

Our understanding of governance modes

A governance mode describes how a city is being governed by analyzing the relationship between different actors and stakeholders (governing relations), the way decisions are taken (governing logic), the importance of key decision makers as well as the fundamental political objectives.

Our understanding of informality

Informality denotes particular economic activities, the resident status of the local population & various types of habitat. We observe phenomena of informality even in well-developed countries. They are always related to a lack of compliance with standards, registration procedures or legal regulations. On the other hand, they offer the chance for non-bureaucratic mobilization of social capital and self-help. Our analysis of informal urban development asks how far the influence of formal instruments regulating spatial development reaches.

Our understanding of borders

Borders are lines of separation around spaces & groups. We look at formal and informal borders (at different levels from national to local) and view all of them as socially constructed and as expressions of ever-changing political, socio-economic and cultural circumstances. Borders have functions in territorial governance and planning, and they have meanings for the people living with them. Our approach is to look at both aspects: top-down and bottom-up.

Informal Trader on a Pedestrian Bridge in Guangzhou 2006



Contact

Study Group 'Residential Entities'



University of Kassel
Department of Urban Regeneration
Henschelstraße 2
D-34109 Kassel, Germany

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Uwe Altrock
Tel.: +49-561-804.3225
Email: altrock@asl.uni-kassel.de



Dr. Sonia Schoon
Tel.: +49-561-804.2783
Email: schoon@asl.uni-kassel.de



Study Group 'Borders'



Sun Yat-sen University
School of Geography and Planning
135 Xingang Xi Lu
Guangzhou, 510275, China

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Werner Breitung
Tel.: +86-2084114105
Email: breitung@gmail.com



Michael Arri M.A.
Tel.: +86-13521030011
Email: m.arri@gmx.de



Study Group 'Economic Entities'



University of Hamburg
Department of Geography
Bundesstraße 55
D-20146 Hamburg, Germany

Assist. Prof. Dr. Michael Waibel
Tel.: +49-40-42838.5030
Email: mwaibel@gwdg.de



Dipl.-Geogr. Matthias Becker
Tel.: +49-40-42838.5217
Email: rmbecker@gmx.de



Internet:

www.bordersandgovernance.gwdg.de

megacities - megachallenge



Research Project

Border-Drawing and Spatial Differentiation of Urban Governance Modes in the Pearl River Delta

with Special Regard to Informal Development and Self-Organization



DFG Priority Programm 1233
Megacities - Megachallenge
Informal Dynamics of Global Change

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Introduction

Our project on borders and urban governance is part of the DFG 1233 programme "Megacities - Megachallenge: Informal Dynamics of Global Change". It is a co-operation of the University of Kassel, the University of Hamburg (both Germany) and the Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou (China).

We focus on the spatially differentiated use of governance modes in the Pearl River Delta mega-urban region, in particular Guangzhou, Dongguan, Shenzhen, Zhongshan and Zhuhai. Our research will also consider Hong Kong and Macau.

The first research phase from January 2007 until December 2008 is currently being implemented. In total, three two-year phases are envisaged.

Overall objectives

The project aims to identify different governance modes, to understand the role of self-organization and informal processes for these modes and to link the practice of differentiated governance with the creation of bounded space.

Results

The findings shall contribute to the understanding of governance in transitional China as well as to the general issue of governability of mega-urban regions.

Our approach

We assume that border-drawing and differentiated governance are used to ensure the governability of this highly dynamic and very diverse mega-urban region. By analyzing various types of bounded places of work and residence, we aim at building a typology of governance modes.

Conceptually, we focus on three categories of spatial entities: administrative, economic and residential units. For these entities, we identify mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, we analyze the significance of boundaries for their governance, and we explore the social implications.

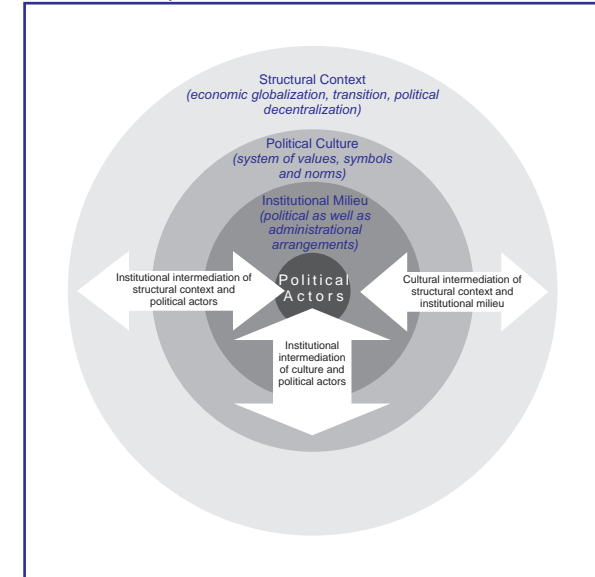
Important hypotheses

- 1) Distinct governance modes co-exist simultaneously in separated spatial units within the Pearl River Delta Region
- 2) Differentiated urban governance and the creation of borders facilitates the governability of mega-urban regions
- 3) The drawing of borders establishes patterns of inclusion and exclusion, which have significant social impacts
- 4) Informal processes and self-organization interact in different ways with the different governance modes

Expected contributions to theory building

- ➔ Identification and explanation of area specific governance modes
- ➔ Analysis of the structural power of borders
- ➔ Explanation of changing formal-informal relationships, the gradual use of self-organization, and the economic, political as well as urban development background in the context of transitional China

Intermediation of political actors and their context



(according to a model by DIGAETANO/STROM 2003; modified)

Three categories of spatial entities to be investigated

Administrative entities

that were created besides the administrative structure in China and therefore promise to produce a certain amount of self-organization and autonomy (Special Administrative Regions, SAR; Special Economic Zones, SEZ)



Border between Hong Kong SAR and the Shenzhen SEZ

Economic entities

Bounded spaces that serve mainly as places of work and for economic development (Export Processing Zones, EPZ; factory compounds etc.)



Factory compound surrounded by a fence in Guangzhou

Residential entities

of different social status and physical structure at the neighbourhood level (urban villages, housing estates, gated communities)



Urban villages (red) in the heart of Guangzhou