

**Axe Villes du Sud & Aire Afrique Océan Indien**  
**Séminaire**

**Infrastructures of urban statecraft:  
Reflections on governing and financing cities in Africa**

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Discussion: **Damien Carrière** (Cessma)

Dr. Liza Rose Cirolia is a Senior Researcher at the African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town. Her research areas include urban governance, sub-national finance, and infrastructure.

Within African urban debates, the shift from government to governance has left gaps in our empirical and theoretical understanding of the state at the urban scale. Recentring the state, this talk deploys two conceptual entry points: fiscal geographies and city statecraft. The talk draws insights from Kisumu, an ordinary city in Kenya.



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**Mardi 28 mars, de 14h30 à 16h30**  
**Salle 209 - Bâtiment Olympe de Gouges**  
**Université Paris Cité - Campus Paris Rive Gauche**

Pour suivre en visio :

<https://u-paris.zoom.us/j/88694911472?pwd=VjZ0V0lxdFpmc0JWMzBmQnEwN29Udz09>

## **Infrastructure of urban Statecraft: Reflections on governing and financing cities in Africa**

**Dr. Liza Rose Cirolia**

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*Abstract:* The shift from government to governance has led to a proliferation of research on the hybridities evident in managing Africa's urban spaces. From water cartels to venture capitalists, mining companies to traditional authorities, scholars foreground the incredible diversity and distribution of power, blurring the boundaries of formal/informal, public/private, and local/foreign. While this shift has valuably articulated more relational concepts of power at the urban scale, it has left a deficit in our understanding of how the state itself is rescaled and urbanized. This deficit has conceptual implications, as we work to make sense of questions that sit at the interstices of finance, politics, and administration. It also has practical implications, as donors and lenders envisage African policy futures which center – but often fail to understand – African city authorities' functions, capabilities and roles in national and geo-political processes. As cities come to be repositioned within global imaginary, international value chains, and national development process, there is considerably more scope to engage with the question of statecraft at the urban scale.

To attend to the importance of recentering the state in urban governance debates, this talk deploys two conceptual entry points: fiscal geographies and city statecraft. Of central concern in the fiscal geographies literature are the ways that fiscal spaces are co-constituted with state-form and the built environment. Related, the city statecraft debates are concerned with the ways in which the state is rescaled and given substance, often through (conflicted) processes of decentralization, recentralization, and metropolitanization. I place this conversation on finance and cities in the context of an ordinary city in **Africa, Kisumu (Kenya)**. Inspired by 'de-description', I provide account of two fiscal 'sites' through which statecraft is given effect in Kisumu. First, I focus on the Kisumu County Government, formed in 2013. The County represents a reterritorialization of urban authority and a practice of perpetual 'making' of sub-national power. This authority is given substance, and contested, through fiscal instruments. Second, I focus on low-level bureaucrats. I foreground the relationship between fiscal policy and everyday state practices. These two sites draw our attention to the multiple and relational logics at play in Kisumu's fiscal geographies and the ways in which sub-national finance provides a unique entry point into understanding urban statecraft in Africa.

**Dr. Liza Rose Cirolia** is a Senior Researcher at the African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town. Her research areas include urban governance, sub-national finance, and infrastructure. She teaches on ACC's Master in Sustainable Urban Practice and consults for local and international organizations.

Recent publications related to the theme of this talk include:

Cirolia, L. R. (2023). [Centreing the Urban State in Urban Governance Debates](#). *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*.

Cirolia, L. R. & Robbins, G. (2021) [Transfers, taxes and tariffs: fiscal instruments and urban statecraft in Cape Town, South Africa](#). *Area Development and Policy*.

Cirolia, L. R. & Harber, J. (2021) [Urban statecraft: The governance of transport infrastructures in African cities](#). *Urban Studies*.

Cirolia, L. R. (2020). [Contested fiscal geographies: Urban authority, everyday practice, and emerging state-finance relations](#). *Geoforum*.