



Call for proposals (CfP)

Africa's 'New Cities'. A policy trend or an urban solution?

19 & 20 June 2023

Dakar, Senegal

Background of the CfP

The French Institute of International Relations, (Ifri) the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) and Charter Cities Institute (CCI) co-organize the annual conference of the 3-years research program “Governing Africa’s Urban Transitions”, coordinated by Ifri. The event is dedicated to the topic of building “new” infrastructures, neighborhoods and entirely new cities, which have received a great deal of attention by researchers, media and the civil society. It will bring together scholars, policy- and decision-makers, as well as experts from the private sector to share and discuss data, results, and future visions for the type of urban infrastructure needed to respond to urban growth patterns in Sub-Saharan Africa. As a multi-disciplinary event, the contributions to the conference will offer different perspectives to assess new city projects on the African continent.

The conference will take place on 19 and 20 June in the country office of FES in Dakar, Senegal.

The two-days event will be composed of four panels reflecting the expertise of the participants on different new city projects in the Sub-Saharan region. One of the panels (June 20) will be dedicated to the presentation of research papers by young scholars (PhD students or post-docs) conducting their research on different new city case studies. The selected candidates will present their papers during the conference and will be discussed by senior experts attending the event. The papers will be part of a collective publication series co-edited by Ifri, FES and CCI and published in December 2023.

The organizing institutions

Ifri (French Institute of International Relations) is France’s main think tank in international relations, bringing together and connecting different types of actors involved in national and international policy making including academia, public authorities, the private sector and civil society organizations. Since its creation in 2007, the Sub-Saharan Africa Center (SSAC) has built up expertise on the challenges of urban growth in Africa. In May 2022, the SSAC has launched the multi-stakeholder research program “Governing Africa’s Urban Transitions”, which aims at providing policy-oriented research results on three key sectors of urban governance, including land, mobility and infrastructure. The research is coproduced by the consortium members including experts from



academia, the international civil society, multi- and bilateral organizations as well as the private sector. The Dakar conference closes the activities of the first year of a 3-years research program.

The **Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES)** is a non-profit German foundation funded by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany. It was founded in 1925 and is named after Germany's first democratically elected President, Friedrich Ebert. FES is committed to the advancement of both socio-political and economic development in the spirit of social democracy, through civic education, research, and international cooperation.

FES engages the concept of a social and inclusive "just city" to facilitate innovative discussions among political decision makers, civil society representatives and others on issues such as affordable housing, fair and clean public transport and meaningful civic engagement in urban spaces. The objective is to promote urban social justice, equal distribution of opportunities for social mobility, enhanced access to social space and family friendliness in African cities.

The **Charter Cities Institute (CCI)** was founded in Washington DC in 2017 and now also has an office in Lusaka, Zambia. In the next few decades upwards of 2.5 billion people are schedule to move into cities, some into existing cities but many into the hundreds of new cities being built around the world, particularly in India, China, and Africa. CCI are urban optimists and belief that urbanization can be a powerful force to drive economic growth, create employment, and reduce poverty. The link between urbanization and industrialization has broken down in Africa since the 1970s. CCI believe that new cities, given greater autonomy and better governance can revive this link and lift tens of millions of people out of poverty. CCI are currently working with governments in Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania, and Rwanda on urbanization policy

Topic and aim of the event

Since 1945 more than 80 new city developments have been either planned, built or completed in sub-Saharan Africa. African governments have promoted the construction of new urban neighborhoods or entire cities as promising solutions to the challenges of rapid urban growth. Project announcements endorse the ideas of modern, innovative, and technology-based forms of urbanism often based on heavy infrastructure investments, sometimes failing to include marginalized city dwellers. The 3D plans and project designs, broadly disseminated by social media and the international press, strongly contrast with the popular images generally associated with African cities displaying overcrowded informal settlements, dust-covered public areas and traffic jams. The enthusiastic promotion of new infrastructure, neighborhoods and entire city projects was followed not only by media and private sector interest, but also by research initiatives seeking to unpack the drivers and ideas behind the phenomenon. Research aims at defining and conceptualizing these urban approaches, and also attempts to identify the variables explaining the gap, observed in some cases, between ambitious urban layouts and the lacking implementation on the ground in some cases.

This multi-stakeholder conference aims at discussing the origins, objectives, challenges and visions behind these urban undertakings and their impacts on urban governance in different countries of the sub-Saharan region. The priority will be given to the presentation of concrete case studies, in order to identify the role of politics, history, culture and economic transformation in the design and implementation of new city projects. An overarching question of the conference is the tendency to

label cities and urban approaches (sustainable, green, new, just, smart, etc.) and the effective contribution of this practice to rethink tomorrow's cities.

Eligibility

The conference aims promoting new research on concrete case studies by young scholars from different universities on the African continent reflecting new city developments in sub-Saharan Africa. Three to four candidates will be chosen based on the evaluation of short research abstracts, that will be presented during the conference (June 20, 2023).

What we offer

- The travel costs including flight tickets, accommodation, visa fees and local transport will be covered by the organizers.
- The research papers presented by the young scholars will be discussed by senior experts attending the conference
- After a thorough review, the research papers will be part of a collective publication series co-edited by Ifri, FES and CCI and published in December 2023.
- Feedback and monitoring to support the candidate throughout the publication process.

Before applying, please take note of the following eligibility criteria:

- You are a **PhD candidate or a postdoctoral research fellow** in a university based in sub-Saharan Africa
- You have a research background in social science (geography, urban studies, sociology, anthropology, political science, etc.), economic science, environmental science or any other related field.
- You are **undertaking research on new infrastructure or new city projects** in a Sub-Saharan country, that can be presented during the June conference.

Program

- Paper **submissions** are to be sent to the organizers by **Monday, May 15, 2023**.
 - o Submissions include a research abstract of 350-500 words and a CV of the candidate.
 - o Submissions can be written in French or English.
 - o The submissions are to be sent as a single PDF file to Lise Lesigne (afrique@ifri.org).
- The selected candidates will be informed about the results of the selection process by **Wednesday, May 24, 2023**.
- The selected candidates will have to submit a **research outline of 3 pages** to the organizers by **Wednesday, June 14, 2023**.