



LANDac ANNUAL
INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE
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LAND GOVERNANCE IN TRANSITION

How to support transformations that
work for people and nature?

CONFERENCE SESSIONS

Theme 2:
**Urban Land Dynamics, Infrastructure and
Deltas**

NEW PANEL!

Understanding and influencing the dynamics of food and water systems in delta regions of the global South

Dr Crelis Rammelt, Prof Veena Srinivasan, Dr Guus van Westen, Utrecht University

CONTACT: C.F.Rammelt@uu.nl

Deltas in the global South are typically known as densely populated areas of surplus food production. They have often undergone profound changes in their food and water systems over the last several decades. They are also known to face a unique set of challenges—both biophysical and socioeconomic. These challenges include over-extraction of water, soil degradation, destruction of wetlands, urban and industrial expansion, pollution effluents, flood plain encroachment, land subsidence and seawater intrusion. These impacts are fuelling poverty, inequity, competition for land, rising landlessness, food insecurity, migration and so on.

These long-term dynamics are also influenced by market-economic forces. The neoliberal process of globalisation since the early 1990s has had far-reaching impacts on commodity, land and labour markets.

First, food commodities travel several thousands of kilometres between the production and transportation of their ingredients all the way through to their distribution and consumption. Farmers are increasingly integrated into global value chains, while markets in nearby urban centres attract food from distant parts of the world. In effect, it could be argued that local food systems—whereby production and consumption flows are linked within the local system—are going extinct. The influence of global markets in food can be felt in very remote agrarian communities where they stimulate commodification and erode traditional exchange relations. In some regions, dietary change brought about by urbanization and rising urban incomes add to the process of dislocation of local food systems.

A second market-economic influence on these systems has been the emergence of land markets in these delta regions has also played a major role in the dynamics of existing food and water systems. These markets have affected the patterns of land use, e.g., the selling of agricultural land towards urban expansion.

The third influence has been the emergence of labour markets. Processes of urbanisation and migration are altering labour availability, which in turn influences investments in agricultural mechanisation or other labour-saving practices, e.g., the application of weedicides. This then pushes landless labour further out of rural communities, fuelling further urbanisation and migration, and thereby altering the forces of supply and demand on markets in food. To add complexity to the matter, commodity and labour markets are also affected by government interventions, such as employment guarantee or crop price support schemes.

For this panel session, we would like to invite participants working on the complexities and dynamics of food and water systems in deltas in the global south. Together we would like to reflect on drivers and impacts of these dynamics, and to develop a better understanding of the complexity of so many biophysical and socioeconomic elements and interconnections.

This session welcomes abstract submissions.

DEBATE

Spatial Injustice in Urban Land Markets in East Africa: What is the Evidence?

Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies (IHS), Erasmus University Rotterdam & Bartlett Development Planning Unit (DPU), University College London

CONTACT: Paul Rabé rabe@ihs.nl

The project on “Spatial Inequality in Times of Urban Transition: Complex Land Markets in Uganda and Somaliland” (SITU-Transitions) investigates how complex land markets, as a central feature of urban political economies in the urban transition, are shaping urbanization in four East African cities: Kampala and Arua in Uganda, and Hargeysa and Berbera in Somaliland. The project is guided by the following main research question: “How do complex land markets influence spatial justice within the current urban transition in East Africa?” SITU-Transitions aims to develop outcomes to help design urban policies and build more responsive land market institutions. SITU-Transitions is financed by the East Africa Research Fund of DfID/UK and managed by Triple Line consultants, in partnership with Bartlett DPU/University College London and IHS/Erasmus University Rotterdam, and local partners in both countries.

After two years of data collection in the four project cities, SITU-Transitions team members from IHS and DPU will share summary project findings from four project components: the spatial analysis; land market analysis; household survey; and the land transaction biographies. Following this summary, they will raise several points for debate and discussion with the audience. These points emanate directly from the project findings so far.

Contrary to our hypothesis, we have not yet found a strong link between urban land market patterns in the four cities and “spatial injustice”. Related to this finding, we have observed the following:

- Disparities between households are most pronounced when disaggregating along tenure type. The strongest correlations are when separating those owning their property from those renting.
- Contrary to our assumptions before data collection, the most vulnerable groups on the land market in the four cities appear to be not women as a discrete group—but rural to urban migrants and urban poor groups in general.
- Land market transactions are made as quick as possible, as much for some parties to profit as for the transaction to even happen in very unpredictable and uncertain environments.

Members of the audience are invited to respond to these points, with evidence from their own experience in urban and peri-urban land markets in Africa and beyond.

Speakers:

- Paul Rabé (Senior Land Expert, IHS)
- Els Keunen (Expert, Urban Planning and Municipal Development, IHS)
- Colin Marx (Senior Lecturer, Faculty of the Built Environment, Bartlett DPU/UCL)
- Michael Walls (Senior Lecturer, Faculty of the Built Environment, Bartlett DPU/UCL)

This session does not invite abstract submissions, yet welcomes active participation in the debate.

PANEL

Urban land debates in the global South: enclosure and recommoning

Christien Klaufus (CEDLA), Griet Steel & Femke van Noorloos (Utrecht University)

CONTACT: G.Steel@uu.nl

In the global land debate and in discussions about land tenure security a clear distinction is made between community owned land and privately owned land. In an urban context this distinction is less rigidly used which urges us to apply a less dualist framework. A (de)commoning perspective can help to grasp the intricate tensions related to land ownership on the one hand as well as to the various socio-cultural uses and appropriations of urban space on the other hand. Harvey understands 'commoning' to be a malleable social relation between a self-defined social group and aspects of their socio-physical environment that are crucial to group members' life and livelihood (Harvey, 2013: 73).

Commoning practices are especially pertinent in cities: cities accommodate large populations – many of whom are strangers to each other – living in high densities on highly valued land where people are forced to share or compete for resources whereas “the necessary commonality, in the city of strangers, is weak or absent” (Huron, 2015: 970). This competition creates tensions and possibilities. In the peri-urban fringes, land disputes are often the result of unclear tenure systems, in which communal land is used for private purposes. Notwithstanding the power of enclosure, private land is sometimes also subject to re-commoning practices. While some informal settlements are scratched down to make way for all-inclusive, elite development projects, new communal claims on (private) land also continue. In inner city centres, public space is enclosed for purposes of gentrification and speculative urbanism, yet creative alternatives in semi-public space are also found (e.g. Bromley and Mackie, 2009).

In this panel we welcome papers tackling these questions on the basis of concrete empirical examples. In particular we look for papers that discuss struggles over the urban commons and practices of (de/re)commoning by investigating the actors, mechanisms of place making and discourses at play.

See also the [Special Issue in Built Environment](#).

References:

Bromley, R. & P. Mackie (2009) 'Displacement and New Spaces for Informal Trade in the Latin American City', *Urban Studies* 46(7): 1485-1506 (22 p.).

Harvey, D. (2012) *Rebel City: From the right to the city to the urban revolution*. London: Verso.

Huron, A. (2015) "Working with Strangers in Saturated Space: Reclaiming and Maintaining the Urban Commons", *Antipode* 47(4): 963-979.

This session welcomes abstract submissions.

PANEL

The Urban Land Nexus and Inclusive Urbanization in Africa

Organisers: Griet Steel (Utrecht University, chair), Gordon McGranahan (Institute of Development Studies, Sussex), Manja Hoppe Andreasen (University of Copenhagen)

CONTACT: G.Steel@uu.nl

Cities in Africa are growing. The total number of urban residents in Africa is projected by UNDESA to reach a billion by 2040 (World Urbanization Prospects 2014). This panel proposes to use the urban land nexus and its politics as an entry point for analysing rapidly growing African cities. The urban land nexus is where people, infrastructures and enterprises come together to form dense urban centres, both benefiting from being tightly connected, and competing for space and location. When two of the most cited urban scholars, Scott and Storper (2015), tried to identify two main processes common to all cities, they set the pull of agglomeration alongside the challenges of 'sorting' people, infrastructures and enterprises within a relatively dense urban land nexus. Scott and Storper (2015) have been criticized for drawing too heavily on Western experiences to justify their universal pretensions. However, we argue that equitable governance of the urban land nexus is especially important in contemporary Africa characterized by rapid urban population growth and elite concerns about this growth. A large share of the politics of the urban transitions play out around the urban land nexus. Agglomeration economies and diseconomies effectively make what goes where in the urban land nexus more important, contested and politically significant. More importantly, urban land governance and competition for land and location are critical to how equitably the growing urban populations, and especially vulnerable groups, are accommodated during the course of the urban transition. The urban land nexus, and the movement of people in, out and around this nexus, is an important factor shaping the social and economic equity of urban transitions.

This panel is explicitly practical in intent and aims to identify opportunities that can deliver benefits in the short or medium term. We welcome research that seeks to identify, research, and stimulate policy debate on actionable changes that are politically feasible and can foster more inclusive urban transitions.

This session does not invite abstract submissions, yet welcomes active participation.

ROUNDTABLE

Dutch Diamonds in the Delta: Towards inclusive and climate proof delta management in the global South

Marthe Derkzen (Utrecht University), Murtah Shannon (Deltares) & Romy Santpoort (Utrecht University)

CONTACT: Marthe Derkzen m.l.derkzen@uu.nl

Over the past decade, the Dutch government has supported the Dutch water sector in activities in urban deltas in the global South, aimed at fostering inclusive growth and climate change adaptation. Ranging from infrastructure projects, spatial development plans and strategic delta management, the 'Dutch Delta Approach' is implemented in a variety of countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In addition to mobilizing much needed resources to these struggling delta regions, Dutch engagements in Southern deltas have also met with challenges and controversy. On the one hand, delta projects do not always translate to real impacts on the ground and when they do they often imply (forced) land use change which disproportionately impacts poor land users and resource dependent households. On the other hand, limited data availability and short term projections raise concerns as to the unforeseen impacts of delta interventions on land-water systems and the long term sustainability of delta management strategies.

It is these challenges that serve as the starting point of the Dutch Diamonds in the Delta research program, developed by Utrecht University, Deltares, and a multidisciplinary consortium of Dutch water sector actors. The aim of the program is to strengthen the linkages between the Dutch Delta Approach and the SDGs by enhancing the inclusiveness and climate resilience of delta interventions.

This conference session discusses challenges and innovative strategies from the field, with regards to inclusiveness and climate resilience of Dutch delta interventions in the Global South. Consortium members will pitch case-based challenges and methodologies, followed by a roundtable debate. As an outcome, we foresee to further refine and inform the Dutch Diamonds in the Delta research program.

This session does not invite abstract submissions, yet welcomes active participation.