

Friday, 15 June
15.15-18.00

Track: Comparative Modernities
Room: *National Library, Main Conference Hall*

**THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE NON-WESTERN WORLD: NORMS AND FORMS OF
'DEVELOPMENT' PROGRAMMES**

Session chairs: Tom Avermaete, Delft University of Technology
Samia Henni, Princeton University

Immediately after its establishment in October 1945, the United Nations (UN) founded the World Bank Group in order to invest in non-western countries, boost their economic growth, and channel their modernization projects. With the gradual collapse of European colonial empires—which stimulated the creation of the Non-Aligned Movement—new states joined the UN and large-scale 'development' programmes were launched. Under the header of technical 'assistance', 'cooperation', or 'aid', these programmes seem to have favoured western urban planning policies and politics. Yet, what exactly did these programmes consist of and how did they operate? To what extent did these 'development' programmes affect the politico-economic sovereignty of non-western countries? And how were western values mediated, but also challenged and remoulded by the so-called 'receivers' of 'development' in the non-western world?

This session aims to address these questions and to explore the relationship between the UN's financial investments, political significances, and planning measures in Africa, Eastern Europe, and Southeast Asia during the Cold War. The objective is to investigate the role of the UN's planning and financial bodies in the making of western post-war international architectural and planning networks and organizations, on the one hand; and to scrutinize the roots of 'development' strategies and their impacts on the consolidation of newly independent states, on the other hand. Considering the 2016 decision of the World Bank to eliminate the term 'developing' from its official vocabulary, the session also intends to question the purpose of the UN taxonomies.

We seek papers that critically deconstruct the involvement of architects and planners in specific UN endeavours in non-western countries, including international seminars, conferences, competitions, housing policies, infrastructure designs, and rural and urban planning. Of special interest are papers that disclose how particular projects or built environments had obeyed or disobeyed to UN 'development' directives and expose the multifaceted impacts of such programmes at national, transnational and international levels. We welcome papers that demonstrate a method for analysing architecture and planning projects in historically, politically, economically, and geographically specific processes of UN 'development' programmes.

PAPERS:

'A World Picture'?: The UN's Audio-Visual Apparatus for Mediating Habitat, 1976

Felicity D. Scott, Columbia University

Preparing for *Habitat: The United Nations Conference on Human Settlements*, Maurice Strong, Secretary General of the UN Environment Program (UNEP), proposed to his governing council that conventional conference reports and verbal presentations be supplemented by audio-visual techniques at the 1976 conference. If the initial idea was to produce a multi-media exhibition demonstrating 'mutual aid' strategies then in line with World Bank mandates that Habitat sought to promote, this initiative turned into a policy of inviting member states to prepare 26-minute films to be screened in Vancouver as part of their national participation. Films, Strong insisted, were better-able to communicate the ambitions of technology transfer and demonstration projects in the field of human settlements to the international audience gathered at the inter-governmental conference, also serving as tools of data collection. Hence Enrique Peñalosa, Habitat's Secretary

General, announced '1975 will most certainly become known as the year in which the world had its picture taken. For Habitat's audio-visual program has caused cameras to focus all over the world on human settlement problems and their solutions.' My paper will not focus on specific development or technical 'assistance' programs in non-Western contexts. Rather, picking up on the panel organizers' question 'how were Western values mediated', it will investigate the UN's attempted audio-visual mediation of World Bank's economic and ideological agenda, their attempt to 'use movies to move.' To this end, with reference to specific films from non-Western countries, I will unpack the careful scripting of normative and distinctly Western narratives of 'human settlements' in these documentaries. In other words, I want to take seriously the degree to which time-based media were conceived as potential vehicles to 'affect the politico-economic sovereignty of non-Western countries,' even while this immense and expensive apparatus of film production and presentation touched down unevenly in different locations and with different outcomes.

Open Door: UNBRO and the Spatial Planning of Cambodian-Thai Refugee Camps

Jennifer Ferng, University of Sydney

In the wake of Khmer Rouge genocide, the short-lived agency United Nations Border Relief Operation or UNBRO (1982-2001) was responsible for the maintenance and services of refugee camps positioned along the northern Cambodian-Thai border. Cambodia represented a fulcrum in southeast Asia during the Cold War, caught between the growing strength of Vietnam and the political backing provided by China. The Khmer Rouge, the Vietnamese army, and Thai officials each sought to wrestle control over specific locations along this region. The 'open-door' policy enacted by the Thai government allowed Cambodians to enter designated holding centers, even though Thailand was not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention. While the accommodations and layout of these camps were funded by donations from Australia, Canada, France, Japan, and the United States, UN contractors had little input since many decisions were often ceded to Khmer civil administration. But this is not to say that architectural design was completely absent from the relief assistance offered by UNBRO. In fact, this paper argues that the concept of spatial planning throughout these camps was resurrected using UN logistics: the layout of food distribution and water rationing, the maintenance of a central border pharmacy, material support for adult and children's education as well as internal security measures that protected each camp's borders. Much of the planning and management of these camps were defined by the spatial configurations of humanitarian aid, and in turn, these practices helped to shape how Khao I Dang, Sa Kaeo, and S2 functioned as border regions that attempted to regulate the flows of refugees moving between Cambodia and Thailand. More importantly, today's contemporary treatment of international asylum seekers and refugees by the Cambodian government and local NGOs has been conditioned by these historical movements of internally displaced persons and Vietnamese and Thai military personnel.

Counter Currenting: The Production of Locality in the Case of the Training for Self Reliance Project (TSRP) – Lesotho, 1983-1987

Iain Low, University of Cape Town

The TSRP is a program developed between the Government of Lesotho and the World Bank (WB) - International Development Authority (IDA) to upgrade education throughout Lesotho. As a Least Developed Country (LDC), Lesotho qualifies for favorable loans negotiated with deferred repayment schedules. This enables Lesotho to benefit from aid whilst servicing loans in a sustainable and managed way.

The period under examination straddles the third and fourth phases of TSRP. By the fourth, the program was sufficiently established to contest norms generally associated with WB projects, particularly maximizing investment through efficient utilization of loans, as reflected in expeditious delivery of goods. Quantitative in its measure, the Bank has been less interested in the qualitative dimension of delivery, thereby promoting a

techno-economic utilitarian development approach, and often marginalising local initiatives and ignoring human need.

The TSRP program requires a set of complex capital and operational investments. Buildings consumed the bulk of the loan, complemented by in-service training for unqualified teachers, the provision of text books, furniture and equipment, school feeding and sanitation—each contributing unique values.

Administration was by an autonomous Project Authority reporting to Parliament, yet governed by a Board comprising Ministries of Finance, Education, Planning and Public Works. Whilst intended on protecting the loan, a power ambiguity emerged, enabling space to experiment. Design agency was instrumental in this and recognized for its role in surfacing local qualitative inclusionary participation. TSRP has by now delivered schools for over twenty-five years.

This study will demonstrate the productive dimension of architectural design when participatory practice is deployed as a 'decolonial' strategy in relation to a set of inherited mechanisms defined by the economic utilitarianism associated with WB agreements.

Tourism and Leisure Politics: The United Nations Development Agenda in Cyprus

Panayiota Pyla, University of Cyprus

Dimitris Venizelos, University of Cyprus

The United Nations declared 2017 as the 'Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development', fifteen years after the 'International Year of Ecotourism' (2002) and fifty years after the celebration of 1967 as the 'International Tourist Year'. Celebrated as 'a Passport to Peace' and a 'Passport for Development', tourism has fuelled UN development agendas in the developing world since the 1960s. Much like the themes of housing, environment, and peace, tourism has been at the root of decolonization, modernization, and development strategies. This paper will investigate the UN agendas on tourism by focusing on the Technical Assistance to Cyprus, which came out of colonial rule in 1960 and received massive foreign assistance for securing the young state's economic growth and political stability.

The paper grounds this inquiry on a critical analysis of the 1961 report *Cyprus: Suggestions for a Development Programme*, authored by UN advisor Willard Thorp. Resonating with broader developmentalist strategies that projected non-western contexts onto a West-centred cartography, Thorp called for the industrialization of leisure in Cyprus, prescribing funding mechanisms, land uses, and hotel standards. Even as they catered to western socio-economic priorities, UN directives confronted a complex landscape of nation-building processes mediated by the state's strong ties with the Non-Aligned Movement—a looming inter-communal conflict between the Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot communities—and larger Middle East geo-politics. Casting the spotlight on the tourism-related policies and planning strategies of Cyprus, as well as on the rapid transformations of the coastal city of Famagusta, the paper analyses the complex intertwinement of Thorp's interventions with divergent advice from other foreign development experts and local actors. This particular history of UN discourse on tourism can be most instructive in light of current advancements of tourism as a means for sustainable development and peace-building around the globe.

Infrastructure of Pan-Africanism: The Trans-African Highway Network

Kenny Cupers, University of Basel

In the process of African decolonization during the 1960s, the United Nation Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) became a central institution for post-independence development programmes. One of the most ambitious of such programmes was the Trans-African Highway project.

Formally planned in the late 1960s and early 1970s, its goal was to establish an international network of highways that would connect the capitals of the newly independent African states. The project was led by Ghanaian economist and UNECA executive secretary Robert Gardiner, who was directly inspired by Kwame Nkrumah's Pan-Africanist development ideology. Both politicians radically reimagined the role of infrastructure: instead of being an instrument of colonial exploitation, infrastructure should be a vehicle of Pan-African freedom, unity, and development. Yet, as the promises of democracy and development turned sour over the following decades, only some of the planned new links were built.

This paper explores the geopolitics of infrastructural design in the Trans-African Highway project. First, it focuses on the relationship between Nkrumah, Gardiner, and Constantinos Doxiadis, whose 1961 Transport Plan for Africa foreshadowed UNECA's plans. Secondly, it examines the technical realization and materiality of the highway itself, focusing on the Nairobi-Mombasa corridor, improved under Jomo Kenyatta in the early 1970s and the only stretch currently still marked as the 'Trans-African Highway'. This single carriageway functions both as a long-distance transportation corridor and a giant linear marketplace linking city and countryside. It is less an artefact of western expertise than an interface between the apparatus of international development and the everyday experience of modernity.