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Title of the work: The influence of (de)centralized politics on transport governance – the cases of the public transport reforms in Santiago de Chile and Bogotá

Overall project: Risk Habitat Megacity

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In almost every Latin-American mega-city the environmental situation worsened dramatically and congestion level rose by reason of the increasing use of private cars due to the positive economic development and rising incomes. This development has a negative impact to the public transport rate which decreased in most of the Latin-American mega-cities in the last years. Against this background it appears as a big challenge to preserve the current rate of public transport which is in comparison to Europe still high though. To reach this aim many cities in Latin-America are modernizing their public transport supply – among others the most ambitious projects are Transantiago in Santiago de Chile and Transmilenio in Bogotá (Colombia). Both projects base on a Bus-Rapid-Transit-System (BRT) and have an extensive reorganisation of the entrepreneurial structure and the financial system in common. However the implementation strategies of both projects differ and appearing problems point out to problematic governance strategies and inappropriate power constellations. But why do these problems appear? Which role plays the general political background (e.g. the decentralization level) to the appearing difficulties? What could be learned out of these examples?

For a deeper understanding of the process of the public transport reformations and their problems I analyze the two cases by using the theoretical approach of governance. In the academic world it is used as a normative as well as an analytical concept, but I do focus on the analytical understanding of governance. To understand what really happens in both case studies I analyze the three dimensions of general influences, institutions and actions. In the case of public transport policy making in the Latin-American context these dimensions are better comprehensible with a deeper knowledge of the status quo of the decentralization process which serves a key element. This investigation is based on two sources: first I use the discussions in the media and academic articles in order to interpret the current discourses and thinking about (public) transport. And second I gain informations out of guided expert interviews. For the investigation in Santiago I use also a widespread investigation about the failures of Transantiago as a third source of data.

The first results show that Transantiago is implemented by the national transport ministry without any participation of local actors like the municipalities or the civil society. The concept of this reform was to design an efficient market for the private bus companies. Whereas in Bogotá Transmilenio is implemented by the local city authority without any direct influence of national ministries but in a cooperation of public and private actors. And the idea of the alteration was to accelerate the public transport. It is noticeable that the different levels of decentralization have an effect on the governance pattern of the public transport politics and that this is probably one reason of the manifold problems.