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Local responses to the unified metropolitan transport authority in Kochi, India:

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2019

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/31511

Reeves, Sarah Elizabeth, 2019. Local responses to the proposed Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority in Kochi, India :Subversion, Adaptation and street-level bureaucrats, University of the Witwatersrand, https://hdl.handle.net/10539/31511

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Abstract

This research interrogates the meaning, genealogy and local interpretations of the proposed Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority in Kochi, India. The methodological approach is key in exploring the complex environment in which this policy is situated. The centrality of relationships and narratives in this research meant that rich interactions with local actors and an evaluation of my own positionality as an 'outsider' guided the research process. Three core thematic areas revealed three distinct findings. The first is that policy genealogy at the local level is produced both through its history and through dynamic alliances between stakeholders of varying power. The perception of power in choosing to form policy networks alters the meaning of the policy in discourse and as a document. The second finding is that ideas travel from international 'spaces' to local 'places' through global, hegemonic circuits. Ideas from the Global North are easily able to land in the Global South and in turn shape the perceptions and decisions of local actors in Kochi. The third finding is that there are discrepancies between the rhetoric of policy in the form of meta-narratives and the way policy is enacted in practice. Stakeholders agree on the underlying promises that allow UMTA to gain traction but the agency and discretion of individuals means that policy practice is highly diverse. This process reveals contestations and negotiations for power at the local scale promulgating in changing forms of governance in Kochi. It can be stated that something unique is happening in Kochi which is illustrated in its dynamic policy landscape.