

# « Circulation des références urbaines et assemblages locaux »

Séminaire organisé par Rémi de Bercegol et Thierry Sanjuan  
Groupe de travail « Circulation des modèles et hétérogénéité des développements »  
UMR 245 Cessma et UMR 8586 Prodig, labex DynamiTe (Comue HeSam)

## “Infrastructures in East African cities: Historical perspectives on Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam”

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2018 – 9.30/12.30  
at Prodig (meeting room 3rd floor), 2, rue Valette, 75005 Paris

- **Frank Edward** (Historian, PhD Candidate at Darmstadt University of Technology, Germany; University of Dar Es Salaam –Tanzania)

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*Circulation, Appropriation and Innovation of Urban Technologies: Drainage and Traffic Infrastructures in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 1913-1999.*

Infrastructures in African cities have been subject to media and political discourses for several decades. The main narrative has been their failure and unreliability. Electricity blackouts, failure of water supply systems, traffic congestions and poor sanitation systems have been at the front of the heated infrastructure discussions. As a result, urban scholars have paid a substantial attention in those systems than others. Drainage infrastructure failures goes unnoticed and understudied because albeit the fact that they occur every year. Drainage failures frequently affect traffic infrastructures by damaging roads, causing traffic congestions and at times cutting urban transit systems. This study uses the case of Dar es Salaam city in Tanzania to investigate drainage problem and its interlace with traffic infrastructures. Using archival and documentary sources, this study refutes the contemporary narrative that drainage problems in Dar es Salaam, and therefore most of Global South cities, are an outcome of climate-related changes (cf. Pauleit et al., 2015). Rather it demonstrates that present drainage problems are a by-product of planning and engineering processes and decision making from colonial era to the present. It then concludes by arguing that the splintering of urban drainage system, the making of engineering cultures as racial and elitist, and failure to implement the urban plans contributed in curbing innovative solutions from cropping up ultimately leading to making drainage problem to persist.

- **Jethron Ayumbah Akallah** (Historian, PhD Candidate at Darmstadt University of Technology, Germany; University of Kisumu –Kenya)

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*In the Technological Footprints of Urbanity: Water, Sanitation and Informality in Nairobi City, 1920-2015*

The problematization of the water and sanitation situation in Nairobi for the purpose of this study shifted away from the question of the deficiency of colonially constructed and centralized system of access. Instead, it focused on evolution of the systems of supply and the technological questions in terms of meaning, use and effect (Arnold 2005). Moving between the formal level of engineering and planning and the informal level of daily practice, the dissertation investigated how urban water and sanitation technologies were adopted, appropriated, and contested by various actors. Archival investigations in Nairobi, London and Oxford (UK) and oral accounts of users were employed and analyzed qualitatively. By departing from the dominant LTS perspective, the study narrowed down on the role of users as participants in the making of the histories of the city and as non-passive recipients of migratory ideas and ideals, especially in the process of procuring their daily needs. Technical infrastructural artifacts were looked at as multilayered and possessing a powerful political and economic nature that determines their access and allocative role. Rather than the normative narratives of race and class differentiation as conscious processes of exclusion, it is in the deployment of Nairobi's water and sanitation infrastructure system that inequality reproduces itself due to the 'embeddedness' of technical artifacts. People as users must be seen as co-producers, or aptly put, as producers. The post-colonial theoretical framework was used to help delineate aspects of continuity and discontinuity, plus the counter-reactions that characterize not only the evolution of cities like Nairobi but also inform post-independence debates in most of the global South.

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