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## The Social Challenges of Global Change

IHDP Secretariat | Hermann-Ehlers-Str. 10 | D-53113 Bonn | P +49 (0)228 815 0600 | F +49 (0)228 815 0620  
www.openmeeting2009.org | openmeeting@ihdp.unu.edu

Time: Monday 27 April, 14:00 - 15:30. Session: A070

## Emerging New Vulnerabilities in Megacities and Implications for Human Security

Location: TNT, Süßmuth Room

Convenor: Hans- Georg Bohle, Department of Geography, University of Bonn, Bonn, Germany

The focus of the session is on emerging new vulnerabilities in urban spaces that are triggered by global change, and on the challenges for human security and adaptation associated with these processes. With the rapid urban growth and the creation of “megacities” new challenges emerge including provision of essential services and security for urban populations. Natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, heat waves or fires put immediate large-scale stress on the human security and resilience of urban populations. Such abrupt, widely publicized emergencies require specific adaptation capacities for human security. At the same time adaptive capacity is constantly changing with the slow and largely silent processes of urban transformations, including resettlement policies, food system changes, commoditisation of urban services and privatisation. Migrations, for example, caused by environmental impacts or social transformations, have considerable impacts on human security in urban spaces as they put high pressure on the adaptability and resilience of urban systems. The effects of environmental stressors may, thus open and suddenly reveal differential vulnerabilities and the limits of adaptation. This session aims at discussing the new urban vulnerabilities created under global change and what this means for human security.

## The Rise of the 21st Century Megacity, Why It Matters, and What Could Be Done

Presenter: Peter Liotta, Pell Center for International Relations, United States

Authors: P. H. Liotta (1)

*Pell Center, Newport, Rhode Island, United States (1)*

Unchecked urban growth in critical regions of the developing world has created problems the world cannot afford to ignore. Serious security problems are emerging in newly formed and under-governed megacities. By 2015, there will be 58 cities globally with populations in excess of five million inhabitants-with most of these massive urban centers in Africa and Asia. Some-Lagos, Cairo, Dhaka, Karachi, Mumbai, and Jakarta, for example-are defined as “megacities”(with populations of at least ten million) and are already bursting at their figurative seams. These and other cities, nonetheless, are projected to grow dramatically in the upcoming decades.



Urbanization in and of itself is neither a good nor bad thing. Yet in some situations urbanization creates more stress than many governments can handle. It is unlikely, for example, that Dhaka, Bangladesh-which has grown from 400,000 inhabitants in 1950 to 12 million in 2000, and is projected to top 22 million by 2015- will be able to sustain such growth rates without significant impacts on the safety and security of its population. Municipal and national governments of these megacities each face similar challenges in governing and providing services to their urban populations. The most effective strategies will re-target assistance and foreign aid to improve and sustain municipal governance and build capacity for essential services.

## Coming To Terms With “Nature”: Theoretical Considerations For A Political Ecology Of Megaurban Livelihood Crises

Presenter: Anna Zimmer, University of Bonn, Germany

Authors: Anna Zimmer (1)

*University of Bonn, Bonn, Germany (1)*

Impacts of Global Change on megaurban livelihood crises are often linked to environmental degradation. Obtaining enhanced understanding of and finding solutions to these crises thus implies to come to terms with the urban environment, and the idea of “Nature” within the city. The objective of the paper is to propose a way of doing so through a political ecological perspective on the concept of hybrids (Latour 1993).

Megacities not only appear as the ultimate opposite of rural space, they also figure as the most visible counterpart to “Nature” - a space so definitely transformed by human agency that anything “natural” is considered impossible to be found. From this perspective, a degraded environment threatening megaurban livelihoods appears as external to the socially constructed city.

This dichotomy between “Society” and “Nature” is questioned by the concept of hybrids (Latour 1993). According to it, the megaurban “Nature”, in fact the megacity itself, are viewed as “socio-nature” (Swyngedouw 2004), and produced through discourses and practices. Hybrids become politically meaningful as the concept looks into the societal dynamics and processes that are fusing in the unintended outcome of ecological degradation. This allows to apply the concept with the help of analytical tools offered by Political Ecology.

New understandings of “Nature” are essential to effectively deal with environmental challenges urban populations face today. As the vantage point of hybridity is believed to offer these necessary insights, the paper proposes a research agenda that integrates the concept into existing livelihood research.

## Street Food Vending and Structural Violence: Challenges to Megaurban Livelihoods in Dhaka / Bangladesh

Presenter: Benjamin Etzold, University of Bonn, Germany

Authors: Benjamin Etzold (1)

*University of Bonn, Bonn, Germany (1)*

Selling street food in rapidly growing cities of developing countries [urbanisation; demographic challenges] is a popular informal activity. While street food vendors provide services for the public, they occupy public space without official recognition. This makes them susceptible to structural forms of violence, such as evictions, destructions of vending units, or 'security'-payments to the police or local muscle men. Their position in formal and informal networks of power [institutions] frames the space of action for their vending activities.

The vendors use multiple strategies to reduce their exposure to violence, to overcome losses and bridge a time of income shortages, and thereby to secure their livelihoods. Rather than maximising their profits, they have to continue their business in the long run - and thereby seek arrangements [institutions], which help them increase their resilience to disturbances. Under insecure conditions mobility and flexibility of street vending businesses often is a key to 'success' - or at least to survival.

All citizens of the highly-dynamic megacity Dhaka are confronted with simultaneous challenges from megaurbanization, globalization and democratization. As a result socioeconomic polarization, spatial fragmentation and political struggles increase [system changes and transition]. Street food vending is in the "crossfire" of these interrelated processes. A particular focus of the paper lies on the specific governance regime since the Bangladesh's Caretaker Government took power in January 2007. This not only changed the political landscape, but also the way how power is exerted over space in Bangladesh, and thereby over the Bengali people [social cohesion / equity].

## "From Food And Floods" - Dhaka's Megaurban Supply Networks And Regulation Of Food Security

Presenter: Markus Keck, South Asia Institute, University of Heidelberg, Germany

Authors: Markus Keck (2)

*South Asia Institute, University of Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Baden-Württemberg, Germany (1), Department of Geography, University of Bonn, Bonn, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany (2)*

Cities can be perceived as a historical product of societies regulating their environmental rapports. A constant flow of natural resources from outside into the city is needed to keep up the functioning of urban life. As a major part of this urban metabolism the daily supply and distribution of food must be guaranteed. Since recent processes of global change challenge the reliability of present infrastructure and the efficiency of current institutions especially food systems of megacities need to be focussed as potential future risk areas of "new famines" (DEVEREUX 2007). First basic functioning patterns of Dhakas food supply shall be presented: Where are the main entrypoints and what are the major food markets? Which quantities of food are transported into the city and where do the commodities come from? Who are the major actors and how is trade and selling organized? In a second step the focus shall be layed upon certain dynamics. Against the background of seasonal change and recent trends, current occurrences of floods in Bangladesh and thier impacts on Dhaka's food security shall be discussed. How do transport corporations cope with sudden interruptions of the traffic system? How do traders cope with flood borne losses of production in their supply regions in Bangladesh or abroad? And how flexible are they in shifting from domestic to international trade and vice versa?

The adaptive capacity of food traders within the socio-ecological food system of Dhaka megacity shall serve as a sound example to analyse urban resilience.



## How resilient is the food system of Dhaka/Bangladesh? Empirical evidence and conceptual considerations on vulnerability and adaptation in a megacity context

Presenter: Hans-Georg Bohle, University of Bonn, Germany

Authors: Hans-Georg Bohle (1)

*University of Bonn, Bonn, Germany, Germany (1)*

The paper starts from the observation that the system of food supply, food distribution and food consumption in the rapidly growing megacity of Dhaka (2006: 14,2 Million inhabitants) has been remarkably resilient during the past 30 years. Despite catastrophic natural disasters, political turbulence and rapid economic transformations, the supply of food to the megacity has remained rather stable, the distribution of food proved more or less efficient, and the consumption of food was always granted, at least for those with sufficient food entitlements.

Based on an empirical case study, the paper starts by giving some evidence on resiliencies, but also vulnerabilities that characterize the supply, distribution and consumption sides of the food system of Dhaka. The paper will then raise a number of questions on conceptual issues that address the functioning of the megaurban food system. Can we observe any self-regulating processes in the functioning of the food system? What is the role of markets, institutions, power and conflicts? Who takes the risks, and who bears the costs of adaptation? The paper will conclude by providing an analytical framework for megacity vulnerability and resilience that is based on three issues, namely arenas, agendas and agency. It is assumed that these are crucial factors in the regulation of the megaurban food system.

