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Urbanism in the Global South Conference:
Building New Geographies of Development

RoomSG1/SG2,Alison Richard Building, University of Cambridge | 26th June 2017

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UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Department of Politics and International Studies

EMMANUEL COLLEGE

Murray Edwards College
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About the Conference

Cities continue to play a defining role in shaping the landscapes, capital and people of our world today. Urban theory and policy have long attempted to define, quantify and explain the practices of everyday urbanity, as well as citizens' affect. Recent debates have forced a redefinition of 'cityness' and the agglomeration of the urban experience, especially in cities of the Global South. Ordinary cities have now come to contest the perceived dominance of global cities, where theorisation from the South seeks to deconstruct the hegemony of traditional urban epistemologies.

While critiques of area-based theorisation increase and 'planetary urbanisation' seeks to render Southern theory obsolete; the 'worlding' of cities has now come into force alongside calls to look at 'global urbanisation' as more than the sum of its parts.

Yet, in the face of international directives and Global Urban Agendas, cities of the South, have continually proven the necessity of localising interventions, countering blanket theorisations and creating innovative solutions from below. Cities such as Manila, Buenos Aires, and Johannesburg among others continually illustrate new forms of contention, governance and nature relationships that disavow accepted conceptualisations. As such, it seems imperative to understand organic trends of urbanism(s) that emerge from grounded empirical research.

This conference will thus bring together case studies, re-theorisations and snapshots of the urban experience designed to tackle pressing questions across Southern cities. These include- What are the new geographies of theory and development in these cities? How is the production of space realised by capitalist endeavours, networks of the marginalised and urban imaginaries? What forms of informal practices persist and co-produce new roles for the state and non-state actors? How are mobilisations disrupting the violent order of participation models?

Welcome Note

We would like to extend a warm welcome to you at the **Urbanism in the Global South: Building New Geographies of Development** conference in Cambridge.

This conference will bring together case studies, re-theorisations and snapshots of the urban experience in cities of the Global South designed to tackle pressing questions such as- What are the new geographies of theory and development in these cities? How is the production of space realised by capitalist endeavours, networks of the marginalised and urban imaginaries? What forms of informal practices persist and co-produce new *roles* for the state and non-state actors? How are mobilisations disrupting the violent order of participation models?

Some of these issues will be explored throughout the day by the four panels on:

- -Urban Theory and Practice – Deconstructing Uneven Epistemologies, Hegemony and Southern Re-interpretation
- Informality, Urban Space and Neolibersation
- Rethinking Urban and Regional Governance: The expanding role of state and non-state actors in cities of the Global South
- "Partici-polis" – Cities, Contestations and Citizenship

We were unanimous in deciding Professor Jennifer Robinson as our keynote speaker, and we are delighted that she agreed to deliver the keynote highlighting the emerging approaches in Global Urbanisms with empirical cases from Johannesburg, London and Shanghai. We have a great line-up of speakers researching on a wide range of topics on Latin American, South Asian, African and Middle-Eastern cities.

We have been hugely impressed by the diversity and high standard of submissions we received for the conference and we hope that the presentations and discussions will be both stimulating and informative. We would also like to draw your attention to the photo exhibition that showcases the artistic contribution by our photo-essay presenters from Mumbai, Cairo and Johannesburg. We hope that you will enjoy reading more about their work. We are all grateful for the contributions of our keynote speakers, speakers, photo-essays presenters and session chairs.

As conveners, we know that the success of the conference depends ultimately on the many people who have worked with us in ideating, planning and organising the event. We would like to especially thank our academic committee members, organising committee, staff from Department of Politics and International Studies (POLIS) and Centre for Latin American Studies (CLAS), all of whom have invested an enormous amount of time and effort into making this conference run smoothly. We are so grateful to our sponsors – Department of Politics and International Studies, Centre for Latin American Studies, Emmanuel College, and Murray Edwards College, Cambridge for making this event possible.

We look forward to meeting you in Cambridge in June at what promises to be a most stimulating and enjoyable event.

Noura Wahby, Shreyashi Dasgupta and Fernando Bucheli

Convenors, Urbanism in the Global South Conference 2017

Conference Agenda

9:00-9:30	Registration
9:30-9:40	Welcome Note
9:40-10:10	Keynote Speaker: *Professor Jennifer Robinson*
	Department of Geography, University College London –UCL-
10:10-10:30	Coffee break
10:30-11:45	**Urban Theory and Practice- Deconstructing Uneven Epistemologies, Hegemony and Southern Re-interpretation**
	Moderator : *Dr.Aseem Inam*, Cardiff University
	Giulia Torino, University of Cambridge
	Alexandra Panman, University of Oxford
	Bipashyee Ghosh, University of Sussex
11:45-13:00	**Informality, Urban Space and Neoliberalisation**
	Moderator : *Dr. Maria Abreu*, University of Cambridge
	Discussant : *Dr. Felipe Hernandez*, University of Cambridge
	Dr. Tanya Zack, University of Witwatersand
	Nayab Jan, London School of Economics and Political Science
	Samir Harb, The University of Manchester
	Yang Song, King's College London
13:00-14:00	Lunch Break + Photo Exhibition
14:00-15:15	**Rethinking Urban and Regional Governance: The expanding role of state and non-state actors in cities of the Global South**
	Moderator : *Dr. Graham Denyer Willis*, University of Cambridge
	Aisha Ahmad, University of Oxford
	Claudia Gastrow, University of Johannesburg
	Maha Rafi Atal, University of Cambridge
15:15- 15:30	Coffee break
15:30-16:45	**"Partici-polis"*- Cities, Contestation and Citizenship**
	Moderator : *Dr. Charlotte Lemanski*, University of Cambridge
	*Dr. Ahmad El-Atrash,*UNHabitatPalestine
	Dr. Sam Halvorsen, University of Cambridge
	MichaelReiche, Bauhaus-Universitat Weimar
	Pauline Niesseron, London School of Economics and Political Science
16:45-17:00	Closing Remarks

Keynote speech

Jennifer Robinson

Professor of Human Geography at University College London

Debating Global Urbanisms: beyond the binaries in comparative urban politics

Abstract

There has been a strong engagement with calls to globalise urban studies, with a range of different approaches emerging. This paper draws on a reformulated comparative methodology, oriented to the specific spatialities of urbanisation, in order to take forward current debates in global urbanism. Firstly, I take issue with some of the ways in which the fully theoretical contribution of post-colonial interventions has been undermined by contrasting wider processes, theorisations and concepts with supposedly a-theoretical or hybridising particularisms. I will insist that building understandings of the urban from somewhere, starting from any city or any urban process, is an explicitly theoretical manoeuvre which cannot be dismissed (or embraced) as a-conceptual. At the same time, insofar as comparative methodologies rest on the radical revisability of concepts, the status of wider theoretical claims about the urban, or urbanisation processes, is always in question.

I argue that the project of decentring, or provincializing, urban studies and urban theory urgently requires that we move beyond emerging false binaries to cultivate cultures of theoretical debate which are open to diverse contributions to the field within the ambit of scholarly practices. Secondly, I explore how comparative tactics can provide a basis for instigating new and distinctive analyses of the urban which potentially speak to the challenges of urbanisation globally, even though their reach and ambition in the first instance might be located, modest and revisable. Analytical conversations across a diverse array of urban contexts serve to keep the nature of the urban in question, as well as to produce, revitalise and expand analytical registers. I will draw on examples here from a collaborative, comparative research project (Johannesburg, London and Shanghai) which seeks to disturb analytical segmentations across wealthier and poor contexts, put new kinds of insights emerging from these contexts into wider circulation and, in the process, destabilise key conventional repertoires of analysis. The shared work of recrafting concepts and producing urban theorizations fit for a global urban world awaits.

Panel 1

Urban Theory and Practice- Deconstructing Uneven Epistemologies, Hegemony and Southern Re-interpretation

Moderator   : Dr. Aseem Inam

Overview

Accepted theorisations on the question of 'the urban' have been rife in academic disciplines, international development interventions and local state policies and practice. Traditionally emerging in Western-based theory, urban theory has been rife with false binaries to explain the urban condition. These include differences between the North and South, formal and informal dichotomies, and a hierarchy of Global cities (Davis, 2005). In recent years, scholars contested these set categories and advocated for the inclusion of theories from the South such as through Southern area-based urbanisms, comparative epistemologies, placing cities 'within a world of cities' among others (Roy, 2005; Robinson, 2007). Recent criticisms of some of these approaches (Scott et al., 2015) has seen some scholars moving towards globalising theorisations of planetary urbanisation and global theorisations as a means to go beyond the North-South binary (Merrifield, 2014). Yet, as Global Urban Agendas continue to determine local policies of Southern cities (Sattherwaithe, 2016), it is essential to question whether these approaches contribute adequately to the understanding of Southern Urbanisms.

This panel incorporates papers that provide a critical reading of these approaches and contribute to the dearth of empirical cases from countries of the South. The first of these is the case of Bogota, where uneven geographical development is discussed within the scope of racial and socio-spatial relations that are often overlooked. An attempt to decolonise research on cities of Latin America is presented, as a means to counter prevailing conceptualisations of urban epistemologies. The same holds true for constructed myths surrounding informality and slums, which have been stigmatised as criminal, poor among others. From the use of the word slum in global development rhetoric, to the empowerment of slum dwellers; slums remain on the receiving end of much urban theorising. The second paper focuses on demystifying one such assumption by asking if all slum dwellers are poor, and if it infact matters. Using case studies from India and Kenya, the paper advocates a more stratified regard to poor areas, which undermines many urban interventions by state and global actors. This links well with the third paper that tackles the Indian government's call to create 'smart cities' across the nation to solidify imaginaries of clean and networked communities. As more countries of the South now strive towards the modernist interpretation of technological utopia, case studies on how communities participate or not in these glass dreams remain vital.

- Davis, D. (2005). Cities in Global Context: A Brief Intellectual History. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 29(1), 92-109.
- Merrifield, A. (2014). *The New Urban Question*, London: Pluto Press.
- Roy, A. (2005). Urban informality: Toward an epistemology of planning. *Journal of the American Planning Association,* 71(2), 147-158.
- Robinson, J. (2007). *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development*. London Routledge.
- Sattherthwaite, D. (2016) 'A new urban agenda?', *Environment and Urbanisation* 28(1)
- Scott, A.J. and Storper, M., 2015, 'The nature of cities: the scope and limits of urban theory', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 39(1), pp1-15.

Whose narratives on urban change? Decolonising the New Urban Agenda: A view from the borderland

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Abstract

Recent scholarship in urban studies and geography has highlighted the predominance of the urban nature of human settlements around the world. Whether originating from the techno-bureaucratic posture of the New Urban Agenda [UN-Habitat, 2016], or from the critical theory postulations on a "planetary urbanization" of society [Brenner and Schmid, 2012], we are now constantly presented with the debate on the global and all-encompassing nature of urbanisation.

However, and especially during the past decade, such universalising theorisations and urban agendas have also been counteracted by scholarly debates in urban studies and geography mainly rooted in cities of the southern hemisphere [in the Anglo-Saxon world, it is worth mentioning Parnell, 2016; Pieterse, 2014; Robinson, 2006; Roy, 2015; Simone, 1994, 2004; among others]. The central argument of their critiques is not only that such homogenising considerations on urbanisation in the global age do not take exhaustively into account the diversity and local specificities of different urban epistemologies outside of the Euro-American ontological (financial) paradigm, but also that their generalising resolutions are acting as a prescriptive, often aggressively neoliberalising force in the determination of what the urban space in "global South" cities is meant to be – according, most often, to a "global North" worldview and understanding of space. Nevertheless, this dichotomous geo-economic division between North and South is not enough to convey the profound divergence in perspectives on the question of space, when dealing with urbanism in cities like Sao Paulo, Jakarta, Mexico City, Kinshasa, Lagos, Cape Town, and others. A more nuanced and multifarious understanding of the hyphenated urban epistemologies beyond the North/South divide must therefore be investigated.

Starting from this operational framework, my contribution will examine some among the most notable decolonising contributions from Latin America, through the lens of the ethnographic fieldwork that I carried out in the peri-urban South-western border of Bogotá in 2014. The main scope here is to start suggesting a conceptual framework for Latin American urban studies that triggers more critical dialectics between the ongoing debates on the urbanisation of the world, the persisting conditions of socio-spatial fragmentation and ethno-racial divides of Latin American metropolises, and the neoliberalising regimes of uneven urban development that started to gain considerable momentum since the 1980s and 1990s.

Are Slum Dwellers Poor? Does it Matter?

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Abstract

The terms 'poor' and 'slum dweller' are often used as though they were synonymous, obscuring the diversity of households that are included under these two terms. Yet is it really the case that slum households are poor? International data on poverty and slum residence suggests that the links

between poverty and slum residence are not straightforward. We probe this by drilling down into a case study city: Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Drawing on a unique new data set, we build a detailed picture of living standards across slum/non-slum households, and find that the income level of households living in slum conditions range widely in our case study city. We tease out the role that measurement decisions play in these results, by comparing the profile of poverty across three different definitions of slums, including one that draws on new methods for identifying slum settlements through satellite data. We find that in all cases, the majority of slum households are not poor.

Does it matter that slum dwellers are not poor? In asking this provocative question we aim to disentangle the rhetoric from the conceptual role that poverty plays in the academic and policy work on slums. We argue that, in theoretical terms, it does not matter as there is a strong case for understanding urban poverty in more than monetary terms alone, and that the slum index provides an important complement for this wider understanding of living standards in cities. Yet there are implications for policy design: the empirical data presented in this paper suggests that improved understanding of the complex trade-offs that households make in their location decisions is needed to support more nuanced policy targeting.

Reimagining the process of urban transformation: A discourse analysis of the 'smart city' socio-technical imaginary in India

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Abstract

In the last decade, plans to make cities 'smart' have become increasingly common in global south. Creation of smart cities is argued to require interventions in several 'application domains' including 'transport and mobility' (Neirotti et al, 2014). Focussing on people's mobility in the smart city mission of India's national government and in smart city proposal of New Town Kolkata, we approach government's visions and plans as 'socio-technical imaginaries' (Jasanoff and Kim, 2015). We study how smart city imaginaries in India, dedicated towards creating "sustainable and inclusive cities across India" (MoUD, 2015), 'imagine' the process of urban transformation, using a framework composed of three conceptual lenses. We ask how distributed, democratic and articulated is the envisioned process of urban transformation according to national and local smart city imaginaries? The conceptual lenses pay direct attention to the imaginaries' inclusion and promotion of diverse citizens' initiatives, of citizen engagement, and registration of voices of the most marginalized citizens. In order to empirically develop the conceptual lenses, we rely on careful review of national mission guidelines, draft and final versions of city level proposals, media reports together with semi-structured interviews with the city government officials, urban planners, civil society organisations as well as poor and marginalised citizens. The interviews were conducted during two stretches of fieldwork in Kolkata, in 2015 and 2016, by the first author. Preliminary results suggest that decision-making power remained concentrated in the hands of a few actors, despite a detailed design of (ceremonial) citizen engagement; disconnects between spatial priorities and technological choices of proposed mobility initiatives and citizen's needs. Our research highlights the importance of holding state imaginaries to account, in terms of their envisioning of transformation as distributed, democratic and articulated. It also raises critical questions about the enactment of current and future urban imaginaries in India and beyond.

Panel 2.

Informality, Urban Space and Neoliberalisation

Moderator   : Dr. Maria Abreu

Discussant   : Dr. Felipe Hernandez

Overview

This session is primarily concerned with the reactions and responses on how urban spaces are reclaimed and contested in the Global South. Urban space is shaped by the constant negotiation of identities where entrenched inequalities overlap with developmentalist pretensions of sanitation and neoliberal growth. Divisions of the urban space transcend metaphors of polarization and fragmentation (Sabatini, 2003), introducing narratives of contemporary dynamics of 'spaces without place' where dwellers face contradictions to radically enhance the production of inclusive cities (Soja, 2010; Fainstein, 2011). Through a process of adaptation, the urban space in the Global South ends up being an amalgam of relations that integrate the emergence of local transformation as well as the redefinition of urban citizenship.

The panel will discuss a set of papers that provocatively examine these elements by looking at how the production and reproduction of urban space alters the social and political norms of the Global South society. The discussion will look at how overlooked dynamics of globalised trade have transformed spaces of urban decay where not only historical sites are renovated but also informality is invigorated as a space for change and adaptation. The panel will delve into how socio-spatial disparities are reproduced in contexts of urban mobility, gender inequality and gentrification. This panel will also pay attention to state practices that embody urban representation in the space, particularly when informality is a state driven process or when nationalistic projects build collective imaginaries through urban representations.

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- Escobar, A. (2008). Territories of difference Place, movements, life, redes. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Featherstone, D. (2011). Resistance, Space and Political Identities: The Making of Counter-Global Networks. John Wiley & Sons.
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- Soja, E. W. (2010). Seeking Spatial Justice. Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press.

Below the radar

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Abstract

Over the last fifteen years Johannesburg has become an intense wholesale and retail centre for sub-Saharan Africa – with billions of Rands' worth of fast fashion sold annually in the traditional CBD and over 20 large Chinese shopping malls west of the inner city. It is a vast low-end globalised trade that has transformed space and pioneered a retail phenomenon in the inner city. And it pulsates from informalised spaces. Modernist buildings that have outlived their usefulness as office space and medical suites have been appropriated and converted at a rapid rate to secret shopping centres hosting over two thousand cupboard sized shops. But this cash economy, its logistics and its services, operate below the radar of formalised planning and regulation. It is not factored into City economic development strategies. It is not supported and is even undermined by municipal policing services. And the unstoppable shopping experience is compromised by strained public infrastructure. So much so that formal developers are taking a new interest in the area.

Drawing on the first spatial mapping of this trade, this paper examines the distribution of shops, goods, transport logistics, accommodation and courier patterns that service cross border shoppers in Johannesburg's inner city. It filters into this relevant findings of a study that is currently in progress – a survey of 400 shoppers and 400 retailers who sell to them as well as in depth interviews of select cross border shoppers and retailers. The paper maps the clustering of goods and services in this area-which are a response to local conditions as well as to socio-political factors in ethnic entrepreneurial communities in the district. The informalisation of space through appropriation as well as the defensive architectural practices are described against a reading of the economic and political dynamics of the shopping hub. Through thick description this paper suggests that this informal platform hosts a transnational and global network that is leading inner city spatial transformation.

Selfies, Streets, Sidewalks : Honour and Public Space in Pakistan

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Abstract

When I left Pakistan for London, bittersweet as it was, the hint of relief was both surprising and overwhelming. For those who may not be familiar, freedom is a contested commodity in Pakistan. Over the course of the year spent in London, I found in the streets and parks of this city, pleasure beyond description. The relationship I developed with London while navigating the city on my own, being mobile on foot, unpoliced and visibly active in its public spaces, was intimate and emotional. This project reflects, then, this desire for freedom and emancipation in the ordinary places of the city.

However, what I found frustrating, particularly within western academic discourse surrounding urban public space and place-making, was the reification of culture as the solution to contemporary 'placeless' cities. This contrasts heavily with my understanding of culture, which I perceive as perhaps the biggest inhibitor towards creating inclusive public spaces in Pakistani cities. In this project, I argue how Pakistani culture, particularly with its dichotomisation between the honourable 'private' woman and the dishonourable 'public' woman, has fractured the relationship between women and the city.

To illustrate the issue, I use the fascinating case study of the Girls at Dhabas* movement, a collective of feminist cultural activists, who are using tea, selfies and interstitial urbanism to question these archaic cultural attitudes. I focus on three aspects of their movement; their use of tea and dhabas as a means to radically reframe cultural perceptions surrounding public space, their novel use of the self portrait, or 'selfie', to register, document and celebrate their presence in public space, and their use of physical incursions, usually in the form of pop up or temporary urbanism, to map out alternative urban imaginaries. This paper is a result of intimate dialogue and discussion with the G@D movement, as well as a thorough examination of their visual content and social media pages. In addition, I conducted literature reviews to help me wholly understand the movement's impact in terms of the alteration of socio-spatial relationships that have resulted due to their awe inspiring journey.

*Dhabas are roadside tea shops in South Asia almost entirely frequented by men.

Urban and social imaginary of an unfinished project of autonomy

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Abstract

This paper will focus urban imaginary that has been produced during the Palestinian Authority (PA) state-building program "Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State" that was initiated in 2009 (Palestinian Authority, 2009).This contribution will focus on the city of Ramallah as a case study where such transformations took place as part of the state-building project. The city has been re-imagined as the contemporary example of how the state might look like. Unlike other Palestinian cities in the West Bank, Gaza, or even Jerusalem. Ramallah emerges as a unique case where the Palestinian urban imagery and new spaces has been articulated and realised materially as a process of instituting the collective imaginary. Furthermore, this can be mapped through a new mode of spatial production (market dynamics, public spaces, state infrastructure, business districts, investment project, national symbolic building, city landscape).

On the theoretical level, I will argue that this particular moment of transition (between 2006 and the present) should be read as a period of instituting new "social imaginary" drawing on the conceptual framework developed by Cornelius Castoriadis (Castoriadis, 1997, 1987; Castoriadis and Curtis, 1997) . Specifically, on the resultant geography looking at it as a praxises of creating an autonomous state through what Castoriadis frames as the "radical imaginary". Therefore, conceptualizing such urban conversion though the notion of constituting the new as "a project of autonomy" opposing the heteronomy. In this regard the project aims to understand 'the urban' as a process of "social imaginary signification". Furthermore it is an attempt to understand the urban transformation as a consequence of processes that are driving new forms of social behaviour in the city and practices of everyday urban life.

The disappearing urban villages' -- A case study of Chinese migrants' encounters in the process of urbanisation

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Abstract

Urbanisation in countries of the Global South has been facing challenges as rapid growth of urbanised population has led to huge housing problem. In contemporary China, over 150 millions of migrants from rural areas flock to cities each year, leading to significant demand of urban housing. 'Urban village', a particular type of informal housing, provides an important source of rental housing for the migrant population. Although have been widely criticised for its illegal building, unsatisfied living conditions, and irregular contract works, urban villages remain the most accessible housing for whom cannot be accommodated through China's formal housing system. However, fate of many urban villages is on the line since redevelopment and demolishment of urban villages are taking place in Chinese major cities in recent years.

The original research presented in this paper was conducted from June to October 2016 as part of my PhD thesis focusing on Chinese internal migrants' identity under institutional reforms. It is a case study of urban villages in provincial capital city Hangzhou. In this research, over fifty semi-structured interviews and ten in-depth interviews with migrants, local cadres and villagers from two urban villages were conducted. This study finds that redevelopment of urban villages accompanied with gentrification which plays a strategic approach for local government to maximise land value has already threatened thousands of migrants' stabilisation in cities and caused social polarisation. Lives of migrant labourers are imperiled by not having access to cheap urban housing while the urban economy will in turn lose out by a lack of labour force. It is a scenario of China, but could mirror the urbanisation of many other transition economies in the Global South.

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Panel 3.

Rethinking Urban and Regional Governance: The expanding role of state and non-state actors in cities of the Global South

Moderator   : Dr. Graham Denyer Willis

Overview

The last two decades have witnessed a significant change from a situation where government was the sole representative in the planning and policy-making process to the involvement of various actors other than the state in making decisions about how cities should be governed. This shift from government to governance, as it is commonly known, emphasises the interactions and power relations between different state (Legislature, Executive and Judiciary) and non state (private sector, real estate developers, intermediaries and civil society organizations) actors (Stoker 1998). These emerging coalitions in the urban and regional governance process has reconfigured the power relations and opened new spaces of contestations and collaborations in the cities of the Global South. How does state create spaces of exception and ad hoc arrangements? What are the different ways in which the state and non-state actors compete or collaborate against each other? Is there an established urban regime in play?

This panel will address some of these questions on the expanding role of state and non-state actors through various empirical case studies in the cities of the Global South. The presentation on Philippines highlights how different stakeholders negotiate diverse relations, structures and regulations in accessing Manila's busiest urban highway. The study then connects these experiences and reflections from the ground and links it to the master planning process. Whereas the research on

Lahore's peri-urban land acquisition brings out the complexity of regulatory frameworks used for private accumulation. This study uses the lens of judiciary to understand the construction of upcoming luxury private housing schemes in the city. In Africa, the study questions how different actors like the state and the planners continue to play a significant role in the production of African urban space as well as misconstruing the ways in which urbanism is closely tied to the state practices that exist in African cities. The final paper on this panel uses a comparative framework in three company towns in India, Kenya and South Africa to explore the governance process and the relationship between actors and corporations.

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Land in Lahore: A Socio-Legal Study of Land Acquisition, Housing and Accumulation by Juridical Dispossession

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Abstract

My paper, based on three months of fieldwork in the summer of 2016, relates to the acquisition of peri-urban land for the construction of luxury private housing schemes in Lahore, Pakistan. Overall, I explore how the proliferation of laws and rules that constitute the regulatory infrastructure surrounding land in urban Lahore are used and misused when these housing schemes are constructed. I use insights from socio-legal literature that explores the "in-between legal spaces" where agents of "institutionalized authority" (i.e. those people that may not be formal legal actors but nonetheless exert legal influence and employ legal authority). I argue accordingly that agents of institutionalized authority in Lahore, namely bureaucrats, real estate brokers and employees of the Lahore Development Authority, exploit regulatory confusion and ambiguity for purposes of accumulation. The theoretical framework I operate within is Harvey's "Accumulation by Dispossession" which has been used widely to describe land expropriation processes in the global south. The theoretical contribution I make is that of "accumulation by juridical dispossession" or the process whereby individuals are dispossessed of their juridical characters and ability to use the law to their advantage when confronted with an obscure and difficult-to-navigate urban regulatory system.

For further clarity, the questions my paper seeks to answer are as follows:

Central Question:

How is law and institutionalized authority used and misused when land is acquired for the construction of private housing schemes in Lahore?

Subsidiary Questions:

1) How do institutionalized authorities use the complexity of regulatory frameworks for private accumulation?

2) Do regulatory complexity and the strategies of action that stem from it dispossess individuals of a legal consciousness and capacity for legal participation that could otherwise impede accumulative practices?

Shadow Cities: Political Power and Urban Planning in Luanda, Angola

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Abstract

Contemporary literature on African cities emphasizes the role of the unofficial, ephemeral and provisional in the production of urban space and experience. While a necessary response to the overwhelmingly negative and developmental tropes through which African urbanism was previously represented, this literature has had the effect of either dismissing or caricaturing the role of players at "the top" such as planners and state institutions. This leaves very little understanding of how these actors continue to play a significant role in the production of African urban space, as well as misconstruing the ways in which urbanism is closely tied to the state practices that exist in African cities. Exploring twenty years of urban planning in Luanda, Angola, this paper draws on anthropological theories of the state to argue that informality and perceived urban decay in Africa is as much produced by state practices as by their absence. The form, materiality and spatiality of cities is shaped by the political systems in in which they emerge. I argue that the Angola's shadow state reveals itself in urban materiality and spatiality as areas of investment and formality parallel sites of elite interest and accumulation. This paper sheds light on the kinds of cities that emerge from the shadow states that characterize governance in much of Africa. It responds to calls for the production of a postcolonial urban theory by arguing that there is a greater need to understand how the nature of political rule in African countries shapes urbanism. In doing this it calls for abandoning idealized notions of Euro-American states that underpin the description of African states' relationships to the production of urban space and materiality.

Are 'Company Towns' Cities?: The Political Geography of CSR in India, Kenya and South Africa

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Abstract

One new development in the organization of human settlements in the Global South is the resurgence of the 'company town.' In these enclaves, companies assume control of housing, health, education, security and other services for their employees and other local residents. This assumption of governing functions serves pragmatic purposes - businesses require infrastructure, security and labor to operate – but it has deep political effects. When corporations take on a governing role, they choose what form of governance to provide. In doing so, they make moral judgments about how people should behave and how society should be organized. When put into practice, these judgments shape not only the economic relations between the company and its stakeholders, but equally, the social and political relations between actors throughout the community. This paper, drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in three 'company towns' in India, Kenya and South Africa, considers the degree to which the political geography of these enclaves can be understood as urban. In particular, while the physical layout of company towns are reminiscent of common patterns of urban planning, these enclaves are most common in extractive industries, and often situated in rural areas where minerals or oil have been found. This urban-rural hybrid has political significance. In political science literature on rural settings, scholars have emphasized the role of territorial control – for example corporate land acquisition - in the creation of political authority. At the same time, scholars of urban development have documented the significance of how space is used; the design of services and infrastructure shapes social relations in a community. Bringing these two literatures together, this chapter argues that corporations' legal control of land and physical organization of the space around them combine to shape the political between the corporate 'rulers' of company towns and the communities they rule.

Panel 4.

"Partici-polis"*- Cities, Contestation and Citizenship

Moderator : Dr. Charlotte Lemanski

Overview

Since the 1990s, 'participatory development' practices have been criticised on multiple levels (Coelho et al. 2013). Participatory planning, private-public partnerships, local budgeting among others were considered the flagships of international development interventions, especially when applied in the urban spheres. Yet critiques against these interventions evoked issues around 'tokenism', manufactured consensus and the contested role of civil societies as a whole. Recent interventions and 'second-generation' participation initiatives embedded in governments' reform agendas do not seem to be much different. The same questions as to who participates, conflicting interests and 'un-civil society', imageries of policy inclusion among others; remain unanswered.

This panel aims to tackle some of these questions and illustrate the face value of participation in policy interventions across the Global South. In the case of Palestine, planning becomes the contested terrain that illustrates the violence of a perceived order. Although 'insurgent citizenship' remains at the core of resistance-based explanations of subaltern tactics, how much is insurgent planning contributing to the neoliberal building of a new Palestine? Is resistance thus a form of participation? Yet, in the case of São Paolo, a public-private partnership that attempted real participation, resulted in a catastrophic symbol of a not-so-public square. This case forces us to reflect on the role of civil society in urban policy-making illustrated by the co-optation of urban collectives, and the domineering state.

This is also reminiscent to the case of Buenos Aires, where a plethora of democratisation and decentralisation endeavours spearheaded by the state have achieved questionable ends. Tracing over 20 years of experimenting, the paper looks at the results of increased neighbourhood structures and contradicting disillusionment with local politics. This brings us to the case of Phnom Penh, where disillusionment was challenged by the collective re-spatialisation of 'Freedom park' in order to raise awareness of societal conflict. As squares and parks across the Global South serve as the culminating terrain of social movements and mobilisations, experiences have impressed the need to understand how these forms of urban contestations can be sustained, inclusive and re-define power in their urban locales.

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Insurgent Planning Practices and Normative Frameworks: The Case of the 'Twilight' Zone, Known as Area C, West Bank and the New Urban Agenda

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Abstract

Development for Palestinian communities as it stands today creates some kind of fearsomely Kafkaesque state of obscurity, ambiguity, and gradual decline for the meaningful role of development. Area C is characterized by formidable challenges of control and territorial contraction that weakens the structure of the foreseen Palestinian statehood. Area C is seen at a 'twilight' zone, a liminal state, at the shadow of the intersection between self-rule and self-determination for the Palestinians. In Area C, there are more Israeli settlers than Palestinians, despite the fact that without Area C, a Palestinian state would be inconceivable. In Area C, the supposedly Israeli-Palestinian innocuous cooperation is indeed a complex project. To understand this truism, one can refer to the spatial planning interventions done for and with Palestinian communities in Area C at the bequest of the international community and in partnership with the Palestinian authorities. To date, 113 local plans for 121 communities in Area C have been prepared to respond to the demolition crisis in place. Despite the proven international quality standards of these plans, only 5 local plans have been approved by the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) out of the submitted plans.

This article will examine the insurgent planning practices done in Area C, and it's interactions with New Urban Agenda that was adopted by the State of Palestine at Habitat III Conference. Actually, Palestine was elected as one of the 5 vice-presidents for Habitat III showing the political will and commitment to use such a normative framework to usher sustainable spatial development. More specifically, this article will address interlinked knowledge gaps. In the context of complex geo-politics and an emergent statehood: how the New Urban Agenda can successfully land in terms of sustainable spatial development; and wherefore the prevailing insurgent planning practices are associated with a stance of doubt.

The political opportunities of urban decentralisation: mobilising local governance in Buenos Aires

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Abstract

Decentralisation – the transfer of political, fiscal and administrative authority from centralised to local bodies - has re-shaped urban governance across Latin America and much of the global south since the 1980s, yet explaining this transformation remains unclear. Much analysis points to the macro-discourses of democratisation and neoliberalism as explanatory factors yet these are difficult to demonstrate empirically and overlook the ambiguous political opportunity structures that determine decentralisation in practice. This is particularly the case for intra-urban (i.e. city-to-neighbourhood) decentralisation that has impacted most large cities in Latin America without a coherent ideological project (e.g. socialist government) driving it. Taking the case of the City of Buenos Aires (CABA),

which has gradually decentralised since 1994, the paper asks: which actors have been the key drivers of this process and what political opportunities have they responded to? This paper integrates existing literature on CABA with a fresh analysis of archives (especially constitutional debates) alongside interviews and participant observation carried out in 2016 in order to explain decentralisation between 1994 and 2017. In examining the political opportunities of decentralisation in CABA it brings together research that emphasises the role of political parties and electoral strategy in decentralisation together with insights from the geography of social movements. It argues that decentralisation is a dynamic spatio-temporal process that unfolds in the intersection of the spatial strategies of political actors and the institutional evolution of urban decentralisation.

Whose Freedom Park? The ongoing struggle for an urban commons in Cambodia.

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Abstract

While spatialised conflicts have always been part of past and current urban development processes in Phnom Penh, Freedom Park became an important venue for many of these conflicts, aiming for instance at the ongoing transformation of the hydraulic system or the beautification of public spaces (regarded as distinct features of neoliberal politics in Cambodia). While there are various themes to look at, this paper aims to shed light on political developments and the struggle for contested spaces which occurred in 2013 and 2014. Sparked by events during and after the general election, Freedom Park, a designated free-speech zone and section of a larger open space, became the epicentre of political conflict and stage for mass protests.

Cambodia's façade democracy is characterised by an autocratic rule and the persistence of informal institutions. One decisive strategy employed by ruling elites to preserve power and wealth distribution schemes is the often exercised expulsion of activists and dissidents from the public sphere. When various opposition groups occupied Freedom Park in 2013 and 2014, their place-making efforts served as a twofold counter-strategy. On the one hand, political power and the very mode urban space is produced and reproduced were challenged. On the other, practices of disobedience stimulated and intensified public interest on ongoing societal conflicts. Especially after Freedom Park was declared a prohibited zone, social media contributed massively to the course of action while challenging common narratives, representations and constructed identities of places. After all, the square was made a place of resistance and anti-government protest. Understood as an actual existing but continuously endangered urban commons, Freedom Park stands as a reterritorialization of collectively appropriated urban space. In this sense, the square developed from a mere venue of protest to the very subject of urban conflict.

Urban Collectives and Local Government in the Renewal of an Emblematic Square: The Case of Largo da Batata in São Paulo, Brazil
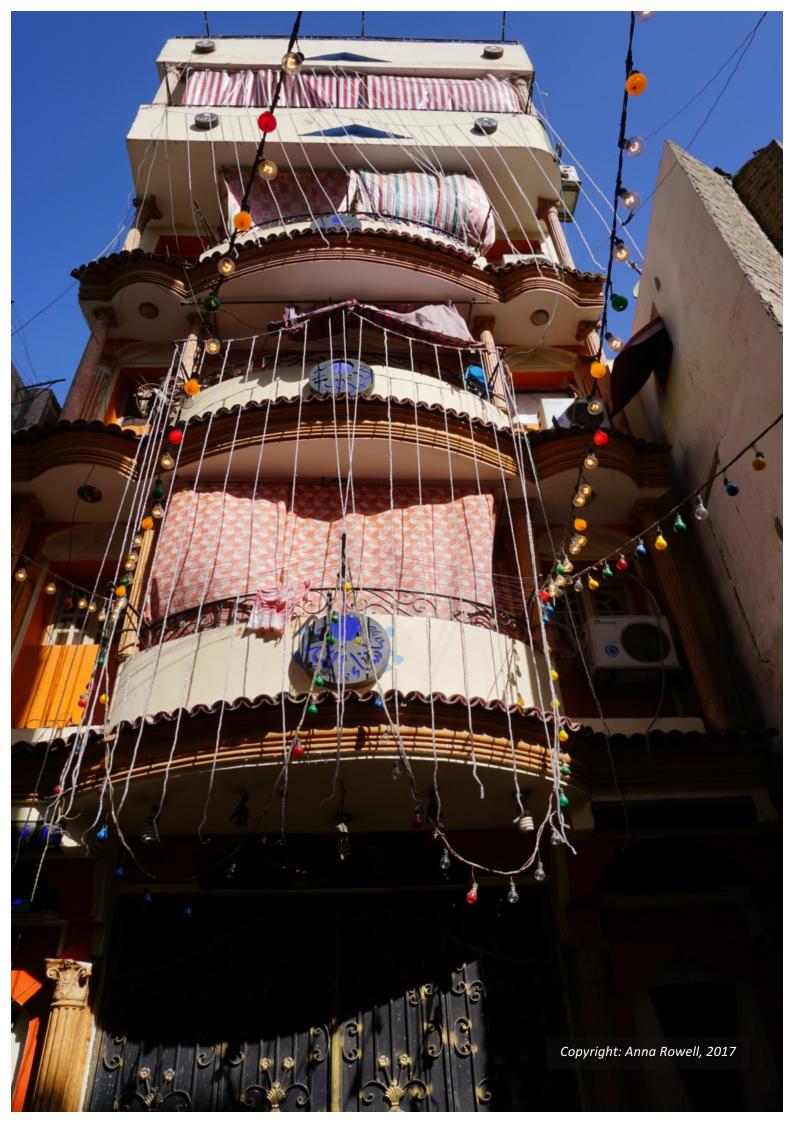
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Abstract

This article uses the case study of a local square in São Paulo, Brazil, to analyse how local government and civil society come together to renovate a public space. The square Largo da Batata was included in a large-scale redevelopment promoted through a public-private partnership that was a disaster when executed but nevertheless led to an interesting collaboration between the local government and urban collectives. This research will demonstrate that a mobilised civil society's role is not so much in opposing the local governments but rather in defining state practices. Moreover, it shows that the state has an active role to play in advancing a progressive urban agenda. On a wider scale, this article will contribute to the international discussion that seeks a post-neoliberal theoretical terrain that would allow a wider theorization of urban processes.

Photo Essays

The Normalization Of Structural Violence

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Abstract

'Ex-information Commissioner Shailesh Gandhi's petition in the High Court had stated 87 rehabilitation projects across Mumbai where there were accusations against the builder for forgery, grabbing public lands, and listing imaginary individuals to increase the number of free sale flats.'

This was in 2008.

All the photographs are from 2010-2015, where residents across Mumbai, in formal to informal settlements have accused builders for forgery, grabbing public lands, and massive corruption, and have contested for public space, have contested for their own citizenship.

The mainstream media doesn't report their struggles against the builder lobby, which stretches from the local tout, to the manipulative NGOs, to the 'public servants' in the government agencies and to the massive real estate industry that has turned Mumbai into one of the most expensive places to live in the world.

The middle class and above has dehumanized anyone in a 'slum' as a cheat, a crook. And the Courts have passed orders that justify fraud and forgery in the name of development; an amorality brought on by globalization, by neoliberalism.

Yet through local resistance, referred mostly as 'people's movement', some of these places still exist, and they continue to fight for affordable housing and self-development.

This is a story of them.

Golibar, Ganesh Krupa Society (living)

Golibar, Ambevadi (demolished)

Ambujwadi, Malad (living)

Ambedkar Nagar, Vile Parle (demolished)

Sion Koliwada (demolished)

BheemChhaya (living)

SantNirankari Nagar, Chembur (living)

Mahatma Phule Nagar II, Chembur (living)

Premnagar, Goregaon, (demolished)

Siddarth Colony, Bandra (demolished)

GanpathPatil Nagar, Dahisar, (living)

Ambedkar Road, Khar, (demolished)

Extraction exploitation and expansion in the city of gold

Photographer   : Mark Lewis

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Abstract

Across the inner city of Johannesburg leftover space, carcases of buildings are appropriated irregularly for living and work. These activities that occur in the gaps of the planned and regulated city offer spaces of innovation and of experimentation with new ways of creating livelihoods and of city making. They rely on exploitation of city services - whether through water extracted from a storm water drains at a taxi rank or electricity wired illegally into a one bedroomed apartment that houses 34 people. They depend on extraction – of waste from suburban bins, which is pulled by sheer body mass across large stretches of the city by unpaid brigades of waste pickers or even of thimble fulls of gold harnessed with great effort from mine dumps skirting the inner city. These marginal activities in invisible spaces of the city are sites of extreme labour – of informal butchers who chop flesh from and commodify every part of cow heads, and of astute economic enterprise of women who convert taxi drivers into customers for their array of cooked food. These are intense, dense spaces of competition for a foothold in Johannesburg.

And on the fringe of this same city a bold formalised real estate expansion continues to taunt the edges of the sprawling city. Houses and apartment blocks sit isolated in bleak landscapes where new developments promise a middle class suburban dream. And where the first marking of territory for first time homeowners in these edge city spaces is a wall, a fence, or a gate….

This photo essay by Mark Lewis juxtaposes the informalised trends of the inner city with the forces of expansion on Johannesburg's northwestern edge.

Transient Constructs: Cyclical Orchestrations in Informal Cairo

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Abstract

In uniquely post-Arab Spring, Middle Eastern contexts, streets are where expressions of collective identity flourish within layered structures of governance and control.

Egypt's governing systems have, for many years, neglected to tackle urban inequality, particularly since the political turmoil of the January 2011 revolution. Against such a backdrop, this photo essay seeks to understand how a city adapts to spatial and temporal mobility, through a particular sector of Egyptian society and their ritual inhabitation of the city' streets. The 'mawladiyya', or moulid people, are itinerant traders, covering long distances between religious festivals. Their colourful tents adorned with religious iconography descend on the city, infiltrating and saturating its fixed structures and mechanisms during a Moulid, and just as quickly disappear when festivities draw to a close.

In a way, this is reflective of many of the practices found on Cairo's local streets. Across increments of time, public space adapts to its varied occupation. Streets obtain new identities and facilitate a multitude of religious activities and events throughout the week, a cyclical orchestration of micro-publics.

This series of photos and their accompanying text look beyond the elements of closure which mask Cairo's 'open' social infrastructure: spatial reservoirs of possibilities, capable of facilitating an intersection of relations. In informal contexts, expanded spaces of economic and cultural operation are accessible to residents of limited means. For example, AsefBayat notes that large segments of Cairo's populace are in a constant negotiation between autonomy and integration, carving out self-governance wherever possible, but reliant on the state for security and service provisioning. AbdouMaliq Simone poses that these junctions where complex combinations of objects, spaces, persons and practices assemble, are in themselves a radically open infrastructure. This allows them to be open to new reciprocal exchanges: connected through an invisible infrastructure of networks.

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