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Emerging and Influence of Local Governances within so-called 'Informal settlements'

This doctoral thesis deals with the question of whether or not underdeveloped neighborhoods within cities of developing countries are actually informal, as they labeled by politicians, governments, donor agencies and urban society, or if local governance structures and its actors formalise them through their actions. To collect varying data and answers to that question, three different types of settlements in three different cities were chosen as case studies: informal settlements in Cairo, squatter settlements in Kathmandu and ger (yurt) settlements in Ulaanbaatar.

These settlements all have one characteristic in common – they are lacking in social and technical infrastructure. But the ways to develop their settlement and improve their personal living standard differ between each community and depends highly on whether or not they are supported by an upgrading programme or if they are left on their own. However, in each neighborhood development process various actors are involved, whether it be public institutions, international, national or local NGOs, local leaders, businesses or the inhabitants. They all have different views and interests in regards to the development of the settlements and with their influences they form the settlement in both positive and negative ways. Communication between these various actors is a decisive instrument in upgrading processes. Different types of communication can be used to define the influence, the recognition of interests and the degree of involvement.

The cities and settlements are observed in a historical context in their growth and development to understand today's processes of urban social separation and the embedding of underdeveloped neighborhoods within the urban fabric. In the settlements it is important how the actors' structure and their influences changed. In the settlements with an implemented upgrading program, the focus was laid on its components which were later adapted by the community. In each city a settlement with less support was chosen to look at its potential for self-support.

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