Workshop Proceedings

# African Urban Research Initiative

**African Centre for Cities & Cities Alliance**
Supported by Rockefeller Foundation

20-21 March 2013

The Hilton Hotel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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## Introduction

This short report has been developed from the proceedings of the inaugural meeting of the African Urban Research Initiative (AURI), a workshop organized by the African Centre for Cities (ACC), the Association of African Planning Schools (AAPS) and Cities Alliance to help key African urban research institutions and Cities Alliance partners to meet and collaboratively develop a shared strategy for future research and advocacy.

The meeting resulted in the agreement to found the African Urban Research Initiative (AURI), with the view to forming a network once initial institutional and collaborative mechanisms have been developed. All parties agreed to undertake several pieces of individual and joint work as a starting point for thinking about collaborative research.

The outcomes of the workshop discussions are presented below, in chronological order, and an attempt to summarise the key issues and outcomes appears in the conclusion.

## Day One: 20 March 2013

The meeting began with welcomes and introductions from Cities Alliance and the African Centre for Cities (ACC).

ACC Director Prof Edgar Pieterse presented on the major urban development trends and challenges in Africa; their implications for policy and capacity needs; the role of universities and research centres, and what is needed generally to confront these challenges. Unlike other regions, the urban population of Africa is expected to grow significantly beyond 2050, and this growth will occur in the context of a global economic shift towards the 'green economy'. Prof Pieterse highlighted the various structural obstacles that limit the capacity of African governments to address the 'urban polycrisis'. In this context, African cities face major challenges in avoiding a future of 'extreme splintered urbanism' marked by a duality between highly networked and secure enclaves for the elite, and drastically under-serviced informal settlements for the urban poor.

Prof Pieterse questioned the conventional view that the primary driver of economic growth in Africa will be increased middle-class consumption and formal employment in the service sectors, asking for greater attention to be given to the various categories of work in the wider 'social economy' as the gateway to work experience and entering the formal economy. Infrastructure investment performed according to an assumption of 'leapfrogging' development is also an imperative, which in turn requires avoiding the infrastructural 'lock-in' that tends to reproduce unsustainable patterns of spatial investment and urban development. Lastly, he made the case for building innovative institutions capable of conducting research and advocacy at local, regional, national and supranational scales, as a means of addressing these challenges in a sustained and critical manner. Developing an effective 'transition mechanism' to shift

African urbanization towards a sustainable path requires that researchers, policy- and decision-makers and other actors work collectively on problems and issues that have been jointly identified. For this, new kinds of interlocutors or 'strategic intermediaries' are needed to occupy and bridge the gap between critical research, policy processes and implementation systems, understanding the different 'languages' that frame problems and responses in different sectors.

*Key points arising in discussion:*

- *If service sector-employment and the growth of middle-class consumption are not going to be sufficient to drive a sustainable socio-economic future, what are some ideas for what should be done?* African countries have to push the regional economic agenda to leverage and negotiate terms of FDI; they have to get national governments to think carefully about spatial economic implications of urban transition, and they have to learn how to manage the transition to a low-Carbon economy, so that the 'green economy' becomes the economic trajectory of Africa. There also needs to be a mind-shift towards measuring, supporting and enhancing the informal economic sectors, and the ways in which these activities contribute to the wider 'social economy'. We need to understand how various categories of 'public work' (including informal practices) can be reframed as social economic activities, and treated as the gateway to work experience and entering the formal economy.

- Ideas and initiatives aimed at achieving structural change should be complemented by innovative 'secondary solutions' at the local level aiming, for example, to promote creative urban potential.

- Qualitative insights and quantitative research are both needed to change policies and practice.

- *If there is a need for knowledge institutions to operate differently, and if there is a role for special kinds of 'interlocutors', what would the possible characteristics of these be and how would they function?* In the traditional Enlightenment-era model, the academy exists to collect evidence in an unbiased way, and to locate its analysis in relation to a 'canon'. Increasingly it is being seen that the academy has to face the realities of the city and take its queue from there. The objective of this project should be to redefine the knowledge project as a whole. Scholars and researchers capable of working in this way must play an intermediary role. They should be embedded in formal institutions and understand the logics and languages of these institutions. In practical terms, this sort of engagement will be a culturally specific process.

- *Informality, economy and spatial structure are three aspects of the major challenge facing African cities. Surely addressing the issue of informality is key to promoting urban sustainability in Africa?* In reality, 'informality' is a misnomer, and could more accurately be termed 'semi-formality', because often in these contexts the state is present to a certain degree. The formal and informal are often seen as disconnected, but in fact they are deeply connected. The first step is to change the paradigm of formality versus informality. Once there is a better understanding of the specific nature of these interdependencies, we can develop better policies to build upon the local innovation associated with informality.

ACC researcher James Duminy presented on the similarities and differences of applied urban research themes and institutions in Africa. He emphasised the wide variety of urban research themes and topics undertaken by African researchers in the past decade, often resulting from international donor-funded projects. Despite this variety, there is evidence of emerging thematic 'clusters' and a wide-reaching paradigm of 'urban security' as a basis for much recent urban work. African urban research institutions face common challenges relating to their financial sustainability, including the development of monitoring and evaluation capacity for impact assessment. But there are emerging opportunities for the financing of research on urban themes, and remaining interest in international networks as a means of producing comparative and policy-relevant research.

*Key points arising in discussion:*
- African urban research institutions have a role to play in promoting a positive and proactive stance towards urbanization on the continent. This means working together to project the realities of urbanization and urban-rural linkages in a unitary manner, emphasising the opportunities linked to cities and even slums.
- In Africa there is a gap between research that aims to inform what should be done about urban problems, and what is actually happening in the wider developmental context. An important question is how to bridge that gap, and who should do it. Any 'interlocutors' must have a scale of understanding of what is really happening in cities, but this scale is often lacking in the African context due to a relative shortage of substantive urban research.
- Gender issues remain an important yet neglected area of urban research.
- The question of how to ensure institutional sustainability has to be related to a wider problem of the place and role of research in different countries.
- There is an important need to take account of the relations (for example, between people and infrastructure systems) imbued in urban processes, and the manner in which urban problems are produced as a way of thinking and acting.

In the afternoon session, representatives of the research centres were invited to present the key priorities of their respective institutions. These inputs revealed an extremely wide variety of research interests, often from interdisciplinary perspectives. Both academic and NGO research centres were attending, and therefore the objectives of the research also differed significantly (i.e. academic publishing versus contributing directly to practice). Some centres focus on developmental or settlement issues more generally (i.e. including rural areas) rather than specifically urban issues. Points of emphasis and discussion have been summarised below.

*Process and outputs of research:*
- There is a need to be clear about the meaning of 'research' within any initiative claiming to be about 'African urban research'. What is research? What does it include and exclude?
- Research institutions face the challenge of balancing 'pure' and 'applied' forms of research. There is a question of how researchers can carve out a space for pure theoretical work amidst the imperatives of applied research.
- To produce relevant urban research, academic centres need to shift their ways of operating. But universities are often conservative and the mind-sets of colleagues sometimes provide opposition to changes. There is a need for researchers to engage with their colleagues to remove these obstacles.
- Research institutions should avoid taking the trend data on African urbanization produced by international agencies and consultancies (often with an economic bias) 'at face value'. They should invest in the production of their own tailored data.
- In line with the essential practice of 'co-production', research institutions must find ways of incorporating non-traditional sources of data into their functions. The knowledge produced by slum dwellers and slum dweller organisations (SDOs) should be mainstreamed into research agendas by both learning from the experience of slum dwellers and SDOs, and in turn using this knowledge to train slum dwellers and SDOs. More arbitrators are needed to work with slum dwellers and promote their cause. But how is it possible to connect 'bottom-up' knowledge with official data sets? What would be institutionally and methodologically required to do this? This process should happen in collaboration with local authorities. How can these constituencies (slum communities and local authorities) be treated as foundational partners in the research project and the identification of research problems?
- Research institutions have to diversify their outputs to include not only traditional research, but also accessible resources and 'tools' that help state and civil society groups to understand and respond to key strategic issues. The process of disseminating research has to take account of how the creation of different 'publics' can improve the quality and impact of research.
- For those institutions also involved in education and capacity-building, a critical question is how an appropriate articulation between research and training functions, between producing data and strategic interlocutors, to drive a shift in professional practice.

*Financing urban research:*
- Where can funding for 'pure' academic research be sourced? Researchers should think carefully about the institutional architecture into which their outputs are fed. They may need to return to the basic questions of what the objectives of research are, and how research should be shaped and balanced amidst different pressures and imperatives.
- Stabilisation of research functions is a key challenge, particularly for autonomous institutions (such as LASDEL) relying on grants secured

through individual research programmes. There is a need to explore and identify alternative and consistent sources of funding for research.

- Funding for research projects may come from government agencies, including municipalities, or through consultancy projects, where there is a need to tailor the project to the interests and resources of the research centre.

*Substantive research issues:*

- Secondary cities deserve more research attention, as they will be the foremost location of urban growth in Africa in the foreseeable future.
- The urban sector requires university-industrial linkages, where research topics are collaboratively identified as critical issues by researchers and those managing the sector.
- Considering the diversity of research institutions and themes, an important lies in articulating this diversity in a way that allows points of commonality and priority to emerge.

The Cities Alliances partners, and other invited guests from development and government agencies, provided feedback on their priorities for African research. The areas of interest varied widely. Specific urban challenges relating to unemployed youth, insecurity, local government capacity, migratory flows, construction materials, urban development financing and economic growth were highlighted. What are the capacities of cities to adapt to climate change and to provide essential services including water, energy, health and education? Research centres should not only consider local urban issues and responses, but must be able to locate urbanization and urban challenges within broader processes of technological (ICTs) and resource-based (energy, water, etc.) transformation. This raises the question of how researchers can build a theoretical language to describe the nature and socio-economic effects of these transitions, while adopting a systems perspective that allows one to see intersections of key issues, and entry points for thinking about intervention and reform. In the midst of these broad transitions, how can researchers think about the transmission of information and innovation? Can different African research institutions find the common paradigmatic structure to have a collaborative and comparative debate on systems transitions through the thematic lens of, for example, climate change?

A major emphasis of discussion was on the need to make a convincing case for urbanization as a complex yet positive process, to place on the African political agenda, and to present to national governments that remain largely rural in their developmental outlook. (Only four African countries currently have urbanization strategies in place). Research should help to provide a convincing case for the opportunities of urban informalities, and the links between urbanization and both democratization and national economic growth.

> *"The first step needs to be to make a case for cities"*
> - Julian Baskin

- Research institutions must develop a 'theory of change' and sets of objectives and 'protocols' to inform their actions in the choice of research topics, the process and outputs of research, and to guide their engagements with research partners and funders. What are the conditions necessary for institutions to be able to navigate particular institutional logics and issues? When is it necessary for an institution to retain autonomy or act interdependently, and what is needed to ensure this?
- The African Development Bank (AfDB) has recently adopted an urban development strategy, but there remains an issue of how to implement this strategy. Research centres should seek to identify and make use of existing research on implementation, and improve the quality and relevance of future African urban research.
- An urban research network has to prioritise between producing new data and information on a subject, or mobilising the existing knowledge of other networks and hubs in a way that is useful for policy-makers.
- How do we improve the lives of people in cities in an energy-constrained world, where growth might not be possible, where people are not reliant upon formal systems, where they might service themselves? The interface between resources, growth and urban transition is a key issue to explore.
- While engagements with the state should for the most part be conducted at the level of national government, in some contexts it should also be at the sub-national scale. In Nigeria, for example, efforts to introduce the concept of 'innovation' to development policy depended upon engagements with both national and state governments. There are always 'reformers' located within government. The challenge is to find and work with these actors.

## Day Two: 21 March 2013

Proceedings began with an address by H.E. Mekuria Haile, Minister of Urban Development and Construction in Ethiopia, who emphasised the need for concerted urban development strategies in Africa. The speech was well received by the workshop participants, who saw the Ethiopian stance towards urbanization as highly progressive in relation to most African governments.

The remainder of the morning session was dedicated to securing further inputs and comments from participants on the potential establishment of an initiative for African urban research. Following on from the previous day's discussions, the value of building and strengthening durable knowledge institutions in Africa was reaffirmed. A major topic of discussion concerned how African research institutions can assist policy- and decision-makers by increasing the availability of reliable data on 'what is actually going on' in cities. Points of discussion included are summarised below.

- While slum dweller communities and slum dweller organisations produce a large volume of data on African informal settlements, this data is often challenged by authorities and officials on the basis of its robustness and veracity. For its part, Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI) would like to work with research institutions to up-scale these activities, and create robust data sets emerging from community organisations through settlement profiles and enumerations.

- From the perspective of the World Bank Institute, a major challenge facing urban researchers and decision-makers is how knowledge can be transformed into action. Yet the simple transfer of technical knowledge between actors is not sufficient. Researchers have to work together with change-makers and reformers, to share experiences and collaboratively identify the variables that impact upon urban development and management. The research process must be combined with action and implementation in the manner of experimentation through, for example, the conduction of 'live laboratories'. Researchers can also assist with monitoring and evaluation capacity for development, finding ways to work better with existing data and to improve this data for monitoring purposes. For activities such as slum upgrading, impact evaluation is extremely difficult, but a key modality of influencing policy and practice is South-South knowledge exchange.

- Workplace internships conducted as part of educational courses can be a key means of producing graduates with the necessary skills and knowledge to drive more effective implementation.

*Research themes and topics:*

- The role of Chinese investment in African urban development is a major issue that deserves the attention of research and training institutions. Development Workshop Angola is currently embarking upon a project to promote the exchange of knowledge and expertise between African and Chinese civil society groups and academic institutions.

- Persuading governments and civil societies to think ahead and plan, and to promote well-managed urban areas, depends on how well research and development agencies show the way forward. Research institutions can help to produce reliable and consistent data, or can strengthen the capacity of existing statistical agencies to do this. More broadly, they can assist in making a convincing case for pro-urbanization strategies by showing the precise nature of urban inequalities, of urban-rural linkages and the value-add of urban areas.

- The relation between transport, spatial structure and urban exclusion is a critical topic for future research. Another is how cosmopolitan urban identities are produced and enrolled in the course of politics, in the context of migratory flows (which may engender local conflicts and exclusions). Alternative sources of foreign investment such as those linked with diaspora are often ignored, but they can be substantial and can have a profound impact upon city development. Although a focus on climate and energy transitions and their implications for urban development is important, we may lose sight of how these transitions

change the very character of the city, or how different urban groups are already affected by major deficits in terms of access to energy and other resources.

- Delivery or services such as water and sanitation at the household level is not addressed well enough in existing research. Job creation was seen as another key neglected topic.
- At the level of local government, sectoral departments are dominant, with each addressing certain lines of issues and problems from particular perspectives. How is it possible for local authorities to know what is happening across these urban sectors? How can they benchmark their functions according to others whom are performing well? Authorities need a better sense of 'what is going on' in cities, and researchers should provide them with both qualitative and quantitative insights. But ultimately, governing is about anticipation, and the question of how we anticipate the future of African cities. How do we define the challenges of tomorrow? This is what is needed from researchers in Africa. Most predictions regarding African urbanization are developed outside of the continent, and are very market-oriented. Are we going to manage cities according to this logic, or attempt to invent an alternative?

Prof Edgar Pieterse (ACC) then presented a set of initial ideas and activities for an African Urban Research Initiative (AURI). The key points of this presentation are attached to this report as Appendix 2. He proposed that the project be framed as an 'initiative' in the short-term, with a view to establishing an African urban research 'network' in the future. If the objective of the initiative is, broadly speaking, to build a shared knowledge system, then first it is necessary to build a shared understanding of what that system might be, and about where to invest in in order to build the system. The proposals were met with a positive response.

*Responses to the presentation included the following:*
- Researchers have to demonstrate that there is an important linkage between research and decision-making. To do this, it will be important to engage with high-level processes in governments and multilateral organizations. The Habitat 3 conference is one opportunity for AURI to place the role of urban research firmly on the agenda. AURI could also seek representation within the Governing Council of UN-Habitat and the Secretariat of the African Union to raise the profile and impact of the initiative.
- It may not be the responsibility of research centres to produce large data sets themselves, and thus the question may be how best to involve researchers in efforts to produce statistics through existing agencies, or in re-thinking processes of data collection as a whole. Furthermore, a focus on policy-makers as the target for research outputs may not be appropriate in politically unstable contexts. Civil society groups are often a key partner in the uptake and implementation of research.
- AURI partners need to debate the extent to which they do, and wish to have a common approach and shared discourse for research. A network could be something that encourages a diversity of approaches, languages and discourses. Each institution needs to think about the instabilities of

their environments, and what this may mean in terms of their approaches to cities and research.

- AURI partners face the challenge of seeking mechanisms for identifying long-term strategic issues, rather than being tied up by local, short-term developmental issues. This is similar to the challenge being faced by Cities Alliance.
- There is a need for interdisciplinary researchers who can read and speak across different institutional contexts, including state policy-making and implementation systems, and for these actors to share experiences of how they have navigated difficult institutional settings and obstacles. They need to be critical and intellectually sound, with an understanding of the sense of urgency affecting many development agencies. However, institutions and researchers need to choose for themselves how they navigate these systems, as it will always be a contextually specific process. But there needs to be some direction on what such a 'strategic intermediary' is and might be. Can a research centre partner with another institution to collaboratively fulfil the function of an intermediary?
- There is a need to promote South-South learning on matters relating to 'mechanisms of engagement' (between researchers and governments, etc.) and the formation of partnerships between researchers, states and civil societies. Organizations such as SDI work to create different types of partnerships, and these lessons should not be ignored.
- AURI can be a means of promoting the publication of research to feed back into capacity-building and training programmes.

> *"What is happening in Africa is distinctive and should be spoken about with confidence by Africans"*                                         – Clare Short

The afternoon session of Day Two featured discussions between research centre representatives, as Cities Alliance partners undertook several site visits in Addis Ababa. There was wide support for the proposals put forward by Prof Edgar Pieterse earlier in the day for the formation of an African Urban Research Initiative (AURI). Specific suggestions and inputs were made on the need for the following:

### *Purpose*
- To promote research excellence in Africa
- To identify and promote alternative sources of research knowledge
- To promote the emergence of the next generation of researchers and intermediaries to drive a sustainable urban transition in Africa

### *Modes and Objectives*
- Create a framework to empower research centres to access sustainable sources of information and financing for their work
- Develop protocols and methodologies of engagement
- strategize about how to engage with organisations and regional networks
- Promote the exchange of research outputs in addition to research practices and ideas

- Develop an online documentation centre or portal to promote research dissemination
- Ensure that AURI operates as an open source project
- Balance the interests and requirements of a common overall research agenda with the diverse strengths and foci individual diversity of individual institutions
- Avoid over-formalising the network as it grows and defines its focus and key functions

It was agreed that AURI partners should identify a minimum number of activities to work on collaboratively over the next two years, as a basis for establishing the network. The following were agreed upon:
- The ACC will host an AURI secretariat while funds from the Rockefeller Foundation are available.
- Partners will peer review a document recently produced by Cities Alliance on enabling environments for urban development.
- Each centre will produce a short document identifying a key gap in existing urban knowledge and expertise, and profiles of research competence, as a way of exploring areas of collaboration.
- The AURI secretariat will prepare a proposal for a series of thought pieces on urban research issues, for presentation to DFID.

A Steering Committee representative of all linguistic regions to oversee the initial functions of AURI was then nominated as follows:
- Jocelyne Vokouma (Laboratoire Citoyennetés, Burkina Faso)
- Divine K. Ahadzie (Centre for Settlement Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana)
- Allan Cain (Development Workshop, Angola)
- Edgar Pieterse/Vanessa Watson (African Centre for Cities, South Africa)

Finally, it was agreed that AURI should organise another meeting with remaining Rockefeller Foundation funds in late 2013 or early 2014, possibly in Nairobi, to present on the progress of activities, and to make further plans for collaborative work.


## Conclusion

The workshop made significant progress towards its objective of providing the space for a shared strategic vision for African urban research to emerge. While the institutions attending, both research centres and Cities Alliance partners, have diverse interests and agendas, key points of strategic emphasis did emerge. These will frame future discussions and activities of the initiative. One such emphasis was that that a primary function of AURI, more so than identifying themes of comparative urban research, should be to help make the factual *case for cities* and urbanization to national and local governments on the continent. The following points attempt to summarise the strategic orientation of AURI, and are presented in the form of a hypothesis and a set of key challenges, which

frame the potential strategic roles of centres and AURI as a whole within this orientation:

**Hypothesis**: Africa will experience a profound set of urban and resource-based transitions in the foreseeable future, and the current development path has to undergo a shift to avoid a major urban 'polycrisis'. Shifting these transitions onto a sustainable and equitable path requires that a wide variety of actors work collectively to promote a common strategic vision of urban futures on the continent.

**Challenge 1**: African political and state officials remain predominantly 'rural' in their development outlook. They have not been confronted with a convincing case for pro-urbanization strategies.

**Challenge 2**: Policy- and decision-makers do not have access to data in a form that is useful for developing urban development strategies and interventions. There is a general disconnect between the urban research produced by university research centres and the knowledge required for policy-making and practice.

**Challenge 3**: Research centres often battle to secure sustainable sources of finance and other resources for research, and to balance the production of 'pure' and 'applied' research.

**What is the strategic role that research centres can play?**
- In order to make a convincing case for a pro-urban development agenda, comprehensive and reliable data is required. Research centres can help to either develop new data sets, or enhance the usefulness of existing data for decision-makers.
- This data should be qualitative and qualitative, obtained from a range of sources, including slum communities, and should be targeted primarily at the needs of local governments. Research centres are often well placed to link processes of bottom-up data generation with functions in the public sector and wider development sector.
- Research centres can provide and train 'strategic intermediaries' to interact with and read across different institutional languages and logics to promote innovation in urban governance.

**What is the strategic role that AURI can play?**
- It can provide a platform for the exchange of research ideas, practices and outputs between its members, as well as other networks and initiatives, in order to improve the quality and impact of urban research on the continent and to drive the emergence of alternative paradigms for the future of African cities.
- It can provide an institutional framework for joint and comparative urban research along consistent paradigmatic and methodological lines.

- It can provide a common voice of academic and NGO researchers to promote the cause of progressive urban development policy in Africa.
- It can assist its individual members by organising meetings and developing resources for networking and capacity-building, focusing on sustainable institutional and financial management, and methodologies of institutional engagement (with state and civil society).

Aside from these conclusions, the research centres attending agreed to form the African Urban Research Initiative with a view to consolidating the initiative into a network in the future. Several key activities were identified as a way to explore further areas of collaborative work. A Steering Committee was nominated and a follow-on AURI meeting scheduled for Nairobi in late 2013 or early 2014.

## Acknowledgements

Great thanks are due to Serge Allou (Cities Alliance) and colleagues in the Ethiopian Ministry of Urban Development and Construction, especially Yitbarek Mengiste and Belay File, for their efforts in organizing the meeting and visa documents for various participants. Heidi Tait (University of Cape Town) is also due great thanks for her work in organizing flights, accommodation, meeting venues and translation services for the workshop.

# Appendix 1: List and Contact Details of Participants

*Representatives of research centres attending and not attending*

| Centre name | Parent institution | Location | Representative | Contact |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Centre for Settlement Studies (CSS), Institute of Human Settlement Research (IHSR) | Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology | Kumasi, Ghana | Dr Divine K. Ahadzie | dkahadzie.cap@knust.edu.gh |
| Centre for Urban Research and Innovations (CURI) | University of Nairobi | Nairobi, Kenya | Prof Peter Ngau | peterngau@gmail.com |
| Centro de Análise de Políticas (CAP) | Universidade Eduardo Mondlane | Maputo, Moçambique | Prof Dr Inês Raimundo | ines.raimundo@uem.mz, inesmacamo@gmail.com |
| Development Workshop Angola | - | Luanda, Angola | Mr Allan Cain | Allan.cain@gmail.com |
| Ecole Africaine des Métiers de l'Architecture et de l'Urbanisme (EAMAU) | - | Lomé, Togo | Prof Dr KOUADIO N'Da N'Guessan (Directeur Général) | ndanguessan@yahoo.fr |
| Environnement et Développement Tiers Monde (ENDA-TM) | - | Dakar, Sénégal | Dr Malick Gaye | rup@enda.sn |
| Institut Africain de Gestion Urbaine (IAGU) | - | Dakar, Sénégal | Mr Moussa Sy | moussa@iagu.org |
| Institute for Development Studies (IDS) | University of Nairobi | Nairobi, Kenya | Prof Winnie Mitullah | mitullahwinnie@gmail.com |
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# Appendix 2: Draft purpose, goals, modalities and activities of AURI

*Presented by Prof Edgar Pieterse (ACC) on 21 March 2013*

## Purpose

- To circulate innovative ideas and management practices between African urban research centres
- To promote the emergence of truly interdisciplinary research centres that can raise the importance and profile of the urban question in Africa

## Goals

1. AURI shall provide a platform for African urban research centres to collaborate in order to persuade key decision-makers to act pro-actively to address Africa's urban transition (at various scales: continental, regional, national and local).
2. AURI will facilitate the exchange of research knowledge, perspectives and practices towards the emergence of alternative paradigms for the future of African cities, rooted in a systemic understanding of the present.
3. AURI will promote the establishment of a common approach to the data platforms required to understand the real manifestations and dynamics of urbanisation in Africa.
4. AURI will promote and disseminate the work of its members through a shared digital knowledge platform to complement the individual efforts of members and portals established by other agencies.
5. AURI will enable its members to exchange effective practice on leveraging funding for both 'pure' (theoretical) and applied urban research.
6. AURI shall create a platform for an engagement with key development agencies (AfDB, AU, Cities Alliance, UN-Habitat, UCLGA, etc.) to ensure that they draw on African institutions for research and analysis.
7. AURI will create mechanisms for member organisations to collaborate on thematic clusters to advance more comparative and contrasting research on a variety of pertinent topics.

## Key activities

1. Discourse building through regular exchange of knowledge
2. Aggregation of research expertise to make a bigger impact
3. Joint research
4. Mutual support and capacity building
5. Promotion of African urban scholarship
6. Expansion of the network

## Modalities

- Meet alongside milestone events, such Africities and World Urban Forum
- Meet by organising events for/with key partners
- Collaborate on key research studies commissioned by partners
- Undertake joint research on critical issues that stem from the goals of AURI

- Undertake joint capacity building projects to improve the capabilities of members to become truly interdisciplinary knowledge centres that can advance innovation (and strategic intermediation)
- Unlock resources for research and institutional development

**Initial activities**

Phase 1: From an initiative to a Network (2013-2014)
- Commission a series of peer reviewed think pieces:
    - Making the urban case more effectively
    - African perspective on an alternative paradigm for African cities (mainly for debate & intellectual stretching)
    - New approaches to data generation, management and use
    - Ideal-type funding model for durable urban knowledge centres
    - What does it mean to be a strategic intermediary?
- Activate the shared knowledge platform
- Establish a secretariat and working committee to undertake detailed planning and coordination
- Develop a 'protocol' for operation
- Organize another AURI workshop in 2014 to potentially:
    - Discuss the Commissioned Papers
    - Formalize the Network
    - Elect a formal Steering Committee
- Agree on programme of work for 2015 to 2017 (targeting the Habitat 3 conference in 2016)