

PROCEEDINGS
AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES 2009
THE AFRICAN INNER CITY: [RE]SOURCED
25-28 SEPTEMBER 2009





Proceedings of

African Perspectives 2009

The African Inner City: [Re]sourced

International conference held at the University of Pretoria
25-28 September 2009

Edited by Karel A. Bakker

African Perspectives 2009
The African Inner City: [Re]sourced

International conference held at the University of Pretoria, 25-28 September 2009

Jointly organised by the Department of Architecture, University of Pretoria, South Africa, Archi-Afrika and the Pretoria Institute for Architecture



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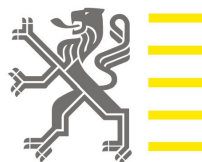


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Message from the Conference Chairs

On behalf of Prof Anthony Melck, Executive Director of the University of Pretoria and Patron of the Conference, the co-chairs of the Conference and the Scientific Committee humbly offer these Proceedings of the **African Perspectives 2009. African Inner City: [Re]sourced** Conference.

This Conference is the fourth in the series of 'dialogues' held under the **African Perspectives** banner as initiated by the ArchiAfrika, a Dutch group of architects and urbanists that put itself the task to disseminate knowledge of, and promote, inter and intra-continental debate on African architecture and urbanism – since the start of 2010 the Board of ArchiAfrika has transformed into an African entity. The Conference integrated the annual South African Architectural Student Congress. It was our intention that the mixing of academics, practitioners and students from the disciplines of architecture, urban design, planning and landscape architecture would ensure an integrated exposure to the views and practice of architects and urbanists who do work in African cities and an enrichment of each other.

The Conference brought many insights: The African City often looks like other cities but has an invisible component – a shadow side – where activity happens in spaces in a way for which they were not formally planned, where space is filled by intense human activity that evolves over time and in place in reaction to the shifting forces and opportunities of the city, where people use existing, formally planned infrastructure in novel ways to capitalise on chance opportunity, and where the spatial expression is invariably 'informal' in nature. This invisibility is not easy to make understandable for use in a more responsive design and planning process. For the time being, acupunctural interventions have been relatively successful in making the invisible visible, in this manner contributing to a dialogue between the tangible and intangible. Pre-colonial patterns of African space are often strongly present in the contemporary African City, again – imperceptibly, invisibly – serving the self-reinventing city. An understanding and post-colonial re-adaptation of these patterns and their influence can be a strong tool in building on a multi-layered future city. More often than not, the Modernist framework of the colonised African city serves the process of self-reinvention, supplying basic shelter, water, energy and discharging waste as were it an *existenzminimum*. There is tension between this centrally planned and administered infrastructure and the – often subversive – acupunctural interventions, but they need not exclude each other. There is a definite role for the architect and urban designer in understanding, respecting and organising the invisible, informal side of the African city, contrary to those arguments calling for no intervention. Also, urban planning and design projects are worthless if they are not politically supported – therefore the political floor can no longer be shunned by architects and urbanists.

It appears that a common understanding of the reading and analysis of the African city is emerging in academia. The challenge will be to link these findings to *praxis*, possibly through richer ways of mapping and unravelling the tangible and intangible city. Furthermore, the unlocking of historical documentation of and research on the African City remains a challenge, one that should be taken up by academic institutions.

The **African Perspectives** series of dialogues are enriched by the inclusion of film makers, artists, builders, anthropologists, writers and theorists – in Pretoria the mix was immensely rich. The conferences are rooted in both *praxis* and theory, and intend to deliver concrete and practical suggestions deriving from the collective knowledge base and ensuing debate. The outcome of this specific Conference will hopefully make a significant contribution to the growing knowledge base on African architecture and cities. The full extent of the programme and side events, the academic contributions, as well as the list of sponsors of the events, can be viewed on the website of the Department of Architecture (www.up.ac.za/academic/architecture).

On behalf of the Conference Secretariat we thank all contributors to the rich programme, the various associates and partners for adding important content and richness to the debate, the Scientific Committee for its work on the quality of the refereed papers and leadership in the proceedings, the Conference sponsors (The main sponsor being the South African Council for the Architectural Profession, and also the South African Institute of

Architects, The Flemish Representation in South Africa, the Cement and Concrete Institute of South Africa, the Prince Claus Fund, Hivos, the Netherlands Architecture Institute, Autodesk, Clotan Steel and the City of Tshwane) for their generous support, the student body for their effort on the student congress side, the staff of the Department of Architecture for their inputs, the University of Pretoria for its amenities and logistic support, Dean Wytse Patijn of the Faculty of Architecture at TUDelft for his unstinting support of the ArchiAfrika and continuous efforts to promote African architecture and urbanism, Mr Antoni Folkers and Mr Berend van der Lans and volunteers from ArchiAfrika for initiating the Conference and providing the necessary support and work in the process building up to the event. We are greatly in debt to Mr Braam de Villiers, president of the Pretoria Institute for Architecture (2008-2010), with his director Ms Mauneen van Wyk, for the excellent work on the planning and organisation of this very successful Conference. The quality and rigour reflected by the Proceedings document are due to the unstinting quest for perfection of Mr Nico Botes at the Department of Architecture, who did the final proof reading and formatted and compiled the document – we thank you. Finally, our sincere gratitude to the Department of Culture of the Flemish Government in Belgium, via the Flemish Representation in South Africa, for fully sponsoring the editing, compilation, printing and distribution of these Proceedings.

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