

STREETSCAPE TERRITORIES AND THE CASE OF ADDIS ABEBA

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ABSTRACT

Urban transformation is directly related to the planning, design and use of a series of urban infrastructures: from streets to highways, from pedestrian, bicycle, bus or train lines and their connecting transport hubs to rivers, canals or harbor facilities: they play an essential role in the transformation of the urban fabric. Recent societal changes, especially in developing countries, demanding higher mobility and urban interaction, influence the used planning and design strategies to transform or extend urbanized areas by planning or renewing these infrastructures. However, its relationship to the surrounding urban fabric, more specifically the collective spaces it constitutes at the level of the streetscape, is not always an initial or integral part of providing these infrastructures. In many cases, the urban fabric is wrapped around or fragmented by these infrastructural projects, causing scale contrasts and struggle to integrate within, generating processes of misappropriation or misuse. Especially in developing contexts, new infrastructures are often planned and built in a fast way, rarely considering the qualities of the existing urban fabric.

During the last decades, research on planning and design models related to the building or integrating of urban infrastructures has been developed and tested via specialised disciplinary approaches to produce insights on the relationship urban infrastructures has with the surrounding urban fabric (Hillier, 1996; Shannon & De Meulder, 2008; Secchi & Vigano, 2013; Graham and McFarlane, 2015; Hasan, 2010). However, additional in-depth research is needed to achieve critical insights on the relationship of infrastructures and their direct environments, starting from their constituent streetscapes -considering the level of the street- that define the perception and use by the inhabitants at an intermediate scale.

This paper focuses on an ongoing research project in Addis Abeba (Ethiopia), where different visions and models of urban growth are at stake. The recent increase of (foreign) investment in major infrastructures, changes the city's streetscapes drastically. This large scale and formal approach of installing high speed trains, LRT's or expand highways and ring roads, to stimulate urban growth, contrasts with the daily routines of the proper citizens that move around by walking or by means of mini buses, both adding to the informal qualities of the city's streetscapes. Within this multi-centred capital, the location of built and planned housing projects, commercial centres, administrative or commercial high rises is studied in relation to the present infrastructural axes and questions models of proximity, accessibility and permeability.