The politics and changing paradigm of megaproject development in metropolitan cities

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Abstract
Although not a recent phenomenon, megaproject building is currently enjoying renewed popularity in large cities across the world. Policy-makers are undertaking major investments in the form of large-scale urban development projects to position their metropolitan cities on a global scale and to scale-up urban infrastructure to meet basic needs of housing and transportation. The aim of this special issue, of which this article is the introduction, is to examine this trend, with a focus on four cities: Cape Town, Durban, Delhi, and Lima. On the basis of empirical case material, the articles analyse the challenges that megaprojects throw up for urban sustainability and discuss the peculiar issues facing cities characterized by extreme social inequalities, limited mobilisation of community groups and growing pressure on governments to implement neoliberal urban development policies. They illustrate how institutional contexts and specific policy instruments in conjunction with territorially grounded social dynamics give rise to distinct patterns of megaproject development. The articles engage critically with recent literature that has postulated the emergence of a new paradigm of megaproject building. The research is an outcome of work conducted in the framework of the “Chance2Sustain” project, funded under the European Commission’s 7th Framework Programme.

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Introduction
To position their metropolitan cities on a global scale and enhance their ability to compete with other spaces, policy-makers undertake major investments in the form of large-scale urban development projects (Swyngedouw, Moulaert, & Rodriguez, 2002). This has been interpreted as a response to the restructuring of global capitalism, wherein large cities have emerged as key ‘accumulation nodes’ (Harvey, 1989; Brenner, 1998, 2004). Although megaproject building is not a recent phenomenon, there is currently renewed interest, a trend observed in countries of the North and the South (Altshuler & Luboff, 2003; Barthel, 2010; Bezmez, 2008; Díaz Orueta & Fainstein, 2008; Flores Dewey & Davis, 2013; Flyvbjerg, Bruzelius, & Rothengatter, 2003; Pinson, 2009). Such urban development policies involve space-based interventions designed to enhance the economic ‘viability’ of cities e.g., by building transport infrastructure for improving communications or establishing production platforms in the form of enterprise parks or export zones to engage with global markets.

A body of literature has emerged on the politics of megaproject development, which examines governance arrangements and patterns of influence, as well as the social and spatial implications of large-scale urban projects.1 One strand of this literature, mainly based on cases from Europe and North America,2 has postulated the emergence of a new generation of megaprojects, which is partly the consequence of the political fallout from the disruptive model that dominated during the Fordist era in the US and Europe (Díaz Orueta & Fainstein, 2008; Fainstein, 2008; Lehrer & Laidley, 2008). That model was characterized by large-scale displacement of residents, and destruction of neighbourhoods. The new paradigm is characterized by efforts to minimize popular resistance, achieve ‘planning legitimacy’ (Flores Dewey & Davis, 2013: 535) and avoid displacement of residents by locating, for instance, on former industrial lands (Díaz Orueta & Fainstein, 2008: 760).

The papers in this special issue undertake to engage critically with this literature as they analyse the politics of megaproject

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1 See for instance Altshuler & Luboff, 2003; Flyvbjerg et al., 2003; Díaz Orueta & Fainstein, 2008; Swyngedouw et al., 2002.

2 Notable exceptions are Bezmez (2008) and Barthel (2010).
development in four metropolitan cities located on three continents: Cape Town, Durban, Delhi, and Lima. Through detailed case material, they examine the challenges that megaprojects throw up for urban sustainability for instance by fuelling land speculation, exacerbating urban sprawl, displacing local populations and livelihoods, and increasing environmental risks, features of megaprojects across the world (Gellert & Lynch, 2003). At the same time, they discuss the peculiar issues facing these four cities characterized by extreme social inequalities, limited mobilisation of community groups and growing pressure on governments to implement neoliberal urban development policies.

The cases illustrate how institutional contexts, mainly intergovernmental relationships, and specific policy instruments in conjunction with territorially grounded social dynamics give rise to distinct patterns of megaproject development. Framed within a similar research design, the papers undertake to identify the actors, situated at various spatial scales, that are driving megaproject development. They examine in particular what extent megaproject politics and planning are open to democratic negotiations with the various stakeholders concerned, and the manner in which organised groups in society (NGOs, private business, local community groups) bring their knowledge into the process and their scope for negotiation. They examine how, in a context of competition over space and resources, tensions between competing agendas are managed politically. Several papers specifically investigate the interactions between megaprojects and settlement dynamics. In the discussion of these cases, the authors engage with the issue of contestation and political constraints to megaproject development, and question the paradigm of a ‘new generation’ of megaprojects (Diaz Orueta & Fainstein, 2008; Lehrer & Ladley, 2008) and its relevance for large cities in the developing world.

The research presented in this special issue is the outcome of original research work conducted in the framework of the “Chance2Sustain” research project (2010–14), funded under the European Commission’s 7th Framework Programme. This project, covering ten cities in four countries, used knowledge management systems as a key analytical tool for engaging with issues of participation and urban governance. Megaproject development and substandard settlements were two thematic areas specifically examined in the study.

**Megaprojects as a prism for apprehending urban governance**

This set of papers adopts a loose definition of the term megaproject, following Susan Fainstein: “(e)ssentially it involves a costly scheme for development of a contiguous area, requiring new construction and/or substantial rehabilitation. Implementation may take a number of years and may be the responsibility of a single or multiple developers. Mega-projects always include a transformation of land uses” (2008: 768). Among the criteria used in choosing specific case studies, a key consideration was the capacity of the project to shape future development in the metropolitan area. This resonates with the broad definition offered by Paul Gellert and Barbara Lynch: “projects which transform landscapes rapidly, intentionally, and profoundly in very visible ways, and require coordinated applications of capital and state power” (2003: 15–6). This need for coordination between public and private actors or between different types of state actors, is one of our justifications for studying megaprojects, i.e., they are a prism through which urban governance can be apprehended. This was expressed by Alan Altshuler and David Luberoff, who studied megaprojects in the United States: “efforts to realize large-scale investment projects often provide an unusually revealing window on patterns of influence in urban development politics. Such projects involve huge commitments of public resources and often entail significant threats to some interests and values even as they promise great benefits to others” (2003: 4).

The diversity of the cases discussed here (cf. Table 1) allows us to explore various aspects of urban development processes in large cities of India, Peru and South Africa. One entry point concerns megaproject development in relation to ‘ordinary’ governance practices. It has been remarked in the literature that by virtue of their size and their capacity to transform, megaprojects usually fall outside the realm of ‘normal politics’. Their governance is often characterised in the literature as ‘exceptional’, and funds and implementation are entrusted to agencies “well insulated from normal politics” (Fainstein & Fainstein, 1983: 248, cited by Altshuler & Luberoff, 2003: 251).

This literature on megaprojects emphasizes for instance their ‘exceptional’ nature, the ‘special regime’ that accompanies their implementation. Thus, megaprojects “necessarily require special authorizing, funding, revenue, land acquisition, and regulatory actions by two or more levels of government” (Altshuler & Luberoff, 2003: 267) and “(c)ivil society does not have the same say in this arena of public life as it does in others; citizens are typically kept at a substantial distance from megaproject decision making” (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003: 5). Key problems that have been identified then are lack of accountability, the absence of clear objectives and arrangements for measuring how they are met and for rewarding/punishing poor performance. Various studies also concur to denounce the tendency for megaprojects to generate cost overruns and to grossly overstate the “projected benefits, notably in terms of positive regional development, [which] often turn out to be insignificant or even negative” (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003: 5).

The seven papers presented here are interested in the various types of actors involved in megaproject development, situated at various scales, and their respective influence over the processes of conception and implementation. This includes attention to the issue of democratic participation in megaproject conception and implementation, as well as organised forms of contestation. For each case, the aim is to understand the balance between the structural forces that bear upon cities and local political agency.

In all of the cases discussed here, without exception, megaprojects are not primarily, or not at all, a city-level initiative. This is an important reminder that city development is a strategic issue that surpasses the city. Although this is the case to some extent everywhere in the world, it appears to be more prevalent in our

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3 Preliminary drafts of the papers in this special issue were presented at the EADI/DSA conference in York in September 2011, in a panel entitled “Reconfiguring the Fast Growing City: Exploring the Interaction between Urban Governance, Mega-Projects and Settlement Dynamics in Cases from India and South Africa”.

4 “Chance2Sustain” is an eight-country research consortium coordinated by Isa Baud, University of Amsterdam. For more information on the Chance2Sustain project, as well as access to publications, see the project website: http://chance2sustain.eu.

5 These are Rio de Janeiro, Salvador and Guarulhos in Brazil, Delhi, Chennai and Kalyan in India, Lima Metropolitana and Arequipa in Peru, Durban and Cape Town in South Africa.

6 However, their more detailed definition, which underscores important potential features, appears too restrictive: “[Mega-projects] use heavy equipment and sophisticated technologies, usually imported from the global North and require coordinated flows of international finance capital . . .” (Gellert & Lynch, 2003: 16). These characteristics must be established on a case-by-case basis.

7 See also Graham (2000).

8 This was in fact the case with all the megaprojects studied in the ten cities of the Chance2Sustain project. See Kennedy (2013).
cities than in examples from the global north discussed in the literature.\textsuperscript{9} It corroborates the point that local governments in developing countries usually have to contend with more centralised political institutions, and are more dependent on other levels of the political system than their counterparts in the global north (Stren, 2001). Although decentralisation experiences in developing countries have been highly contrasted, local mandates remain primarily focused on basic service delivery and do not generally extend to socioeconomic development (Dubresson & Faure, 2005) or strategic planning (Scott, 2001).

The importance of non-local levels of government in promoting urban megaprojects is linked in part to institutional factors, the statutory sharing of powers and responsibilities between different levels of government, which varies widely from country to country. It is also linked to politics and the real world functioning of democracy and party systems in each context. In India, municipalities, including the country’s largest metropolitan cities, have limited mandates and are weak financially, a situation that decentralisation reforms adopted in the 1990s did not fundamentally alter. The central state in New Delhi or provincial governments in the country’s other large cities generally provide the impetus for large-scale investments in urban infrastructure.\textsuperscript{10} India’s institutional framework for local government marks a striking contrast with that of South Africa. The latter’s post-apartheid Constitution (1996) gave metro cities a large degree of autonomy, exclusive executive and regulatory powers and a single city tax regime. In addition to their wide-ranging powers, democratically elected metro governments also have extensive social and economic mandates: to reduce poverty, provide housing and services, redress inequality and promote economic development (Sutherland, Robbins, & Scott, 2011). As for Peru, the decentralisation reform implemented in the early 2000s has not resulted in significant empowerment of subnational states, although central transfers to regional and local bodies have increased quite remarkably. As the Peru team’s research indicated, the general institutional framework is marked by the country’s extractivist model of economic growth characterised by heavy reliance on mining activities,\textsuperscript{11} and private mining companies directly assume the provision of some public services, which has contributed to weakening the legitimacy of local authorities.\textsuperscript{12}

Notwithstanding, this research has found that local political elites — often acting within growth coalitions — usually end up supporting the megaprojects, which they perceive as bringing benefits to their constituencies. The findings emerging from the Chance2Sustain research project allow us to qualify certain theoretical propositions, which tend to view megaprojects as being primarily driven by global capital. Our studies suggest a more indirect relationship: rather than focusing on capital flows, it is more relevant to map how knowledge is translated into ideological projects, for instance via discourses on ‘globalisation’. In this context, the role of global policy networks and travelling concepts take on special significance (cf. infra).

### A ‘new’ paradigm for megaproject development?

A specific contribution of this special issue is to critically engage with the so-called ‘new’ megaprojects, elaborated on the basis of European and American examples primarily,\textsuperscript{13} and discuss the relevance of this category for our cases and for cities of the global south more generally. The literature undertakes to identify the characteristics of a ‘new generation’ of megaprojects and distinguish it from the previous model: the focus is flexible and diverse rather than singular and monolithic and involves the creation of mixed-use spaces; there is a shift from collective benefits to a more individualized form of public benefit; such projects simultaneously re-inscribe and reinforce socioeconomic divisions; the diversity of forms and uses employed inhibits the growth of contestational practices (Fainstein, 2009; Lehrer & Laidley, 2008).

On the basis of this definition, some of the megaprojects studied in the framework of the Chance2Sustain project resemble quite closely these ‘new’ megaprojects. It is the case for the Porto Maravilha urban redevelopment project in Rio de Janeiro and also for the King Shaka Airport/Dube TradePort in Durban (cf. Robbins’ paper in this issue). This international airport project was conceived as an integral part of a multi-modal logistics platform, the plans for which include high value manufacturing, agro-industry and technology-enabled commercial transactions between businesses. To consider such a case primarily as a transport project would neglect key aspects of the “aeropolis” concept

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\textsuperscript{9} Even in Brazil, decentralized fiscal and administrative institutions at the municipal level coexist with a high concentration of power at the federal executive level (Curza Lavalle ed., 2010).

\textsuperscript{10} There are variations within India because State governments are empowered by the Constitution to legislate on urban administration. See Ghosh et al., 2009.

\textsuperscript{11} Mining activities accounted for 32% of the total tax income between 1998 and 2009, 44% of total private investments between 2010 and 2012, and more than 60% of total exports. See Takano, 2013.

\textsuperscript{12} This is the case for instance in Arequipa, Peru’s second city, where a mining company is building a water supply and treatment plant (Takano, 2013).

(inspired from examples such as Dubai and Schiphol), which gives the project its broad scope.

Conversely, some of the other case studies present primarily features of ‘old’ megaprojects i.e., state-initiated, state-financed projects aimed at the creation of public goods, whose physical appearance corresponds to “monolithic singular structures” extended via infrastructure networks. This is the case of the large-scale water supply scheme in Kalyan, a satellite city of Mumbai. Yet even seemingly conventional megaproject types may present features of the new generation through their funding modalities, for instance, the water treatment project in Arequipa, Peru’s second city, is being built and managed by a private mining company.

Other cases can be described as ‘hybrid’, combining characteristics of old and new megaprojects, such as the “IT Corridor project” in Chennai, India, centred on the construction of a 18 km 6-lane expressway (Varrel, 2011). Although at one level, it has the features of a classic state-funded road project, it was conceived as a means to promote the development of the IT industry in the southern part of the city by strengthening agglomeration economies. The toll-expressway effectively inter-links three large IT parks, built by State (provincial) government agencies, as well as several private IT campuses located at different points along the road. Hence the basic road infrastructure is one component of an ambitious strategic vision of urban development driven by IT activities, which range from high value-added software engineering to lower value BPO services. To achieve its broader goals, this model relies on private investments to develop property (office buildings, housing, retail) and to set-up economic activities. Like the Brazilian and South African projects mentioned above, it is a large-scale mixed-use project that effectively combines housing, economic activities and transport networks. Whereas Chennai’s IT Corridor and Durban’s aerotropolis are basically greenfield developments, other projects examined in this issue involve urban redevelopment, transforming substandard settlements into more valuable property; this is the case of the expressway in Lima (see Strauch, Takano & Hordijk in this issue) and the megaprojects along the Yamuna River in Delhi (cf. Follmann’s paper).

Beyond morphological and functional features, a key issue is whether the megaprojects studied here are emblematic of a new approach to megaproject building that is more transparent, that is more inclusive in the kinds of knowledge taken into consideration and that embraces the “do no harm” principle (Flores Dewey & Davis, 2013: 545). Indeed, the literature documents the decline of megaprojects in the United States in the 1970s as a result of a backlash from the social groups most negatively affected by urban redevelopment projects during the 1950s and 1960s, including low-income and minority residents of older neighbourhoods (Altshuler & Lubroff, 2003). As a result of citizen mobilisation and resistance, new norms have come into practice, aimed not only at mitigating negative consequences, but also at “transforming planning institutions into forums where affected parties could voice their concerns, stake their mitigation claims, and defend local autonomy” (Frug, 1999, cited by Flores Dewey & Davis, 2013: 534). Although specific patterns vary across the cases, the papers here suggest continuity with the old approach to megaproject development: there is a tendency to rely almost exclusively on expert-based knowledge together with an extensive use of global and domestic consultant advisors; city residents, including those directly affected by megaprojects, are largely excluded from decision-making and implementation processes; there is minimal integration of community-based knowledge, usually only considered in the event of organised resistance or in the context of formal consultation processes, e.g., environmental impact assessments. Whereas the ‘new’ norms discussed in the literature imply sensitivity to displacement by locating on “obsolete industrial and port

lands rather than intruding into residential areas” (Díaz Orueta & Fainstein, 2008: 760), several of our cases document large-scale evictions and demolition of informal settlements. To summarise, top-down, technocratic planning and implementation remain the predominant approach.14

Realising city visions through megaproject development

One of the shared aims of the papers in this issue is to examine the relative importance of megaprojects in city development plans and policies, and the extent to which they give expression to urban sustainability principles. Of particular importance here is the manner in which they articulate economic and social objectives. As has been noted with regard to European and North American cities, although megaprojects are physically similar, they differ widely with regard to the attention given to spreading the benefits across social groups and ensuring accessibility to new infrastructure facilities and public spaces (Fainstein, 2009; Lehrer & Laidley, 2008).

The research presented here indicates that large-scale projects tend to respond to numerous objectives that combine in varying degrees economic, political and social aspects. They are often more or less articulated with longer-term goals of urban planning and urban redevelopment. This is apparent, for instance, in medium and long term planning documents like the 2012–2025 Regional Plan for Lima, which has quite a strong focus on economic issues, and the Regional Plan 2021 for the National Capital Region (Delhi) of India, which underscores the importance of developing connecting infrastructure, specifically transport, to boost the competitiveness of the metropolitan region. It is true also that megaprojects are not always planned in advance; they are sometimes integrated ex post facto into planning documents (cf. Follmann’s article on Delhi). Indeed, in some cases, the megaprojects appear to emerge from a relatively narrow set of objectives, promoted by a relatively narrow set of actors (cf. the paper on Lima’s Expressway by Strauch, Takano & Hordijk).

In comparing and contrasting our case studies, two important aspects appeared for answering this set of questions about the manner in which megaprojects emerge and are articulated with development goals: the role of travelling concepts and the link between megaprojects and mega-events. Here too, this special issue will contribute to on-going debates and highlight some of the specificities of Indian, Peruvian and South African cities, linked to broader development challenges.

Travelling concepts

Transnational models, which circulate through transnational knowledge flows, embody particular ideologies about urban development and economic growth. Such ‘policy mobility’ (Peck & Theodore, 2010) or ‘travelling concepts’ contribute to promoting norms about what constitute ‘global cities’ or ‘world class’ cities. Such concepts circulate through ‘transfer agents’ (Stone, 2004), such as international development organisations, private consulting companies and global policy networks, e.g., World Bank, McKinsey Global Institute. Policy transfer has been defined as a process by which knowledge about policies and administrative arrangements in one setting is used in developing policies and arrangements in another political setting (Stone, 2004). Evidence that travelling concepts have influenced urban planning and practices was found in a number of our case studies, and this aspect will be developed in detail in the paper on Delhi’s metro (cf. Bon’s paper),

14 These findings are consistent with those discussed for Mexico City, see Flores Dewey & Davis, 2013.
which explicitly borrowed its financial model i.e., financing infra-
structure through property development, from the Mass Transit
Railway Corporation of Hong Kong. Likewise, the study of Lima’s
expressway refers to new instruments used in Peru to encourage
private funding of infrastructure; although modelled on interna-
tional theories of ‘regulation by contract’, which assume tendering
occurs in a competitive environment, in practice they were seen to
prevent an open and competitive public tendering process (cf. pa-
per by Strauch, Takano & Hordijk in this issue).

Mega-events such as the Olympics, the FIFA World Cup or other
international sporting competitions are also treated as a particular
‘model’ for putting urban development on a fast track. Mega-events
as act as a powerful catalyst for undertaking large-scale urban
projects, a point that has been made quite abundantly in the
literature. A project that has existed for decades on paper can
suddenly be dusted off and put under construction once a mega-
event is announced. Because of the high visibility of such events,
and their symbolic importance in terms of national prestige,
countries are willing to make exceptional investments to ensure
their success. Indeed mega-events offer a unique opportunity to
‘market’ the city and the country at a global scale, and it is
commonly assumed that hosting such events attracts new sources
of funding.15 It has been suggested that ‘semi-peripheral’ polities
are increasingly inclined to bid for hosting major international
sporting events as a strategic response to the pressures of globali-
sation (Black & Van Der Westhuizen, 2004). Such events entail
various costs and risks that might need to be evaluated critically in
light of opportunity costs for infrastructure for basic needs.

In several cities examined here, mega sporting events have had or
are currently having a direct influence on large-scale urban devel-
opment projects. Delhi hosted the 2010 Commonwealth Games and
in addition to the construction of specialised facilities required for
the event (stadiums, athletes’ village), an overall thrust was given to
other large-scale projects such as riverfront redevelopment and
the extension of the metro rail system, with several new lines opening in
time for the Games (cf. articles by Bon & Follmann in this issue and
Dupont, 2011). South Africa organised the Football World Cup, also
in 2010, and this event had a decisive influence on the decision to
build the new international airport in Durban (cf. Robbins and
Hannan & Sutherland in this issue), and to undertake beautification
in Cape Town in conjunction with the N2 Gateway project (cf.
Jordhus-Lier in this issue). Major new commitments to urban
megaprojects (stadiums and transport infrastructure) were financed in
large part through grants from the national government. In Delhi
too, megaprojects were funded mainly through public investments
channelled from the national government through specialised
agencies.16 In both cases, public investment is considered a lever, a
necessary condition, for bringing in private property developers as
‘partners’, for instance to develop residential and retail components
of the larger megaproject.

This brief overview has discussed the key themes examined in
the articles comprising this special issue and highlighted some of the
areas where they will make a contribution to the academic litera-
ture. The final section provides a brief description of each article.

Contents of the special issue

The article by David Jordhus-Lier examines the politics of the N2
Gateway housing project in Cape Town, tracing opposition
movements and various forms of resistance to this megaproject.
Based on fieldwork carried out in an informal settlement, Joe Slovo,
the paper analyses how this megaproject contributed to reshaping
local community dynamics through various phases of mobilisation.
He questions the way public discourses have been constructed and
shows the divisive effects that the limited forms of participation
built into the megaproject have had. Situating this large-scale
intervention in relation to Cape Town’s social and economic base,
he argues that this flagship housing project—located on one of the
main portals into the city—was part of the process of “dressing up
for the world”, including preparation for hosting the FIFA 2010
World Cup, a mega-event par excellence.

The article on the ‘Via Parque Rímac’ expressway in Lima, by Lisa
Strauch, Guillermo Takano and Michaela Hordijk, also discusses
how the urban poor struggle to mitigate the risks of a megaproject
in their neighbourhoods. Situating their case study within its
broader historical and institutional context, the authors trace the
evolution of Lima’s approach to city development from one pro-
duced ‘from below’ through collective action to one relying on top-
down planning of large-scale urban projects, increasingly realised
by private firms. The expressway is being built through a PPP
mechanism called ‘Iniciativa Privada’ for processing unsolicited
bids from private firms for infrastructure development. This
framework, which focuses on protecting the rights of private
companies, raises issues of political transparency and account-
ability. Sensitive to protests from local communities, Lima’s newly
elected mayor (2013) managed to renegotiate some key compo-
nents of the megaproject including better compensation modalities
and green spaces, albeit in exchange for a longer concession on tolls
(from 30 to 40 years).

A research team from Durban, Catherine Sutherland, Vicky Sim
and Dianne Scott, propose a paper that engages with the politics
and discourses of a large-scale housing project in Durban, the
Cornubia New Town Development Project. This case demonstrates
how the megaproject model can be mobilised by the state as a pro-
poor response aimed at building sustainable settlements. Exam-
ining the project over time, the authors analyse the shifts among
different actors and interests. Engaging with the international
literature on “new” megaprojects, they observe how the flexibility
and diverse focus of contemporary megaprojects enable dominant
actors to shape space in a manner that excludes a wide range of
social goals and practices.

Focusing on the new international airport in Durban, Glen
Robbins offers a critical analysis of the manner in which state ac-
tors, working in conjunction with private sectors interests, “scale
up” megaprojects in ways that require more public resources and
secure a privileged place for such projects in urban development
strategies. Based on detailed case material of the King Shaka In-
ternational Airport/Dube Tradeport the paper examines the inter-
play between public and private sector actors as the concept of
“aerotropolis” was gradually embraced and analyses the implica-
tions for public sector budget commitments. In dialogue with the
academic literature, Robbins discusses how megaprojects have
evolved into complex, mixed-use environments that allow cities to
position themselves in a highly competitive global investment
environment.

The paper by Sylvia Hannan and Catherine Sutherland engages
with the broad issues of megaproject development and urban
sustainability on the basis of an empirical study of two contentious
megaprojects in Durban, the Moses Mabhida Stadium and the
Point Waterfront Development. The paper explores the extent to
which these cases are emblematic of a strategy aimed at global
competitiveness and whether they embody the “new” megaproject
paradigm. It also questions how these megaprojects are framed in
relation to sustainability principles, which have been prioritised by

15 For a discussion of the links between mega-events and megaprojects, see Varrel and Kennedy (2011).
16 In the case of the metro these investments were made possible through loans from Japan’s International Cooperation Agency. See Bon’s article in this issue.
the South African state and integrated into urban planning. The authors reflect on the tensions between the urban regeneration and sustainability agendas in the eThekwini Municipality and analyse how they are managed politically.

Alexander Follmann’s paper examines the recent trend of riverfront development in India, focusing on the Yamuna River in Delhi. He notes that a major driver of such developments are the ambitious visions of Indian cities to become ‘world-class’ and his analysis shows how the perception of the river’s floodplain as underutilized or wasteland has evolved over time, transforming it into a central component of the city’s make-over. Focusing on the environmental dimension of urban planning and policy discourse, as well as the notion of informality as a ‘mode of urbanisation’, the paper examines the modalities through which state agencies appropriate land and mobilise new financial opportunities to develop megaprojects. Follmann’s critical analysis of the rhetoric of environmental sustainability allows him to engage with the international literature on megaprojects and underscore the points of convergence and divergence.

Using the case of the metro rail network, Bérénice Bon’s paper provides a pointed analysis of the evolution of metropolitan governance in Delhi. Supported by solid empirical case material, she shows how a new model of land value capture, a concept explicitly borrowed from Hong Kong, is being adapted in India’s National Capital Region. In addition to careful attention to the different types of actors involved, including the multi-level government that characterizes Delhi — an overlap of municipal, State and Union prerogatives —, she undertakes to analyse the impacts of this new model in terms of production of space. In a city marked by growing social inequalities, the sharp increase in real estate values in proximity to the new metro stations raises important political challenges and throws into relief the mediating role of local politics in large urban redevelopment projects.

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