

Maison d'analyse des processus sociaux – MAPS

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The globalisation of urban forms in Hanoi and Ouagadougou

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Abstract

The underlying hypothesis of this research is that the globalisation of urban spaces is characterized by the rise of cosmopolitan urban regimes and urban forms. Through the concept of cosmopolitan urban regime, we designate the importance, for the functioning of local governance, of flows of capital, persons and knowledge which link the relevant urban space to others geographically distant cities and regions.

The urban forms produced in the context of such regimes, i.e. the material dimensions of the globalization of urban spaces, constitute the core of this research. The major aim of this research is to analyze how exchanges of knowledge across long distances mould the forms of contemporary cities and, in turn, how these forms shape the urban culture of those cities. The research focuses in other words on the material culture of cities, whereas the large majority of studies dedicated to urban globalization has been devoted to the role of financial flows or international migrations.

Based on an interdisciplinary approach and methodology (urban geography, urban anthropology, science studies and political science), the research develops an original approach of the relations between *forms* and *flows* in the transformation of urban space.

The case-studies, Hanoi in Vietnam and Ouagadougou in Burkina-Faso, have been chosen according to three criteria. First, both cities are (still) in the periphery or semi-periphery of the world-economy. Second, they both are stepping out of a period of relative isolation related to a situation of economic underdevelopment or to the political choices of their Nation-State. Third, they have been in recent years under the influence of an important intensification of global flows relating them to others cities and regions in the world. Our fieldwork uses three types of methods: documentary research, analysis of statistical data, qualitative observations and interviews. It focuses on a “biographical” study of a carefully selected sample of built forms.

The choice of case-studies enables us, on the one hand, to study a process of urban globalization in areas rarely considered by the existing research and, on the other hand, to examine the globalisation of urban forms “in the making”. The results of this analysis will be confronted with the results of a recent research dedicated to a globalizing (and for long marginal) European city, the city of Palermo, in Italy. These three studies spanning over three continents will help us develop an understanding of various unexplored aspects of the globalisation of cultures and cities.

Research team

- **Prof. Ola Söderström**, director of the research and professor of social and cultural geography at the Institute of Geography, University of Neuchâtel.
- **Blaise Dupuis**, coordinator of the research and PhD candidate, working on the global circulation of urban models (Institute of Geography, University of Neuchâtel).
- **Dr. Ir. S.J.L. Stephanie Geertman**, in charge of the fieldwork in Hanoi (Vietnam), researcher in spatial development at DHV Eindhoven, Netherlands. Her thesis held the title “the Self-Organising City in Vietnam, Processes of Change and Transformation in Housing in Hanoi” (April 2007). She will work with a Vietnamese team supervised by:
 - **Prof. Nguyen Quoc Thong**, architect and urbanist working as editor in chief for the Ministry of Construction in Hanoi (Vietnam).
 - **Prof. Trinh Duy Luan**, director of the Institute of Social Sciences, University of Hanoi (Vietnam).
- **Pierrick Leu**, scientific collaborator in charge of the fieldwork in Ouagadougou (Burkina-Faso). He completed his Master (2008) at the Institute of Geography, University of Neuchâtel, with a dissertation on the transformation of urban markets in Ouahigouya (Burkina-Faso).
- **Alexandra Biehler**, consultant for the Ouagadougou case study. She works in France as a landscape architect and finishes her PhD on the transformation of the public space in Ouagadougou (Burkina-Faso).

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