The Large Cities Statistics Project - A gateway to the creation of a dialogue among the world's large cities on sustainability problems

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On the eve of the 21st century cities seem to be both the problem facing, and the key to, the world's development. Furthermore, it is in and around cities that socio-economic disparities and environmental distress accumulate and poles of progress and innovation emerge.

As two large UN-summits, the Rio-Conference and Habitat II passed, both with sustainable development as the most prominent point on their respective agenda, a lot has been achieved in awareness-raising regarding the main problems of sustainable urban development world-wide. However in terms of quantifying sustainability problems of the city's development process as well as in terms of creating a world-wide communication process among those concerned - i.e. the cities - on urban problems of sustainable development, there was still a gap to fill. LCSP launched in 1993 aims to provide such a process in the context of a net to generate new and process existing data and dialogue.

The bottom-up approach of LCSP involving all large cities world-wide in the project, by addressing them with a questionnaire on the one hand and by making available to each city the data of the other participating cities on the other, has been crucial to the initiation of such a dialogue.

In the present situation there is an urgent need of quantification, analysis and solutions concerning sustainable urban development accompanied by unsolved methodological problems resulting to a large extent from the international perspective. A first step would be to identify, how the rules that govern statistics change when the angle from which to observe problems switches from a national to an international context.

A selection of topics from LCSP - population growth, traffic, housing, unemployment and watersupply - which are crucial to sustainable urban development, will be presented on the basis of LCSP-data.