Call for Papers
TRIALOG Journal

Urban Technology & Collaboration in Informal Settlements in African Cities:
Enhancing Livelihoods and Empowering Communities

Editors: Prof. Gesa Ziemer, Dr. Sophie Naue, Dora Hegyi

Abstract deadline: 19th of January 2024

Informal settlements are where most people residing in urban areas live in the African continent. In contrast to the way in which this type of urbanisation happened in other geographies, like Latin America and Southeast Asia, this is taking place at a time when digital devices like smartphones are becoming increasingly available for a larger part of the urban population. Simultaneously, digital tools are being developed for the urban context to support planning processes and enhance collaboration among communities and other stakeholders. The intersection of urban technology and interventions in informal settlements is therefore a crucial area of interest and research. This special issue seeks to explore the potential of this area while compiling a critical statement on the use of urban technologies and collaborative approaches in informal settlements in African cities.

Despite the importance of informal settlements, being home to one-quarter of the world's urban population, the fast-changing nature of those settlements, which often results in a lack of accurate spatial data and or records being outdated, poses significant difficulties for urban policymaking and public entities in addressing resident needs. At the same time, we can observe a resistance by public authorities to mapping informal areas as their representation on a map can convey recognition of their status as settlements – which some authorities want to avoid. Consequently, our understanding of the spatial distribution, evolving patterns, and social and demographic profiles of inhabitants within these settlements remains constrained. At the same time, citizen science and emerging technologies have ushered in new prospects for the collection of high-quality data, used with the purpose of advocating for basic services and civil rights, but this remains a largely unstudied field.

We are looking for contributions that examine and highlight how urban data and digital technology can support cooperative efforts in informal settlements, fostering sustainable urban development and enhancing the livelihoods of communities. The emphasis of the thematic issue is on empirically driven studies while encompassing practical projects and experiences. By involving researchers, data analysts, urban practitioners, and community organizations, we are aiming to embrace a diverse range of perspectives and bridge the realms of academia and practical application.
We encourage detailed research studies and practical approaches that critically reflect on potentials and build awareness on the use of digital data and technologies in informal settlements in African cities. Contributions on (but not limited to) the following themes are welcome:

- Participatory data collection for informal settlements upgrading. Why, how and for whom is data collected?

- Data visualization, GIS-based spatial analysis, and remote mapping techniques to enhance the knowledge base on informal settlements. Considering as well potential risks of using technology in an informal settlement context.

- Considerations on spatial justice: What role can technology play to support the Right to the City?

- Reflections on the (un/just) distribution of data and participatory governance approaches for reducing the digital divide in African cities.

- Multi-stakeholder collaboration: Improving how communities and local authorities work together towards the common good.

- Community mapping and bottom-up data collection as practices of empowerment.

- Good practices and policy for data transfer and sharing. And critical reflection of: who does the data belong to?

- Technology and approaches for innovative service provision in informal settlements.

- How can unconventional types of data, such as data from social media, utilities or crowdsourcing, be used to enhance the livelihoods of people in informal settlements?

Contact:
Interested authors are invited to submit an abstract (max 300 words) by January 19, 2024. Full papers (4000- 5000 words) must be written in English and submitted by March 22, 2024.

Please include your full contact details and a brief biography of each contributing author (up to 100 words per author) and submit as a single document to editor@trialog-journal.de

Authors interested in submitting a paper for this issue are asked to consult the journal's instructions for authors and for any further inquiries please contact the editors directly:
dora.hegyi@hcu-hamburg.de and sophie.naue@hcu-hamburg.de

Important Dates:
Abstract Submission: January 19, 2024
Invitation to submit full paper: February 9, 2024
Full Paper deadline: April 19, 2024
Reviewers' Feedback: May 24, 2024
Revised paper's submission deadline: July 26, 2024
Expected date of publication: October/November 2024