

AFRICITY

Adaptability, Food Security, Risk, and the Right to the City in Sub-Saharan Africa: Towards Sustainable Livelihoods and Green Infrastructure

What is AfriCity?

AfriCity is a collaborative research, teaching and training project. It explores the causes and effects of environmental change and resource use in Sub-Saharan African cities. The project considers rapid social and economic transformation processes and their external and internal drivers, and assesses the barriers for potentials of social adaptability in the context of inequity, risk, and resourcefulness.



Urban agriculture in Dar es Salaam (Photo: F. Krüger)

Overall Objectives

- To explore and understand social vulnerability and adaptability with regards to environmental and resource change, with an emphasis on the issues of risk and food security, in Sub-Saharan African cities.
- To promote sustainable urban livelihoods and adaptability through understanding and communicating the right to the city with regards to the necessary green and social infrastructure.

- To foster sustainable partnerships with academic and public institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Partners

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- Dr. Emmanuel Munishi - [College of Business Education](#), Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
- Prof. Dr. Charlie Shackleton (Co-PI) - [Department of Environmental Science](#), Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa
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Routines, Ruptures, and Agency in Cities

Citizens and other stakeholders form permanent or temporary, fluid collectives, each defined by a set of mutual interests, shared values, or similar experiences of power or disadvantages. Interests are brought forward against other, competing ideas and strategies. Such contestations are often becoming part of routines in everyday urban life. The city becomes an arena of mediation, negotiation, and reconfiguring of urban ordering, of urban livelihoods and food security, of access to shaping urban environments and lifeworlds. *This is where we start.* The projects looks into these processes in four cities in Tanzania, Malawi and South Africa. It also includes a strong teaching component, with short term stays for Master students at the partnering universities abroad.

Core Research Concepts

The project is wary of conventional notions of ‘resilience’. It is embedded in a framework of three major conceptual approaches:

From ‘resilience’ to ‘resourcefulness’ - Despite the current popularity of the *resilience* approach, there is an increasing critique of the concept as “the paradigm shift from vulnerability to strength” [1] is still largely based on definitions by external agencies and experts. We prefer to talk of ‘resourcefulness’ [2] which focuses more on creativity and capabilities of *people* and is a less system-oriented approach.

From ‘living in the city’ to the ‘right to the city’ - The recently revived ‘right to the city’ and ‘just city’ debates stress the formulation and cultivation of (political) justice amongst urban citizens and the inclusion of spatial dynamics that ‘make’ the city (cf. [3], [4], [5]). There is a mismatch between an increasing demand for a change of existing orders, and dwindling opportunities to actually achieve these changes [6]. The production of distinctive and contextually dependent formations of the right to the city in Sub-Saharan Africa [7] have not yet been sufficiently taken into account.

From the ‘distribution of goods and services’ to the ‘poetics of (green) urban infrastructure’ - The role of green infrastructure (GI) in contributing to urban sustainability and livelihoods parallels the paradigm shifts embodied in ecosystem services thinking and the increasing acceptance of agriculture as an urban land use. As with ‘resilience’, GI concepts still largely stem from functionalistic approaches. But infrastructures also exist as forms separate from their purely technical functioning. They need to be analysed as concrete semiotic and aesthetic vehicles oriented to addressees and store within them forms of desire, deliver moral behaviour and are sets of social practices ([8]: 329, 336). (Green) infrastructure gives meaning to urban lifeworlds.



Flooding is a major threat and frequently impairing urban livelihoods in Dar es Salaam (Photo: F. Krüger)

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Code: <http://brackets.io>; Fred Krüger - This is a preliminary website. It will be replaced by an extended accessible version.