Transnational Production Spaces

A multi-local study on the impacts of the global clothing industry on urban spaces and urban planning.

The worldwide production of goods is increasingly organized within transnational production networks. Regions with very different conditions and resources are connected through complex and highly dynamic production processes based on an international division of labour. The resulting integration in global production systems not only affects local economies, but also the built environment and urban development of the respective places of production.

This research project explores the spatial effects of industrial production and the role of urban planning at different locations of a transnational production network of the clothing industry. It traces the interplay of local and transnational forces in the spatial and physical development of these production locations. Harnessing the research approaches of Global Commodity Chains and Global Production Networks for a multi-local and multi-scalar analysis of urban spaces, it is our aim to investigate the translocal character of urban production places and thus to contribute to the emerging research field of transnational urbanity.

In the medium term, research at Habitat Unit will explore a range of
Case studies from various industrial sectors and production regions – following the industrial goods in their transnational production and distribution processes in order to investigate diverse production networks and their interplay with spatial structures and urban development.

Case Study

Our case study focuses on selected industrial locations in Turkey, Bulgaria and Ethiopia which are connected by a production network of the clothing industry supplying Western European fashion companies and markets. The study locations subsequently became target destinations for the relocation of specific production stages or entire segments of production. The core study focuses on clothing production for the European market in the Istanbul metropolitan region. Here, a gradual de-centralization of production from inner-city areas has taken place, including the relocation of large scale industrial operations to the western neighbouring province of Tekirdağ. In the last two decades, producers from Turkey have also partially transferred production to an expanding range of international offshoring destinations in Eastern Europe, the MENA region, Central Asia and most recently, East Africa. Our study investigates such industrial locations and their specific contexts in Bulgaria (Kardzhali) and Ethiopia (Addis Ababa). Within the context of transnational economic dynamics, our research traces how industrial production shapes the physical urban space and drives urban development in these locations, thereby also exploring its interplay with urban and regional planning governance.

The project addresses the principal question how urban spaces of industrial production are constituted at different stations of a transnational production network and what kind of forces are taking effect on them – from local to global ranges of influence. Our research takes materialities as its point of departure – highly mobile commodities and their production on the one hand and the built structures of urban space on the other hand. By combining an analysis of the built environment and qualitative analysis of planning governance, the research project aims to build an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of spatial negotiations and the role, scope and leverage of the different actors involved – from the local to the global scale, between bottom-up and top-down drivers of urban development, and at the intersections between formal and informal economic and building practices.

Project presentation in the concluding Symposium „Mapping the Global Factory. Architectures of Commodity Chains”

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Academic Partners

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Publications


Events and conference papers

2019

Anke Hagemann: Building the global factory – architectures of transnational clothing production, Symposium Factory World: Architecture and Industrialization over Time and Space, Architecture Space and Society Centre, Birkbeck/University of London, October 30-31, 2019

Symposium Mapping the Global Factory. Architectures of Commodity Chains (> online video documentation), concluding event of the Project Transnational Production Spaces, Berlin, September 29, 2019


2019.


*Infrastructures and the built environment. The physical dimensions of global production networks*, 3rd meeting of the *DFG Scientific Network "The Spaces of Global Production"* hosted by Transnational Production Spaces / Habitat Unit, Berlin, January 24-25, 2019, Evening lecture Christof Parnreiter

2018


2016


Anke Hagemann: Spatial effects of global production networks: urban upgrading and the relocation of industry in Turkey's globalized clothing production, Global Production Networks and Social Upgrading: Labour and Beyond, Brown International Advanced Research Institute (Brown University) & Global Development Institute (University of Manchester), Manchester, May 2016.

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