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Although many people have an image of Africa as predominately rural, it is now the fastest urbanizing continent in the world. Since World War II, a number of African metropolises have developed, including four that have over eight million inhabitants: Cairo (Egypt), Lagos (Nigeria), Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of the Congo) and Johannesburg (South Africa). Because of this growing urbanisation, the cities of Africa have attracted new, and renewed, interest within many disciplines. While the explosive growth of cities in African countries was initially greeted with reports about failing infrastructure, corrupt governments, insecurity, ethnic conflicts and humanitarian disasters, another discourse on the African city has recently developed that highlights the creativity and vitality of the urban cultures within this vast continent. However, although African cities are now receiving more positive attention, understanding African urban space remains highly problematic and vague. We believe that one of the keys to a better understanding of contemporary urban conditions in Africa is through an in-depth look into the history of its development. This PhD thesis aims to contribute to the research in this area.

The goal of this thesis is to build a bridge between two fields that study the historical development of African cities: the broad field of urban history and the sub-field of the history of urban planning. Until now, these fields, although highly complementary, have developed quite separately from each other. Instead of seeing urban history and urban planning history as two ways of looking at the African city, we explicitly apply an interdisciplinary approach that combines both perspectives. We believe that our understanding of urban spaces in Africa will be greatly enhanced by this cross-fertilization.
The thesis uses an interdisciplinary approach to compare the historical development that took place between 1920 and 1980 in three cities in sub-Saharan Africa: Dakar (Senegal), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) and Kinshasa (Congo). An important consideration for selecting these cities is their different colonial backgrounds, which are French, British and Belgian, respectively. We have chosen to examine this period in order to look beyond the classical endpoints of historical research into African cities, such as the independence of the former African colonies.

Although the title of the thesis, *Making the African City*, could be misleading, this comparative research is not aimed at building a general model for the development of African cities. Instead, our goal is to use a comparative approach to map both the similarities and the differences in the processes, mechanisms and models that have determined the development of these important African cities. The term “the African city” can, therefore, be viewed as a generic term that links cities that are located within a similar geopolitical context, in order to compare the different ways in which they have developed. The topic of segregation is used throughout the thesis as a tool for comparison, to connect the two main volumes of this thesis, *Editing the City* and *Making the City*, and to interrelate the three case studies (Dakar, Dar es Salaam and Kinshasa) and the three time periods (1920–1940, 1940–1960 and 1960–1980). By presenting the research findings in two volumes, in which comparative and case-bound analyses alternate, rather than presenting the three case studies separately, we try to illustrate the connections between these cases at all levels of research.

In *Editing the City*, we study how urban plans were realized in each of the three cities. Since Western urban planners designed almost all of the plans, we can definitely see the influence of urban planning trends that come from elsewhere in the world. However, we also find that the African context led to specific modifications to these urban plans. This process of “editing” becomes clear when urban planning and ideology are studied together. *Editing the City* demonstrates how urban planning in Africa has been used as an instrument of politics. Aside from other purposes, such as urban renewal or economic progress, urban planning has served ideological objectives. Urban plans are not, then, considered to be neutral or technical artefacts, but carriers of meaning. In this thesis, we study the way models and techniques imported from Western urban planning were edited in order to suit the ideological agendas of the rulers, particularly with reference to segregation. The urban plans that resulted from this editing process can, therefore, be considered as blueprints for how the rulers envisioned the organization and categorisation of their cities and societies.

In this respect, it is striking to see how the segregationist character of urban planning was often legitimised by integrating it into a more benevolent policy framework. We have called these frameworks “syndromes,” since the official discourse was, to a great extent, defined by the underlying motivations. For each time period, we determined a common syndrome: a sanitation syndrome (1920–1940), a development syndrome (1940–1960) and a cooperation syndrome (1960–1980). These syndromes are identified to point out the underlying ideological agendas of the rulers; editing is the term used to show how urban
planning models and concepts imported from the West were adapted to these ideological agendas, in particular with respect to segregation.

For the period between the two world wars, we refer to the sanitation syndrome in Dakar, Dar es Salaam and Kinshasa, since the preoccupation with public health and hygiene clearly had, apart from the obvious sanitary objectives, underlying objectives in terms of racial segregation. Although the plans to implement a sanitary zone, or “cordon sanitaire,” within the urban fabric remind us of the nineteenth-century rebuilding programs in Europe, in Africa these cordons were used mainly to introduce racial segregation into the urban spaces. This can be viewed as an important form of editing. However, as racial segregation was highly controversial, colonial administrations searched for mechanisms to implement the cordons without formulating them in racial terms. Building regulations seemed to offer a satisfactory solution. For this time period, we begin by analysing the design of the “open space” in Dar es Salaam, and then compare the case there to the two other cities.

After World War II, we can identify, through analogy with the interwar sanitation syndrome, a development syndrome in which urban planning was integrated into a broader framework of development. Here we argue that a development discourse not only formed the basis of initiatives to modernize and develop African cities, but also served as a way to legitimize racial and socio-economic segregation. While, in the West, the concept of zoning was launched in urban planning to organize cities rationally and functionally, in Africa it was also used to keep racial and socio-economic groups housed in separate neighbourhoods. Again, this constitutes a strong form of editing. It was housing programs rather than building regulations that were used after World War II to implement zoning in the African cities without having to release any segregationist objectives. For this time period, we first study the emergence of zoning in Dakar, and then we compare this case to the other two cities.

From the 1960s onwards, after these three African nations had gained their independence, a cooperation syndrome emerged. This syndrome is closely linked to the development syndrome. In the three cities, all of the postcolonial urban plans were created within a framework of development cooperation. Large-scale plans were drawn up to control urban growth and to improve the living conditions of the urban populations, usually by constructing new towns in the periphery of the cities. During implementation, however, far more attention was paid to expensive and prestigious projects and less to aspects that were beneficial to the entire population. This selective investment by both the donor countries and the African nations can also be considered a form of editing. Although the urban designs did not necessarily contain segregationist objectives, this cooperation syndrome often resulted in intensifying the existing patterns of segregation. For the period between 1960 and 1980, we start by studying the birth of the “ville est” in Kinshasa, then come back to examine the two other cities. Making the City begins by observing that the African city depicted in urban plans rarely coincides with the real African urban space. A wide gap often exists between the theory of urban design, with its corresponding discourse, and the actual implementation. This discrepancy demonstrates the limitations of urban planning
and is not specific to the African city. On a more positive note, this discrepancy sheds light on the role played by those from outside the urban planning milieus in the production of urban space. In looking at this, we use the notion of “agency” to show that African urban spaces not only result from top-down planning processes, but also from various bottom-up processes, in which city dwellers have an active role. Seen from this agency perspective, the city can be considered as the outcome of enduring processes of negotiation and resistance between various actors. This process of agency is again not specific to the African city, although studying it does reveal several context-specific aspects of urban space in Africa.

In *Making the City*, we elaborate on the process of agency in Dakar, Dar es Salaam and Kinshasa. Agency and the way in which the various actors relate to each other in the cities are, to a large extent, determined by power relationships and social hierarchies. These lead to a power (im)balance that, in turn, is influenced by the process of agency. In this thesis, we bring to light how both local governments and city dwellers interact with urban planners. In the field of urban history and in the social sciences, it is unconventional to represent local governments as those who take action in the process of agency. For our analysis, however, it is useful to examine how these governments tried to adjust urban designs to suit their own political or economic interests. These interests often differed from the ideological agendas that affected urban planning. The interaction between urban planners and the technical and implementation-oriented bodies of the local governments shows how these governments often decisively changed urban designs by shifting emphasis and obstructing ideas.

In addition to this, we investigate how a number of actors who did not belong to formal institutions contributed to the production of urban space. Several political, social, cultural and economic motives drove them to force adjustments to the urban designs, to hinder their implementation, to appropriate urban spaces or to remain inactive. As a result, this agency of city dwellers ranged from active to passive resistance and was as much the result of daily patterns of use as of coordinated movements of resistance.

*Making the City* covers the same time periods as *Editing the City*. For each period, we present three micro-studies that examine the relationship between urban space and agency for Dakar, Dar es Salaam and Kinshasa. These micro-studies are organized around a common topic that relates to a physical component of urban space that underwent important modifications as a result of agency. These topics include cordon sanitaire (1920–1940), housing (1940–1960) and land (1960–1980). It is important to emphasize that our thesis uses the agency perspective to find out how the physical aspects of urban space were determined by the local actors who intervened. There is an important difference in the way the agency perspective is used here and how it is usually applied in urban history and social sciences. Although these fields place a greater focus on urban space, “spatial space” is rarely their primary topic of investigation. Our study explicitly adopts a spatial approach in order to create a meaningful connection between the two volumes, *Editing the City* and *Making the City*. In the latter, we investigate the extent to which the agency of local actors influenced how urban space developed and how, as a result, it differs from the urban space envisioned by urban planners, studied in *Editing the City*. *Making the City* is, then, a sound
continuation of *Editing the City* and shows among other things that the real urban space of the African city was far more heterogeneous and diverse than the dual categories seen in urban planning, such as European versus African, or formal as opposed to informal, may suggest. This is particularly true for spatial segregation, which was far more complex and layered within the urban spaces than in the urban plans.

Index by keyword: comparative research, urban planning history, diffusion, implementation, Local actor, foreign actor, segregation


Schlagwortindex: Umsetzung, Vergleichende Forschung, Stadtplanungsgeschichte, Verbreitung, Lokaler Akteur, Externer Akteur, Segregation

Geographie: Afrika, Ostafrika, Tansania, Dar es Salaam, Westafrika, Senegal, Dakar, Zentralafrika, Demokratische Republik Kongo, Kinshasa

Indice de palabras clave: puesta en práctica, investigación comparative, historia del urbanismo, difusión, actor local, actor externo, segregación

Geografía: África, África del Este, Tanzanía, Dar es Salaam, África occidental, Senegal, Dakar, África Central, República Democrática del Congo, Kinshasa

Index de mots-clés: recherche comparative, histoire de l’urbanisme, diffusion, mise en œuvre, acteur local, acteur extérieur, ségrégation


Parole chiave: realizzazione, ricerca comparative, storia dell’urbanismo, diffusione, attore locale, attore estero, segregazione

Indice geografico: Africa, Africa orientale, Tanzania, Dar es Salaam, Africa Occidentale, Senegal, Dakar, Africa centrale, Repubblica Democratica del Congo, Kinshasa