

## Research Project

### TEMPEA Temporality of permanence – material and socio-spatial practices in African urbanism

#### Third-party funded project

**Project title** TEMPEA Temporality of permanence – material and socio-spatial practices in African urbanism

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**Organisation / Research unit**

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**Department**

**Project Website** <https://zasb.unibas.ch/research/research-projects/tempea/>

**Project start** 14.09.2015

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**Status** Completed

The constructed materiality of African urbanism can be seen in buildings and the urban layout, especially when they aspire to permanence by building in stone. These built environments have mostly been analysed through the rather static lens of individual periods and social forces, resulting in uniformly interpreted organic growth (for pre-colonial periods), or as in stages of progress towards the fulfilment of a grand master plan (predominantly in the colonial and post-colonial era).

The project explores the social temporality of African urbanism against the context of its material complements from the perspectives of a range of social and human sciences, in order to obtain a dynamic picture from before to after the colonial era. Providing analyses relevant to the ever more pressing issues of urban ethnic/social coexistence and the implications of urban development, it incorporates aspects of sociology (living in neighbourhoods in densely populated environments), history (representations and accounts of past experience) and social anthropology (the meanings of space).

It centres on spatial materiality of African cities, as it is demonstrated in their layout and in the organisation of buildings, looking at how these urban patterns are produced, used and continually altered, and how a 'building heritage' emerges from these. Its aim is to derive how this influences the social life of inhabitants and visitors, and how it in turn induces on-going processes of change in material representations.

The first phase of the project is undertaken at the Centre of African Studies, University of Basel, Switzerland. The 2nd phase at Uppsala University, Sweden, will focus on the implications for the Swahili coast and African archaeology.

**Keywords** African urbanism, cultural memory, networks, structure, built environment, material culture

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**Add publication**

**Add documents**

**Specify cooperation partners**