



The Rockefeller Foundation marks its 100th year in 2013. Our mission, unchanged since 1913, is to promote the well-being of mankind throughout the world.

As part of our centennial activities, we will soon launch *The Rockefeller Foundation's Informal City Dialogues* in the cities of Accra, Bangkok, Chennai, Lima, Metro Manila and Nairobi –cities we chose because of their rich and ongoing discussion about informality and urbanization. The *Dialogues* will explore the role of informality in fostering inclusion and building resilience, and co-create scenarios for the future of each of these cities in 2040.

The majority of people in the world now live in cities, creating new vulnerabilities to health and economic well-being, and placing greater stresses on individuals, communities and regions. Taking advantage of the entrepreneurship and human energy in cities, The Rockefeller Foundation promotes opportunities for those whose well-being is most threatened, by rethinking current institutions, and inventing new structures and interaction and bottom-up governance to achieve equitable growth and build resilience.

The informal city is alive in nearly all cities in the Global South, flourishing behind an unmarked fault line that excludes it from the formal city. While the informal city pervades –in informal livelihoods, informal transportation, informal settlements, and the informal economy –it is most visible in the spatial divide marking the large areas of inadequate infrastructure in the urban fabric. It is also delineated by exclusionary policy and the lack of services and investments. At best, the informal city is treated with benign neglect by the formal city and is completely ignored in planning or policy. Often, the relationship is marked by open hostility and violence.

Away from the visible divide, the actual fault line is porous, with the formal and informal interweaving in the life of the city. Many residents who live in informal settlements work in the formal economy, many who live in the formal districts find their livelihoods in the informal economy. Households may have members working in both the formal and the informal city. In addition to these economic and living conditions, there are multiple other dimensions to the informal city, expressed in a broad spectrum of activities and urban networks, from the barter of goods and services to contractual and supply arrangements; from odd jobs and freelancing on the internet to domestic and home care workers; from street trading to small manufacturing enterprises embedded in regional or international supply chains.

The reality is that formal city cannot exist without the informal city. In cities of the Global South, the informal economy is estimated to account for as much as 40% of GDP, informal settlements are home to as much as 25% of the urban population, and informal transport provides mobility for upwards of 60% of the populace. The OECD estimates that half the workers of the world—close to 1.8 billion people—hail from the informal sector. Paraphrasing the late C.K. Prahalad, *the informal city is the bottom of the pyramid that holds up the formal city.* The Foundation believes that the informal city will play an essential role in transforming our cities into engines of opportunity and social and economic mobility.

The Objectives of the Dialogues

The Rockefeller Foundation's Informal City Dialogues seeks to understand the relationship between the formal and informal in our cities and to envision a different, more inclusive and resilient future. The Foundation's partners for this work are [Forum for the Future](#), [Next City](#) and respected local institutions in each city.

Through the *Dialogues*, we hope to:

1. Begin a local and international conversation on the role of informality in building inclusive and resilient cities.
2. Foster understanding of the symbiotic relationship between the formal and informal city.
3. Understand the forces that are driving change in each city and in cities in general, focusing on how these forces will interact with formality and informality to shape the future of the city.
4. Imagine and create narratives of the future of each city in 2040.
5. Foster a wider conversation around the narratives so as to inspire positive change in communities and institutions; in policies and practice.
6. Surface and encourage innovations that will help cities build on the strengths of the informal city to achieve a more inclusive and resilient future.

In each city, the *Dialogues* will involve a diverse group of citizens representing public, private, civic, industry, non-profits, local philanthropies, workers, street vendors, urban poor groups, academe, women and youth who will consider scenarios for the future of their own city. They will explore the forces driving or resisting change in their city. Together they will tell the future stories of life in their city –of living and working in their home city in 2040. They will take these stories to a broader audience, engaging the whole city in a conversation about the shared future. They will also come together to identify, build or propose an innovation that will help their city achieve a more inclusive and resilient future. The proposed innovation will compete with proposals from the other cities for the *Informal City Dialogues Urban Innovation Grant Pool*.

The *Dialogues* will begin in January 2013 and conclude in September 2013 with a global dialogue on the findings at the Foundation's Bellagio Conference Center.

The Foundation and its partners will share the lessons, insights and innovations from the *Dialogues* with the global audience and the Foundation will use it to shape its agenda to Transform Cities: Embracing Urbanization to Catalyze Equity.

Our Local Partners:

- Accra: [African Center for Economic Transformation](#)
- Bangkok: [Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Chulalongkorn University](#)
- Chennai: [Transparent Chennai](#) (with the [Madras Institute for Development Studies](#))
- Lima: [Foro Nacional Internacional](#)
- Metro Manila: [Ateneo School of Government](#)
- Nairobi: [Institute for Economic Affairs](#)