

Transforming Cities: Urbanization and International Development Policies in the 'Global South' in the Twentieth Century

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Worldwide processes of urbanization and ever-growing percentages of people living in cities have been a defining characteristic of the history of the second half of the twentieth century. In the 'Global South' rapid urban growth in postcolonial metropolises and the emergence of megacities fundamentally altered the living conditions of millions of people, raised hopes and anxieties, and created new challenges for local administrators, national governments, and international development institutions. The conference successfully brought together and connected two different fields of historical enquiry, namely urban history and the history of development and modernization, with a focus on different cities and countries in the 'Global South'.

The first session examined the importance of the colonial setting for urban planning policies and the colonial legacies of urban development after independence. With a focus on Angola during the Portuguese colonial war (1961-1974) BERNARDO PINTO DA CRUZ (Lisbon) argued that the history of urban planning and of new architectural styles cannot be detached from the involvement of modernist designers in colonial policies and from the colonial circumstances in which new styles emerged. He emphasized that not only the massive villagization programs but also urban planning models in Angola were profoundly shaped by the counter-subversive logic of the Portuguese colonial war effort. TIM LIVSEY (Oxford) emphasized the importance of the late colonial moment for urban development policies after independence in West Africa. Pointing to the complicated colonial legacies of urban planning policies, he showed that reservations remained in place as a socially segregated form of housing in post-independence Lagos, as postcolonial political

elites and Africans working in the civil service moved in to replace white British colonial officers.

The second session presented case studies from three different countries and pointed to the complexities of urban planning and the wider networks it was connected to. GABRIEL SCHIMMEROOTH (Hamburg) showed how very different interests and actors were that came together in the building of the EKO bridge in Lagos (1963-1975), connecting Nigerian officials and German foreign policy-makers to the West German construction company Julius Berger. MICHAEL SUGARMAN (Bristol) pointed to the centrality of Singapore for housing and urban planning models in Southeast Asia. He argued that housing development in Singapore was crucial for networks of knowledge exchange and circulation between different urban planners and city administrators within the 'Global South'. MARKUS DAECHSEL (London) analyzed the engagement of the Greek planner and architect C. A. Doxiadis in Pakistan under Ayub Khan and used this example to discuss the essential politics that were involved in urban planning and development. Doxiadis' model of urban planning attempted to gather critical views and to make itself proof against resistance. Daechsel argued however that Pakistani development projects did not work as an „anti-politics machine“[1] but rather repoliticized urban spaces and invited sovereignty games that were inherently political.

A third session was dedicated to the role of United Nations organizations in urban development in the 'Global South'. TAMER ELSHAYAL (Cambridge, Mass.) pointed to the long-lasting influence of the 1976 Vancouver Habitat I conference and argued that Habitat established a new international framework for international urban planning policies during the 1970s. TOBIAS WOLFFHARDT (Munich), in contrast, focused on the United Nations Program of Technical Assistance. Emphasizing the structural difficulties that newly independent West African governments faced in the fields of housing construction and urban development, Wolffhardt showed how the United Nations Program filled the gaps that the depart-

ture of colonial building experts and trained architects had left behind. The provision of international expertise, however, not only unfolded against the backdrop of practical challenges on the ground, but was also embedded in broader debates about the meaning of urbanism in independent sub-Saharan Africa and the intricate relationship between urbanism and modernization.

In her keynote NANCY KWAK (San Diego) engaged with questions of control, disorder and 'unruly urbanism' in cities. Using slum clearance schemes in current day Manila as a starting point, Kwak drew attention to the conflicting visions of urban disorder between poor city dwellers and governments. She pointed out that exploring the history of the city from the vantage point of those differences would allow both a deeper understanding of the absence of total control over cities and a better sense of the 'ungoverned' as well as a new perspective on power. The shape a city takes was seldom in the hands of one single actor alone, but was rather a process in which many different actors participated and in which unorganized grassroots actors and multiple uncoordinated actions like refusing to pay rent and moving back to cleared spaces played an important role. The real challenge for historians lies in the difficulty of understanding and tracing these processes and actors which fundamentally shape the city but do not leave official sources to be found in archives.

On the next day, the topic of 'unruly urbanism' remained present particularly in the first presentation of the fourth session by AMANDA WATERHOUSE (Bloomington). Waterhouse analyzed the planning process for a reconstruction of Bogotá after the riots in 1948 had destroyed several city buildings. She showed that ambitious plans drawn up by famous Le Corbusier and the architects Josep Lluís Sert and Paul Lester Wiener never materialized, but they had long lasting consequences for future urban planning concepts and development policies in Colombia. PHILIPP MISSELWITZ (Berlin) analyzed the urban development cooperation of Israel and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) with countries in the 'Global South' and provided a close analysis of the complicated in-

volvement of the GDR in housing construction in Zanzibar. As Misselwitz showed, that involvement changed over time: While GDR architects and local partners in Zanzibar often had considerable freedom of action at the beginning, GDR urban development policies got much more centralized towards the late 1960s, and for the most part favored industrial housing production. ANNE FENK (Berlin) and RACHEL LEE (Munich), too, analyzed an illustrative example of how international development projects during the Cold War provided spaces for 'unlikely collaborations' between East and West. Both showed that the development of the master plan for Abuja, the new Nigerian capital planned after the Biafran war, involved multiple international actors spanning five different continents, including architects from East Germany and Poland. In the end, those international collaborations on the ground translated into grand visions of the new capital that paid little attention to local conditions.

The fifth session was comprised of two case studies investigating urban planning in Latin America in its relationship to political ruptures. ANDRA CHASTAIN (Vancouver, Washington) showed how the construction of the metro in Santiago de Chile survived all major political ruptures of the 1970s. As she argued, the involvement of France in the metro project was crucial for the shape, survival, and implementation of the project beyond all political upheavals. France provided foreign exchange in crucial moments when the large project was about to stop and the presence of French planners shielded the metro system from the growing influence of the 'Chicago Boys' during the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. LEANDRO BENMERCUI (Purchase, NY) analyzed the Federal Housing Plan in Argentina which was introduced at the beginning of the 1960s by the conservative minister of economy Álvaro Alsogaray. The Housing Plan relied on the creation of a mortgage market and on the expansion of homeownership. Benmergui observed that Alsogaray defended these housing policies as a shift away from the political principles of past Peronist housing and welfare politics, favoring the organized working class to a 'non-political' reliance on market

mechanisms. However, the creation of a housing market also required very active state politics and called for large foreign investments to jumpstart this market.

The last session brought the theme of nature back to the city. SABRINA KIRSCHNER (Munich) investigated the growing awareness towards the problem of air pollution in Mexico City since the 1950s and Mexico's participation in the first transnational air pollution monitoring network set up in 1967 by the Pan American Health Organization. SOENKE KUNKEL (Berlin), in contrast, examined how urban earthquake risks became a new concern for international development institutions in the 1960s. Partly driven by global headlines but also by the promises of the rising disciplines of seismology and earthquake engineering, he showed, international institutions made the prevention and mitigation of urban disasters a new theme in their policies. Thereby, they also contributed to a gradual global rethinking of security towards more individual concepts of human security.

Overall, the conference gathered a wide variety of very rich and broad case studies of urban planning and urban development in the 'Global South'. It demonstrated that bringing together a focus on urban history with an analysis of the history of development is a fruitful perspective for future research. Specifically, the following sets of questions and problems emerged from the general discussions:

Urban development history cannot be isolated from analyses of the region. In particular, the connection between rural and urban spaces needs to be addressed more fully. Secondly, the participants discussed the relevance of politics and political change vis-à-vis physical structures, buildings and architectural styles in the city particularly in cases where chronologies do not follow easily a political history. While it is important to trace political changes and their influence on cities some contributors reminded the participants that historians might sometimes be prone too much to assuming the relevance of politics in influencing physical structures which follow their own logics and path dependencies. A third theme centered on the historical critique of planning and of modernist aspira-

tions and development models. While there are many examples of dysfunctional planning that did not account for local circumstances and are worth of critical historical scrutiny, several speakers emphasized that planners still have a very difficult and important task that necessarily cannot accommodate all existing interests and will always remain controversial. Other speakers also questioned the critique of modernism and modernist city planning that was present in many papers particularly against the background of the absence of such planning today and the financialization of housing and the city. Promises of urban modernism and mass-housing have to be weighed against social, environmental, and cultural costs. It is here that multi-faceted approaches combining global and local histories remain important.

Conference Overview:

Introduction

Marc Frey (Bundeswehr University Munich) / Soenke Kunkel (Free University of Berlin): Introduction

Session 1: Engaging the Colonial Legacy: Transforming Cities and the Transition from the Colonial to the Postcolonial

Session chair: Soenke Kunkel (Freie Universität Berlin)

Tim Livsey (University of Oxford): The Late Colonial Roots of Urbanisation and International Development in West Africa, 1945 to 1975

Bernardo Pinto da Cruz (Universidade Nova de Lisboa): Slums, Villages and Concentration Camps: Portuguese urban policies in Angola (1950-1974)

Session 2: A World of Slums? International Development and the Politics of Housing, 1950s to 1960s

Session chair: Avi Sharma (Technical University Berlin)

Gabriel Schimmeroth (MARKK, Museum am Rothenbaum Hamburg): Constructing Postcolonial Modernity and the Remaking of Lagos. The Construction Company Julius Berger and the EKO Bridge Project, 1963-1975

Michael Sugarman (University of Bristol):

Singapore's Centrality? Housing, Improvement, and Urban Development in Southeast Asia and the 'Global South', c. 1947-1967

Markus Daechsel (Royal Holloway, University of London): Ekistics comes to Pakistan: Housing and Settlement Planning under a Developmentalist Dictatorship

Session 3: The new role of International Organizations

Session chair: Dorothee Brantz (Technical University Berlin)

Tobias Wolffhardt (Bundeswehr University Munich): Transforming African Cities. United Nations Technical Assistance, Urban Development and Modernization in a Decade of Decolonization, c. 1955-1965

Tamer Elshayal (Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.): The Birth of Habitat

Keynote speech

Nancy Kwak (University of California, San Diego): When Cities won't Behave. Rethinking Histories of Development in an Age of Unruly Urbanism

Session 4: Urban Planning and the Cold War in the 'Global South'

Session chair: Soenke Kunkel (Free University Berlin)

Amanda Waterhouse (Indiana University, Bloomington): The Body Utopic: American Anticommunism & the Urban Planning of Bogotá

Philipp Misselwitz (Technical University Berlin): From Experimentation to Monetization: Israeli and East German Attempts to build Global Alliances through Architecture and Planning in the 1960s

Anne Fenk (Technical University Berlin) / and Rachel Lee (Ludwig-Maximilian University Munich): Unlikely Collaborations: Planning Experts from both sides of the Iron Curtain and the Making of Abuja

Session 5: Reimagining the City: Experts and New Transnational Connections, 1960s-1980s

Session chair: Michael Goebel (Graduate Institute Geneva)

Andra Chastain (Washington State University, Vancouver): Rethinking Basic Infra-

structure: Urban Development and Metro-Building in Latin America, 1960s-1980s

Leandro Benmergui (Purchase College, State University of New York): Housing for „All Who Are Willing to Save and Make a Sacrifice“: Mortgages, Development, and Modernization in Buenos Aires, 1960s

Session 6: Towards Sustainable Development? Cities and their Environmental Challenges up to the 1980s

Session chair: Helmut Aust (Free University Berlin)

Sabrina Kirschner (Bundeswehr University Munich): Fighting against Urban Air Pollution. Mexico City and its Participation in Early Monitoring Networks: The Case of the Pan American Air Monitoring Network (1967-1980)

Soenke Kunkel (Free University Berlin): Human Security in the Global City: Natural Disasters and Urban Development Policies in the 'Global South'

Final discussion

Chair: Marc Frey (Bundeswehr University Munich)

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