

Open Call for Participants to the Symposium

Knowledge Production in Public Transport – Normativities. Actors. Outcomes.

Tbilisi, Georgia, 18 – 21 March 2023

The Leibniz research group “CoMoDe – Contentious Mobilities: Rethinking Mobility Transitions through a Decolonial Lens” at the Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography welcomes participants to the interdisciplinary symposium “Knowledge production in Public Transport. Normativities. Actors. Outcomes”, which will take place from 18 to 21 March 2023 in Georgia’s capital Tbilisi.

Background of the call

In the face of climate crises and in the name of achieving climate goals, sustainable transformation of urban public transport systems is increasingly seen as one of policy and developmental priorities, to reduce dependency on car-based mobility and fossil fuels. Urban and national governments, transnational developmental and financial institutions, and transnational consultancy companies promote and enact transformative changes in the sector.

Cities in formerly Soviet states, many of which experienced unprecedented rupture and decay of public transport infrastructures throughout the first two decades since the collapse of the Union, are now reinvesting and reforming urban public transport systems. Yet not only material infrastructures, financial investments and public regulations that experienced ruptures and transformative changes, but also transport-related knowledge production systems.

While reforming urban transport: what happens to the knowledge inherited from Soviet planning practices? What happens to knowledge accumulated by private and often informally operating actors (e.g stakeholders of the marshrutka sector)? What new knowledge and expertise is mobilised while planning and implementing reforms? Which actors manage to articulate their concerns and interests, and which actors are silenced? Which broader imaginaries and desires about development and modernisation shape urban public transport reforms?

Scope of the symposium

This symposium is dedicated to understanding knowledge production in public transport, primarily in formerly Soviet cities and beyond. It focuses on three interrelated topics:

First, it focuses on normative visions surrounding public transport reforms. Which kinds of socio-economic orders are promoted as desired developmental paths while reforming public transport? How are socialist and capitalist modernities narrated in relation or through reforming public transport? How are sustainability, social, spatial and mobility justice defined, how such definitions and developmental imaginaries travel?

Second, it focuses on actors that produce knowledge about public transport, ranging from state officials, manufacturers, consultancies, developmental organisations and investors to users, service providers, transport workers, civil society actors and transport enthusiasts. How do actors accumulate transport-related knowledge and how do they manage or fail to influence transport-related policy making?

Finally, the symposium looks into the outcomes of specific constellations of knowledge production. How do various knowledges re-shape policies, material infrastructures, and what kind of socio-spatial consequences do they carry for urban dwellers?

The workshop will take the form of a four-days meeting with a schedule highly shaped by the academic, artistic and practice-oriented input of its participants, and will furthermore include keynote lectures, public debates, and excursions to major and contentious public transport sites in Tbilisi.

Your application

We invite participants irrespective of disciplines and affiliations – scholars, practitioners, transport activists, enthusiasts or artists – to submit paper abstracts or proposals for presentations, round tables, workshops, walks, screenings, exhibitions. and other interventions related to one or more key topics raised by the symposium: normativities, actors and outcomes.

Please send your application incl. a statement of motivation, a brief bio and abstract/ project description (250 words) as a single pdf document via e-mail with the keyword:

CoMoDe Tbilisi to: l_pozharliev@leibniz-ifl.de

Deadline: **31 January 2023**

Accepted participants will be notified within 15 days after this deadline. Partial or full financial support for accommodation and travelling is available to selected participants. Please indicate if you would like to receive such support, including a preliminary calculation. Please check the availability of institutional funding options first. This will allow us to dedicate travel budgets to participants who would not be able to attend otherwise.

By submitting the application, you consent to the processing of your personal data for the purpose of the application procedure.

Contact: Dr Lyubomir Pozharliev (+49 341 600 55-160, l_pozharliev@leibniz-ifl.de)

Further information

The IfL conducts basic research on the regional geography of Germany and Europe and communicates its research findings to a wider public. Under the heading “Geographies of the Regional”, the institute develops perspectives on socio-spatial developments in a globalised society that is increasingly characterised by differences, diversity and complexity.

The CoMoDe project brings a novel lens to mobility transitions literature by combining critical mobilities research and post-Soviet decolonial thinking. CoMoDe opens up new pathways for devising policy instruments able to contribute to environmentally viable and socially inclusive mobility futures. The project conceptualises mobility transitions beyond technocratic fixes, and adopts a perspective sensitive to epistemic perceptions and power constellations, still unexplored in human geography and mobility studies.

More details at <https://comode.leibniz-ifl-projekte.de>