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Complex Dynamics of Informal Settlement Development



Settlement development mirrors the dynamics of migration and expansion in the megacities at the best. Research areas are the forms, mechanisms, actors, and governance methods of informal urban growth, including informal construction activities of different actors, informality of

control, and the multi-layered bargaining processes between institutions and individuals as well as the future of informal and semi-formal housing production in the context of socio-spatial fragmentation.

Of particular importance are peri-urban areas and sparsely built-up sectors between central infrastructure lines, since they are places of intense functional changes, such as from agricultural to industrial production places for urban markets to leisure facilities and landscaping for globalised middle classes. Moreover, suburbia transforms to secondary residence areas with different forms of informal and semi-formal housing and settlements.

Megaurban Areas of Investigation



In view of the highly complex process dynamics of the megacities, a largest possible bundling of two mega-urban investigation areas for the research programme is necessary in order to allow intensive interaction and coordination between

the projects and to obtain added value.

The two megaurban areas of Pearl River Delta/China and Dhaka/Bangladesh were selected based on contrasting categories: "centralistic" (in part with limited informality) and "decentralised" (with a pronounced degree of informality).



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Megacities – Megachallenge

Informal Dynamics
of Global Change

DFG

Megacities: Worldwide Urbanisation and Informal Processes

Megacities are results of globalisation processes and subject to global ecological, socio-economic, and political change. Reciprocally, they also dictate these changes due to their strong development dynamics. Increasingly, megacities are subject to an up to now unknown loss of governability and controllability – with the consequence that more and more processes are unregulated and take place informally or illegally. This informality is hardly investigated with respect to form, function, and interaction.

Against this background, the priority programme of the DFG is aiming at a systematic investigation of the increasingly important connexion between highly complex and informally running megaurban processes and the form and effect of global change upon the reorganisation of spatial, social, and institutional relationships in the megacities. The processes and interactions of four issues with very high development dynamics and social relevance form the main focus of the programme.



Loss of Governability, New Governance Forms and Self-Organisation

It should be identified, how standards, regulations, methods, and instruments of different actors, at least partly with global claims, affect megacities. Moreover, it will be investigated how intense techniques of control and institutions with exogenous origin are connected with local and traditional regulation processes and superimpose or contribute to new government forms and self-organisation. This is taking into account the simultaneousness, interaction, and parallelism of standards and institutional systems, in particular informal ones.

It will be clarified, to what extent state and administration or informal processes play an important role towards more participation or more exclusion. The impacts of different degrees of informality and parallel standard systems upon the degree of certainty for future developments, information flow, network formation, and the legitimacy of those involved in the decision making process and organisations need to be verified.



Dominance and Differentiation of Urban Economies

As urban economies are becoming more dominant within national economies, the structure of the megaurban informal sectors will be investigated. The balance between informal and formal institutions is relevant in questions as to whether informal institutions (contact and cooperation networks, informal sanction modalities, complex social capital) minimise risks and lower transaction costs and hereby reduce the deficits of formal institutions (trade regulations, standardised procedures, etc.) in megacities, thus contributing to the efficiency of the economic systems.

The future possibilities of the informal economies under the influence of global manufacturing and services in relation to formalised economic cycles need to be analysed. Functionality, persistence, uncoupling, and survivability of megaurban sub-areas as well as socio-ethnic diversity play a decisive role.

Complexity and Dynamics of Matter and Resource Flow

The main focus here is deliberately directed at highly dynamic and relevant, particular informal processes for the functioning of megacities, i.e. processes and consequences of air and water dynamics, capital and information, energy, traffic and migration flows. The paths of matter and resources from their sources to their sinks and sub-systems involved will be identified and analysed in order to obtain a deepened understanding of new processes, including non-linear reactions of sub-systems and “social deterrents”.

