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Book review

Verkehrsgovernance in Megastädten – Die ÖPNV Reformen in Santiago de Chile und Bogotá (Transport Governance in Megacities – Public Transport Reforms in Santiago de Chile and Bogotá), C. Höhnke. Fritz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart (2012). €44.00 (Paperback), ISBN: 978-3-515-10251-3

Motorization is a challenge to all cities, especially rapidly growing megacities in developing or emerging countries. In this context, Latin American cities have been forerunners in reforming informal or uncoordinated public transport through developing public transport systems that take away pressure from congested roads and enable safer, more reliable and comfortable public transport. Many cities have developed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems that allow more reliable and fast public transport systems without the high cost of a subway system. Such reforms are, however, difficult to initiate and implement. Caroline Höhnke in her Ph.D. thesis looks at two examples (Bogotá and Santiago de Chile) of such reform processes and gives details about the way the two systems emerged and were implemented. Based on an in-depth analysis of the case studies, she identifies different implementation problems and concludes lessons learnt for public transport reforms in megacities. The book is written in German and contains an abstract in English.

The two cases contrast a successful example (Transmilenio in Bogotá) with a less successful case (Transsantiago in Santiago de Chile) where major organizational problems and objections of the users occurred. The background and the decision-making processes of both cases are described in detail based on literature analysis and a number of expert interviews. The book is focused on governance structures and processes in multi-level decision-making systems, where national and municipal governments interact to establish new policies in the transport sector. It describes that during the decision-making process for the two public transport systems existing governance processes were changed (rescaled). While in Santiago, decision-making became more complex through involving both national and local decision-makers, in Bogotá an already decentralized decision-making system was strengthened through the success of the policy. The author argues that decentralized decision-making systems in which various local stakeholders participate may be more capable of establishing transport systems that serve the needs of the people.

The book is structured systematically: It starts by putting the topic of transport policy into context and describing the challenges and objectives of the research. In chapter two, the term governance and the way it helps to structure the analysis of policy-making is presented. This includes a discussion of multi-level governance and the concept of decentralization, both of which are related to transport policy-making in cities. Although a geographical work, this part touches on many terms used in political science and especially points out the multi-level nature of decision-making in the transport sector. The third chapter describes how the governance concept can guide empirical research. It concludes with a framework for analyzing governance processes in public transport including four categories: Meta-governance, the institutional framework, actors and the policy process. After a short description of the empirical approach of using expert interviews, the two case-studies are described in separate chapters. These are the main parts of the book and both chapters are structured in the same way referring to the analytical framework. The final chapter is a comparative analysis of the two cases describing the particularities, the different multi-level arrangements and governance factors that may hinder or support the success of implementation; it concludes with recommendations for other cities and identifies further research needs.

The study focuses on the important topic of initiating and implementing public transport reform. The fact that there is high public awareness for public transport, limited road-space for competing modes and a strong interest from various stakeholders makes this issue a complex topic that will always cause strong debates and face several barriers. So far, there is no golden rule for successful reforms and many politicians are hesitant to touch this sensitive area. In this sense, the book discusses an important area that focuses on the "how to" rather than the "what" of building up public transport. While there are many guidelines and good-practice case studies of what systems should be implemented, there is limited literature on the important question of barriers and opportunities in local decision-making. While the approach of expert interviews and using in depth case studies describes many details of the selected cases, the author struggles to generalize conclusions. The focus on just two cases does not allow for explanation of universal barriers and opportunities. Hence, many conclusions remain limited to the specific cases and are difficult to generalize.

To conclude, the study is a substantial source of information for background information on decision-making on local transport policy. It helps to understand why difficulties occurred in Santiago de Chile whereas Bogotá became a successful case. Höhnke's explanation goes beyond the often-cited statement that the leadership of Enrique Peñalosa – the mayor of Bogotá – enabled the implementation of Transmilenio. Instead the author underlines the beneficial institutional setting of decentralization in Colombia (and its absence in Chile) – this is a valuable contribution to the literature about bus rapid transit systems in Latin America. However, in large parts the book describes the processes of the two cases separately and to some extent, the author fails to present substantial conclusions from the comparative analysis. This may be due to the fact, that the selected examples are far too different in most of their dimensions. To better understand success and failure, it may have been helpful to select two cases with more similarities e.g. with two similarly charismatic leaders or under similar institutional contexts. This may have allowed to come to a more detailed

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understanding of barriers and success factors. Lastly, the concept of "governance" helps to structure the description, but it does not give much theoretical foundation to explain success and failure. Additional theoretical underpinnings, such as from game theory may have helped to contribute to a deeper understanding of transport governance.

Daniel Bongardt
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH,
Sunflower Tower 860,
37 Maizidian Street, Chaoyang District,
100125 Beijing, PR China
E-mail address: daniel.bongardt@giz.de