Parallel session 3A-1.3
The politics of urban development
Tuesday 12 November, 16.00 – 17.30
IAS Common Ground

Chair: **Dr Barbara Lipietz**, Associate Professor, The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL

Comparing London: what is 'normal' about developer interactions?
Dr Frances Brill, Research Fellow, The Bartlett School of Planning, UCL

This paper interrogates the role of real estate developers in urban governance. It argues that a comparative approach to developers' role forces analysis to question the wider institutional context, in terms of both formal systems and 'rules of the game'. In this case, putting London into conversation with other cities encourages an urban political analysis that challenges assumptions about what is normal or standard for a developer to do. This paper therefore uses the cases of Johannesburg and Amsterdam to question norms about developer involvement. These cases are part of two research projects: first, a comparison of London and Johannesburg that specifically sought to analyse the developer. The second, 'What is Governed in Cities', is a comparison across Amsterdam, Paris and London.

In this paper, using interviews with developers in London, Johannesburg and Amsterdam, we argue that the ways in which the planning system is structured to encourage particular forms of interactions between local authorities and developers encourages the now well established pattern of developers engaging in extensive pre-planning application debates in London, and their manipulation of the viability assessment. This, we argue is the product of two factors: a wider cultural norm within the industry and the fracturing of planning power across more than thirty bodies. Looking from Johannesburg, where a one-city system encourages different alliances within the real estate ecosystem, and Amsterdam, forces us to question what could be possible in London. Specifically, in the context of Mayoral capacities to bring forward planning applications to a municipal level, we argue there is hope that developers in London could be held to account through a cultural shift within the system, aligned more directly to a single authority.

An urbanized state in waiting: discourse, practice and territory in times of crisis
Dr Diego Garcia-Mejuto, Lecturer, Newcastle University

This paper mobilizes a conceptualization of urbanisation – 'the urbanisation of the state' (Hsing 2010) – developed outside the Euro-American context to contribute to the understanding of a European experience: the suspension of urbanisation processes in Spain as a result of the recent global economic crisis.

In the decade before 2008, Spain underwent a generalised and unprecedented urbanisation process, crucially supported by the central, regional and local state. Adopting Hsing's notion (2010) to conceptualise the relationship between the state and urban development in China, I examine the extent to which the Spanish local and regional state may have 'de-urbanised' – that is, become less co-implicated with urbanisation processes once these have been halted. I develop this examination through a focus on Murcia, the Spanish Mediterranean region with the highest rate of artificial land growth in the 1987-2011 period. Based on semi-structured interviews with state officials and planners, developers and consultants, and a review of state documents and news articles, I examine the state discursive, material and territorial practices related to urbanisation in three cases: the regional state, the largest municipality in the region, and two peripheral municipalities that had increased dramatically its urban growth prospects. I conclude that the economic crisis has not led to a de-urbanisation of the state that involved a decoupling of its practices from urbanisation; rather, I argue that these have been oriented towards laying the ground for a new cycle of development. All in all, by exploring the applicability of a notion emerged in the Chinese context to the Spanish case, the paper seeks, on the one hand, to engage in global urban debates by reversing conventional geographies of theory production; on the other, it aims to contribute to theorising the role of the state in Spain by, precisely, thinking it 'through elsewhere' (Robinson, 2016).

Unpacking the politics of City making in post-revolution Iran – the case of Tehran
Azadeh Mashayekhi, Teaching Fellow, The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL

This paper explores how the radical shift in post-revolution Iranian politics, and the attempts of the Islamic Republic to conceive an Islamic model of development, have had important implication for the urban planning and development of Tehran. The paper focuses on the politics of urban development and interrogates state power, its modalities and its effect in building Tehran as a capital city of the Islamic Republic over the past four decades. The empirical analysis depicts the formation of the Iranian/Islamic state and its transformation since the 1979 Islamic revolution, and examines the ways in which this process influenced Iranian Planning practices and Tehran's urban transformation. In particular, this study examines the power configuration between the number of charitable revolutionary foundations (religious-political groups) and Tehran's municipal government as well as their role and involvement in shaping the trajectory of urban development. This paper identifies certain conflicts and alliances among these actors through analysis of a number of large-scale development projects, master plan adaptation, and implementation of land use/density plans. The paper concludes with a discussion on types of agencies and actors involved in the urban development of Tehran, and reflects on the limits and boundaries of state planning practices in the past four decades.

From Tahrir Square to New Cairo: The American University in Cairo's Drawn Out Dreams of a Suburban Desert Campus

Danya Al-Saleh, PhD candidate, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Private educational institutions have played a prominent yet under-examined role in urban development processes taking place at Cairo's metropolitan periphery. In this article, we examine the American University in Cairo's (AUC) 2008 move from its downtown campus in Tahrir Square to the centre of New Cairo. We argue that this move is not just a symptom of neoliberal urbanisation, but indicative of the University's historical relationship to land in Cairo. By tracing the history of AUC's geographical imagination of a suburban desert campus, we highlight two key ways that AUC has situated itself in the Cairo's development over the past century. First, acquiring large tracts of suburban desert land has been central to AUC's educational mission to simultaneously shape elite society and land-use in Egypt. Since plans for an isolated suburban campus were first drawn up in 1916, administrators have consistently aspired to market AUC as a renowned university that models how desert land should be used and developed. Second, purchasing land for a suburban campus has been central to AUC's strategy for accumulating wealth and ensuring its long-term presence in Egypt. By examining AUC's historical relationship to land in Cairo, we make broader contributions to theorising the role of universities in neoliberal urban development in the Global South.