

Tools for the Formalization of Informal Constructions in Self-Made Cities in the Greater European Region: Challenges and Steps Forward

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SUMMARY

Since 2007, ongoing international research has been initiated with the goal of identifying the causes, size, type and impact of informal construction that has recently led to the development of self-made cities in parts of the greater European Region, specifically in Eastern and Southern Europe. Since then, formalization projects have been started in some of the affected countries. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic crisis has had an increased impact on the economies of most countries adding new challenges to those already existing in the self-made cities that require urgent attention.

Further international research on the topic has assessed and recorded the accumulated experience derived from the pandemic responses resulting in the compilation of two policy and technical tools aiming to support interested governments in formalizing informal constructions and increasing resilience in the self-made cities: (a) the Guidelines for Formalization of Informal Constructions, and (b) the Covid-19 Recovery Action Plan for Informal Settlements in the UNECE Region, both published by UNECE in 2019 and 2023. These tools are accompanied by e-training courses aiming to train decision-makers, involved professionals, researchers, etc.

Unfortunately, little progress has been achieved in formalizing and increasing resilience in the self-made cities in the region, and challenges are on the rise primarily due to the sequential and overlapping occurrence of global crises. These include climate change-related and other natural and manmade disasters, such as extreme weather events, megafires, floods, earthquakes, rising cost of living, global inflation, the two wars in Ukraine and Gaza, and the unstable political and economic situation. This paper aims to (a) raise awareness and provide clear knowledge about formalization and resilience challenges in the self-made cities in the greater European region, as well as the available tools, and to (b) outline a methodology for future research on monitoring the progress in

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increasing resilience in the self-made cities, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Agenda 2030. It also provides an update on the formalization progress in some UNECE countries derived from recent research in the region.

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