Introduction

Informality, Social Change and Development (ISCD) is a new IGU commission established in July 2021. A plain fact that stimulated the commission proposal is that today 1 billion people or 13% of global populations live in informal settlements and 2 billion people or 61% of global workforces make their livelihoods in informal economies. Informality, and its connections with issues of poverty, precarity, gender, migration, exclusion, inequality, decent work, governance and innovation, have become areas of research of multiple disciplines, including geography, sociology, economics, politics and urban studies. Moreover, international organizations, such as the UN-Habitat, International Labor Organization and the World Bank, have defined informality as a concern of policy for global sustainable development. The ISCD commission is established in time to advance the global understanding of economic, social, political and spatial dimensions of informality. It aims to bring together social, economic, political and urban geographers to promote intersectional research on the connection between informality, social transformation and development under global changes. The commission aims at advancing theories on inclusive development, shaping new visions on and approaches to just, equal and sustainable societies and cities. The commission is dedicated to the following objectives:

a) Promote the advancement of theories on work, employment, housing, governance, planning and social sustainability through critical research of various informalities;

b) Strengthen comparative research and transdisciplinary communication on forms, dynamics, processes and geographical implications of informalization and social transformation in the global South and North.

c) Advance the communication on successful practices of inclusive and sustainable social development and promote mobilities of good policies between countries.

d) Inspire new visions on and approaches to inclusive, equal and sustainable societies and cities.

e) Enhance the exchange between academic researchers (from multiple disciplines) and non-academic actors/experts from international organizations for building sustainable societies and cities.

Since we received the letter of decision on constructing the commission in November 2021, we have done work on building the steering committee, organizing academic meetings and virtual lectures, making connection with other groupings and launching journal special issue. However, the COVID-19 pandemic imposed considerable constrains on the commission’s work. We hope to promote the commission more substantially in the future with the end of the pandemic.
1. Membership

1A. Steering Committee

The steering committee of the ISCD commission consists of 9 members at the present. They are from different regions over the world, including Europe, Asia, Africa, North America and Latin America (Figure 1). The commission plans to increase three or four members from the regions of Southeast Asia, Middle-East, North Africa and South America to broaden regional coverage of the steering committee.

Prof. Desheng Xue (Chair)
School of Geography and Planning
Sun Yat-sen University, China
E-mail: eesxds@mail.sysu.edu.cn

Prof. Alison Brown
School of Geography and Planning
Cardiff University, UK
E-mail: brownam@cardiff.ac.uk

Prof. Alan Smart
Department of Anthropology
University of Calgary, Canada
E-mail: asmart@ucalgary.ca

Prof. Tabea Bork-Hüffer
Department of Geography
University of Innsbruck, Austria
E-mail: tabea.bork-hueffer@uibk.ac.at

Prof. Veronica Crossa
Center for Demographic, Urban, and Environmental Studies
The College of Mexico, Mexico
E-mail: vcrossa@colmex.mx

Prof. Darshini Mahadevia
School of Arts and Sciences
Ahmedabad University, India
E-mail: darshini.mahadevia@ahduni.edu.in

Prof. Marie Huchzermeyer
School of Architecture and Planning
University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa
E-mail: Marie.Huchzermeyer@wits.ac.za

Prof. Gengzhi Huang
School of Geography and Planning
Sun Yat-sen University, China
E-mail: hgzhi3@mail.sysu.edu.cn

Prof. Dietrich Soyez (Senior Advisor)
Institute of Geography
University of Cologne, Germany
E-mail: d.soyez@uni-koeln.de

Figure 1 Regional representatives of the ISCD’s steering committee in 2022

1B. Commission corresponding members
The list of corresponding members is being built.
2. Meetings

2A. Meetings organized, co-organized and sponsored by the commission


Unfortunately, the COVID-19 lockdown policy in China impacted the implementation of the proposed session organized by the commission. We tried to make an on-site commission meeting in Paris as it was the first show of the commission. But it was disabled by the international travel regulation of China where the chairperson of the commission comes from.

2A2. Session in the First Conference on World Geography

The ISCD Commission hosted a session on *Urbanization, Social Transformation and Sustainable Development* in the First Conference on World Geography, sponsored by The Geographical Society of China in Shanghai, China, 27 November 2022. Due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, the session was proceeded via online virtual platforms. The goal of the session was to advocate research and dialogues on new social changes, social phenomena and social issues from an international comparative perspective, adopting new theoretical perspectives and methods and innovating theories, concepts and methods on social geography. The session was set to include the following topics: globalization and intra-urban spatial structure, urban renewal and gentrification, digital technology and virtual social space, war, disaster and refugee camps, urbanization and migrants’ settlements, ageing and communities of the elderly, global mobility and international migrant communities, informalization and socio-spatial production, rural revitalization and rural social reconstruction, social integration and spatial governance.

2B. A brief summary of the topics addressed at each meeting

In the session of Urbanization, Social Transformation and Sustainable Development, we received 43 papers and accepted 15 of them. These 15 papers were focused on the social transformation and development of world urbanization, engaged in theoretical and methodological discussions on human settlements, rural-urban migration, international migrants’ community, urban renewal, residential segregation, social integration, as well as carbon emission reduction, circular economy and smart urban waste reduction. They proposed new perspectives and directions for social geography and sustainable development research. Speakers were from Peking University, Nanjing University, Sun Yat-sen University, Wuhan University, Fudan University, Southwest University, Nanjing Normal University and other universities and research institutions. About 100 scholars and researchers from different universities and institutes attended the session.
2C. Lectures

The commission organized 14 lectures via virtual platforms as a response to the impact of the pandemic on academic activities. These lectures were given by international scholars invited by the commission. Topics included geographical discipline, migration, social care, aging society, regional development, planning, environment, shared economies, and smart cities (Table 1).

Table 1 Virtual online lectures organized by the commission in 2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The future of geography: An international perspective</td>
<td>Michael Meadows&lt;br&gt;University of Cape Town, South Africa&lt;br&gt;Nanjing University, China</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Measuring and forecasting migration with traditional and novel data</td>
<td>Arkadiusz Wisniowski&lt;br&gt;University of Manchester, UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>How to make smart cities smarter</td>
<td>Anthony G.O Yeh&lt;br&gt;Hong Kong University, Hong Kong, China</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Macau and the Greater Bay Area: Deeper integration and dual circulation economy</td>
<td>Jose Luis de Sales Marques&lt;br&gt;Institute of European Studies of Macau, Macau, China</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Understanding Macanese’s transformation in the Macau context</td>
<td>Margarida Cheung Vieira&lt;br&gt;Institute of European Studies of Macau, Macau, China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Health and social care for older people</td>
<td>Mei Champ&lt;br&gt;University of the West of England, UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>How to publish journal papers in health geographies</td>
<td>Jamie Pearce&lt;br&gt;University of Edinburgh, UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Healthcare systems of the United Kingdom - benefits and disadvantages</td>
<td>Mei Champ&lt;br&gt;University of the West of England, UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mobility-based Geographies of Health</td>
<td>Marco Helbich&lt;br&gt;University of Utrecht, Netherlands</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Shared and circular economy and its geographies in UK</td>
<td>Robert Huggins&lt;br&gt;Cardiff University, UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Solving environmental problems by urban planning</td>
<td>Richard Cowell&lt;br&gt;Cardiff University, UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Environmental policy and environmental geographies in UK</td>
<td>Andrew Flynn&lt;br&gt;Cardiff University, UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Comprehensive study of Lanstad region, Netherlands</td>
<td>Dick Ettema&lt;br&gt;University of Utrecht, Netherlands</td>
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2D. Future events

2D1. Business meeting of the commission

The ISCD’s steering committee plans to make a business meeting in February 2023. In the meeting, the committee will discuss the work plan of the commission in the future.

2D2. The commission’s 2023 Annual Conference

The first annual conference of the commission will be held in November 2023 in Guangzhou, China. The chairperson of the commission is the organizer of the first conference. The theme will be "Geographies of Social Transformation and Sustainability under Global Change". The conference pays attention to the social transformation, its geographical processes, consequences and impacts and challenges to sustainable development in the contexts of recent global dynamics such as the post-pandemic globalization, flexible capitalist accumulation, international trade conflicts, broader geopolitical instability, and climate change. The topics include but not limited to precarity, informal urbanism, platform workers, socio-spatial restructuring, urban regeneration, aging society, local and international migration, refugees, gentrification, socio-spatial divisions, social upgrading, sustainable social development, and so on. With the aim to promote interdisciplinary communication and collaboration, the conference welcomes participants from the disciplines of geography, sociology, economics, politics and urban studies.

2D3. Session in the 35th IGC 2024

The 35th International Geographical Congress will be held in August 2024, Dublin, Ireland. The theme of the congress is “Celebrating a World of Difference”. The commission will submit a session proposal that echoes the theme during May to September 2023 when the call for sessions is open.

2D4. Virtual Academic Forum

The commission is planning to construct a virtual academic forum by inviting scholars and researchers to give speeches online, with the aim to promote the spread of scientific research and knowledge. Speeches will be announced in the commission's website.

3. Networking

3A. Links with other IGU Commissions and taskforces

The commission has built close relation with the commission on Agricultural Geography and Land Engineering. In next years, it will build connection with the commissions on Marginalization, Globalization, and Regional and Local Responses, Population Geography, Urban Commission: Re-thinking cities and the urban: from the global to the local, and Gender and Geography: Care, Connection and Change.
3B. Collaboration with other International and Inter-disciplinary Groupings

The commission has built collaboration with the Asian Geographical Association, the Urban Geography Commission of the Geographical Society of China (GSC), the Cultural Geography Commission of GSC, the Guidance Committee for Teaching of Geographical Science in Higher Education, Ministry of Education, China, and the Informality Research Observatory at Cardiff University, UK. In the future, the commission will build networks with the UN-Habitat and the global research network of informal economy the Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO).

3C. Cooperative efforts with ISSC (International Social Science Council) and with ICSU (the International Council for Science) programs

The commission has no direct connection with the ISSC and ICSU at the present.

4. Publications

4A. Newsletters, special journal issues, and books (please provide complete citations for all publications).

4A1. Special journal issues

The commission has launched a special issue in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. The leading guest editor is the member of the steering committee Gengzhi Huang. The topic of the special issue is “Urbanization in Transition and Coordinated Regional Development: Challenges under Global Change”. For detailed information about the issue, see the following web page: https://www.mdpi.com/journal/ijerph/special_issues/6KH9HW72S7

4A2. Journal papers and book chapters


Chen Siyue, Huang Gengzhi*, Zhang Hongou, Ye Yuyao, Wu Qitao (2022). Does China’s direct investment in ASEAN have institutional preference from the perspective of investment motivation heterogeneity?. *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy*, 1-25 (online first).


4A3. Books


4B. The current accurate URL of the commission’s web site

The commission’s website is being constructed.

5 Archival Contributions

Publications were sent to IGU secretary general upon publication.