

## EDITORIAL

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### Megacities in Asia

This year, in 2007, according to the United Nations, more than half of the world's population live in cities – an increase from 30% in 1950 to 47% in 2000 – and the increase will probably reach 60% in 2030. Particularly in developing countries of Asia and Africa urbanization is proceeding rapidly. Megacities, i.e. cities with more than 5 million inhabitants, are most significant in this world-wide process of urbanisation. Almost 60 of them, with together more than 600 million people, are expected to exist by 2015. They are characterized by new scales, new dynamics, new complexities, i.e. the largest population figures and densities and highest development dynamics, as well as intense and complex interaction of different demographic, social, political, economic and ecological processes. Moreover, highly dynamic processes take place simultaneously, thereby often reinforcing themselves. In economically booming megacities, strong opportunities exist as well as strong pressures for change. What does the situation look like in Asia? What are the predominant challenges and chances for mega-urban developments, and to what extent are development paths different in the various megacities? This issue of *ASIEN* intends to take a closer look at selected mega-urban questions and case studies, by addressing important topics of recent development dynamics of this globally relevant issue.

This special issue of *ASIEN* on megacities in Asia is connected to different research initiatives launched since 2004, such as the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) programme "Research for the Sustainable Development of the Megacities of Tomorrow" (2004-2015) and the Priority Programme of the German Research Council (DFG) on "Megacities – Megachallenge: Informal Dynamics of Global Change" (2006-2012), both with projects focussing on Asian megacities. Moreover, it is connecting with the International Human Dimensions Programme (IHDP) Core Project on "Urbanization and Global Environmental Change" and with one of the key topics "Megacities – our global urban future" of the International Year of Planet Earth (UNESCO).

At first, a general overview of major trends and global considerations aims at summarizing important processes and challenges worldwide and in mega-urban areas of East, Southeast and South Asia (contribution of Frauke Kraas). It points out the double-headed face of mega-urbanisation and tries to emphasize the importance

of looking at megacities not only as victims of risks and as areas burdened by disadvantages and problems, but rather as – at least potential – regions for chances and advantages.

In regard to the situation of rapid mega-urban development in China, Qi Changqing, Volker Kreibich and Sabine Baumgart in their research contribution focus on the problems of informal elements in urban growth regulation in Ningbo/China, that arise from the massive influx of rural migrants into the emerging megacities. Due to the strict hukou-system, the urban population is polarised – into citizens with rights to public services within the cities and de jure rural migrants residing in urban areas, mainly in so-called urban villages, but without access to proper services. The contribution points out the problem of uncoordinated, partly contradicting political aims and administrative regulations on different scales and elaborates on the subsequent socio-economic characteristics of migrants and their position in the urban housing market. The article thereby opens the view for a more critical perspective on China's high pace of urbanisation.

Another critical assessment is undertaken by Christoph Dittrich for the case of the "Electronics Capital of India" Bangalore, which has grown into a globally integrated location of software development in recent years and thereby has produced a global localisation of modern service industries, which have substantially altered the social fabric of this Indian megacity: Growing disparities, fragmentation and polarisation have created a so-called multiply divided city in which various barrier functions are reinforcing and reinforced between people from different socio-economic groups.

For Southeast Asia, the case study of Ho Chi-Minh City/Vietnam, illustrates the importance of low-income groups for the success of transitional mega-urban development. Michael Waibel, Ronald Eckert, Michael Bose and Volker Martin elaborate on new, interdisciplinary approaches on the provision of housing for low-income people, particularly since the introduction of new so-called "land use rights", which are deemed important for a competitive and socially responsible concept of transition from state- to market-economy. Among the new strategies are those of flexible development, compact city, socially mixed neighbourhoods and sustainable architecture, at the same time highlighting the importance of both strong administration and local participation.

All contributions show the necessity of international, interdisciplinary collaboration in addressing complex research questions of mega-urban development dynamics as well as prove the imperative to include and connect major stakeholders, ranging from local governments, private enterprises, non-governmental organizations to the civil societies, in order to understand and analyse current developments and in order to achieve good practices for a more sustainable performance of mega-urban governance.