



1st INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COLLOQUIUM OF CERVIDA

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

Theme: Urban sustainability: what roles for African universities?

Lomé University Campus, November 18-20th, 2025

1-Background and rationale

If the United Nations has chosen as its eleventh Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 11) to "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable", it is not without reason. In 2009, for the first time, the world's population became predominantly urban: more than 3.7 billion people now live in a city. Each year, these urban dwellers are joined by 60 million others, so that by 2030, there will be around five (05) billion (H. Marchal and JM. Stébé, 2018). In Africa, urbanization is growing rapidly, with a considerable increase in the urban population estimated at more than 60% by 2050. This demographic dynamic represents not only a major challenge but also and above all a significant opportunity in terms of governance, planning, ecology, infrastructure and quality of life. The need to promote urbanization that is mindful of "inclusion and equity" and to strengthen capacities for co-production, co-planning and co-management for an integrated approach to human settlements in all countries, particularly those in Africa, is now a major concern.

African cities are subject to numerous challenges and tensions, particularly in terms of planning (J. Chenal, 2018), where trends are opposed: informal forms/modern forms (R. Koolhaas, 2004), traditional donors/new investors, temporary/permanent buildings, flow/fluidity, eviction/relocation, peri-urbanization/gentrification, etc. Some other issues are: pressure on natural resources (agricultural land, water and energy); land pressure with its share of disputes; mobility problems (transport equipment, urban congestion, etc.); the housing problem; the question of informality; demographic pressure rhyming with the inadequacy of basic urban equipment and services, etc. Moreover, a scientific look at the socioeconomic issues of the demographic dividend reveals that this galloping growth of the urban population limits the access of populations and very often young people and women to efficient goods and services, to an adequate education, health, food and labor market system, thus leading to social instability (P. Vimard and R. Fassassi, 2015; D. Delaunay and JP. Guengant, 2019; L. Dramani, 2019).

In this regard, several cities are facing various challenges that continually call into question the efforts of public authorities. The latter, faced with the socio-economic, environmental, political, and health crises their countries are experiencing, feel powerless.

Faced with these multifaceted challenges, urban sustainability is becoming one of the priorities for ensuring the balanced and inclusive development of African cities and strengthening the resilience of populations. We know that today urban theory has replaced the rules of design and it is the strategic discourse on the city that has replaced the physical planning of the city (T. Oblet, 2005; J. Chenal, 2013; V. Kaufmann, 2014) but also the description of the mechanisms of city-making especially in African urban realities. However, during this time, the African city is growing, growing, developing, and struggling to contain its urbanization, even calling into question certain urban theories. Thus, in the African context, the design of the sustainable city deserves to be redefined by taking into account the socio-economic, cultural and environmental specificities of the continent, to propose adapted theoretical frameworks and endogenous urban planning practices.

The Regional Center of Excellence on Sustainable Cities in Africa (CERViDA-DOUNEDON) of the University of Lomé, one of the 54 African Centers of Excellence (CEA) initiated by the World Bank, aims to provide a response to these current urban issues by offering professional training in urban professions and by investing in the field of research and development, support and advice for local and sustainable development of African cities.

In this regard, CERViDA-DOUNEDON is initiating, in collaboration with the Africa Hub of Future Earth, a conference that seeks to highlight the contribution of African universities to urban sustainability in Africa. It is therefore an opportunity to question the theoretical models of the African city and endogenous urban planning practices, by specifically questioning its urban planning system. Knowing that Africa is at the heart of international agendas, it is a question of entering into the very making of the African city by questioning the inequalities and contradictions that are only reinforced.

The aim of this scientific meeting is to challenge the epistemological and theoretical issues surrounding the African cities in order to construct a specific scientific discourse. Through a multidisciplinary approach (sociology, geography, urban planning, architecture, history, anthropology, etc.), this conference will provide researchers with the opportunity to lift the veil on the urban dynamics of African cities, which, from afar, are constrained by a plurality of externalities and sometimes complementarity in these different asperities. Also, the discourse on the sustainable city is primarily of Western inspiration. The same is true of the sustainable city models that are promoted. This conference is also an opportunity to present the contributions of African universities to the global discourse on urban sustainability.

2-Objectives

The main objective of this international scientific event is to mobilize the scientific and non-scientific community to explore approaches that should contribute to the sustainable and inclusive development of African cities. Specifically:

- Identify the main challenges, issues and perspectives of sustainable urban development in Africa, translating tradition into modernity;
- Highlighting technological and social innovations for resilient and inclusive African cities;
- Sharing experiences and good practices in sustainable urban development in Africa with a view to produce strategic and operational planning tools;
- Encourage multidisciplinary approaches and inter-university partnerships in the definition and implementation of public policies for urban sustainability.
- Discuss the direct roles of universities: research, sustainable campuses, territorial registration and local partnerships, student involvement.

3-Thematic areas

The themes of the communications must be in line with the main research axis of the Regional Center of Excellence on Sustainable Cities in Africa (CERViDA-DOUNEDON) of the University of Lomé, dedicated to sustainable urban development and resilience in Africa. Around this main axis, communicators have the opportunity to propose innovative and topical communication projects covering the priority sub-themes which are:

- Urban planning
- Urban water and sanitation
- Urban mobility
- Urban economy
- Sustainable urban planning
- Sustainable housing and construction
- Urban ecology
- Urban governance
- Cities and climate change
- Sustainable cities and public policies
- Socio-spatial inclusion

4-Structure of the conference

The conference includes an inaugural lecture, workshops, side events, exhibitions. Participation in the

conference is a hybrid format. Participants choose their participation type when submitting their abstract.

5-Submission of abstracts

The conference is open to lecturers, researchers, doctors, doctoral students, NGOs, and international institutions. In accordance with the stated themes, those interested in this scientific event should submit an abstract of no more than 350 words to CERVIDA-DOUNEDON at the following address: cervidadounedon@cervida-togo.org by June 17, 2025. Each abstract must include the title of the topic (in capital letters), the name(s) of the authors (maximum three), their institution of affiliation and a valid email address. Each participant must specify the thematic axis in which the topic they are addressing falls.

6-Submission of the full manuscript

Abstracts, in French or English, should be a maximum of 350 words, including five keywords. The main manuscript should for the standards of the African Council for Higher Education (CAMES). Font Time News Roman, size 11, single spacing are recommended.

5-Participation fees

The participation fees are set as follows:

- Lecturers and Researchers: 100,000 FCFA
- PhD students: 50,000 FCFA
- Urban planning or architecture agency, NGO, etc.: 200,000 CFA francs

These fees are payable after acceptance of the abstract.

6-Payment of participation fees

Payments of participation fees will be made to the CERVIDA account generated resources, or via Western Union, Ria, Money Gram and Mobile Money at the address of CERVIDA-DOUNEDON.

7- Key dates

- Launch of the call for papers: **April 18, 2025**
- Deadline for receipt of abstracts: **June 17, 2025**
- Notification of acceptance of abstracts to authors: **July 18, 2025**

8-Organizers

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