

# **Urban shifts and political economy**

## **3 sessions:**

### **1. Spectacular to Skeletal, Clandestine to Everyday: Contemporary Modalities of Autoconstruction in African Cities**

**Session organiser:** Stephen Marr, Malmö University, Sweden, **E-mail:** [stephen.marr@mau.se](mailto:stephen.marr@mau.se)

AbdouMalik Simone's notion of the "worlding of African cities" (2001) introduced a distinctive way of understanding how urban residents in Africa seek to connect to global political-economic and socio-cultural circuits, even as they carve out spaces for themselves within cities marked by infrastructural deficits, uneven governance, and predatory forms of extraction. Nearly a quarter of a century later, these dynamics have become more pronounced and ubiquitous. As new forms of global connection emplace themselves in African cities, residents must grapple, often on their own in the absence of state support, with the same persistent difficulties: governance failures, infrastructural decay, and now the accelerating impacts of climate change, far-reaching technologies of extraction driven by digital platforms and artificial intelligence and widening gaps in socio-economic inequalities that harden already deep bifurcations in the material spatialities of African cities.

The proposed panel seeks to engage these contemporary modalities of autoconstruction by exploring the diverse and situated ways residents of African cities today navigate these political, economic, technological, and infrastructural conditions that define contemporary urban life. Key questions that papers might address include:

How do people build a life from the margins, in the shadows, in half-built urban environments that consistently fail them?

What are the impacts on everyday politics and infrastructure in cities increasingly featuring spectacular construction developments funded by mysterious, if not illicit, financial and political sources?

What tactical responses by individuals and local communities are possible underneath the (dys)(u)topian narratives of TechBros?

What happens to everyday lives and livelihoods in African cities when "AI comes to town"?

How do urban Africans make and manage cities, resist, evade or leverage challenging spatial-material conditions of economic, political or technological extraction?

To engage these and other related questions, the panel seeks theoretically informed and/or empirically grounded papers. We especially welcome papers that adopt an interdisciplinary perspective, a comparative approach that considers these themes in a wider intra-regional or cross-regional frame, or from younger scholars operating at the forefront of this research agenda.

### **2. Urban geopolitics: Patterns, Shifts, and the Restless Nature of Cities**

**Session organiser:** Ioannis Georgikopoulos, Catholic University of Paris (ICP), France, **E-mail:** [i.georgikopoulos@icp.fr](mailto:i.georgikopoulos@icp.fr)

**Panel Title: "Urban geopolitics: Patterns, Shifts, and the Restless Nature of Cities"**

Since the early 1960s, urban geography has been related to a broader set of fields in social sciences. The pioneer works of Jean Gottmann, especially his "Megalopolis" (1961) and "The Significance of Territory" (1973),

paved the way for the development of the interdisciplinary and multilevel frame of analysis used as reference in terms of epistemology and methodology ever since.

While being associated with top-down public policies and economic strategies involving the state scale (Anderson, 1983; Harvey, 1989; Hollifield, 1992; Jessop, 2002), cities are also studied as laboratories of broader and more complex realities and interdependencies. Various publications have placed the city within the socio-political context of post-modern globalization (Hall, P., 1966; Friedmann, 1986; Back, 1996; Prévelakis, 1999; Lacoste, 2001; Kaika, 2005; Agnew, 2009; Rossi & Vanolo, 2012; Georgikopoulos, 2018, Georgikopoulos, 2020), militarism, violence, and warfare (Ashworth, 1991; Graham, 2004; Graham, 2010; Harker, 2014), and have also forged connections with the ever-evolving territorial and cultural processes (Lefebvre, 1974; Prévelakis, 1994; Appadurai, 1996; Prévelakis, 2000; Amin & Thrift, 2002; Veschambre, 2008; Foucher, 2011; Jones, 2016; Foucher 2016; Georgikopoulos, 2017; Rokem & Boano, 2018, Chevrier, 2024) characterizing contemporary urban geopolitics. The resurgent interest in the link between environmental questions and political geography (Kaika, 2004; Loftus, 2012; Saguin, 2022) has expanded the scientific range and knowledge of urban geopolitics' analytical framework.

Following on from this multidisciplinary endeavor, the panel "Urban geopolitics: Patterns, Shifts, and the Restless Nature of Cities" encourages contributions from a large spectrum of research fields, such as political geography, history, urban planning and architecture, demography, political science, cultural studies, comparative politics, and international relations. The aim is to propose a comprehensive and balanced approach to modern cities by studying shifts and patterns related to power dynamics: globalization, migration and diaspora networks, identities, architectural heritage, resilience and symbolic systems, borders, conflict and war, violence and contestation (urbicide), sovereignty and governance, natural resources, sustainability and climate change, metropolization, urban rebranding and public diplomacy, innovation for smart cities of tomorrow.

Submissions of paper abstracts for in-person presentations of 15 minutes should be in English and respect the following:

A clear-cut research question, hypothesis, and a brief description of the methodological approach (no bibliographical references needed)

Limit of 400 words

Include name, contact details, and affiliation of author(s)

Paper abstracts on Nordic urban geopolitics will be greatly appreciated.

### **3. Urban Political Economy in Transition: Critical Perspectives on Urban Processes in a Polycrisis Era**

**Session organiser:** Defne Kadioglu, Nordic Urban Political Economy Network , Sweden, **E-mail:** defne.kadioglu@mau.se

#### **Organizers: Nordic Urban Political Economy Network (NUPE)**

This session invites contributions that advance our conceptual and theoretical understanding of how political and economical processes shape urban socio-spatial configurations and vice versa. For decades, critical political economy approaches have remained impactful in the study of urbanization and cities. In this session we aim at deepening our understanding of the role of space, place and scale within politico-economic processes, and nurture a dialogour between critical political economy approaches within the wider field of urban geography. We are particularly invested in investigating the diverse and transitional landscapes of urban political economy in the present poly-crisis era, marked by accelerating socioecological crises, global economic growth slowdown, deepening political and social polarization, ongoing welfare and state restructuring, and a shifting security paradigm. The polycrisis is becoming increasingly acute in cities and regions, manifesting as growing climate, housing and social vulnerability, while also triggering resistance and social mobilisation. The session specifically welcomes contributions that push for theoretical development and/or contributes to expand the empirical research fronts. We primarily invite submissions that explore the Nordic context, while also welcoming other international perspectives, across (but not limited to) the following areas of inquiry:

Critical urban political economies of the ongoing geopolitical transformations (e.g. the urban in state-capitalism, the urban dimension of industrial policies, city-state relations in the age of national revanchism/economic nationalism, rescaling).

The critical political economy of race/racialization (e.g. racial capitalism, raced markets, colonialism, apartheid, segregation)

Urban financialization, entrepreneurialism and restructuring of urban provision (e.g. financialization of local government, infrastructure or housing, welfare entrepreneurialism, indebtedness, rent extraction and assetization, green financialization, branding, retrenchment and restructuring of public housing systems, all of which contribute to housing insecurities in the Nordics)

Critical urban political economies of environmentalism and eco-modernity (e.g. the green transition, climate adaptation, energy scarcity)

For questions please contact Mika Hyötyläinen ([mika.hyotylainen@helsinki.fi](mailto:mika.hyotylainen@helsinki.fi)) or Defne Kadioglu ([defne.kadioglu@mau.se](mailto:defne.kadioglu@mau.se)).