

Preface

One billion people live in slums. Inadequate housing conditions prevail for a large part of humankind and efforts to ease the problem seem to be inadequate and not sufficient. This study contributes to the global debate on adequate housing policies by the presentation and comprehensive examination of the approach of an Indonesian city—Surakarta—in managing its informal settlements. The question is addressed whether Surakarta’s policy in dealing with the informal sector and marginal settlements can be a role model for other cities and an example for ‘good governance’.

For this purpose, first, current trends in urban development, as well as international discussions on adequate strategies to improve the living conditions in slums are illustrated on both, a global and a national (Indonesian) scale. Following this analysis, a detailed examination of Surakarta’s housing policy regarding the poor—its procedures and mechanisms—is carried out, using four concrete programmes as examples. For understanding the procedures applied, Surakarta’s resettlement scheme is analysed in more detail.

The results show that Surakarta’s city government has put in place an effective and inclusive approach characterized by community-based steering groups for implementing slum-upgrading and resettlement measures. By involving substantial parts of the affected residents, a political commitment for improving living conditions of the poor and showing elements of ‘good urban governance’ the examined policies can be assessed as inclusive and efficient. It can be argued, however, that the approach is top-down induced and shows also deficits regarding participation and transparency.

This work is based on Christian Obermayr’s outstanding master’s thesis, defended in 2013 at the Institute of Geography, University of Innsbruck, Austria.

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Sustainable City Management

Informal Settlements in Surakarta, Indonesia

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2017, XXIII, 190 p. 56 illus., 44 illus. in color., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-49417-3