

The creation of futures: models and ideals in planning African cities

Visions, ideals and models of urban space and of technical infrastructures guide urban planning as a field where imagined futures of cities are explicated and negotiated. Following Jennifer Robinson's claim to see African cities as "ordinary cities" (2002: 533) that need to be treated as a subject of urban studies in their own right the study of the underlying planning visions, ideals and models in urban Africa is of major importance. The built environment and the infrastructures of African cities are shaped by circulating urban and technological ideals, engineering concepts and the corresponding planning principles, which they inscribe into their physical and institutional form and which they modify and "appropriate" according to local conditions. At the same time, the place-specific conditions of African cities and their dynamic development patterns shape the evolution of new circulating ideals and models.

This panel invites papers that provide conceptual and empirical insights into the production and evolution of urban and technological visions, ideals and planning models in urban Africa. More specifically, the focus is on the manifold negotiations over the translation of these visions and models in African cities and thus their incorporation into the urban system, as well as their appropriation and refusal under the place specific conditions of urbanity in Africa. The aim is to discuss these processes of translation of urban and infrastructural visions, ideals and planning models from multidisciplinary perspectives. In order to facilitate discussion based on a common ground, the panel addresses the following core questions:

- How have circulating urban and technological visions, models and ideals shaped urban planning systems in Africa? Do urban realities in Africa potentially shape the emergence of new ideals and models?
- In which ways is the circulation of these visions, models and ideals interrelated with the processes of urbanization in Africa historically and today?
- What are the impacts of these models, ideals and visions on African urban forms and urban infrastructure systems?

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