Panel E32: Slums and Places of Innovations, Ingenuity and Creativity [initiated by LAM Bordeaux]

Convenors

- Marieke van Winden (Conference Organiser) (African Studies Centre Leiden)
- Josiane Tantchou (CNRS)
- Frédérique Louveau (Gaston Berger University, Saint Louis)

Contributors

- Nuhu Adeiza Ismail (Wageningen University and Research)
- Obasesam Okoi (University of St Thomas)
- Serges Alain Djoyou Kamga (University of South Africa)
- Erik van der Zanden (Leiden University)
- Geoffrey Nwaka (Abia State University)
- Lalli Metsola (University of Helsinki)
- Christiane Stephan (University of Bonn)
- Albert Oikelome (University of Lagos)
- Joana Messan (Diplômée en Droit, RSE & Relations Internationales, France)
- Oluwatoyin Olokodana-James (University of Lagos)
- Nformi Joan Mumbfu: African Studies Leiden (reporter)

Summary

The panel clings to Africa Knows' ambition towards critically addressing "dominant perceptions and biases in the knowledge of Africa to decolonise the academy" by capturing knowing Africa from the African slums. Using different literatures, the panel captures characterisations perceiving urbanisation of African cities as risky, factors of ill health, and of epidemics and discomfort (Kovacica, Kaviti, Musangoa et al. 2019; Mboumba 2007, Barry 2014, AFD 2015, Fourchard 2018, Ongo Nkoa and Song 2019); while adopting a different approach to suggest that slums are also spaces of contestation, ingenuity, innovations and creativity (Mayhunga 2014; Louveau 2013, Mbade Sène 2018).

Accepted Papers:

Path Dependence and Critical Junctures in the Governance of Informal Settlements: The Interplay of State and Non-state Actors over Land Rights and Tenure Security in Abuja, Nigeria

Author: Nuhu Adeiza Ismail (Wageningen University and Research)

The author of this paper uses the Mpape slum (Abuja) to demonstrate the fundamental and yet to be resolved complex, controversial and limited understanding of land rights and tenure security in Abuja informal settlements, 42 years after the creation of Abuja as the new capital city of Nigeria. The paper further explores the need for a retrospective approach to better analyse and understand current dynamics in informal settlements using the theory of historical institutionalism especially the concepts of path dependence and critical junctures.

Transforming Inequality: the Inventive Processes of Social Transformation in Africa's Urban Slums.

Author: Obasesam Okoi (University of St. Thomas)

Increasing neoliberal globalisation is at the core of social inequality for urban poor in metropolitan centres such as Johannesburg, Nairobi, Lagos and Abuja. Due to the inability of neoliberal state to provide social amenities for its urban poor, residents have lost confidence in such state and thus, resorted to creative inventions as a means of transforming inequality. Drawing on the backdrop of decolonization thinking and constructivism, this paper examines how class, privileges and cultural positions determine the knowing of Africa, the dominant narratives we construct about inequality in Africa's urban spaces and the decolonisation of these narratives. The paper embraces a perspective that mirrors the continent's potentials rather than miseries and the tact with which slum communities innovate and invent creative processes to overcome the inequalities that urbanization generates in Africa. The paper also devotes attention to the extent to which these inventions are recognised and incorporated into mainstream policy.

The contribution of slums to the South African jurisprudence on the right to housing: the concept of "meaningful engagement"

Author: Serges Alain Djoyou Kamga (University of South Africa)

This paper explores the contribution of slums to the development of South African jurisprudence on the right to housing and beyond. It elaborates the concept of "meaningful engagement"- an interim order (passed by the South African Constitutional Court in 2007) directing private property owners and slum dwellers "to engage with each other meaningfully" and to report back to the Court. The proliferation of slums in South Africa began in the early post-apartheid years when people were still homeless despite the country's adoption of a transformative constitution to change the segregated society into an egalitarian one. 'Homeless' South Africans illegally erect and occupy shacks on private properties and/or abandoned buildings; often facing (threats of) eviction.

This paper uses qualitative research method to demonstrate that slum dwellers were instrumental in development of the concept of "meaningful engagement" which has now cascaded down to various parts of the south African jurisprudence. It also argues that slum dwellers are part and parcel of the society and contribute to the transformation of South African law of eviction and beyond.

The political impact of urbanization on youth in waithood in Uganda

Author: Erik van der Zanden (Leiden University)

Economic opportunities during colonization led to an increased migration from villages to cities; often accompanied with a fast-growing population within slums dominated by youth especially in African societies. Due to overpopulation and inability to find work in such cities, youth remain stuck in a situation of scarcity, called waithood. Opposition parties find fertile grounds in the growing desperateness and frustrations of waithood thereby, using it to pressure government who often respond with force. Prolonged violent uprisings and political instability resulting from government response further tarnishes fast urbanisation; perceived since the colonial era as a threat to peace in Africa.

This paper employs a Boserupian approach as an alternative to demonstrate that scarcity resulting from population growth inspires youth to resort to innovation in order to escape

waithood. The author further examines repeating patterns of behaviour in determining historical trajectories (more instability or progress), queers the inside-out perspective from the youth in waithood; and settles on peaceful political innovations of Ugandan youth in waithood in the slums of Kampala.

<mark>INCOMPLETE ABSTRACT SUMMARIES</mark>

Key points from panel discussions

1) **Ismail Nuhu Adeiza (Wageningen University)**

The panel provides ways through which to write and analyse slums.

"The idea that Africa Knows is really powerful and we should stay with that in our practice and our writing" (Josiane Tantchou).

- The capital of Nigeria was moved from Abuja to Lagos for purpose of land expansion. Slums represent most of the unsettled indigenous communities yet, their continuous growth in cities constitutes a serious problem. The exclusion of Mpape Slum from the Abuja Resettlement Programme pushes the author to question whether there are situations in which government is above the law. She uses the concepts of path-dependency and critical junctures to provide more understanding into the purpose of land rights and tenure security in Abuja.

Q and A

Q: Who are the residents of this slum? What are the relationships to the indigenous communities and who can claim the sense of belonging?

A: The residents are the first settlers of the area. (<mark>Further response not captured</mark>).

Q: Based on the research, what solutions would you provide to slum communities elsewhere in Africa?

A: It depends on the state's approach. Freely negotiate their way with/through their people in power. Indigenous settlers (mostly educated) communicate and call on those in power to prevent conflicts.

2) Lalli Metsola (University of Helsinki)

Namibian capital has experienced constant growth since independence and the study is based on the timeframe between 2004 and 2018.

- What kind of relationships are involved over infrastructure?
- What is social infrastructuring?
- What are infrastructural relations?
- How do we understand transactions and exchanges? – Network provision.
  - The need to ensure provision brings people together in several ways.
  - Informal residence is at the mercy of the 'goodwill' of authorities.
  - The process of upgrading is marked by slowness and lack of funds.
  - Demands of residents determine decisions and sometimes political relations.
  - Conditions in Windhoek have universal significance – perspective of political and environmental crises.

Q and A

Q: Can social networks be considered as a social infrastructure or otherwise?

A: Different kinds of relationships form around different kinds of infrastructural problems.

Q: If approached from a circular social infrastructural perspective – observed that a way of learning to organise things starts from churches, etc. and move on to attack government policies, infrastructuring has origins somewhere else. There are quite multiple sources of social networks and relations. What could be the cultural influence of this infrastructuring? What is the role of different ethnic groups in social infrastructuring?

A: No difference necessarily. People merely transgress ethnic boundaries.

Q: Youth and the state – confrontational, isolated – create new citizenship ideologies. What do you observe?

A: Youth are far less isolated from authorities. Confrontational and critical; through collusive and co-productive sense of relations.

3) Joana

- The UN Sustainable Development Goals present housing as a basic human right. From the 2000-2015 MDGs to the 2016-2030 SDGs the United Nations is involved in the challenge to reduce inequalities.

Perspectives of World Urbanisation

- Advantages: The more people come together, the more they find common solutions.
- It is negative in South Africa as inequalities are still marked by the apartheid experience.
- Informal settlements are an emergency in South Africa.

Prevention

- Re-blocking: Community involvement/consultation, information gathering, fundraising.

Causes of disaster response

- Fires, which also spread because of zinc, wood, recycled material.
- Ikhayalami's response: Constructors and inhabitants work two-agenda.
- Fire retardant
- Quick to build houses

Q and A

Q: About actors in the configuration of the slums, religious actors are competitive and compete with state, hospitals, educational activities, etc. What is the role of these actors in the configurations? Did you observe it?

A: No specific observations made or noticed in this regard. The people are poor, but give higher amounts in church to buy themselves out of their given situations. Religion was not the focus of the project.

Observation: Despite religion's negative perspective in Kampala against LGBTQs, it still connects people in amazing ways, creates unity among communities and also across the international spectrum. Religion also creates room for mutual learning and sharing of knowledge.

4) **Oluwatoyin Olokodana-James (Principal Investigator, Lagos ACC, UNILAG)**

Makoko Slum

- Very popular site in Lagos. It is a tourist attraction because of the deplorable living conditions of the people there. Its buildings are constructed on steels. Its inhabitants are those from Dahome displaced by war.

- The slum experiences government abandonment: lack of electricity, no schools, no roads but only waterways. Government often serves them with eviction notices.

Purpose of the study

- Provide insights to ethno-cultural patterns, living conditions, infrastructural needs of the people.
- The study anchored on social action and activism.
  - Many out of school children are endowed with talents but lack confidence and self-esteem.
  - The children are not aware of a better world out of the perception and community due to marginalisation.
  - Lack of human-friendly environment.

5) Erik van der Zanden

Music and Symbols of Edutainment – "Waithood": Old political ideas repackaged for slums/youth. Political Instability vs Political Innovation.

- Population growth is exponential while food is static – scarcity.
- Population growth rather inspires innovation.

Locations of innovation: slums, universities, civil society organisations.

Edutainment

- Education is still based on colonial objects and youth/school children are trained into obedience subjects.
- Try to transform society first and not the political kingdom –

"Seek ye first the political kingdom and all other things shall be added onto you."

"To change anything, you need to change everything."

- Creative activism: Changing the society through music, art and media.

Methods: peaceful demonstrations, media, elections.

Perspectives: Inside-out.

6) Dr Christian Stephan

Collaborative Research Project: Focused on Nakuru, Kenya.

What innovations come from Africa:

- Covid-19 App.
- "One wo*man's innovation might be another wo*man's everyday survival practice."

Empirical Findings

- Navigating uncertainty
- Three areas:
  - Food security: "[M]y farm has become a friend of mine …"
  - School closures and early pregnancies: "Children are only giving birth to children."
  - Outlook on post-covid and the future: "…We walk more than covid. We walk faster than covid."
- Capacity to aspire
- Uncertainty and epistemologies
- Africa Knows: "It's Africa that knows, not research." "We need those knowledges to deal with the crisis. Knowledges and epistemologies are under (de)construction."

7) Serges Alain Kamga

What is the role of slums in advancing law? – the concept of "meaningful engagement" (requires explanation to slum dwellers and alternative accommodation).

The legal context and the law of eviction

- What does the concept do to slum dwellers: in the Apartheid era, eviction of Blacks was an order of the day. The law prohibited "illegal squatting" while proteting the South African Whites and their property from the "illegal" majority poor Blacks. The controversial law of 1951, replaced by the law of illegal eviction obliges the State to provide alternative accommodation. "Slum dwellers are the source of transformation to the legal provision and development of the law of eviction in South Africa".

General Q and A

Q: How do you argue for the importance of children as a catalyst for change? why do you think that if people could not listen to elders, they would listen to children?

A: Challenges are there, but it depends on how you are able to convince the children to see the need for their basic rights in order to get engaged.

Q (Metsola): Evictions in Windhoek (1985) were challenged in court about ten years ago. Court ruling cannot evict without order and without alternative location. Government monitors new-comers to defend land occupation. Has the approach and methods of authorities changed in terms of land occupation?

A: In South Africa, there is a lot of judicial activism and you can actually see the politics behind the law. Ubuntu dictates that you can't just evict people from their land. Put the state in a position of negotiation: "willing buyer, willing seller." CSOs in South Africa basically run the country and the state is careful about having issues with these CSOs. The legacy of Apartheid still makes the state to need slum dwellers during election.

Q (To Erik): Does your presentation give an idea of how you reconceptualise the state? Would your view on Uganda vary from the way you define the state?

A: Political kingdoms continually keeps the weak under control. Unlike abolishing, leaders rather adopted colonial systems. There are two ways to define: those that eat and those that don't eat. Distrust is coming from the colonial system.

Q (Relating to the concept of bridge-builders; Cabral's class suicide): Who are these bridge-builders? Who crosses?

A: Medical doctors (joined Cabral).

Q: What role do doctors and nurses play in discovering capacities and innovations of slum-dwellers and what do they do with it? – The case of Nakun

NB: Christiana Stephan (the presenter) acknowledged the group's overlooking of the medical personnel.

Observation (Ton Dietz): Where the state is not trusted and people build their hospitals, local initiatives become a spring-point from where other actions develop and the nurses/medical personnel are caught in-between.

Observation (Erik): Even though there is poverty, youth believe that everyone has a talent. "The starting point of transformation is the cultural revolution and it starts with the liberation of the mind. Art is the mother of revolution." There is a legacy that has endured – prevention of urbanisation. Urban areas are breweries for democratisation. On the contrary, it is high time we started seeing "slums as breweries for democracy and revolution."

*Many in slums still believe that they are cursed. Therefore, having a leader is important. It is more of mental slavery. Africa knows! When we go to communities, it is better to listen to their problems.

Q: How do we tap into youth anger to bring about revolution. How do we save those who no longer believe that a better life can be achieved through their talent?

A: it is good to consider those who are yet to believe that anything good can come out of their desperation. There is a high degree of desperation because slum dwellers are not even aware of their strengths.

- Gap: Education, scholarships, financial constraints.

"We should avoid being the teacher. We should engage slum dwellers to understand their perspectives" (Serges Alain Kamga).

Q (Josiane Tantchou): Are we not reproducing hidden biases in our pessimistic description of slum dwellers?

A (Erik): "Food for the body is food for the soul – a universal method of luring people."

Q: What will be the next topic for this particular conference? Why are slum dwellers not generally or specifically discussed in Africa whereas they have the merit of having something good? They deserve credit!

A: "Nothing about us without us" – the disability principle as raised by Serges Alain Kamga. To drift from the bias, we need to record what is good about slum dwellers.

Q: Can Ubuntu be regarded as a defining factor of slum society in Africa? The concept of Ubuntu is that which seemingly cuts across many African cultures, but is coded in group/collective rights in different ways. how do we tap into that to develop slum dwellers?

*Western capitalism has become a general system where individualism thrives, but in (ancient) African society, it was community.

Side Notes

From Christiane Stephan to Everyone: 01:32 PM

Hello everybody, happy to see you.

From Josiane Tantchou to Everyone: 01:32 PM

Good afternoon!

hello

From frederiquelouveau to Everyone: 01:33 PM

Hello Christiane !

From Me to Everyone: 01:33 PM

Good afternoon

From Me to Erik van der Zanden: (Privately) 01:37 PM

Hello Erik. Good to see you

From Katarina Rybarikova to Everyone: 01:39 PM

Good afternoon everyone

From Erik van der Zanden to Me: (Privately) 01:41 PM

Hello dear amazing to see you!

From tondietz to Everyone: 01:53 PM

Recent PhD dissertation about African New Towns dealing with similar issues: Keeton, Rachel (2020). African New Towns. Architecture and the Built Environment, (18), 1-368. PhD defense in Delft 13/10/2020. R.E.Keeton@tudelft.nl

From Oluwatoyin Olokodana-James to Everyone: 01:55 PM

That was well articulated Ismail

From Kristjan - Tech support (NomadIT 1) to Everyone: 02:31 PM

If you have difficulties hearing the talk, please increase temporarily you computer volume.

From Katarina Rybarikova to Everyone: 02:46 PM

louder please

From Steyn Hoogakker to Everyone: 02:56 PM

Thanks all so far. For more information during the break, I just had a brief look at http://u-tt.com/project/empower-shack/

From Erik van der Zanden to Everyone: 02:57 PM

Great thanks for sharing

From tondietz to Everyone: 04:07 PM

About children as co-researchers: see for instance

http://www.padev.nl/infosheets/infosheet_agnieszka_thesis.pdf, and her thesis for the

www.padev.nl project It can be done! And it adds a lot of unexpected information.

From Christiane Stephan to Everyone: 04:09 PM

Thank you, Ton!

From frederiquelouveau to Everyone: 04:11 PM

About interview with children, see also : https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01240793v2/document

But it is in french… !

From Erik van der Zanden to Everyone: 04:34 PM

Very inspirational documentary of music/hip hop in Senegal: https://vimeo.com/channels/55357

From tondietz to Everyone: 04:34 PM

Do you know: Banks, N., Lombard, M., & Mitlin, D. (2020). Urban informality as a site of critical analysis. The Journal of Development Studies, 56(2), 223-238. available online

From Me to Oluwatoyin Olokodana-James: (Privately) 04:38 PM

Good afternoon. I am Joan Nformi, graduate from African Studies Leiden. I would like to discuss with you about some thought provoking issues

So impressed with your presentation and interventions

From Oluwatoyin Olokodana-James to Me: (Privately) 04:42 PM

Good afternoon. Thank you for the good words. we can actually talk about them later. Here is my email address olokodanajames@gmail.com

From Josiane Tantchou to Everyone: 04:43 PM

Thanks!

From Me to Oluwatoyin Olokodana-James: (Privately) 04:43 PM

Thank you very much

From Oluwatoyin Olokodana-James to Me: (Privately) 04:44 PM

uwc

From Steyn Hoogakker to Everyone: 04:47 PM

Great and important question Josiane

From Me to Oluwatoyin Olokodana-James: (Privately) 04:49 PM

You got me: 'seeing the children smile gives me much joy'

From Oluwatoyin Olokodana-James to Me: (Privately) 04:50 PM

Thank you again and again

From tondietz to Everyone: 04:56 PM

In a PhD study about rural informality that I co-supervised (Nina Tellegen, 1997, about Malawi) there was a distinction between what I would now call 'survival informality' and 'enterprising informality', and most of the innovations (and cases of social emancipation and economic improvement) came from the last category. Would that also be a useful distinction for urban slum studies?

From Steyn Hoogakker to Everyone: 05:03 PM

Interesting Serges. I think this is the link to Essays in African Land Law (2011): https://www.pulp.up.ac.za/component/edocman/essays-in-african-land-law

From Erik van der Zanden to Everyone: 05:04 PM

Inspirational. Succes is not amount of riches/fame/beauty, but the amount of Ubuntu a person has

From Me to Everyone: 05:05 PM

It was such an interesting panel presentation and Q&A session. Thanks a lot