

Entangled Urbanization Conference 2017

Day 1 Breakout Group 1 Summary_Emily Rains

Our group discussed the importance of engaging in open dialogue among participants from various backgrounds (social science, policymaking, and action) and incorporating methods most commonly utilized by each field. Upon discussing, we proposed a broad research agenda clustered around five sub areas

Definitions and Data

We agreed that many of the concepts (i.e. informality, slum, city) we have been discussing at the workshop can be defined in many ways and that different definitions produce substantially different interpretations and make comparisons across contexts particularly challenging. We proposed agreeing to a working definition of each concept at the outset and also learning from the people living in these conditions about how they would define each of these concepts.

We also discussed current data deficiencies. In many cases, data do not exist. In other cases, data exist with inaccuracies. In addition to determining which definitions of each concept we plan to work with, we also would document the existing data on each concept and the different challenges with each data source.

Informality and Formality Continuum

An important theme of the day was that these concepts exist as a binary. Another arm of the research agenda would document the differences and nuances of varying degrees of informality. Furthermore, we do not want to assume that formalization follows a linear trajectory. For example, in Kenya, some complexes have been formalized and then tenants will informally expand upon these areas in order to informally rent them out. We also discussed the role that globalization and expanding technologies have played in potentially creating a distinct new form of informality.

Policy Lessons

We also discussed the importance of carefully reviewing policies that have worked successfully in the past. What worked about them and what lessons can we take from the reasons why they worked? Where did they work and how does this affect where else we think they might work?

Networks

The importance of networks and groups emerged as an important theme throughout the day. A sub component of the larger proposed research agenda would examine how social networks affect an individual's access to formal rights and services as well as one's ability to utilize social policies.

Policy suggestions

Finally, what can we learn from the above research arms in terms of proposing potential policies? What have we learned about how to strengthen networks and improve policies to promote inclusion in the city?