

CITIES TO BE TAMED?

Standards and alternatives in the transformation of the urban South

CALL FOR PAPERS

CITIES TO BE TAMED? is an international conference aimed at simultaneously exploring and questioning the role played by urban planning, design, and policies in the continuous urbanisation processes affecting the so-called 'global South'.

Under the purposefully vague label of 'urban South', a nuanced variety of urban environments scattered across Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America share: (1) the prominence of informal settlements, (2) the tension between imported and endogenous paths to modernisation and (3) exacerbated social conflicts related to the use of the urban space. In addressing one or more of the three above mentioned topics, the Conference aims to explore the difference between 'standard' and 'alternative' strategies of transformation – especially investigating the relationships between the visions of policy-making, and the transformative agency of everyday urbanity.

As such, the Conference targets urban researchers coming from the backgrounds of planning and urbanism, architecture, design theory, and geography – and welcomes both theoretical reflections and academic perspectives, and case-study related practices and insights.

MAIN TOPICS

(1) DESIGNING THE INFORMAL CITY/ THE INFORMAL DESIGN OF THE CITY

As a growing number of regions are presently embroiled in the process of urbanisation, informal settlements develop unabated in the territories of the 'global South'. In the last fifty years, design-related disciplines have informed a multitude of practices and conceptual frameworks exploring ways to qualitatively transform these sites. An enduring and highly disputed problem, however, has remained the difficulty in assessing within which processes, and to which extent, the production of design strategies can acquire *agency* and have significant leverage effects within the informal sectors of contemporary cities – thus effectively contributing toward the feasible amelioration of living conditions for their inhabitants.

What role do design-related disciplines currently play, in relation to the self-produced transformative logics that shape informal cities across the world? What place might be accorded to design products and processes, at the crossroad between the social and spatial dimensions of urban poverty and inequality? Under which conditions and at which scales can design have a strategic function, and contribute to producing structural modifications on the longer term?



IMPORTANT DATES

Call for papers launch:
1 March 2012

Deadline for Proposals:
15 June 2012

Notification of acceptance:
15 July 2012

Deadline for registration:
1 September 2012

Deadline for Papers:
15 October 2012

Conference:
15/17 November 2012

PROMOTERS

Spazicontesi | Contestedspaces

Francesco Chiodelli

Beatrice De Carli

Maddalena Falletti

Lina Scavuzzo

with the support of

**Department of Architecture and Planning
(DiAP)/ Politecnico di Milano**

in collaboration with

**Laboratory of International Cooperation/
DiAP (Coordinator: Paola Bellaviti)**

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(2) STEREOTYPICAL VISIONS/ ENDURING REALITIES

Characterised by wealth concentration and social polarisation, cities in the South of the world are also typically subject to a dual mode of transformation. On the one side, we assist to the everyday reshaping of the urban environment, spontaneously performed by a number of inhabitants and in most cases referring to long-lasting conceptualisations of space, nature, society; on the other side, governmental institutions display planning discourses – namely visions and programmes – which tend to rely on stereotypical notions of development and sustainability, fixed at the supranational level and often detached from cultural milieus in terms of problem assessments, objectives and solutions.

By whom and for whom are visions conceived? How do global agendas affect local territorial transformation? Can different rationalities converge in setting priorities and excogitating ways to improve the quality of life in urban environments? Can vernacular rules of transformation provide valid alternatives for addressing the challenges posed by contemporary urban growth?

(3) THE POWER OF PLANNING/ EMPOWERING BY PLANNING

As Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber remind us, “Planning is a component of politics. There is no escaping that truism”. Although this is true everywhere, it is made more evident in many contexts of the ‘urban South’, where ethnic and social conflicts are often exacerbated. In these situations, planning and urban policies often act as a ‘veil of Maya’ hiding by a ‘technical cover’ the underlying political aims pursued by the design of space.

Which are the different articulations of the relationship between spatial transformation, power, social conflicts, popular resistance in different ‘urban South’ contexts? How is it possible to fight back the ‘dark side’ of planning? Is it really feasible to empower citizens by participation in planning, urban policies, architecture?

CONFERENCE CURATORS

Francesco Chiodelli
Beatrice De Carli
Maddalena Falletti
Lina Scavuzzo

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Alessandro Balducci
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Oxford Brookes University

Agostino Petrillo
Politecnico di Milano

Antonio Tosi
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SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Paper proposals are now being accepted. The official language for the Conference is **English**. Submissions in other languages will not be accepted.

Paper proposals intended for presentation within the Conference should be e-mailed to conference@contestedspaces.info via the **abstract form** which can be downloaded from the website, no later than **June 15, 2012**.

Submissions should include the following information:

Author(s) - *In case of multiple authors, please indicate presenter with an asterix (*)*

- name and contact information (phone number, email and postal address);
- institutional affiliation;
- biography: indication of educational and professional background, and research interests, in a single paragraph up to 100 words.

Paper

- title of the paper;
- main topic addressed;
- 3 keywords;
- highlights: see <http://elsevier.com/highlights> for some examples;
- abstract: outlining the aims, scope and conclusions of the paper in maximum 500 words;
- 5 key bibliographical references.

On receipt of a submission, the Conference curators will make a first decision on its suitability for presentation. The final selection of papers to be presented during the Conference will be agreed on by the Scientific committee. Successful applicants will be notified by **July 15, 2012** and must register by **September 1** (fee 100 Euros).

The **selected papers** will be submitted in a final version (**4000 to 5000 words in length**) before **October 15, 2012** via the paper form which will be uploaded on the website in due time.

Full papers will be presented during the Conference for interactive discussion among a small group of people including a moderator, and will be **published** on **'Planum. The Journal of Urbanism'** (ISSN 1723-0993). Avenues for further publication of a selection of the Conference papers will also be explored.

For more information please send an email to info@contestedspaces.info.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Bruno De Meulder
University of Leuven

Jorge Fiori
A.A. School of Architecture

Nabeel Hamdi
Oxford Brookes University

Further Keynote Speakers will be announced upon confirmation.