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**Making up the neoliberal city: the role of urban market actors.**

**Evidence from housing and airport planning policies.**

Paper presented at the RC21 Conference 2013, Berlin, 29-31 August 2013.

Session 21-1:

*Making up cities: urban policy mobilities, assemblages and urban politics in a global age*

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Abstract

This paper aims at discussing the neo-liberal city theoretical framework by exploring how market actors initiate and shape processes of urban policy change and the increasing shift towards market-oriented regulations. This framework is based on the following assumption: market dynamics are considered as a major driver behind neo-liberal processes and urban policy change in cities. Yet, the literature on policy transfer and diffusion shows that such a process is not “agentless”, and does not result in “spontaneous policy-making”. Our objective is to go beyond the rhetoric of neo-liberalism in order to explore the features and the role of urban market actors in urban policies. First, we draw on both public policy analysis and the sociology of markets in order to define and characterize urban market actors. We identify actors within “market situations” and not defined as market actors *a priori*. Such an approach allows going beyond some limits of neo-liberalization theoretical frameworks by articulating long- and short-term perspectives, by taking into account the heterogeneity of market actors and by invalidating empirically the implicit similarity/ symmetry between firms and market actors. Second, this analytical framework is explored empirically through two contrasted cases - property developers and airport companies. By comparing their long-term evolutions (resources, strategies, etc.) in four major European metropolitan areas (Paris, London, Madrid and Frankfurt), we highlight the socio-spatial consequences of increasing international circulation of policy models and ideas in the housing and airport planning policy domains.