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Title of the work: Private Urban Development and Public Participation.

The Governance of Large Scale Infrastructure Projects in Santiago de Chile

Overall project: Risk Habitat Megacity

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Today in megacities around the world, especially in developing countries in Latin America and Asia and here on the urban fringes, large scale infrastructure projects as toll roads, special business districts and huge residential enclaves are changing the physical and socio-spatial geographies of the respective city regions in important ways. Furthermore, these projects and the modes of governance by which they are implemented represent a new way of city-building that is primarily based on the initiative, interests and capital of the private sector. In the face of ongoing processes of decentralisation and often high degrees of political fragmentation for many authors it seems that the responsibility for visioning the future of cities in the developing world to a considerable degree is now transferred from public to private actors.

In my PhD-project I address the issue of privately led city building by analyzing the governance of selected large scale projects on the urban fringe in Santiago. Chile's capital city is an interesting case not only for the impressive dimension of the ongoing peri-urban restructuring process but also for its historical reliance on market-led urban policies (e.g. in the fields of housing, water and transport) which by many experts and practitioners in the region is seen as role model for the effective (private) provision of (former public) goods. The emerging large scale projects on the urban fringe are equally legitimized by being based on innovative forms of public-private interplay since the real estate developers (in the name of public interest) are bound to several conditions (in-kind exactions) and are made to pay for negative externalities of their projects (impact fees) what is unique in Latin America.

My hypothesis, however, is that the implementation of large scale projects in Santiago is based on a systematic exclusion of most social groups from decision making on various levels and thus is highly oriented towards the specific interests of private sector actors. Together with the oppression of any public debate about the vision of the city region's future, the new way of public-private city building on the urban fringe is contradicting the government's policy of steering participative governance and instead leading to a crisis of (local) democratic institutions.

The central questions of my investigation are: How and by whom are the large scale projects in Santiago planned, negotiated and realized? What are the political and economic interests, strategies and rationalities of the involved public and private actors? What are the (political, economic or social) mechanisms of inclusion in and exclusion of decision-making-processes? By which institutions and discourses is the new form of city building in general and its mostly exclusionary character more specifically legitimized? What is the reaction of the excluded groups?

The paper will present the objectives and the general design of my research project as well as first results of extensive field work. This essentially is based on qualitative methods as problem-centred interviews with academic experts, public officials, planners, private real estate developers and civil society groups. Additionally, in order to understand the legitimating discourses I analyze public documents and local media. In order to grasp the spatial dimensions of the peri-urban restructuring and its underlying governance processes I furthermore use a Geographical Information System combining data on certain aspects of large scale projects (location, size, investment volume, responsible developers, etc.) and characteristics of the hosting municipalities (financial resources, local land use plans, etc.).