



AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES PREPCON

Addis Ababa
25-27 Jan 2018



Young Ethiopian woman in Addis Ababa. Photo by R.R.

African Perspectives PrepCon

Executive Report

African Perspectives PrepCon, UN, Addis Ababa, February 25th-27th 2018

Event jointly organised by the TU Delft Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment and Ethiopian Institute of Architecture, Building Construction and City Development (EiABC)

Colophon

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Christian Benimana, MASS Design Group, Rwanda
DK Osseo Asare, Low Design Office, Ghana
Fasil Giorgis, Chair of Heritage Architecture, EiABC, Ethiopia
Georgia Cardosi, PhD candidate at the Université de Montréal, Canada
Igor Moreno da Cruz Pessoa, MOOC Rethink the City, TU Delft, The Netherlands
Jean-Charles Tall, Collège Universitaire d'Architecture de Dakar, Senegal
Maheder Gebremedhin, Yema Architecture, Ethiopia
Meskerem Tamiru, President of the Ethiopian Association of Architects, Ethiopia
Peter John Russell, dean of the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment, TU Delft
Rahel Shawl, Raas Architects, Ethiopia
Zegeye Cherenet, Deputy Scientific Director, EiABC, Ethiopia
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Conference moderated by Antoni Folkers, African Architecture Matters Foundation, The Netherlands
Report organised by Roberto Rocco and Rachel Keeton

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Participants



Yaw Dankwah (DK) Osseo-Asare. Photo by R.R.

Meryam Ajari

Meryam Ajari started studying Architecture at TU Delft in 2014. As student she has always been interested in the educational affairs of the faculty. She was a member of the Faculty Student Council in 2016/2017. Currently she is the Commissioner of Education at ARGUS the Architecture Student Association of the master track Architecture. She has been involved in the making of the Massive Online Open Course Design for the Public Good: Dutch Urbanism. Since September 2017 she joined the African Initiative team.

Christian Benimana

Christian joined MASS in 2010 and holds a Bachelor of Science in Architecture from the School of Architecture and Urban Planning (CAUP) of Tongji University in Shanghai, China (2008). He was a 2011 Global Health Corps fellow with MASS and Partners in Health projects and has been involved with design/build projects, development initiatives, operational and administration leadership at MASS, as well as teaching at the architecture school of the former Kigali Institute of Science and Technology (KIST). He is currently the chairman of both the Education Board of the Rwanda Institute of Architects and the Education Board of the East African Institute of Architects. Christian is currently leading the implementation of the African Design Center, a field-based apprenticeship that is set to be the BAUHAUS of Africa.

Belinda van Buiten

After her studies in Delft Belinda van Buiten worked in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) for L+P architects and the Institute for Tropical building. In 1992 she established, together with Antoni Folkers and Geoffrey Wilks, FBW Architects with branches in Manchester, Dar es Salaam, Utrecht, Kampala and Kigali. She is a regular guest lecturer practising on various universities and schools for advanced education in the Netherlands. Belinda is one of the founders of ArchiAfrika, aiming to put African architecture and urbanism on the world map. For African Architecture Matters, the foundation that evolved out of ArchiAfrika, she organised various exhibitions in Africa as guest curator.

Georgia Cardosi

Italian architect living in Montreal since 2010, Georgia is a Ph.D. candidate, and research and teaching assistant at the Faculté de l'aménagement of the Université de Montréal. She is member of the Observatoire Ivanhoé Cambridge (OIC), UdeM; IF Research group (grif), UdeM; Innovation and Research for Reconstruction (i-Rec), UdeM; and the Canadian Disaster resilience and sustainable reconstruction research alliance (Œuvre Durable).

Zegeye Cherenet

Zegeye studied architecture and town planning at Addis Ababa university, holds Master of Architecture degree from IIT, Roorkee – India. Since 1998, he has been teaching architectural design and construction and currently holds the chair of Architecture and design at EiABC-AAU. He was guest lecturer in various universities in Ethiopia and abroad on theories of

architecture, vernacular architecture in Ethiopia and contemporary trends of urbanization in Ethiopia and Africa. In 2006/2007 he was also an academic guest at the Department of Architecture at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology -ETH in Zurich, teaching Design and Construction studios. He also has served as the general secretary of the Association of Ethiopian Architects (AEA). In addition to teaching architectural design he has served as a deputy scientific director of EiABC (from its establishment to March 2011) and also runs his practice with his partners (oadus plc) in Addis Ababa. He has designed and realized a variety of private and public projects in Ethiopia.

Abdoulaye Diakite

Abdoulaye was born in Dakar (Senegal), where he grew up and partly completed his studies. He then left his hometown to continue his undergraduate studies in France where he finished his bachelor and completed a master then and a PhD in computational geometry applied to the built environment at the LIRIS lab (Université de Lyon). Currently a post-doc researcher, working on the smart space subdivision of building model for indoor navigation purpose in emergency situations (SIMs3D Project), his topics of interest include: 3D modelling and reconstruction (of buildings and architectural elements), 3D indoor navigation, spatial analysis on BIM and GIS and computational geometry. Convinced that a bright future is waiting for Africa, Abdoulaye intends to be actively involved in the construction of his continent.

Antoni Folkers

Antoni is director of the African Architecture Matters Foundation (www.aamatters.nl) and director of the FBW Architects & Engineers (www.fbwgroup.com). Antoni is an architect and urban designer. He commenced his studies in art and art history at John Carroll University in Cleveland and obtained his masters

in Architecture cum laude at Delft University in 1986. He commenced his professional career as researcher and designer in Ouagadougou before joining the Institute for Tropical Building (IFT) of Dr G Lippsmeier in Starnberg, Germany. For Lippsmeier he became Resident Architect for East Africa in 1988. In 1992, together with Belinda van Buiten and later Geoffrey Wilks, he founded FBW Architects with offices in Manchester, Dar es Salaam, Utrecht, Kampala and Kigali. Since, he has been director and senior designer in the firm. The firm has won various awards for their innovative projects. In 2001, together with colleagues Janneke Bierman, Belinda van Buiten, Berend van der Lans and Joep Mol, he founded ArchiAfrika, platform for research and news on African architecture. In 2010, the management of ArchiAfrika was handed over to network partners and Belinda van Buiten, Berend van der Lans and Antoni Folkers founded African Architecture Matters a Netherlands based foundation active in organizing and executing research, events, exhibitions and publications on African architecture. He published a wide range of articles on architectural subjects, as well as edited the proceedings of the African Perspectives events of Dar es Salaam (2005), Kumasi (2007), Delft (2007) and Pretoria (2009). In 2010 he published two works on African architecture. He recently became Senior Urban Designer at the World Bank Group.

Maheder Gebremedhin

Maheder Gebremedhin is a practicing architect born and raised in Ethiopia's sprawling capital city, Addis Ababa. Included in his extensive profile is architecture, engineering, interior design and project management. On top of that, he produces and hosts his own radio show called Kebet Eske Ketema (from the house to the city), which he uses as a public platform to discuss civil architecture.

Fasil Georgis

Fasil Giorgis is Associate Professor of architecture and chair holder of conservation of urban and architectural heritage at EiABC, Addis Ababa University. He received his bachelor degree from Addis Ababa University in 1985 and his Masters degree from Helsinki University of technology in 1990. For more than twenty years, he has devoted his time to the study and preservation of the architectural heritage of Ethiopia, from traditional housing to historic towns. He has participated in numerous international conferences and contributed articles on sustainable architecture and preservation of cultural heritage. In 2008, he published a book entitled "Addis Ababa the City and its Urban and Architectural Heritage from 1886-1941". Together with some Swiss and Ethiopian colleagues they founded the NESTOWN group which works on a visionary idea on development of sustainable towns in Rural Ethiopia the first model being Buranest in Amhara region. His architectural design work in his private consulting firm focuses on urban conservation, restoration of historic buildings, regional hotels, cultural centers, public buildings and private residences in which he melds use of local material, indigenous knowledge and environmental concerns in contemporary design. Among his notable works are the Red Terror Memorial Museum, the Alliance Ethio-Francaise new blocks and the restoration of the Addis Ababa museum.



Fasil Giorgis during excursion in Addis. Photo by R.R.

Zhengli Huang

Zhengli earned her PhD from Tongji University in 2017. In her PhD she studied informal settlements in cities in Africa, focusing on the dynamic nature of these settlements and their symbiotic relationship with urbanization. She is currently working with Tom Goodfellow on a project about [China's impact in African urbanization](#), taking Ethiopia and Uganda as case studies. She has previously worked as an intern for UN-Habitat, where I developed research interests in cities in Africa, particularly focusing on two subjects. The first one is urban informality in African cities, particularly reflected in the form of housing. Her second main interest is on the impact of Chinese companies in Africa, especially those involved in infrastructure projects. She has carried out and participated in several research projects on urbanization in African cities and surveys on Chinese enterprises in African countries, mostly in Kenya, Zambia and South Africa. Her recent publications include a special issue of [Urban China: Chinese Urbanism in Africa](#) which she co-edited, and an article in European Financial Review on ['Is China Building Africa?'](#).

Rachel Keeton

Rachel Keeton is an urban researcher and founder of Urban Anecdote, a research office concerned with questions about the city. An architect by training, Keeton has worked in the field of urban analysis for the last ten years, specializing in contemporary new towns around the world. As a researcher for the International New Town Institute (INTI), she initiated and led INTI's satellite program in Nairobi, Kenya. She is a co-editor of the forthcoming book *To Build a City in Africa: A History and a Manual* (Nai010, 2018), and author of *Rising in the East: Contemporary New Towns in Asia* (SUN, 2011). She lectures regularly at international venues such as the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Bi-city Biennale, the Canadian Centre for Architecture and UN Habitat Expert Group Meetings. In 2016 she was the recipient of a Delft Global Development Fellowship. Keeton is currently pursuing a PhD in urbanism at TU Delft, under the Design as Politics chair.

Ambassador Bengt van Loosdrecht

Bengt van Loosdrecht is the Ambassador of the Netherlands to Ethiopia. I have been in Addis since August 8, 2016. I represent the Netherlands in Ethiopia and in Djibouti. Simultaneously, I serve as the Permanent Representative to the African Union, IGAD and UNECA in Addis Ababa. The Netherlands has a long tradition of good relations with Ethiopia. We work together in several areas. In agriculture and food security, for example, we support government programs as well as Dutch companies, NGOs and knowledge institutions. Improving access to health and SRHR is another of our priorities in Ethiopia, as well as cooperation on governance and the judiciary. In the context of moving from aid to trade, however, perhaps the most promising avenues for future cooperation lie in floriculture and horticulture, through investments from Dutch companies and good opportunities for the Ethiopian people.

Yaw Dankwah (DK) Osseo-Asare

DK Osseo-Asare is a founding principle of [Low Design Office](#), an architecture and planning firm based in the United States and Ghana. He received an A.B. in Engineering Design and an

MARCH, both from Harvard University. His building and research explore sustainability by linking form-making, technology and geopolitics with social dimensions of global environment. TED-Global Fellow, Fulbright Scholar and co-founder of design think tank DSGN AGNC, he has presented his work at the Royal Institute of British Architects, Harvard Graduate School of Design, PennDesign, Cornell, KNUST, University of Ghana-Legon, Smart Cities Expo and on the BBC. DK previously worked for architecture office MOS and Ghanaian architect-builder Alero Olympio. He blogs about African architecture and making at [Afrch](#). Most recently, he designed a new [town in Eastern Nigeria](#).

Igor Moreno Pessoa

Igor Pessoa is a PhD candidate in the OTB Department at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment since 2014. His research is financed by CAPES (part of the Brazilian Ministry of Education) and it looks for possible mechanisms to improve urban resilience in Brazilian Metropolises. He tries to transform the broad concept of resilience into practical, objective and implementable policies. In TU Delft he also helped to establish the Global Urban Lab, an online collective initiative of PhDs that are working to tackle urban challenges in emerging economies outside Europe. He became an Architect and Urban Planner by the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, but has always been interested on strategies beyond the traditional design oriented solution for urban problems. In that sense, Igor is eager to debate possible comprehensive and multidisciplinary solutions for contemporary urban challenges.

Roberto Rocco

Rocco is a senior Assistant Professor at the Section of Spatial Planning and Strategy of the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment (*Bouwkunde*) of TU Delft. His main efforts of research are into GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY and SPATIAL JUSTICE as FRAMEWORKS and TOOLS that enable planners and designers to elaborate strategies to achieve sustainable and fair urban development. Since the publication of the New Urban Agenda in Quito (2016), he has been working with UN-Habitat to integrate the New Urban Agenda into education. He has published extensively in issues of governance, sustainability and energy efficiency.

Peter Russell

Peter Russell is dean of the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment since 2015. Before this, Peter Russell was Professor of Computer Supported Planning in Architecture (CAAD) at the RWTH Aachen University. He also served as Rector's Emissary for Alumni Affairs at the RWTH where he has been Dean of the Faculty of Architecture and chaired the Dean's Council. He is a partner in architectural practice IP Arch GmbH and serves as vice-chairman of the German Architecture Dean's Council (DARL). From 2012 to 2013 he served on the Council of the Association for European Education in Architecture (AEEA/EAAE). He is also a founding member of the newly formed European architectural research network ARENA.

Russell holds a bachelor in Environmental Design Studies from the Technical University of Nova Scotia, where he also obtained a master's degree in Architecture. His research encompasses Building Information Modelling, Intelligent Buildings and Ambient Assisted Living. He is no stranger to TU Delft: in 2010 he chaired the Research Evaluation Committee for Architecture

and Urban Planning in the Netherlands, which undertook a combined assessment of the research programmes and institutes at TU/e and TU Delft. He was also part of the Organising Committee for the Solar Decathlon Europe 2014, where TU Delft's 'Prêt-à-Loger' came third.

Rahel Shawl

Founder and director of one of the leading architecture firms in Ethiopia, Rahel Shawl prides herself on designing quality building projects and being a leader, mentor, and role model for young architects in her country. Rahel cofounded ABBA Architects in 1992 and founded RAAS Architects in 2004. Her collaborative international as well as local projects employ traditional and contemporary approaches that are true to the environment and its users. She received the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 2007 for her work as the architect of record on the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Addis Ababa and has been honoured numerous times for her contribution to the field of architecture by the Association of Ethiopian Architects. Her passion to inspire and share knowledge with architecture students and young professionals led to her inclusion in "Temsale: A Book around 64 Phenomenal Ethiopian Women," and also appointed Honorary Good Will Ambassador for Zer Ethiopia, an NGO promoting education for girls. Rahel was the first African woman to be awarded the Loeb Fellowship at the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

Mamadou Jean-Charles Tall

Mamadou Jean-Charles Tall is President of the board of the Collège Universitaire d'Architecture de Dakar, an institution that he created in 2008 with his partners Naby Kane and Annie Jouga, and where he teaches and is Director of the Masters of Architecture programme. He has taught at the Institut Supérieur des Arts of the University of Dakar and at the school of architecture of Lomé, Togo (EAMAU). Mr. Tall is the co-director of J&T Architectes et Associés, an acclaimed architectural practice he runs in Dakar, Senegal, with Annie Jouga, and has led or designed several projects in Senegal and neighbouring countries. He served as a member of the scientific committee of the Dakar International Art Biennale and was involved with the Doual'Art triennale in Cameroon. An active member of the Comité Supérieur des Monuments Historiques du Sénégal, he has been the President of the Ordre des Architectes du Sénégal for five years.

Meskerem Tamiru

Meskerem Tamiru Gubay is graduate from EiABC in Architecture and town planning. She has a Certificate in Management from Oxford University (Open University) in collaboration with Bahir Dar Polytechnic Institute. After graduation, she has been employed in consulting office and has been working on different projects. She founded MeskeremTamiru consulting architects in August 2008 and later MeskeremTamiru consulting & Trading plc in 2012 and engaged in Architectural design, supervision and contract administration of construction works. Though a young company, The firm also has the vision of mentoring young architects. In August 2017, she is assigned by the general assembly as the first female president to serve 3 (three) years for Association of Ethiopian Architects in its 25 years of formation.



Meskerem Tamiru speaking at the PrepCon. Photo by R.R.

Anteneh Tesfaye Tola

Anteneh Tesfaye Tola was born in Ethiopia. He received his MAS in Urban Design from the ETH Zurich, in Switzerland. He studied methodologies of analysis and the strategic design and planning of urban territories in emerging economies – taking cases in neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo in Brazil. The continuous confrontation between issues of rapid urbanization and social equity and the use of design as an instrument of intervention has been his main area of investigation. He has been an academic staff at the Addis Ababa University –Ethiopian Institute of Architecture, Building Construction and City Development, during which time he was continuously involved in teaching, research and consultancy work in the development of a masterplan for the main city center of Addis Ababa. At TU Delft, Anteneh is engaged in a research entitled: Addis Ababa's 'Sefers' - Reimagining Places of Coexistence in a Rapidly Urbanizing Africa.

Henk Visscher

Henk Visscher is Professor of Housing Quality and Process Innovation of the OTB Department of the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment of Delft University of Technology. He is director of the Graduate School and coordinator of the Africa program of the Faculty. He works with the World Bank on guidelines for building regulations for resilient cities. He is coordinator of the task group Building Regulations in the Face of Climate Change of CIB and coordinator of the Working group Energy efficient and environmental sustainability of Housing of ENHR. He has published many articles, supervised many PhD's and initiated and coordinated large research projects.

Our Vision

Our Vision

The Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment of the TU Delft (Bouwkunde) has a vision for strengthening ties with Africa. Bouwkunde wishes to have a positive impact on African's rapid urbanisation in the next decades. Africa is urbanising at record rates and there are many challenges ahead. According to the World Bank, Africa's urban population stands at 472 million people today, but this number will double over the next 25 years, reaching 1 billion urban dwellers by 2040¹.

While the main responsibility for the destiny of African cities lies with African citizens, governments and institutions, we believe that universities everywhere have a role to play in helping educate the next generation of African architects, planners and urban designers with a global perspective. We wish to reach out to African higher education institutes, governments, businesses and citizens to become partners in promoting sustainable, inclusive and fair urbanisation within the framework of the New Urban Agenda, adopted at Habitat III in Quito 2016.

We believe African problems need African solutions, and TU Delft wants to learn from African institutions and people in order to support positive change in the continent, especially in issues of capacity building and implementation of the New Urban Agenda. We believe we can have a role in providing world-class education and training for African students and academics in partnership with local institutions, governments and businesses.

For this reason, we are launching the 'A is for AFRICA' initiative at Bouwkunde, in which research, education and cooperation come together under one umbrella. This initiative articulates endeavours in three areas (research, education and cooperation) in order to maximise TU Delft's positive impact on African urbanisation. The organisation of this PrepCon (preparatory conference) is the first step in this process. In the PrepCon, scholars and practitioners concerned with questions related to African urbanisation came together for two days in January 2018 to discuss the following questions:

What are challenges associated with contemporary African urbanisation?

How can TU Delft engage with African institutions in order to produce a positive impact on African urbanisation?

What are on-going educational experiences and research projects from which we could learn together?

This report is a summarised account of the PrepCon.

¹ The World Bank emphasizes that "investments in African cities' infrastructure, industrial, and commercial structures have not kept pace with concentration of people, nor have investments in affordable formal housing. The potential for coordinated investments in infrastructure, residential, and commercial structures is great, which will enhance agglomeration economies and connect people with jobs." World Bank (2017). Africa's Cities Opening Doors to the World. S. V. Lall, J. V. Henderson and A. J. Venables. Washington D.C., World Bank.



Participants of the PrepCon. Photo by R.R.



Street scene in Addis Ababa. Photo by R.R.

The main issues
at hand

The main issues at hand

This preparatory conference explored the main issues around sustainable, fair urbanisation in Africa. But even before the Prep-Con started, we knew that to talk about urbanisation “in Africa” is to repeat the idea that the African continent is somehow homogeneous. This idea of “Africa” as one continuous, homogeneous, poor and rapidly urbanising continent is a Western construct that does not survive the test of reality. Africa is an enormous continent with 54 independent countries, an immense variety of cultures, climates, political organisations, urbanisation processes and levels of development. The challenges of urbanisation are different in each country, depending on the level of development, type of government, climate, size and infinite other issues.

Therefore, there are big challenges in perspectives when discussing urbanisation in Africa. While many people seem to see urbanisation as an opportunity for development (SDG 11 and the New Urban Agenda), since many countries in the African continent are still predominantly rural, many people think the discussion should also include how to manage rural communities in order to provide them with services and opportunities that would somehow “slow down” the process of urbanisation in the continent, leaving more breathing space for national governments to develop strategies of sustainable inclusive urbanisation.

There are, however, a few starting points for the discussion, many of them highlighted by Antoni Folkers from the African Architecture Matters Foundation in The Netherlands, in his initial address. Folkers highlighted the Economist Intelligence Unit best cities ranking² in

which all of the “best cities” are in Australia, Canada and Northern Europe and most of the “worst cities” are in Africa, including 7 “worst” cities to live in, according to the Economist: Harare, Lagos, Dhaka, Abidjan, Dakar, Lusaka and Nairobi.

This type of ranking, while having valid methodologies, is aimed primarily at the international business community and fails to take into account local perceptions and experiences that make African cities places of innovation and hope. Then again, issues like air quality, mobility, green spaces, access to

sanitation, fresh water and jobs are universal and large African cities seem to score low in all these items. Folkers also highlighted the issue of informal urbanization as one of the main defining issues in African urbanization processes. While slums offer the first opportunity for access to the city for millions of impoverished rural immigrants, their general

living conditions are difficult and they cannot be seen as “solutions” for rapid urbanization.

Finally, the size and the scale of urbanization processes is a common defining element in Africa. According to Hoornweg (2016), in 100 years from now, African cities will be the largest cities in the world. While the largest cities in 2006 were Tokyo, Mexico, Mumbai, New York and São Paulo, the three largest metropolises in 2100 will be Lagos, Kinshasa and Dar-es-Salaam, with Kharoum and Diamey coming in 6th and 7th places.

Such speed of urbanisation is taking a toll on African governments’ ability to steer sustainable inclusive development that harnesses the benefits of urbanisation. The World Bank emphasizes that “investments in African cities’ infrastructure, industrial, and commercial structures have not kept pace with concentration of people, nor have investments in affordable formal housing. The potential

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2 The EIU Best city ranking and report <https://www.eiu.com/>

public/topical_report.aspx?campaignid=BestCity2012



Light-rail in Addis Ababa. Photo by R.R.

for coordinated investments in infrastructure, residential, and commercial structures is great, which will enhance agglomeration economies and connect people with jobs” (World Bank, 2017).

This is made more daunting by the worrying lack of institutional and implementation capacity in many African countries (The African Capacity Building Foundation, 2002). While external development aid has been a force for development, the push for sustainable development must come from within, and African governments must develop tools, frameworks and institutions that are able to implement strategies and projects in an extremely agile way in order to face the scale and scope of urbanization in the continent. As Africa continuously becomes more attractive for foreign investment, local governments must be able to implement spatial strategies that successfully translate foreign funds into local public goods.

In this sense, capacity building and education become central concerns for African countries, especially when devolution takes place and local authorities become accountable for steering development at the local level, while reinforcing democracy and participation. This is the space in which global universities like TU Delft can act: capacity building and education for sustainable urban development. In the end, the challenges for sustainable urbanization in Africa are the same as everywhere else: how to create inclusive, healthy, safe, resilient cities and communities that are able to withstand the challenges of climate change, economic and political uncertainty, lack of fresh water, access to sanitation, green spaces and services. TU Delft is a centre of excellence in research and education for the built environment and as a global uni-

versity, it is our duty to educate young minds everywhere.

Africa for and by Africans

Capacity building becomes a central concern for African countries, especially when devolution takes place and local authorities become accountable for steering development at the local level, while reinforcing democracy and participation.

This brings us to the important issues of knowledge transfer, policy transfer and the transferability of tools and theories. Most countries in Africa have had to deal with a brutal history of colonialism and the consequences of predatory political regimes imposed from outside. This puts us all on guard against any patronizing attempts to “educate Africa” with Western paradigms. It is obvious that Africans must steer the process of capacity building, education and training in

the continent, which they have been doing intensely. The Ethiopian Institute of Architecture, Building Construction and City Development, for example, has a model programme of education and training. However, African institutions are looking for partners elsewhere. In a globalized world, where the basic challenges for human existence are common challenges, universities everywhere must work together to educate the next generations of urban planners, designers, architects and city managers for our common future.

The issue of partnerships was frequently alluded to during the PrepCon and there was general consensus about the need to work together. The range of speakers addressed a large variety of issues. We can summarize the discussion in 3 main challenges that must be tackled but to which we do not have an immediate answer, as they are mostly “wicked problems” that are both related to vastly larger socio-economic contexts and interrelated to each other.

The Challenge of building on African Knowledge

The need to develop critical approaches on knowledge, skills and practices that are embedded in the African context is widely acknowledged. This is connected to the recognition of non-traditional knowledge and the need to decolonize knowledge, which leads to the need to learn from how Africans live, beyond European and North-American models.

Notions like African geometry, fractals in African architecture and urban organisation and organized informality were mentioned in the talks of Professor Jean-Charles Tall and DK Osseo Asare. This is also related to the challenge of understanding what is African modernity, or in other words, what does modernity mean in Africa? What could be genuinely African approaches to modernisation? This issue was strongly emphasised by Zegeye Cherenet and Antoni Folkers, for whom the entire notion of modernity as understood in the west is damaging to Africa and needs to be critically and locally reviewed.

Fasil Giorgis, on the other hand, emphasised the richness of African architectural heritage, which is often overlooked in education within Africa itself, an issue raised also by Tall. Georgia Cardosi drew the attention of the audience to the need to learn from vernacular forms of spatial organisation, an issue related to Tall's,

Asare's and Giorgis' ideas and to Folkers' claim for an African modernity independent from models imposed from abroad.

These ideas found echo in the talk by Zhengli Huang from Sheffield University, who compared informal settlements in Shenzhen to informal settlements in Nairobi. The "Chinese model" of urbanization in Africa has many critics in the West, but Africans have a more nuanced view on it, and recognize that China is alone in willing to invest massively in infrastructure in the conti-

nent. Either way, Chinese investment in infrastructure in the continent seems to be a reality that many governments and professionals need to contend with.

Another aspect connected to the African perspective on modernization came from Bizuayehu Jembere from EiABC, who highlighted the need to plan and design for rural environments, in his account about Ethiopia's plan to build 8.000 rural villages gathering basic services in the next 10 years.

The "Chinese model" of urbanization in Africa has many critics in the West, but Africans have a more nuanced view on it.



Street scene in Addis Ababa. Photo by R.R.



Street scene in Addis Ababa. Photo by R.R.

The Challenge of Agile and Critical Education and Capacity Building

This challenge is connected to the need to educate critical minds that are open to advocacy, community building and participatory design and planning, emphasizing democracy and good governance. But it is also connected to the absolute urgency to form a new generation of African planners and designers who can tackle the immense challenges ahead quickly.

The architect as an advocate for positive change and community engagement was emphasized by Rahel Shawl and Christian Benimana, architects from Ethiopia and Rwanda respectively, who engage in participatory exercises for their projects and educate future architects through mentorships and on-the-job training. Shawl and Meskerem Tami-ru, head of Ethiopia's Architects Association, emphasised the need to empower women's voices in urban development, something Shawl has been proactive about by engaging young promising female architects to her successful practice in Addis Ababa.

Shawl and others pointed to the need to make education and training in Africa as inclusive as possible, seek-

ing to close the gender gap and to empower women and minorities, an issue also tackled by Bizuayehu Jembere in his research on engineering education for the blind. This is intimately related to the challenge to inspire the African youth and the need to imag-

ine an African future that is fair, inclusive and democratic and environmentally resilient. But the scale of African urbanization processes requires urgent solutions: promoting agile, innovative, and practical education, with emphasis on online engagement as exemplified by MOOCs, as well as short training and capacity building exercises.

The challenge to inspire the African youth and the need to imagine an African future that is fair, inclusive and democratic and environmentally resilient

These issues were highlighted by Igor Moreno, the organizer of the Rethink the City MOOC¹, and others during the PrepCon. The need to prepare architect-citizens and planner-citizens was highlighted by Zegeye Cherenet, Roberto Rocco, Moreno and others.

¹ <https://www.edx.org/course/rethink-city-new-approaches-global-local-delftx-rtc1-0>

The Challenge of Information, Data and Technology

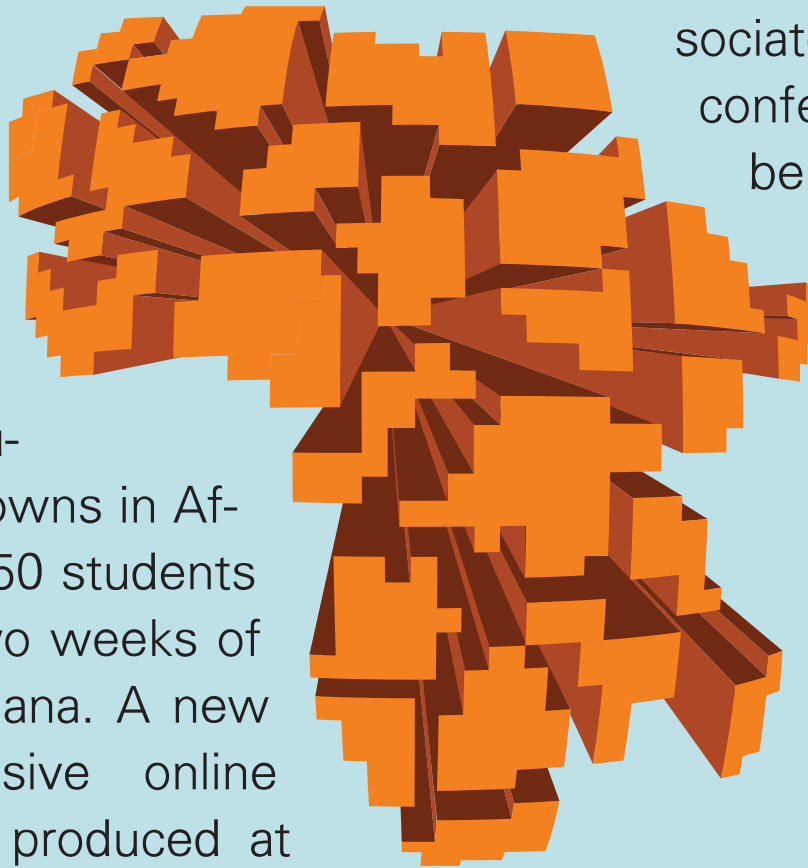
The challenge of data collection, availability and transparency and the need to adopt modern technologies for data collection and sharing, connected to good governance and effective open government was highlighted by many, but the efforts made by Maheder Gebremedhin, Ethiopian architect, to gather data for Addis Ababa were remarkable. Peter Russell, dean of Bouwkunde, highlighted how automation and technology might have an impact on African urbanisation and might allow Africa to “jump” some of the detrimental steps in modernisation processes faced in the past by the West. The issue of sound data collection and availability for good governance was mentioned by several participants, which brings us back to the need to form critical minds who are able to use big data in a smart way for sustainable democratic processes of urbanisation.

Our Role

As a global university, we recognize that the challenge of EDUCATION for SUSTAINABLE, FAIR and INCLUSIVE CITIES and COMMUNITIES seems to bring together all the main issues discussed at the PrepCon. We recognize that university education is expensive and extended, and new, more agile and inclusive ways to train, capacitate and educate the next generations of African planners and designers must be found by partners involved. In this regard, the role of online education, short training programmes and other forms of education must be contemplated. Agility and accessibility are big issues but the connection of education to real life challenges and stakeholders seems also crucial in order to connect knowledge production to the reality of African cities and communities and to pursue the vision of African modernity. Education must be embedded in real-life challenges and systems of governance and in order to achieve education for the city we need, we must carve partnerships with African universities, governments, businesses and citizens.

Next Steps

The Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment of the TU Delft will continue to define the 'A is for Africa' initiative through a number of events over the course of 2018, including a student-led Urbanism Africa Day on March 16, a Spring 2018 lecture course and studio on New Towns in Africa involving 50 students conducting two weeks of analysis in Ghana. A new MOOC (massive online open course) produced at Bouwkunde addressing African urbanisation begins in May, and this will be followed by a faculty-wide Africa Day on September 27 2018. During this time, we will continue to develop the African Perspectives conference at the TU Delft Faculty of Architecture planned for March 2019. This conference will address the issues brought to light by presentations and discussions during the PrepCon. The themes, tracks and special events associated with the conference will be directly influenced by the results of the PrepCon, as elaborated here. Following the conference in 2019, Bouwkunde will continue to build its 'A is for Africa' initiative through new research directions, the establishment of a new chair on African urbanisation, and new relationships with African institutions.





SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



Participants of the PrepCon. Photo by R.R.

THE GOALS





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