

MEGAURBAN FOOD SYSTEM OF HYDERABAD, INDIA

Lower middle classes under pressure – Food security between the poles of vulnerability and social advancement

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Research Intro

- Coping of lower middle class groups with change and interrelated risks and opportunities in the field of food, nutrition and health
- The conceptualization is based on an analysis of Hyderabad's food system (production, exchange, distribution, consumption) in order to understand structures, processes of change and new risks/potential vulnerabilities
- Theory-based and application-oriented research on vulnerability to food security, risk perception and social change



Research Location: Hyderabad

- One of the growing Indian Megacities with a population of 6.5 Million (estimated: 10.5 Million by 2015)
 - Rapid economic growth encourages higher living standards and modern lifestyles
 - One third of the population still lives below the poverty line, suffers from severe food and health problems
 - A representative „India on a small scale“ due to its socio-cultural diversity (IT-sector attracts people from all over India, high percentage of Muslims etc.)
- Interesting experimental ground, not only for companies, but also for research

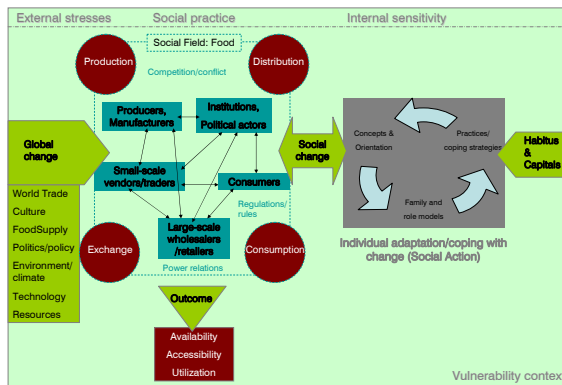
Central research questions

- How does global change translate into social change and result in transformation and restructuring processes of the food system and lower middle classes' lifestyles?
 - How can lifestyles of lower middle classes be modified so that they become food secure, low-emission and socially-sustainable?
 - What influence do habitus, risk perception and capitals have on people's coping behavior with change and adaptive capacities/adaptation strategies and in how far do they generate change?
- **Hypothesis:** The erosion of social networks, traditional retail infrastructure and the increase in food prices (and other costs) increase vulnerability and weaken mitigation mechanisms, encourage social price-building and result in restructuring and new configurations of social structure.

Research object: Lower middle classes

- A neglected, but relevant group (2005: 5%, projections for 2025 up to 40%): Growing purchasing power and potentially emittent
 - The „aspirers“, the lowest segment of middle classes have a monthly household income of 7500-16.500 Rs. (120-270€) (NCAER 2007)
 - Double role: Drivers of change vs. precarious wealth
 - Still highly vulnerable to phenomena of social, global and climate change (high degree of insecurity)
 - Caught between tradition and modernization, new opportunities and threats (coping with change)
- Setting course for future

Conceptual Framework: Social Field of Food

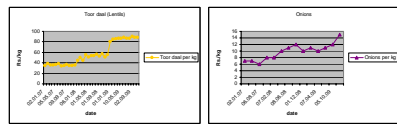


Source: Own Draft 2010

Theoretical framework: Habitus and Field (P. Bourdieu)

- Social reality is multidimensional: Individuals occupy a position within the social space that is structured by networks of social relations and constitutes those relatively autonomous (social) fields with their own structure and logic as well as flexible boundaries constantly redefined by agents
- Actions within the fields are not based on rational decisions, but on dispositions (habitus), a bundle of habits or patterns of acting developed through unconscious training in combination with resources for social action (capital)
- Political and economic actors compete for social position and resources in the process of change within the field of food (access, availability and utilization), while consumers wish to increase their sovereignty, using different strategies (coping behavior)
- Physical position within the city correlates with the social position within the field

Food system and culture in transition



Price developments of two major staple food items from 2007-2009, Retail Hyderabad

Challenging food security – changes in availability, access and utilization

- Population growth, land degradation and industrial growth impose pressure on peri-urban food production around Hyderabad
- Aggravating factors are frequent regional climate phenomena, rising demand for bio-fuel crops and mismanagement resulting in **Food price crises**
- Spatial differentiation and restructuring of urban food provisioning system
- Decentralized commercial centers, rising options for eating out and shopping → restrictions for small scale businesses and street vendors
- Displacement of traditional markets and infrastructure
- Malnutrition vs. Overnutrition → Increase in non-communicable diseases
- Inefficient distribution systems → 30% of population in Hyderabad is malnourished

Research approach and procedure

Step 1: Stakeholder Analysis to investigate power relations and the organization of social structure (field of food)

Step 2: Panel survey used to compile an inventory of lower middle class households' lifestyles (consumption habits, health status and financial assets)

Step 3: Analysis of the food system through expert and semi-structured household interviews to examine the quality and dimension of change processes within the food system and culture (vulnerability context)

Step 4: Qualitative interviews on household level (+PRA) to detect emic risk perceptions and analyses and coping strategies in order to evaluate concepts of nutrition and health, the food security status and practices of managing change (considering role of [group] habitus/capitals)

Way forward...

- Finishing data analysis
- Conceptualization of session for a **school curriculum** – addressing not only food intake, but lifestyle, embracing environmental and social aspects
- Development of **consumer protection strategies**

