

Conference Themes

The conference organisers presented the following themes for the **African Perspectives 2009. The African Inner City: [Re]sourced** Conference:

The (historical) identity of the African City Centre

African Cities have many identities. Many have existed through a vast depth of time. Others were Colonial creations. Some are hybrids. Within these formations the African City Centre also has many identities. The City Centre's past and future lives were and are determined by culture in general. This encompasses ritual, work, recreation and dwelling, all within a larger urban, regional and global network of connectedness. In this theme there is exploration of what can be said and shown of the historical cultural identity/ies of the African city centre, and how that manifests in contemporary urban form, process, pattern, place and architecture.

The African City Centre in a contemporary global context

African cities are currently amongst the fastest growing in the world. Western and Eastern societies are reviewing the form, processes and roles of the post-industrial era in the looming shadow of global warming and global economic stress. African cities are, more often than not, the places where products or processes occur that are now unacceptable in post industrial environments or that can be obtained more cost-effectively in Africa, but that are required to feed the insatiable need for growth in the 24/7 global economy. These processes include large scale exploitation of unprocessed resources and industrial production, accompanied by large scale, negative impacts on the natural environment, a lack of local beneficiation and appropriate infrastructure delivery as well as unsustainable and exploitative labour practices. There is uncertainty about where the evolution of Western and Eastern development will leave the African City. However, African Cities are participants in the global economy and global culture. It is therefore necessary to understand the role of African cities in the contemporary global context, as well as how they are resourced and resourcing themselves, to what extent African cities have evolved individual patterns of form, growth and survival, and what the role of the African Diaspora may be in the development of African Cities? This understanding will support further exploration of the role of the urban centre in the ecology of resourcing the African City and its manifestations in terms of urban processes, form and architecture.

The future life of the African City Centre

The African City manifests a strong developmental and/or survival instinct. Through understanding past and current identities and (re)sources of the African City Centre, in this theme there is exploration of directions and solutions that may be postulated and formulated for a desired, sustainable future of the African City Centre, and for desired, sustainable and appropriate urban patterns, processes, form and architecture, on a local, regional and global scale.

