ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

SUMMARY

The street feeds the city. Every second person in Dhaka, a megacity of 15 million people, takes street food every day. In turn, almost 100,000 vendors sell rice dishes, light snacks, fruits or beverages on the streets and footpaths, at markets and transport nodes. Street food is cheap, readily available and nutritious and thus *needed*. Food vending in public places is a good livelihood opportunity and a significant functional element in the megaurban food distribution system. Street food contributes crucially to urban food security; in particular the urban poor rely on it. Moreover, eating outside is a vital element of urban public life. In the eyes of the law, the vendors' encroachment of public space is, however, illegal. The authorities and urban elites see it as obsolete, unhygienic, disorderly, and 'in the way'. From their perspective street food is *unwanted* and the vendors are therefore regularly evicted from their vending sites. Nonetheless, at most vending sites in the megacity the street vendors are tolerated. This situation poses a dilemma that lies at the heart of this book on "*the politics of street food*". On the one hand, hawkers appropriate public space illegally, which calls for rigid state action and their eviction. On the other hand, street food vending is tolerated because the hawkers are protected by local 'patrons' and the informal rules that govern the street. Manoeuvring through delicate local governance regimes, most street vendors actively take their right to the city. Dhaka's urban public space is the arena of politics where the contestations between hawkers and the state are played out.

This empirical study is based on research in Dhaka that was carried out between 2007 and 2010. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to achieve three overarching objectives. The first aim was to *understand and evaluate the role and meaning of street food in Dhaka's food system*. The second goal was to *understand decision-making processes, informal negotiations, everyday contestations, and thus the politics in the social field of street food*. The third goal of this study, one a more conceptual level, was to *lay out and contribute to a relational, critical, and reflexive social geography of the Urban South*. These aims cannot be achieved with only one research perspectives. In this study, food-, public space-, vulnerability- and governance-perspectives were thus conceptually integrated on the basis of Bourdieu's Theory of Practice. Bourdieu's key principles of research, such as relational thinking or reflexivity, his key theorems, such as fields and capitals, and his understanding of governance and people's relation to the state proved to be fruitful for my own approach to analysing the contested fields and arenas of street food vending in Dhaka.

In the following, I briefly touch each conceptual cornerstone and some results of my study. As the sale and consumption of food is looked at, an analysis from the vantage point of *food systems* and *food security* concepts seems to be adequate. One of my key findings is that the emergence of the field of street food is

closely tied to megaurbanisation. A locally growing demand for readily-available food and employment and global economic trends are both reflected in the growth and diversification of street food vending in Dhaka. The analysis shows that mobile labourers and many slum dwellers require street food for their food security.

As the street food vendors are forced to cope with multiple risks and stresses, I make use of a *livelihoods* and *social vulnerability* perspective. As the street is the arena where the vendors play out their social and indeed spatial practices, the debates about the function, value and social construction of *public space* need consideration, too. Linking both aspects reveals that the vendors' access to public space, i.e. their spatial capital, relates directly to their business success or vulnerability. Permanent street vendors occupy the best social *and* spatial positions at the vending sites, while mobile hawkers and in particular also female vendors are highly vulnerable to poverty. The latter groups have the lowest business profit and household income, they face poverty and food insecurity themselves.

Analysing the *governance* of food vending in public space requires a fundamentally political approach in order to deconstruct the prevalent public discourses, formal regulations, informal negotiations and everyday contestations over street food. The study shows that through its regulative and discursive power, the nation state structures the conditions for the informal economy and for street food vending. The "politics of the street", the everyday encounters with representatives of the state and shifting modes of governance are crucial for the street vendors' lives, their business failure or success and their quiet encroachment on public space. Moreover, fundamental political transformations have left their marks on Dhaka's public space and thus also in the field of street food. Eviction drives against thousands of hawkers during the reign of the so called Caretaker Government in 2007/08 showed this quite drastically. In this particular era, the state used street vendors as scapegoats to demonstrate its authority. One of the lessons from the analysis of macro- and micro-political street food governance is that street vendors need to be safeguarded against evictions and harassment. Their rights as vocal and productive citizens have to be recognised. This would be the first, but maybe most important, step towards fair street food governance.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Jeder zweite Einwohner der 15 Millionen-Metropole Dhaka ernährt sich täglich von *street food*. Auf den Straßen und Gehwegen, auf Märkten, in Parks und an Verkehrsknoten verkaufen 100,000 Straßenhändler Reisgerichte, Snacks, Früchte oder Getränke. Die Verkäufer sichern ihren eigenen Lebensunterhalt und tragen wesentlich zur städtischen Ernährungssicherung bei. Dies kommt insbesondere den Armen zu Gute, denn das Essen von der Straße ist nicht nur überall verfügbar, sondern auch vergleichsweise günstig und nahrhaft. Street food wird in Dhaka schlichtweg *gebraucht* und ist ein Zeichen von Urbanität. Für die städtischen Behörden und Eliten ist street food allerdings unhygienisch, unmodern und unordentlich. Und aus gesetzlicher Perspektive eignen sich Straßenhändler den öffentlichen Raum illegal an. So gesehen, ist der Verkauf von street food *nicht erwünscht*. Die Händler sind ‚im Weg' und werden regelmäßig von ihren Verkaufsplätzen vertrieben. Paradoxerweise werden sie ‚normalerweise' dennoch toleriert.

Dieser Widerspruch zwischen ‚Verstoßen' und ‚Zulassen' steht im Zentrum dieser Studie über die *umkämpfte Regulation des Straßenhandels*. Einerseits ist die Aneignung öffentlicher Räume durch die Verkäufer illegal und illegitim; hartes Durchgreifen des Staates und die Vertreibung der Händler werden verlangt. Anderseits wird der Handel zugelassen, da die Verkäufer durch Beziehungen zu mächtigen Akteuren und durch die informellen Gesetze der Straße geschützt werden. Die meisten Verkäufer manövrieren geschickt durch den institutionellen Dschungel im ‚Feld des Straßenhandels' und nehmen sich so ihr Recht auf Stadt. Der öffentlicher Raum kann als eine ‚Arena' bezeichnet werden, in der subalterne und staatliche Akteure um ‚Raumprofite', soziale Positionen und Macht ringen.

Diese Studie beruht auf eigener empirischer Forschung in Dhaka. Zwischen Februar 2007 und März 2010 wurden zahlreiche qualitative Interviews mit Straßenhändlern, lokalen Informanten, Polizisten und Experten geführt, die durch quantitative Erhebungsmethoden ergänzt wurden. Drei übergeordnete Ziele wurden verfolgt. Erstes Ziel war die *Rolle und Bedeutung des Straßenhandels im Nahrungssystem der Megastadt zu verstehen*. Das zweite Ziel war die *alltäglichen Praktiken, informellen Aushandlungsprozesse und Spielregeln im ‚Feld des Straßenhandels' zu erfassen und zu verstehen*. Auf einer eher konzeptionellen Ebene war es das dritte Ziel meiner Dissertation, die wissenschaftlichen *Diskussionen in der geographischen Entwicklungsforschung und der Stadtgeographie aus der Perspektive einer relationalen, kritischen und reflexiven Sozialgeographie des Urbanen Südens zu bereichern*. Um diese Ziele zu erreichen habe ich mehrere Forschungsperspektiven auf der Grundlage von Pierre Bourdieus Theorie der Praxis zusammengeführt: Nahrungssysteme, öffentliche Räume, soziale Verwundbarkeit, sowie Informalität und Governance. Diese vier Themenfelder werden in vier empirischen Kapiteln erschlossen und miteinander verwoben.

Es geht um den Handel mit und den Konsum von Lebensmitteln. Ein Ergebnis aus der Perspektive der *Nahrungssystemforschung* ist, dass die gestiegene Nachfrage, die Ausbreitung und die Differenzierung des Essens von der Straße aufs engste mit den Prozessen der Megaurbanisierung und Globalisierung sowie mit sich wandelnden Ernährungsmustern einher geht. Die Untersuchungen zeigen, dass mobile Arbeiter und die in Slums lebende Armutsbevölkerung in besonderem Maße auf street food angewiesen sind um ihre Ernährung zu sichern.

Es geht auch um Lebenssicherung unter prekären Bedingungen und um die Nutzung von Straßen, Parks und Plätzen. Eine Verknüpfung von *Verwundbarkeitsforschung* und einem *stadtgeographischen Blick auf öffentliche Räume* zeigt, dass der Geschäftserfolg oder die Verwundbarkeit der Straßenhändler in erster Linie von ihrem gesicherten Zugang zu öffentlichen Räumen abhängt. Die Zugangschancen zu profitablen Plätzen sind zwischen den Händlern ungleich verteilt, und hängen insbesondere von persönlichen Beziehungen ab. Permanente Händler nehmen die besten sozialen und räumlichen Positionen an den Verkaufsstellen ein und können so die größten ‚Raumprofite‘ erzielen. Die mobilen Händler und die meisten Essensverkäuferinnen sind hingegen eher marginal positioniert. Sie haben die niedrigsten Geschäftsgewinne und sind somit äußerst verwundbar gegenüber Armut und Ernährungsunsicherheit. Ein guter und sicherer Verkaufsplatz ist das ‚räumliche Kapital‘ der street food-Verkäufer, das in der Arena den „feinen Unterschied“ zwischen Gewinnern und Verlierern ausmacht.

Wer in welchem Maße vom Straßenhandel profitiert und wie der Zugang zu öffentlichen Räumen reguliert wird, ist eine grundlegende politische Frage. Aus einer *Governance-Perspektive* werden die gesetzlichen Regelungen und Diskurse über street food (Makropolitik) sowie die persönlichen Interaktionen, informellen Aushandlungsprozesse und alltäglichen Konflikte zwischen den entscheidenden Akteuren in den lokalen Arenen (Mikropolitik) betrachtet. Einerseits zeigt die Studie, dass der bangladeschische Staat die Rahmenbedingungen für den informellen Verkauf von street food durch seine regulative und diskursive Macht setzt. Straßenhändler werden durch geltendes Gesetz ‚illegalisiert‘ und ihre Lebenssicherungspraxis wird delegitimiert. Andererseits sind es ebendiese alltäglichen Begegnungen mit staatlichen Akteuren, die einen Verhandlungsspielraum für Straßenhändler schaffen. Ihre persönlichen Kontakte zu Politikern, Polizisten und Mittelsmännern sowie ihre Kenntnisse der lokal ausgehandelten ‚Spielregeln‘ prägen ihre Geschäftsaussichten und Lebenssicherungschancen entscheidend. Immer wieder zeigt es sich allerdings, dass sich die Händler nicht auf die informellen Gesetze der Straße verlassen können. Zeiten politischer Umbrüche auf nationaler Ebene hinterlassen auch an den lokalen Verkaufsplätzen ihre Spuren. Mit Vertreibungsaktionen gegen Straßenhändler und der Zerstörung von Slums demonstrierte die vom Militär gestützte Übergangsregierung (2007/08) ihre Handlungsfähigkeit und Macht. Als Sündenböcke gerieten die Essensverkäufer in das Kreuzfeuer der Konflikte um das ‚Feld der Macht‘. Die Verkäufer sind staatlicher Willkür, Vertreibung und Ausbeutung allerdings nicht schutzlos ausgesetzt. Vielmehr haben sie vielfältige Anpassungsstrategien dagegen entwickelt.

Die Lebens- und Arbeitsbedingungen der Straßenhändler sollten verbessert werden. Ein erster Schritt wäre es ihre Leistung bei der Nahrungsversorgung der Stadt anzuerkennen und ihre Rechte als Bürger der Stadt durchzusetzen. Soziale Anerkennung und ein auch rechtlich gesicherter Zugang zum öffentlichen Raum würde es den Straßenhändlern ermöglichen ihre tragende Rolle im Nahrungssystem der Megastadt Dhaka angstfrei ausfüllen zu können.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 IMPRESSIONS FROM DHAKA'S FIELD OF STREET FOOD

Moment 1: During the holy month of Ramadan the early evening hours are quite special and almost sincere moments in the otherwise always buzzling megacity of Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. One evening, just after the break of dawn, some university students are sitting on the steps in front of the Shaheed Minar monument that commemorates the Nation's freedom struggle. As each day during Ramadan, they are sharing *Iftar* – a meal to break the fastening – and invite me to join them. We are eating tasty fried snacks, local sweets and dates, and are drinking Coca-Cola. I ask them where they bought their *Iftari* and they praise the street market at Chawk Bazar in the city's old centre, where one can get the best traditional food snacks. Together we are enjoying *Dhaka's street food culture*, a mix of religious and secular, traditional and modern, local and global food, and the peaceful atmosphere in public space.

Moment 2: Together with my research assistant I am sitting on a rickshaw. We are riding through the narrow streets of Old Dhaka. Our rickshaw puller is telling us that he does not like to eat full rice meals on the street, but that he often takes nutritious and cheap snacks like bread rolls, bananas and strong sweet tea that help him to get through his arduous working day. Every day, he spends a quarter of his total income on this *required street food*. Since he came to Dhaka, 15 years ago, he is often buying snacks from the very same food vendor in a quiet side street – although the same food is available at every other corner. He goes there, because he enjoys these short breaks and the conversations with other rickshaw pullers and the street vendor, who became a good friend.

Moment 3: A woman, maybe around 40 years, is squatting on a footpath with three bowls in front of her. She sells rice dishes with vegetables or fish curry for only 10 or 15 Bangladeshi Taka per plate to Dhaka's poor. In a short conversation she is telling me that she prepares the food at her home in the morning, then walks to that site where many *rickshaw wallahs* drive by, and serves the food to maybe 30 customers throughout the day. When my translator asks her how much money she makes with her little street food business, she is starting to moan about her life and the government. With a meagre profit of only 50 Taka per day, it is extremely hard for her to sustain her own food demand, in particular because the price of rice has doubled within two years. She is saying that she has no other choice, but to sell street food for her *livelihood*. She is divorced and as there is no social security system in Bangladesh, she now depends completely on her own.

Moment 4: The director of the biggest public hospital in Dhaka is explaining to me his efforts to curtail street food vendor's encroachment on the public space in front of the hospital. While I am expressing my fascination of this very vivid street food market, he becomes increasingly infuriated. When I ask him, why he is

so keen on evicting the street food vendors, the director – an army general – replies angrily that one has to "eradicate this kind of profession in Dhaka, because unsafe food cannot be allowed in this age of civilization". He therefore instructs the hospitals security guards to keep the entry gates as well as the footpath in front of the hospital clear of hawkers. The gatemen do follow their orders, but interestingly only when the director is present during the daytime. Each working day, one can thus witness a distinct rhythm on the street as the food vendors have adopted a flexible business mode that suits this particular *spatial governance regime*.

Moment 5: One morning, I am coming to the site of a highly frequented street restaurant opposite the hospital in order to have a little breakfast. To my surprise, I find the street food stall completely destroyed. Tables and benches, on which customers normally sit, are broken and food is spilled on the ground. The cook Anwarul is telling me that last night there was an 'unexpected' police raid. Normally, they hear rumours about upcoming eviction drives or get warnings from middlemen who have good contacts to the police. That late evening they felt safe and business was going very well. But the police came quickly with two trucks full of men who demolished all the street food shops along the street. The street restaurant owner, the boys who work as waiters and Anwarul himself could do nothing, but take valuable equipment and their money and flee – otherwise they would have been arrested. Two weeks after this eviction drive all food shops at this site are running again and it seems as nothing had ever happened. The owner, however, is telling me that he lost a lot of money and that it was difficult for him to get credit to repurchase necessary equipment. Nonetheless, he always supports his staff even if is street restaurant has to remain closed due to s*tate violence*.

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THIS STUDY

These impressions were collected in 2007 at one particularly contested *arena of street vending*, the street in front of the university hospital where almost 100 vendors sell prepared food. The narratives reflect the broad range of perspectives on street food vending, such as consumers' tastes and desires, changing urban food cultures under the impact of globalisation, common public discourses on street food, regulatory regimes of street food markets, distinct contestations between street vendors and the state, and the livelihood struggles of the street food vendors themselves. Touching upon all of these themes, this study aims at analysing the *social field of street food* and the *arenas of street vending* in their full breadth.

Why Do I Look at Street Food Vending in the Megacity of Dhaka?

Street food vending is one of the world's oldest and most widespread occupations and an integral part of urban food systems. Despite repeatedly uttered predictions of its disappearance in modern and globalised economies, its importance seems to increase in this urban 21st century, not only in the cities of the South, but also in

the metropolises of the North. The academic interest in the street trade dates back 50 years to the pioneering work of Clifford Geertz (1963) on "Peddlers and Princes" in Indonesia and Terry McGee (1973) on hawkers and urban planning in Hong Kong. Since then, numerous authors studied street vending (cf. Tinker 1997; Brown 2006b; Cross & Morales 2007b; Bhowmik 2010b; Ha & Graaf 2013). They focussed on seven key themes that are all relevant in the megacity of Dhaka.

First, street vending is a particularly visible component of the urban informal economy. In 2010, approximately 14.9 million people lived in Bangladesh's capital, making it the world's ninth biggest megacity. More than 20 percent of its people live below the poverty line, while two third of all urban employment relations are informal. In between 120,000 and 300,000 hawkers work on Dhaka's streets.

Second, street vendors sustain their livelihoods in a context of poverty, risk and insecurity. The 97,000 street food vendors provide a living for at least 400,000 people. Their lives are, however, marked by relative poverty, irregular income and pertinent stresses with which they have to cope on a daily basis.

Third, street vendors appropriate public space, which evokes conflicts with the state. Hawkers' "quiet encroachment" (Bayat 1997) of streets, footpaths and squares is not only illegal, but also an eyesore for many. Hence, the police regularly evict them. But vendors need access to public space and have to ignore the law to sustain their livelihoods.

Fourth, street vendors provide vital services for the city. Hawkers sell clothes, goods for daily use, as well as books, music and films, and thereby contribute to functioning services across large metropolises. The sale of prepared food in public space is particularly important, but also evokes some more food specific issues.

Fifth, street food vendors link actors in urban food systems. All of Dhaka city dwellers rely on functioning and resilient food markets for the daily provision of food (cf. Keck et al. 2008; Bohle et al. 2009a; Etzold et al. 2009; Keck et al. 2012; Keck & Etzold 2013). With 2.9 million people, or one third of the labour force, the production, processing, transport, trade and preparation of food, is the most important field of employment in Dhaka. Street food vendors provide a link in the food chain between market traders and the consumers.

Sixth, street food vending is an important aspect of urban food security. More than half of the city's population buys street food every day. Street food serves as a *supplement* or a *substitute* to home-prepared meals that are traditionally valued more in Bangladesh. Like the rickshaw pullers who eats cheap rice meals or fatty snacks in between, many slum dwellers depend particularly on cheap, readily-available and flexible food services; they *require street food* for their own food security (Zingel et al. 2011). But due to often unsatisfactory hygienic conditions, food safety and public health are crucial themes, too.

Seventh, street food vending reflects a specific street culture that enriches urban life. Like the students who enjoy snacks and sweets in their leisure time, many like to eat outside and take tasty *pleasure street food*. The sale of food on the streets contributes to a vivid public life. Street food vending should then not be considered as a marginal informal practice, but as an important livelihood style, a crucial food service, and a vital aspect of urban life.

Why is Street Food Vending Contested?

In Dhaka, street food vending is illegal. Although it is not wanted, it is needed. Given a high demand, vendors sell food on the streets, at transport nodes, markets and at other niches in the city. Like in many other cities, Dhaka's street food vendors encroach on public space and thereby challenge the authority of the state (cf. Brown 2006b; Low & Smith 2006; Cross & Morales 2007b; Bhowmik 2010b). The contestations between hawkers and the state over the access to and use of *public space* turn the street into an "arena of politics" (Bayat 1997: 15).

Moreover, the *social space* (or the field) of street food is contested, too. Although most street food vendors do not live in extreme poverty (about one third of them are below the lower poverty line) and most can fulfil their basic needs with their income, they are being marginalised: Neither their struggle for their livelihood, nor their contribution to food distribution and food security are acknowledged. Even more so, the state drives their vulnerability through erratic evictions and thus puts into question their citizenship. Public discourses that are advocated by state actors and the media contribute to the symbolic marginalisation of hawkers and to the denial of their 'right to the city' (Etzold 2011a).

The *modes of governance* of the field and the arenas of street food are contested, too. A broad governance concept includes formal law and its (erratic) enforcement by state actors, public discourses as well as social norms that structure everyday life. It also contains operational rules that come into effect in local arenas through informal negotiations as well as the self-governance of food needs and desires. *Contested street food governance* is about the social practices, negotiations and contestations revolving around the sale and consumption of street food and the formal and informal modes of governing public space.

These contestations showed strikingly during empirical research that was conducted between 2007 and 2010. These years have been marked by political transformations in Bangladesh, which had significant implications for the structural conditions of the field of street food, for the governance of the local arenas and for the livelihoods of the street vendors.

What is the Research Context of this Study?

The urban turn of 2009 as well as the scope, speed, complexity and dynamics of urbanisation in the Global South have brought the theme 'megacities' into the academic discourse, which is reflected by a number of interdisciplinary research programmes that have started since 2005.[1] Although food is the most basic human

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1   The International Human Dimensions Programme has a sub-project called "Urbanisation and Global Environmental Change" (www.ugec.org). The Resilience Alliance has a programme on "Urban Resilience" (http://www.resalliance.org). The German Helmholtz Association is funding the programme "Risk Habitat Megacity" (www.risk-habitat-megacity.ufz.de). The German Ministry of Education and Research funds the programme "Emerging Megacities:

need, most of these research programmes hardly touch the critical questions of food production, supply, distribution and consumption in megacities. While population growth, poverty and slum settlements, infrastructure and basic services, the (informal) economy and labour markets, environmental pollution and natural hazards, public health, and governance challenges are discussed in depth in policy reports and academic literature, a functioning food system is largely taken for granted or only marginally addressed under the category of "satisfying basic needs" (cf. Drakakis-Smith 1995, 1996; Pelling 2003; Bronger 2004; Burdett & Sudjic 2007; Davis 2007; Kraas 2007b; UNFPA 2007; Birkmann et al. 2010). The historic legacy and fundamental importance of food systems for urbanisation is often crudely overlooked: Only if food markets grew, could cities expand in demographic, spatial and economic terms (Satterthwaite 2005: 15). Yet, fairly few studies analysed urban food systems in the Global South (cf. Lam 1982; Guyer 1987; Pryer & Crook 1988; Drakakis-Smith 1991; Gertel 1995; 2010; Lohnert 1995; Smith 1998; Ruel & Garrett 1999; Bohle & Adhikari 2002). In the past decade, however, flows of food in and out of cities, inner-urban food distribution, changing urban food cultures and food governance regimes have become more prominent themes on the research agenda (cf. Koc et al. 1999; Aragrande & Argenti 2001; Ingram et al. 2005; Sánchez-Rodriguez et al. 2005; Smith et al. 2007; Bohle et al. 2009b)[2] and are acknowledged in flagship reports of international organisations, too (cf. UN-Habitat 2008: 218ff). Given the blending of global trends such as on-going urbanisation, informalisation of labour relations, restructuring of food systems under the impact of economic globalisation and environmental change, as well as local, national and global governance challenges (cf. Gertel 2010; Ingram et al. 2010), more research on urban food systems is certainly necessary.

This study has been part of the research programme "Megacities - Megachallenge: Informal Dynamics of Global Change" (SPP 1233) that is being funded by the German Research Foundation. Research was undertaken in the Pearl River Delta in China and Dhaka in Bangladesh and should provide findings on the organisation of society, economy, and space in these megaurban regions. One of the fundamental goals was to (re)conceptualise informality in order to deepen the understanding of structures and governance processes in in megacities.[3]

Research for Sustainable Development of the Megacities of Tomorrow" (www.emerging-megacities.org). The German Research Foundation enables the programme "Megacities-Megachallenge" (SPP 1233). The EU funds a "North-South-Network on Urban Self-Organisation and Public Life in Europe, India and China" (http://urbanself-fp7.eu/).

2 In the BMBF-project "Hyderabad as a Megacity of Tomorrow: Sustainable Urban Food and Health Security and Environmental Resource Management" transformations in food systems are also analysed. See www.sustainable-hyderabad.de and reports (cf. Lohr & Dittrich 2007).

3 Website of SPP 1233: www.megacities-megachallenge.org/Objectives.html (15.05.2012).

A sub-project on the "Megaurban Food System of Dhaka" was a part of this re-search endeavour.[4] The project's central propositions was that the analysis of food systems in megacities offers special insights into the discontinuities, contentions, fragmentations and conflicts that global processes generate in local arenas. The project aimed at understanding the dynamics of flows of food, capital, information and people into and within the megacity of Dhaka, the differentiation of the urban economy, and the formal and informal governance of urban space – all of these issues are central to the megacity research programme. Empirical research was undertaken in two sub-projects. Markus Keck and Wolfgang-Peter Zingel shed light on economic and political dynamics of Dhaka's rice and fish wholesale markets in order to assess which actors and institutions govern the overall resilience of the food system. Hans-Georg Bohle and I focussed on the most vulnerable groups of people in terms of food insecurity, on the livelihoods of street food ven-dors, and on the governance of public space. Taking the megacity of Dhaka as an example, our research shows the crucial importance of urban food system for people's livelihoods, the interconnectedness of different segments of the urban food economy, the complexity of food supply chains to and within the megacity, the role of social networks and informality in governing the distribution of and the access to food, the impacts of global food system trends such as the 2007/08 food crises on the vulnerability of the urban poor, and the very local contestations over space that take place at wholesale markets and at street vending sites (cf. Etzold 2008; Keck et al. 2008; Bohle et al. 2009a, b; Etzold & Keck 2009; Etzold et al. 2009, 2011a, b; Zingel et al. 2011; Etzold et al. 2012; Keck 2012; Keck et al. 2012; Etzold 2013a, b; Keck & Etzold 2013; Keck et al. 2013).

What are my Research Objectives?

Three overarching objectives guided the research process:

(1) The first aim was to understand and evaluate the role and meaning of street food in Dhaka's food system, and indeed in the urban society.

(2) The second goal was to understand the decision-making processes, informal negotiations and everyday contestations between differently powerful agents with regard to the access to food, the formation of livelihoods, and the regulation of public space.

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4   The project was chaired by Professor Dr. Hans-Georg Bohle, Geography Department at the University of Bonn, and Dr. Wolfgang-Peter Zingel, South Asia Institute (SAI) at the Univer-sity of Heidelberg. The projects' key hypotheses and research questions can be read on: www.megacities-megachallenge.org/dhaka2.php (15.05.2012).