

Online Workshop

Formalizing the Informal to Protect Residents in Informal Settlements

Wednesday, 17 June 2020, 14:30-17:00 CEST, WebEx

Questions and Answers

responses by Mr. Steven Nystrom,
NewStream Companies and FIG Commission 9 Chair (2015-2018)

I. Process of Formalization, partnerships, incentives, challenges

1. What are the main forms of formalization of informal settlements?

We define these in the Guide, but technical and legal informality are 2 primary categories that can be applied. Also property type such as a home, apartment building (multiple flats), retail, industrial, office etc, are categories that can be applied. Also forms of tenure, environmental or health safety concern and other categories can be applied. The forms and categories used will depend on the overall scope of the problem in a given region, to be most useful in solving the informality problems in specific areas.

2. What are the key incentives available to the informal settlers that encourages them to formalize?

Many they frankly won't easily understand. These are related to economic security and flexibility that have a huge yet subtle effect on their day to day lives. However, the obvious one is security of ownership.... their claim to their home will be protected by law! Additionally, infrastructure improvements will be made using all fees from the process, optimally and transparently.

3. What are the possible partnership models in the formalization process?

There could be a host of these as long as they do not de-rail the central concept of formalization and community empowerment.

4. What are the major impediments and potential solutions to formalization of the informal settlements?

This will vary WILDLY based on local, societal, and cultural context.

5. Is it possible to make a typology of formalization initiatives based on the region? In other words, is there a need of formalization in Europe for instance.

With 50 million informal residents in Europe I'd say yes, there is need. (1 billion residents globally). Typology.... yes, likely a very interesting study.

II. Formalization and environmental concerns

1. How can informal settlements be formalized in an environmentally sustainable way?

The devil is in the details. The specific environmental problems need to be described before I can answer that question. But YES, definitely, assuredly. Formalization is just another way to more efficiently utilize resources to accomplish a set of social, cultural, economic and yes environmental goal(s). Environmental goals included.

III. Formalization and public participation

1. How to foster citizen participation in this process?

This will vary case to case. In general, any method that engenders trust in govt. that their increased tenure security or land infrastructure will improve their lives of protect their families will engender public participation. Having a seat at the table for local activists and leaders will enhance this as well.

2. How can the value added by the residents in informal settlements through their contributions in kind be duly acknowledged and credited to these inhabitants?

The main source of wealth accumulation for families of middle and lower income is gathered in the value and value increases of their home, if they have home ownership. If tenure security is increased and investment in their home is rewarded, they will achieve the wealth accumulation (spiked early on !!) to support family economic advancement over time.

3. Have alternative models of tenures such as Community Land Trusts been considered in the guidelines?

Yes, but specifically these are less typical tenure models that do not have much discussion about them. The advantages should play forward for all tenure types.

IV. Technology and formalization process

1. Role of Geomatics and Geoinformatics in formalizing the informal. Any best practices and/or exemplary case studies?

Personally, I always find Lithuania a good study of best / good practices.

2. Will any new technologies be useful to use during the formalization process and deed and title registration to ensure transparency, publicly available information and legal ownership? Blockchain technologies would be a perfect fit for not only title transfer and recordation but even to immutably record the whole formalization process to ensure its integrity. Comments?

I wholeheartedly agree. While not expressly focused on, creative technological solutions to solve historically thorny technological / administrative problems, help make tenure more secure, and involve more trusted international actors.

V. Informal settlements – more general

1. What solutions to bring vital public services and a social safety net to informal settlement dwellers?

The first step is acknowledgement that they are part of formal society!

2. What policies to bring decent employment opportunities to informal settlements?

Inclusion within the formal markets will bring this opportunity with it over time...in locally specific and societal / cultural ways.