

Inside a Construction Boom: Politics, Responsibility and the Temporalities of Urban Development

Urban development is a field of study based on the assumption that the development of cities is a phenomenon that is always unfolding. Cities are seen and studied as being in a constant process of change. However, while the meanings and practices of the urban are often reconfigured and reimagined, the making of the urban environment is fundamentally discontinuous. The starting point of this workshop is that a history of a city is better understood as an incoherent and contingent alternation of ephemeral, temporary, and exceptional conjunctures of growth, stagnation and decay.

The objective of this workshop is to examine 'construction booms' as particular moments in the life of a city. The focus of the workshop is to explore the temporalities of urban development in cities that are positioned at the margins of the geographies of financial capitalism that nurture 'global cities'.

Construction booms often explode in exceptional moments of economic growth. The time projections for such booms are affected by the ways economic growth is hoped to be 'structural' and not 'conjunctural', that is triggering a forever-continuous and cumulative expansion of the economy. Construction booms and economic growth are there to last, projections say. But the idea of continuous growth is often a myth, as downturns and 'temporary fluctuations' might cause resources to dry and construction frenzy to halt.

At the same time, however, the idea of economic growth as forever continuous and construction booms as being lasting moments in the history of a city are 'real fictions' that significantly affect policies of urban development and governmental ideas of responsibility and justice. Economic growth is believed to hold the promise of a better, more just and more abundant society, and construction booms act as the living proof that a better society is about to come. New roads, spectacular highways and brand-new high-rise buildings stand in the present as time-machines connecting ordinary citizens to that future of greater abundance when even the poor will be able to benefit from increased resources, services and opportunities.

The objective of this workshop is not to prove such projections wrong, but to explore how construction booms are made possible through the establishment of exceptional regimes of labour, urban politics, collective and individual responsibility, and finance, that rest on assumptions that economic growth and development are here to last and to deliver increased benefits to society, including the urban poor.

Programme

| Tuesday, 14 November 2017 | |
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| 9:30 | Welcome |
| | Panel 1 |
| 9:40 – 10:00 | Claire Mercer (LSE) - States of uncertainty: building and demolishing suburban Dar es Salaam |
| 10:00 – 10:20 | Ezana Haddis Weldeghebrael (University of Manchester) - Aspiring "Developmental" State's Spatial Strategy towards Slum for Accumulation and Hegemonic Purposes: The Case of Addis Ababa |
| 10.20- 10:40 | Pushpa Arabindoo (UCL) - A spectral city in the making: The urbanity of a pseudo-welfare state in India |
| 10.40 - 11.10 | Discussion – Discussant: Luisa Moretto (ULB) |
| 11.10 - 11:30 | Coffee Break |
| | Panel 2 |
| 11:30 -11: 50 | Manuel B. Aalbers (KU Leuven) - Urban Redevelopment as a Space of Exception: Land as a Financial Asset in Brazil |
| 11:50 –12:10 | Erik Harms (Yale University) - Megalopolitan Megalomania: Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam's Southeastern Region and the Speculative Growth Machine |
| 12:10-12:30 | Tom Goodfellow (University of Sheffield) - Urban fortunes and skeleton cityscapes: Real estate and late urbanization in Kigali and Addis Ababa |
| 12:30-13:00 | Discussion – Sasha Newell (ULB) |
| 13:00 –14:00 | Lunch |
| | Panel 3 |
| 14:00 –14:20 | Llerena Guiu Searle (University of Rochester) - Betting on the Future: Speculative Knowledge in an Indian Building Boom |
| 14:20 –14:40 | Judith Audin – (French Centre for Research on Contemporary China) Surviving spaces, suspended spaces, an ethnography of non completion in Chinese cities: the case of an urban reconversion in progress in Datong (Shanxi) |
| 14:40- 15:00 | Marco Di Nunzio (LSE) - Not My Job? Architecture, Responsibility and Inequalities in a Booming African Metropolis |
| 15:00-15:30 | Discussion – Solange Guo Chatelard (Science Po Paris / ULB) |
| 15:30-15:50 | Coffee Break |
| | Panel 4 |
| 15.50 –16.10 | AbdouMaliq Simone (Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity) - Compressed Construction |
| 16:10-16:30 | Sabine Planel (Institut de Recherche pour le Développement/ DALVAA Project): Financial inclusion, socio-spatial exclusion and political participation in access to housing. The Ethiopian construction boom from below. |
| 16:30-16:50 | Daniel Mains (University of Oklahoma/ ZMO) A Cobblestone Boom: The Temporal Politics of Cobblestone Roads in Urban Ethiopia |
| 16:50-17:20 | Discussion – Discussant: David Berliner (Université Libre de Bruxelles) |
| 17:20-18:00 | Final Discussion |

