



**Dr Liza Rose Cirolia**

**Senior Researcher at the University of Cape Town's (UCT) African Centre for Cities (ACC)**

Dr Liza Rose Cirolia is a Senior Researcher at the University of Cape Town's (UCT) African Centre for Cities (ACC). In the first four years of working at the centre she led ACC's portfolio on land and housing, working closely with the Western Cape Department of Human Settlements and the City of Cape Town. Her research sought to interoperate between the technical and the political, translating political claims into technical discourse and showing the implicit politics embedded in highly technical instruments and programs. Cirolia's PhD, completed in 2019, shifted her intellectual project, focusing her attention on the complex interfaces between urban authority, infrastructural arrangements, and public finance. Her PhD topic honed in on Kenya's (then recent) devolution process, reflecting on the political and material dimensions of Kisumu's fiscal transitions. This research created the foundation for Cirolia's contribution to a range of multi-year, multi-city projects. One of her current projects is the GCRF funded Beyond the Networked City, where she leads the urban governance research in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and Kampala, Uganda. She is also the principal investigator (PI) on ACC's partnership with the Covenant of Mayors, sub-Saharan Africa, leading the development of 'city-labs' in several secondary cities. Through her work, Liza aims to balance critique with proposition. While recognizing the limitation of scholarly mediums, Cirolia publishes critical work in academic journals. Her recent publications explore a range of concepts, including urban statecraft, infrastructural heterogeneity, and financial technologies<sup>1</sup>. She extends these debates by deploying a queer orientation to her studies. This approach acknowledges that how we encounter our research matter, and with whom, shapes how we see and understand our

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of recent publications Pollio, A., & Cirolia, L. R. (2022). Fintech urbanism in the startup capital of Africa. *Journal of Cultural Economy*. Cirolia, L. R., Hall, S., & Nyamnjoh, H. (2021). Remittance micro-worlds and migrant infrastructure: Circulations, disruptions, and the movement of money. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. Nyamnjoh, H., Hall, S., & Cirolia, L. R. (2021). Precarity, permits, and prayers: "working practices" of Congolese asylum-seeking women in Cape Town. *Africa Spectrum* 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., Hailu, T., King, J., da Cruz, N. F., & Beall, J. (2021). Infrastructure governance in the post-networked city: State-led, high-tech sanitation in Addis Ababa's condominium housing. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*.

fields of work. In her co-authored 2022 piece: "From problematisation to propositionality: Advancing southern urban infrastructure debates", she unpacks the important role of southern scholars in advancing propositional agendas related to urban infrastructure in African cities. To this effect, Cirolia is the co-founder and co-convenor of the Urban Theory Africa-Doing (UTA-Do) African Cities Workshop, an annual event which brings together scholars, artists, activists and officials in Nairobi, Kenya. The programme is designed to support a radical approach to thinking and doing in cities. She firmly believes that scholars can, and should, support social imagination. She argues that the collective project of imagining new social and economic worlds, and charting paths through which we might get there, is at the heart of the southern project.