

## **Moving Beyond Colonialism: Town Halls and Other Public Spaces of Africa's Postcolonial Capitals**

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This paper examines the widespread efforts in postcolonial Africa to remake urban spaces in new ways. The institutional desires for making a truly different and distinctly African post-colonial city dissipated, in ongoing circumstances of donor dependency, neoliberalism, and resource limitations. Grand visions inevitably eluded the states that attempted to create entirely new capitals, and state-led re-workings of colonial capitals seldom resulted in post-authoritarian cityscapes. Instead, the poor majorities of these cities remade the postcolonial understandings of the urban landscape, within the limitations of the power structure. Using the examples of Dodoma and Abuja (as new post-colonial capitals) in comparison with Zanzibar and Lusaka (as transformed colonial capitals), I focus on key public buildings and public spaces of each city to argue that, in each case, the states' visions for these spaces as symbols of a new post-colonial order came to be overridden by the everyday life of the citizenry. Colonial rule unquestionably reoriented urban forms to meet its needs. Contemporary cities on the continent still cope with colonial legacies in socio-cultural, political-economic, and spatial-architectural terms. State-led postcolonial efforts to overcome the temporal and conceptual aftermath of colonialism have struggled. Even in newly created capitals built to speak back to colonialism, we can see colonial tactics and strategies, sometimes in even more authoritarian guises, replicated or adapted by states and elites. Genuinely post-colonial citiness seems to have more potential to emerge in the informal, relational fluidity of the citizens.