

## Publication

## African Cities and the Development Conundrum: Actors and Agency in the Urban Grey Zone

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Africa is urbanising faster than any other continent. The stupendous pace of urbanisation challenges the usual image of Africa as a rural continent. The sheer complexity of African cities contests conventional understandings of the urban as well as standard development policies. Lingerings between chaos and creativity, Western images of African cities seem unable to serve as a basis for development policies. The diversity of African cities is hard to conceptualise-but at the same time, unbiased views of the urban are the first step to addressing the urban development conundrum. International development cooperation should not only make African cities a focus of its engagement-it should also be cautious not to build its interventions on concepts inherited from Western history, such as the formal/informal dichotomy. We argue that African cities are more appropriately regarded as urban grey zones that only take shape and become colourful through the actors' agency and practice. The chapters of this special issue offer a fresh look at African cities, and the many opportunities as well as limitations that emerge for African urbanites-state officials, planners, entrepreneurs, development agencies and ordinary people-from their own point of view: they ask where, for whom and why such limitations and opportunities emerge, how they change over time and how African urban dwellers actively enliven and shape their cities.

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