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Bus Shelters as Shared Public and Private Entities; and Bus Shelter Advertising Contracts (BSACs), a Product and Source of Global Change: an Overview, History, and Comparison

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Bus Shelters as Shared Public and Private Entities;
and Bus Shelter Advertising Contracts (BSACs), a Product and Source of Global Change:
an Overview, History, and Comparison

A Thesis

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University of New Orleans
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requirements for the degree of

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Transportation Planning

by

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Abstract

The transit shelter, the space where riders make the transition from open space to more controlled buses and trains, is in many cases the site of a public-private transaction. Here, government agencies contract private companies to build and maintain shelters in exchange for governmental allowance of advertising in these locations. This dual purpose—the shelter serves concurrently as protection for transit users and as a moneymaker—means the space is contested, with economic and social needs often at odds. Bus shelter advertising contracts (BSACs), increasingly operated by large corporations, have resulted in widespread networks of bus shelters; observing these renders processes of globalization—generally not visible at the street level—more legible. Drawing from case studies of Lyon, France, and Los Angeles and New Orleans, United States, this thesis describes successes and failures both in the implementation of bus shelter contracts and in the provision of public amenities via shelters.

Keywords: transit shelters; outdoor advertising; street furniture; Lyon, France; Los Angeles, California; New Orleans, Louisiana

I. Introduction

Bus shelters warrant a view from social, economic, and historical viewpoints, among others, similar to other items of street furniture and other components of transit infrastructure. Bus shelters are unique in their sudden appearance and proliferation beginning around the mid-20th century. The forces that brought about this phenomenon were largely non-governmental, and it remains true today that bus shelters are the site of shifting public-private interactions, another feature unique to shelters. This paper seeks to illuminate bus shelter advertising contracts (BSACs), the public-private mechanism which has led to the installation of bus shelters in many large cities today. The central theme of this thesis, BSACs provide an example of how the government's assumed priority of delivering transportation amenities to the public can be subverted by an advertising agency's desire to meet the bottom line, leading to inefficiencies in delivering the benefits of shelters to those who can most profit from them.

The first section of this thesis addresses bus shelters as a component of the larger category of street furniture, including a discussion of professional opinions on how to achieve the best level of shelter design. This affords a view into the importance of shelters as a public amenity, while introducing general knowledge about their material composition.

The following section seeks to describe the importance of advertising within the phenomenon of the BSAC. Beyond their social utility, bus shelters today act as a source of significant monetary revenue via contracts controlled by private agencies. These contracts, covering everything from the minutiae of physical characteristics of shelters to the amount of space dedicated to art, are ultimately made possible due to a private firms' ability to profit from installing advertisements on the faces of shelter structures.

The third section describes the extent of BSACs across the world, culminating with an assessment of its importance as a phenomenon couched within current trends of globalization. BSACs bear features of global change in part due to the limited number of companies operating contracts in hundreds of cities in the developed world. They are also subject to the demands of municipal authorities; in this way, some BSACs contain clauses that have the capability of bringing benefits to citizens beyond revenue for cities and shelter from the rain. The most repeatedly noted result of bus shelters' global proliferation is the frequency with which clusters of them form in areas that see high advertising revenue, as opposed to high transit ridership (Hur , 2012, Law, 1999, Law and Taylor, 2007).

The fourth section contains a history of BSACs, as well as several case studies. Born during the turbulence of mid-20th century France and today widespread, BSACs are a product and a signifier of the global shift toward cities gaining greater autonomy, in part through the growth of multi-national corporations. The history of these contracts offers a striking parallel to the timeline of globalization, from the first changes after World War II to the dominance of global trends today. This section also brings to light the examples of two different cities, Lyon, France, and Los Angeles, California, in an attempt to understand the diverse ways that BSACs are employed across the world. In Lyon, one of the original purveyors of the BSAC, one notices the developed state of transit infrastructure, the extent to which advertising exists throughout the city, and the inter-connectedness of private and public entities. In Los Angeles, the most notable feature is the mismatch between the location of shelters and the places where people are boarding and exiting buses.

The final part of this thesis describes bus shelter provisions in New Orleans, using the comparative case studies as a guide for understanding where the city conforms to global trends,

and where it acts as an exception. Through an observation of the current infrastructure in place, a basic understanding of the BSAC the City of New Orleans has signed, and a comparison with Lyon and Los Angeles, among other cities, one finds that New Orleans has taken its own path in implementing bus shelters. The results of bus shelter management in New Orleans are mixed, with triumphs such as the relatively equitable distribution of shelters, and some drawbacks, due at least in part to the city only recently installing many of its shelters. Overall, while I recommend that the city follow the lead of other cities in certain regards, I find that New Orleans is engaged with its shelter advertising contractor in such a way as to truly benefit citizens, using minimal resources to create a fair and extensive bus shelter network. BSACs merit the intense scrutiny they are given here due to their ubiquity, their role within the current changes globalization is creating, and their effects on the everyday habits of transit patrons. The public-private nature of these contracts allows for opportunities for cities and citizens to temper—or even profit from—the effects of globalization on a local scale.

II. What is a bus shelter? Shelters as street furniture

Professional and academic literature tends to group bus shelters within a broader category of *street furniture*. Street furniture includes any number of semi-permanent objects in a streetscape. For instance, CBS/Decaux's "coordinated" contract with Los Angeles includes bus shelters, city information panels, kiosks, and newsstands (JCDecaux North America, 2010). Street furniture, a term in common use in much of the English-speaking world, has not been entirely accepted in the United States. Observers in Los Angeles have often used the phrase in quotations, perhaps signifying that it seems unnatural or convoluted to the average transit advocate or patron (Sulaiman, 2012, Gallegos, 2013). This unease or unfamiliarity is due in part to a lack of discussion of street furniture in the literature in the United States, and the novelty of including amenities such as bus shelters, billboards, and waste receptacles—historically under the purview of separate public or private entities—in a single contract. In the media, the term street furniture is even less common. Today, the term is gaining in importance in the United States as cities sign contracts with companies like JCDecaux, who increasingly manage everything from airport advertising signage to public toilets. A closer examination of the literature provides a basis for understanding the significance of bus shelters, as a form of street furniture, in the United States today.

While the international discussion covers many social aspects of street furniture implementation, in the United States the literature focuses on the importance of delivering a quality product that manages to best serve transit customers. Bus shelters act as the "primary interface between transit patrons and the transit system," and as such, transit agencies provide better customer service when taking into account the needs of bus passengers (Ewing & Bartholomew, 2013, p. 52). When prioritizing "placement of benches and shelters," bus

headways, the number of lines serving a stop, nearby land uses, and the need for protection from weather are all important considerations (Center for Urban Transportation Research, 2009, p. 30). However, the primary goal is to build shelters at the stops that have the greatest frequency of boardings and alightings, thereby providing the “greatest benefit” to the most passengers (30). Furthermore, bus stops with more boardings tend to accumulate greater combined passenger wait time (Law, 1999, p. 2); it is crucial to improve conditions for waiting passengers, as “the time spent waiting is experienced as passing much more slowly” (Ewing, Bartholomew, 2013, p. 52). In the United States the discussion of transit furniture is utilitarian, concerned primarily with providing the most benefit to the most bus patrons.

The focus domestically on shelter placement aligns with the interests of transit users, providing for customers’ essential needs in an equitable manner. Still, transit providers’ “quest for efficiency” has in many cases led to “dull and utilitarian” furniture that holds back the image of the city and the street it occupies (Ewing, Bartholomew, 2013, p. 62). Although it is important to cater to the primary concern of transit riders, protection from the elements, installing striking furniture can greatly impact the success of a street as an urban place. The lack of care afforded to the style of most shelters today leads to a proliferation of uninspired, “lifeless streetscapes” that may prevent the resurgence of healthy urban life (62). Revamping street furniture so that it is unique and suited to the specifics of the streetscape leads to fewer “monotonous urban environments,” and makes streets inviting places (Siu, Hong, 2011, p. 197). Striking shelters may also encourage non-transit users to consider riding the bus, to better “identify the neighborhood,” or at the least to take note of the existence of bus infrastructure and patrons, leading to improvements in safety (Law, Taylor, 2007, p. 80). By expanding the variety of street furniture

and creating more inviting shelters, transit providers can promote a new image of a vibrant bus system, even potentially encouraging increased ridership.

Improvements to street furniture can also highlight the importance of these objects as sites of urban interaction. The “element that both residents and visitors experience” in the most tangible way in the city, street furniture’s successes or failures can be measured through the quality of interaction (Siu, Hong, 2011, p. 183). Where the “significance and design considerations” of street furniture are observed, there are the healthiest interactions. As these considerations are almost “always neglected” by shelter providers, there is room for improvement on this count (183). Bus shelters have the potential to become foci of local life; at highly patronized stops, shelter design can “tap into” the already existing resource of people in the area, turning the stop into a destination renewed with “neighborhood vitality” (Law, Taylor, 2007, p. 80). Shelters, while encouraging people to wait at selected locations, can provide additional customers to nearby businesses, as well as marking a part of the street as a shared space. Recognizing the potential of shelters to benefit not just transit patrons, but whole communities, provides a more holistic view of their role.

When the design of pieces of street furniture is considered on an individual, rather than macro level, these pieces can be used to provide identity to the places they occupy. Furniture naturally “develops a sense of space around it,” a sense that is most positive when it is manifest in a form that reflects the uniqueness of its surroundings (Yücel, 2013, p. 623). “Visually unattractive or poorly planned street furniture,” often the same across whole cities, lacks identity, and rather “defines a city through chaos...and the absence of community” (641). When designing furniture with an eye to identity, Siu and Hong (2011) recommend employing unique “forms, contours, colours, [and] materials” (197), thereby allowing outsiders a glimpse into the

“history, culture, tradition, development, lifestyle and behaviour” (194) of a neighborhood. In its most successful iteration, street furniture “maintain[s] the identity of a place and its localism/regionalism,” provides a point of pride to locals, and acts as a tour guide, offering strangers a sense of the uniqueness of individual locations (184).

Attaining unity in street furniture is another feature that experts commonly recommend. Furniture attains a look of unity through many of the same means it develops identity, that is, through manipulation of “appearance and style” (Siu, Hong, 2011, p. 197). When all bus shelters throughout a community are unified in appearance, a transit system becomes immediately identifiable to outsiders. Unity of street furniture also fosters a sense of “order and harmony” (641), and helps to “set standards and expectations” for the appearance and development of areas where street furniture is installed (Yücel, 2013, p. 624). In this sense, unity of street furniture, as it projects an image of an orderly city, is a tool municipalities may employ to legitimize the security of their city. Similarly, through identity-based designs, cities may promote unique features of their city, for the sake of tourism or building city pride.

Most city governments, along with bus shelter providers, are keen on the aesthetics of their street furniture being unified, but not necessarily on it displaying a strong sense of uniqueness or identity. While cities, transit agencies, and the advertising companies they do business with do have a stake in the wellbeing of the community, each of these entities is generally more interested in the bottom line. The choices of street furniture design that result from these municipal and private priorities have effects on many agents at many levels. These include the quality of service provided to transit patrons, the character of a neighborhood as displayed through its street furniture, the effectiveness of companies to advertise their products, and the resulting entrenchment of a global industry of advertising. The following section

explores the significance of advertising, the other key element besides use by bus riders, within bus shelter contracts.

III. Outdoor advertising and BSACs

In describing the role of bus shelters within cities today, scholarship often invokes discussions that cross several fields of academic inquiry, including sociology, economics, planning, and philosophy. Indeed, the subject of bus shelter advertising contracts (BSACs), and the companies who operate them, can be viewed through many filters, due to the complexities of analyzing something which is both municipal and private, driven by global processes and an important part of neighborhoods. Among different subsections of outdoor advertising, BSACs, with their rapid spread across Europe, North America, and Japan via international corporations such as JCDecaux, qualify as unique phenomena that merit further analysis due to their dual character. Combining a description of contemporary outdoor advertising practices and theory of globalization, one can see bus shelters' unique role as intermediary between the physical and technological world, and the global elite and average citizens.

The significance of the BSACs is linked to the resurgence of outdoor advertising as a popular medium for dissemination of information. Unlike much of modern advertising, which occurs on television, the internet, or the radio, and whose transmission to its audience may occur simultaneously in a thousand separate places, outdoor advertising tends to be more static, with each sign or panel having a finite location. Outdoor advertising comes in two primary forms, posters, which are displayed in bus shelters and other street-level panels, and billboards (Cronin 2006, p. 5). In recent years, advertising agencies have come to see the immobile nature of this medium as a bonus, and its growing share of the overall advertising market is a testament to this. When constructing a brand image, the "standard industry view" is that one might "miss a TV

ad,”¹ but when one’s commute follows the same roads every day, one becomes a more stable target for advertising (6).

Exterior advertising is a fast-growing industry, and one that has branched far beyond its roots in billboard ads. Street advertising is appearing in increasingly innovative locations, including on information panels, benches, and even manholes. John Miller, an outdoor advertising specialist, claims that advertising now appears in “at least 200 out-of-home formats” (Esterl 2005). Expenditures in the sector increased from around \$2.5 billion to nearly \$6 billion between 1994 and 2004 in the United States, and are growing considerably faster than in the general advertising industry. Still, the sector is small; TNS Media Intelligence estimated that in 2004 outdoor advertising “made up only 2.3% of the overall advertising pie” (Esterl 2005). In spite of its relatively minimal monetary prominence, outdoor advertising has a large reach in terms of physical presence in peoples’ daily lives in the West.

Outdoor advertising companies take advantage of the fixed nature of their panels by offering their customers demographics analyses of viewership at each location. This practice of “niche” advertising stretches back at least to nineteenth-century Paris (Gaffney 2007, p. 3), but is today attaining new levels of sophistication. In the United Kingdom, outdoor advertisers collectively pay for POSTAR, a “site classification and audience measurement system” (Cronin 2006, p. 9). This program maps urbanites’ journeys around the city using both demographic data and “modal targeting,” the latter device including such varied categories as “spending mode,” “single again, with children,” or “working at the moment” (11). Outdoor advertising companies’ “complex mapping of city space” is their primary means of touting the visibility of a street-side panel, and in turn has a direct impact on where these companies determine to build or enhance

¹ Quote from “Simon Sinclair, Director of *Pravda* advertising agency based in Manchester, UK.”

advertising infrastructure (Cronin 2006, p. 12). The effects of advertising agencies' decisions are manifold, and simultaneously play a part in redefining the urban landscape while being defined by global currents of change.

Contemporary outdoor advertisers' panels and mapping tools have extended so far in reach in the urban setting that they have begun to reform the shape of the Western city today. Programs like POSTAR represent the most sophisticated of a number of tools advertising agents use, culled from large pools of data on consumers and their habits. These data, however, are limited in scope; the "mapping of city space according to potential commercial value" (Cronin 2006, p. 12) necessarily leads to a "uni-dimensional transcription, and indeed flattening out" (14) of the true complexity of peoples' movement in cities. In particular, the industry's figures ignore "unspoken and barely legible tactics and ruses" (13) urbanites often engage in, what de Certeau has deemed the "network of ...antidiscipline" (as cited in Cronin, p. 13). In spite of its shortcomings, the ability of outdoor advertisers' data to "re-map" urban landscapes is powerful, in large part due to how much clients believe in the power of programs like POSTAR (11). The combined legitimacy of these data and ever-increasing profits in the outdoor advertising sector are an "indication of strong growth potential" (Gaffney 2007, 2) and the overseas growth of outdoor advertising is largely fueled by a "mechanism of brand recognition and reputation" (Gaffney 2007, p. 6). This leads companies like JCDecaux, a world leader in outdoor advertisement, to invest in more figures and projections, resulting in a self-perpetuation and a proliferation of billboards and posters throughout cities.

Today, "advertising marks [the] everyday, routine experience" of urban life "in a complex and heterogeneous manner" (Cronin 2006, 12). Indeed, it is difficult to imagine Western cities without the omnipresence of "advertising and corporate imagery," currently the "backdrop of

urban life” (Gaffney 2007, p. 3). For many city dwellers, the “banality of advertising in city spaces functions to naturalise” urban form, as advertisements become part of the accepted landscape (Cronin, 4). Cronin attributes a “disquieting familiarity and a sense of sameness from one city to the next, to the prevalence of similar posters advertising a handful of brands across much of the world (12). The power of outdoor advertising today is “disproportionately large” in relation to its share in the overall advertising market specifically because it has an enormous impact on the city itself, as well as its inhabitants (6).

Behind the sameness and visual uniformity that crosses oceans and borders, allowing “even unknown cities [to] seem strangely familiar” (Cronin 2006, p. 13), is a concerted effort from a handful of corporations to create a sense of “perceptual ubiquity in the global metropolitan landscape” (Gaffney 2007, p. 6). Both in order to satisfy demanding clients in its home country of France, and due to a company policy of “commitment to style,” JCDecaux, a leader in bus shelter advertising, emphasizes quality of design in its products (10). One reason for the proliferation of a unified look for bus shelters is that competitor companies have responded by bringing the look of their own shelters into conformity with the Decaux model, leading to street furniture that looks much the same in France as it does in the United States.

This uniformity is a testament to the role of bus shelters, and the private contractors who distribute them, as physical “indicator[s] of globalization” in cities (Gaffney 2007, title). Bus shelters are definitively tangible, but also occupy what Castells’ deems the “space of flows” (Gaffney 2007, p. 3). The space of flows describes the parallel reorganizations of cities across the world due to high technology, and signals the development of a new global landscape of “nodes and hubs” that ties large cities together while bypassing national structure (Castells 1996, p. 413). At the human scale, the result of these changes is the development of a new “technocratic-

financial-managerial elite” who inhabit a unique, global setting at the nodes of the space of flows (415). Here, where the concentration of global power is the strongest, one observes a “tendency towards architectural uniformity,” where each hotel, airport, or central business district looks strikingly similar, as well as an “increasingly homogeneous lifestyle” (417). Outdoor advertising giants maintain a uniform and globally pervasive image through their bus shelters and other structures, an image which aligns perfectly with Castells’ space of flows (Gaffney 2007, 7).

Bus shelters occupy a unique site within global space, where they act as a portal between the space of place and the space of flows. The space of place, the “historically rooted spatial organization of our common experience,” represents the way that urbanites typically perceive their city (Castells 1996, p. 378). Through the use—or observation—of bus shelters, the changes globalization brings to the urban experience become part of the daily reality of people in the city. Moreover, the existence of bus shelter advertising and other outdoor advertising acts as a map, showing which spaces contain processes of globalization, which is legible to those outside the global managerial class. Indeed, much as global processes are grouped in certain cities as loci of hubs and nodes, the distribution of bus shelters tends to be concentrated in particular neighborhoods and along certain highways in “zones of exception” (Gaffney 2007, p. 7).

The processes by which publicity panels—often incorporated with street furniture such as bus shelters—coalesce spatially are driven primarily by advertising revenue. Advertising companies determine the most profitable locations for locating advertisements using audience measurement analyses. Certain neighborhoods and avenues of cities tend to have more traffic—foot, vehicle, or otherwise—and advertisers frequently target these areas, creating landscapes panels and billboards, some of which—such as those at Piccadilly Circus and Time Square—become famous in their own right (Cronin 2006, p. 12). The case of bus shelters differs from that

of billboards, however, in that shelters' original purpose is as a public amenity, and not as a conduit for advertisement. Thus, cities, transit agencies, and transit patrons also have a strong interest in guiding the location of shelters toward areas with higher ridership. The bulk of academic literature concerning bus shelter distribution is directed at highlighting—and determining solutions to—this conflict of interest “between the catchment areas for transit users and the advertising audience” (Gaffney 2007, p. 7).

IV. BSACs as an International Phenomenon

Today, the industry is dominated by a few giant organizations whose reach extends to many sectors of outdoor advertising. JCDecaux, founded by the eponymous Jean-Claude Decaux in 1964, is today a “global advertising giant” among giants (Gaffney 2009, p. 2). As of 2012, JCDecaux is the largest provider of outdoor communications in the world, as well as being number one in Europe, Asia and the Pacific (“Profil.” JCDecaux). The company is also number one in street furniture, with 434,700 advertising panels, number one in airport advertising and bike-share systems, and has contracts with over 280 transit agencies. There are two large companies in competition with JCDecaux, Clear Channel Communications and Cemusa (Gaffney 2009, 6). JCDecaux is present in 55 countries and 3,700 cities, and in 2012 posted a revenue of €2.623 billion. These figures belie JCDecaux’s humble yet auspicious beginnings in mid-century Paris.

JCDecaux has grown to such a degree that its influence extends across the world, making it part of the global economy. JCDecaux’s ascendance has paralleled the rise of globalization, an unknown concept in the 1950s, now widely acknowledged to be a driving force in contemporary society. Globalization differs from previous movements that encompassed all or much of the world because it entails new groupings of influence, often concentrated within the centers of large cities, accessed by a powerful new elite, and operating outside of traditional national power structures (Sassen, 2001). JCDecaux, whose success is rooted in the expansion of its network bus shelter advertising contract to cities across the world, is emblematic of the new dynamics globalization has brought about. BSACs, which are uniform across cities and continents, contribute to the “sheer ubiquity” in design and presence of outdoor panels worldwide, which not

only “drives” the extension of global processes, but, through shelter distribution, “mimics” them as well (Gaffney 2007, p. 3).

As one JCDecaux promotional video puts it, the company is “showcasing the world” (Gaffney 2009, 2). JCDecaux is also most certainly showcasing itself, and its brand. The “visual connections created through consistency” in appearance of bus shelter design makes the brand highly visible on a global scale (6). Gaffney posits this “global unity of...style and consistency of audience reach” as a key selling point for both transit agencies and local advertising agencies looking to break into the bus shelter market (6). JCDecaux and its peers gain from having local partners, who have access to data about local advertising realities. They use this material to determine the most effective locations for installing shelters, and tend to choose “only those places where...[their] products can generate revenue” (7). While this strategy is effective for meeting the bottom line, it does not fare as well at distributing access to bus shelters evenly across a client city.

This mismatch “between the catchment areas for transit users and the advertising audience” leads to clumpings of shelters that Gaffney characterizes as “zones of exception” (7). As BSACs create of *zones of exception*, the existence of these tight groupings “creates new urban intensities where mobile currents of bodies, finance and meanings interface and (provisionally) sediment around the physical structures holding the advertisements” (Cronin, 2006, p. 5). The choices that JCDecaux and its competitors make in placing bus shelters, often fed by complex tools that determine where advertising is the most profitable, “imagine [new] cities” within existent cities (7). These “imaginings” have impacts on the lives of people, especially those who use public transportation (7).

The inequitable placement of bus shelters throughout a municipality is a polemic that has received more attention than most topics concerning BSACs. This is no surprise, considering it is as old as bus shelter contracts themselves. In 1960s Lyon, public officials had to fight to get bus shelters outside of the city center, the only area where they were highly profitable, and therefore the only place JCDecaux sought to install them (Huré, 2012). When designing its contract with Shelter Media Associates in 1981, Los Angeles sought to avoid this pitfall by including phrasing to the effect that shelters would be evenly distributed geographically. Six years into the contract, the company had built only 700 shelters, a third of those originally stipulated (Connell and Wood, 1987). The shelters they did build were largely in affluent parts of the city. In the following decades, this pattern of shelter placement became common across the county, in spite of innovations to contracts. Chicago's 2001 contract with JCDecaux required an even number of bus shelters (17%) to be placed in each ward (Jaffe, 2013). Still, in installing its shelters, JCDecaux "prioritized downtown shelters" in order to increase revenue, leading to similar results to those in Los Angeles.

V. Comparative case studies: Lyon, Los Angeles, and New Orleans

a. Introduction

The discussion of bus shelters within transportation planning literature in the United States is limited. Those scholarly works that do exist call into question the importance of shelters within a transit network. Trips on transit also include a great deal of time spent between the destination and the transit stop or station; in the United States, “out-of-vehicle time share of trips has increased” due to longer distances associated with suburban expansion (Iseki & Taylor 2010, p. 24). The bus shelter, then, is not significant within planning so much because of the amount of time travelers spend waiting there, as it is important as a symbol of the transit system and a means of revenue for both transit agencies and advertisers. In one study in southern California, transit patrons identified safety (“an emergency contact method” and “safety at night”) as the most in need of improvement at transit stops, followed by reliability (“schedule adherence” and “wait time”) (Iseki & Taylor 2010, p. 33). At least according to this study, the appearance of a shelter is not as important as feeling protected from crime at a bus stop, and having on-schedule, reliable transit service. The importance of maintaining a quality network of shelters, then, is likely more beneficial to the operators of said shelters than it is to the people using them each day.

Keeping in mind previous discussions on the role of bus shelters as both transit furniture and medium for advertisement, the history of shelters, especially as a global phenomenon, and the benefits of shelters to riders, the following section contains three case studies, employed to give a variety of examples of the state of bus shelter contracts today.

The first city in the study is Lyon, France. Lyon is the third largest city in France, but has the second largest metropolitan area (INSEE 2011). It is also the city where Jean-Claude Decaux earned his first shelter contract, and the history of its street furniture is closely tied to the JCDecaux company. Thus, the first case study will concern a city that has played host to a shelter contract for longer than any other city, and present a unique view of the long-term effects of these agreements. Furthermore, Lyon demonstrates the comparative advantage cities privy to the birth of global movements such as BSACs.

The second city under review is Los Angeles, California. This city, located in the southwestern corner of the contiguous United States, is second in the country both in population within the city limits and in metropolitan area. As I will demonstrate, transit activism is high in Los Angeles, and the city and its eponymous county have come under intense criticism for the unequal distribution of bus shelters there.

The final city is New Orleans, Louisiana. This city is considerably smaller than the first two, in real and relative terms. New Orleans stands as the fifty-first largest city in the United States, and the forty-fifth largest metropolitan area (United States Census Bureau. “Population Estimates”). While bus shelter contracts are comparatively new to New Orleans, shelters are beginning to make an impact in the city. The New Orleans section will describe these changes.

b. Methods

The purpose of this thesis is to illuminate the complexities of the bus shelter, heretofore largely ignored within transportation and planning literature. Through extensive qualitative analysis of both domestic and foreign literature on the topic of bus shelters, I determined several questions that have received little attention: What is the history of bus shelters? In particular,

why did they become so wide-spread, so fast, and through what means? What is the significance of their expansion in popularity mirroring changes that today bear the label *globalization*? What can we learn from examining the success of JCDecaux in Lyon, site of the first bus shelter advertising contract? What are some unique features of bus shelter contracts in other cities, and what are the results of these idiosyncrasies? Finally, what power do municipal authorities have to improve cities through overseeing the insertion of unique provisions to bus shelter contracts?

The topic for this paper came to me as a result time spent waiting for a bus or train, sometimes protected by a shelter, and sometimes not. My curiosity led me to initiate research—both online using searches of both scholarly and popular databases and on site at the Earl K. Long library. Initially, researching bus shelters bore little fruit as the bulk of literature on the topic appeared to focus on topics germane the fields of engineering, advertising, and sociology, rather than planning. As a result, I expanded the scope of my study to include these non-planning documents, and began the process of identifying a multi-disciplinary approach for understanding bus shelter networks today.

Understanding the complexities of what I have termed BSACs requires an explanation of their history. Through literature searches, I identified a pattern of innovations in advertising and street furniture arising in France and culminating in the current significance of bus shelter advertising worldwide. The firm JCDecaux, whose name has appeared above, is a central element of this paper; the BSAC's genesis is closely tied to the company, and the monumental success of this company in large came from bus shelter advertising. I explore the history of this company, and of more broad patterns in the history of bus shelters and street advertising, below.

Following the history of bus shelters is a series of case studies describing the conditions of BSACs. I have chosen three cities, each based on unique criteria. I included a study of Lyon,

France because of that city's significance as the first municipality to engage in a BSAC in the world, leading to a long and involved history that is ripe for exploration. I chose Los Angeles, United States, because it appears to be the American city where bus shelter contracts have received the most attention from scholars and the public. New Orleans, United States, is a city of which I have extensive knowledge, having lived and studied here for several years. In this thesis, I provide information parallel to that of Lyon and Los Angeles—which represent some of the best-documented cases of bus shelter contracts in the literature—about the city of New Orleans.

Accessing information concerning bus shelters in New Orleans was not a straightforward process, and my research reflects the unevenness of available data. Over the span of several months in 2014, while first beginning my study of bus shelter literature, I observed changes in the distribution and design of bus shelters in the city. Even before I contacted the city employees and businesspeople associated with shelter contract in the city, I noted a large number of new shelters being installed in New Orleans, along with improvements being made to many.

In order to obtain more concrete figures, I contacted the city transit agency, the Regional Transit Authority (RTA), multiple times; in particular, I was interested in acquiring a copy of the advertising contract. While the authority did not provide the contract, Deslie Isidore, who works directly with the city's shelter contract, did provide a list of bus shelters and their locations city-wide, which is incorporated into my analysis of New Orleans. Through informal interview with RTA employees, I learned a few useful pieces of information concerning RTA's BSAC, namely the existence of a clause within the contract that requires a shelter to be installed at any location that meets a minimum threshold of daily bus boardings (Isidore 2014, Marks 2014). I also spoke with RIDE Nola, a transit advocacy organization that recently staged a protest on lack of bus amenities on Elk Place (Miller 2014). I encountered many roadblocks in maintaining contact

with both the RTA and Laurel Outdoor Advertising, its private partner in the BSAC. The following section reflects my incomplete knowledge of bus shelters and advertising in the city, and my attempt to fill in gaps in understanding with whatever data was available.

As a primary part of argument pertains directly to the research I did on bus shelters in New Orleans, whatever recommendations included in the paper will be most applicable in New Orleans. Still, the topic of shelter advertising contracts is fairly universal, touching the hundreds of cities world-wide which maintain contracts with JCDecaux and similar companies (Gaffney 2007). The chief objective of this paper is to draw from the literature of many academic and professional fields to crystalize the story of bus shelter contracts, above all with the goal of providing cities and transit agencies with a general understanding of the significance of the presence of seemingly innocuous bus shelters within their cities. Thus, although this thesis focuses on topics such as the development of shelters in France and the current state of shelters in New Orleans, the themes contained herein are significant on a much larger scale.

c. History of street furniture and advertising

Although outdoor advertisement of different sorts has existed in public space for centuries, it was in 19th Century France that a strong trend toward institutionalization emerged. Particularities of the Belle Époque age in Paris led to the city developing into the “true epicenter for the development of advertising street furnishings” (Gaffney 2009, p 3).² During this, the period of Enlightenment, Haussmannization, and industrialization, the streetscape of Paris changed drastically. This change was at least in part due to the Press Law of 1881, which instated regulation of street hawkers and vendors, and gave the government power over billposting in

² Street furniture is here defined to include benches, tables, transit shelters, streetlamps, traffic signs, information panels, and any number of other man-made features of public space that are neither part of buildings nor of streets.

public spaces. From this point on, mayors “designate[d]...the places which are exclusively chosen to receive [public] bulletins,” and “personal billposting” was banned (“Loi du 29 juillet 1881 sur la liberté de la presse”).³ This seriously damaged the informal promotion and advertisement sector, leading to “niche advertising” agencies competing by “gathering and analyzing demographics” information for clients (Gaffney, 3). This new industry paired with Paris’ Public Works department to create a revolution in street furniture and advertising.

During the Belle Époque, “thousands of pieces of street furnishing [were] installed on the streets of Paris” (Gaffney 2009, p 3). Advertising appeared on these pieces of furniture as a result of a three-tiered process. Advertising agencies paid the city to rent out parts of these pieces of furniture, which were public property. The agencies would then sell their acquired spaces to clients in a “targeted” way (3). From a compilation of “mappings of demographics, housing tenure and locations of furnishings,” buyers would determine where in the city they wished to advertise. The marked growth of this sector demonstrates that this model was likely profitable for all parties involved, including the city, whose coffers benefited from an influx of “millions of Francs” during the period (3). The complex and informed nature of this industry is remarkable, and its *targeted* nature in particular has great bearings on current trends in urban advertising.

As discussed above, street furniture has a history that extends back at least as far as the late 19th century in Europe. Outdoor advertising became widespread in Europe during the same era (Hahn). Following the arrival of industrial society and the establishment of a bourgeoisie came a culture of consumption, described most famously through descriptions of Paris’ *passages*,

3 Chapitre III, Article 15. Translated from “désignera...les lieux exclusivement destinés à recevoir les affiches” and “affiches particulières”

boulevards, and *flâneurs* by Benjamin and Baudelaire.⁴ These social changes spread from Paris and London to cities across Europe, and subsequently across the world, providing a foundation for the twentieth-century movements of modernism and post-modernism. As occurred after the onset of industrial society, the era of post-modernism also saw changes in the application of advertising. In the revolutionary 1960s, public opinion of the role of advertising in society shifted from the awe of Benjamin and his cohort to concern about its invasiveness in daily life.

Incidentally, some of the first philosophical works to warn of the changes of mass advertising on society came from Paris. In particular, Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*, a book closely associated with the Situationist International and the revolution of May '68 in France, was published in Paris in 1967 (Dumontier 1990). Debord's critique of society's glorification of the *spectacle*, meaning a facsimile or representation of an object, spoke directly to the encroachment of advertising in Western society at the time (Debord 1992). The members of the student revolution of 1968, in large part influenced by Debord's seminal work, were acutely aware of the effects of advertising on their lives. An enduring image of the actions of protesters during the summer of 1968—memorialized in at least one exhibit—is a defaced JCDecaux bus shelter (Bois 1986). For the student movement, these shelters represented the encroachment of a ubiquitous, unified conduit of private advertisement into what had been public space. Debord's fears, echoed throughout the streets of Paris, were of societal changes that are today widespread throughout the Western world.

4 Charles Baudelaire's poetry describes the changes of culture in Paris following the Hausmannien projects in the mid 19th century. In particular, he wrote of the typical member of the *nouveau riche*, a *flâneur* taking strolls along the wide, clean boulevards and dining at well-lit cafés (Berman). Walter Benjamin expanded on this work, and his fascination fell the strongest on Paris' covered commercial streets, or *passages*, the predecessor to today's commercial center (Benjamin).

The success of the first bus shelter advertising contract, a major milestone in the shared history of public space and furniture, mass transit, and advertising, came in the years leading up to the revolution of May '68. This took the form of a series of private contracts the French government signed with the enterprise JCDecaux. Although Jean-Claude Decaux claims to have invented street furniture, the masterwork of this “advertising wizard” is the bus shelter advertisement contract (Bois 1986, p. 143). In 1964, Decaux’s agreement with the French government granted his company the right to “install bus shelters across France,” reversing the precedent of publically owned street furniture in that country (Gaffney 2009, Abstract).

In addition to protests from more radical movements like the Situationist International, the French press “raised quite a controversy” over the contracts, citing that Decaux was doing little for the benefit of the community, while “consolidating [his] company’s network and financial operations,” all in supposedly public space (Bois 1986, p. 143). In spite of these arguments, JCDecaux pushed on, expanding rapidly over the last decades of the 20th century. The enterprise attained success in large part because it “*retained ownership* of the furnishings and agreed to maintain” them (Gaffney, 3).⁵ From their earliest appearance on the streets, the public protested JCDecaux’s bus shelters, with little success. Today, “Decaux’s true invention – a model of public-private partnership which insinuates the demand of corporate advertising accounting into the provision of transit-related service – is now part of the decision-making processes which determine the level of service in neighborhoods around the globe” (Gaffney 2007, p. 3).

The expansion of BSACs from Lyon—the site of the first contract—to other French cities, and eventually the world, has been seemingly unstoppable. JCDecaux marketed its bus shelter as the Abribus, a clever portmanteau of the French words *abri* and *autobus*, meaning

⁵ Emphasis in original

shelter and bus, respectively. By the year 1973, there were 10,000 Abribus in 450 French cities, marking a huge success for JCDecaux, and eventually attracting attention from abroad (Pégard 1999, p 104). In 1974, New York City “discovered” the Abribus model and undertook to tap into JCDecaux’s profitability through signing a similar contract (Weisman 1984, p. 361). The city chose “one of the original American shelter companies” to “build, maintain and repair” 500 shelters within the municipality. The city received a share of the company’s “gross advertising receipts” (361).

It also unwittingly started a trend that would spread rapidly across the continent. By 1980, there were similar transit shelter programs in Los Angeles (2500 shelters), Philadelphia (1000), Toronto (800), and New Orleans (150), among others (Weisman, p. 362). At the outset there were a great number of companies providing bus shelter services, with each company located in a handful of cities. The more recent trend has been toward a domination of the market by a handful of large companies. Today, Cemusa, JCDecaux, and Clear Channel hold contracts in hundreds of cities worldwide, including many of the largest cities in North America.⁶

d. Lyon and JCDecaux

The strength of JCDecaux—today a multi-national corporate powerhouse of advertising—is derived from a long history of contracts with public entities in France. One of JCDecaux’s oldest clients is the city and region of Lyon, located in central France. The Communauté urbaine de Lyon (CUL), also called Grand Lyon, is the most populous of France’s sixteen urban communities, institutions which operate in a similar manner to the United States’ metropolitan planning organizations, addressing collective urban issues at a regional level.

⁶ New York City’s contract is with Cemusa, a Spanish company (Bagli, 2006). Los Angeles’ contract is with CBS/Decaux (JCDecaux North America), and Chicago’s is with JCDecaux (Jaffe, 2013).

(Direction générale des collectivités locales, Feb 2011)⁷. The relationship between JCDecaux and Grand Lyon stretches back to the 1960s, yet these public and private entities have become increasingly interdependent over the years. In order to catch a glimpse of how JCDecaux and bus shelter contracts have changed, we will follow a half-century of history of “hybrid public action” in Lyon (Huré, 2012, p. 1).⁸

In the 1950s and 1960s, the bus came into its own as a mode of public transit in cities across the world. Entrepreneur Jean-Claude Decaux sought to capitalize on this trend by proposing the installation of bus shelters in Lyon, which would be privately managed and maintained (Huré, 2012, p. 2). He benefited from the deregulation of outdoor advertisement and a deal he had struck with the French government (Bois, 1968). In exchange, the city would concede rights to advertising on shelters. Decaux’s fledgling company installed its first shelters—trademarked as *Abribus*—in Grand Lyon in 1962 (Zonebourse. “Jean-Claude Decaux: Biographie”). JCDecaux’s initial contract with the CUL has historical significance; over the three decades that followed, the phenomenon of bus shelter advertisement contracts spread rapidly, first in France and eventually to much of the world. JCDecaux has profited over the years from its role in Lyon, which shows an “asymmetry to the benefit of the enterprise,” wherein Lyon conferred a preferential status on JCDecaux, with the company responding by meeting many of the city’s demands (Huré, 2012, p. 4).⁹ According to the president of JCDecaux in 2005, “without Lyon, Decaux would not exist” (2).¹⁰

7 In 2011, the population of Grand Lyon was 1,287,216. Paris, a considerably larger city, does not have an urban community; rather, its entire *région*, Île de France, operates in a similar capacity.

8 Translated from “action publique hybride”

9 Translated from “asymétrie au bénéfice de l’entreprise”

10 Translated from “Sans Lyon, Decaux n’existerait pas”

The Lyon-JCDecaux contract also benefited the city and its suburbs. Lyon's unique position at the forefront of the movement to privatize bus shelters led to an extensive dialogue between company leaders and elected officials. As testified elsewhere, a common trend is for the "relationship between public power and [private] firm... [to become] a process of adjustments introduced in the form of amendments" (Huré, p. 12, as cited in Lorrain, 2005).¹¹ In Lyon, amendments to the original contract were not only a tool of the government to control the scope of JCDecaux's public involvement. Huré argues that the CUL participated in a broader "fashioning" of JCDecaux's outdoor advertising monopoly in France by repeatedly allowing the company access to new urban venues (12).¹²

A series of contract amendments in the 1970s came as a result of demands from the president of Grand Lyon for a larger coverage of bus shelters in the region. The governmental organization was pleased with the shelters JCDecaux had built, and was open to the increased involvement of this private firm in its affairs. The expansion of the shelter network, especially outside the city center, was a top priority of elected officials during this period (Huré 2012, p. 9).

JCDecaux pushed back against these demands, arguing that there was little fiscal potential for advertising in the periphery (Huré 2012, p. 10). Despite this, JCDecaux eventually relented, and offered to install shelters without advertisements in the region's less profitable outlying areas (9). In exchange, the CUL contracted JCDecaux to implement new wayfinding signs and public toilets. As Lyon's demands grew, so did JCDecaux's level of diversification and entrenchment in the community. It was by this process of renegotiations on its original contract

11 Translated from "La relation entre puissance publique et firme...prend la forme d'un processus plus régulier avec des ajustements introduits sous la forme d'avenants"

12 Translated from "façonnée"

that the company became a fixture, and eventually obtained a monopoly on installment of new street furniture in Lyon and many of its French counterpart cities (4).

The 1980s were a period of strong growth for JCDecaux, with a marked increase in the amount of urban furniture it managed within Lyon, and expansion of the bus shelter advertising concept into international markets. While JCDecaux's role in public politics grew progressively (Huré 2012, p. 4), the company gained new expertise in data production and accumulation, as well as in the field of international development (5). The company created an internal division of statistical studies and urban cartographies, leading to the deployment of new data for advertising and displaying information. Using this data, JCDecaux was able to provide its client cities with bus network maps, pedestrian zone maps, and installed these throughout the city for free (Huré 2012, p. 17). At the same time, its statistical and cartographic division was collecting data on upkeep expenses, as well as on the marketability of different advertising locations and formats. These data—collected from Lyon for no charge—likely aided JCDecaux in its expansion outside of France and into the rest of the world.

In 2004, JCDecaux bus shelters were present in all 57 communes¹³ in Grand Lyon (Huré 2012, p. 9). The CUL's newest contract with JCDecaux (2004) envisages 2200 bus shelters and 600 billboards, as well as a newer addition to its repertoire, a bicycle-sharing system called Vélo'v, with 4000 bicycles available. JCDecaux implemented its system in Lyon following the entry of one of its major international competitors, Clear Channel, into the neighboring city of Rennes. Clear Channel made a “sensational” entry into a French market heretofore entirely monopolized by JCDecaux by offering a bicycle sharing system in addition to the typical urban furniture contract (8). Today, Lyon is in negotiation with JCDecaux to increase the scope of the

¹³ Equivalent to municipalities

Vélo'v system beyond the urban core, closely following the pattern of bus shelter expansion thirty years earlier.

e. Los Angeles and BSACs

Among American cities, the construction and management of bus shelters has received perhaps the most press, as well as been the subject of the most academic query, in Los Angeles. This notoriety is due in part to the particularly uneven distribution of shelters in the city and county of Los Angeles, a region with marked spatial division in terms of income and ethnicity, and served primarily by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) (Connell and Wood, 1987). Members of the community and researchers have observed obvious imbalances, including twice as many shelters in the well-heeled San Fernando Valley as in inner city South Central (Law 1999, p. 11). In 1987, a *Los Angeles Times* article scrutinized the city's then six year-old bus shelter system, which during that period underwent several questionable processes. Among other problems, the shelter contract switched hands from Shelter Media to Gannett Transit without public process or official recourse on Shelter Media's outstanding debt to Los Angeles (Law 1999, p. 7). Along with problems of management, further research into the system exposed egregious differences between the placement of shelters and the apparent need for them, as measured in *person-minutes* of wait time (Law and Taylor, 2007, 80).¹⁴ The priorities outlined by the city and private decision making are focused on profit, leading to many parts of Los Angeles with high ridership and almost no bus shelter coverage (Sulaiman 2012). The distribution of shelters in Los Angeles remains visibly and statistically uneven today.

¹⁴ Person-minutes, which may also be expressed as person-years, are determined by multiplying the number of transit patrons waiting a shelter-less bus stop by the amount of time spent there (Law, 1999). Data were collected by joining MTA passenger surveys with maps and information on the whereabouts of shelters in the Los Angeles metropolitan area (Law, P and B. Taylor, 2007).

After withstanding a shaky start in its first decade, the contract-based shelter phenomenon is firmly rooted in Los Angeles. Any “concern for the financial stability” of this enterprise “no longer appears warranted,” although occurrences of graffiti and defacement of shelters, more common than in the suburbs, do hamper profitability to some degree (Law & Taylor 2007, p. 81). OSI, a company that managed Los Angeles’ shelters during an interim period following Shelter Advertisings’ abandonment of its contract with the city, was the focus of Law’s study. The operator of the Los Angeles contract for many years, OSI claimed that maintaining shelters in Los Angeles was riskier than in other cities where the company managed contracts due to this vandalism (Law 1999, p. 15). Still, OSI earned an estimated 7.7 million dollars from the Los Angeles contract in 1999. As compared to Burbank, Long Beach, and San Francisco—all cities in California—the shelter contract with the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) is also “less lucrative (from the city’s perspective)” (Law & Taylor 2007, p. 84).¹⁵ The nearly one million dollars a year in bus shelter advertising revenue that Los Angeles receives is still impressive, and the city is incentivized to improve this figure by allowing the shelter provider the freedom to install shelters in profitable areas.

Through comparisons with similar contracts in cities across the United States, Philip Law (1999) exposed shortcomings in the Los Angeles contract to provide the best benefit to the city and its citizens, in terms of equity (p. 15). Law denounced the inefficiencies of the shelter coverage in Los Angeles, specifically for its failure to provide shelters at the busiest bus stops in the city (p. 15). Using *person-years*—a combination of the number of people waiting and the duration of their wait—as the standard of measuring the time lost at MTA bus stops, Law calculates that bus patrons wait 7.6 *person-years* a day, or 4 million *person-minutes* (1). This

¹⁵ Parentheses in original text

figure is especially astounding because Law factored in the availability of schedules and low headways, most bus patrons wait no more than ten minutes before boarding (Law, P and B. Taylor, 2007, 83). The major factor leading to such high *person-minutes* of wait time is that only twenty percent of the time patrons spend at these stops occurs where there is a bus shelter, suggesting a potential shortage of shelters throughout the system. However, closer observation into the matter shows not so much a lack of shelters as misplacement relative to wait time. In fact, the twenty-six bus stops in Los Angeles which accrue the most daily *person-minutes* of wait time have no infrastructure beyond a sign and, in some cases, an uncovered bench (Law and Taylor, 2007, 80). Installations of new shelters in upscale neighborhoods (often with low transit ridership) were common during the management period of OSI and Shelter Media before it. As was the case in Lyon and appears to be the case in cities across the world with similar contracts, only riders in certain parts of Los Angeles benefit from the protection of a fortified shelter network.

The desire of private contractors to increase their profit comes into conflict with MTA's duty to provide its passengers with access to safe and comfortable transit. Law's map, "The 626 MTA bus stops in Los Angeles with the Highest Amounts of Use and No Bus Shelter," indicates major groupings of such stops in central, south, and east Los Angeles, as well as in the San Fernando Valley (Law 1999, p. 71). These spatially concentrated bus stops belong to only a few districts of Los Angeles; the majority (52.4 percent) of MTA boardings during the workweek occur in just four of fifteen city council districts (Law and Taylor, 2007, 82).¹⁶ This mismatch of bus shelters to transit boardings can be explained at two levels, either by examining the actions

¹⁶ The population in the city of Los Angeles is more or less evenly distributed among the fifteen districts. (Law, P and B. Taylor, 2007, 82, Table 2).

of the shelter provider or the rubric used by the city of Los Angeles to determine shelter placement.

Commentary from blog readers shows a concern for bus riders in south Los Angeles hiding behind poles and trees to stay cool (Sulaiman, 2012). This, alongside the Los Angeles media's chronicling the uneven distribution of shelters (Connell and Wood, 1987), as well as then City Controller Wendy Greuel's complaints about loss of revenue from mismanagement of shelters (Orlov, 2012) demonstrates a marked interest in bus shelters which is perhaps unique to Los Angeles. In most cities and among most scholarship in the United States, relatively little "attention has been devoted to the distribution of transit shelters" (Law and Taylor, 2007, p. 79). The special attention that bus shelter contracts receive in Los Angeles may be due in part to how clear it is that shelter distribution is not based on ridership, or it may be due to poor coverage and longer headways—two complaints which are common elsewhere in the country—being less of an issue for MTA riders. Regardless, the evidence is strong that "current shelter placement policy in Los Angeles... [is] guided principally by the revenue-generation potential of shelter advertisements," to the detriment of the city's transit patrons.

The contract that the city signed with Shelter Media included a formula which determined where in the city bus shelters were placed between the beginning of the contract in 1987 and its termination in 2001. The more points a shelter location received, the higher the priority the city and shelter company would place on its installation. Of the one hundred possible points, the formula allotted 26 points to "city considerations," 25 to "bus service considerations," and the near majority, at 49 points, to "transit shelter contractor's considerations" (Law, P and B. Taylor, 2007, p. 81). City considerations were generally political, including 15 points per Council District, and 6 more for overall District recommendation. The points which aligned with MTA

interests were based entirely on daily bus boardings, with all bus stops with 400 boarding or more a day given the maximum 25 points. The private entity's interests—subsumed within the 49 'contractor's considerations' points—were represented by an equation¹⁷ which calculated the profitability of each stop location.

Law identifies a host of problems with the state of bus shelter coverage in Los Angeles, many of which he associates with the contract and the formula embedded within it. As mentioned earlier, the city has deferred to the needs of the advertising companies, allowing them to renege on their contractual duties to place shelters within a time frame or pay a penalty. The formula the city uses heavily favors the private company, specifying essentially half of the points for this purpose. Even within the points the MTA's interests receive, the grouping by daily boardings is uneven. All bus stops with 400 or more boardings are relegated to a single category, when in fact many stops in Los Angeles accumulate more than 4,000 daily boardings (Law, P, 1999, p. 12). Therefore, just as much priority is given to a moderately busy bus stop as to the busiest stops in the city. With this system, the city and MTA's priorities were minimized, and one notices the results of this in the placement of the majority of shelters in areas with high advertising revenue productivity, but often with little relevance to where people are riding the bus.

In 2001, Los Angeles signed a twenty-year agreement with CBS/Decaux, a consortium consisting of one American and one French company, both of which are among the largest outdoor advertising corporations in the world (Bureau of Street Services, City of Los Angeles, 3). One of the changes with this new contract is the decommissioning of the old formula for shelter placement. Although the city is purportedly making “every attempt...to ensure that there is some parity in the distribution” of shelters, Los Angeles has eliminated the former equation in

¹⁷ Net annual advertising revenue = gross annual advertising revenue – (installation cost + maintenance cost). Law, P and B. Taylor, 2007, p. 81. Table 1. Original source: Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering.

order to “locate furniture in areas that are really in need [of] the facilities” (15). CBS/Decaux’s priorities are in many ways a reflection of those of the advertising companies which preceded them. Whereas the Los Angeles Bureau of Street Services touts the benefits to the public of its contract with CBS/Decaux, JCDecaux’s website describes how its “advertising faces are in the best locations,” including in “main upscale neighborhoods” and on campuses of the “largest universities” (JCDecaux North America. “Advertising in Los Angeles”). At this juncture, signs point to a continued situation of mismatch between bus stop boardings and shelter placement in Los Angeles.

Certain aspects of the CBS/Decaux contract do exhibit a change in approach of shelter provision for Los Angeles. The most obvious change is also the most significant; whereas the city previously entered into contracts with local companies, CBS Outdoors and JCDecaux are large, multi-national organizations with huge resources. Los Angeles is now fully a part of the bus shelter advertising contract scheme invented by Jean-Claude Decaux, and as such, a recipient of the benefits and burdens that accompany it. Street furniture in the city now includes not just shelters, but public toilets, kiosks, and information panels (JCDecaux North America, 2010). Through the expansion from a simple bus shelter contract, and the inclusion of many types of furniture, JCDecaux intends to increase its presence in the city.

The emphasis on providing a quality product with a unified visual appearance allows JCDecaux more visibility and bargaining power with potential advertising clients (Gaffney, 2007, 10). The city information panels, while often displaying a map on one side, serve primarily as a showcase for advertisements. These information panels, trademarked as MUPI¹⁸ and first implemented by JCDecaux in the 1970s, were a key component of JCDecaux’s processes of

18 MUPI is short for *meublier urbain pour l’information*, or street furniture for information.

entrenchment in the built and political landscape of Lyon and other French cities. Today, they are emblematic of similar processes occurring in Los Angeles. Through the change in contract operator, as well as changes in the urban landscape through installation of new forms of street furniture, Los Angeles' has marked its debut into the world of global advertising.

VI. New Orleans and BSACs

New Orleans' bus shelter situation differs from that of many cities previously mentioned, primarily due to the Crescent City's small size and less extensive economy compared to Paris, Los Angeles, Lyon, etc. Public transit in New Orleans, provided exclusively by the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority (RTA), comprises 32 bus routes and 3 streetcar routes, with an average weekday ridership total of 47,000 passengers (Nelson/Nygaard 2012). Still, New Orleans' history with shelters is extensive, dating back to at least the mid-20th century. The city's first transit shelters existed at the end of bus or streetcar lines. Several examples of such shelters remain in the city, as these first shelters were often composed of concrete, iron, and other durable materials. One may observe these shelters on City Park Avenue at near the end of the Canal streetcar line, at the intersection of Canal Boulevard and Robert E. Lee Boulevard, and on Magazine Street near the entrance to the Audubon Zoo (Mizell-Nelson, 2014).

In more recent decades, the city accumulated a few more shelters, although largely at a slow pace. In the decade of change that has followed Hurricane Katrina, there has been a rapid expansion of the number of bus and streetcar shelters in the city. This expansion mirrors others changes in the city, which has experienced an influx of new residents and capital since the 2005 disaster. The city signed a BSAC with Clear Channel in 2005; with this act the city appeared prepared to usher in the sort of unified, ubiquitous shelters common in larger cities across the country and world. A lawsuit from a local advertising firm—Marco Outdoor Advertising—failed in court in 2005, seemingly spelling the end of locally-run bus shelters in New Orleans (Marco vs. RTA, 2005).

Sometime after Katrina, the advertising contract changed hands from Clear Channel to Laurel Outdoor Advertising, Inc., a local advertising firm located in neighboring Metairie,

Louisiana. The result of this decision is that the New Orleans BSAC is once more locally controlled. This choice may have been due in part to the existence of a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise System in the city, which seeks to award government contracts to women and people of color (Office of Supplier Diversity). The Board of Directors, which tends to favor local community members in choosing to whom to grant a contract, may have also played a role (Isidore, 2014). Ultimately, regardless of the reasons behind the choice, the result is that New Orleans is not currently involved in the global system of BSACs.

I was not able to ascertain details of the BSAC contract in New Orleans, as the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority (RTA) did not provide the contract for public viewing.¹⁹ I did acquire a map of the placement of all bus shelters in New Orleans, as well as a certain amount of knowledge through interviewing a representative from the RTA. Both the map and the interview corroborate my observation that the stops with the most riders tend to also be the ones with bus shelters. This is likely due to a clause within the BSAC, mentioned in an interview by someone who works closely with the RTA, which states that all stops that have more than 50 boardings or alightings per day will receive a shelter (Marks). This system of determining shelter location, a far cry from the point system of Los Angeles, appears to provide for the equitable distribution of bus shelters in New Orleans.

In order to gain an understanding of the distribution of shelters in New Orleans beyond offhand observations and interviews with public officials, I analyzed data from the United States Census' five year American Community Survey (ACS). When combined with the RTA's list of the current locations of shelters, the ACS data—including estimates of the number of households with no access to a vehicle and the number of persons who commute by public transit—provide a

¹⁹ Given the short period of time during which research and composition of this thesis were carried out, I did not submit a FOIA Request for the shelter contract.

general view of how well New Orleans is served by its shelter system. The data I drew for both carless households and commute share data are broken down by Census tract. These data, while powerful due to their geographical preciseness, are estimates often accompanied by large margins of error.

The United States Census Bureau has segmented New Orleans, which is coterminous with Orleans Parish, into 177 Census tracts (United States Census Bureau. “American FactFinder”). Among New Orleans Census tracts, 71 (40.1%) contain no shelter within their area (Rose 2014). Image 1 (p. 40) displays the distribution of carless households throughout the city. Certain parts of New Orleans—including Central City, the French Quarter, the St. Roch and 7th Ward neighborhoods, and parts of Algiers and New Orleans East—have markedly low rates of personal vehicle ownership. Large percentages of residents of many of the same New Orleans neighborhoods also ride public transportation frequently (Image 2). Notable exceptions to correlation between Census tracts with low car ownership and those with high transit ridership exist in the French Quarter and the Faubourg Marigny. In the French Quarter, both car ownership and transit ridership are low, perhaps due to the walkability of the area. On the other hand, car ownership and transit patronage are both high in the Marigny neighborhood.

In order to determine if there are parts of the city where there is the greatest lack of access to the amenity of a bus shelter, I combined the map furnished by the RTA with a map of ACS transit commute share data (Image 2). From the ACS data, I determined the average (median) commute share in the city. On average, 9.3% of New Orleanians use the bus or streetcar to get to work (United States Census Bureau. “American FactFinder”). Doubling this figure, I created a threshold for Census tracts that are heavily dependent on transit. This allows for the visualization of patterns of shelter distribution in tandem with patterns of transit use.

	Contain shelter	(%)	Contain no shelter	(%)	Total
Transit dependent	29	(64.4)	16	(35.6)	45
Non-transit dependent	77	(58.3)	55	(41.7)	132
Total	106	(59.9)	71	(40.1)	177

Table 1: Comparison of transit dependence, shelter prevalence in New Orleans

Image 3 is a depiction of the Census tracts that meet the threshold for transit-dependency. These 45 tracts represent 25.4% of New Orleans' total of 177. Image 3 also highlights the sixteen (16) Census tracts that were above the threshold *and* contained no bus shelter. All told, these sixteen tracts account for nine percent (9%) of all tracts in the city, and 35.6% of tracts with notably high transit ridership (see Table 1). The rate of shelter-less Census tracts in areas where fewer residents depend on public transportation is considerably higher, at 41.7 percent. According to these figures, the parts of the city where people are most dependent on transit are generally the same areas that have better access to transit shelters.

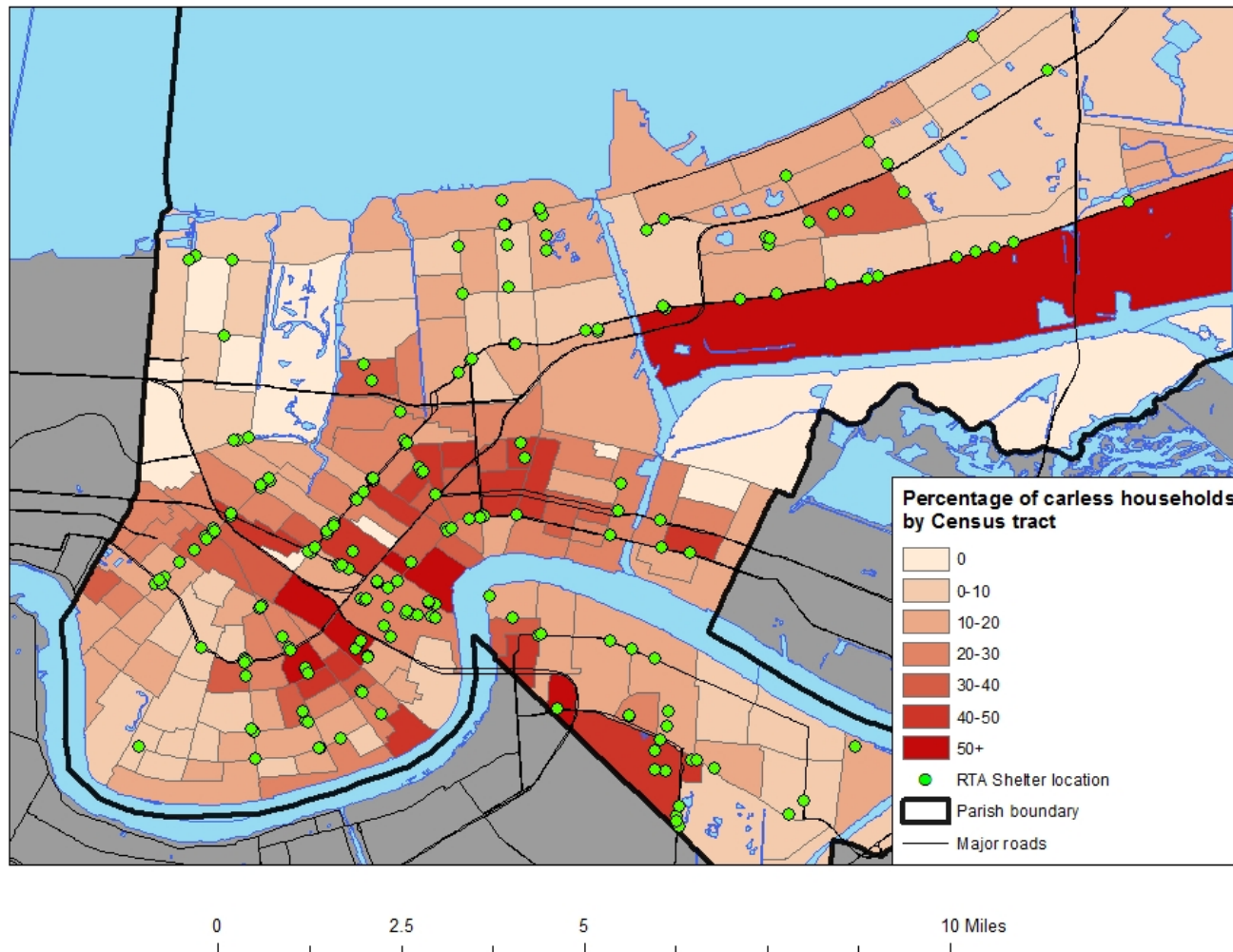


Image 1: Carless households in New Orleans, and distribution of bus shelters

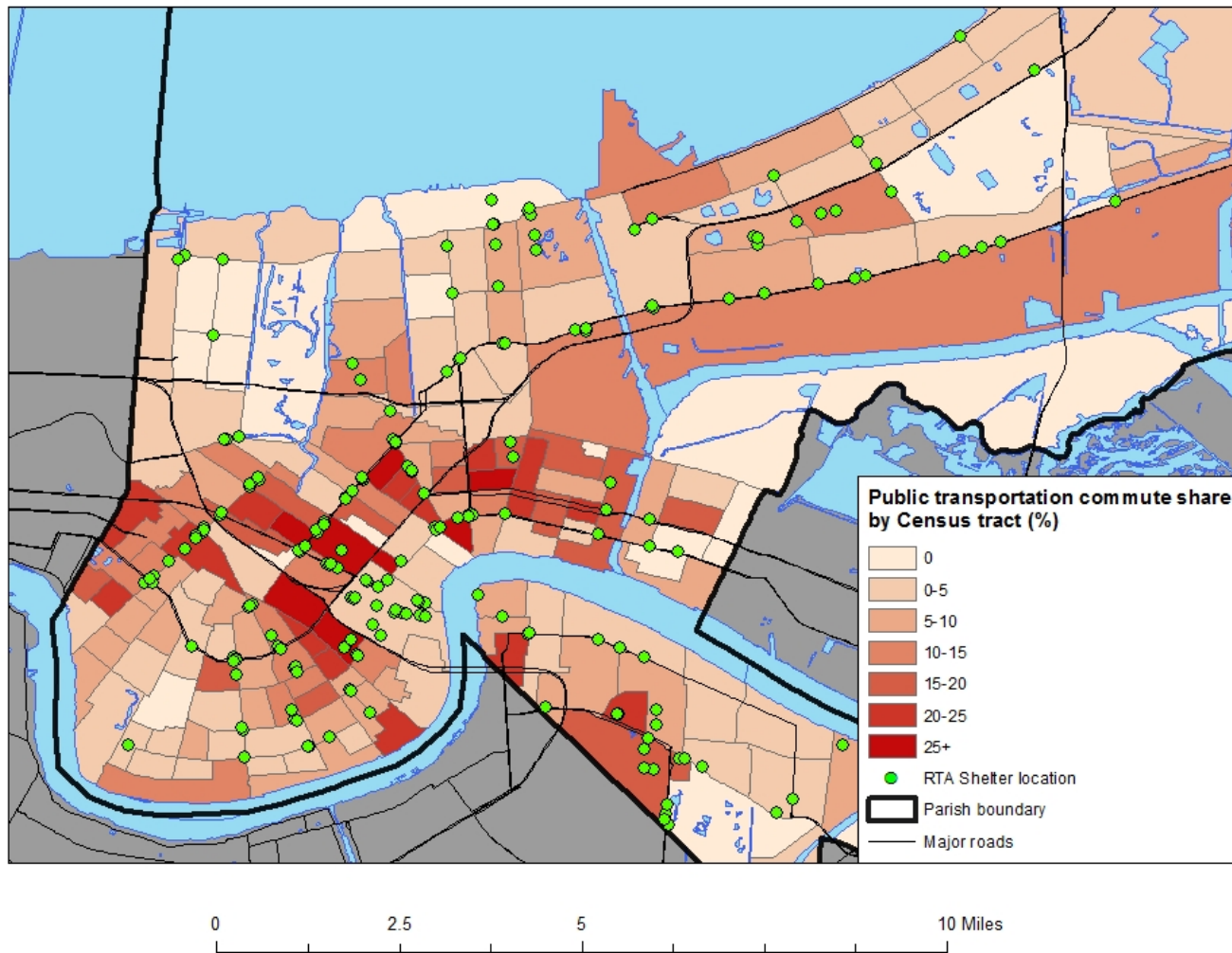


Image 2: Public transportation commute share, and distribution of bus shelters

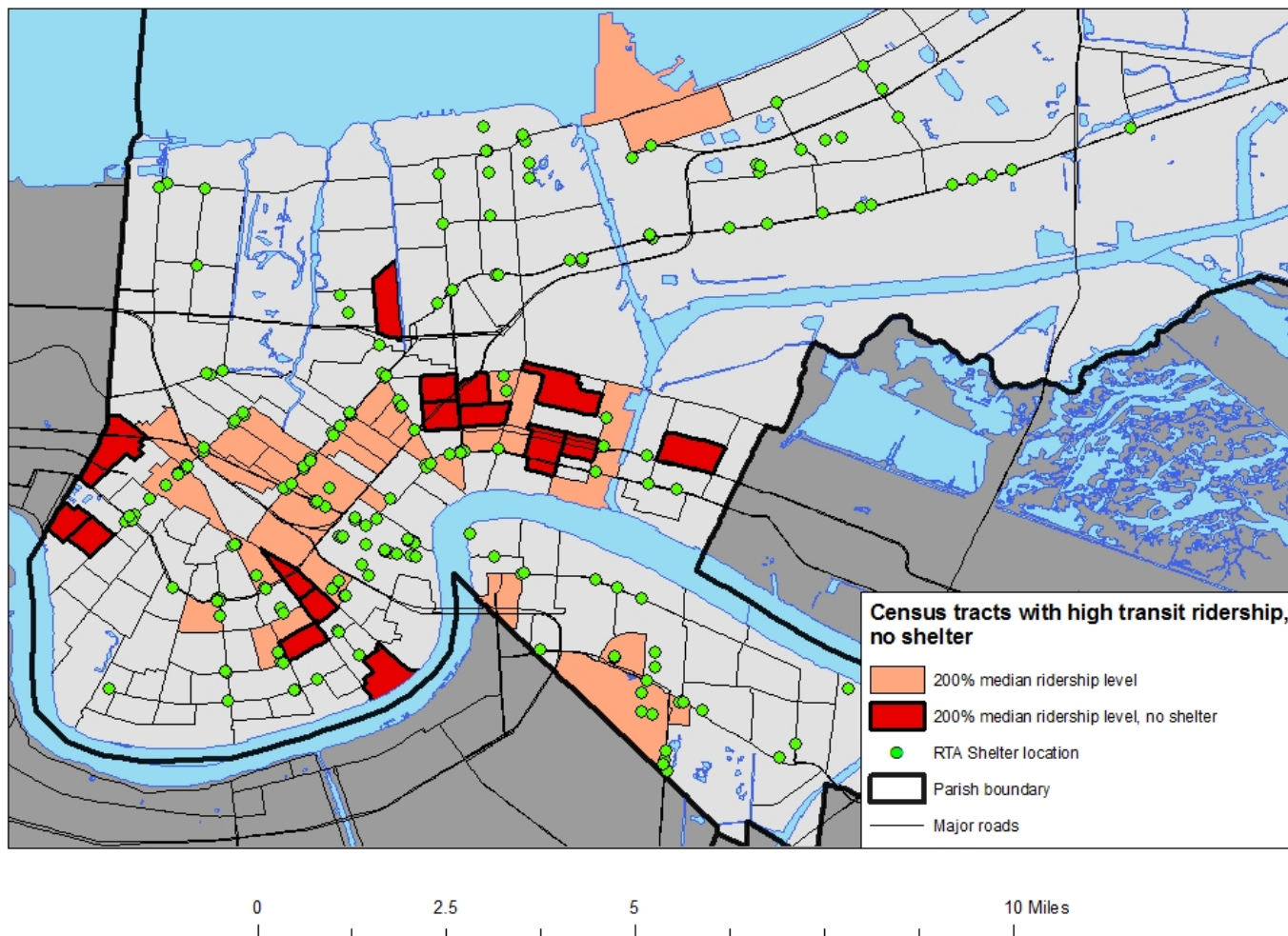


Image 3: Census tracts with high transit ridership, no shelter

VII. Discussion

To date New Orleans has avoided taking the path of many cities and joining in a global network of bus shelter advertising. It has been able to source its bus shelter contract locally, and has succeeded in providing shelters to many of its transit patrons, across many routes. As such, the city's story is one of success. Still, there are municipalities in the United States and abroad that have taken it upon themselves to provide even more benefit to their citizens through unique clauses in their shelter contracts. In many ways, the two other subjects of case studies in this thesis—Lyon and Los Angeles—act as examples of a city that has been able to provide benefits to transit users, and a city that has failed at this, respectively.

Lyon, trailblazer of the bus shelter contract, benefitted from the special status it had with JCDecaux. The communes where bus shelter advertising was not profitable were still able to welcome shelters due to JCDecaux's need to preserve its contract there. Of course, there is no way for another city to be the first contract holder in the way that Lyon is. Still, other cities can learn from Lyon's persistence in acquiring better service for its citizens. It was through repeated negotiations and re-negotiations over the decades that Lyon acquired the bus shelter and bike-share system it has today. The example of Lyon shows that, in order to establish equitable shelter distribution, city leaders must engage in "increasingly numerous interactions and the re-enforcement of relations of interdependence" between company and city, which over time allow the formation of a "public/private hybrid" system of mutual benefit (Huré 2012, p. 1).²⁰

In Los Angeles, as described above, the priority has been placing shelters where the profit from advertising is the greatest, rather than the benefit to transit patrons. In the United States,

²⁰ Translated from "des interactions de plus de plus nombreuses et le renforcement de relations d'interdépendance" and "hybride...publique/privée."

	Shelter provider	Scale of operations	Other street furniture included in contract?	Distribution of shelters
Lyon	JCDecaux	Global	Yes; wide range of street furniture, including MUPI, bike-share system	Originally uneven; provision of shelters in outer city accompanied by increase in non-shelter panels in center
Los Angeles	CBS/Decaux	Global	Yes	Uneven; contract favored placing shelters in profitable areas only
New Orleans	Laurel Outdoors	Local	No	Fairly even; shelter placed wherever boardings exceed 50 riders per day

Table 2: Comparison of BSACs in cities profiled in case studies

several cities maintain contracts with wording that leads to the direct benefit of bus riders. In Seattle and Minneapolis, the advertising contract does not allow installation of shelters at stops that see fewer than fifty or forty daily boardings, respectively.²¹ This rule assures that the least-used stops do not receive shelters, although these “minimum threshold[s]” are extremely low (Law, P and B. Taylor, 2007, 82). In Boston, any move by the private entity to add advertising displays must be accompanied by proof of the company’s “financial need” to install them (Law, P, 1999, p. 4). In Vancouver, advertising is banned entirely from residential areas. San Francisco, a city which has perhaps the most progressive advertising contract, requires one ‘art’ shelter for every for-profit shelters.²²

Even more unique, San Francisco entirely forgoes collecting its share of the profit, thereby “removing the [city’s] incentive to help maximize advertising revenue” (16). By

21 In these cities’ suburbs, the “minimum threshold” is reduced to 25. This may be due to higher profitability rates of advertising in these areas. It may also be due to a desire to spread the benefits of shelters to the suburbs as a means to get these cities on board a region-wide contract (this is pure conjecture). It is interesting to compare this situation to that of Lyon, whose outer communes had to fight many years before they got the (less profitable) shelter coverage they desired.

22 The Los Angeles contract requires one public-use shelter for every 100 for-profit shelters

choosing to not engage in the commercial side of the shelter contract, San Francisco—and also San Diego—deviate significantly from the for-profit model which first appeared fifty years ago in Lyon and has been the standard for bus shelter contracts ever since. San Francisco also bucks convention by requiring OSI, the contractor, to pay the city \$150,000 a year for shelter maintenance. Maintenance is part of the duties of the private company within most contracts. This alternative form of contract has greatly benefited San Francisco, and New Orleans would do well to emulate several of its northern neighbor's innovations.

There are multiple approaches municipalities can take to obtain a quality bus shelter advertising contract. These approaches will vary based on circumstances unique to each city. Cities that exist at nodes of global power are likely to be wooed by large companies such as JCDecaux and Clear Channel. In most cases, the greatest benefits of having contractors with extensive reach is their ability to provide a wide range of furniture to client cities, as well as the most up to date technology. There are trade-offs associated with contracts with multi-national corporations, including frequently uneven distribution of shelters, and an inflexibility on the part of the company to change the contract to suit needs unique to a specific city. The cities that in the past have dealt with these problems have done so through keeping a constant dialogue with companies over how the contract can be rearranged to the benefit of both the city and the shelter provider.

Less globalized cities, which tend to maintain shelter contracts with small-scale providers, have a different set of advantages and disadvantages. The primary benefit of these types of arrangements is the city's leveraging power vis-à-vis the shelter provider. A more even dynamic of power means more room for direct, equitable negotiations. As was the case with JCDecaux—whose success is closely tied to its original contract with Lyon—a company and city

can grow together to the mutual benefit of both parties. A successful public-private relationship occurs where the public interest is “discovered discursively through the participatory process” (Campbell 2002, p. 181). The solution to tensions between the two parties’ priorities may not show itself immediately, but rather be achieved through years of partnership between a city and a company.

VIII. Conclusion

In seeking to better understand the global nature of the bus shelter advertising contract, we have explored the details of shelters and outdoor advertising, as well as a history of shelter contracts couched within greater economic and societal trends. Keeping in mind the complex nature of street furniture and advertising, we surveyed three cities in order to distinguish the state of bus shelter advertising on the ground today. Following these case studies came a comparison of different approaches that cities take, and a discussion of means public figures can take to ensure that the wording of their shelter contracts leads to a provision of the most extensive and equitable service.

Bus shelters, unique in their sudden appearance and proliferation beginning around the mid-20th century, are controlled through a public-private mechanism which is the norm in many large cities today. Municipal governments, while attempting to deliver the best transit service to citizens, may inadvertently give away public space to be used by an advertising agency, whose primary desire is to profit from this public space. The results of these private-public deals have been mixed, but the example of New Orleans shows that cities and city officials do have the power to use bus shelter advertising contracts to the benefit of bus riders and the public as a whole.

As a handful of companies continue to make inroads into more and more parts of the world via shelter contracts, transit officials and advocates would do well to arm themselves with a more complete understanding of the global processes which affect their cities. Shelter providers like Clear Channel and JCDecaux are today expanding their services to include a wide array of street furniture, as well as currently fashionable bike-share systems. While encouraging public officials to allow their cities to benefit from these services, I caution them to be aware of the gray

area of public/private interactions, and use whatever the tools available to make these public services available to all members of society.

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