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Murder at Sharpeville, 21 March 1960 by Godfrey Rubens/ CC Wikimedia.

Vol. 13 (November 2010 - June 2011)

PROBLEMS IN AFRICA'S LARGE CITIES

No. 6 - June 2011
Cairo and the Quest for Freedom and Social Justice

By Timothy Gachanga Recent events in Cairo, Africa's largest city, have inspired people throughout the continent. In this first venture of the *Ezine* into North Africa, Timothy Gachanga of Kenya shows why the liberation struggle of people in Cairo matters. In fact, many of their aspirations and problems — poverty, hunger, gender injustice, poor transportation and housing, unemployment, corruption, unresponsive government and lack of freedom — are shared by Africans in other large urban centres, as seen in the earlier articles of this series.

No. 5 - May 2011
Kinshasa et la dynamique urbaine
/ Kinshasa and the Urban Dynamic

Par/By Mik Missakabo Kinshasa, la capitale de la République démocratique du Congo, est présentement la troisième plus grande ville d'Afrique et est en voie de devenir la plus grande ville. Pour plusieurs observateurs, cette situation se traduira nécessairement par plus de problèmes, incluant des logements inadéquats, des infrastructures désuètes et une pauvreté grandissante. L'auteur de cet article nous propose en fait une thèse différente. Tout en ne minimisant pas les défis réels et énormes que devra surmonter la mégalopole, Mik Missakabo présente Kinshasa comme un "espace d'action collective" riche et créatif et insiste sur son potentiel de devenir une "ville dans laquelle il fait bon vivre".

Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo, is currently the third largest city in Africa and is on course to become the largest. For many analysts, this necessarily means more problems, including inadequate housing, hopeless infrastructure and grinding poverty. The author of this article argues otherwise. While not ignoring the very real and enormous problems facing the megacity, Mik Missakabo reveals Kinshasa as a rich and dynamic "space for shared action" and highlights its potential to become "a city where one can live well."

No. 4 - March 2011
The Struggle for Basic Services in Cape Town

By Munyaradzi Makoni Cape Town is often considered one of the most attractive cities in the world. But appearances can be deceptive, for within Cape Town there are a number of large slums, where many people live in unimaginable poverty and squalor. Munyaradzi Makoni reveals this jarring reality, especially highlighting the lack of infrastructure and social services in poor areas. In view of Cape Town's highly divided society, he questions its commitment to basic human dignity and equality and challenges authorities and people to build a better, common future.

No. 3 - January 2011
Challenges of Urban Housing Provision in Lagos and Johannesburg

By Teke Ngomba Many African nations are committed to the goal of providing decent housing for all, and many Africans view decent housing as a right. Within the context of rapid urbanisation and extreme poverty, however, the provision of adequate housing has proven particularly challenging. In this article, Teke Ngomba looks at two major African cities, Lagos and Johannesburg, and examines the gaps between policy and implementation, together with small successes and wrong-headed strategies, within the larger effort to realise "cities without slums."

No. 2 - December 2010
Hurdles to Social Integration in Nairobi's Slums

By Timothy Gachanga Nairobi today is a city of over 3 million people, but roughly half of the rapidly growing population is thought to live in slums such as Kibera, Korogocho and Mathare, which cover only about 5 percent of the city's area. In this article, Timothy Gachanga looks at the problem of social disintegration in the slums, its causes and the obstacles it poses to the realization of values. He also suggests ways to effect better social integration, ways that include the participation of the slum residents themselves.

By J-P Thompson From Dakar to Cairo to Cape Town, Africa's large cities are in trouble. Wracked by a host of problems from a lack of clean water and sanitation to bad government and high unemployment, these cities are growing rapidly and major parts of them are turning into extremely poor, overcrowded and disease-ridden slums. In this editorial, which begins a new series in the *Ezine*, J-P Thompson gives an overview of the challenges facing Africa's major urban centres with a particular focus on housing, environmental and policy issues.

Cairo and the Quest for Freedom and Social Justice

by Timothy Gachanga

Demanding freedom and social justice: Egyptians gathered in Tahrir Square, Cairo, on February 9, 2011

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Introduction

"Any people anywhere, being inclined and having the power, have the right to rise up and shake off the existing government, and form a new one that suits them better. This is a most valuable, a most sacred right, a right which we hope and believe is to liberate the world" (Abraham Lincoln, 1848). Lincoln's famous quote resonates across North Africa and the Middle East today. Indeed, one and a half centuries later, Egypt did "rise up and shake off the existing government". Workers and peasants jammed the streets of Cairo to demand freedom and social justice. They wanted a say about where they live and work. They wanted to be free from the corruption that stole the value of their resources. Women wanted to be free from sexual harassment when on the streets of Cairo. Young people wanted jobs so that they could start their own families. They also wanted to use the internet to communicate near and far with their peers and friends. They wanted a government that would listen to them and serve them well. What was lacking, however, was a catalyst for revolution. The uprising in Tunisia provided the model they needed to advance their quest for justice.

They wanted a government that would listen to them and serve them well ... The uprising in Tunisia provided the model.

Cairo is an ancient city full of paradoxes. It is a place filled with joy and sadness, love and hate, good and bad, rich and poor. Globally, it is considered one of the safest cities in the world. According to the UN Habitat State of African Cities Report 2010, it is the largest city in Africa and the largest in Middle East. It has a population of 20 million people and a population increase of 30 people per hour. Street life has a patent charm to it. Late model cars compete with cabs, donkey-carts and livestock transportation for space. It also consists of a little joking and haggling with neighbors and street vendors. However, beneath this veneer lies a "collective narrative" of poverty, social injustice, desperation and hopelessness.

Poverty

Life in Cairo is full of hardships. Rising inflation, rising food prices and unemployment have made life unbearable, especially to the poor already prone to malnutrition, water-borne diseases and respiratory infections. In order to cope, the poor are forced to stretch their resources by selling their personal property, working long hours, sometimes in harsh conditions, begging, engaging in prostitution and even selling body organs. According to Mullins (2009), poverty has become so harsh that organ selling is viewed as a means to survive. He describes an incident where one woman sold a kidney for $2,185 in order to pay off debts and feed her family. Elsewhere, a young couple in Cairo was forced to sell a kidney each after selling nearly everything else they had. The two were later dumped semi-conscious into a taxi with the payment for the kidneys tucked into their clothes. A year later, their health had deteriorated so much that they spent much of the day in bed in a dark room (Keysen, 2009).

To cope with the increasing food prices, the poor are forced to buy poor quality food. As

a result, obesity has now become an epidemic in Cairo. Obesity among adults, particularly women, has reached very high proportions while malnutrition rates in pre-school children remain stubbornly high. Sably (2009) observes that in 1998, around 70 percent of women and 48 percent of men were overweight or obese. This figure has shot up due to high inflation that has made the cost of food unaffordable to average Egyptians. In May 2010, for instance, Cairo restaurants were forced to withdraw red meat in their menus due to high costs. On average, a kilo of beef sells

Harsh conditions: child labourers in Cairo scavenge trash heaps looking for useable or saleable items
© UN Photo/Jean Pierre Laffont

for $10 to $12. This is not affordable to the vast majority of ordinary Egyptians who earn less than $2 per day (Jensen, 2010). The only commodity that has not gone up is the subsidized *baladi* bread. This has led to an increase in demand for the commodity. Egypt started subsidizing staples like bread, sugar and tea around World War II, and has done so ever since. When it tried to stop subsidizing bread in 1977 there were serious riots.

Bread is the staple food in Egypt. Every day people line up 3 to 4 times a day to buy the subsidized bread. This however is a fierce affair. People spend an average of between two and three hours daily just to get their daily bread supplies. This has led to violence, mainly in Cairo's impoverished neighborhoods. In 2008, for instance, at least 11 people died in bread queues from exhaustion, and two were stabbed when fights broke out between customers vying for places in the queue. A woman was hit by a car while standing in a queue that stretched into the street. Elsewhere, an argument between two boys over their place in line escalated to a brawl in which four people were hurt. Schoolchildren are also forced to miss school while queuing (Jonstone, 2008).

Injustice against women

The situation for women in Cairo is no better than for poor people in general. To be a woman in Cairo is to accept sexual harassment on a daily basis. In Cairo, pursuit of justice for women is fraught with images of despair and hopelessness. This is clearly highlighted in a film, Cairo 678, which tells the story of three fictional women from different backgrounds in search for justice from daily sexual harassment. One of them is separated from her husband and sexually harassed by a group of men after a football match, another insists on taking her harasser to court despite pressure to drop her case and the third responds by stabbing harassers in the groin with the pin from her head scarf. Widespread sexual injustice also caught international attention on February 11, 2011, when CBS correspondent Lara Logan was sexually assaulted and beaten on the final night of the 18-day revolt (Rothe, 2011).

**To be a woman in Cairo is to accept sexual harassment ...
80 percent of Egyptian women experience sexual
harassment on a daily basis and 62 percent of men admit
harassing women sexually.**

According to a report released in 2008 by the Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights (ECWR), 80 percent of Egyptian women experience sexual harassment on a daily basis and 62 percent of men admit harassing women sexually. Sexual harassment is regarded as a private matter in Cairo. Women often are afraid to report sexual assault or harassment for fear that they and their families will be stigmatized. In a bid to stop this, a new internet site called *Harassmap* was launched in October 2010 to provide Egypt's women with a new voice and a renewed sense of empowerment. The site allows women to instantly report incidents of sexual harassment via text message or Twitter. Each report is then pinpointed on a digital map of Cairo, in order to determine particularly dangerous areas of the city. Users who submit the reports remain anonymous and the collected data is shared among activists, media and police. Women who send text alerts also receive safety suggestions, support, and instructions on filing police reports.

Unfortunately, however, this doesn't seem to have done much. On March 8, 2011, a demonstration to commemorate International Women's Day turned violent when more than 200 men charged on the women – forcing some to the ground, dragging others out of the crowd, groping and sexually harassing them as police and military figures stood by and failed to act. The female demonstrators were protesting against Egypt's chronic sexual harassment problem, against the many barriers women face in public life, and against the pervasive conservatism that curtails the freedom of women in society at

Calling for freedom, justice and equality: a
Muslim woman raises her hands and voice to
God in Cairo's Tahrir Square

© Joel Carillet

large. The women chanted slogans that had
been used in the revolution itself, calling for
freedom, justice and equality. But their
demonstration quickly attracted a counter-
protest. When the women argued back,
many were dragged away individually by
small groups of men who attacked them.
The police continued to direct traffic around
the square as the incident was taking place
(Younis, 2011).

Transportation

In terms of mobility, poor people do not own
private means of transport. There are two
main transport options for the poor: the *tuk-tuk* or the mini-trucks. *Tuk-tuks* operate in a
grey zone of unlicensed, unregistered business. The transport authority does not
consider them to be regular vehicles and hence has neither registered nor licensed
them. These three-wheeled Indian imports, however, are too expensive for most poor
people (Nassr, 2007). The other possibility is the use of the mini-trucks. The trucks are
cheaper than the *tuk-tuks* in that they cost 50p per journey and have set routes.
According to Sabry (2009), children usually jump on the truck while it is moving and then
pay the driver. The mini-trucks are all unlicensed and usually very old. They cannot
leave the informal settlements as they would not be granted a license in their state to
drive around the city. A lot of the mini-trucks are driven by unlicensed under-age
teenage boys who have dropped out of school. While they serve the purpose of moving
people from the edge of the informal settlements into the depths of the different areas,
they are quite dangerous. An estimated 8,000 people die in car accidents annually in
Egypt (Hasrawi, 2010). The US Embassy in Cairo strongly recommends that its
personnel not use mini-buses in Cairo. In 2010, there were several accidents involving
these trucks and international tourist buses. In the spring of 2010, a lorry with
malfunctioning brakes slammed into stalled rush-hour traffic resulting in a forty vehicle
pileup and nineteen deaths (OSAC, 2011).

**Poor people do not own private means of transport ... The
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Housing

In terms of housing, the poor have quietly
claimed state or public lands and
cemeteries on the outskirts of the city.
Bayat (1996) observes that there are more
than 111 *ashwa'iyyat* (spontaneous
communities) in greater Cairo and together
they house over six million people. The City
of the Dead, a cemetery, is a good
example. It is currently inhabited by almost
800,000 people who occupy funeral chapels
and other places where the dead are
buried, making them their permanent
homes. However, life here is characterized
by deprivation, neglect, insecurity and the

Over 6 million people living in perilous conditions:
one of Cairo's many slums (foreground)

© Andrew Kaupang

constant threat of forcible eviction. In November 2009, Amnesty International accused
the Cairo government for condemning Cairo's poor to living conditions that place their
lives in peril. The rights group said the government was failing to prevent rock-slides in
areas around informal settlements that house millions of Cairo's poor. In September
2008, at least 107 people were killed and 58 were injured when a rock-slide hit the
overcrowded, eastern Cairo slum of Manshiyet Nasser (Manchanda, 2009).

Vending and unemployment

Selling personal property and cheap products in the street has become a common way
of augmenting family income in Cairo. With an unemployment rate of around 12 percent
and significant bureaucratic obstacles to setting up small businesses, many families and
individuals simply step onto the street and start trading. The problem is exacerbated by
a youth bulge that has become a common characteristic of many African cities. A review
of the literature reveals that youths constitute a third of Cairo's population. Assaad and
Barsoum (2007:5) observe that 83 percent of the unemployed are in the 15-29 year-old

age group, and 47 percent are between the ages of 20-24. Youths with a secondary education or above constituted 95 percent of the unemployed. Clearly the educational system is poorly attuned to the needs of the labour market.

The (unemployment) problem is exacerbated by a youth bulge that has become a common characteristic of many African cities ... 83 percent of the unemployed are in the 15-29 year-old age group.

A country poorly attuned to their needs: members of Egypt's youth movement during a roundtable discussion with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in Cairo, in March 2011

© UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

The poor have quietly taken over public main roads to conduct their businesses. It is estimated that there are over 200,000 vendors in Cairo. As a result, street vendors have become a major part of Egypt's large "informal sector" which makes up around 30 percent of the national economy. This, however, has severe limitations. Informal vending is fraught with frustrations and uncertainties. The law requires vendors to pay a fee of 50-100 Egyptian pounds (US$9-18) for a street trading license. The vast majority of vendors cannot afford this. For those who can afford it, the licenses are hardly ever granted or take too long to be granted. As a result, a constant cat-and-mouse game ensues between illegal vendors and the municipal police – known as the *baladiyya* . To escape the municipal dragnet, the vendors are forced to pay regular bribes to the police to ensure their continued tolerance. Those who cannot afford the bribes are often arrested and harassed by police and their wares confiscated. This leads to stress, a missing inventory of goods and continued suffering in many families.

In a parallel situation, this is what triggered the uprising in Tunisia. Mohamed Bouazizi, 26, was a vegetable vendor in a small town outside Tunis. Protestors described him as a generous man who would give free fruit and vegetables to very poor families. He became the sole bread winner of his family when he was 10 years old. As in Cairo, police would confiscate his scales and his produce, or fine him for running a stall without a permit. Six months before his attempted suicide, police sent Bouazizi a fine for 400 dinars (US$280) – the equivalent of two months of earnings. The harassment finally became too much for the young man. On the morning of December 17, it became physical. A policewoman confronted him on the way to market. She returned to take his scales from him, but Bouazizi refused to hand them over. They swore at each other, the policewoman slapped him and, with the help of her colleagues, forced him to the ground. The officers took away his produce and his scale. Publically humiliated, Bouazizi tried to seek recourse. He went to the local municipality building and demanded to meet with an official. With no official willing to hear his grievances, the young man obtained paint fuel, returned to the street outside the building, and set himself on fire (Yasmine, 2011).

The future of Cairo

It took 18 days to get rid of President Mubarak; it is going to take more than 18 days to build institutions that can guarantee freedom and social justice. To do this, Egyptians must have an impartial, accountable judiciary to promote equity, social justice and human dignity. They must have a strong civil society that is built on respect for freedom of expression, freedom to organize and freedom to assemble. There must be freedom for people to express diverse views and develop unconventional and unique ideas, and members of society must have the confidence to engage and interact with each other, and to build mutual trust while acknowledging their differences. Likewise,

The need for a strong partnership between the state and its citizens: UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (at podium) addresses audiences in Cairo during the panel discussion, "Listening to the People: A Changing Arab World and the UN", in March 2011

© UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

they've got to rebuild the economy. A new constitution has to be written that guarantees these important components of the rule of law and enshrines democracy. In addition, the government and civil society must build a strong partnership for creating horizontal

connections among divided groups as well as vertical connections between the state and its citizens. The long-suffering, brave people of Cairo will benefit from such change and only then be able to move forward to address the serious daily life problems encountered in their city – endemic problems that have been accumulating for decades.

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Kinshasa et la dynamique urbaine
by Mik Missakabo

**(For the English version, click on
"Kinshasa and the Urban Dynamic".)**

Dans l'imagination populaire, les images qu'évoque le mot « Afrique » sont celles des safaris, animaux exotiques et villages pittoresques. Et pourtant, selon Anna Tibaijuka, secrétaire générale adjointe des Nations Unies et directrice d'ONU-Habitat « L'Afrique s'urbanise plus rapidement que tout autre continent, à tel point que d'ici 2030, l'Afrique cessera d'être un continent rural. Malgré cela, peu de leaders africains prennent la question au sérieux ». Pour les experts s'exprimant à travers la presse internationale ainsi que la multitude de rapports tant de l'ONU que d'autres organisations internationales, l'urbanisation à Kinshasa comme ailleurs en Afrique galope à une vitesse alarmante.

Urbanisation galopante: des passagers et des bagages empilés sur un camion à Kinshasa.
© 2005 Netsanet Assaye, Courtesy of Photoshare

L'urbanisation de l'Afrique nous est présentée comme étant intrinsèquement un problème social qu'il est ardu de résoudre. En est-il un? Même si elle est l'accoucheuse de divers maux affligeant les villes africaines telles que la sous-alimentation, le chômage endémique, la divagation, la délinquance juvénile et la prostitution, l'urbanisation n'en est pas forcément la génitrice. L'urbanisation n'est pas à présenter seulement comme un problème, on peut aussi l'imaginer comme porteuse des solutions à certains défis endémiques.

L'urbanisation n'est pas à présenter seulement comme un problème, on peut aussi l'imaginer comme porteuse des solutions à certains défis endémiques.

A en croire René de Maximy, « être africain et citadin d'une grande cité, ce n'est pas facile. Surtout quand cette cité s'appelle Kinshasa ». De Maximy décrit les Kinois (habitants de Kinshasa) comme « …vivant agglutinés et misérables au bord du fleuve le plus puissant du continent!... ». Pour ceux qui connaissent Kinshasa, ces propos creux et simplistes escamotent une réalité bien complexe. Pour Pascal Kapagama et Rachel Waterhouse (2009), « la ville de Kinshasa est, sans conteste, le reflet des paradoxes de la République Démocratique du Congo dont elle est la capitale ». Des paradoxes qui se réduisent au tandem: pays riche et population pauvre!

Nous nous proposons de discuter de la dynamique urbaine de Kinshasa, la capitale de la RDC. Cette importante agglomération urbaine, officiellement vieille d'un peu plus d'un siècle, est une des plus grandes villes d'Afrique subsaharienne. Avec plus de 10 millions d'habitants éparpillés sur une superficie de 9 965 km2, Kinshasa est la ville-province la plus peuplée de la RDC. Les jeunes de moins de 20 ans représentent plus de 60% de la population. Avec un taux de natalité bien au-delà de 50%, de tout le pays, elle est aussi l'agglomération la plus sujette à une expansion incontrôlée des quartiers populaires. Il y a 25 ans, la croissance était d'environ 7 km2 par an.

Aperçu historique

Historiquement parlant, Kinshasa est une ville toute agglomération d'environ 5000 habitants vivant essentiellement du commerce. Les origines des villes africaines sont souvent expliquées à travers deux cadres théoriques qui s'opposent : la thèse africaniste et la thèse classique. Faisant fi des critères de taille et de densité, la thèse classique soutient que l'Afrique n'avait pas de ville avant la colonisation européenne. Comme on peut s'y attendre, la thèse africaniste soutient l'existence des villes africaines avant l'arrivée de colons européens. Et, la colonisation en a changé la dynamique.

Lumenganeso (1995) avance qu'il y au moins 40 000 ans que le site actuel de la ville de Kinshasa abritait des ateliers de taille de pierres et des sièges d'importantes industries lithiques. Aussi, il fait référence aux témoignages des missionnaires tels que F. Botninck, William H. Bentley et Geronimo de Montesarchio qui attestent de l'existence d'une importante agglomération de gros villages au XVIIe siècle. Ces faits indiquent que

Kinshasa était un milieu de vie bien avant l'arrivée de Henry M. Stanley. Avec une population estimée à 30 000 habitants regroupés dans 66 différents villages, Kinshasa était aussi un marché accueillant divers groupes ethniques. Sans une présence humaine significative et un appui bienveillant des habitants, Stanley ne s'y serait pas installé. Selon Léon de Saint Moulin (1971), ces mêmes communautés qui ont accueilli Stanley ont été par la suite systématiquement détruites par les autorités coloniales belges.

> **Kinshasa était un milieu de vie bien avant l'arrivée de Henry M. Stanley. Avec une population estimée à 30 000 habitants regroupés dans 66 différents villages, Kinshasa était aussi un marché accueillant divers groupes ethniques.**

Connu sous l'appellation de *Ntsasa* -qui veut dire « marché »- pendant la période précoloniale et élevé au statut d'agglomération urbaine en 1895, Kinshasa (ou Léopoldville) est devenu la capitale du Congo en 1929. Sans toutefois faire fi de l'histoire pré-coloniale de Kinshasa, nous convenons avec Michel Lusamba (2008) que Kinshasa, tel que nous le connaissons aujourd'hui, est une « grande ville née du contact de la civilisation mercantile et chrétienne d'une Europe brutale ».

Dans les quartiers populaires, l'autorité coloniale utilise l'origine ethnique comme critère déterminant dans l'allocation des lots. Selon Lusamba (2008), l'organisation spatiale de Kinshasa avait des objectifs spécifiques : « …économiques afin de faciliter l'exportation des matières premières, sociales à travers le bien-être des européens résidents au Congo et esthétiques à travers la production de villas et des beaux paysages ». Ainsi, le pouvoir colonial transforme Kinshasa en une ville de type ségrégatif avec un centre commercial, administratif et résidentiel pour les Européens. Les Africains « …étaient surtout admis et reconnus comme population laborieuse, à la disposition d'une économie urbaine extravertie, fonctionnant par et pour la Belgique… » (De Maximy, 1984).

L'état du marché

Un jour de marché à Kinshasa: une ville développée autour des marchés, incluant des entreprises de micro-commerce essentielles dirigées par des femmes.
© 2004 Daren Trudeau/Institute for Reproductive Health, Courtesy of Photoshare

Même dans ses incarnations antérieures, Kinshasa a toujours été un espace de vie multiethnique facilitant le contact entre divers groupes tels que les Batéké, les Bahumbu, les Bakongo, les Bayanzi ainsi que les Bangala. Aujourd'hui, presque toutes les ethnies de la RDC y sont représentées.

Selon Marc Pain (1984), le marché est à la base de l'organisation urbaine de Kinshasa. Il avance que c'est autour des marchés que se forment et fonctionnent les divers quartiers de cette ville. Presque tous les ménages de Kinshasa s'adonnent au micro-commerce pour arrondir les fins du mois. En grande majorité pratiqué par les femmes, le micro-commerce permet d'endiguer les effets néfastes d'une inflation. L'intensité de ces activités humaines fait que la nature est souvent mise à mal. Par exemple, la production du charbon de bois a un impact dévastateur sur la végétation en contribuant au ravinement qui menace plusieurs quartiers populaires.

Ville et cité

Fidèle à la tradition coloniale, Kinshasa offre encore deux types d'espace de vie que l'on appelle communément : la « ville » et la « cité ». L'autorité coloniale voulait une ville mais pas forcément une cité au sens d'une unité politique et économique conférant des prérogatives à ses habitants. D'un côté, il y a les quartiers bourgeois instaurés et légués par l'autorité coloniale belge. De l'autre, la cité était essentiellement constituée des camps de travailleurs. Autrement dit, « ce sont des cités populaires moins planifiées et opposées aux quartiers européens. Elles sont séparées de ces derniers par des zones neutres telles que le camp militaire » (Lusamba, 2008, p.22). Dans ces cités populaires ou « centre extra-coutumier », l'autorité coloniale utilise l'origine ethnique comme critère déterminant dans l'allocation des lots. Cette pratique a effectivement créé et accentué les clivages sociaux.

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Ainsi la ville a bénéficié d'une urbanisation reflétant une vision ségrégationniste du développement de l'Afrique. « Dans les quartiers européens, construits dans les secteurs les mieux exposés à la brise et bien ventilés comme le bord du fleuve, le mont Ngaliema, la pointe de la Gombe et les collines de Mbinza, la législation foncière interdisait de céder, vendre ou louer les lopins de terre à des non-européens. Y circuler la nuit et y habiter étaient formellement prohibés aux africains, sauf pour les domestiques vivant avec sa famille dans une dépendance de la maison du patron blanc » (Lusamba, 2008, p.29). Ces clivages sociaux persistent encore et informe la gestion urbaine.

Après l'indépendance, une nouvelle élite se forme. A celle-ci s'adjoint une classe moyenne plus ou moins dépendante de l'oligarchie politique. Dans la cité, les infrastructures de base sont insuffisantes. C'est ainsi que les beaux quartiers ont continué à bénéficier des investissements importants de l'État. Malheureusement, cela n'a pas été le cas pour les quartiers populaires qui accueillent la grande majorité des néo-kinois.
Comme à l'époque coloniale, l'investissement de l'État s'y limite souvent à quelques routes en terre battue ainsi que quelques points d'approvisionnement en eau potable.

Extensions excentriques

La disparité entre la ville et la cité est frappante. Kinshasa comprend des quartiers résidentiels huppés ainsi que des quartiers populaires (anciennes cités, cités planifiées et quartiers semi-ruraux). Avec l'abolition du régime de travail forcé qu'imposaient les autorités belges aux autochtones, les quartiers populaires ont connu une croissance démographique importante due à l'exode rural. Cette tendance s'est maintenue même après l'indépendance. Par exemple, Kinshasa est passé de 1 650 000 habitants en 1975 à 3 000 000 habitants en 1985, exacerbant ainsi la dépendance économique de la cité vis-à-vis de la ville. Ce qui explique la prolifération des circuits illicites voire frauduleux de l'économie du quotidien.

L'arrondissement et les communes de Kinshasa.
(© Denis Moyogo Jacquerye, 2006, Wikimedia Commons)

La combinaison de cette croissance démographique ainsi que le flux migratoire a eu l'effet générateur de ce que René de Maximy (1984) appelle les *extensions excentriques* . Sous le règne de Mobutu, ces quartiers se sont développés sans qu'on y prenne garde. Aujourd'hui, ces *extensions excentriques* représentent plus de deux tiers du site de Kinshasa. Pour la majorité des habitants de ces quartiers populaires, l'habitat est marqué par la pauvreté. Des fois, la pénurie les pousse à recourir à des solutions extrêmes. En janvier dernier, Radio France International rapportait la présence des familles entières vivant dans le cimetière de Kinsuka ou l'on procède encore aux enterrements.

Habiter un quartier populaire implique bien des défis. La ville cesse d'y être ville! Les avantages socio-économiques de la ville y sont dilués. Hélas, loin de la ville veut dire

aussi loin des emplois. L'inexistence d'un réseau de transport en comment adéquat fait que le problème de transport se pose avec beaucoup plus d'acuité pour les habitants de quartiers populaires. Cette carence s'étend aux autres services de base qui relèvent de la compétence de l'État.

En dépit de l'hypercroissance démographique ainsi que les problèmes environnementaux que cette dernière entraîne, la gestion urbaine semble souffrir d'un manque de planification. Le fonctionnement interne des *extensions excentriques* obéit la même logique imposée par les autorités coloniales et, par la suite, par divers gouvernements nationaux qui a toujours eu comme conséquence : un manque criant d'infrastructure et d'équipement.

Infrastructures et équipement

Kinshasa est une ville de contrastes frappants. Depuis l'époque coloniale, la gestion de la cité n'a pas toujours été le principal souci des autorités. Le contraste entre la *ville* et la *cité* est saisissant. On y trouve des quartiers commerciaux et résidentiels de haut de gamme juxtaposés aux habitations d'une modestie déconcertante. Avec sa forte concentration d'immeubles à plusieurs étages, le centre-ville situé dans la commune de la Gombe fait pâlir les quartiers populaires des communes voisines telles que Barumbu, Lingwala et Kinshasa.

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Lusamba (2008) remarque que l'implantation des quartiers populaires comporte des biais. On s'aperçoit assez vite de la disparité entre *ville* et *cité* . En fait, les quartiers populaires ne s'intègrent pas à la morphologie urbaine. Ce manque d'intégration est très évident aux niveaux des infrastructures et équipement. Par exemple, le réseau de canalisation nécessaire à l'évacuation des eaux de pluie est vétuste. En fait, il n'est plus en phase avec le réaménagement actuel des infrastructures routières. Toute pluie de plus d'une heure entraine des débordements de caniveaux. Radio Okapi rapportait qu'en dépit des travaux de réhabilitation des infrastructures routières nouvellement réalisées par les entreprises chinoises, les caniveaux dégorgeaient les eaux de pluie sur la chaussée.

Et pourtant, les infrastructures routières constituent le « système nerveux et circulatoire » de la ville. Les initiatives d'amélioration des infrastructures et équipements ont diminué sensiblement depuis l'accession de la RDC à l'indépendance. Cette carence d'infrastructure et d'équipement se répercutent tant sur la viabilité des biens d'utilité publique que sur la circulation des gens et des biens. Depuis 2009, d'importants travaux de réaménagement de principaux tronçons routiers sont en cours. En dépit de l'extension du réseau routier, se déplacer rapidement reste néanmoins l'apanage des privilégiés. Pour le Kinois moyen, le déplacement se fait souvent à pied.

Dans les quartiers populaires, se brancher aux réseaux urbains de distribution d'eau et d'électricité n'est pas chose facile. Bien qu'un peu partout à Kinshasa, on trouve l'eau à fleur de terre, au début du mois de mars, Radio Okapi rapportait que l'eau potable était « …devenue une denrée rare dans certains quartiers à Kinshasa ». Paradoxalement, le coût de l'eau est souvent plus élevé dans les quartiers populaires qu'au cœur de la *ville* . Pour ce qui est de l'électricité, l'insuffisance de transformateurs fait que la régie de distribution d'électricité recourt au délestage pour éviter une surcharge du réseau. Bien évidemment, les quartiers populaires ne sont pas prioritaires dans l'ordre de distribution.

Mode de gestion

La mode de gestion urbaine semble être une constante dans l'histoire de Kinshasa. « De la création de poste de Léopoldville (1881) et celui de Kinshasa (1883) jusqu'au 30 juin 1960, date marquant l'indépendance de la République Démocratique du Congo, la ville exprimait l'organisation sociale dans l'espace selon les seuls besoins et les seuls projets des colonisateurs. Même l'habitation destinée aux noirs dans les cités dites *indigènes* répondait à des normes établies uniquement par les belges » (de Maximy cité par Lusamba, 2008, p.27). Avec l'indépendance, l'élite politique nationale s'est substituée aux autorités coloniales.

Les défis auxquels fait face Kinshasa semblent être intimement liés à la gestion du pays en général. La centralisation du pouvoir qui caractérisait le régime colonial et, par la

suite, celui de Mobutu informe encore la gestion politique et administrative de la ville. Comme nous l'avons remarqué plus haut, la gestion de Kinshasa répond encore à la logique de l'urbanisme colonial. On peut dire l'après indépendance a exacerbé les manquements hérités des autorités coloniales. Ainsi la gestion de la ville est sclérosée par l'État-ogre.

Le défi d'intégrer des nouveaux arrivants: des Kinois sur le boulevard Lumumba.
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L'affaiblissement de l'état se traduit par l'incapacité d'offrir des services urbains de base. Et pourtant, la conjonction des forces politiques et macro-économiques impose l'exode rural comme solution viable à la problématique existentielle des jeunes habitants en diverses zones rurales. Ces nouveaux venus viennent gonfler les effectifs des quartiers populaires et, comme ceux qui les ont précédés, ils seront abandonnés à eux-mêmes. Cet état des choses laisse croire à l'absence d'un projet urbanistique découlant d'une vision moderne de la ville. Le défi d'absorber les nouveaux venus ainsi que celui de gérer l'impact des activités humaines sur l'environnement se posent avec beaucoup d'urgence. Mais, le manque d'une planification nous indique l'absence d'une implication réelle des autorités politiques et administratives dans l'instauration des conditions adéquates de vie sur toute étendue de la ville. Le peu que l'état investit dans les secteurs prioritaires tels que la santé et l'éducation, est généralement dans les grandes villes.

Comme dans bien des pays en développement, ce n'est pas l'industrialisation qui anime le processus d'urbanisation de Kinshasa. C'est plutôt la pauvreté. Les habitants des quartiers populaires se débrouillent pour mettre sur pied grâce à leur créativité ainsi que leur génie, divers mécanismes qui leur permettant de faire face aux défis quotidiens avec un brin de dignité.

Le son

Pour Pius Ngandu-Nkashama (1979), ce n'est pas par hasard que l'essor des agglomérations urbaines et industrielles coïncide avec la naissance de la musique populaire urbaine. Il soutient que la musique congolaise « …était exigée par le dépassement d'une situation sociale qui achevait de désintégrer l'homme traditionnel ». En fait, le *son* de la musique congolaise est un produit de la dynamique urbaine des quartiers populaires devenu indispensable à la vie quotidienne du congolais. L'espace public étant confisqué, le *son* offre un ersatz de liberté qui facilite et permet l'expression de l'imagination. Ainsi, la musique devient plus qu'une métaphore illustrant la créativité et l'imagination dont la fécondité résulte de la diversité culturelle de Kinshasa.

> **L'espace public étant confisqué, le *son* offre un ersatz de liberté qui facilite et permet l'expression de l'imagination.**

Déjà à l'époque coloniale, la cité ou le quartier populaire était un espace de vie accueillant divers groupes ethniques. Chaque groupe était riche de plus ou moins une culture musicale ayant une fonction divinatoire, incantatoire ou simplement ludique. Au contact avec la ville, xylophone, tam-tam, likembe, flûte et autres se voient remplacés ou suppléés par les instruments modernes tels que la batterie, la guitare, le saxophone ainsi que la trompette. Dès le début, le *son* était en porte à faux vis-à-vis des autorités coloniales. Antoine Kolosoy alias Papa Wendo, un des pionniers de la musique congolaise connu pour sa chanson *Marie-Louise* , eut à purger une peine de prison sous l'instigation de l'église catholique qui l'accusait de pratiquer le satanisme.

Depuis les années 40, le *son* catalyse le sens de l'identité ainsi que la fierté nationale. C'est à travers le *son* , entre *ville* et *cité* , que s'élabore « la société congolaise en devenir ». Souvent, les paroles reflètent les préoccupations des masses de la *cité* . *Indépendance Cha Cha* de Joseph Kabasele alias le Grand Kallé illustre bien ceci. Les paroles de cette chanson exprimaient éloquemment les aspirations de la population. D'ailleurs, le Grand Kallé contribua à la campagne électorale de Patrice Emery Lumumba en lui prêtant sa voiture. Pour l'une des vedettes populaires de la musique congolaise, Werrason, c'est la musique qui garde la nation congolaise en vie.

La territorialité

Kinshasa « …a une culture particulière qui fait parler d'elle, de ses habitants, de ses artistes, musiciens particulièrement. Elle est chargée de symboles et comme toute ville, d'une histoire » (Kapagama & Waterhouse, 2009, p.1). Les diverses histoires de Kinshasa se confondent avec les diverses histoires du Congo. La gestion matérielle de la ville de Kinshasa est reléguée à la périphérie. Et pourtant, cette mégapole incarne bien le cœur ainsi l'âme de la nation congolaise. Il est difficile de ne pas s'y sentir chez soi. Malgré les conditions de vie difficiles qu'impose Kinshasa, peu des gens voudraient retourner au village. *Ah, Kinshasa kiesse Yaya* , disent les Kinois. Comme le dit René de Maximy, « on y pressent que Kinshasa pourrait être une ville à l'économie florissante, où il fait bon vivre ».

Kinshasa est un espace d'action partagé. Cependant, la création de représentations communes est un produitdes quartiers populaires. Les écarts culturels s'y négocient et une identité s'y forge. Loin d'être statique, cette identité kinoise est riche et dynamique. Elle s'aventure bien au-delà des carcans imposés par la colonisation ou les couleurs politiques en vigueur. Le capital est remarquable par la vivacité de la société civile. Malheureusement, le foisonnement des églises du réveil cloisonnent l'espace public et court-circuitent le système d'action en en diminuant l'envergure. On s'attendrait à ce que les diverses composantes de la société civile contribuent au nivellement de cet espace d'action qu'est Kinshasa au lieu de creér des porte-à-faux compromettant la distincte territorialité qui semble animer les Kinois. Malgré tout, ce sens de la territorialité contribue au développement de la citoyenneté qui est le fondement d'un état démocratique. Comme partout ailleurs, la viabilité de Kinshasa dépendra de son capital social, et du poids des intérêts communs.

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Kapagama & Waterhouse (2009) suggère que Kinshasa est aussi un lieu caractérisé par un ordre caché dans le désordre apparent. Divers schémas d'expression y « organisent la vie locale en dépit de l'absence généralisée de services publiques et mêmes, des fois, de l'état tout court ». N'est-ce pas possible de voir quelques opportunités en ce que J-P Thompson, dans l'éditorial de cette série sur les villes africaines, appelle le « nœud gordien de défis » ?

Croissance et développement

Même si elle est co-génératrice des maux qui affligent l'Afrique, l'urbanisation peut être un facteur contribuant à la renaissance de l'Afrique, qui inclut la viabilité économique et écologique. Comme le souligne Anna Tibaijuka « …l'investissement dans les infrastructures et les logements dans les villes africaines constitue une formidable opportunité pour le secteur privé ».

Bien d'avis experts concordent que le site écologique de Kinshasa est « favorable et propice au développement d'une grande ville ». Avec 200 km2 favorable au développement urbain et sous la poussée d'une inexorable croissance démographique, Kinshasa se transforme en une mégapole. Si cette tendance se maintient, Kinshasa comptera bientôt 12 millions se propulsant ainsi dans le groupe de 30 plus grosses agglomérations de la planète. Cependant, une question s'impose: comment maîtriser cette croissance et faciliter la prestation de services de base à la population?

La croissance continuant d'amener sa trame de défis, la viabilité de Kinshasa dépend d'une vision et une planification qui intègre les habitants de la *cité* dans un schéma de modernisation. Par exemple, faut-il promouvoir des « *extensions verticales* »? Pourquoi pas! Au moins, elles ont le mérite de minimiser les distances séparant l'habitant et les points de services essentiels tels que les écoles, les hôpitaux, etc. et, par voie de conséquence, minimisent aussi les empreintes écologiques en faisant la promotion d'un mode de vie dépendant moins de l'automobile. Ainsi, il incombe aux nouvelles autorités de forger une vision qui fait de Kinshasa un lieu qui attire le talent ainsi que

Développement de gratte-ciels sur le boulevard du 30 juin: minimiser les distances et l'empreinte écologique.

© Vberger, Wikimedia Commons

l'ingénuité afin d'actualiser son rôle de moteur du « corridor de développement régional ». Et, surtout que l'on fasse de Kinshasa une ville où il fait bon vivre.

Kinshasa and the Urban Dynamic

by Mik Missakabo

In the popular imagination, the images evoked by the word "Africa" are safaris, exotic animals, and picturesque villages. Yet, according to Anna Tibaijuka, Under-Secretary General and Director of the UN-Habitat, "Africa is urbanizing faster than any other continent to the point that sometime between now and 2030, Africa will cease to be a rural continent. In spite of this, few African leaders are taking this issue seriously." For the experts writing for the international press and in many reports, as much from the UN as from other international organizations, the urbanization of Kinshasa, like other African places, is galloping ahead at an alarming rate.

Galloping urbanization: passengers and cargo piled high on a truck in Kinshasa.
© 2005 Netsanet Assaye, Courtesy of Photoshare

The urbanization of Africa is presented to us as essentially a social problem which is difficult to resolve. But is it? Even if it is the midwife for various ills afflicting African cities, such as under-nourishment, endemic unemployment, alienation, juvenile delinquency and prostitution, urbanization has not inevitably created them. Urbanization should not be presented solely as a problem; it can also be seen as bringing solutions to some endemic challenges.

Urbanization should not be presented solely as a problem; it can also be seen as bringing solutions to some endemic challenges.

If we can believe René de Maximy, "to be African and the inhabitant of a large city is not easy. Particularly if this city is Kinshasa." De Maximy describes the Kinois (those living in Kinshasa) as "living wretchedly stuck together on the banks of the greatest river on the continent!" To those who know Kinshasa, these hollow, simplistic words *hide* a very complex reality. To Pascal Kapagama and Rachel Waterhouse (2009) "the city of Kinshasa is, no doubt about it, the reflection of the paradoxes of the Democratic Republic of Congo, of which it is the capital." Paradoxes which can be reduced to one: rich country and poor people!

This paper will discuss the urban dynamic of Kinshasa, the capital of the DRC. As an important urban conglomerate, Kinshasa is officially a little more than a century old, but it is one of the largest cities in sub-Saharan Africa. With more than 10 million inhabitants, scattered over an area of 9,965 km2, it is the most densely populated city-province in the DRC. Young people under 20 make up more than 60% of the population. With a birthrate well above the 50% of the country as a whole, it is also the conurbation most at risk of an uncontrollable expansion of its working-class districts. For the last 25 years, it has grown by around 7 km2 a year.

Historical Overview

Historically speaking, Kinshasa was a closely built up city of 5000 inhabitants living essentially on commerce. The origins of African cities are often explained by two opposing theoretical frameworks: the Africanist thesis and the classic thesis. Making light of the criteria of size and density, the classic thesis maintains that Africa had no cities before European colonization. As might be expected, the Africanist thesis insists on the existence of African cities before the arrival of European colonists. And it was colonization that changed the dynamic.

Lumenganeso (1995) argued that for at least 40,000 years, the present site of the city of Kinshasa supported stonemasons' workshops and important centres for stone-working industries. He also referred to the witness of missionaries like F. Botninck, William H. Bentley, and Geronimo de Montesarchio who attested to the existence of an important conglomeration of large villages in the 17th century. These facts show that Kinshasa

was a flourishing centre long before the arrival of Henry M. Stanley. With a population estimated at 30,000 inhabitants, grouped in 66 different villages, Kinshasa was also a market attracting various ethnic groups. Without a significant human presence and the friendly support of the inhabitants, Stanley would not have camped there. According to Léon de Saint Moulin (1971), these very communities which welcomed Stanley were later systematically destroyed by the Belgian colonial authorities.

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Known as Ntsasa—meaning "market"—during the precolonial period and raised to the status of an urban conglomeration in 1895, Kinshasa (or Leopoldville) became the capital of the Congo in 1929. Without, however, ignoring Kinshasa's pre-colonial history, we agree with Michel Lusamba (2008) that the Kinshasa we know today is a "great city born out of contact with the Christian and mercantile civilization of a brutal Europe."

In the working-class districts, colonial authority used ethnic origin as the determining criterion for the allocation of land. According to Lusamba (2008), the spatial organization of Kinshasa had specific objectives : "economic, to facilitate the export of primary materials, social for the wellbeing of the European residents in the Congo, and esthetic, for the production of villas and beautiful landscapes." Thus colonial power transformed Kinshasa into a segregated city with a commercial, administrative, and residential centre for the Europeans. The Africans "were accepted and recognized primarily as labourers, at the disposition of an urban, outward-looking economy, functioning with and for Belgium." (De Maximy, 1984).

The State of the Market

Even in its earlier incarnations, Kinshasa had always provided space for multi-ethnic life, facilitating contact between various groups, such as the Batéké, the Bahumbu, the Bakongo, the Bayanzi and the Bangala. Today, almost all the DRC's ethnicities are represented there.

According to Marc Pain (1984), the market is the base for Kinshasa's urban organization. He claims that the various districts of the city formed and functioned around the markets. Almost all the households in Kinshasa are involved in micro-commerce to keep going to the end of the month. Largely run by women, micro-commerce allows them to counteract the harmful effects of inflation. The intensity of these human activities often takes a toll on natural resources. For example, the production of charcoal has a devastating impact on vegetation, contributing to an increase in gullies which menace several working-class areas.

Ville and *Cité*

Faithful to colonial tradition, Kinshasa still has two kinds of living space, called locally the *ville* and the *cité*. The colonial authority wanted a *ville* , but not inevitably a *cité* in the sense of a political and economic unity which would give its inhabitants prerogatives. On the one hand, there were the bourgeois districts, set up and allotted by the Belgian colonial authority. On the other the *cité* was essentially made up of workers camps. In other words, "they were the people's *cité*s, less planned and distinguished from the European districts. They were separated from the latter by neutral zones like a military camp" (Lusamba, 2008, p. 22). In these people's *cité*s or "informal centres," the colonial authority used ethic origin as a criterion to determine who got land. This practice effectively created and exaggerated social divisions.

In these people's *cité*s or "informal centres," the colonial authority used ethic origin as a criterion to determine who got land. This practice effectively created and exaggerated social divisions.

Thus the city got a form of urbanization reflecting the segregationist vision of African development. "In the European districts, constructed in the areas which got the most wind and were best ventilated such as the banks of the river, Ngaliema mountain, Gombe point and the Mbinza hills, land laws prohibited leaving, selling or renting plots of land to non-Europeans. Moving around there at night or living there were formally prohibited for Africans, except for domestics living with their families and working in a white owner's house" (Lusamba, 2008, p. 29). These social divides still persist and affect urban growth.

After independence, a new elite developed. Joined to this was a middle-class more or less dependent on the political oligarchy. In the *cité* the basic infrastructure is inadequate, because the better districts have continued to benefit from important state investment. Unfortunately this has not been the case for the people's districts which have taken in the majority of new Kinois. As in the colonial period, the state's investment is often limited to several beaten-earth roads and several outlets where drinkable water is provided.

Eccentric Extensions

The disparity between the *ville* and the cité is striking. Kinshasa includes uppercrust residential areas as well as people's districts (old *cité*s, planned districts, and semi-rural districts). With the abolition of the system of forced labour imposed by the Belgian authorities on the natives, the people's districts experienced important demographic growth due to rural exodus. This tendency continued, even after independence. For example, Kinshasa grew from 1,650,000 inhabitants in 1975 to 3,000,000 inhabitants in 1985, thus exacerbating the economic dependence of the *cité* on the *ville* . This explains the proliferation of illicit even fraudulent dealings in the economy of daily life.

The combination of this demographic growth and flood of migration have had the effect of generating what René de Maximy (1984) calls *eccentric extensions* . During Mobutu's rule, these districts developed without anyone noticing. Today these eccentric extensions make up more than two-thirds of the Kinshasa site. For the majority of the inhabitants of these people's districts, the environment is marked by poverty. Sometimes penury drives them to desperate solutions. Last January, Radio France International reported the presence of whole families living in the Kinsuka cemetery where burials were still taking place.

Living in a people's district involves many challenges. The city ceases to be a city! The socio-economic advantages of the city are diluted. Unfortunately, being far from the city means being far from work. The lack of a transportation network in any way adequate means that the problem of transport is far more acute for the inhabitants of these districts. This deficiency extends to other basic services which are state responsibilities.

In addition to the demographic super-growth and the environmental problems it brings with it, urban development seems to suffer from lack of planning. The internal functions of the excentric extensions follow the same logic imposed by the colonial authorities, and in turn by various national governments, and as a result have always cried out for infrastructure and equipment.

Infrastructure and Equipment

Kinshasa is a city of striking contrasts. Since colonial times, the administration of the *cité* has never been the authorities' principal concern. The contrast between the *ville* and the *cité* is stark. There are classy commercial and residential districts cheek by jowl with shockingly mean housing. With its high concentration of multi-storey buildings, the city centre located in the Gombe district overshadows the working-class districts of neighbouring communes like Barumbu, Lingwala, and Kinshasa.

Kinshasa is a city of striking contrasts... The contrast between the *ville* and the *cité* is stark. There are classy commercial and residential districts cheek by jowl with shockingly mean housing.

Lusamba (2008) notes that the establishment of people's districts brings discrimination. The disparity between *ville* and *cité* is grasped very quickly. The people's districts are not integrated into the urban morphology. This lack of integration is obvious when it comes to infrastructure and equipment. For example, the network of drainage channels necessary for rain water run-off is dilapidated. In fact it no longer fits with the current restructuring of the roads. Rain lasting more than an hour causes the gutters to overflow. Radio Okapi reported that despite rehabilitation work on the road infrastructure recently undertaken by Chinese companies, rainwater still overflows from the gutters into the road.

Yet roads constitute the nerves and circulation of the city. Attempts to improve infrastructure and equipment have noticeably diminished since the DRC gained independence. This inadequacy has as great an effect on the viability of public services as on the circulation of people and goods. Since 2009, important reconstruction work has been going on on major stretches of road. Nevertheless, despite the extension of the road network, moving swiftly from place to place is still the perk of the privileged. The average Kinois often walks.

In the people's districts, connecting to the urban distribution networks for water and electricity is not easy. Almost everywhere in Kinshasa, the water supply is laid at ground level. At the beginning of March, Radio Okapi reported that drinkable water had "become a rare commodity in certain Kinshasa districts." Paradoxically, the cost of water is often higher in the people's districts than in the heart of the city. As for electricity, the shortage of transformers means that regulation of electricity supply relies on temporary diversions to avoid overloading the system. Obviously, the people's districts are not a priority when it comes to distribution.

Management

Urban management seems to have been a constant in the history of Kishasa. "From the creation of the outposts of Léopoldville (1881) and Kinshasa (1883) to June 30, 1960, the date marking the independence of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the city has organized its social space to suit only the needs and projects of the colonizers. Even habitation intended for blacks in so-called 'native' districts mirrored the norms established solely by the Belgians" (de Maximy, cited in Lusamba, 2008, p. 27). With independence, the national political elite took the place of the colonial authorities.

The challenges which face Kinshasa seem to be intimately tied to the administration of the country as a whole. The centralization of power which characterized the colonial regime, and in turn that of Mobutu, still governs the political and administrative management of the city. As was said earlier, the administration of Kinshasa still mirrors the logic of colonial urbanism. It could be said that the aftermath of independence has exacerbated the failings inherited from the colonial authorities. Thus the administration of the city is ossified by the ogre-state.

The weakening of the state leads to an incapacity to offer basic urban services. Despite this, a combination of political and macro-economic forces affecting the rest of the country offers exodus as an attractive solution to the current problem of young people living in various rural areas. These newcomers have swollen the population of the people's districts and like those who preceded them, they will be left to their own devices. This state of affairs suggests there is no urban plan with a modern vision of the city. The challenge of absorbing the newcomers and mitigating the impact of human activity on the environment is an urgent one. But the lack of a plan shows that the political and administrative authorities have no real stake in setting up adequate living conditions throughout the city. The little that the state invests in priority sectors such as health and education is usually focused on the big cities.

As in many developing countries, it is not industrialization that is animating the process

of urbanization in Kinshasa. Rather, it is poverty. Through their creativity and their ingenuity, the inhabitants of the people's districts manage to set up various mechanisms which let them face the daily challenges with a scrap of dignity.

The Sound

For Pius Ngandu-Nkashama (1979), it is no accident that the booming urban conglomeration coincides with birth of an urban popular music. He claims that Congolese music "was needed because of an impossible social situation which had totally destroyed the traditional man." In fact, the *sound* of Congolese music is a product of the urban dynamic of the people's districts which is indispensable to the daily life of the Congolese. Since public space has been confiscated, the *sound* offers an imitation of freedom which facilitates and allows imaginative expression. So music becomes more than a metaphor, illustrating the creativity and imagination whose richness is a result of Kinshasa's cultural diversity.

Since public space has been confiscated, the *sound* offers an imitation of freedom which facilitates and allows imaginative expression.

In the colonial period, the *cité*, or the people's district, was a living space attracting various ethnic groups. Each group had a more or less rich music, used for religion, ritual, or just pleasure. When this music reached the city, the xylophone, tam-tam, likembe, flute and other instruments were replaced or supplemented by modern instruments like drums, guitars, saxophones, and trumpets. From the beginning, the sound was barely tolerated by the colonial authorities. Antoine Kolosoy alias Papa Wendo, one of the pioneers of Congolese music, known for his song *Marie-Louise* , had to serve time in prison indicted by the Catholic church which accused him of practising satanism.

For 40 years, the sound has been a catalyst for a sense of identity and national pride. Through the sound, between *ville* and *cité* , "the evolving Congolese society" will develop. Often the words mirror the preoccupations of the masses in the *cité*. The *Indépendance Cha Cha* of Joseph Kabasele, alias the Grand Kallé, is a good example. The words of this song eloquently express the people's aspirations. The Grand Kallé also contributed to Patrice Emery Lumumba's electoral campaign by lending him his car. For Werrason, one of the popular stars of Congolese music, it is music which keeps the Congolese nation alive.

Territoriality

Kinshasa "has a particular culture which speaks for it, for its inhabitants, its artists, and particularly its musicians. It is full of symbols, and, like every city, of history" (Kapagama & Waterhouse, 2009, p. 1). The various histories of Kinshasa are mixed into the various histories of the Congo. The physical administration of the city of Kinshasa is relegated to the sidelines. Yet this megalopolis also incarnates the heart and soul of the Congolese nation. It is difficult not to feel at home there. In spite of the difficult living conditions that Kinshasa imposes, few people want to return to their villages. *Ah, Kinshasa kiesse Yaya* , say the Kinois. As René de Maximy says, "You have the feeling Kinshasa could be a city with a flourishing economy, where the living is good."

Kinshasa is a space for shared action. The creation of common representations is a product of the workers' districts. Cultural differences are negotiated here and an identity is forged. Far from being static, this Kinois identity is rich and dynamic. It ventures way beyond the yoke inflicted by colonization or the political colours in force. The capital is notable for the liveliness of its civil society. Unfortunately, the abundance of evangelical churches partitions the public space and short-circuits the system of action by diminishing its scope. We wait to see how the diverse members of civil society can overcome these false partitions and create an equal public space that can tap into the distinct nature of Kinshasa that seems to animate the Kinois. In spite of all this, this sense of territoriality contributes to the development of citizenship which is the foundation of a democratic state. As everywhere, the viability of Kinshasa will depend on its social capital, and the weight of common interests.

Kinshasa is a space for shared action. The creation of common representations is a product of the workers' districts. Cultural differences are negotiated here and an identity is forged.

Kapagama and Waterhouse (2009) suggest that Kinshasa is also a place characterized by a hidden order in an apparent disorder. Various schema "organize local life despite the general absence of public services and even, sometimes, of the state altogether." Isn't it possible to see some opportunities in what J-P Thompson in the editorial to this series on African cities calls the "Gordian knot of challenges"?

Growth and Development

Even though it is a co-creator of the ills that afflict Africa, urbanization can be a factor contributing to an African renaissance, including economic and ecological viability. As Anna Tibaijuka emphasizes "investment in infrastructures and housing in African cities offers a major opportunity for the private sector".

Plenty of experts agree that the ecological site of Kinshasa is "favourable and propitious for the development of a great city." With 200 km2 suitable for urban development and under the pressure of inexorable demographic growth, Kinshasa is transforming itself into a megalopolis. If this trend is maintained, Kinshasa will soon have 12 million inhabitants, thus raising itself into the group of the 30 largest conglomerations on the planet. However, the question must be asked: how to manage this growth and facilitate the provision of basic services to the population?

As growth continues to bring its load of challenges, Kinshasa's viability depends on a vision and a plan that will integrate the inhabitants of the *cité* in a scheme of modernization. For example, should "high-rise development" be promoted? Why not! At least high-rises have the advantage of minimizing the distances separating the inhabitant from essential services such as schools and hospitals, and consequently also minimizing ecological footprints by promoting a way of life less dependent on the car. Thus, it is the responsibility of the new authorities to forge a vision which will attract talent and ingenuity to Kinshasa so that it can realize its role as a driving force for the "corridor of regional development"—and above all, make Kinshasa a city where one can live well.

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The Struggle for Basic Services in Cape Town

by Munyaradzi Makoni

Early in 2010, the city of Cape Town had to grapple with the horror of open toilets that had been constructed in the informal settlement of Khayelitsha, in Makhaza section on the outskirts of the city. People there had to suffer the indignity of covering up with blankets when they went to relieve themselves. At the centre of the controversy were 65 toilets without walls. The incident highlights the struggle for better social services in poorer communities in a city famed for its beauty.

That such an incident occurred is an indictment of the country's morals. South Africa has made some strides in changing the lives of its people since the coming of democracy in 1994, but looking at the successes so far, especially through the eyes of the black majority, there is much to be done.

Looking at the successes so far, especially through the eyes of the black majority, there is much to be done. "We don't accept that the city has no funds."

"We don't accept that the city has no funds to build proper toilets for our people, as we know that Cape Town has got the best suburbs in the country, comparable to the best in the world," raged Clarence Mayekiso, Secretary-General of the Pan African Movement.

For its part, the African National Congress Youth League lodged an official complaint with the South Africa Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) and also complained to the opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) party that governs Cape Town.

"As the so-called custodians of morals and human rights, the DA has to explain how, under its political leadership, the community of Makhaza who include women and children have to relieve themselves in open toilets without any privacy."

In a letter to Sicelo Shiceka, Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Helen Zille, the premier of Western Cape Province said the so-called "open-air toilets" saga was an issue that had been hijacked for specific agendas to the detriment of residents in this community.

Zille said that ensuring that all citizens have access to adequate sanitation is an objective that should motivate public representatives in all spheres of government. The high court eventually ordered the City of Cape Town to build the toilets again—this time covered.

From both sides of the fight, the whole issue highlighted the fact that the poor need basic services. The problem lies in the informal settlements that teem with shacks and impoverished habitants drawn from rural areas into Cape Town. The core of the issue is service delivery. How can the city cope with a growing population when it claims that such basic provisions are too costly for the council?

Compelling circumstances

In recent times, Cape Town has grown in leaps and bounds to become a major commercial and industrial hub. Today, oil refining, food, chemical, fertilizer processing, the manufacture of automobiles, leather and plastic goods, and clothing are the chief industries.

Cape Town has grown in leaps and bounds to become a major commercial and industrial hub ... This growth is the magnet that continues to attract people.

This growth is the magnet that continues to attract people of all colours, both skilled and unskilled, to Cape Town. Poor workers who labour in some of the factories scattered across the city live in equally scattered communities such as Makhaza, Joe Slovo, Imizano Yethu and Du-noon. The majority of informal settlement dwellers are black or coloured (people of mixed parentage).

Spiralling population growth is a constant concern. As the State of African Cities 2010: Governance, Inequalities and Urban Land Markets (a report by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlement) indicates, the population of African cities is set to triple over the next 40 years. In the case of Cape Town, the City's Five-Year Housing Plan says Cape Town has already doubled in size over the past 20 years and had a population of almost 3.5 million in 2007. This is expected to grow to over 4 million in the next few years—and it takes into account a slowing population growth because of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and a probable drop in migration from the Eastern Cape.

Retired Cape Town Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu voiced his concern clearly after the first ever soccer World Cup was held in Africa in 2010. "This has been a wonderful World Cup, but it doesn't negate the fact that the majority of South Africans don't have houses, schools, clinics, running water and many more things," Tutu was quoted as saying by the South African daily newspaper, The Times. "If we were able to deliver such a project in just six years, imagine what we could have achieved in 20 years," the Nobel Peace Prize laureate added.

Anzabeth Tonkin, a research programme leader at the Development Action Group and author of the book, Sustainable medium-density housing: A resource book, borrowed views from the employment equity report in the Western Cape and described the city as "backward" compared with Johannesburg. One respondent in the report described Cape Town as a sad place with a sad psyche, "such a beautiful place but there is no soul."

> **One respondent ... described Cape Town as a sad place with a sad psyche, "such a beautiful place but there is no soul."**

Tonkin went on to analyse such views of the city. "There is ample reason to become sad and unsettled, especially if the two elements that doubtless have the most potential to integrate a highly divided society, namely housing and land, are not utilised in creative ways to integrate, equalise and assimilate," Tonkin wrote in The Cape Times.

However, some of the problems are beyond the city's control. For instance it is widely recognised that there is a shortage of available well-located land for housing in Cape Town. The city's estimates are that roughly 10,000 hectares of vacant "greenfield" land will be required (based on one family per plot) to meet the current backlog.

According to Tonkin, "This sad state of affairs has serious implications for democracy, equality, citizenship and human relations. Considering the enclaves of affluence prevalent in our 'paradise' at the foot of Africa, it is fair to ask whether we even care."

Overall, between1993 and 2005, informal dwellings grew from approximately 28,300 to 98,031. This now affects over 400,000 poor people in Cape Town. Clearly, the housing problem has grown more acute over time, and such conditions could lead to civil unrest.

Poverty and crime

Barely three months had passed after President Jacob Zuma's election in 2009 when strikes by poor South Africans exploded. It was a time when a series of protests against poor delivery of essential services such as housing, water and sanitation facilities were everywhere in the news.

Cape Town was not spared. The Malawi informal settlement near Bishop Lavis in the city had nearly 200 residents throwing stones at passing vehicles, demonstrating against a lack of electricity and housing. One of the biggest informal settlements near Cape Town in Khayelitsha was also engulfed in service delivery demonstrations as residents called for better houses. The Bush Radio, a community radio station, reported that on 21 July angry residents from 15 informal settlements marched to the office of city mayor, Dan Plato, demanding better living conditions.

Nthamaga Kgafela, a researcher with the South African Institute of Race Relations, wrote in the Municipal Outreach bulletin of May 2009 that there were over 140,000 households in the City of Cape Town living in makeshift houses and of these, 77% lived in informal settlements while the rest lived in shacks in backyards.

Many households were without basic services such as water, sanitation facilities, and electricity. Only 539,893 of households in Cape Town had access to water inside their houses. Some 111,258 of the households had access to water via a community stand.

Kgafela said more than 58,000 of these households used a community stand more than 200 metres from their homes. The remaining 22,348 households used boreholes, spring

water, rainwater tanks, dams, rivers or streams, and other water sources.

Some 664,700 households had access to a flush toilet and the remaining 55,000 had no sanitation facilities at all with some 34,296 using bucket latrines. The remaining 23,230 households use flush septic tanks, chemical toilets, VIP toilets, and pit latrines.

Adequate sanitation facilities cannot exist without sufficient water resources. Households without water and sanitation facilities are often vulnerable to health risks, such as cholera, pneumonia and typhoid.

An article written ahead of the Major Urban Poverty Challenges Identification (MUPCI) workshops for Cape Town stated that 52,708 were without access to electricity and dependent on paraffin and candles.

These statistics on living conditions were in line with the City's poverty rate of 23.6% which ultimately meant that more than 183,000 households live in poverty, that is, households with incomes below R800 per month.

Though financial poverty can ultimately be eradicated through jobs, the city has been found wanting. As of 2007, the city had an unemployment rate of 16.8% but much higher among the black population that had a 20.4% unemployment rate, compared to 14.4% among the coloured population and 6% among the Indians.

"While the City of Cape Town has continually performed better than most other municipalities, poverty and inequality remain prevalent," Kgafela noted. Mirrored against achievements since the coming of democracy, it shows the city has been doing something, but that is no consolation in the eyes of a labour union leader. "All these good sounding statistics do not tell the full story," said Zwelinzima Vavi, the secretary general of South Africa's largest labour movement, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) at the social forum meeting.

"The commercialisation and commodification of basic services means that even though water taps may be in each yard where they have been provided, a growing number of these are dry as the poor are being made to pay in advance for an increasing number of these services, including water," he added.

Vavi had an opportunity to go door-to-door in many informal settlements around Cape Town in 2009. "Every time I did so I came out completely depressed, realising the challenges we still face. Most of these informal settlements do not have the most basic infrastructure—no water, no sanitation, no electricity, no clinics, no schools, and no streets. It is just sand and a terrible stench of poverty and squalor."

"Every time ... I came out completely depressed, realising the challenges we still face. Most of these informal settlements do not have the most basic infrastructure."

Vavi said announcements that the City of Cape Town had been voted one of the best municipalities showed that the panel who decided on this had not been where he had visited. In his generalized assessment, governments all over the world were guilty of failing to develop the rural areas and ensure food security. This inevitably leads to a massive rush to the cities by people looking for work, compounding existing housing shortages. Cape Town has to be one of the worst cases.

Unfortunately such a state of affairs has earned Cape Town a top spot as one of the world's most dangerous cities. Its beauty contrasts sharply with its high level of robberies, rapes, kidnappings and murders. The police are on record as saying that the homicides usually occur in the poorer districts and suburbs of the town, rather than in upscale areas, showing the link between crime and poverty.

Together as one

Cape Town remains a favourite destination for job seekers, immigrants from other countries and rural to urban migration. But the challenge to deal with shanty towns remains a tall order for responsible authorities. The speed at which they provide critical basic services is below the rate at which people give themselves homes on public land, unoccupied buildings or even sidewalks in the areas near the city.

Cape Town is the only city in a province of South Africa that is governed by an opposition party. While it has largely become a functional city, the accusation of the black majority being sidelined and women being less represented cannot be muffled.

No doubt the social cohesion, minimising disparities and avoiding marginalisation, were dampened by the whole toilet saga. But when Zille presented her state of the province address in February 2011 for the Western Cape, she showed her determination to address the challenges for everyone.

"Our role is to extend to every person the opportunity to live a life he or she values. But citizens also have a part to play. It is to take responsibility for making the most of the opportunities on offer. Building a shared future requires each of us to understand our role and what it means to achieve the better life for all," she said.

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Challenges of Urban Housing Provision in Lagos and Johannesburg
by Teke Ngomba

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Introduction

In November 2010, UN-Habitat (the United Nations Human Settlements Programme) published a pertinent report on the state of African cities. The report confirmed that Africa is the fastest urbanizing continent in the world and that by 2030 "Africa's collective population will become 50 percent urban" (UN-Habitat, 2010:1).

Apart from multi-storeyed buildings, traffic jams and street beggars, one of the central "faces" of Africa's rapid urbanization in most if not all of its large cities is "non-standard, poor-quality housing units" (Kasarda and Crenshaw, 1991:479) which the UN calls "urban slums". According to UN-Habitat (2010:4), Africa currently has a slum population of 199.5 million people and this represents "61.7 per cent of its urban population" (UN-Habitat, 2010:4).

As the scale of urbanization increases, the task of providing appropriate and affordable housing to the urban poor has persisted as one of the most intractable problems facing developing countries. In the wake of an unprecedented pace of urbanization in sub-Saharan Africa and a corresponding increase in urban poverty, how have African governments been handling this problem? What are the challenges they face and what are the chances of these governments living up to the ideal of having "cities without slums"?

Africa currently has a slum population of 199.5 million people and this represents "61.7 per cent of its urban population" ... What are the chances of these governments living up to the ideal of having "cities without slums"?

This article focuses on the situation in Lagos, Nigeria, and Johannesburg, South Africa. The countries of both these cities are members of the Cities Alliance, the "brain" behind the global City without Slums Action Plan. (The Alliance is a global coalition of cities committed to poverty reduction. The **Cities without Slums Action Plan** was launched by Nelson Mandela at the inaugural meeting of the Alliance in Berlin in December 1999.) Through an overview of some scholarly discussions of these issues, this article

highlights some of the main measures taken by both governments and city officials within the last two decades to clear Lagos and Johannesburg of slums and provide affordable and appropriate housing to the urban poor.

Housing the Urban Poor in Lagos

Lagos, the former federal capital of Nigeria, is the country's economic hub and biggest city. With a current population of about 10.5 million people, UN estimates indicate that by 2015 the population of Lagos will be close to 12.5 million (UN-Habitat, 2010:53).

According to Gandy (2006:372) there are as many as 200 different slums in Lagos, "ranging in size from clusters of shacks underneath highways to entire districts such as Ajegunle and Mushin". As Morka (2007:7) points out, over two-thirds of the population of Lagos lives in the "informal settlements or slums scattered around the city". Most of these slums are densely populated with some estimates indicating that "more than 75 per cent of urban slum dwellers live in one room households with a density of 4.6 persons per room" (Adelekan, 2009:6).

Given the above situation, combined with other challenges such as city transportation, electricity and potable water provision, Morka (2007:4) argues that "to say that Lagos is a city in crisis is to understate the severity and enormity of the challenges that confront its residents and managers". The massive problems facing the city notwithstanding, the Lagos Executive Development Board was established with a mandate to clear the city of slums. Successive federal and state governments have taken several measures to "establish the necessary institutional frameworks to radically transform" Lagos into a functional megacity (Ilesanmi, 2009:11). At both the federal and state levels, some of the main measures taken thus far have included the creation of specialized agencies both at national and state levels to handle issues concerning housing for the urban poor and of specific housing policies designed to increase the provision of appropriate and affordable housing in Lagos.

Federal government measures have included plans to construct about 2,000 housing units in each state annually within the framework of the Fourth National Development Plan (1984-1985) as well as the construction of about 143,000 "low-cost housing units across the country" (Ademiluyi, 2010:157). Such measures were continued between 1990 and 1992, during which time the federal government intensified its sites and services scheme to solve the issue of inadequate urban housing and also commenced the construction of hundreds of housing units in Lagos and Abuja (Ademiluyi, 2010:157).

Prominent among the state-level housing measures taken has been the establishment of the UN-backed Master Plan for Metropolitan Lagos (1980-2000). Among other things, this called for the provision of about one million housing units for low income households in Lagos and the World Bank-supported Lagos Slum Upgrading Programme, which was instituted in 1999 (see Abosede, 2006:6). As part of the strategy to improve housing conditions in Lagos and to stop the proliferation of slums in particular, both the federal and state governments have also engaged in forceful evictions of slum dwellers. According to Morka (2007:8), such evictions, like those of July 1990 and April 2005, have been inappropriate and ineffective and have instead helped to "fuel the growth of new slums or the expansion of existing ones with more complex dimensions".

Both the federal and state governments have also engaged in forceful evictions of slum dwellers ... such evictions, like those of July 1990 and April 2005, have been inappropriate and ineffective.

Notwithstanding the strategies mentioned above, the persistence of the housing problem in Lagos has continued to put the state government under pressure to look for lasting solutions. Recent state-level initiatives in this regard have included the establishment of the Lagos Metropolitan Development and Governance Project, the Lagos Island Revitalization project which aims to "upgrade derelict residential areas" in Lagos (Abosede, 2006:7) and the formulation of the Medium Term Sector Strategy of the Housing Sector for Lagos for the period 2011-2013 which has an ambitious vision to achieve "a Lagos State where every citizen has access to quality housing that meets their needs".

Despite all these interventions within these past two decades, the concrete achievements in terms of "providing adequate housing" for the urban poor in Lagos and in Nigeria as a whole remain "essentially minimal" (Ademiluyi, 2010:158). Onibokun's (1971:283) conclusion three decades ago is still valid today: both the state and federal governments have been "unable to meet the challenges posed by Lagos". Worse, there

seems to be the absence of a "practicable government policy that could solve the housing problems of Lagos" (Olayiwola et al, 2005:187) and even the formal public-private partnerships to address the issue have so far produced a "relatively low quantity of affordable housing for the low income people of Nigeria" (Ibem, 2010:14).

Given such a balance sheet, it goes without saying that there are significant measures that need to be put in place if the federal and state governments hope to provide appropriate and affordable shelter to Lagos' urban poor and live up to their subscribed ideal of a city without slums. Some of these issues are highlighted in the latter part of this article.

Housing the Urban Poor in Johannesburg

According to UN-Habitat, Johannesburg, South Africa's economic hub, currently has a population of about 3.670 million and by 2015 the city's population is expected to be about 3.867 million (UN-Habitat, 2010:53). With visible "scars" from the apartheid era, Johannesburg, as Bollens (1998:739) noted, is a city of "enormous economic and social contrasts" where sky scrapers co-exist with "townships and shanty towns of intentionally degraded living environments".

In recent years, the number of people living in what are termed "informal settlements and backyard shacks" across South Africa has been increasing (see Landman and Napier, 2010:303) and it is estimated that "between 150,000 to 220,000 households in Johannesburg live in informal dwellings" (Planact, 2007:2). According to the Center on Housing Rights and Evictions (2005:6) some of these "informal dwellings" in which the urban poor in Johannesburg live often include urban shack settlements (with close to 200 of them across the city). There are also 235 so-called "bad buildings" in the inner city and "shelters" in "backyards, on pavements, or under highway bridges".

Current measures to address this situation and provide affordable and appropriate housing to the urban poor in Johannesburg in particular and across South Africa are "informed by the history of the country" (Goodlad, 1996:1644). Following the historic election in 1994, successive post-apartheid governments have focused on conceiving and implementing policies to "combat the spatial manifestations of apartheid" (Bollens, 1998:741), especially with regards to the provision of housing for the urban poor.

According to Parnell and Robinson (2006:346), though hard to "pin down", the ANC has had an important influence on local governments to the extent that in the case of Johannesburg, policies relating to the management and upgrading of the city have been "synergistic with national ANC policies". Similarly, Beall et al (2000:113) had earlier argued that, in dealing with Johannesburg's housing crisis, city officials have "largely deferred to the national and provincial government" (see also Development Action Group 2003).

South Africa's housing strategy has centered on a combination of private, public and community initiatives ... where "market and community involvement" in housing provision is "maximized".

By looking at national policies on the provision of appropriate and affordable housing for the urban poor, some evidence regarding strategies within Johannesburg to house its urban poor become apparent. Briefly, within the last decade in particular, South Africa's housing strategy has centered on a combination of private, public and community initiatives wherein the state, rather than take a center stage in direct housing provision, has focused on creating an environment where "market and community involvement" in housing provision is "maximized" (Goodlad, 1996:1636; see also Landman and Napier, 2010:299). This is currently evident in the new national housing policy dubbed "Breaking New Ground" (BNG). Framed as South Africa's "new housing vision", a central aim of the BNG housing policy is to accelerate the delivery of quality housing to the poor as part of the government's plan to promote the development of "sustainable human settlements" in South Africa.

Housing policies and strategies in contemporary South Africa have been hailed for being "progressive" (du Plessis, 2005:126) and, though not perfect, are said to be registering some success (see Cross, 2008:3). Pro-poor housing policies and strategies in Johannesburg have been listed as one of the "best practices" worth copying in South Africa (see see Development Action Group, 2003). Recently, in September 2010, the UN-Habitat awarded a Scroll of Honour for human settlements development to the Johannesburg Social Housing Company (JOSHCO), a company established by the City of Johannesburg to provide quality low-cost housing services and products to the

citizens of Johannesburg.

According to UN-Habitat, the Scroll of Honour was awarded to JOSHCO in recognition of the company's provision of "tens of thousands of affordable housing units, improved living conditions and basic services to poor families" (see **UN-Habitat** for the complete statement). Such recognitions notwithstanding, overall, the challenges to significantly and sustainably resolve the "huge housing shortage" in Johannesburg and in South Africa as a whole remain very daunting (Lemanski, 2009:482).

Sadly, the much-criticized forceful eviction of the urban poor from slums has also been among the policy options used to address the housing crisis in Johannesburg. This was clearly evident for instance in the 2004-2007 Johannesburg Inner City Regeneration Strategy Business Plan which recommended the closing down of "bad buildings"— a "euphemism for evicting the building's occupants and sealing it off" (Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, 2005:42). Such evictions have often led to clashes between residents and the police. According to Harrison (2006:330), for example, in August 2005 police used stun grenades to:

> … quell an angry mob in the suburb of Marlboro in north-eastern Johannesburg which was protesting against the eviction of residents who had long occupied empty factories in response to the serious housing backlog in the neighboring township of Alexandra. (For more reports on cases of forceful evictions in Johannesburg, see, for instance, Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, 2005:60-64).

Comparing Lagos and Johannesburg

From a general perspective, contemporary strategies adopted to provide appropriate and affordable housing for the urban poor in Lagos and Johannesburg are fairly similar. The strategy for the largest cities in both countries has revolved around the establishment of national and city-based housing policies and targets; the creation of specialized agencies to handle urban housing tasks; the acquisition of multilateral assistance especially from the World Bank and UN to implement national or city-based housing-related projects; the tilting towards a more neo-liberal, market-based approach as far as the provision of urban services and facilities are concerned; and the resort to forced evictions as one "weapon" in the "arsenal" for dealing with the proliferation of slums.

The strategy for the largest cities in both countries ... (includes) the tilting towards a more neo-liberal, market-based approach as far as the provision of urban services and facilities are concerned; and the resort to forced evictions as one "weapon" in the "arsenal" for dealing with the proliferation of slums.

Such similarities in strategy and policy continue to support Stren's (1972:492) previous conclusion that the responses to the problem of inadequate urban housing across African countries "have shared many common features, in spite of important socio-cultural and ideological-political differences" among these countries.

However, there are also important differences between the approaches taken. They include the scale of the institutionalization of community-based approaches to urban housing provision for the urban poor (more formalized in South Africa than in Nigeria) and differences in the "level of maturity and entrenchment" into the economy of the housing finance sector/system (more entrenched in South Africa than in Nigeria). Another major difference between housing strategies in South Africa and Nigeria has been the provision in South Africa of a public housing subsidy for the lower-middle and low income populations.

Arguably, as seen in the case of Lagos and Johannesburg, South Africa appears to have a relatively more "evolved approach" to pro-poor housing provision than Nigeria. In addition to the differences mentioned above, two recent developments in South Africa separate it further from Nigeria. In September 2005, according to Cross (2006:4), "all the major South African role players in housing" signed a Social Contract for Rapid Housing Delivery which aims to replace "informal housing stocks with new standardized subsidy housing" and set stakeholders on the course of "working to eliminate all shack housing in the country" by 2014.

Secondly, as Landman and Napier (2010:301) have pointed out, commercial banks in South Africa have signed a Financial Sector Services Charter with the government,

"promising to provide mortgages for housing to lower income households". Taken together, such pro-poor strategies testify to South Africa's relatively more "evolved" housing strategy. As Cross (2006:3) noted, "no other country in Africa promises its poor the levels of social provision" that the successive post-apartheid governments in South Africa have committed themselves to.

Conclusion

Urbanization in Africa has a long history (see Abate, 1978:23) but currently its pace is making it one of the "most dramatic social phenomena" taking place in Africa since the colonial era (Mabogunje, 1990:121). For several years, as Stren (1992:533) has argued, research on African cities has centered on two main themes: "their poverty and their rapid rates of growth". These were also the central Messages in the UN-Habitat 2010 report on African cities which highlighted, among other things, the central problem of urban housing provision for the urban poor across the continent. As concerns the continent as a whole, while there are a few signs of progress, the enormity of the challenge to provide a "decent house" for every urban dweller in Africa is simply overwhelming (see UN-Habitat, 2010:2).

Urbanization in Africa ... is making it one of the "most dramatic social phenomena" ... while there are a few signs of progress, the enormity of the challenge to provide a "decent house" for every urban dweller in Africa is simply overwhelming.

Within the last two decades, governments have made a plethora of pledges to tackle this challenge. In June 1996, for instance, heads of state and government from all over the world met in Istanbul, Turkey, for the UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and reaffirmed, among other things, their "commitment to the full and progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as provided for in international instruments". Fourteen years after that conference, hundreds of millions of people are still stuck in slums.

Given the rapid increase in urban populations in Africa, the corresponding increasing demand for urban housing, the persistently dire financial situation of the urban poor, persistently significant levels of bad governance in Africa and the insufficient financial and material resources available to African states to tackle this issue, it is not possible or pragmatic, at least for now, to envisage a situation where every urban dweller in sub-Saharan Africa will live in a "decent house" in the near future.

These practical constraints notwithstanding, there is need for all stakeholders in the housing sector in Africa to continuously strive to provide adequate and affordable housing to the urban poor given that the acquisition of such a house is a central part of every individual's human rights, recognized and codified in both national and international instruments such as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (see Leckie, 1989:525).

For the right to adequate housing to become a sustainable reality for the urban poor across Africa, a lot needs to be put in place. In a 1992 essay, Nwaka (1992:95) argued that, as concerns housing policies, Nigeria has probably had "enough policy advice already". This holds true for all countries in the region. The fact that years of policy advice and pledges have not produced dramatic reductions in slums suggests that something very fundamental is lacking in Africa: visionary, democratic and dedicated leadership. Substantially realizing the right to adequate housing demands, among other things, that African leaders develop and manifest the political will to live up to their commitments. It also demands that these leaders should be continuously pressurized through legal and peaceful strategies to fully implement their commitments to the poor.

As the world slips into the second decade of the third millennium, for millions of slum dwellers across the world, the message to their governments is simple: Enough is enough! Help us obtain adequate housing — it's our right!

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Hurdles to Social Integration in Nairobi's Slums
by Timothy Gachanga

Introduction

Many people think that a peaceful and socially integrated society is easy to achieve. All that is necessary, they believe, is to involve the services of experienced peacemakers and human rights activists using their skills and knowledge in this field. This is what happened after the December 2007 post-election crisis in Kenya, when Dr. Kofi Annan intervened to end the political stalemate that threatened to plunge the country into civil war. From this perspective, social disintegration is simply a result of the inadequate application of human rights and peace-building skills. But the situation is not that simple. In many ways, social disintegration is a symptom of underlying social and cultural problems. This is well exemplified in Nairobi's slums. Examination of the underlying political, social, and economic instances of injustice in slums leads one to understand the problem of realizing one's values. Often, the values held by people are adversely affected by obstacles to social integration.

Basic facilities and human rights

Nairobi's slums are a tragic story of despair and hopelessness and represent a microcosm of an unjust society. A review of existing literature on slums in Nairobi reveals this state of deprivation. Elsewhere (Gachanga 2007) I have noted that 40% of the slum residents are destitute, 45% are poor, 13% middle class and 2% affluent. The unemployed constitute 35%, while 30% are engaged in hawking and petty trade as a means of survival. Only 15% of the population is involved in some mainstream commerce and business, while 15% have waged employment, but mostly as casual workers in various parts of the city. In terms of living conditions, 25% of the population lives in makeshift slum shelters, while 20% lives in poor semi-permanent shelters. The rest of the population, that is 55%, lives in permanent shelter that is nevertheless poorly constructed and overcrowded and offers no form of secure tenure. Evictions, often violent, occur at the whim of landowners. Defaults in rent payments are rarely negotiated and result in evictions. In some cases, arson is used by unscrupulous landlords to evict non-complying households or the residents of entire slums. Ventilation in all the shelters is very poor. Coupled with overcrowded living space and inadequate sanitation facilities, these result in greater exposure to disease and infections.

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The road networks are generally very poor in the slums. Some roads where the few affluent live are tarmacked and have street lights. The rest are dusty footpaths which become muddy and impassable during the rains. Pedestrian bridges exist which allow the rest of the population to flow freely around and over the slums. The majority of slum residents cannot afford any of the motorized transport options in the city. To cope, they must either limit their travel outside their settlement or live close enough to employment prospects to be able to walk to their jobs. Without mobility options, many people with little money live in crowded, unsafe, and unsanitary conditions near the centre of town (Salon and Gulyani 2009, 242). Although over half of the population has access to electricity for lighting, 1 in 5 households are connected to poor quality and unsafe power supply via illegal lines. This has resulted in many electrical accidents and fires. In February this year for instance, two people were burnt to death at Mukuru-Lunga Lunga slums in Industrial Area after six shanties caught fire after an illegal connection caused an electric fault (*Daily Nation*, 21 April 2010). In October, several families were left homeless and property worth thousands of shillings destroyed after a fire razed slum dwellings in Southlands, Lang'ata. More than thirty houses, shops, pubs and video halls were also burnt down (*Daily Nation*, 25 October 2010). Those not connected to electricity use paraffin as fuel for light and cooking and this also results in fires.

Facilities for water, health and education are also poor. Access to water ranges from adequate for the affluent to severely inadequate for the majority of the population. Some settlements have been provided with communal water taps, but these are controlled by water vendors who sell the commodity at an exorbitant price compared to the metered piped water. Health services and education are no better. Hospitals are beyond the slum dwellers' reach. They often depend on distant clinics or dispensaries or the occasional passage of voluntary or semi-official medical teams for medical care (Moschetti 1997). There are very few schools in slums, and they mostly run by voluntary organizations or denominational bodies. These schools are informal and, because of the high school fees, are unaffordable for many children.

The description above reveals the state of deprivation, exclusion and frustration facing poor slum residents. Typically, the poor not only have few economic resources, but also very little opportunity for meaningful participation in, and access to, social or political life. This makes them feel the pain, burden and disadvantage of their lower socio-economic status. Accessibility to amenities such as schools, health services, water and electricity is an important element for a socially integrated society. These are the basic services that create conditions for people to feel included and not suffer the painful consequence of being unable to afford them. Populations whose demands exceed the amenities available will tend to fight for the survival of their kin group and ignore any claims of "others" to access the same. Accessibility to basic services therefore underlines the cohesion of a society and reinforces the notion that every citizen should feel included.

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Insecurity — especially for women

Chronic violence has been a great impediment to social integration in Nairobi. Amnesty International decried the high level of insecurity in Nairobi's slums in a recent report entitled *Insecurity and Indignity: Women's Experiences in the Slums of Nairobi*. Through brutal first-hand testimonies, the report revealed the trauma, pain, and desperation women experience in order to access basic services such as communal toilets and bathroom facilities. One resident of Kibera, Wanjiku, lost a tooth in a terrible ordeal. "It was around 8 pm and I needed to use to the toilet. As I walked towards one, I saw a group of men, one of whom I recognized so I knew they would not do anything to me," Wanjiku said. "I called out the name of the man I knew and was surprised when he was the one who held me while the others tried to undress me. They beat me up because I was screaming and one of them knocked [out] my tooth. My screaming saved me because people came to my rescue as one of the men was removing his trousers." This,

according to the report, has made women become prisoners in their own houses at night and sometimes well before it is dark. Due to the long distances between their houses and the toilets, some women resort to using "flying toilets" (plastic bags thrown away after use instead of a toilet) hence increasing the risk of illness.

But sometimes women are not even safe in their own homes. "It was two years ago when three young men stormed into my house, ransacked it and raped me in turns," said Mama Joseph, a kiosk owner in Kibera. "I pleaded that I was old enough to be their mother but they could hear none of my pleas. I realized they were indeed determined in their mission. I disclosed to them that I was using anti-retroviral drugs to sustain myself but they could not listen." After the rape, which lasted an hour, the men stole her household items and left (Amnesty 2010; *Daily Nation*, July 7, 2010). Unfortunately Mama Joseph's story is not unique.

Such incidents are compounded by the complacency of the police and the fact that there are no police posts and police patrols in most of the slums. Police frequent the slums only when arresting illicit brewers in order to extort money from them. This has made slum residents lose confidence with law enforcement agents. "People have become demoralized and have resorted to using their own devices to ensure their own security," lamented Muturi, a Kibera resident. "We have community policing but it isn't effective. The information volunteered to the police on criminal activities is leaked to criminals who later come to threaten residents for betraying them to the police. " This has made criminal gangs take advantage of the situation by claiming to provide security to the residents. The gangs demand protection fees from the poor residents and those who refuse to pay risk being killed or having their houses burnt. In October this year, the government gazetted 33 criminal gangs and warned the public against dealing with them in any way (*East African Standard*, October 20, 2010). Eighteen of these gangs operate in Nairobi slums and were responsible for the eviction of people from their houses at the height of the post-election violence. Today, their members continue to control many houses, dictating who occupies them. Members of the public living in such houses are forced to pay rent to the group. The disappointment, the helplessness in the hands of criminal gangs, makes slum residents feel excluded. Maintaining the security of all individuals and their living environment is therefore paramount in creating a feeling of inclusion and an atmosphere of participation in society.

> ### Slum residents lose confidence with law enforcement agents ... "The information volunteered to the police on criminal activities is leaked to criminals who later come to threaten residents for betraying them."

Lack of good governance/leadership

Poor leadership and lack of good governance are other major obstacles to social integration in Nairobi's slums. In terms of governance, the slums fall under the Nairobi City Council (NCC). However, the performance of the NCC in resolving the problems in informal settlements has been unacceptable because of corruption, lack of consultation, poor leadership and mismanagement. According to the East African bribery index released by Transparency International in July this year, NCC was ranked the second most corrupt public sector organization in Kenya (Transparency International 2010). Incidents of financial mismanagement within the executive are rampant. For instance, in October this year, the mayor of Nairobi was brought to court for allegedly acquiring Sh283.2 million (US$3.5 million) from the Ministry of Local Government claiming it to be the purchase price for cemetery land at Mavoko Municipality, Machakos District. The graft conspirators are alleged to have inflated the cost of the land, hastened the release of the money, and paid the seller about a third of the quoted price before sharing the balance among themselves. The mayor was forced to step down (*Daily Nation*, October 26, 2010).

Lack of consultation has also created a condition where the majority feel excluded from decision-making processes. "We are not consulted when decisions on development are being made. For instance, we know very little on how Community Development Fund (CDF) is being utilized. We only see projects, some very irrelevant, coming up and we are left wondering who approved them. The people we elect do not come to us for consultations before they undertake a project in our area," lamented Wanyama, a Korogocho resident. In October this year, an attempt by the City Council to increase parking spaces offered by the council was challenged in court for failure to consult and to deliver services. "We are not against increasing parking fees but the manner in which it was done and the lack of consultations," said Mr Mutoro, the Chief Executive of Kenya Alliance of Resident Associations (Kara). Kara cited lack of security and poor upkeep of parking lots as some of the concerns and that the increased parking fees should be

matched by tangible service delivery (*Business Daily*, October 30, 2010). In June this year, a high court ruled that the city council should not collect rates/taxes from more than 3000 traders in Eastleigh division in Nairobi because it had failed to provide requisite services commensurate with the huge taxes and rates remitted by the business community (*Alshahid*, June 18, 2010). Eastleigh is one of the filthiest and dirtiest divisions in Nairobi. Its roads are impassable; heaps of uncollected garbage are everywhere; a poor drainage system causes waste from stinking lavatories to flow over paths and roads.

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The majority feel excluded from decision-making processes ... This eventually makes them feel as though they are not part a system. When people are not consulted they stop participating.

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Corruption and the failure to consult and deliver services to the disadvantaged in slums results in further exclusion and marginalization. Corruption denies the rightful people access to resources, opportunities and power. This eventually makes them feel as though they are not part a system. When people are not consulted they stop participating, choose to remain silent and deny existing problems, rather than face and address them. In order to create an inclusive society, therefore, the city council must be accountable to the people, consult and reflect the needs and concerns of the disadvantaged and those who are not included.

How to build an integrated society

Access to accurate and timely information for slums residents is a key to social integration. A lack of information often leads to doubts, suspicion, inflammatory statements, accusations, and ultimately, exclusion and conflict. This is the case in the informal settlements of Nairobi. The detachment between the civic leaders and the residents has given rise to political and ethnic rhetoric that has tended to overshadow positive images for a socially integrated society in the slums. We need to understand what the slum dwellers are doing to promote a socially integrated society. This is because in order to realize a socially integrated society, we need to build on the positive values latent in the slums, and have those values shared and understood by every member of society. Such values include respect for human rights, good neighbourliness, civic responsibility, accountability, good leadership, tolerance and respect for diversity.

The following actions may be among those that will help to realize social integration in Nairobi's slums:

- Respect for the rule of law. Every resident, no matter what his or her economic resources, political status or social standing, must be treated equally under the law.
- Freedom for people to express diverse views and develop alternative ideas. Members of society must have the confidence to engage and interact with each other and to build mutual trust while acknowledging their differences.
- Open dialogue among all communities and social groups represented in the slums.
- A deliberate attempt to learn and understand different cultures, values, and perspectives of various social groups as a method towards creating unity while managing diversity. This is especially important given the cultural mosaic in Nairobi's slums.

- Efforts to reduce the socioeconomic disparity between the rich and the poor.
- Capacity building and intensive education to foster an understanding of a just society, good governance and effective leadership.
- Active participation in civic, social, economic and political activities by individuals at all levels.
- Dissemination of relevant information such as what a community owns, generates or benefits from.
- Effective use of the media and effective partnerships with policy makers to formulate an agenda for a just society.

The possibility of such actions could be like a magnet drawing society towards a better future. A society with no vision for the future indicates a society in decline. Societies that maintain a unity of purpose, or a shared common goal embraced by the community, and that encourage broad-based stakeholder participation in the formulation of that goal, will be more socially integrated as every member will be working towards a unified objective.

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A Gordian Knot of Challenges:
Africa's Large Cities under Pressure
by J-P Thompson

Introduction

On August 10, 2010 a fire swept through the Kennedy Road shack settlement in Durban, South
Africa. It left thousands of poor people homeless. The previous fire to sweep through the
Kennedy Road shack settlement claimed four lives. The **Abahlali baseMjondolo (Shack
Dwellers) Movement** reported on this latest incident:

> If electricity, water and adequate housing were provided in the Kennedy Road
> shack settlement these recurring shack fires could have been prevented… When
> the state refuses to provide the poor with electricity and then violently disconnects
> us from electricity when we connect ourselves it is sentencing us to burn… The
> poor in Durban have been abandoned to fire, left to burn, because we do not count
> in this city.[1]

This glimpse into the reality facing shack dwellers in Durban is mirrored across the continent.
More than 3,000 shack fires occur in South Africa alone, killing around 100 people a year.[2]
Overall, UN Habitat estimates that all manner of urban environmental problems kill an estimated
one million Africans each year[3] and disrupt the lives of millions more. Alongside urban
environmental problems, African cities face a multitude of challenges:

- **Housing** , which is grossly inadequate;
- **Living conditions** , which divide cities into haves and have-nots, many of whom lack
  clean water and electricity;
- **Employment** , which sees formal economic sectors waning and being replaced by
  informal sectors;
- **Governance** , which requires major improvements in central and local governments;
- **Environment** , which encompasses huge pollution and degradation problems in
  developing cities; and
- **Food security** , which necessitates finding new ways to feed the large numbers of people
  moving from the countryside to the cities.

Over the next five months *At Issue Ezine* will examine the urban stories of Kinshasa, Nairobi, Lagos, Cape Town and Johannesburg. This editorial, after exploring urban growth rates, will examine some of the issues that are increasing the pressure on urban centres. It will also introduce potential antidotes for African cities that might abate an otherwise grim future.

Urban growth rates: historical and demographic overview

European colonialism maintained stringent regulations that governed native populations' access to urban land. Africans did not have a "right to the city" and those who worked in cities were largely viewed as temporary residents in the service of colonial administrators. Africans were forced to live in desperate conditions on the edge of cities. Apartheid is the most extreme example of urban disenfranchisement through the State criminalizing urban migration and brutally displacing a million Africans from urban centres. Almost everywhere, the 1960s brought national independence movements and the accompanying civil turmoil. This triggered exponential urban growth. For example, after seven years of colonial warfare in Algeria, the population of Algiers tripled between 1962 and 1964 as the "bidonvilles" or shantytowns absorbed the displaced rural populations. In other places, like the DRC, independence brought leaders like Mobutu who kept control centralized and who imposed virulent economic and taxation policies on the rural population forcing them to give up their agricultural livelihoods and migrate to urban centres to seek jobs. As for South Africa, Rian Malan poignantly captures the disintegration of apartheid laws in relation to Cape Town which saw its black population triple between 1982 and 1992:[4]

> "[T]he hated pass laws were scrapped, it was as if a distant dam had broken, allowing a mass of desperate and hopeful humanity to come flooding over the mountains and spread out across the Cape Flats. They came at a rate of eighty, ninety families a day… Within two years, the sand dunes had vanished under an enormous sea of shacks and shanties."[5]

These examples illustrate the urban growth seen after independence which eventually slowed to become a steady flow of rural to urban migration. In addition, massive population displacements were driven by sporadic events like armed conflicts, economic shocks and natural disasters. Over time, this migration would result in most countries witnessing an urban growth that was double the natural population growth rate. The extent of the urban growth can be witnessed in examples of urban population changes in African countries between 1950 and 2001 (Table 1).

Table 1: Urban population changes in selected African countries[6]
(Source: Machumu 2001: 4; Sebastian 2006: 11)

Country	Urban population, 2001 (000)	% of population in urban areas (level of urbanization)		
		1950	1990	2001
Kenya	10,751	5.6	23.6	34.4
Mozambique	6,208	2.4	26.8	33.3
DRC	16,120	19.1	28.1	30.7
Gabon	1,038	11.4	45.7	82.3
Egypt	29,475	31.9	43.9	42.7
Libya	4,757	18.6	82.4	88.0
South Africa	25,260	43.1	49.2	57.7
Botswana	768	0.3	23.1	49.4
Nigeria	52,539	10.1	35.2	44.9
Cote d'Ivoire	7,197	13.2	40.4	44.0

Despite this growth, Africa currently remains the least urbanized region in the world. But for how long? In the early 1990s, two-thirds of Africans still lived in rural areas. In 2007, cities across the continent accounted for 38.7% of the total population or 373.4 million urban dwellers. It is expected that by around 2030, Africa will have entered its "urban age," when half of the total population will be urban dwellers (759.4 million). And by 2050, it is projected that just under two-thirds of Africans will live in urban areas (1.2 billion). In brief, despite a slowing growth rate, within the time-span of approximately 60 years there will have been almost a total reversal of the rural-urban balance.[7] Major cities will account for a third of the urban growth rates across Africa. Moreover, it is the "second-tier" cities, with populations of less than 500,000 that will account for two-thirds of all urban growth rates.[8]

In 1950 only two cities (Alexandria and Cairo) had populations of more than one million inhabitants. By 2005, there were 43 cities with at least a million people and an additional sixteen cities are expected to reach this benchmark by 2015. Lagos is a prime example of a megacity that has experienced meteoric urban expansion. In 1950, Lagos had 300,000 inhabitants; in

2004 it had a population of 13.4 million. This means it is now over 40 times its original size.[9] In addition, local estimates report that the city welcomes 6,000 newcomers a day.[10] In fact, Lagos goes beyond the traditional definition of a city. It is an agglomeration that is at the heart of an urban corridor across West Africa connecting with neighbouring towns and cities like drops of mercury. The OECD reports that "by 2020, this network of 300 cities larger than 100,000 will have a population comparable to the US east coast, with five cities of over one million… and a total of more than 60 million inhabitants along a strip of land 600 kilometers long, running east to west between Benin City and Accra."[11]

The Lagos megapolis is one of three "urban development corridors" in Africa. The other two are the North Delta Region of Egypt (the urban network including Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said and Suez) and the Gauteng Urban Region of South Africa (Johannesburg, Tshwane/ Pretoria and Emfule/ Vereeniging). In these cases, the symbiotic melding of urban areas and regional peripheries is creating a landscape that is neither rural nor urban but a hybrid version of both, "wherein a dense web of transactions ties large urban cores to their surrounding regions."[12] In the case of Lagos, "it probably will also be the biggest single footprint of urban poverty on earth."[13]

Poverty and urban growth

Historically, urbanization had been determined by the onset of industrialization and subsequent socioeconomic transformation. This is not true of Africa. African urbanization is a process driven by poverty. First there is the poverty that drives people from rural areas to the city. Migration from rural areas is propelled by a number of economic, political, social and security-related reasons. For instance, agricultural policies of post-colonial governments and international institutions have placed excessive demands on farmers by forcing them to sell their crops at below-market-value or imposing higher taxes. Natural disasters, like droughts and famines, as well as man-made wars, can also uproot entire communities who are forced leave their land. Add to this mix of factors the notion that governments are seen to be spending more on public services in cities on health, education and infrastructure improvements. It is unsurprising that cities seem to offer a promise of a better life and a route out of impoverishment for rural families. In the end, however, the urban promise holds true only for the political and economic elites. Upgrades occurring in cities generally do not benefit incoming migrants who are left struggling on the periphery with few prospects for economic integration. Therefore, the breadth and depth of poverty within the cities is fuelled by the growing number of people living there and the lack of adequate urban planning to absorb this growth.

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Although 55% of the continent's GDP originates in cities, 43% of urban residents live below the poverty line. This figure reaches 50% in some regions such as West and Central Africa.[14] With the predicted future growth of African cities in mind, these figures will worsen given the extent of urban poverty. Urban poverty is not driven by a linear set of issues but rather a complex, inter-related set of factors and pressures that originate both from the micro-level (e.g., local factors like access to safe drinking water) and the macro-level (e.g., broader spheres of influence like government policies). This a miserable Gordian knot for many millions of urban Africans. There are three broad strands that make up this knot.

Housing pressures

Urban poverty is most visible when dealing with the issue of housing. The term "slums" conjures up images that proliferate in today's media of unsafe shanty towns built out of wood, corrugated iron, mud bricks and plastic sheets. UN-Habitat estimates that in 2000, on average, about 70% of all African urban dwellers lived in slum housing. Available data revealed that in eight countries, 90% of urban residents lived in slum housing (Ethiopia, Central African Republic, Niger, Chad, Togo, Guinea, Mozambique and Madagascar).[15] Table 2 identifies Africa's largest slums and the number of people who reside there.

Table 2: Africa's largest slums (2005)[16]

Name (City)	Millions	Name (City)	Millions
1) Ajegunle (Lagos)	1.5	8) Kibera (Nairobi)	0.8
2) Soweto (Gauteng)	1.5	9) City of the Dead (Cairo)	0.8
3) Cape Flats (Cape Town)	1.2	10) Inanda INK (Durban)	0.5

4) Pikine (Dakar)	1.2	11) Manshiet Nasr (Cairo)	0.5
5) Imbaba (Cairo)	1.0	12) Mathare (Nairobi)	0.5
6) Ezbet El-Haggana (Cairo)	1.0	13) Agege (Lagos)	0.5
7) Cazenga (Luanda)	0.8	14) Masina (Kinshasa)	0.5

The concept that "housing is a verb" signifies the constantly shifting nature of the issues slum residents have to face and balance continually. In other words, "the urban poor have to solve a complex equation as they try to optimize housing cost, tenure security, quality of shelter, journey to work, and sometimes, personal safety."[17]

The crux of the housing problem is the issue of land rights. The dawn of independence in many countries triggered a population rush to claim their "right to the city." However, this did not necessarily translate into a right to the land. Many post-colonial elites kept the same zonal restrictions and segregation policies of their colonial masters, separating the emerging African professional classes from the poorer masses. For example, in Luanda, Angola, the political elites and the wealthy inherited the Portuguese-built "asphalt city," whereas the edge of the city housed the poor in settlements called "musseques." These settlements would become massively over-crowded with thousands of refugees during the ensuing civil war. However, these settlements are viewed as temporary by residents who cannot prevent the government from "tidying up the city" by carrying out forced removals of communities and destroying thousands of homes. SOS Habitat estimates that at least 6,000 families lost their homes between 2000 and 2007 and received minimal compensation at best.[18]

This pattern of government abuse is replicated throughout the continent. The most widely reported recent example is, "Operation Murambatsvina" (Drive out the Filth) perpetrated by the Zanu-PF government in Zimbabwe in 2005. Among other devastating results, more than 500,000 people lost their housing across the country. Some urban centres lost as much as 60% of their housing stock. The government denounced these settlements as illegal, even though families had been living in these areas for decades.[19] Operation Garika/Hlalani Kuhle (Live Well), a government program to re-build housing for the displaced population, has apparently been discontinued and was reported to have helped only Zanu-PF sympathizers and government civil servants.[20]

Another example of a government trampling over land rights is happening at the time of writing in Chad. More than 10,000 people are facing forced evictions from the neighbourhood of Ambatta in the capital city N'Djamena. The Deby government is supposedly planning on building social housing in the area, despite previous assurances to residents that the area was protected. No compensation will be offered to displaced residents, some of whom have lived and worked there for over 20 years.[21]

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Slum areas on the periphery of urban centres generally consist of informal settlements that have no clearly defined legal status. Therefore, the slum dwellers have no legal documentation to support their residency. This means residents do not have security of tenure and are left to the mercy of governments who can pursue evictions with little fear of reprimand because the poor do not possess the political clout to hold the government accountable.

Environmental pressures

Compounding the problems of impoverished housing and derisory land rights are the squalid conditions that are synonymous with the poverty of slum settlements. A lack of clean drinking water, inadequate sanitation facilities that help the spread of numerous diseases, along with overcrowding, the increased use of motorized transport and hazardous energy supplies, among other factors, all contribute to detrimental living conditions. These pose a constant threat to the lives of millions as well as causing natural environments to degenerate. As slum areas continue to expand in a haphazard fashion with little or no urban planning and as the population in these areas continues to grow, an ever-increasing demand on resources and services already stretched beyond capacity is created. Safe drinking water is a case in point.

At first, access to safe drinking water in recent years seemed to be improving. For example, UN-Habitat estimated that 26 out of 54 countries are on track for meeting the MDG drinking water supply target. Also, 245 million Africans gained access to improved drinking water between 1990 and 2006. However, because of population increases the number of people without access to

improved drinking water actually increased from 280 million in 1990 to 341 million in 2006.[22] In Uganda, for example, although the urban population without access to safe drinking water declined from 20% in 1990 to 13% in 2004, the number of urban households without a residential piped water supply increased from 76% to 93% in the same period. The lack of residential supply has been shown to be linked to increases in unplanned settlements in urban centres and the accompanying population growth.[23] Two outcomes arise from this situation. Firstly, slum residents have to pay more for their water. Secondly, because the cost is prohibitive, more people have to rely on unsafe sources risking exposure to more water-borne diseases. In the slums in Kampala, the Ugandan capital, water costs three times more than it does in planned neighbourhoods. Additionally, this leads to a situation of profiteering where entrepreneurs can exploit municipal water sources and sell it on to slum residents at exorbitant costs. Many residents have little choice but to draw water from unsafe sources, resulting in frequent outbreaks of various diseases like cholera and dysentery.[24]

The other problem is the immediate danger to potable water posed by the pollution and waste products that can contaminate water sources. In this respect, it is not an exaggeration to say that many African cities are drowning in their own refuse. A lack of even the most basic sanitation facilities, like adequate pit latrines, is creating health crises for millions of people in urban centres. Sanitation deficits were inherited from colonial times, when the controlling empires ignored the need for infrastructural upgrades like drainage and sewage systems for the local populations. However, this situation of neglect has largely continued in the intervening years—so much so that according to the Mercer Index on Health and Sanitation, 16 out of 25 of the world's dirtiest cities are African. The extent of the filth and refuse is inescapable and is creating a social and economic nightmare. For example, the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, ranks sixth on the list and "faces one of the worst sanitation problems on both the continent of Africa as well as in the world. The lack of adequate sanitation programs results in infant mortality, low life expectancy and the transmission of water-borne diseases."[25] No other continent is as well represented on this Index. Contributing to this are the inadequate and sometimes harmful policies of different levels of governments and institutions.

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Policy pressures

Cities are essentially economic vehicles. Cities possess the physical, financial and intellectual resources that can be used to spur and sustain economic growth and prosperity for a country. The levels of urban poverty witnessed in African cities indicate that this dynamic is largely missing. In fact, negative economic factors, like inflation, falling wages and price increases, have actually contributed to urban population growth. This is paradoxical, but in African cities physical, financial and intellectual resources are massively under-utilized or often criminally-utilized. In many respects, this situation can be attributed to policy failures at the national, municipal and institutional levels.

African states have failed their cities. The *laissez-faire* approach to urban planning has ensured that slum settlements have expanded beyond control. With this, governments have no incentive to provide sufficient and adequate housing stock for their population. Furthermore, governments can ride roughshod over legitimate claims to land, such as egalitarian communal landownership, in preference of market forces that will generate profit. So, selling land to line the pockets of government officials will either turn ordinary landowners into renters or may force existing inhabitants to move to another poor settlement in the city which increases the density of population in that area and creates an additional strain on resources. In any number of countries —Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Egypt, to name a few—examples exist where the poor urban majority are held hostage by a minority of unscrupulous land-speculators that include the wealthy elite, tribal chiefs and politicians.[26]

All the while, municipal governments, often paralyzed by a state emphasis on centralized government, have failed to invest the necessary financial capital into upgrading basic essential services like piped water, sewage systems, refuse collection and electricity. As well, an inability to administer fair taxation policies indicates the combination of corruption, inefficiency and diminished capacity of municipal governments. For example, many municipalities are unable, or unwilling, to assess and collect property taxes, particularly from wealthy landowners. The urban rich are generally reluctant to pay their taxes because of the levels of corruption; they do not believe their money is put to good use. The tax evasion of the rich has even been described as "criminal" by some observers.[27] Additionally, in places like Nairobi, Mombasa, and Dar es Salaam, state governments own huge tracts of land but do not pay municipal taxes.[28] It is often the case that municipalities put emphasis on sales taxes and user fees, which places most of the

burden on the poor and not on the rich. Tax revenues from employment are also well-below capacity, since 60% of urban employment is estimated to be in the informal sector.[29]

International institutions have failed African cities as well—not least, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund-imposed Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) in the 1980s and 1990s whose effects are still felt today. For example, the informal employment sector in cities continues to thrive in Africa, to the point where the UN has projected that this sector will have to absorb up to 90% of new workers in the short term.[30] Formal job creation has virtually ceased in many countries.[31] Formal job creation was not the only victim of these neo-liberal conditional loan agreements. These policies forced governments to reduce their spending on public programs and domestic policies. In other words, "Everywhere the IMF and World Bank… offered poor countries the same poisoned chalice of devaluation, privatization, removal of import controls and food subsidies, enforced cost-recovery in health and education, and ruthless downsizing of the public sector."[32] The focus of many SAPs was to redress perceived biases in national policies that favoured urban centres. For example, national bureaucracies in urban centres, although bloated, were helping to create a middle class. However, the civil service ranks were decimated by SAPs targeting public spending, and forced many in the emerging middle-classes back into poverty. The emerging industrial sector in African cities is another instance where SAPs caused considerable damage. Industries, such as manufacturing, were often assisted by governments through subsidies and import controls. These were largely eradicated by SAPs which put the emphasis on agricultural and commodities export, so that countries could pay for the interest on conditional loans.[33] Undoubtedly, there were many significant problems with national policies before the onset of SAPs, but SAPs did not solve these problems and introduced a whole range of new ones. This included stunting economic growth in African cities, which created unparalleled levels of urban poverty.

Outlook and potential solutions

Ultimately, if African cities continue on their present trajectory with little recourse to large-scale solutions, their future is bleak. One Hobbesian scenario speaks of the dispossessed masses thrown into the arms of extremism by unending poverty, engaging in conflict against their government oppressors. In this world, urban spaces disintegrate into the battlefields of a war that pits the poor against the rich.[34]

If African cities continue on their present trajectory with little recourse to large-scale solutions, their future is bleak ... the most urgent need is to upgrade essential services."

So what can be done to cut the Gordian knot which has placed African cities in the bind of decay and poverty? Arguably, the most urgent need is to upgrade essential services, especially in slum areas, such as piped water, improved sanitation facilities and refuse collection. To achieve this, municipal authorities need to be empowered both politically and financially to embark on a massive program of improving these services. Encouragingly, municipalities are working together on these issues. For instance, the **South African Cities Network** is a partnership of nine municipalities whose scope of work includes promoting sustainable cities, economic growth and poverty reduction, urban renewal, good governance, integrated land management and service delivery, and city development strategies. In pushing their agendas with national governments, local authorities will find strength in numbers.

Beyond investing more power and money in municipalities, national governments need to address the issue of land rights. Most governments have been guilty of breaking promises to the poor, initiating forced evictions and demolishing settlements. This detrimental recurring pattern cannot hide urban poverty, let alone solve it. Slums are not the cause of urban poverty, but rather its most visible symptom. Furthermore, there is a strong case to be made that making land available to the urban poor will stimulate economic development in the cities through construction and entrepreneurial initiatives. To this end, social movements and NGOs have a role to play in unifying and mobilizing poor urban residents to communicate with governments about the urgency of having secure and permanent tenure in informal settlements. Other cooperative solutions that may address the problems of African cities will be explored in further articles in this volume.

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