the Urban Mobility Plan of Belo Horizonte is the only in Brazil that estimates the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and atmospheric pollutants to be reduced in the case of its implementation”<sup>20</sup> (2018).

In fact, *BHTrans* both lacks implementation autonomy and is resistant to it. The *Pedala BH* team seems isolated, creating a challenging environment for the mobility by bicycle policy to thrive inside the organization. This aspect is also related to two other dimensions of the suggested Urban Political Opportunity Structure, the 'political alignment and cleavages within society' and the 'state capacity of execution', to be presented in the following sections.

Concerning the broader municipal scene, the municipality concentrates power, being almost hypertrophied, according to 'Interviewee F'.

“As in almost all capitals, there is a hypertrophy of the executive power, which manages to have the control over the city council. Everything passes through the municipality's screen, which puts itself as the only responsible for the urban planning. The 'regionals' in this new term have had their autonomy, that was not enough, decreased. (...) The power is centralized on the Mayor's hand”<sup>21</sup> (2018).

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<sup>16</sup> Translated by the author.

<sup>17</sup> Translated by the author.

<sup>18</sup> Translated by the author.

<sup>19</sup> Translated by the author.

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<sup>21</sup> Translated by the author.

On the other hand, the city council is also seen as a barrier for some municipality's projects, depending on political alignment, according to 'Interviewee E' (2018).

'Interviewee G' also sheds light on the autonomy of the thematic councils and commissions in which citizens and civil society have seats, exemplifying with the City Master Plan construction process.

“The autonomy of the councils and commissions formed by citizens to implement public policies is minimum. Just see what happened with the City Master Plan, constructed by more than six thousand people in 2014, in a process that lasted eight years and has not been voted yet. The population, after many battles, can participate in projects formulation, but they are not necessarily implemented, resulting in huge discouragement for those that try to participate and influence the institutional politics”<sup>22</sup> (2018).

Therefore, the political system in which the *BHeC* acts is, besides relatively open regarding access points (but ineffective), a centralized system regarding power, with little autonomy for the involved actors to promote change.

## 4.2 The presence of allies

The presence of allies can be precious regarding the success of an urban social movement. In general, *BHeC* has structured its alliance collar outside the institutional political system, relying mainly on other urban social movements. *Bike Anjo*, *Nossa BH*, *Tarifa Zero*, and others were listed as allies. The three cited here were part of the *#D1Passo* campaign, explained above. The *BHeC* also helped *Nossa BH* in articulation to grab one seat in the Urban Policy Council, uniting forces with the same purpose.

In some specific and isolated moments, the association looked for support inside the institutional system and other actors outside of it. A previous city council member, Adriano Ventura, also a cyclist, was a recurrent citation. Part of the local press, namely the *O Tempo* journal, was also cited as an ally, providing news and a specific column for the theme 'mobility by bicycle' in the city.

The *Pedala BH* team, the unit within *BHTrans* responsible for formulating and implementing the mobility by bicycle projects was also considered an ally by *BHeC* members, although without the required power to change things as the movement wishes since they seem isolated. The other way around is also true. The *Pedala BH* team also considers the *BHeC* an ally, as expressed by 'Interviewee E': “For me, the *BHeC* is the biggest partner the *Pedala BH* program can have. With a precise and effective social control, it is through this partnership that many planned actions become viable to happen. There are some divergences, which is normal, but our relationship is mature enough to treat these divergences with respect”<sup>23</sup> (2018).

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<sup>22</sup> Translated by the author.

<sup>23</sup> Translated by the author.

Interesting to notice, none of the cited or listed allies make part of a political or economic elite. In fact, the *BHeC*'s allies do not hold influential positions. The alliance structure is mainly constructed bottom up. The *BHeC* interviewed members recognize this situation and even have mapped potential allies, such as the other members of the Urban Mobility Council, the Secretariat for Urban Planning and the Secretariat for Food Security, but have not reached them yet.

The possibility to find potential allies within the political system was highlighted by both the elected city council members interviewed. 'Interviewee F' said "there is a good number of city council members sympathetic to these initiatives that aim to promote the use of the bicycle in Minas Gerais' capital. What is needed is the movement's leaders to approximate more of these members, through a constant presence in the City Council, to invite these members to participate in meetings and other events for promoting the use of the bicycle"<sup>24</sup> (2018). 'Interviewee G' emphasized the role of the City Council in writing, approving and rejecting bills, and also inspect the municipality's actions, which naturally turns its members as potential allies. Nonetheless, also warned that when it comes to the implementation things are not that easy. "Practically all colleagues from the City Council agree the importance to improve the cycling infrastructure in the city and to invest in traffic education to promote respect with the cyclists. However, at the moment to actualize these policies, they do not give the same importance. Just look the city's budget plan, that prioritizes the expenditure in works that incentivize car use"<sup>25</sup> (2018).

It is worthwhile to notice that the political parties do not have a fixed and closed position on the topic, as exposed by 'Interviewee F': "Concerning Parties, nowadays the diversity of individual postures does not allow a group evaluation"<sup>26</sup> (2018).

Thus, the alliance structure constructed by *BHeC* is quite limited and based on other social movements. It lacks access to political and economic power. Exceptions can be made in specific situations. However, some of the interviewees glimpse potential allies that the movement could reach.

### **4.3 Political alignment and cleavages within society**

The 'political alignment and cleavages within society' dimension is explored in two topics to delineate better the results: topic accommodation within society, which is how the bicycle topic is accommodated on the political agenda, and political alignment with local political forces and external events, to understand how the disputes around the topic have developed. In this sense, the *BHeC* and its battle will be contextualized in the political and societal system in which they act.

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<sup>24</sup> Translated by the author.

<sup>25</sup> Translated by the author.

<sup>26</sup> Translated by the author.

### 4.3.1 Topic accommodation within society

The cycling movement in Belo Horizonte, specifically the *BHeC*, subject of this research, aims a shift in the current urban mobility paradigm. This aim was heavily highlighted by the interviewees and influences the accommodation of the topic on the local political agenda and the (lack of) results achieved. Answering on why the results are not satisfying, 'Interviewee D' said:

There is an external factor, that is the mobility paradigm, that goes beyond the bicycle. Within the 'bicycle bubble', it is easier to construct good stimulus, good paths but bumps into the paradigm. A paradigm that disregarded the bicycle during many decades. The bicycle is still a blind point, and people have difficulties in seeing it. A second reason is the lack of faith, beliefs in the bicycle as a solution. The promotion policies are not seen as solutions, but complementary policies. Some people accept the policy and pretend to believe (like the politicians that sign support letters). Thus, some people think it is not necessary to act, that it is foolishness. A third reason is that the bicycle topic has not much mobilizer power such as public transport, for example. If you solve the public transport problem, you solve the situation for much more people, changes much more the city. However, starting on the 'bicycle' it is possible to discuss social inclusion, sustainability, among others. So the bicycle is a gateway to discuss a new paradigm"<sup>27</sup> (2018).

The belief in the viability of the bicycle as a solution for the unsustainable urban mobility pattern was also mentioned by Interviewee E. "The number of bicycles on the streets has been rising visibly, but in the mode share it represents a tiny part. I think the city lacks public management that faces the bicycle as a fundamental part of a project for a viable city. Which means being willing to pick fights, to defend the project despite opposition and look further into the future, beyond a four-year term"<sup>28</sup> (2018).

'Interviewee B' brought thoughts about the socioeconomic and political context. "Belo Horizonte is not outside from the national political and economic context that prioritizes the car, a capitalistic system in which the car represents an enormous part of the production and in which people imagine to have the right to use their cars"<sup>29</sup> (2018). Moreover, as also touched by 'Interviewee D', raised questions on the priority of the bicycle in this political context and agenda.

"It is difficult to find arguments to put the bicycle as a priority when, for example, the metro's tariff is going to raise, when the public transport is not enough, no buses during the late night. Or when someone does not have a home and is occupying a building to have a shelter. Or when the health system does not provide satisfactory services. Thus, there is room to discuss the bicycle in the city, but it is restricted to the academy and the upper mid-

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<sup>27</sup> Translated by the author.

<sup>28</sup> Translated by the author.

<sup>29</sup> Translated by the author.

dle class. Every time we tried to focus outside our 'bubble' we had no success"<sup>30</sup> (2018).

"The bicycle is a tool for inclusion. Mobility is a right to the city. It gives access to services. Also, the bicycle is democratic. It is cheap. So the bicycle has an important role, but I confess that depending on the place I will give a speech in some events I get uncomfortable"<sup>31</sup> (2018).

This aspect was also mentioned by 'Interviewee F', saying that "the city experiences a process of decadence in urban spaces, and this is one of the main worries of the population. The massive presence of homeless people in many points around the city, the degradation of the city center, the lack of conservation of the streets, the precarious street lightning and the lack of good service in health centers are problems more relevant for the population"<sup>32</sup> (2018).

Therefore, it is noticeable that for the interviewees the topic regarding the use of the bicycle still lays behind socio-economic and other urban aspects. Even within the urban mobility area, the bicycle topic also struggles with getting priority when compared to other modes that potentially can attract more people. 'Interviewee F' also highlighted this point:

"Another point that contributes to this adverse reaction is the awful quality of the public transport in Belo Horizonte. Without a metro system and with a bad bus system, people understand that the priority should be given to individual motorized transportation modes, that is, cars and motorcycles, and then put themselves against the bicycles"<sup>33</sup> (2018).

Contradictory, although the topic is immersed in a paradigm shift, and other themes were put as more relevant in the current political context and city's socio-economic situation, all interviewees, from the urban social movement members to the *BHTrans* employee and city council members, agreed that there is enough room to discuss the use of the bicycle in city of Belo Horizonte. 'Interviewee A' highlighted that the *BHeC* as a social movement is succeeded in creating guidelines within the topic, remembering the success obtained by the *#D1Passo* campaign during the previous municipal elections. 'Interviewee C' also mentioned this virtue of *BHeC*, and added that the association brought the discussion beyond the 'bicycle for the bicycle itself', placing this element as an object that questions the entire city model turned to the automobile, by occupying all available spots in the discussion of urban mobility in the city. 'Interviewee E' shared that the bicycle topic is better accepted now than before, despite differences when it comes to the implementation. The City Council also seems to be open to discuss the topic, as can be seen in the previous dimension about potential allies.

However, *BHeC* faces some problems in expanding this debate over its influence areas. As already explained, for 'Interviewee B' the topic is restricted to the academic educated and upper

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<sup>30</sup> Translated by the author.

<sup>31</sup> Translated by the author.

<sup>32</sup> Translated by the author.

<sup>33</sup> Translated by the author.

middle class, and the attempts to promote the debate outside of it has failed. 'Interviewee C' stated that "BHeC lacks the capacity to bring the discussion to other places beyond the city center. And it is where we are losing cyclists in the city"<sup>34</sup> (2018).

The use of the bicycle as a means of transport in Belo Horizonte has room to grow on the political agenda. The success of the *#D1Passo* campaign also indicates this path. However, sometimes is treated as an auxiliary discussion about urban mobility, not as a real solution, with other themes such as public transport having a preference. The bicycle is related by the movement to other sectors of the urban life, such as inclusion (since it is a cheap way to move around the city, therefore more accessible). Nevertheless, the urban social movement faces difficulties in expanding this debate to areas outside its influence areas to improve its impact on the political agenda.

#### 4.3.2 Political alignment with local political forces and external events

The *BHeC* is not aligned with a specific political side. Its allies, as seen, mainly rely on other social movements, with exceptions in exceptional moments. The most of the city council members and politicians seem to be open to discuss the bicycle-related topics regardless of the political party they make part of, although when it comes to actions few things are done. 'Interviewee F' contributed to this topic saying that "None of the city council members has explicitly manifested against an increase in the use of bicycle, but since they vote according to personal interests, it is tough to evaluate who is really against the cycling movement. Parties have also not manifested themselves in the topic"<sup>35</sup> (2018).

However, the bicycle as a means of transport had a buzz in the country when the previous Mayor of the city of São Paulo, Fernando Haddad from the left wing 'Workers Party', rapidly expanded the cycle path network including a symbolic cycle path in the most important avenue of the city. According to 'Interviewee E' this had a contribution to other state capitals consider the mobility by bicycle as municipal policy. Fernando Haddad suffered a huge resistance because of his traffic and mobility policies, such as the investment in bicycles, the reduction of the maximum speed allowed on streets, and others, which influenced the city of Belo Horizonte. According to 'Interviewee E', one project of 'Zone 30' (urban spaces where the maximum speed on the streets is limited to 30km/h and designed accordingly) was aborted by the previous Mayor of Belo Horizonte after he saw the bad repercussion in São Paulo.

Although the stimulus to increase the number of cyclists in Belo Horizonte does not face resistance inside the city council, at least on the speech according to the interviewees of this research, the policy faces resistance in other places and groups. Since the physical space of a street is a conflictual space, naturally when the government decides to construct a cycle path, for example, someone that is not a cyclist will lose space for transit or parking. 'Interviewee F' listed taxi and private drivers as opponents. 'Interviewee E' said sometimes the commerce on the streets were

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<sup>34</sup> Translated by the author.

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against pro-bicycle measures because they would lose parking spots for clients. Even within *BHTrans*, especially the part responsible for implementing the projects.

In respect to *BHTrans*, it is important to notice the mission for what it has been created. In 'Interviewee D's words, this factor still shapes the department's structure:

"The logic behind *BHTrans*, regarding traffic management, is completely car-oriented. (More open to) Discuss fluidity and much less open to discuss pedestrians, the bicycle, and even the public transport. The logic of traffic management is based on the car, on the fluidity of streets"<sup>36</sup> (2018).

Thus, *BHTrans* was not created to deal with mobility in a broader sense that encompasses active mobility. Curiously, the *BHeC* did not list specific and organized groups as opponents. When asked, all of them said the opponents were punctual, in specific cases, such as some columnist in the press. The topic suffers most of the time a diffuse and fragmented resistance, only when is threatened to lose privileges.

When it comes to external events, trends and general factors that could influence the directions of the *BHeC* and the topic in the city, interviewees reported some influence so far. While the world discusses climate change, this topic still has not been substantially incorporated in the mobility by bicycle discussion. 'Interviewee C' said the external scenario does not affect the discussion, except for the openness to raise international funds. 'Interviewee A' noticed that the *PlanBici* was presented to United Nations representatives in an attempt to clinch funds for implementation. However, 'Interviewee E' sees as a future opportunity since the political system might suffer pressure from the outside:

"Nowadays, another decisive factor has been contributing with the project (*Pedala BH*): international funding organizations for urban mobility only accepts programs in which contemplate the bicycle and its integration with public transport (...). In this sense, in my opinion, even if the municipality per se does not understand the necessity of implementation of the *Pedala BH* Program in its totality, this will happen from the outside as a requirement to obtain funding resources"<sup>37</sup> (2018).

'Interviewee B' brought two other external factors into the scene, a political and economic crisis installed in the country:

"The political crisis and the criminalization of the left wing and posteriorly of peripheral social movements (not only geographic but also socioeconomic) affects the perception by society about the 'banners' historically associated to the left wing, such as human rights, housing, land reform. The bicycle less, but it is also affected by being associated to the left wing, especially in São Paulo"<sup>38</sup> (2018).

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<sup>36</sup> Translated by the author.

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<sup>38</sup> Translated by the author.

“The economic crisis justifies the non-investment in mobility by bicycle. However, what does not exist is the prioritization of the investment in the bicycle. We were surfing on the 2013 and 2014 waves, with investments and resources for the World Cup (FIFA World Cup 2014) that now we do not have”<sup>39</sup> (2018).

In line with the notion of the mobility by bicycle be considered an auxiliary solution in urban mobility, investments were only made when money was highly available, being cut when a financial crisis arrived.

#### 4.4 Response strategies employed with challengers

After digging into the openness of the political system in which the *BHeC* acts on, its allies and the political cleavages within society, this section will show how the government has been reacting to the movements' actions, and how the interaction between them has developed. The section is divided into two subcategories, 'movement's origins political context' and 'interactions and strategies employed by movement and government'.

##### 4.4.1 Movement's origins political context

More than to explain the factors and reasons involved in the movement's origins, the focus of this subcategory is to analyze the political context of the time, as if establishing the ground for the kind of responses that have developed further on the process.

In this sense, *BHeC* surged in a conflictual moment between the municipality and social movements, in 2012 - 2013. Former Mayor Márcio Lacerda was facing a campaign aiming to remove him from the charge, the *Fora Lacerda*. At this moment, the left wing had withdrawn themselves from the coalition, and social movements started to pressure the government.

Simultaneously, as already exposed in the 'Contextualization' chapter, the *BHTrans*, in a scenario of abundant resources through a federal program to accelerate economic growth, implemented cycle paths in disagreement with the cyclists' expectations. This fact resulted in discontentment and a public hearing in the City Council after a report made by the movement referring to the poor implementation of the cycle paths.

At this moment, no dialogue exists between the government and the social movements, although the cycling movement had not experienced any strong repression by the government. The absence of dialogue at this moment of history was reported by Interviewees A, B and C. The claims by *BHeC* were ignored or answered by notes published in local newspapers.

It is interesting to notice, at this point, what was highlighted by 'Interviewee D':

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<sup>39</sup> Translated by the author.

“The *BHeC* was not born from ‘let’s fight for cycling policies’, but from ‘projects for the bicycle are badly implemented, they are making wrong projects’. So it is different of other social movements that create the policies. In Belo Horizonte, there was public policy, even prior to the *BHeC*”<sup>40</sup> (2018).

Following the same direction, ‘Interviewee C’ also thinks similar: “It is important to notice that the *BHeC* was born differently than other associations in Brazil, it was born from the public policy discussions, and not from the ‘critical mass’”<sup>41</sup> (2018).

This simple fact had an enormous influence on the interaction between the movement and the government. From the public hearing onwards, a dialogue between the two parts has started, resulting afterward in the creation of the *GT Pedala*, as a commitment from the government to establish contact with the cyclists prior projects’ implementation.

The beginning of this process was tense and conflicted. ‘Interviewee E’ said “the beginning of my relationship with the cyclists was tense. Establishing an immediate relation of trust was hard. Everything was a process. Sometimes slow, painful, but transparent. But then we got closer, each one understanding the other’s role”<sup>42</sup> (2018).

Thus, the association of urban cyclists of Belo Horizonte was originated as a reaction to the government actions, in the context of clashes regarding an existing public policy, which was different from other cycling movements in the country. The focus on the public policy steered the direction into a diplomatic interaction that persists until nowadays, as it is explored in detail in the next subcategory.

#### 4.4.2 Interactions and strategies employed by movement and government

Although the beginning of *BHeC* was followed by a clash context with the government, after the response by the government with the creation of *GT Pedala*, an instance for dialogue and discussion with the social movement, the association has behaved diplomatically. All interviewees evidence this. ‘Interviewee D’ said “*BHeC* has always acted supporting the government on the public policy. The emergence of *BHeC* occurs at a time of clash. After the *GT Pedala* creation, there were more collaboration and decrease in conflicts”<sup>43</sup> (2018). ‘Interviewee B’ also highlighted the apparent shift in behavior: “The feeling before the *GT Pedala* (is that) we were more combative”<sup>44</sup>. Interviewee A even added a comparison with other local social movements: “Compared to other movements in the city, *BHeC* is less combative and very formal (...)”<sup>45</sup> (2018). The way the association and the *Pedala BH* team consider each other as allies can also be evidence of this behavior.

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<sup>40</sup> Translated by the author.

<sup>41</sup> Translated by the author.

<sup>42</sup> Translated by the author.

<sup>43</sup> Translated by the author.

<sup>44</sup> Translated by the author.

<sup>45</sup> Translated by the author.

Part of this diplomatic interaction can explain and be explained by how the movement acts. The association nowadays is considered an intellectual reference for mobility by bicycle in the city, being consulted whenever the bicycle as means of transport is discussed. 'Interviewee A' highlights the main tools used by the association, such as communication, letters, memos, campaigns, characterizing the already mentioned formality. 'Interviewee C' mentioned the importance of the research and surveys done by *BHeC*: "During the past years the research was fundamental to generate data of how people use the bicycle in Belo Horizonte, to talk to the people and to talk with the government. The data production has changed the way of dialogue with the municipality. Technical elements were created to 'make' the policy"<sup>46</sup> (2018).

Since the movement has employed diplomatic tactics throughout the years, the government, in turn, has also reacted diplomatically, limiting themselves to and using the *GT Pedala* structure as the dialogue channel with the cycling movement. No significant repressions or isolation, but almost a cooptation. 'Interviewee D' expressed in this way to refer to this strategy employed by the government:

"The *GT Pedala* is an escape valve for *BHTrans* because before the demand arrives in *BHTrans*, it passes through the *GT*, which dissipates the energy. Since *BHTrans* is not able to implement the policy, it is using the *GT Pedala* to avoid attacks (...)"<sup>47</sup> (2018).

'Interviewee E' also points to this direction: "For a long time, I established with *BHeC* a relationship in which I was absolutely alone as a public power representative. During more than one year I did the meetings with *GT Pedala* alone. Sometimes, the person responsible for the implementation participated, but in general, it was only me"<sup>48</sup> (2018). Therefore, for a moment technical interactions prevailed in the contacts between the *BHeC* and the government, with noticeable negligence by the strategic governmental level.

Things have changed a little when realizing the absence of results and the need to reach the strategic level, the movement organized themselves (including the *Bike Anjo BH*, another organization component of the cycling movement of Belo Horizonte) to influence the municipal elections with the *#D1Passo* campaign. The elected Mayor since then invited the movement for two meetings, opening a (timid) channel for the movement with the strategic level. Interviewees evidenced this change. 'Interviewee B' said that "the meetings with the Mayor and the *PlanBici* were results of *#D1Passo*, a coordinated political incidence with other urban mobility 'collectives'. An increase of political maturity as a movement, thinking the public policy in a more strategic way and with more repertoire of actions"<sup>49</sup> (2018).

Although these meetings had few practical results, the demand to construct a plan for the next few years was originated from them. This demand had an even more significant impact on the

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<sup>46</sup> Translated by the author.

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<sup>49</sup> Translated by the author.

movement's actions and strategies, reinforcing the diplomatic behavior and, according to 'Interviewee D', increasing the complexity of *BHeC*'s role in the advocacy, as can be seen in the following quotes:

"During the *PlanBici* elaboration, there was a change in the context. The actor that took the lead of transforming the PlanMob in a more strategic plan was the social movement. The logic of policy formulation was inverted, as an unfolding of the *#D1Passo*"<sup>50</sup> (2018).

"The thing that has changed was the more elaborated construction of incidence. For example, the elaboration of the *PlanBici*, a six weeks process, a robust plan, with six axes. The *BHeC* has a more complex role in the advocacy"<sup>51</sup> (2018).

However, the instituted dialogue between the *BHeC* and the government is considered positive by both sides. 'Interviewee C' said that the "dialogue is good because it perdured different mandates. *BHeC* worked well the transition between mandates, influencing the municipal elections and the transition between governments"<sup>52</sup> (2018). The virtue of promoting a supra institutional debate is also pointed a reason for the association's recognition between cycling movements in Brazil.

The unusual direction from where the urban cyclists association was created, as a reaction to governmental action had a significant contribution to how the interaction between the movement and the government have developed, and to the respective strategies, each actor has employed. After rejecting the job done by the government, the movement organized themselves and put pressure on the responsible entity to improve the services and infrastructure. The government opened up a dialogue channel, establishing a diplomatic relationship focused on the discussions regarding the public policy in question. A well-structured plan was even created in a partnership between the actors, although no results have been accomplished so far.

#### 4.5 State capacity of execution

The last dimension to be analyzed is the 'state capacity of execution', (which will not be divided into topics, since to better understanding an integral exposure is preferable). This dimension will see if the government is well prepared to attend the social movements' demands, in an attempt to evaluate their potential feasibility.

First of all, it is necessary to separate the municipality as a whole of the *BHTrans*, that is the traffic management and urban mobility department. Interviewees agree that the municipality has the necessary capacity to execute the movement's demands and, moreover, to promote a transformation in the city. Emphasis is given on financial resources as a possible barrier, but not

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<sup>50</sup> Translated by the author.

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accepted by movement actors. The prioritization of resources often comes into place, along with the alleged lack of willpower.

'Interviewee A' said the "financial resources contingency of the Growth Acceleration Program (a federal government program) prevented the implementation of the planned 150 km of cycle path. However, the municipality many times do not execute the actions with guaranteed resources", remembering many initiatives with guaranteed resources that were not implemented due to a political decision. 'Interviewee C' stated that "the municipality of Belo Horizonte has the required capacity to promote transformations in the city, but depends on external resources, although it can to raise them"<sup>53</sup> (2018).

The car-oriented logic, aligned with the current mobility paradigm, is reflected in *BHTrans* structure. As seen in the first dimension, it is alleged that the organization has the autonomy, but lack organizational resources, and as seen in the third dimension, the organization was built to cope with traffic management mainly. According to 'Interviewee C', "*BHTrans* has autonomy and institutional capacity to implement the *Pedala BH* and the *PlanBici*, but not organizational. It lacks human resources such as an infrastructure designer that understands the mobility by bicycle topic, as well as in the communication and management areas"<sup>54</sup> (2018). In line with 'Interviewee C's opinion, for 'Interviewee D' the "current arrangement of *BHTrans* is not capable. However, it has the potential to hire more people, for example, to work with bicycles"<sup>55</sup> (2018).

*BHTrans* employee also admits this situation but indicates a possible change for the next years. "Our team is still tiny but has been growing. In the current administration, the Mobility Unity in *BHTrans* has an Active Mobility Center. It is still little, but a visible structure. We were invisible for many years"<sup>56</sup> (2018).

Therefore, it can be said that *BHTrans* as an organization is in the middle of a slow process to think and frame urban mobility in Belo Horizonte in a broader manner, and its organizational structure/resources do not follow the objectives and aims of the policies being formulated in past years. Looking into previous dimensions of this research it is possible to notice that there is a significant resistance within the *BHTrans* regarding this shift. In respect to this, 'Interviewee C' complemented that the "current *BHTrans* Director-President was Director of Planning for a long time and participated in every policy. If there were a willingness something would have happened"<sup>57</sup>, indicating that the resistance can also be present on the strategic level, responsible to steer this shift.

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<sup>53</sup> Translated by the author.

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## 4.6 Summary

### Urban Political Opportunity Structure - UPOS framework

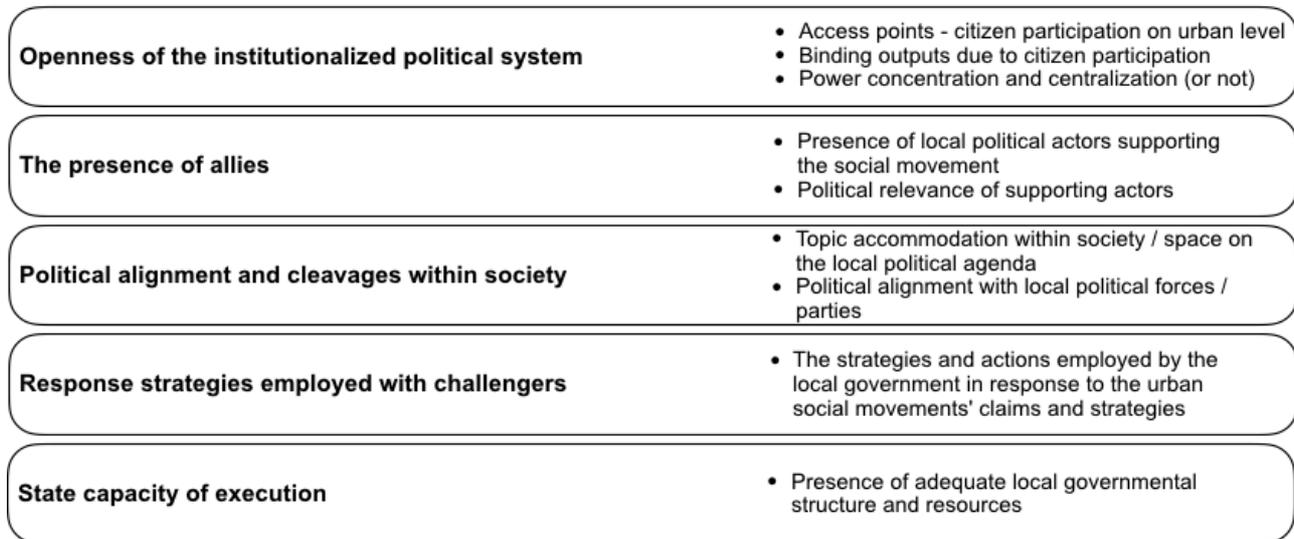


FIGURE 3 - Dimensions of the UPOS framework

Figure 3 above reminds us of the dimensions of the UPOS. Concerning the framework, the research findings show that the urban social movement in question acts upon a relatively open political system, with many access points. However, these points do not seem effective and do not promote real citizen participation, in the sense of allowing participation in decision making. The one the most approximate of citizen empowerment, the *GT Pedala*, has been used by the government as an “escape valve”, dissipating the energy of conflict in the technical level and preventing it from reaching the strategic level. Therefore, the access points are extremely controlled by the regime, which concentrates power.

The *BHeC* has mainly relied on other urban social movements as allies, without the presence of actors occupying powerful positions, inside and outside the political system, with few exceptions in exceptional moments. Thus, it can be said that the association tries to create a ‘bottom up’ alliance.

The attempt to build a ‘bottom up’ alliance, with allies within civil society, makes the *BHeC* to not align with any formal political parties. Moreover, although the alliance structure is composed by other social movements, the discussion regarding mobility by bicycle in Belo Horizonte is still encapsulated in the academic educated, and upper middle classes (contradictory, in which the association has no allies), and *BHeC* has difficulties in expanding this discussion for other parts of society. The topic has no priority within political debates, which are still dominated by the socio-economic issues typical from urban problems in developing countries, such as housing, public space degradation, health, among others. The car-oriented society partly justifies the urban sprawl and creates barriers and resistance for active mobility related subjects, pushing the discussion towards public transport. Nevertheless, interviewees see room for debate on the bicycle’s space in

the city. Although global discussions such as climate change have not reached the local political debate, they are seen as future link opportunities, especially regarding policy funding.

*BHeC* was originated as a counteract of existing governmental policy for mobility by bicycle, differently from other associations and organizations of cycling movements in the country. Therefore, it has specialized in technical aspects of the public policy, adopting a formal way in its actions and strategies. The government, in turn, created a dialogue space that has modelled a two-way diplomatic interaction that has prevailed so far, with little conflictive situations.

Conclusively, *BHTrans* has its structure turned to deal with traffic management and is slowly changing towards thinking and framing the urban mobility as a whole, expanding the way of thinking to encompass active mobility. Moreover, there is internal resistance to this change. Therefore, although the municipality has the capacity to execute the movement's demands and thus change the city (even within the middle of an economic and financial crisis), the responsible organization of execution lacks organizational resources.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The case of this thesis presents favorable arrangements regarding policy formulation, but lack of results in increasing the participation of cycling in the mode share of Belo Horizonte mobility. From the research findings, it is noticeable that the political aspect is interfering in this scenario, particularly in the policy implementation. Especially considering the political opportunity structure of the cycling movement, that is, how the political system constraints and fosters the urban social movement concerning opportunities, and how the movement perceives these opportunities and interacts with the political context.

This research has shown that the UPOS in Belo Horizonte creates obstacles and is not favorable for the cycling movement of the city. There are many access points to the political system through participation. However, these points are not effective since the system is centralized regarding power. In this scenario, high pressure from outside the regime is even more critical in order to promote social change. Although interviewees consider to exist room to discuss the topic in the city, the cycling topic is not well accommodated on the political agenda, falling behind many other aspects. The state structure responsible for coping with the topic is both not prepared to deal with the cycling movement's demands and resistant to it.

Employing diplomatic strategies in order to promote change requires time since changes in institutions and the accommodation of the topic within society do not happen quickly because of the resistance to change. Therefore, changes can occur at a slower pace than desired by the cycling movement. This situation could lead to more radical actions by the cycling movement because the lack of results can demotivate and create impatience. However, the cycling movement has not acted in such way so far.

Participation, in this case, lacks binding outputs and serves as a form of legitimization and control by the local government. Nevertheless, *BHeC* uses it as a mechanism to accommodate the topic within the public administration and society. The Association has been using the strategy to occupy all the available spots. Since the misalignment between the policy formulation and the policy implementation can be partly explained by the lack of integration of the cycling topic within society, with few enforcement mechanisms and the social mobilizations (along with the non-prepared/suitable structure of the government), occupying the available spots seems critical.

Still, the UPOS in Belo Horizonte also presents some positive aspects for the cycling movement. There is some potential for expanding its limited alliance structure with actors in powerful positions, both within the municipality and within the city council, which is promising in this case due to the concentration of power and lack of integration of the topic within society (which results in lack of priority and localised resistance). The spectrum of allies can be expanded since there is no coherence among the political parties about the topic. That is, the ideas around the bicycle are fragmented, and support can be found regardless of ideological trends or wings since cycling is a theme that can be linked to many topics such as health, inclusion, democracy, economy, public spaces, and more. Actors occupying strategic positions in the municipality also seem to be poten-

tial allies in this case, which would create different vectors of pressure towards investments in mobility by bicycle. Moreover, allies outside the political system such as universities and technical centers could also be involved. Work with the private sector could also be beneficial.

However, it is interesting to notice that *BHeC* members listed only one component of the cycling movement, the *Bike Anjo BH*, as an ally. From the characterization made of the cycling movement of Belo Horizonte in Chapter 2, many of the initiatives were left behind and not cited. This fact raises questions about the unit or the fragmentation of such a movement, how they are integrated and share a collective identity, and how *BHeC* interacts with the others aiming to join forces upon the common goal.

The *BHeC* tries to access the system through the institutional way, avoiding disruption. In a context in which the approach focusing collaboration and knowledge production are employed by the movement, in association with a strategy of no repression from the government, a cooptation case is likely to happen. In this sense, the diplomatic strategy employed by *BHeC* can be self-limiting when there are no satisfactory results since it becomes stuck in the structure created both by the urban movement and the government, and for the fact that the central participation instance is being used by the local government to dissipate tension. It seems that *BHeC* is channelizing most of its efforts and hope in the interaction with *BHTrans*, possibly resulting in not usage of other available opportunities such as alliances with other actors.

On the other hand, the diplomatic strategy seems necessary for the movement in the current situation, characterizing an apparent trap. The *BHeC* has a limited alliance structure and mobilization force beyond central areas of the city. Thus, being allowed to act without being repressed represents at least the possibility to promote incremental improvements into the policy design, and to insert the theme into the public administration. However, the current scenario does not point to any relevant and desired transformation in the city's transportation pattern on the short term and, more and different things must be done to speed up the pace.

If social movements take advantage of the opportunities of given political system, they can also influence the political system in order to create new opportunities. A highlight must be put in the case for the creation of *GT Pedala* when the pressure made by the movement on the poor implementation of cycle paths resulted in public hearings and then in the *GT Pedala* afterwards. Furthermore, the usage of the elections to create a campaign to insert the bicycle topic among the sustainable urban mobility debate has proven to be successful. From this initiatives, a direct channel with the municipality was opened, and a specific and concrete plan was developed, giving *BHeC* mechanisms to pressure the local government on concrete planned actions and indicators. However, the movement has not been able so far to create more opportunities for beyond the policy formulation, with the implementation still being a significant obstacle. Creating political opportunities to force the policy implementation is maybe the most significant challenges ahead of the cycling movement in Belo Horizonte.

It is relevant to stress that the openness of a political system can assume many facets on the urban level, considering it the smallest unit, dealing directly with the territory. Informal access

points gain further relevance, allowing centralized systems appear more open than it is in fact. Furthermore, many access points do not guarantee the desired results. Therefore, this dimension must be analyzed carefully.

The presence of allies, as stated in the literature, has proven to be fundamental to explain the (lack of, in this case) results. The more allies, the more opportunities can be taken, with the opposite also being true. However, the power configurations on the urban level do not always follow the national trends. It seems that on the urban level, in this case, personal interests overcome institutional parties ideas, or at least the expected coherence between municipal and national parties in a common trend cannot exist. Therefore, resistance can be found fragmented within society in an individualistic and not organized way, shedding light on micro-relations and micro-politics. In this scenario, a more detailed analysis of the allies and on the strategies employed to secure them is also essential.

Since the openness of the political system can assume many facets, local governments can employ more and subtle strategies regarding a challenging group, such as using participation to dissipate tension and avoid problems.

Finally, the state capacity of execution has proven to be fundamental when analyzing the political opportunity structure on the urban level (aiming to explain results). Local governments usually do not have plenty of resources at disposal to implement policies, and many times are not prepared for it. Therefore, transformation processes can take time and be more prolonged than desired, such as in this case, promoting a misalignment and discontentment, and being an important part to explain the achieved (or not) results by urban social movements.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In an attempt to answer the central question of this research, which is an effort to explain the divergence between the favorable policy arrangements and the lack of results booked by the cycling movement in the city of Belo Horizonte, this thesis analyzed the Political Opportunity Structure of the urban social movement in question. After a contextualization of the case, an analytical framework adapted for the urban level - the UPOS - was suggested and applied, containing five dimensions: openness of the institutionalized political system; the presence of allies; political alignment and cleavages within society; response strategies employed with challengers; and state capacity of execution.

The research found that the political system and the opportunities it provides for the cycling movement and, moreover, how the movement uses them and create new ones, can be part of the explanation for the referred divergence. Also, although the movement's claim is represented in the policy framework (local and federal mobility policy design, civil society groups, urban governance landscape/platforms), the theme is not yet accommodated within society, and the governmental structure is not adequately prepared to cope with it.

Remembering the first sub-question about the interaction between the government and the civil society organizations that make part of the 'cycling' movement, it was found that the *BHeC*, the urban cyclists association of Belo Horizonte, and the local government have developed a diplomatic interaction so far, focusing on collaboration and knowledge production. This interaction is an interesting situation since it escapes from only criticism from the urban social movement to suggesting alternatives, actively participating in policy formulation. Also, the local government can learn from civil society and create partnerships to develop better results. However, in a context in which resistance is highly present, it can possibly slow down the pace of a transition to the desired situation since the pressure on the regime is quite low and no disruption has been made. Moreover, questions on whether this strategy is self-limiting the movement must be raised..

The second sub-question asked to what extent the political opportunity structure limited positive outcomes for the 'cycling' movement. The UPOS in the city creates barriers such as weak access points to the centralized political system. The presence of the bicycle as an alternative to the current unsustainable urban mobility pattern still falls behind other discussions and requires accommodation within society. Moreover, the governmental structure responsible for the policy is both not prepared to cope with and resistant to it. It can be stated that this situation affects directly the results gathered by the movement, diminishing the expected positive outcomes.

Finally, the third sub-question searched leverage points to develop future strategies. Besides the barriers, the UPOS offers gaps that could be explored by the movement. Although *BHeC's* alliance structure was constructed along with other social movements, potential allies are spread out within the municipality structure and city council. The fragmented political scenario allows many (informal) access points. Moreover, the response employed by the government is also facilitating, since the urban movement is not excluded or repressed at the moment.

In this sense, two main recommendations can be made for the cycling movement in the city of Belo Horizonte. First, the *BHeC* should expand its alliance structure by exploring support in other areas of the municipality than *BHTrans*, gathering the support of people in strategic and influential positions. Moreover, more actions for gathering the cycling movement as a whole and create bonds over the common goal can be beneficial, to increase its bargain power. Second and related to the previous recommendation, the integration of the bicycle topic with other public policies could raise awareness in a different public (and also reunite more allies in an attempt to expand its points of access to the political system and create more pressure). That is, exploring the bicycle for beyond mobility, such as health, urban planning, (and consequently, dealing with other strategic actors than *BHTrans*). Since the movement apparently lacks mobilization power on the general public, aiming for specific sectors could be a useful idea. Expanding the alliance structure and integrating the bicycle in other policies could generate pressure from different (powerful) sources towards the mobility by bicycle policy implementation that could potentialize the diplomacy strategy employed.

The recommendation for searching new allies can also be directed to the *Pedala BH* team. Building new partnerships and joint programs with other parts of the municipality, such as the referred sectors in the previous paragraph can empower the team within *BHTrans*. Furthermore, adding universities and institutes in the knowledge production processes can increase the department's credibility and legitimacy. If there are few people sympathetic to fostering the mobility by bicycle inside *BHTrans*, looking for support outside of it can help.

For the municipality itself, it is urgent to adapt its structure towards the challenges of the 21st Century, especially with the world and the big urban centers facing sustainability issues in the era of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). However, changing the mindset of organizations is not something easy to happen. Bringing new people into the structure could increase the chances of such a change to occur and to overcome the resistance.

Another important reflection as an output of this thesis is to what extent the political opportunity structure can affect sustainability transitions and sustainable development on the urban level. The pressure to change the regime many times comes from challengers within social movements and civil society, and the political system plays a substantial role in offering barriers but also opportunities not only at a national level, but also on the urban level. A transition towards a more sustainable world requires changes in governmental institutions in different levels to cope with societal problems from a different perspective, which depending on the system, it is difficult to happen. Many times, the specific sustainability problem must be integrated into society, which can create conflicts on the political agenda. On the urban level, political forces can sometimes be more fragmented than expected, increasing complexity in decision making. Therefore, the political aspect deserves more attention in the sustainability debate.

Unfortunately, this research could not interview all planned actors due to lack of time and availability of actors. Some were contacted but did not reply. This situation overweighted the urban social movement perspective in the research. Valuable insights were gained, despite this fact. The

suggested analytical framework has proven to be useful in analyzing the development and results of a specific social movement on specific urban space. Although not much adapted from the original dimensions, considering the urban peculiarities in the framework allowed the understanding of the perspectives that can be taken on the political context of the urban social movement. Going beyond common sense, the framework was successful in achieving the aims and objectives of this research, which involved the interactions between movement and government, the discrepancies between policy formulation and policy implementation, and between intention and reality.

In conclusion, further research can be done regarding the case to grasp a more comprehensive understanding, such as whether or not the mobilization power (or lack of it) of *BHeC* is affecting the outcomes, and if and how cultural references in Brazil, especially in Belo Horizonte, are affecting the outcomes and results. Applying the framework in other cases in other parts of Brazil or even in Latin America, about cycling movements that employ other strategies and have a different kind of interaction with the government can also be interesting to further comparison. On a broader scale, further research could apply and refine the suggested UPOS framework in other urban cases to analyze its usefulness and comprehensiveness in different urban environments.

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## ANNEX I

### SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS:

All interviews were made in Portuguese and translated to English by the author.

#### **Interviewee A, member of the Urban Cyclists Association of Belo Horizonte, BHeC:**

- Visually, between 2012 and 2018 the number of cyclists has increased, but not because of investments in infrastructure and plans. The bicycle is becoming fancier. The periphery has always cycled, and the numbers in the center are rising. But little if compared to what was planned.
- Before the formalization of the BHeC, there were other initiatives related to the bicycle and also individual involvement in the public policy. However, there was not an organized group focused on this, which was a gap regarding representation.
- *GT Pedala* is necessary, a reference for other cities in Brazil. However, it is frustrating to see that nothing discussed is actually implemented or it is implemented at a high cost. For example, the implementation of an ecological corridor by the Secretariat of Food Safety. *BHeC* is participating because the active mobility is embedded in the project. The attempt is to implement a planned cycle path that has been discussed for 5 years in the *GT Pedala*. This time the cycle path was approved because the demand came from another Secretariat. *GT Pedala* was important to accumulate discussions and subsidizing deliberations, but not for decision making.
- Channels of participation used by *BHeC*: Mobility observatory, that discusses indicators related to urban mobility. The observatory functions as a monitoring instance. Urban Mobility Council that now is virtual but has never functioned, even when the meetings were in person.
- When compared to other movements in the city, *BHeC* is less combative and very formal, using communication strategies, letters, memos, and campaigns.
- The contact with Márcio Lacerda (previous Mayor) never existed, we got the answers to our demands via articles in the newspaper. Alexandre Kalil (current Mayor) received us in meetings. From 2012 until 2016, little has changed. In 2013 we started an open dialogue with *BHTrans*. With the elections in 2016 and the change of Mayors, a dialogue with strategic level happened, but without practical results.
- There is room to discuss the bicycle topic in Belo Horizonte, and the *BHeC* can insert the theme in the media. *#D1Passo* campaign was a success to put a bicycle an issue in the elections.
- The bicycle is often linked to environmental issues, and it is discussed in the municipal climate change committee regarding greenhouse gases emissions. The *PlanBici* was presented to United Nations representatives in an attempt to raise funding for the mobility by bicycle policy.

- Financial resources contingency of the Growth Acceleration Program (a federal government program) prevented the implementation of the planned 150 km of cycle path. However, the municipality many times do not execute the planned actions with guaranteed resources.
- *BHeC* allies are other social movements such as *Bike Anjo*, and the municipality itself. Sometimes the press is also an ally. Many actors seem to be neutral but have never been contacted by the association, like other members of the urban mobility council, representatives of class entities. The opponents are punctual, people who argue against a bicycle.
- *BHTrans* has the autonomy to implement the *PlanBici*, but it often lacks initiative, because many actions do not require financial resources and they simply do not happen.
- *BHeC* can be considered an intellectual elite for the way it expresses, and this is not attractive to other people. This is not deliberately or exclusive, but people who make part of *BHeC* are knowledgeable. *BHeC* should use a more accessible language.

**Interviewee B, member of the Urban Cyclists Association of Belo Horizonte, BHeC:**

- The Regional Commission for Transport and Transit and the Urban Mobility Council are not deliberative. The reports we have are that these instances of participation serve more to legitimate governmental action than to steer it
- *GT Pedala* is one of the most important instances of citizen participation and is well seen by the rest of the country and even in the World Bicycle Forum. However, it is not effective. There are lots of ideas, lots of discussions, but nothing coming from it is implemented. So we do not produce public policy with citizen participation because it does not happen
- *BHTrans* allege they do not have resources, but in fact what happens is the non-prioritization of the existent resources in active transportation. If there was an executive power more interested in this public policy, even with financial difficulties, it would be able to do something
- Belo Horizonte is not outside from the national political and economic context that prioritizes the car, a capitalistic system in which the car represents an enormous part of the production and in which people imagine to have the right to use their cars
- It is difficult to find arguments to put the bicycle as a priority when, for example, the metro's tariff is going to raise, when the public transport is not enough, no buses during the late night. Or when someone does not have a home and is occupying a building to have a shelter. Or when the health system does not provide satisfactory services. Thus, there is room to discuss the bicycle in the city, but it is restricted to the academy and the upper middle class. Every time we tried to focus outside our 'bubble' we had no success.
- The bicycle is a tool for inclusion. Mobility is a right to the city. It gives access to services. Also, the bicycle is democratic. It is cheap. So the bicycle has an important role, but I confess that depending on the place I will give a speech in some events I get uncomfortable

- The political crisis and the criminalization of the left wing and posteriorly of peripheral social movements (not only geographic but also socioeconomic) affects the perception by society about the 'banners' historically associated to the left wing, such as human rights, housing, land reform. The bicycle less, but it is also affected by being associated to the left wing, especially in São Paulo.
- The economic crisis justifies the non-investment in mobility by bicycle. However, what does not exist is the prioritization of the investment in the bicycle. We were surfing on the 2013 and 2014 waves, with investments and resources for the World Cup (FIFA World Cup 2014) that now we do not have.
- The feeling before the *GT Pedala* (is that) we were more combative, during Márcio Lacerda's term. The *#D1Passo* campaign was a mark for *BHeC*. The meetings with the Mayor and the *PlanBici* were results of *#D1Passo*, a coordinated political incidence with other urban mobility 'collectives'. An increase of political maturity as a movement, thinking the public policy in a more strategic way and with more repertoire of actions. But even after the meetings nothing has changed.
- Previously, the political context was worse. The *BHeC* had never been received by the mayor. The *BHeC* does not have enough power to constrain the mayor to welcome us, such as other movements like *Tarifa Zero*, to "close the streets", etc. *BHeC* does not have this expertise.
- *GT Pedala* does not work because *BHTrans* has a structure aimed for cars. Beyond that, the *GT Pedala* team is not good. If there was a proactive team and with more strength internally, it could be better. The feeling is that even the simplest actions that do not need resources do not happen. Even with a negative context, with some proactivity they could do something.
- The bicycle has a strength that we do not know. But we could not break the bubble so far.
- As allies, *BHeC* had the Adriano Ventura (previous city council member), other social movements, the *Pedala BH* team. But all of them powerless. As opponents, only isolated cases, some newspapers columnists.
- *BHTrans* is capable of and has the autonomy to implement the *PlanBici*. They just do not want it. It lacks governance and joint work with other municipality entities. They do not want because they have the same mentality of people that believe in the model that privileges the automobile.
- The *BHeC* and their members can be considered as an intellectual elite of Belo Horizonte, regarding mobility. *BHeC* is consulted because of this.

**Interviewee C, member of the Urban Cyclists Association of Belo Horizonte, BHeC:**

- The expiration date of the *GT Pedala* expired, in this format, it does not work anymore. It is not effective. It requires a new format, new people. It continues to be something innovative, with discussions between the civil society and public power in a high maturity level but needs a change

- It lacks financial resources, but the *BHTrans* can raise international funds linked to climate change. It has all to do with the bicycle. Even because, perhaps, the Belo Horizonte Urban Mobility Plan is the only in Brazil that estimates the CO2 emissions and atmospheric pollutants to be reduced in the case of its implementation
- *BHeC* lacks the capacity to bring the discussion to other places beyond the city center. And it is where we are losing cyclists in the city.
- It is important to notice that the *BHeC* was born differently than other associations in Brazil, it was born from the public policy discussions, and not from the 'critical mass'
- During the past years the research was fundamental to generate data of how people use the bicycle in Belo Horizonte, to talk to the people and to talk with the government. The data production has changed the way of dialogue with the municipality. Technical elements were created to 'make' the policy
- The dialogue between *BHeC* and the municipality is good because it perdured different mandates. *BHeC* worked well the transition between mandates, influencing the municipal elections and the transition between governments
- The municipality of Belo Horizonte has the required capacity to promote transformations in the city, but depends on external resources, although it can raise the funds.
- *BHTrans* has autonomy and institutional capacity to implement the *Pedala BH* and the *PlanBici*, but not organizational. It lacks human resources such as an infrastructure designer that understands the mobility by bicycle topic, as well as in the communication and management areas
- The plan (*PlanMob*) do not exist legally because the Master Plan was not approved by the city council. However, a technical review has been carried out which, while respecting the unapproved legal review, is not being complied with. No resources have been invested in cycling, and the municipality continues to invest in the usual car-oriented model. Adding a macroeconomic policy to stimulate the purchase of cars, with a municipal policy to stimulate circulation, the model does not change.
- The *PlanMob* decree authorizes the use of instruments such as urban tolls, among others present in the National Policy on Urban Mobility, but there has not yet been a decision maker who supports an inversion of the model for the city. Belo Horizonte opted for the car.
- During the first Márcio Lacerda term, there was an effervescence of social movements with the '*Fora Lacerda*' (campaign against him) and a breakup of the political alliance with the Workers Party (left wing) leaving the government. Following this situation, of course, there was no dialogue.
- The municipality deployed bike paths in the wrong way with the Growth Acceleration Program money, a federal government program to accelerate economic growth and that something had to be invested in cycling. The social movement made a report that was taken to a public audience at the town hall, which was the embryo for the creation of the *GT Pedala* two months later.

- *BHTrans* lacks courage, and will. They do not believe. Current *BHTrans* Director-President was Director of Planning for a long time and participated in every policy. If there were a willingness something would have happened. The people who work with the stimulus to the bicycle do not use the bicycle, which is an important factor because they do not know the reality. Only after an audit of bicycle lanes did the people who deal with cycling come to know the reality of the peripheral cycle routes, almost ten years after the start of *Pedala BH*.
- Despite problems with *BHTrans*, apparently, the Secretary of Urban Planning can be an ally because she thinks something needs to change in the city. After the project with the Secretariat of Food Security, which was articulated by the Secretariat of Urban Planning, *BHeC* could explore this ally.
- Other channels of participation: those created by the city council (public hearing, etc); Urban mobility council (inoperative, deactivated, non-deliberative); Urban policy council (articulation with other movements - *Nossa BH*, *Escola de Arquitetura* - deliberative and well functioning); Regional Commission for Transport and Transits; Metropolitan Collegiate; Metropolitan Mobility Plan Elaboration Committee.
- There is room to discuss the bike in Belo Horizonte, and *BHeC* has managed to bring the discussion beyond the bike for the bike, but putting the bike as an element that questions a model of city facing the automobile. Mainly by the strategy of occupying all possible spaces for discussion of urban mobility in the city or that may have to do.
- External context does not affect the discussion, except for the opening of possibilities for attracting external resources when related to climate change.
- Allies: Some city council members supported, but in isolated cases. Almost always in unique moments. 'o Tempo' journal, with specific guidelines and columns. Itaú Bank was important at the time of the world cup. The *Pedala BH* team. Opponents: Isolated. Some people of the press. Chris Guerra (of fashion sector) began as an opponent but with the intervention of the *BHeC* became an ally.
- The people who integrate the *BHeC* can be considered an intellectual elite in the city for having access to knowledge and to what is happening in the world. As a result, they raise expectations regarding the bicycle in the city, but the municipality lacks institutional capacity (team, investment priority) to make the transition (execution of the *PlanBici*) to the utopia.
- **Interviewee D, member of the Urban Cyclists Association of Belo Horizonte, *BHeC*, and former employee of *BHTrans*:**
- The *GT Pedala* nowadays fulfill its function as a space for citizen participation, but it has failed in achieving results. However, the *GT Pedala* is not an instrument to get results, to design cycle paths, to raise funds. The main role is to promote the dialogue within the policy formulation and to avoid surprises. We put too many expectations on the *GT Pedala* as if it was the *Pedala BH* or

*PlanBici* themselves. We can not forget that in less than one year ago the *GT Pedala* was used as the space to construct the *PlanBici*, a key factor on cycling policy nowadays.

- Few people inside *BHTrans* have a notion of what policy for mobility by bicycle means and a few are sympathetic. For every sympathetic, there are two opponents.
- There is much more stimulus than results, the results are timid. There is an external factor, that is the mobility paradigm, that goes beyond the bicycle. Within the 'bicycle bubble', it is easier to construct good stimulus, good paths, but bumps into the paradigm. A paradigm that disregarded the bicycle during many decades. The bicycle is still a blind point, and people have difficulties in seeing it. A second reason is the lack of faith, beliefs in the bicycle as a solution. The promotion policies are not seen as solutions, but complementary policies. Some people accept the policy and pretend to believe (like the politicians that sign support letters). Thus, some people think it is not necessary to act, that it is foolishness. A third reason is that the bicycle topic has not much mobilizer power such as public transport, for example. If you solve the public transport problem, you solve the situation for much more people, changes much more the city. However, starting on the 'bicycle' it is possible to discuss social inclusion, sustainability, among others. So the bicycle is a gateway to discuss a new paradigm.
- The logic behind *BHTrans*, regarding traffic management, is completely car-oriented. (More open to) Discuss fluidity and much less open to discuss pedestrians, the bicycle, and even the public transport. The logic of traffic management is based on the car, on the fluidity of streets.
- The *BHeC* was not born from 'let's fight for cycling policies', but from 'projects for the bicycle are badly implemented, they are making wrong projects'. So it is different of other social movements that create the policies. In Belo Horizonte, there was public policy, even prior to the *BHeC*. From the pressure of the social movements, the public hearing, the *GT Pedala* was born, and it worked for a long time as a perfect marriage.
- *BHeC* has always acted supporting the government on the public policy. The emergence of *BHeC* occurs at a time of clash. After the *GT Pedala* creation, there were more collaboration and decrease in conflicts. Also action in favor of the bicycle in other instruments, such as *PPAG* (pluriannual governmental plan). What has changed from one time to another has been the more elaborate construction of the incidence. For example, in the creation of *Planbici*, a 6-week process, a robust, 6-axis plan. *BHeC* has now a more complex advocacy space.
- The *GT Pedala* is an escape valve for *BHTrans* because before the demand arrives in *BHTrans*, it passes through the *GT*, which dissipates the energy. Since *BHTrans* is not able to implement the policy, it is using the *GT Pedala* to avoid attacks. But if *BHTrans* wanted and had implemented the policy, the *GT Pedala* would have been used in a different manner. The *GT Pedala* has its role in the policy, without it would be worse.
- During the *PlanBici* elaboration, there was a change in the context. The actor that took the lead of transforming the *PlanMob* in a more strategic plan was the social movement. The logic of policy formulation was inverted, as an unfolding of the *#D1Passo*.

- The thing that has changed was the more elaborated construction of incidence. For example, the elaboration of the *PlanBici*, a six weeks process, a robust plan, with six axes. The *BHeC* has a more complex role in the advocacy.
- The current arrangement of *BHTrans* is not capable. However, it has the potential to hire more people, for example, to work with bicycles.
- In the case of BH, it was relatively easy to create the stimuli. There was an opportunity to put the bike on the agenda, and with the presence of *BHeC*, it accelerated the process. There was an attempt to modernize, put the bike on the agenda, both the political actors of the municipality and the technical staff. But the reality is more difficult, it is not easy to make the transformation. It is easy to make a plan, but when it comes to implementation, it is difficult. And then when the difficulty appeared, it stopped.
- When we refuse the institutionalization of the *GT Pedala*, it is precisely to be free to leave if that is the case. I do not think the *GT Pedala* has this force to prevent direct action by itself. On the contrary, it can be an instrument of public policy pressure.
- There is room to discuss cycling in the city and social movements are important, as is the *GT Pedala*. The more complex path in advocacy from a plan and monitoring can help.

**Interviewee E. employee in *BHTrans* and responsible for the *Pedala BH* Program:**

- Concerning mobility policies formulation, we have enough freedom. We have always had room to discuss the policies with the municipality as a whole. However, in the implementation of some controversy projects, the difficulties appear. The infrastructure for bicycles implementation requires the rethinking of the street. Requires the withdrawal of car parking spots in many times, narrowing the width of the bearing ranges, car-restraining policies, among others. And this will always result in much resistance. In Belo Horizonte, we face all kinds of resistance, from the press, to commerce, through various sectors. At that moment, the governors need to be absolutely sure of the importance of implementing the bicycle infrastructure to face this process and in Belo Horizonte we retreat at various times, unfortunately.
- Of course there is a dependency regarding the general directions given by the Mayor. No municipal entity is independent, and I do not think this is necessarily bad. When a department is too technical, such as *BHTrans*, it is up to the department to bring the Mayor its accumulated knowledge and technical production to base his directives for the city. We had in the past more financial independence, and this accelerates things but does not mean political independence.
- For me, the *BHeC* is the biggest partner the *Pedala BH* program can have. With a precise and effective social control, it is through this partnership that many planned actions become viable to happen. There are some divergences, which is normal, but our relationship is mature enough to treat these divergences with respect.

- The number of bicycles on the streets has been rising visibly, but in the mode share it represents a tiny part. I think the city lacks public management that faces the bicycle as a fundamental part of a project for a viable city. Which means being willing to pick fights, to defend the project.
- The beginning of my relationship with the cyclists was tense. Establishing an immediate relation of trust was hard. Everything was a process. Sometimes slow, painful, but transparent. But then we got closer, each one understanding the other's role.
- For a long time, I established with *BHeC* a relationship in which I was absolutely alone as a public power representative. During more than one year I did the meetings with *GT Pedala* alone. Sometimes, the person responsible for the implementation participated, but in general, it was only me.
- Our team is still tiny but has been growing. In the current administration, the Mobility Unity in *BH-Trans* has an Active Mobility Center. It is still little, but a visible structure. We were invisible for many years.
- The fact that Belo Horizonte had more left-wing political management for several years certainly allowed us to consolidate *Pedala BH* as a program. The development of the Urban Mobility Plan of Belo Horizonte (*PlanMob*), which incorporated the guidelines of *Pedala BH*, also reinforced its importance from the point of view of the legislation. However, this does not mean that the *Pedala BH* was fully incorporated by the upper echelons of the municipality. On the contrary, it has always been difficult to put this subject on the agenda of public investment.
- The relationship with the city council, too, depending on the political articulation, can mean serious barriers to the implementation of strategic projects for the municipality.
- There is an elaboration (of internal coherence in *BHTrans*) in progress. That's how I see it. I still see a lot of inconsistency, but I see changes.
- I believe that structural capacity is built when there is a decision. I do not think that lack of structural capacity is the impediment to the implementation of the Program.
- Basically, the national movement for the bicycle caused the municipalities to turn their eyes to the theme. In the Haddad term in São Paulo, the rapid expansion in mileage and coverage of the cycle paths and the implementation of symbolic cycle lanes, such as the Paulista Avenue, was super important so that other capitals could look forward to the issue. Here is an important point: As we all know, Haddad suffered many opposing pressures, and the national press played an important role in opposing his management. Haddad faced the problem of maximum speed reduction on the road, and the positive results of these actions were never properly publicized. So the press only divulged widely the opposition suffered by the Mayor of São Paulo in this process. Why is it important to mention this fact? Because in the last administration, we had already negotiated with the then Mayor, Márcio Lacerda, the implantation of our first Zone 30. However, his Communication Advisor was contrary, precisely citing the problems faced by Haddad and in this way, we were not able to make our project viable.

- All international context and the agenda of climate change meet the *Pedala BH* Program, reinforcing our guidelines for sustainable mobility. Nowadays, another decisive factor has been contributing to the project: international funding agencies for urban mobility projects only fit programs that consider cycling and its integration into the public transport network as possible to raise funds. Thus, in my opinion, even if the City Hall, by itself, does not understand the need to implement the *Pedala BH* Program in its entirety, this will be given out as a requirement to obtain funding.
- I believe that every city is prepared for this transition. Being prepared does not mean not facing opposition, it means facing the inevitable maturing processes in every city where the urban mobility centered on individual motorized means begins to collapse.

**Interviewee F. elected member of the city council of Belo Horizonte:**

- These places (for participation) exist and are open for popular movements and every citizen of the 'capital' (of Minas Gerais State). The public hearings are the most used mechanism. When there is a bill of interest of the population, the audience is summoned to debate over the subject, with the popular representatives having assured freedom to expose points of view and suggest changes or even the suppression of the bill.
- Social movements representatives can arrange meetings with the city council members in their cabinets since all the elected members are open to debate and receive and follow up suggestions and demands from the population.
- As in almost all capitals, there is a hypertrophy of the executive power, which manages to have the control over the city council. Everything passes through the municipality's screen, which puts itself as the only responsible for the urban planning. The 'regionals' in this new term have had their autonomy, that was not enough, decreased. Therefore, they do not have power to elaborate or implement any action. The power is centralized on the Mayor's hands.
- There is a good number of city council members sympathetic to these initiatives that aim to promote the use of the bicycle in Minas Gerais' capital. What is needed is the movement's leaders to approximate more of these members, through a constant presence in the City Council, to invite these members to participate in meetings and other events for promoting the use of the bicycle. The distance that still exists can be reduced with this approximation. The movements can have more actions with the councilmen and will have good receptivity.
- The city experiences a process of decadence in urban spaces, and this is one of the main worries of the population. The massive presence of homeless people in many points around the city, the degradation of the city center, the lack of conservation of the streets, the precarious street lightning and the lack of good service in health centers are problems more relevant for the population
- Another point that contributes to this adverse reaction is the awful quality of the public transport in Belo Horizonte. Without a metro system and with a bad bus system, people understand that

the priority should be given to individual motorized transportation modes, that is, cars and motorcycles, and then put themselves against the bicycles.

- None of the city council members has explicitly manifested against an increase in the use of bicycle, but since they vote according to personal interests, it is tough to evaluate who is really against the cycling movement. Parties have also not manifested themselves in the topic. On the other hand, taxi drivers, private drivers and people who have had part of the roads in which they circulate destined for the implantation of bicycle paths are against the increase of the use of the bicycle, because they feel that they are harmed.
- Little or almost nothing is done to encourage the use of bicycles in the capital. The City Master Plan and the Urban Mobility Plan deal with the use of bicycles as one of the municipal guidelines. However, it is only a programmatic norm, and unfortunately, it is not accompanied by measures that rethink the entire municipal mobility system, limiting itself to specific actions. I believe that transport modes should be thought together and in tune, and mobility as a whole.
- I believe that the use of alternative transport modes will only really advance when there is planning that takes into account the complex organism that is a metropolis like Belo Horizonte, integrating all means of transport in a logic that facilitates the locomotion of the citizen.
- There are other city council members, besides me, who advocate for mobility and sustainability. What is important is the task of convincing them through visits, meetings and forwarding of requests.
- The matter has not yet been discussed in the city council since the projects on the subject have not yet been submitted to the plenary. No initiative in this sense was sent to the city council by the municipality.
- I believe that there is a lack of democracy and openness in this relationship (municipality and social movements). Movements that have good interlocutors with the councilmen who make up the political base of the mayor get hearings and meetings with the mayor and members of the first municipal level and have part of their demands met. Those who do not enjoy this interlocution have access difficult.
- Some councilmen are in favor of the use of the bicycle. Concerning Parties, nowadays the diversity of individual postures does not allow a group evaluation. Social movements, especially those that promote outdoor events and defend the occupation of urban spaces, have been very supportive of the groups of cyclists who always participate in these activities. In the press, there is also a favorable posture to the defenders of the use of the bicycle. The scenario is basically the same as in previous years, but support for cyclists has increased.

**Interviewee G, elected member of the city council of Belo Horizonte:**

- Movements can participate in the commissions and public hearings and can make suggestions to some bills that arrive at City Council, for example, during the discussion and planning of the city's 'budgetary cycle', when it is opened up space for suggestions from the population.
- It is also important to have it clear that the claims that advance are those that conjugate institutional tools with 'direct actions'. That is, as important as to appropriate of the language and of the formal instruments is to keep acting and mobilizing people to pressure the government to implement the changes. This is very clear inside the city council. When the population comes, visit the cabinets, makes noise and pressure for the approval or rejection of a specific bill, it is treated in another manner by the city council members.
- The autonomy of the councils and commissions formed by citizens to implement public policies is minimum. Just see what happened with the City Master Plan, constructed by more than six thousand people in 2014, in a process that lasted eight years and has not been voted yet. The population, after many battles, can participate in projects formulation, but they are not necessarily implemented, resulting in huge discouragement for those that try to participate and influence the institutional politics.
- Practically all colleagues from the City Council agree the importance to improve the cycling infrastructure in the city and to invest in traffic education to promote respect with the cyclists. However, at the moment to actualize these policies, they do not give the same importance. Just look the city's budget plan, that prioritizes the expenditure in works that incentivize car use.
- The insertion of the bicycle in the public policies of the city is far from reflecting reality. This contradiction can be observed when we read documents such as the Urban Mobility Plan of Belo Horizonte, which provides targets for the discouragement of individual motorized transportation and the growth of the cycle network, but we are faced with works such as duplication of viaducts or the lack of budgetary resources for the improvement of bicycle paths. Belo Horizonte was born under a car-oriented logic, a colonizing and predatory logic, which leads us to spend more, pollute a lot and die by the thousands. The incentive to this model persists in the present day.
- There are many laws on urban mobility within the city council. Some are against state and federal regulations or do not find support in the municipal budget, which means that, even if approved, they are not feasible - a result of a logic that values the quantity, not the quality nor the participation of the population in the elaboration of the law drafts.
- The mayor Alexandre Kalil showed openness to the dialogue at the beginning of his term, receiving people from different segments and circulating around the city. Over time, however, he made hasty and unilateral decisions, often in an authoritarian way.
- The municipality seemed to be open to dialogue with the movements that promote the use of the bicycle in the city, including periodic meetings to deal with the subject that sometimes counted on the participation of the mayor. Despite this apparent openness, however, the municipality repeats the logic of previous local governments that foresee the creation of public policies for sustainable

urban mobility but do not move to implement these policies. The fact that PlanBici has not yet been implemented is an example of this.

- The presence of movements that promotes the use of the bicycle in the city, through campaigns, dissemination of information, mobilization and direct actions, modifies the actions of city council members, even because these movements carry out an inspection work of the legislature and of the executive. *BH em Ciclo - BHeC*, *Nossa BH* and *Tarifa Zero BH* are some examples of movements that carry out this work. We have some councilmen within the city council who use the bicycle to get around the city, and I am sure that this practice transforms the political making of these people. Just as the fact that I am a black woman, for example, influences the way I position myself and think about politics when the subject is the rights of this population.