

# BUILDING AFRICAN FUTURES

10 MANIFESTOS FOR TRANSFORMATIVE  
ARCHITECTURE AND URBANISM

edited by Kuukuwa Manful, Emmanuel Ofori-Sarpong, Julia Gallagher

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# Acknowledgements

The decision to produce this book of manifestoes was spontaneously taken in September 2022 during a symposium in Accra titled “Reimagining African Futures through Transformative Urbanism and Architecture”. Organised by the African State Architecture (ASA) project, SOAS, University of London; the African Futures Institute (AFI) and the Institute for African Studies (IAS), University of Ghana. The Symposium brought together an energetic and brilliant group of African early career professionals thinking and working around urban planning, architecture, spatial politics, and related fields.

We are thankful to all the people who contributed to the organisation and smooth running of the symposium, particularly our co-organiser Dr Innocent Batsani-Ncube and Sunil Pun of the ASA project, as well as Prof Lesley Lokko for not only taking time out of her extremely busy schedule to support us, but also for inviting us to launch this book at the 18<sup>th</sup> International Architecture Exhibition that she has curated in Venice. We are grateful to Anthony Wortsem, Festus Jackson Davis, Patrick Gentilezza and Eddie Abladjei of the AFI and Dr Irene Appeaning Addo of the IAS. We are grateful to Dr Epifania Akosua Amoo-Adare, Arc Toni Asare, Arc Augustine Owusu-Ansah and Mr Eden Tekpor Gbeckor-Kove for serving as mentors and discussants for our participants, and to Lois Naa Kwaale Quartey and Joseph Nii Mensah for taking us on fantastic tours of Accra.

The camaraderie, creativity, and dynamism that characterised the symposium transferred seamlessly to the actual making of this book. We are grateful to our designer David Annertey Abbey-Thompson, and Dr Nadine Siegert and Dr Katharina Fink of iwalewabooks for their enthusiastic support for our vision for this book. Finally, we are thankful to the symposium participants-turned-authors featured in this collection for taking up this challenge to think of, research and write compelling accounts of their visions for the future of architecture, urbanism, and spatial politics on the African continent.

The “Reimagining African Futures through Transformative Urbanism and Architecture” symposium received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 772070). The ERC is also supporting the open access costs for this book.

# Introduction

*“If we get self-government we’ll transform the Gold Coast into a paradise in ten years.”*

Dr Kwame Nkrumah (1951)

One of the most intriguing stories of mid-century political competition in Africa is what has become known as the ‘West African wager’ (Prosperetti). The incident occurred exactly one month after Ghana gained independence, when Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah accepted a challenge from the future Ivorian President Félix Houphouët-Boigny as to which country would ‘develop’ and ‘modernise’ faster.

The wager was about two versions of independent Africa that were realised and reflected in vastly different urban settings. In the Ivorian capital Abidjan, the central Plateau district was quickly and dramatically remodelled around a modernist ideal of high-rise geometric shapes placed in a rational grid-pattern. In Accra, a more pragmatic approach saw colonial classical and tropical modernist structures gradually joined by a mix of modernist styles, scattered around a more jumbled, ad hoc development of the city. Political events and economic performance in the early years of independence both played a part in the unfolding of these urban forms: Côte d’Ivoire’s political stability and economic ‘miracle’ was very different to Ghana’s succession of coups and economic decline. But also important were different aesthetic approaches. Both leaders were utopian and bold in their vision, both steeped in the 1960s ‘modernisation’ ethos, but Houphouët-Boigny’s prioritisation of form was markedly different from Nkrumah’s eclectic pragmatism of weaving the old and the new into a complex symbiosis of urban spatial conditions.

This story sets the scene for our exploration of urban challenges in sub-Saharan Africa. More than 75 years after Ghana’s independence, the continent’s cities are still shaped by colonial planning and structures – in physical forms, planning laws and ideas – of what makes a ‘modern’ city. Fascination with modernism, and suspicions about ‘Africanising’, still form part of the logic that drives ideas about modernisation. The inadequacies of urban structures and infrastructures still lead to grand planning, often through top-down approaches that aim to improve populations rather than consider them. And economic constraints still mean that foreign finance is at the heart of urban restructuring and reform. All this happens within a context where rural-urban migration has put enormous strains on cities throughout most of the continent.

*Emmanuel Ofori-Sarpong,  
Kuukuwa Manful, Julia Gallagher*

This book examines the enormous urban challenges the continent is facing. It critically analyses the logics – colonial and post-colonial – that have produced them. It started as part of discussions between team members of the African State Architecture (ASA) research group at SOAS, University of London in early 2022. We put out a call to young architects, urban planners and policymakers asking for ideas about how to improve urban life where they lived and worked. Fresh, innovative ideas from an up-and-coming generation of urban thinkers about how to reshape the continent's cities have been produced in this process. All of them are assembled in this collection: ten authors writing on cities in eight countries.

We asked applicants to propose “new ways of thinking about the role of architecture in reflecting and reshaping social and political relationships”. Transcending conceptions of Africa as a space for foreign experts to test grand visions, we were interested in what young professionals on the ground were thinking and imagining for their communities. Bold endogenous – albeit far from insular – ideas with a potential for change. These form part of an ongoing critical dialogue of the politics and international relations of architectural and urban development in Africa.<sup>1</sup>

### (Re)Imagining Africa

Some six years before the wager, Nkrumah had promised that within ten years of independence he would turn Ghana into a paradise (Fitch and Openheimer). For this, bold architecture and urban design constituted a crucial component. For leaders like Nkrumah and Houphouët-Boigny<sup>2</sup> state buildings were a signal of political competence and of visionary leadership and became an important tool for nation-building. For example, various leaders saw the modernist architectural language as suitable for the complex ethnopolitical contexts they ruled. The abstract aesthetics of these buildings, without any ethnic iconography, proved helpful in making ‘neutral’ architecture for states, comprising multiple ethnic groupings, forged in the crucible of colonial conquest (Lu). Beyond single buildings or building complexes, large-scale urban interventions became a means of bolstering newfound sovereignty.

1 It builds on Tomkinson, Daniel and Gallagher.

2 For a comparative analysis of the political architecture of these two states, see Gallagher, Mperere and N'djoré.

The most dramatic was the relocation of erstwhile colonial capitals to central and supposedly neutral locations – as was the case in Abuja – to forge united states and rally support for the nation-building agenda (Elleh).

Yet, given the lack of local expertise at the time, but predominantly the lack of access, the most ambitious of these projects were led by foreign, mostly male European architects, planners and engineers. The famous names associated with African independence modernism include Henri Pottier, Henri Chomette, Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew, Rinaldo Olivieri, Karl Henrik Nøstvik, Max Gerlach, Jacek Chyrosz and Stanislaw Rymaszewski, Dušan Milenkovic and Branimir Ganovic. Therefore, the history of heroic ideas and grand architectural and urban visions in Africa is, in a rather bitter-sweet way, the continuation of Western intellectual hegemony on the continent. Most African architectural history scholarship of the era continues to pay disproportionate attention to these European designers, with scant recognition, if any, accorded to the contributions of their African counterparts (Manful).

Despite the bold claims, wagers, and even bolder projects of the early post-independence era, the nationalist promises of an African paradise were not to be. The economic successes of the early 1960s, which provided the impetus for bold visions, largely gave way in the late 1970s to tumbling economies, dictatorships and civil strife. These problems were compounded by the enormous demographic and spatial shifts in many parts of the continent. These included rapidly growing populations, rural-urban migration driven by economic and social factors, and conflict-induced mass exodus, sometimes crossing national borders. But the urban boom for the most part did not bring with it the kinds of economic and political gains that might have been expected. With growing cities came challenges of informality (see Agah – chapter 3) and derelict urban enclaves. Many grand urban visions and architecture were either abandoned or overwhelmed by the inadequate provisions of social amenities and services. Desperate attempts such as structural adjustment strategies by the World Bank or development agencies' programmes did not yield the desired outcomes and in some cases resulted in a worsening of pre-intervention conditions. By the 1980s and 1990s, there was increasing talk of ‘urban crisis’ (Stren), a backdrop to wider discussions about ‘failed statehood’.

The continent arrived in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with much of its potential unrealised – but also with a new wave of enthusiasm. The steady economic growth that many states began to experience, coupled with an optimistic ‘Africa rising’ narrative, brought a new epoch of bold visions in Africa. These included particularly grand visions for new cities – often projected from outside onto the African continents such as Rem Koolhaas' studies on Lagos – similar in some ways to the visionary spirit of the early post-independence era. Many have been pushed along by such global trends as the utopian urban vision of the Black Panther films but also their critique as a US-American unreflected



appropriation of African identities, which provided a jolt to the imaginaries of many creatives concerning what Africa could be. Whilst these are welcome movements, they are, as in the 1960s, dominated by sources off the continent. Take a look at the International New Town Institute website and others like it that display these grand visions (INTI). One rarely finds locally-based creatives in the lead on these projects.

In thinking about African visions of urban life, we are inspired by two artists: Congolese Bodys Isek Kingelez and Nigerian-American Olalekan Jeyifous, both of whose work speaks to cities and architecture.

Working in Kinshasa, from the late 1970s, Kingelez's work was conceived under conditions of the harsh political, social and economic realities of Zaire (now DR Congo) under Mobutu Sese Sekou. His fantastical architectural and urban sculptures, that became known to an international audience through the exhibition "Magiciens de la Terre" in Paris (1989), which he called Extreme Maquettes, were of vibrant colours, expressive geometry; made from everyday objects, but depicting a wondrous, futuristic, utopian city.

A generation later, the work of Jeyifous, on the other hand, resists the inclination towards utopia (but also dystopia). Projects such as Shanty Megastructures can be thought about more as cautionary tales – art as a tool of philosophical reflection on the realities of contemporary Africa (Gibson). His 'Afro-surrealist' approach represents a collapse of the temporal dimension of sci-fi and futurist imaginings. Rather, it is an amalgamation of the past, present and future – an alternative reality clearly rooted in present lived experiences that invites introspection. The work draws heavily on the Afro-surrealist manifesto: "[t]here is no need for tomorrow's-tongue speculation about the future. Concentration camps, bombed-out cities, famines, and enforced sterilisation have already happened... [t]he future has been around so long it is now the past" (Afrosurreal Manifesto).

Far from proposing grand blueprints, these artists provoke grounded reflections on the realities of the African situation. In Bodys Isek Kingelez, we find a creator whose work and commentary about his work is – as Okeke-Agulu opines – ambiguous and even contradictory on occasion (MoMA Live). Inspired by the thoughtful ambiguity of both artists' work, we are of two minds here. On the one hand, his work is sympathetic to the project of Western modernity: the kind of reality, albeit in exaggerated form, that many Africans had hoped would emerge with the arrival of self-rule. The paradise that the independence fighters had promised. Bodys Isek Kingelez, takes up these dashed dreams of the ordinary citizen and immortalises them, as if for a future generation which might be able to implement them. On the other hand, it transcends this longing and expresses scepticism – even a 'flamboyant' critique of the project of modernity. Olalekan Jeyifous represents an unambiguous jettisoning of the early post-independence modernist project and an

embrace of the state of decay and contestation. Using digital tools, he challenges not only Western notions of futurity and utopianism but even those of Africans – in this case, Lagosians. In a sense, the pejorative becomes the material for his (re)creation.

Whatever one's take is on the work of these artists, the chutzpah of their ideas is undeniable. Our contributors are part of this lineage. They have accepted the challenge of daring to dream up alternatives and not be satisfied by the lukewarm promises of current governments, because they are grounded in the realities of the continent. Many of their ideas transcend the typical concerns of built environment professionals to take up systemic challenges that have important policy implications. They are evidence that the continent's youthful population, many of whom have been trained in its own institutions, are creative, imaginative and hold much-needed solutions.

## The Essays

The top-down approaches alluded to earlier – a direct result of the continent's colonial past and subsequent widespread despotism – have led to many African states maintaining a strained relationship with their citizens. This tension is evident in numerous aspects of the built environment, with one of the most prominent being the absence of citizen involvement and consultation in development projects. In our first essay, **Fiona Nyadero** points to this lack of consultation as one of the primary reasons projects are abandoned by their intended users. For her, there is value in effective consultation with would-be users or beneficiaries of various public infrastructure projects, and yet, all too often, the process is rushed and superficial – if it does happen at all. To this end, she proposes an interactive spatial planning website in Kenya, to engage the public. While acknowledging that not all members of the public may have equal access to it, a virtual public platform of this kind could complement other avenues in promoting inclusive and participatory governance at county level.

Closely related to this, **Bamusi Abdullah Nankumba** believes that good architecture and infrastructure projects happen when all the stakeholders understand one another. In response to the dearth of communication and consultation among local authorities, architects and citizens in Malawi, he proposes an innovative remedy: a television programme. This proposal presents an opportunity to educate the public and professionals alike, with the objective of mitigating the tendency of experts to presume that they know what is best for the public. By leveraging the persuasive power of mass media, these schemes offer the possibility of unique approaches to cultivating a more inclusive and participatory decision-making process in the design, construction and management of public infrastructure and architecture in Africa.

For **Korkor Agah**, this quest for inclusivity means that there is a pressing need for a reassessment, in Accra, Ghana, as in other African cities, of how authorities interact with those who are marginalised both economically and politically. Her essay speaks to the perennial issue of informal street trading, which she sees as the unacknowledged lifeblood of many African cities. She points out that efforts to exclude this demographic are reminiscent of colonial practices that sought to remove those deemed undesirable from the city. For Korkor Agah, working with rather than against this group can foster a more vibrant and dynamic urban environment that benefits everyone.

The theme of historically conditioned exclusions, as raised by these contributions, remains pertinent in the ongoing discourse surrounding African cities. In her essay, **Mandisa Lusanda Shandu**, asserts that apartheid land laws in South-Africa produced and entrenched racialised inequities by denying natives access to valuable land. The repeal of these laws notwithstanding, the spatial and economic injustices they generated persist, shielded by unspoken principles that are woven into current legislation. As such, she posits that new laws are necessary and should be intentionally formulated to reverse these historical injustices.

Similarly, **Maxmillian Julius Chuhila** argues that there is a pressing need to confront the colonial legacies of urban planning which continue to haunt Tanzania. Like many African cities, Dar es Salaam and its surrounding areas still reflect the patterns and structures created during the colonial period: privileged urban enclaves surrounded by neglected rural communities. For Chuhila, a truly decolonised approach to urbanism should prioritise the needs of rural communities, rather than replicating the disregard shown by past colonial governments. He calls for a serious rethinking and investment in rural planning and development as one important lever for addressing current challenges. In a similar vein, **Ngonga Kapalu** draws on his experience from Zambia to demonstrate how outdated and inadequate laws are a big barrier to the expansion of affordable, decent housing. To this end, he outlines the legal frameworks governing housing and land in Zambia and explains how these are preventing the country from achieving development goals and discusses ways they might be improved.

The three essays that follow pick up on the theme of housing – a big issue for a continent undergoing unprecedented demographic expansion and urbanisation. The current situation requires solutions that are adaptable to specific needs, and can be quickly and efficiently implemented at scale, in an environment where there has been little investment in decent low-income housing projects. However, **Olufemi Hinson Yovo** warns that without taking into consideration the nuances of local challenges, such projects are likely to fail. Drawing from her experience working on a flagship housing project in Benin, she suggests a blueprint that emphasises the importance of sensitivity to local knowledge, people, politics, tools, programme, climate and history.

Both **Enitan Oloto** and **Tolulope Ajobiewe** offer strategies to address the pressing issues of the continent's most populous nation, Nigeria. Oloto proposes a (re)turn to prefabrication as a way to provide housing at the speeds required in urban Nigeria. Frustrated by the current barriers and lack of innovative solutions, she proposes an Adoption Support Framework (ASF). This is a five-stage decision-making model designed to foster innovation and collaboration around the adoption of prefabrication. For his part, Ajobiewe contends with the challenge of density in the megacity of Lagos. As he points out, this is often discussed as a solution to the challenges of housing Lagosians, but there is little on offer regarding how to achieve it. He suggests land sharing and density readjustment as potential avenues for progress, while emphasising that these should be seen not as definitive solutions, but as concepts to be debated, modified, and adapted to the Nigerian context. Both essays offer key insights that the rest of the continent can learn from in dealing with the question of adequate shelter for all.

In the final essay, **Chan Simon** centres on the necessity of a reformed educational system in the nation-building agenda for the young South Sudanese state. An architect himself, Simon makes the case for decolonising the educational system of South Sudan using a decolonised architectural studio approach. He argues that the core features of the architecture design studio – collaboration, learning through making, creativity and continuous open dialogue – make for a much better way to nurture the creative minds of the next generation.

Undeniably, the issues addressed by our authors bear striking similarities to those encountered by early post-independence leaders like Nkrumah and Houphouët-Boigny. Like those of their forebears, these solutions are similarly about improving people's lives. Yet, their approaches demonstrate a heightened sensitivity to local ideas and necessities, learning from past triumphs and missteps associated with grandiose mega-projects. Moreover, they resist the temptation to turn their backs on the challenges of the older city in favour of the forms of grand visions that are advocated in brand new fantasy cities or even charter cities emerging in several parts of the continent. Rather, our authors suggest that it might be better to try many small changes. Whilst these are more politically contentious, they are better attuned to lived experiences in African cities. The authors argue that the cumulative effect will produce a more significant and sustainable impact than any single, sweeping transformation.

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- 1 Fiona Nyadero
- 2 Bamusi Abdullah Nankumba
- 3 Korkor Agah
- 4 Mandisa Lusanda Shandu
- 5 Maxmillian Julius Chuhila
- 6 Ngonga Kapalu
- 7 Olufemi Hinson Yovo
- 8 Enitan Oloto
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- 10 Chan Simon

## The Authors

**Fiona Nyadero** is a Kenyan landscape architect working with the State Department of Housing and Urban Development. Through the Kenya Urban Support Programme, she has made a significant input to various infrastructure developments within the County government of Taita Taveta. Through her work, writing and advocacy engagements, Fiona Nyadero hopes to contribute to raising the profile of Landscape Architecture in the country. She is passionate about social justice in urban design/planning and climate-responsive design.

**Bamusi Abdullah Nankumba** is an accomplished Malawi Parliament broadcasting officer with a passion for media and diplomacy. His educational background includes a degree in International Relations and Diplomacy and a diploma in Journalism, which have equipped him with a broad range of skills and knowledge. With a keen interest in urban development, he has taken the initiative to develop a TV show to discuss urban building and infrastructure. His work has been highly regarded and he has earned a reputation as a respected commentator on the topic. He is committed to using the platform to inspire change and promote good architecture and infrastructure projects and important political issues.

**Korkor Agah** is a Ghanaian chartered architect, registered with the Ghana Institute of Architects, GIA and the Architects' Registration Council, ARC of Ghana. As a researcher, her main interest is the study of African public spaces. Korkor Agah holds M.Arch and BSc. Architecture degrees, both from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. Her Master of Architecture thesis focused on curating an interactive street corridor on Bantama High Street in Kumasi. She is currently a PhD Candidate at the University of Pretoria where her research investigates socio-spatial patterns of Ghanaian streets in Accra and Kumasi. She is also a lecturer at the School of Architecture and Design at Central University, Ghana.

**Mandisa Lusanda Shandu** is a DPhil Law Candidate at the University of Oxford. Her research focuses on inequality and urban land rights in South Africa. She completed a B.Soc.Sci degree in political science, an LLB, and an LLM in Constitutional and Administrative Law from the University of Cape Town. Mandisa is an admitted attorney and has experience litigating in strategic impact cases involving constitutional-, property-, spatial planning- and housing law, administrative justice, access to basic services and movement lawyering. Prior to commencing her DPhil, Mandisa Lusanda Shandu was the Executive Director and a practicing attorney at Ndifuna Ukwazi – an activist organisation and pro bono law centre that focuses on access to land and affordable, dignified housing in Cape Town, South Africa. Mandisa Lusanda Shandu founded Ndifuna Ukwazi's law centre in 2015 and was the first Black woman to establish a public interest litigation unit in South Africa.

**Maxmillian Julius Chuhila** is a senior lecturer in the Department of History, College of Humanities at the University of Dar es Salaam. He teaches theory of history, philosophies and methodologies of history, environmental and urban histories, research methods and proposal writing. He has published in the areas of theory of history, rural and urban transformation and environmental history. He is currently working on a book monograph titled: Expanding Frontiers: History, Culture and Belonging on the Slopes of Kilimanjaro, ca.1920s–1980s that examines the influence of culture on expansion of frontiers in land use on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro.

**Ngonga Kapalu** is a proficient architect currently living and consulting in Lusaka, Zambia. He graduated with a Bachelor of Architecture from the Copperbelt University in Kitwe and is a registered member of the Zambia Institute of Architects. As an Architect, he has experience in residential, commercial, social and institutional projects with the optimum utilisation of locally available resources. Outside of the office, and for the past eight years, he has spent his free time blogging on a selection of his projects as well as wider topics around Architecture that inspire him (mrkapalucandesigntoo.wordpress.com).

**Olufèmi Hinson Yovo** is polymath creative, trained both as architect and artist. After studying a Bachelor of Architecture and an MA in Fine Arts, in the UK, she received her Masters in Architecture, DESA in Ecole Spéciale Paris. In Abidjan, under a renowned firm she oversaw Benin's leading construction project, 20 000 housings. In 2021 she opened a polymath research-based practice in Cotonou, SAH STUDIO, developing projects from various scales and materiality, celebrating the local context with a focus on decolonizing architecture. She participated in the 14<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, exhibited at the African mobilities, Munich and is the Laureate of the Prince Claus Building Beyond 2023 Prize. She is a tutor at Africa Design School in Cotonou, exploring urban public spaces' possibilities.

**Enitan Oloto** has a BSc. and MSc. in Architecture from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. She also has a PhD in Architecture from the University of Lagos, Nigeria. A full member of The Nigerian Institute of Architects (NIA), Architects Registration Council of Nigeria (ARCON), International Council for Research and Innovation in Building and Construction (CIB), and Modular Building Institute (MBI), she lectures at the Faculty of Environmental Science, Department of Architecture, University of Lagos. Enitan Oloto's areas of specialization are prefabrication, innovative construction methods and materials, off-site construction methods, urban renewal, innovation decision process.

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# Making Consultation Meaningful: Creating a Planning Website to Engage the Public

*Fiona Nyadero*

On a hot afternoon in 2021, while passing by some traders camped right outside the construction site of their new modern market at Mwatate, Taita Taveta County, I overheard a conversation that would prompt this discussion. Normally, the little bits of conversation I happen to overhear put a smile on my face and leave me feeling proud of my work. On that particular day, however, the remarks left me puzzled. One of the traders was commenting on the worktop structures that were being built at the time. She thought that they were a waste of resources. She went on to say that she and her colleagues will not use them and would prefer not to have them there.

The market committee (made up of various members of the community) was involved in the design and planning of this project, which was taken through public participation. This process is required for every project under the Kenya Urban Support Programme (KUSP). I found myself asking: Were they not taken through the details of this project? Did they not endorse it? If they were complaining about the structures coming up, then how effective was the public participation process? Is it not the goal of the engagement to collect feedback to be used to enhance the user experience?

I brought this conversation to several colleagues and was shocked to find out that this is a regular occurrence in markets all over Kenya. An article in one of the local dailies cited that about 32 new markets were constructed or renovated countrywide in the last five years under KUSP. I cannot help but wonder how many of the proposed features in these modern markets will end up unused, despite all these projects having irrefutable proof of public engagement in the design and planning phase.

We need to look seriously at the effectiveness of this process. Several discussions on urban governance allude to public engagement as key to inclusive and sustainable urban development. It is not enough to just preach about engaging the public in infrastructure development projects. We cannot keep having public participation engagements for the sake of checking a box and being done with it. It is not enough to ask whether it has been done. Its quality has to come into question as well.

I am of the conviction that this process needs to be taken to the virtual space. We can leverage an existing medium that has proven itself time and time again, the internet. Allow me to take you to the ecitizen platform for reference. Launched in 2014, ecitizen has been a massive success in enhancing service delivery for state agencies in Kenya. I cannot begin to fathom how strenuous it must have been to process documents such as birth certificates, passports and business registration prior to ecitizen. Shifting these government services online has been convenient for most Kenyans.

Having this in mind, I can confidently propose the TafSIRI Initiative as one part of the solution to our public participation challenges. The TafSIRI Initiative is

a proposed informative and interactive platform geared towards increasing the effectiveness of public participation in infrastructure projects across the country. TafSIRI is a play on the Swahili word 'tafsiri' which means 'to decode/interpret/translate'. Leveraging technology, the project will interpret complex architectural and engineering plans for the public; and then collect and relay public feedback to the responsible entity. TafSIRI will transform the quality of public participation; empowering people to make informed decisions regarding infrastructure developments across the country.

## The Problem

Public participation is one of Kenya's national values and a principle of good governance. It ensures that the citizenry is heard and can take part in decisions that affect their lives. The Constitution of Kenya 2010, provides a foundation for the enhancement of participatory governance in Articles 10 (2) (a) and 232 (1) (d) (PSC, 2015). One of the objectives of continuous and systemic civic engagement is to improve understanding, appreciation, and engagement in the operationalisation of county governance, as highlighted in the County Government Act (2012).

Effective public participation should facilitate communal ownership of infrastructure projects and in turn promote projects' sustainability. The effectiveness of this essential process raises questions every time I am confronted by an under-utilised piece of infrastructure that did not quite hit the mark.

The first problem is that information is often inaccessible or incomprehensible. This leads to poor engagement and then ineffective public participation. I have observed that the quality of citizen engagement in public participation forums in most public infrastructure projects is very poor. More often than not, this challenge is caused by difficulties in accessing proposed plans. The majority of the public, often uninvited to the discussion forum, ends up with limited information regarding ongoing projects through mandatory project boards in construction sites.

A project board shows the project consultants' names as well as their registration details and address. It should also show the main contractor's and subcontractors' names, contacts and registration details. In certain projects, information on funding is also provided. These boards are meant to ensure professionalism in the industry by curbing the problem of sub-standard construction. They do not delve into the project particulars, in terms of the actual design intervention. These adequately provide project accountability; however, they cannot be substituted for actual civic engagement and education.

Even when drawings are provided, there is a challenge for non-experts to understand complex technical architectural and engineering plans and

specifications. While the presentations in these forums are done by experts, to untrained eyes and minds, they are just garble.

Consciously or otherwise, there is often a disregard for public opinion, sadly even during the engagement sessions. This defeats the purpose of the consultation. We cannot keep having these meetings to force-feed ideas to the public and simply stamp the interventions with the 'people's approval'. As professionals and policymakers, we often forget this simple fact that, unless regulated, the public will use the product how best it suits them. This provides the basis for user-oriented design.

## My Solution

TafSIRI has the potential to tackle the following challenges to public participation as outlined by the Ministry of Devolution and Planning (MoDP, 2016):

**Negative public attitude or apathy toward public participation.** A general lack of understanding of the process or likely the lack of feedback from previous public consultations, has resulted in a disengaged public in consultation meetings. The TafSIRI initiative is a civic education platform. Part of its mandate will be to educate the public on what effective public participation is. Furthermore, TafSIRI will collect feedback on Infrastructure projects and relay this information to the responsible government entities. They will be prompted to constantly provide updates on the decisions made with regard to the feedback collected from the public.

**Difficulties in accessing information.** A large portion of the public might not be in a position to access project plans and specifications. Moreover, the information may be difficult to understand. TafSIRI will make use of technology such as computer-aided design and virtual reality to exhaustively interpret complex drawings for the public using the available technology. The use of a website as a civic information, education and communication tool will ensure that everyone, especially within the target group, has access to the information.

**Skewed representation.** Certain groups such as women, youths and persons living with disability are generally under-represented in decision-making processes. The initiative intentionally targets Kenyan youth between the ages of 18 and 35. This is because this particular group of people is not only technologically savvy but also makes up a significant proportion of the population. It encourages youth to take part in the developments in their community that will shape their future.



TafSIRI will strive to be an all-inclusive, responsive website with a user-friendly interface to make it attractive and easy to use for everyone.

**Elite capture.** Public participation consultations can become dominated by a local group of ‘elites’ who can influence the decision-making in their favour, disregarding the public good. Manipulation and coercion undermine the entire process. One of the core functions of TafSIRI is to champion collective common interests, that is, the public good. It gives a voice to the people at the grassroots level, regardless of economic, social or political status. Anyone can participate.

**Inadequate decentralisation.** Most public participation meetings are held at the national, county or sub-county headquarters, which may be physically or economically out of reach of the majority of the citizens. TafSIRI comes in to ensure that the public participation process is accessible to most of the public. The feedback will be collectively presented, thus eliminating the need to travel for people who cannot readily access the consultations.

## Methodology

The TafSIRI Initiative is a civic educational/advocacy, interactive website, with a user-friendly interface to encourage public action. The website is designed to provoke human curiosity and investigation, drawing the attention of both active and passive internet users.

The Initiative will solicit architectural and engineering plans and specifications from various local government offices including but not limited to municipality offices and county public works departments.

Leveraging heavily on architectural visualisation through computer-aided design, the TafSIRI team will then create photorealistic visuals out of the architectural and engineering plans and specifications and avail the visually-interpreted information to the public via the website.

The website will include the following items:

- **About:** This will describe the TafSIRI Initiative, including the project’s background, objectives and expected outcomes.
- **Catalogue:** This will incorporate a map indicating the location of the featured projects for easier identification. ‘Find a project near me’ will encourage engagement. Therefore, this page forms the database entry point of this website.
- **Project:** This will include a combination of technical drawings and photorealistic rendered visuals of the projects as well as virtual simulation

of the spaces. A simple and clear feedback form will be embedded in particular project posts. This page should have a user-friendly interface, borrowing heavily from features in social media. This form will be linked to a data management software that will sort and organise the data relating to particular projects according to the set parameters. A feedback form will be accessible to users who have signed up.

- **Partnerships:** This is a collage of all our partners including the volunteers working on various projects. It will include a call to action for people to sign up and work with us, hopefully growing this into a network of like-minded young citizens willing to better their societies.
- **Contacts:** This will include telephone numbers, email addresses and links to the social media handles.

The feedback on individual projects will be consolidated and presented at the relevant offices at national and county government levels on behalf of the people. These institutions will be promptly encouraged to provide updates on the decisions made with regard to the feedback collected from the public. In this way, the platform will fulfil its role as an advocacy agent.

## Partnerships

This platform has the potential to be fully integrated into our public service systems; to be utilised by built environment professionals in various parts of civil service. The feedback collected on user experience can guide the design of public markets, hospitals and schools, streets, roads and bridges, to mention but a few. In the right hands, there is limitless potential in the application of this platform.

The success of this initiative will rely on continuous lobbying to foster goodwill and participation from the national and county governments, government agencies and authorities (CGT, 2022). These institutions form the primary source of information that will be fed into this database, and these agencies will need to take on board the public feedback it generates.

Other potential partners may include civil society organisations such as the Civil Society Urban Development Platform (CSUDP), Uraia and Code for Kenya.

## Anticipated Challenges

With the initiative fully in the virtual space, there might be low traffic from already disengaged citizens. This will be navigated through the use of a rigorous marketing campaign strategy to rake in the needed traffic. The onus will be on the entity proposing the project to ensure that their post gains traction and gathers as much feedback as possible. The team must come across as partners to foster goodwill amongst the responsible government officials. A comparative analysis on the effectiveness of traditional forms of public participation against TafSIRI should provide adequate motivation for the switch. Moreover, the processed consolidated feedback can form the basis for the agenda formulation for the physical meeting thus saving time by avoiding distractions and topic diversions.

The operational costs of running the program will be a challenge in the long run. Core staff members must include at least three built environment professionals, two software developers, an administrator and a public relations or marketing expert per county. Initial funding will be sourced from startup accelerator programs that offer seed funding. Partnerships with global infrastructure donors are also a viable option since this product will be used to monitor and assess projects being funded. Nonetheless, constant innovation will be needed to improve the program's sustainability.

## Conclusion

The TafSIRI Initiative has an enormous potential to make an impact by empowering people to effectively participate in proposed infrastructure developments. It is an innovative solution to a huge flaw in our public systems, which leverages an already existing infrastructure, the internet. It is transformative in that it encourages impactful, inclusive and people-oriented urban development.

TafSIRI will facilitate inclusive public participation. With enhanced awareness and understanding, there will be an attitude change in both the public and the government regarding this vital process. Through consistent use of the website, everyone will be able to assess and monitor infrastructure projects through the various project stages, remotely. I believe this will contribute significantly towards collective ownership of public infrastructure, during and after construction.

While I think this is an innovative approach to the challenges facing public participation in the country, I would be naïve to think it would solve all of the problems. TafSIRI is just one of many approaches that can be applied to solve one part of the problem. Think of this as a conversation starter. Let us keep asking ourselves, "What else can we do to improve public participation in this country?"

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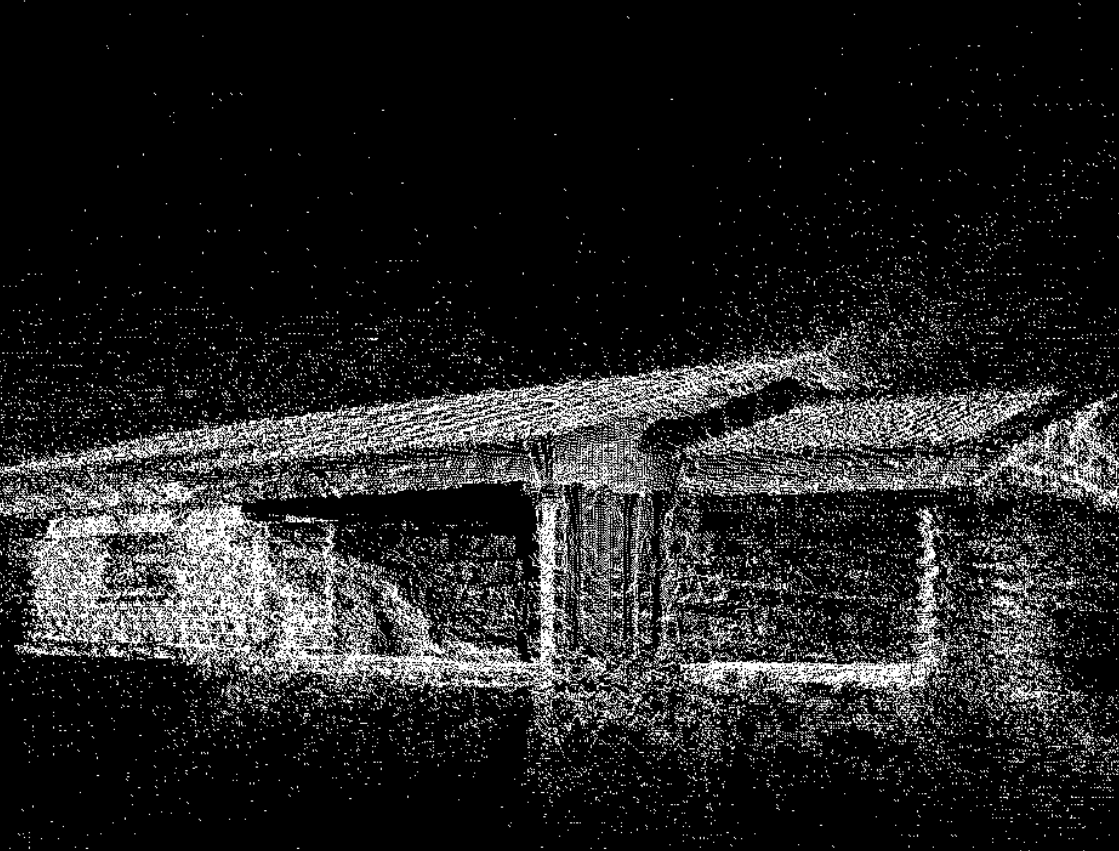
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**Figure 1** shows the user experience at work. Just as the traders prophesied, they abandoned the provided worktops (with lockable storage) and settled on the allocated driveway instead.

**Figure 2** shows what was supposed to be a six-metre-wide vehicular access lane, which can barely even accommodate pedestrian traffic now.

# Transforming Malawi: a TV Show for Urban Building



*Bamusi Abdullah Nankumba*

Urban architecture has great potential for transformation, yet is severely undermined when architects, urban planners, policy makers, politicians and the beneficiaries of building projects don't understand each other. There is a worrying gap in coordination and consultation among these stakeholders. Yet a good relationship among them would support successful projects, better informing experts on what is needed, giving better oversight and opening wider space for creative African design from everyone – policy-makers, politicians, city planners, architects and citizens.

Realising this gap propelled me to develop a programme that serves as a communication bridge for stakeholders involved in building and architecture.<sup>1</sup> The initial idea is to allow architects, policy makers, politicians and planners to interact with each other to develop new ways of thinking and build a new urbanism.

I then thought of broadening the idea to allow everyone to participate in these modern-day discussions: a TV show. As a journalist I see this as the best way to disseminate information as well as collect data.

I created my show as a platform for infrastructure, building and planning discussions. It is a place for practitioners to discuss their plans and for urban residents to have a say on what they want the governing bodies to deliver in their communities. My main objective was to draw the attention of those in policy-making, governance and urban planning and building to issues around informal areas and structures, in order to persuade them to make policies to improve the face of the cities. I hope the show will enhance new ways of thinking about the role of architecture in reflecting and reshaping social and political relationships.

## The Problem

The main objective of this project is to promote good architecture in Africa, in the first instance, Malawi. To start with, good architecture is one of the major drivers of Malawi's economy: a good road network, decent and affordable housing and wider supporting infrastructure contribute potentially to the economy of the country by leading workers out of low-productivity agricul-

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<sup>1</sup> In any democratic nation, infrastructure distribution depends on political will. This is why most governments are rated successful or not depending on what infrastructure they developed during their tenure. Involving politicians, planners and architects to think together and share ideas about architecture is part of a democratic process.

ture into manufacturing and services. This is best achieved with the input of the people who will use it: the appreciation of architecture is an essential element in the creation of good quality in the built environment and should become a matter of primary concern for the citizens of Malawi.

However, to achieve good standards in architecture and building, coordination and co-operation among stakeholders is essential. The communication gap between the stakeholders in building and infrastructure has for decades resulted in poor infrastructural projects and poorly planned cities in most African countries.

A good example is the Police Housing Project (2020) by the Malawi government, which planned to construct 10,000 houses for police officers by 2025. By January 2023 the project had yielded less than 16 percent of its planned output and there is public outcry over outdated project designs and corruption, and criticism that already scarce land is being wasted because of the erection of horizontally-constructed single houses instead of taller, cheaper flats that can save land for future developments.

Among other reasons for the delay and substandard work is a lack of thorough consultation and benchmarking, and the exclusion of stakeholders, in particular civil engineers, city planners and architects during the initial planning stages. One stakeholder told me: "This project lacks many aspects which could be mitigated if there was an inclusive policy or a forum to include all parties, scrutinise the design, planning, land management and futures of building."<sup>2</sup>

The lack of communication has resulted in infrastructure that is not user friendly and difficult to maintain. A particularly egregious example is the parliament building in Lilongwe which was designed and constructed by the Chinese government without consultations with local architects and engineers. The facility was built according to Chinese plans, using Chinese parts and instructions written in Mandarin which is hardly understood in Malawi and make it problematic for local engineers to maintain the building. This makes it difficult to use the building to its full potential (Batsani-Ncube).

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2 Interview with a police officer, May 2022.

## The Proposed Solution

I designed the TV show as an advocate for better quality in architectural practice. I invited land experts, architects, engineers, policy-makers, town-planners and expatriates from other African countries to contribute to the show. They were there to give guidance and share ideas on notable infrastructural projects in order to reimagine important architectural features in the urban areas. The programme also provides slots from which diplomats residing in Malawi can share experiences from their local towns and cities, and discuss what can be learned from them in terms of infrastructure, urbanisation and physical planning.

The TV show is called "Transforming Malawi" and airs on Parliament of Malawi Television. The title is designed to show how good architecture can impact infrastructural development in Malawi and beyond.

Parliament Television is unavoidably a political space and therefore an ideal forum for politicians to engage with citizens. It is also a strategic medium for hosting this type of a programme because it invites viewers from the worlds of development, politics, economics and governance. Such a diverse viewership supports the aim of reaching out to many and impacting them with new ways of thinking about architecture. Architects can take advantage of the show to drive home messages about the need for changes in building practice.

The show focuses on the informal areas that deviate from initial city plans and designs, and poorly located and constructed buildings in the cities. It brings such scenes to the attention of policy-makers and urban planners, stimulating them to come up with ways of improving such unplanned areas.

Mtandile is one among many other slums in Malawi's capital Lilongwe, situated close to Bingu National Stadium along Kamuzu International Airport Road. This informal area has outgrown the initial town plan. This has left the capital city with a notable informal settlement that requires intervention to improve its infrastructural appearance. Historically, such informal settlements have largely been left unsupervised and badly governed by the country's urban development plans. Mtandile suffers shortages of inclusion in public infrastructure distribution. For instance, there are no properly designated access roads such that residents resort to using paths created by run-off water. Besides that, there is no health facility such that patients have to walk long distances to access the services from other townships. The area also has one primary school. With its dilapidated few structures, the school does not cater for the growing population of school-going children. As if this is not enough, residents use a makeshift market; the area lacks one because it is not officially recognised by the governing authorities as a residential area.

Due to its lack of planning, Mtandile is congested, occupied largely by poorer residents working in factories at the nearby industrial area Kanengo, and a large number of residents supplying labour to the main city and other urban households. Mtandile has always been overlooked in terms of infrastructural development. Chief Chibwe, a local leader described some of the problems in the area to me: “These paths you are seeing around the houses, were once waterways, since early 1970s, we could just build anyhow and for free – that’s why we are this overpopulated.”<sup>3</sup>

By focusing on Mtandile in the pilot phase of the project, I aimed to attract the attention of the policy-makers, architects and even the Ministry of Lands and Urban Development (MoLUD) to work on formalising the area by redesigning it, constructing amenities such as access roads, hospitals, markets, schools, stable water and electricity power supplies and modern buildings.

Recently the government of Malawi announced ambitious plans to upgrade some of the slums in the cities, however Mtandile is not on the list. Deputy Minister of Lands and Urban Development, Honourable Deus Gumba (MP) said in a parliamentary address to the First Deputy Speaker of Parliament, “First Deputy Speaker, Ministry of Lands is mandated to provide land, housing and urban development services, to the general public and making sure that physical development happens in an orderly manner”.<sup>4</sup> My objective is to ensure that parliament and the government consult relevant stakeholders when designing and planning urban settlements and infrastructure to achieve the ‘orderly manner’. I want to avoid situations such as the bus terminal in Blantyre city that was constructed without consulting the bus users and operators, as a result neither passengers nor bus operators want to use the facility.

I designed the episodes in two ways. First, a panel-discussion in a studio set-up that gathers different representatives from Mtandile’s local leadership, the city council, MoLUD, architects and policymakers to iron out problems faced by Mtandile’s residents and find new solutions. This is followed by on-sight interviews and follow-ups with the governing bodies such as the Lilongwe City Council chief, members of parliament or the chairperson of the Committee of Parliament on Transport and Infrastructure. The following episodes follow up developments being made in the process of the projects at every stage.

On the technical side, producing a television show involves, first, pre-production where we conceptualise the idea, develop a script and identify the cast

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3 Interview with Chief Chibwe (May 2022).

4 Ministerial statement by the Deputy Minister of Lands and Urban Development, Deus Gumba in Parliamentary address (Hansard 21 April, 2022).

and the crew. The second stage is the actual production, the technical part consisting of shooting and editing content to make a storyline. This stage involves video and audio balancing and levelling. The final part is post-production which involves scheduling the programme, making promotions and finally, airing and broadcasting. By producing the first pilot using my own resources I was able to excite parliament and management to invest in the idea and allocate resources for the programme to continue.

## Impact

Since its inception, Transforming Malawi has been taken up as an important tool in the oversight roles of the Committee of Parliament on Transport and Infrastructure, Ministry of Transport and Public Works, the MoLUD and the Department of Physical Planning and Urban Development. All have used it to promote infrastructure development in non-statutory planning areas through existing laws or drawn on it to propose new laws to improve infrastructure in informal areas in the cities. The programme has also assisted the Committee of Parliament on Transport and Infrastructure by providing evidence of some of the poorly planned and constructed buildings for the committee’s inspection and appraisal.

By providing documented and televised interactions between architects and policy makers among others in the building and urban planning industry, this project also benefits students of arts, architecture studies, physical planning, history and political science, providing them with access to videos that document their community’s past and present while wondering about its future.

There is a team of four members of staff working on the programme, lead producer and presenter which is done by myself, video editor, videographer/camera person and a logistics officer. Every production has potential problems and Transforming Malawi is no exception. We faced problems in the lack of willing and skilled operatives and modern equipment. It was sometimes difficult to convince the interviewees to talk openly about issues affecting them, as many feared being associated with politics.

Parliament TV is a political space and some professionals were reluctant to participate in televised discussion because they do not want to be politically affiliated. This was a problem despite my efforts to explain that the programme has no affiliation with any political party or faction. To solve this, I plan to take the programme to other media spaces such as privately owned radio and television stations to allow free participation from all.

## Conclusion

The communication gap between stakeholders in building and architecture has resulted in poorly finished projects. There is a lack of coordination and consultation from the policy-makers who decide what type of infrastructure is needed and how to fund it versus the planners and architects who design the actual project. Such problems are a feature of many types of projects, from a highway road through the Lilongwe City to an aquarium centre at the Bingu Wa Mutharika National Stadium. I have argued how using a show on Parliament TV can work as a forum for bridging the gap between politicians, architects, town-planners, officials from government and citizens.

Transforming Malawi's pilot programme in Mtandile slum reached out to the landless and gave a clear vision of the future of building in Malawi. In doing so, it aimed to benefit local residents, architects, urban planners and policy-makers by providing them with a forum for discussion and information to support them to reshape social and political relationships. The show provides not only information to the relevant authorities and sectors, but promotes cohesion among the stakeholders, making them realise the potential they can reach by working together in the form of consultations from the beginning of every infrastructural project through every stage until a project is completed. In the long-run, the project aims at persuading parliament to make settlement and land laws that are good for all.

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**Figure 1** Some of the Police Houses being constructed at Area 30 Police Headquarters in Lilongwe, Malawi [www.africa-press.net/malawi/all-news/police-houses-change-the-face-of-jenda-rural-growth-centre](http://www.africa-press.net/malawi/all-news/police-houses-change-the-face-of-jenda-rural-growth-centre) (2022)

**Figure 2** Mtandile road. (Bamusi Abdullah Nankumba May, 2022)

**Figure 3** Mtandile Slum area. (Bamusi Abdullah Nankumba, 2022)

# Working With, not Against Informal Traders

*Korkor Agah*

Informal economic activities are a key driver in the economies of African cities. Although common, informality is ironically not perceived as integral to the urban cityscape of African cities, but rather as a problem to be eradicated. In Ghana, streets in commercial areas are observed to be filled with vibrant activity. There is often a heavy presence of street hawkers who usually perch on the sidewalk, stationing themselves where pedestrians pass to quicken visibility and sales of their wares. Bearing a similar motive, shop owners of commercial ground floors also extend the display of their wares onto the already narrow pavement. This contestation of space by human traffic goes beyond to affect vehicular traffic as people are forced to walk on the edges of the road, competing with vehicles and putting their lives at risk. Within this same limited space, other issues of rubbish disposal, choked gutters and lack of safety and security also linger.

As a result of these issues, efforts are driven towards completely ridding the streets of informal traders, who are generally perceived as a menace. Their activities are rarely considered in the planning and design of our public spaces. Hence, informal activities are often banned in public spaces. This banning is however ineffective since they soon return to sell on the streets again within a short time. Instead of authorities completely shutting down the activities of the street vendor, is it possible to engage them in planning and decision-making? Can African urban planners create systems within context that allow informal sellers opportunities to make a living in the city in a better organised manner? Is it possible to create a street vending manual that assigns the vendor responsibility as a key stakeholder, such that they take better care of the urban space while contributing to better urban public spaces for all?

Informal economic activities are similarly disregarded in other African countries because they are perceived by city planners and elites as a nuisance. The origins and trends of the informal economy are driven by many factors, including the history and politics of African cities (Andersson). Colonial segregation policies, for example, were silently inherited at independence, in Ghana as in other African countries. The redevelopment of African cities into new places of our own was one of the main highlights of the independence era. However, reshaping the city valorised the formality of the elitist-developed neighbourhoods that were so carefully planned for the benefit of the colonisers. Many remain intact to date.

Across the continent we need to explore strategies that will harmonise and protect both the informal sector which involves people and the urban space which forms part of the environment. Despite these problems in a system where regulations are uncertain, creating a street vending manual serves as a guide to make clear the rules that can regulate activities of vending on the street and defragmenting the complications that exist.



The unplanned neighbourhoods designed for ‘natives’ remain in similar condition to colonial times. In Accra, such spaces have formed today’s major informal settlements. These areas are located close to the core or Central Business District (CBD) and have been highly congested over the years due to rapid rural-urban migration. Over 10,000 street vendors exist in Accra, alone. They play a key role in city life by selling wares from tabletops, carts and stalls. Their activities may seem basic, but to some, selling pure water or carrying out MOMO transactions at a transfer point is vital to many livelihoods.<sup>1</sup> Many depend on proximity to the core areas where they are likely to meet with customers. The satellite cities developed during the post-colonial era lag behind as development of infrastructure such as roads and amenities is poorer in the outskirts of the city.

Our quest to resist our colonial masters has rather found us, in our independence, returning to a dependency as we seek solutions in Western codes and manuals which have little understanding of the dynamics of our informal cities. Following their elitist thinking, we have looked at the dynamics of informality as a problem instead of patterns that need to be understood and made to work better. Much of our thinking towards the informal systems is influenced by Western perceptions. These are inclined to look down from above (Hecker), seeing cities in maps, from satellite images or helicopters as in the work of Rem Koolhaas’ project dubbed “Learning from Lagos”. Koolhaas’ approach is to try to tidy things up with formalised approaches (Godlewski).

There might be a better way. Instead of transforming and modernising the African city by attempting to ban informal traders, we need an improved pattern or language that gives meaning to the informal. The apparent chaos, as seen from above, is actually intricate with patterns and understood differently by those who live through such experiences (Ogbu). In-depth research is vital to better understand our cities and the African continent at large. This is the advantage we local researchers have over foreigners who do not immerse themselves in the true happenings but instead decide to ‘analyse’ the context of our cities from a distance. Studying the details of the modus operandi and patterns of our informalised urban framework could help us develop sustainable urban planning that will help our informal economies thrive.

I propose a three-step approach to incorporating street vendors in the development of a street vending manual to make our cities work better. My plan is to establish a balance between allowing street vendors to make a decent living and keeping the urban street space in good condition to make the urban environment safe and comfortable for all.

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<sup>1</sup> MOMO refers to mobile money transactions, usually via the MTN Ghana network.

## Step One: Creating Provision

The first step towards incorporating the informal vendors is to provide for them. In creating proper provision, we need to identify the type of businesses they operate – this could be determined by the wares they sell as observed on wheelbarrows, in push carts, mounted on tabletops or those with more permanent sales points such as stalls as well as those going about their business on-foot.

All vendors market their wares through visibility and accessibility to their customers. They want to openly display wares to attract people passing by. This often leads to the contestation of space which we often experience on a congested street.

In providing spaces for them, vendors must also be made to understand the need to provide enough space for their customers to purchase. Also, space for those moving along the street who are most often potential customers must not be violated from using the sidewalk because street hawkers have taken over.

Other factors to note include average sales made by street vendors from the kind of wares they sell and the costs in starting their businesses in order to know how much of the temporary or semi-permanent spaces can be afforded them for their business. Authorities can then explore providing for different business income scales. For instance, a vendor selling fresh tomatoes may be able to afford an entire stall as against one who deals in selling padlocks who may only be able to afford to use a tabletop.

## Step Two: Creating Access

After creating the necessary provisions, we can consider making the space accessible to the street vendor. In Ghana, one of the main ‘solutions’ as applied to informal vending is banning. No proper space allocation for street vendors exists. This is probably because the perception of the authorities is that the activities of these vendors are chaotic. However, ‘chaos’ emerges because we have not created provision for them. The result is that they organise themselves on their own, which the same authorities find a problem. And this is why the approach of banning has not solved the ‘problem’.

Rather, the hawkers keep coming back and their numbers increase each time they return. Why is it not possible to change the approach? Making informal vendors more responsible by allowing some access could be explored through incorporating the activities of street vending into our city planning.

The population of street vendors often surpasses the space available for their actual operations. Informal vendors are then allowed to trade only in designated spots in order to keep their activities organised. Explicitly designed vending structures based on standardised spatial requirements which are well-communicated to vendors also helps to bring the same order that city planners desire. In some countries, certain areas are marked off as 'restricted' and 'unrestricted' vending areas which give the vendors an opportunity to sell. Another idea is to explore day and evening/night market or shift days so as to cater for the large numbers.

However, I suggest we go further by providing the proper infrastructural provisions that allow informal vendors to operate in an undisrupted manner. We should provide access to amenities such as washrooms, day care for young children since informal economies tend to be female-dominated, credit facilities, places of worship, canteens, storage areas for their goods and taking part in the decision-making process through trade unions.

### Step Three: Maintaining the Policy

After creating provision and allowing access to the street vendors, we need to find ways to keep the system running. One problem with our cities is that we are unable to maintain policies because all the stakeholders are not fully on-board. City planners need to involve all agencies to tackle the issues at different levels if they are to realise better cities for all.

These agencies include the Food & Drugs Authority for consumer safety affairs with regards to food safety, which could help ensure that food vendors provide consumables that meet food safety requirements. In tandem, Zoomlion, which has responsibility for health and sanitation, could engage street vendors in cleaning up at the start and close of business to keep the city clean and encourage the use of dustbins by all. The Environmental Protection Agency should take a role in ensuring that hazards against the environment such as smoke emissions from cooking and burning are mitigated as much as possible.

Financial support is usually a huge problem for informal economies. Savings and loans (susu), banks and other financial service providers could be encouraged to help street vendors with pre-financing to pay for allocated spaces, levies and even the supply of wares in line with improving the general quality of life of street vendors.

The Department of Parks & Gardens could provide some measures to include and maintain urban greenery in public space. Aside from offering beautification, this could serve as a means of decarbonising the street space and

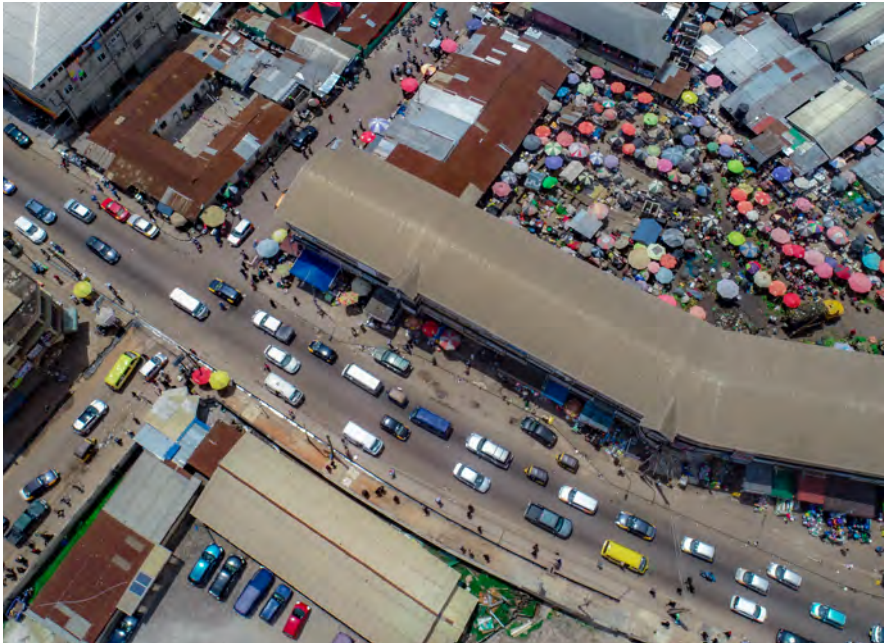
improving air quality for all users, especially the traders who spend most of their time conducting their business there.

Other enforcement bodies include the police who can, in addition to offering protection and safety, help sensitise people on security as they go about their business as well as promoting the concept of self-policing. Urban roads could provide the necessary road safety guidelines with regards to selling safely near streets or roads.

In making policies, all stakeholders, authorities, the general public and most especially the informal vendors need to be involved in the decision-making process. Only then can we make our cities better for all. Instead of leaving vendors and their expertise out of the picture, we need to find ways of incorporating their activities.

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**Figure 1** Aerial view of a typical market in Ghana showing details of spatial organisation

**Figure 2** Street eye-level view of informal structures typical on key commercial streets in Ghana

# Barriers and Bridges: Municipal Laws and Spatial Equality in South Africa

*Mandisa Lusanda Shandu*

One of the most significant mandates of the post-apartheid democratic government was, and remains, the need to address the structural inequalities caused by the unequal distribution of land during the colonial and apartheid eras. When South Africa commenced its transition to democracy, there was great anticipation that the newly elected government would prioritise land reform as a critical constitutional intervention aimed at undoing the apartheid spatial form that had shaped both urban and rural landscapes. Despite such high hopes, the pace of urban land reform has been slow. From a socio-spatial perspective, apartheid's urban logic of segregation and consequential inequality has largely remained intact – “[s]patial unsustainability, spatial injustice, spatial inefficiencies, and a lack of spatial resilience still persist on the landscape” (Massey and Gunter 10). Moreover, well-located urban land has not been adequately redistributed. And so, the material and non-material infrastructures of the past continue to exert an urban politics of marginalisation and contribute to sustaining racial, economic, gendered and spatial inequality.

Infrastructures are generally conceived of as material objects or structures that exist in a physical form, and ‘constitute the form of the city’ (Wafer 85). They are different from other material objects because they primarily function as connected networks – “[infrastructures] are things, and also the relation between things” (Larkin 329). In cities, infrastructures are “both object and relationship, both connection and disconnection” (Wafer 85). They have the power to connect people and communities, or create impenetrable barriers. In the case of segregated and divided cities, oftentimes “the only boundary between vastly different cultural, economic and social realities is a road or highway” (Visser and Horn 25). Consider, as an example of a barrier, several highways separating residential areas and simultaneously preserving large tracts of land for recreational uses, such as golf courses across well-located, or central urban nodes. Importantly, and in the context of this example, the recreational uses of these parcels of land originate in colonial land-use decisions and together with the infrastructures that surround them, reinforce control over spatial relations and access to the city.

In addition to material infrastructures, there is an expanded conceptualisation of other forms of infrastructures – *non-material infrastructures*. Non-material or ‘spectral infrastructures’ are hidden and invisible infrastructures that have real implications for how we conceive of, or access the spatial landscape (Rogoff). Non-material infrastructures are concerned with “non-physical relationships between things” and “include a complex network of material and institutional structures that underpins the functioning (and dysfunctioning) of modern cities ... they are also therefore implicated into systems of power and politics” (Wafer 85). This conceptualisation of non-material infrastructures proposes that infrastructures are complex and can have broader institutional, economic, emotional, ideological and *legal* dimensions. For example, controlled movement and access to urban areas through racial segregation

and social and economic exclusion were central ideological infrastructures in the building of the apartheid city. Understanding infrastructures in these terms might present a useful framing of the contemporary barriers *and* opportunities to practitioners who are actively engaged in challenging the structural foundations of the apartheid city, and are working towards achieving substantive equality through access to urban land. This is because naming the seemingly invisible enables an articulation of the active role of non-material infrastructures in either maintaining spatial divides and persisting inequalities, or in facilitating spatial restructuring and transformation.

In this essay, I explore the idea of municipal laws as a non-material infrastructure that can – in the same way as physical material infrastructures – entrench spatial barriers and spatial inequality; or enable connections as a ‘bridge’ towards spatial justice. First, I discuss certain laws that operate at the local government, municipal level as active barriers to achieving spatial justice in urban areas. I then make brief proposals about re-imagining the potential for law – as a non-material infrastructure – to contribute to dismantling barriers and building just cities.

### Municipal Laws as Infrastructural Barriers

While urban land seizure and segregated spatial planning throughout the colonial and apartheid eras might be described as principally advancing economic, political and ideological aims, it is without doubt that the widespread land dispossession and exclusion across South African towns and cities areas were aided, entrenched and sustained by powerful laws. During the colonial era, colonial powers acquired land through violence and other means to secure and distribute land for European settlers and corporate entities. This era also saw the introduction of a land rights regime and informal land practices that would guarantee an unequal distribution of land as well as ‘race’-based segregation. The land systems and practices that had already commenced the work of social and economic exclusion along racialised lines were formalised early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century through the enactment and implementation of the infamous land laws, namely the Natives Land Act 27 of 1913, the Natives (Urban Areas) Act 21 of 1923, the Native Trust and Land Act 18 of 1936 and the Group Areas Act 41 of 1950. The Natives (Urban Areas) Act and the Group Areas Act described as “ruthlessly rigid and inflexible” (Maharaj 43) were key instruments in the enforcement of apartheid in urban areas. The Natives (Urban Areas) Act empowered the state to control, manage and segregate urban Africans through pass laws while the Group Areas Act entrenched ‘race’-based spatial segregation.

One of the many harsh consequences of these acts, particularly the Group Areas Act, is that “between 1950 and 1991 more than 1 million hectares of

urban space was rezoned on a racial basis” and “an artificial shortage of land and housing” was created (Maharaj 47). Though repealed, these apartheid era land laws have not been matched by a proportionate and transformative land law, the purpose of which would be to squarely inform and regulate proactive urban land redistribution in response to the scale of land dispossession and resultant displacement and landlessness. In other words, whereas the apartheid land laws produced rigid and inflexible barriers, a new urban land law targeted at redressing the status quo through *land redistribution* would act as a bridge through regulating and promoting land access, spatial equality and connection.

This gap, or incompleteness in the law, presents various challenges for work aimed at furthering land redistribution, especially if we are to accept that “inherited legal conventions shape the very terms of citizen understanding, aspiration and interaction with others” (Rosenberg). This is because in the absence of redistributive land laws specifically aimed at opening up the land base through redistribution, the courts, as well as the executive and administration as key role players in the formulation and implementation of transformation-oriented programmes, make decisions about the acquisition, use, management and disposal of land that are primarily informed by private property law notions of individual rights and inherited, legally endorsed market-centric notions of access to land. It is in these instances that the law might be conceived of as a non-material infrastructure that has the potential to act as a barrier to spatial equality.

Consider the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 (MFMA). South African municipal property portfolios are regulated by various laws and policies with the MFMA as the *primary* piece of legislation. The MFMA deals with municipalities’ fiscal and financial affairs and sets out the requirements for managing a municipality’s assets. Section 14 of the MFMA (read together with the Municipal Asset Transfer Regulations) regulates the disposal of a municipality’s capital assets. These capital assets are defined to include a municipality’s immovable property (land). Sections 14 (1) and (2) of the MFMA provide that a municipality may not transfer ownership as a result of a sale or otherwise permanently dispose of immovable property unless two conditions have been met: First, the municipal council must have decided “on reasonable grounds”, that the land “is not needed to provide the minimum level of basic municipal services”. Second, the municipal council must consider “the fair market value” and “the economic and community value to be received in exchange for” the piece of land.

As the primary tool for regulating the treatment of municipal land, the MFMA is not a sufficient tool to undo colonial and apartheid spatial legacies. Nor is it up to the task of facilitating access to municipally owned land for redistributive purposes or achieving the transformative goals of equitable access to land as envisioned in section 25(5) of the South African Constitution, which provides that:

The state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to foster conditions which enable citizens to gain access to land on an equitable basis.

The MFMA simply requires a municipality to establish that its immovable property, defined as a capital asset, is no longer required for “the minimum level of basic municipal services” before it is disposed of. A “basic municipal service” is defined under the MFMA as a municipal service “that is necessary to ensure an acceptable and reasonable quality of life and which, if not provided, would endanger public health or safety or the environment”. This has been interpreted by the Court (in *Oranje Watersport CC v Dawid Kruiper Local Municipality and Others*) to include the “provision of water, sanitation, electricity, roads, storm water drainage and transport” and does not, on the face of it, require a municipality to pro-actively consider whether its land ought to be used to advance redistributive-oriented goals through equitable access to land.

Contrast this to the Government Immovable Management Act 19 of 2007 (GIAMA) which regulates land owned by provincial and national levels of government. Section 5(1)(f) of GIAMA, requires the relevant provincial or national government land owner (or custodian) to take a broader range of considerations into account before disposing of its land, including whether public land can be used:

“(i) by another user or jointly by different users; (ii) in relation to the social development initiatives of government; and (iii) in relation to government’s socio-economic objectives, including land reform, black economic empowerment, poverty alleviation, job creation and the redistribution of wealth.” (emphasis added)

In practice, the lower justification threshold in the MFMA has meant that strategically located parcels of municipal land are regulated and treated as financial commodities that can be swiftly disposed of to the highest bidder, or by way of long-term leases to, for example, golf clubs without conditions to use land to overcome enduring spatial barriers.

Let us return to the golf course example and the City of Cape Town’s renewal of a lease of its land to the Rondebosch Golf Club as an illustration of this. The Club (450,000 m<sup>2</sup>), situated on municipally owned land, is strategically located with direct connectivity to the city centre, hospitals, schools and public transport nodes. It is located between highways and borders another similarly sized exclusive golf course – the King David Mowbray Golf Course. In 2020, Cape Town’s City Council approved the renewal of a long-term lease agreement of municipally owned land with the private golf club. This decision was taken in spite of a public campaign for equitable access to this this

land parcel, led by activists who called for it to be used to promote spatial justice and redress through developing affordable housing (Ndifuna Ukwazi; Reclaim the City). As an initial response justifying the lease renewal, the then Deputy Mayor stated that “the limiting factor in the provision of housing is not land, but funds” (Chambers) – thus centering the economic value, over the potential, redistributive use value of the land. A few years later, and after sustained public outcry about the failure to redistribute this land, the City committed to investigating the Rondebosch Golf Course, together with the adjacent King Mowbray Golf Club for their “potential contribution to promoting inward growth, spatial justice and improved access to high quality open space and to rationalise the provision of public golf facilities” (City of Cape Town 137).

Despite the pressure from activists and a politically motivated turn-around on this specific site, the example demonstrates that because municipal land is not tied to broader, long-term goals for redistribution and societal restructuring, as a point of departure, the MFMA allows municipal land across the country to be treated in the same way as any other capital asset owned by a municipality that does not share the same social and historical value as land, hindering opportunities for urban land redistribution. This is particularly concerning because, as the Court observed in a recent case concerning the state’s obligation to redress spatial apartheid through access to strategically located land,

“[t]hey’re not making land anymore ... land [is] a most valuable resource which enjoys constitutional protection and must not be disposed of without sound reason” (Adonisi v Minister for Transport and Public Works: Western Cape).

Ultimately, through prioritising the treatment of municipal land in economic terms, the MFMA becomes a non-material barrier that favours a market-centric ideological lens in relation to the use of public land, and is dislodged from the possibility of facilitating access to land on an equitable basis or even considering equality and principles of spatial justice when making land-use decisions about municipal land.

## Laws as Bridges

In this essay, I have proposed that making the invisible more visible might assist in an articulation of the obstacles that have contributed to the slow pace of urban land reform, and re-imagining the place of law as a non-material infrastructural barrier or bridge to urban land equality. Framing legal barriers as non-material infrastructures lets us visualise which of these infrastructures ought to be ‘dismantled’ (or reformed), or built with the intention

of undoing colonial and apartheid infrastructures through an imagination of new, more just infrastructures. I have focussed on the MFMA as a law that has implications at the municipal level, however the framing of laws in this way is applicable to other laws (and bylaws) that have implications for how cities are accessed – such as zoning laws, nuisance laws and laws regulating access to, and activities in streets and public spaces. Does the effect of the law entrench racial and spatial exclusion or enable access, connection and inclusion? How does the law contribute to the functioning (and dysfunctioning) of cities? This potential shift from barriers to bridges entails a reconsideration of the principles underpinning existing municipal land and related laws, policies and processes that favour the implementation of established, oftentimes exclusionary property law, market-centred principles without an articulated vision or mechanisms for more equitable uses of urban land. The shift also invites a multidisciplinary re-imagining of the contents of a redistribution-oriented, overarching legislative framework that would disrupt the legacy of colonial and apartheid socio-spatial relations, and instead, centre equitable access to urban land as the point of departure.



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# Confronting the Colonial Legacies of Urban Planning in Tanzania

*Maxmillian Julius Chuhila*

Imagine walking through the streets of any urban centre in the African continent today. You will surely see the manifestations of colonial urbanism that appear in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in similar styles and tendencies. In this essay I present how the colonial experiences have been at the forefront of urban planning and settlement by drawing on examples from Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. As a decolonial approach I indicate that instead of following the colonial legacy of top-down urban planning, we should focus on improving rural livelihoods as a sustainable alternative for African circumstances. This would prevent rural-urban flows and sustain cities' capacities more reliably than trying to densify or gentrify them. In the current approach, planning has been taken as a manifestation of modernism where formalisation of urban spaces occupies the working desks of planners and policy makers sometimes without recourse to local contexts. This has forced urban residents into continuous struggles to assert themselves in the urban areas that are dynamic and unpredictable.

## **The Colonial Urban Experience**

One of the major claims of colonialism in Africa was the civilising mission. Colonialism travelled into the continent with foreign ideas, experiences and expectations all drawing from 19<sup>th</sup> century European developments. They introduced urban formalities of housing and settlement to control the population's movements and monitor urban growth for administrative convenience. For the entire colonial period, planning was a tool to exclude certain racialised groups from urban areas and give privileges to foreigners. This was done not necessarily as a sign of modernism but a strategic way of realising what Ambe Njoh calls "a social objective" of having cities of different 'colours' through official segregations. Official demarcations of where somebody belonged had socio-economic connotations that were well understood by residents.

This colonial imagination of urban planning has continued to shape cities into the postcolonial period and still informs current practices in terms of spatial distribution of settlement. Urban planning in colonial Dar es Salaam was a racialised infrastructure marked by class differences of residents with high incomes, those with low incomes and those with different skin colours. Non-Europeans were stigmatised, labelled as 'uncultured', in order to justify environmental corridors that acted like control and monitoring mechanisms. Deliberate efforts were made to demarcate separate areas for different racialised groups. Infrastructure for sanitation, sewage, roads, electricity and water followed these patterns.

The residents understood this pattern too and adjusted their lives to cope with their urban realities. They avoided areas not meant for them or accessed



those areas with special purpose. In many Tanzanian towns and cities, it is no wonder we see street names like *Uhindini*, *Uzunguni*, *Uswahilini* or Soweto as a recollection of local people's memory of urban experiences. Each of these designations had an implied meaning and practice. *Uzunguni* denoted the prestigious zone for European settlement while *Uhindini* denoted the business centres typically occupied by Indians. Soweto – originating from apartheid South Africa – and *Uswahilini* marked the urban areas where low-income people lived. These were typically unplanned, squatted and lacked basic social amenities compared to the previous two classifications.

Since colonial times African populations have struggled to establish themselves in urban areas by adopting various survival mechanisms. These included expanding to unsurveyed land, sub-letting land and accommodating themselves on the streets and in informal businesses. At independence, people expected to have more inclusive urban experiences where co-existence between those with high income and those without would become fairer. Unfortunately, in Tanzania it was different. With the adoption of *Ujamaa* socialism, society was modelled into the rural economy where the urban centres were meant for employed residents only. The government ran campaigns to repatriate unemployed residents in Dar es Salaam to the villages where they could engage with agricultural activities (Jackson). Similar in scope to colonial experiences and thinking, the urban areas were not for everyone. The rural areas were for the urban jobless but no meaningful investment followed to attract young people to stay in the rural sector.

## Defining the Colonial Urban Space

The 1923 Land Ordinance is at the centre of rural and urban development in Tanzania today. The Ordinance gave power of land ownership to the governor on behalf of the people. This implied that all land use would be authorised by government authorities, to which the occupiers would pay prescribed rents and develop the land on specified terms and conditions. For urban areas this formed the core of developing informal settlements. Despite amendments to the Ordinance, government control on land is maintained and low-income people remain less privileged.<sup>1</sup> Title deeds and rights of occupancy are given only on surveyed areas leaving vast areas of un-surveyed land without formal recognition. As a result, developing surveyed areas is determined by regu-

<sup>1</sup> Tanganyika Territory. Land Ordinance (Ordinance No.3 of 1923). An Ordinance to define and regulate the tenure of land within the Territory, 25 January, 1923.

lations governing a particular area while those in unplanned areas are left without monitoring.

Sixty years after independence, government authorities still follow colonial land planning, a model that produces unavoidable expenses to the majority of the population. Landowners are required to bear written titles over plots of land to which they claim ownership. Land registration was supposed to work for the good of both the colonial government that controlled land division and distribution in Dar es Salaam and the residents who were granted secure ownership. It also helped to control migration into the town and the springing up of unplanned buildings. Registration helped the government to oversee the development of land and evict tenants who failed to adhere to the state requirements. And it helped the government to keep records of who owned what and the amount to be charged as land rent and other government taxes.

The benefits were skewed towards the authorities and this situation remains. This largely unchanged practice has meant that government capacity to survey as much land as possible and distribute it to the needy has remained difficult. It results in developing informal settlements and housing on the margins of the city. The colonial town area has remained planned while the outskirts develop uncontrolled.

## Dar es Salaam: an Administrative and Economic Hub

The colonial government based its administrative and economic hubs in the urban centre. They were supported by reliable infrastructure and social amenities. Rural areas, on the other hand, were deprived of development other than the infrastructure supporting peasant agriculture and reserves of labour for major plantation works. This colonial trend continues in the postcolonial period where all the best services are found in the urban areas. It is one of the reasons that rural-urban migration continues: growing cities are a result of increasing demands for improved livelihoods. According to the United Nations, rural-urban migration contributes 50 to 60 percent of the total population growth rates in Africa. That means it is a major area of focus for urban planning and development (Teye).

Dar es Salaam is a rapidly expanding city in Tanzania and one of the biggest cities in Africa. Population is a major pressure on housing and settlement in everyday urban struggles. It is the major business centre of the country and attracts thousands of migrants annually who are in search of improvement to their fortune. Formal and informal activities both shape the day-to-day realities of the city and act as pull factors for those coming from upcountry.

New migrants find themselves trapped in poor housing and jobs just to give them a foothold in the town. As people want to belong to the urban space they use whatever possible means to establish settlements that are temporary or permanent that lead into the growth of unplanned urban experiences. What matters to needy residents is not the quality of housing but their presence in the town to grab urban opportunities.

Newcomers start with whatever housing is available to maintain themselves and later on move into building houses for themselves. Expanding settlement areas shift around with the value of land and building costs. A large part of Dar es Salaam's housing is established in informal areas because planning and financial obligations in planned areas do not keep pace with needs. Unsurprisingly, expansion into cheap areas allows individuals more freedom to develop whatever structures they want; as a result, most of the new building takes place in unplanned areas.

During the colonial period, such expansion responded to racialised structures and compositions. Now rapid population increases and the inability of government authorities to support it compounds the trend. Preventing informal settlement requires the government to provide standard housing or cheaply available surveyed areas and conditions for development. Because the government does not do this at a speed that corresponds to demand, informality develops unchecked and lives on as the city's defining feature. Unless we embark into new considerations of urban development, the current state of urban housing and settlement would be everlasting.

## 'Colonised' Urban Planning

Since independence, urban planners have followed similar logics as those of their colonial predecessors. Colonial ideas continue to determine urban aesthetics and formalities in African cities. Unfortunately, African urban experiences are different from those of most cities in the developed world. Informalities across the continent dominate real life experiences and reflect the nature of economics for the majority of the people. Sixty years after independence, living at the urban centre still determines economic class level, if at least no longer racialised lines (Mercer). Consequently, urban centres remain the catalysts for cultural change, while the rural areas, held apart, continue to be shaped from the centre and look towards it enviously.

In his narrative of postcolonial Dar es Salaam, Andrew Ivaska shows the role of urban centres in maintaining hybrid cultures in contrast to rural experiences where people are better integrated culturally. As part of a lasting solution to urban congestion, improving the rural sector is key to encouraging people in village life. Improving rural social services, providing agricultural subsidies

and guaranteed crop markets is a better way to sustain urban making than concentrating on the urban areas directly. Urban areas are the end-points of the problem and they have no control over it. To find a solution to this increasing problem we must focus on the core of it: improving rural conditions, the source of rapid urban population flow. Focusing on any other urban planning strategies will not sustain pressures long before they become overwhelmed again.

An improved rural setting would provide livelihood options that most people, especially the youth, move to find in the towns. Employment in the rural sector will guarantee opportunities only when it is sustained as a crucial sector of the national economy. Other issues like provision of services like electricity, good hospitals, schools, all weather roads for easy mobility of people and farm goods are needed to make the rural areas friendly. They would help contain existing residents and even invite new ones who now have uncertain urban livelihoods. Deliberate urban-rural migration will only be possible when the rural sector guarantees the sustainability of the options available. For the past six decades it has demonstrated that forced urban-rural movement in Tanzania has been unsuccessful because on arrival to rural areas, people with urban experience feel it difficult to incorporate into rural life (Simbeye). There exists a complete distinction between the two landscapes in terms of opportunities and challenges that make people prefer the urban areas to the rural areas. Government investment will attract willing people into the rural sector who will help in decongesting the urban areas and providing employment to the youth.

## Conclusion

Urban planning in contemporary African cities reproduces colonial legacies, which are perpetuated knowingly or unknowingly. The definition of urban belonging has remained a key factor in determining financial muscle and individuals' capacity to appropriate opportunities and to evade challenges. For the experience of many African town centres, the use of colonial style urban planning has not been successful. In areas where planning laws and congestion make housing provision expensive, it ends up left to individuals to build their own houses. This essay has emphasised that instead of a focus on urban improvement, effort should be put into the rural areas. The rural areas contribute nearly half of the population growth rates in town areas. If they were able to develop their fortunes in the villages, the rate of migration would decrease. It is a mistake to look at urbanism as an independent causality instead of taking it in homogeneity with what happens in the villages.

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**Figure 1** Planned area of Dar es Salaam during the colonial period, near the harbour. Source: Colonial Office (CO) 1069/3/31.

**Figure 2** Colonial Dar es Salaam showing the three zones. Source: Appeared originally in Taifa.

# Building Homes in Zambia: Shaking off the Shackles of Poor Legislation

*Ngonga Kapalu*

The world is becoming increasingly urban, and the level of urbanisation is rapidly changing with 60 percent of the world's population already expected to live in cities by 2030 and nearly 70 percent by 2050 as estimated by the United Nations (2014). This growth of cities puts immense pressure on development targets, specifically those of the Sustainable Development Goal number 11 (SDG 11) which aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. In particular, this goal sets out to mitigate deteriorating living conditions in cities, especially in basic service provisions such as decent housing, water and sanitation.

According to World Bank projections, Zambia has one of the highest rates of urbanisation in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. This urbanisation comes with challenges for the housing sector due to problems with the country's existing policies at state level which make SDG 11 targets almost unattainable. This essay analyses the various laws that govern and foster housing development in Zambia, and the hindrances to home ownership they sometimes create. Zambia has over the years developed policies to foster the development and supply of low-cost, affordable housing for its population especially in urban areas, but the lack of sustainable and relevant laws provides a fundamental challenge for housing development. I therefore propose new approaches towards housing development in policy-making which stand to help Zambia make significant progress towards meeting the SDG 11 targets.

## **Zambia's Housing Development and its Legal Framework**

There are several laws that govern housing and land in Zambia. These are as follows:

1. 2020 National Housing Policy
2. National Housing Authority Act
3. Zambia National Land Policy
4. The Lands Act
5. The Urban and Regional Planning Act
6. The Local Government Act
7. The Public Private Partnership Act

One of the newest policies of the Zambian Government is the 2020 National Housing Policy which aims to utilise housing cooperatives and community-led housing initiatives to deliver affordable and adequate housing. As much as the policy sets out to improve the housing situation, it also adds to the multiplicity of legislation which already exists around housing, much of

which is overlapping and confusing. The goals set out under this new policy could have been easily achieved by simply amending the existing National Housing Authority Act, instead of formulating an entirely new piece of legislation.

The National Housing Authority Act aims to make better provisions for the development and control of housing throughout Zambia. This Act is useful because it oversees the implementation of housing development projects through the local authorities which are appointed to approve development applications. Unfortunately, it does not set out explicit mechanisms – rules and regulations – which should spell out the Dos and Don'ts under the Act, to oversee compliance by the local authorities in their assessment of housing development applications. It is no secret that acts uphold standards only when they are enforced. This inadequacy therefore leads to the lack of implementation in the provision of basic services like water and sanitation, and thus makes attaining the SDG 11 targets difficult.

Other pieces of law have been introduced, but they have failed to improve the situation. The Zambia National Land Policy gives a comprehensive framework for how land should be administered and managed. However, this policy, like the 2020 National Housing Policy, also only adds to the multiplicity of legislation which exists in the legal framework around housing because it merely reproduces elements of the Lands Act in terms of improving housing.

The Lands Act, as the name suggests, deals with all land-related matters and seeks to promote land ownership for all Zambians through the effective provision of title deeds for land which is serviced with roads, water and sanitation. This Act is important to achieving the SDG 11 targets. However, there still is a need for the Act to introduce mechanisms which encourage the periodic updating of boundary maps. This might be the solution to avoiding encroachments and other land-related disputes because the lack of these mechanisms currently instils uneasiness in willing and would-be land owners, and thus affects land ownership for housing development.

The Urban and Regional Planning Act, formerly known as The Town and Country Planning Act, is one of the oldest in Zambia. It provides a comprehensive planning, development and administration framework on urban planning. Unlike the National Housing Authority Act which is concerned with national housing development, this Act oversees the implementation of all manner of national development projects including housing through the local authorities which are appointed to approve development applications. And similarly, this Act does not set out explicit mechanisms to oversee compliance by the local authorities in their assessment of development applications. This inadequacy is what leads to the lack of implementation in the provision of basic services, and therefore makes attaining the SDG 11 targets challenging.

The Local Government Act mainly provides for an integrated local government system and has the principal goal of decentralising functions, responsibilities and services at all levels of local government. What this means is that the Act cannot exist on its own without borrowing from other existing Acts which directly oversee the activities of the different local authorities and the cities they serve. However, for this Act to perform effectively, it needs amending to include compliance mechanisms of all other governing Acts in the housing sector by the local authorities.

Lastly, the Public-Private Partnership Act's main goal is to create opportunities for the private sector to deliver affordable housing and basic public services. While it is important to note that public-private partnerships present opportunities, there are numerous challenges in actualising them. One of Zambia's difficulties in engaging the country's private sector is linked to regulatory inadequacies that the Public-Private Partnerships Act does not sufficiently address, and this is the lack of a welcoming environment to the private sector aside from the occasional memorandum of understandings which are contractual agreements signed between the state and the private sector. More needs to be done in attracting private sector participation. For example, currently, state land is relatively easy to acquire for those willing and able, but it often lacks basic infrastructure like roads. The Act should have provisions for rules and regulations that allow the private sector to come to a concession with quasi-government institutions – electricity or water suppliers – to provide services and have the investment recoverable from billings.

The above legislation makes up the entire legal framework around housing. While each part of the framework offers something towards supporting housing provision, none is fully comprehensive, and the effects of piling ever more pieces of legislation into the mix has had the effect of producing a muddled legal framework with gaps in it that mean effective housing provision remains out of reach. Another problem is that Zambia has too many laws which look good on paper but institutions and the local authorities lack the power to enforce compliance. Parts of it are poor and inadequate, but they can be improved. I will outline how next.

## Recommendations for a Successful Housing Development

The first approach to tackling the problem of housing policy reform is to review the existing legislation and improve it before signing into effect new ones. This should help avoid the multiplicity of legislation and counter the tendency for laws to become restrictive and in need of refinement over time. These amended acts need to be equipped with electronic footprints to make

it possible for them to be hosted on a web-based database that is maintained by the Registry and accessible to the general public. It is important to improve access to information as it reduces the stagnation of applications and subsequent corruption.

The Urban and Regional Planning Act should act as a vehicle to assess the performance of the existing legislation and put in place mechanisms that focus on the implementation of other acts while the Local Government Act deals with compliance by the local authorities. There are still some ways to make this work. An example is zoning in planned cities – the Urban and Regional Planning Act should lay down mechanisms for the various zones in the cities to act as Dos and Don'ts to avoid overlaps and confusion. The Local Government Act as the instrument overseeing compliance should promote the use of properly trained investigators with a planning background to see that the laws are followed and properly enforced.

The Lands Act should be compartmentalised into two categories of administration and development: the administration component would tackle settlement planning and documentation while the development component would tackle construction. Having this clear cut distinction of roles will streamline the development application processes which are prone to stagnation due to overlapping. This will also allow for the simplification of the multiplicity of legislation because currently we have the Zambia National Land Policy providing for the administration and management of the land resource, and therefore causing further confusion.

The Lands Act promotes enhanced equitable access to land and should be refined to include the provision of affordable access to land equipped with basic services like roads, water and sanitation for all. This will help close the inequality gap and allow more Zambians to have access to land for housing development.

The Local Government Act already provides for an integrated local government system but should therefore do more on compliance policies and programs to better support underserved populations. This reform will help to improve systems for inclusive participatory and democratic planning, and sound decision making.

Last but not the least, as Zambia continues its growth in social development under its new government, the Public-Private Partnership Act should formulate mechanisms that create an enabling business environment that implement the introduction of investor incentives like reducing the high taxes – Income Tax at 30 per cent – that currently exist. This is sure to entice and welcome on board more stakeholders from the private sector to finance and invest in the housing sector.

The Public-Private Partnership Act promotes privately financed infrastructure projects for effective delivery of social services, yet struggles to fully facilitate them. The Act needs to be refined to include mechanisms that provide for viable and sustainable funding through private sector investment to meet the development needs of an expanding urban population. One way the Act can do this is by identifying a set of incentives to entice participation.

## Conclusion

It is evident that the highlighted legislation has an important role to play in the global political agenda, but only if effectively planned and implemented. The severe lack of affordable housing in Zambia can be linked to gaps in the existing legal provisions. Therefore, there is a need to reform legislation if SDG 11 targets are to be achieved by 2030. This is an urgent call to action in the provision of basic needs like shelter and sanitation for all following high levels of urbanisation in Zambia caused by rural-urban migration and population increase.

The success of SDG 11 targets is clearly linked to legislation and the local authorities that serve our cities. It is worth repeating here: Some of the existing acts are adequate, but others are inadequate and in need of refining.

Therefore, even though the performance of Zambia's housing legislation has yielded very little success in the past because of inadequate implementation mechanisms, the new strategy should be one that equips all legislation with monitoring and reporting strategies particularly on compliance by the local authorities to evaluate effectiveness of the SDG 11 coordination mechanisms.

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**Figure 1** Proposed affordable container house (Kapalu Ngonga)

**Figure 2** Proposed affordable two bedroom flats (Kapalu Ngonga)

**Figure 3** Proposed affordable cottage (Kapalu Ngonga)

# Homes for the People: From Political Will to Local Context

*Olufèmi Hinson Yovo*

I want to tell a story.

It is the story of a small country in West Africa with a French colonial past trying to develop itself and make its mark in the world. Since independence, the tools we inherited from colonial administration have never been adapted to our local needs – financial, educational, cultural, economic and certainly not social.

Fast forward to 2016. We have a newly elected President and discover he is different from everyone before. His vision is rather capitalist. He has a grand masterplan to thrust forward development: he focuses largely on expanding roadway infrastructure and tourism in order to attract foreign investors. Soon, the population discovers a strict and driven man dedicated to action. And he has a flair for it. President Patrice Talon's vision is grand, that of a Caesar in Rome or, closer to us, a Houphouët in Côte d'Ivoire. He is rightfully dubbed 'Le Bâtitseur' – the 'master-builder'.

And he does build. Since 2017, Bénin Republic has felt like a huge construction site. Buildings are being destroyed, renovated, erected. To manifest his vision President Talon has deployed the PAG "Programme d'Action du Gouvernement", which includes 45 ambitious projects (PAG). Indeed, the country has a huge deficit of housing and infrastructures. Around 2020, housing demand was up to 320,000 units countrywide (Assogbavi). Thus, amongst the upcoming projects, a 20,000-housing project countrywide was announced, with 10,849 units in the outskirts of Cotonou (Présidence Bénin). It is the first of its kind and the entire country and its workforce has to get to work.

A project this ambitious – 20,000 housing units built simultaneously – is rare. The tools and expertise needed for such a project are lacking. Ambition on this scale requires people, processes and tools. For that the President often calls the best practitioners in the world and he is surrounded by a capable team. He also trusts young Béninese professionals.

It was in this context that I worked, first as a junior architect and then as a project manager in Koffi et Diabaté, a world-renowned firm from Côte d'Ivoire tasked with the enormous project. The project being a flagship for urban development, was subject to extreme time constraints and tight budget. Being the first and largest to be launched it acted as a guide for other projects.

In this essay, I won't be actively discussing architecture and the master planning of the 20,000-housing scheme. Instead, I am interested in the genesis of such projects and how custom-built tools and programme, competent team selection and suitable design can change the destiny of urban development projects. I analyse the problems of large-scale building projects, drawing from my experience as a young architect, and finally, I draft a manifesto for future practices in urban development projects in West African cities.



## Developing Local Tools

When producing large scale projects in Benin one is faced with shortages of local reliable tools, expertise and processes. Despite pressing demands for new infrastructure, we have had scarce opportunities to erect large scale projects in Benin. In recent history, 646 housing schemes were funded by Japan in 1990. After that, there was a bid for 10,000 houses, but only 893 were achieved by 2016. In other words, there are barely any projects of consequence that were completed. One notable result is that the country has provided few opportunities to train local architects, planners and contractors to work on urban housing projects.

The first gap in the project inception was that of preliminary studies. When conducted locally, these are commonly dismissed because we often do not trust our local professionals' guidance. Preliminary studies help delimitate a project's needs. According to Pascal Reysset, development projects' quality largely depends on the existence and the quality of preliminary studies. Too often, preliminary studies are overlooked for financial reasons, or assumptions of a lack of competence. For this project, it appeared that a team of local architects and geographers had drafted several conclusions presented to the administrative bodies. Yet at the time of the project, we didn't have information on such studies.

A second problem was that the program and scale were not entirely adapted to local needs. Given the housing deficit, all socioeconomic classes are in need of decent housing, especially the more accessible option for the more marginalised part. Of course, for such a project there has to be a repartition diverse standing for a development project to be financially sound and successful.

Was the project adequate, tailored to contemporary needs? Perhaps there was another project to be done, perhaps a different site, with different numbers, a more fragmented approach? Given the budget constraints and the urgent needs, perhaps the aim to offer homes for all, quickly, was paramount: reducing bedroom units to lower prices or increasing the percentage of low-income housing in the entire scheme may have been an option? In the end the project offered five types of units: three apartment units and two rows of houses. One of them was social housing (for working class residents), while the remaining were economical (for middle class residents).

Certainly, it is detrimental to future projects that the basics were not properly laid in this flagship project. Given the scale of housing need, working out how to provide adequate provision is most important. Getting the programming right is essential for successful development projects and needs careful determination amongst all those involved: developers, governing bodies, local associations, owners and users. Feedback from all these stakeholders needs to be gathered at an early design stage.

In addition, the local context has to be taken into account. We need to think about climate, context, social and technological advances.

Finally, we should think on larger scales, about expanded land uses, city-wide and country-wide. Architects must draw a global country strategy. According to Khandekar and Booyabancha, in large government-led, city-scale programs the government should play a role turning large-scale ideas into a policy program, providing guidelines and inviting the private sector and the population to take ownership and support housing development on a city-wide scale. Recognising smaller group dynamics in the larger population is time-consuming and difficult, but it allows greater flexibility and better design.

An absence of good programming is not only occurring in Benin – it's the case in several West African countries. Currently, we witness several governments announcing large numbers of social housing without necessarily drafting adequate urban planning. It is the case of a national program of 20,000 units in Togo, 40,000 in Burkina Faso and a 100,000-housing scheme in Senegal. Indeed, West African countries mirror each other. We are in a race for development, with each country pursuing its own agenda for local development. Yet, if one can get it right, others will follow.

## Building Adequate Teams

Generally, locally-qualified architects are not involved in large urban projects. Because most architects in Cotonou design private villas, commercial buildings and so on, they have no experience in large-scale projects or high-profile civic buildings. Consequently, local legislators tend to look for foreign expertise.

The firm involved in this project had wide experience in Abidjan. Koffi et Diabaté had developed a varied portfolio and distinguished itself in developing different building archetypes across West Africa. The firm had operated as an agent of change by developing a high-density luxury residential compound in Abidjan, a big success. Moreover, it had collaborated with the President and a mutual respect was born from that professional relationship. It is well known that presidents often have an architect who is in charge of the grand vision for the country, like in the case of Senegal Pierre Goudiaby Atepa, or Pierre Fakhoury, considered the master builder of president Houphouët-Boigny in Côte d'Ivoire.

However, Koffi et Diabaté had specialised in luxury residential and real estate and offices in Abidjan and this new project was a social housing project of 20,000 units in Cotonou. It was a first on such a scale for the company, much as it was for the government. Yet in terms of infrastructure, processes, qual-

ity and speed – the technical elements – the firm certainly was the best in sub-Saharan Africa to tackle a large-scale housing project.

It is beneficial to choose a high profile architect. They possess the fortitude needed to lead, ignite debates and take important issues to higher spheres. Nevertheless, it is equally important to add local or regional disruptors who have proved themselves in the field and have the capacity to hold their ground. Only then, can we produce homegrown urban solutions. For the social component, and keeping Beninese peoples' needs in the heart of the project, we would have benefitted from the perspectives of locals.

I was rather the right person to lead the project at the firm, having studied and worked on housing offers in Cotonou. But I couldn't bring this 'local perspective' all on my own. Without extensive preliminary research to build on, the project certainly suffered. We had gathered the only statistical and sociological data we could find. It was relevant to the project but dated, far too small-scale and not specific enough. The information we gathered was never as good as a government-led research aimed to build 20,000 units in a West African country of 13 million people.

Furthermore, interdisciplinary research teams are a necessary preliminary cost. The best projects involve professionals like local and international architects, urbanists, sociologists and geographers. Even in the early research phase, professionals should work closely with civil servants. Involving communities in the design processes is also beneficial, within a time-managed framework. They can contribute expertise, having been developing homegrown solutions and building social support systems. Involving them from the project's inception will help later with local appropriation and pride.

Finally, it is important to involve architects in different formats such as immersive workshops with different teams. This will help keep local government aims and architects' goals aligned. Oftentimes, architects are not involved in the planning stages of projects.

Alongside tools and adequate management from governing bodies, it is important to involve local entities who are in contact with end users. These understand the social context and should already be conducting ongoing studies and statistics. Furthermore, they should cater for users from the informal sector, who often earn cash daily, but are not often eligible for government houses.

For overseeing the project, from construction to management, a national body Société Immobilière et d'Aménagement Urbain (SIMAU) was created. It was a joint venture between the Beninese government, local banks and insurance companies. The SIMAU was created almost two years after the start of the project. Once created, it smoothed the processes and helped the project move faster.

An important side note is financing. Oftentimes, projects fail because of poor resource management. From what I perceived, it was led masterfully by the governing bodies. These included large subsidiaries on land, roads and utilities networks of primary services and the involvement of local banks. Thus, the cashflow worked effectively, helping the project to run smoothly.

## Designing in Context

Architects must find ways to accommodate legislators' needs without perverting their own goals. And to do this well, we ought to put people first. According to Khandekar and Boonyabancha (196), "when people are the centre of housing productions, the final product is always invariably cheaper, better, more socially lively and culturally appropriate than the minimal, individual kind of housing units favoured by developers and found in public housing".

Alongside this imperative, we could do much more to use architecture as a tool of decolonisation. I would like to see architecture that uses new typologies based on traditional heritage, local lifestyles, local climates and local materials. We shouldn't ignore wisdom and practice from the people and local communities that have sustained West African societies for centuries.

For our project, building designs were based on the successful architecture of the 1960s in Abidjan. These are extremely rich in their structure, arrangement and organisation. They have withstood time, gained people's love and are part of Abidjan's famous skyline. I was amazed by the thoughtfulness, details and variation of Abidjan's post 1960s dwellings. Designed by Ducharme, Larras and Minost, social units were imbricated, dispersed, staggered; they included wooden finishing, concrete finishing, paint, tiling ... a wonderful library to dwell on. Other references such as Alexandro Aravena's incremental housing were of interest, offering a technique inherent to our culture of self-construction.

Working in the Global South, we architects should explore other tropical contexts, both colonised and non-colonised. Asian countries like Thailand or Vietnam and Spanish-speaking countries such as Mexico share similar community-oriented values and conserve a strong traditional heritage have often managed to create homegrown solutions that we might learn from.

The 20,000 housing project is in the process of delivering approximately 10500 units for Ouédo, Cotonou's outskirts, and production is more than half-way through. Construction has also started in other parts of the country and 175 are almost finished in Porto-Novo. We must applaud the ongoing governing bodies for delivering so many homes. Yet to deliver homes tailored to local needs within the social context, there is much more to do.

In a nutshell, a successful urban project relies on tools and teams adequately selected. Once preliminary requirements are catered for, the project will be more robust in a crisis. I urge legislators and governing bodies to utilise all tools and teams, both local and international, positioning everyone in relation to their appropriate capacities and places.

To conclude the story, as Issa Diabaté said: “It is an architect’s destiny to make everyone a home, to provide shelter for the poor and the homeless and in the process become a social activist”. Architects should remember their social responsibility. That’s why we need a manifesto!

## Manifesto

**People & politics.** Architects ought to put people first: our project should reflect the people they are designed for. Yet we should also integrate legislators’ demands without diverting our initial goals.

**Tools.** In order to design for our people, we ought to decolonise our set of tools. Local tools are the best measure of local needs. They include extensive sociological and anthropological studies to help explain and meet people’s needs.

**Programme.** Adequate tools include outlining the right programme, adapted to local culture, reflecting heritage, lifestyle and socio-economic contemporary challenges. We must define the right programme, based on those aforementioned studies, for a successful development project.

**Interdisciplinary and intercontinental teams.** Working with interdisciplinary teams will reflect a complex architectural infrastructure response. Not only do projects have to speak for the past, they have to accommodate present and future needs. Thus, a team of practitioners such as sociologists, anthropologists and social workers as much as architects and urbanists is needed. Its input must be taken seriously. On top of that, local disruptors and innovators can contribute expertise, by developing homegrown solutions and building social support systems. They can work along with high profile architects who have the power to take important issues to higher spheres.

**Context.** Putting people first also means we have to design and build keeping their context in mind. When the right team is put together, it has to offer design solutions adapted to local ecosystems. This implies designs adapted to local clientele, economy and heritage, locally available technology, local climate and the local culture of so-called ‘informality’.

**Design.** Design is a sensibility. But before personal tastes and preferences lie culture, context and climate. Contemporary challenges of decolonisation and decarbonisation are of utmost importance when designing in our current times. We must reconsider beauty and aesthetics from our chosen centre: Africa. We can no longer dwell naively on the past without focusing on our footprint, be it carbonated or simply the legacies we desire to pass on. We ought to look for homegrown answers, set in the global context and sustainable future, merging tradition and true modernity.

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**Figure 1** Cité Ouèdo, 20,000 Logements under construction, Center Lane, July 2023 (Olufèmi Hinson Yovo)

**Figure 2** Cité Ouèdo, appartement block, July 2023 (Olufèmi Hinson Yovo)

**Figure 3** Cité Ouèdo, 20, 000 Logements, Row House E, July 2023 (Olufèmi Hinson Yovo)

# New Models for New Homes: Persuading Nigerians of the Virtues of Prefabrication

*Enitan Oloto*

Technically speaking, 108 million Nigerians are without proper housing, while an approximate 24.4 million people (roughly 13 percent of the nation's overall population) are without a roof above their heads (World Bank). This challenge places a heavy responsibility on all stakeholders in the housing industry, knowing that homelessness is an egregious violation of human rights, threatening the health and life of the most marginalised.

With such a daunting crisis looming over the country, one would think that ideas and strategies that would mitigate this situation would be explored and implemented with a sense of urgency. Unfortunately, this is not the case. In reality, there is resistance to housing innovations amongst stakeholders in the Nigerian construction industry, including building professionals, finance bodies and consumers. Interestingly, the term 'consumers' could also refer to all housing industry stakeholders who are direct or indirect beneficiaries of adequate and affordable housing, since housing affects all. Where does the resistance come from? Is it to do with vested interests, a challenge to people's belief structures (Ram and Sheth), or simple inertia?

It has been observed that people often opt for a state of hopelessness and despair rather than venture into unknown terrains. This state of transfixion in the face of change, ravages the global construction industry, therefore making it not only peculiar to the Nigerian scenario. This can be seen in a report by McKinsey and Co. which states that the industry lags behind others in adopting innovations. In fact, less than one percent of construction companies' revenue goes back into technology research and development. Compare this to the 3.5 percent invested in innovation by the automotive industry and 4.5 percent by aerospace companies. In addition, almost two-thirds of architecture, engineering and construction professionals responding to AECOM's own *Future of Infrastructure Report* believe that the industry is not evolving fast enough to meet society's changing needs.

The Nigerian construction market is among the largest in Africa, and has recorded impressive growth over the years. Despite this, an unanswered question remains as to why private developers in Nigeria remain slow to adopt new technologies for improving decision-making processes and project success rates. Researchers have reported that the Nigerian construction sector lags behind many of its developing-country counterparts regarding acceptance, usage, and adoption of these technologies (Buba, Chitumu and Ibrahim). Osofisan criticises the Nigerian construction industry for being one of the slowest to integrate technological advancement.

## Prefabrication – an Innovative Solution for Housing Crises

One such innovation, designed explicitly to address large-scale housing shortages, is prefabrication. This is a rapid production procedure where building components are coupled off-site within a mechanised controlled environment with the sole aim of heightening productivity and providing adequate and affordable mass housing. Recently, it has been verified that the conventional technologies used for construction and maintenance of buildings are inefficient and wasteful due to the enormous number of resources consumed. Prefabrication addresses these problems.

There are numerous benefits to this type of construction. The most common are cost savings, schedule acceleration, improved quality, standardisation, rapid prototyping and safer work environments. Despite these benefits, a review of seminal literature shows that there are still barriers hindering the adoption of prefabrication (Goulding et al). In a recent research conducted by Oloto, the six top barriers of prefabrication in Nigeria out of 26 that were identified are, private developer's attachment to traditional system of construction, current site specifics and constraints and transportation, the nature of the Nigerian planning system, government's low interest in prefabrication system for housing production, insufficient working knowledge of prefabrication systems, perceived limitation for adoption in small projects and fragmented industry structure.

It is important to understand what influences its adoption and rejection. While there are factors that influence innovation adoption as proposed by Rogers in *Diffusion of Innovation* – relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability – there are equally several factors that inhibit its adoption, thereby leading to rejection. Reasons for innovation rejection are born usually out of perceptions from direct or indirect experience with the new idea or product. According to Kim, consumers' resistance is usually shaped by consumers' characteristics and/or innovation characteristics. Consumers' characteristics involve views of the innovativeness of a particular product. Innovation characteristics are related to the effects of new products on consumers. A good example of innovation resistance can be found in the Dolphin Estate experience, the first prefab residential neighbourhood built in Lagos, Nigeria.

## From Glory to Despair: The Dolphin Estate Prefab Residential Neighbourhood

Dolphin Estate was developed by HFP Engineering Nigeria Limited in the early 1990s for the Lagos State Development and Property Corporation (LSDPC). Figure 2 shows an aerial view of the estate located in Ikoyi, a highbrow residential area in Lagos State. To make way for the construction of the estate, the dilapidated Jakande Housing Estate at Ijeh was demolished because it constituted an eyesore and degraded the neighbourhood. LSDPC first built two- and three-bedroom flats in eight blocks of prefabricated high-rise buildings to accommodate those who were displaced by the demolition.

Dolphin Phase I, which was targeted at the upper medium income class, consists of 646 duplexes of four bedrooms, each with an area of 150 m<sup>2</sup>. The total built up area in this phase is 102,068 m<sup>2</sup>. Dolphin Phase II included 236 four-bedroom duplexes, 440 three-bedroom flats and 136 flats of two bedrooms each. The project was completed in 1997. The location where the high-rise buildings were built is also called the Ijeh housing estate, which was named after the previous settlers in that location. This name helps differentiate the location of the housing styles, and maybe even the social class of those residing there.

Unlike the low-rise section of Dolphin Estate where you have the duplexes, the infrastructure in the high-rise section of the estate where you have the flats, is in a decrepit condition. The barracks-like prefabricated high-rise buildings have become a mere shadow of their former glory, due to poor maintenance. The neo-American suburban names for the housing complexes, as Nkanga (2008) writes, suggest a gated utopia, but in reality, the buildings are often not adequately equipped with the facilities they promise and people build extensions and additional structures to support comfortable living, as the multitude of giant water vessels outside the apartment windows prove. As the photographs show, the makeshift alteration between the domestic environment and the vividly coloured barrels, though infusing a burst of colour into a rather dull, concrete environment, leaves a sense of disorder and chaos, as seen in Figure 3. Attempts were made collectively amongst residents per block to upgrade the structures as depicted in Figure 4, where a residential block is seen with a different colour. Also, the erection of temporary makeshift structures for shops can be seen dotting nearby urban green spaces.

This large-scale showcase of the attempt at prefabrication technology is a biased case study of a failed attempt at prefabrication. It has deterred not only consumers, but even private developers from investing in future prefab building approaches. It was against this backdrop that I was asked to investigate the current perspectives of private developers on the adoption of prefabrication for housing development in Nigeria.

## The Adoption Support Framework (ASF)

I developed an Adoption Support Framework (ASF), which is an inclusive diagrammatic five stage innovation decision process model illustrating the relationship between identified housing industry stakeholders and social structures, driven by the exchange of technical data through communication channels, towards the adoption of prefabrication. My ambition is to induce innovation in the sector that will help mitigate the housing crisis in Nigeria.

I started by investigating the private developers' perspective on the adoption of prefabrication methods for housing development in Nigeria. The ASF was underpinned by two theoretical models – Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) – which in general investigate individuals' reactions to new products or processes. They can be applied to different behaviours, and address behavioural patterns towards the adoption or rejection of innovative ideas or technology needs, and their diffusion rate. The rate of adoption of any idea or technology is dependent on factors like perception or perspective of the target group on the technology or idea being proposed for adoption. The ASF equally summarises steps towards achieving a sustainable innovative technology adoption and its commercialisation amongst private developers in Nigeria, which would not only increase housing productivity and affordability within urban cities, but would discourage housing financialisation - a phenomenon that occurs when housing is treated as a commodity, a vehicle for wealth and investment, rather than a social good for providing adequate and affordable housing. These speculative behaviours have direct effects on the increase in rents and housing costs in ways that households face significant financial pressures and hardships.

The aim of the framework is to build a collaboration between the industry, academia, the relevant government bodies and the end users/consumers. The proposed Nigerian Offsite Construction HUB will be the centre of expertise, responsible for defining, disseminating and showcasing skills and knowledge requirements pertaining to prefabrication and its adoption process, while ensuring collaboration between professions within the housing industry. The HUB concept involves a network of interconnected bodies who are identified as stakeholders in the building industry, adopting communication channels (social media, symposiums, publications, mass media etc.) to disseminate vital information from sub-research and development units situated in the bodies identified in the framework. These bodies are social structures that include professional bodies, manufacturers, academia, the government and end-users, receiving information from the central research hub, while interfacing amongst each other. The idea is for the framework to be popularised by the Real Estate Development Agency of Nigeria (REDAN) to ensure companies across the housing development industry have an understanding of the interaction between the principles of design, construction, manufacturing and engineering, all within the prefabrication construction methods, and are all maintaining high standard practices. The Nigerian Offsite Construction

HUB is to progressively continue to develop practical and interactive learning material to share sector-wide, applying the process developed via the framework, upskilling the workforce and creating high level training on managing and delivering prefabrication construction. This framework provides a starting point for raising awareness of the principles and the optimisation of prefabrication construction among various stakeholders in the Nigerian construction industry.

Though the ASF is yet to be implemented, being a recent research output within the Nigerian context, the ASF however has been presented to notable experts and change agents in several organisations in the housing industry, like the Real Estate Developers Association of Nigeria (REDAN) and the Nigerian Institute of Architects (NIA), who were asked to evaluate the framework for clarity, accuracy, relevance and appropriateness. These professionals described it as transferable in nature, having the capacity for abstraction and theoretical generalisation, with sufficient variation to apply to other contexts within and outside Nigeria. It also demonstrates an innovation relationship that enables the implementation of process innovations into the housing development sector, and at the same time, the conduct of scientific research in construction. It demonstrates the importance of a defragmented industry where information and empirical evidence can be disseminated more easily through appropriate channels of communication, to facilitate prefabrication acceptance and gradually diminish resistance amongst stakeholders.

The ASF is novel, as frameworks towards prefabrication adoption have only been presented within the context of developed countries like the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia, and recently in developing countries like China. However, what is lacking is a robust adoption framework indigenous to Nigeria and Africa as a whole. The ASF reflects the African experience through an African lens and is a tool for initiating African policy interventions in the housing industry.

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**Figure 1** Illustration of prefabricated construction assembly on site. [karmod.eu/blog/prefabricated-construction-companies/](http://karmod.eu/blog/prefabricated-construction-companies/)  
**Figure 2** Aerial view of Dolphin Estate, Ikoyi (Damola Solanke, 2018, [www.lagosview.com](http://www.lagosview.com))



# Densifying Cities: a New Approach to Urban Growth

Tolulope Ajobiewe

*"Lagos Island is truly densely packed. It just needs taller buildings and Metro. Yeah, most of the city is still very low rise. Yaba, a fast-gentrifying district, still has most buildings topping out at 4 floors. All this needs to be rebuilt with added floors. Going to 8 & 10 floors more than doubles the capacity in this area."*

@TonamiPlayman<sup>1</sup>

It is perhaps unusual to begin a tale about Lagos with a quote from twitter, especially when such a tweet could have been made by a bot. In the present case, however, it seems appropriate, simply because it gives a birds-eye-view on the current state of the city. It is not only Lagos that is densely packed. Nigeria hosts four other cities (Kano, Ibadan, Abuja and Port Harcourt) that are among the 30 largest urban settlements on the African continent. For those who like to think in numbers, "the city of Lagos covers a total of 1,171.28 km<sup>2</sup>; a population (mostly contested) exceeding 17 million residents; a population density around 6,871 residents per km<sup>2</sup>; and a growth rate of 3.2 per cent per annum" (World Population Review; Ezema and Oluwatayo 3). The World Economic Forum also reported that Lagos, being the "biggest metropolitan area in Africa, generates 10 percent of Nigeria's total GDP of \$432.3 billion".

Much has been written about rapid urban growth in the new century. Every corner of the world now consists of dense agglomerations of people, and African cities are often seen as sites where growth has led to particularly acute crises, whether in Lagos, Kinshasa or Cairo. Wherever one turns, one will find stories about how rapid urban growth threatens the social, economic and natural capital of cities to provide adequate basic services such as housing, water and energy, sanitation, education and healthcare. To make the same point in a more particular way, Cohen (64) noted that "the speed and sheer scale of urban transformation across the world presents formidable challenges", to the point where urban issues seem to be reduced to discussions about these challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> @TonamiPlayman, August 2022, [twitter.com/TonamiPlayman/status/1561140206639595520](https://twitter.com/TonamiPlayman/status/1561140206639595520).

The housing crisis is a particularly acute part of the problem. In Nigeria for example, recent studies have shown that the housing deficit stood at about 28 million units in 2022. Therefore, it came as no surprise when the World Bank (4) reported in 2018 that “Nigeria requires about 700,000 housing units annually, spanning through a 20-year period to accommodate the teeming population in cities”. In any case, Moore (206) noted that “the current housing production in Nigeria is at about 100,000 units per year, which is grossly inadequate for Nigeria’s estimated population of nearly 200 million people”. If you do the maths, as Moore did, we need at least 1 million additional units each year to have a chance of bridging this housing shortage; not to talk of the cost implications which the World Bank puts at N59.5 trillion for 20 million units (Ekpo, Moore). Besides the number of housing units required and the cost implications thereof, there are other huge challenges such as land availability and land rights. For example, where would these housing units be constructed and on which or whose land? Does it matter if we have a sprawling city<sup>2</sup>, as long as the population meets its needs for shelter? If it does matter, how else can urban planners and city managers address the question of sustainable land use?

I would argue that talk about densifying Nigerian cities is nothing new. It usually goes like this. Urban densification is needed to address urban sprawl and the proliferation of informal settlements. Agreed, but how can we pursue this in a mega city like Lagos with its housing deficit sitting at over 3 million units (Heinrich Böll Stiftung)? Response from urban managers, arm-chair scholars, and budding analysts: silence. Despite this silence, rarely are these pundits not seen and heard (virtually and physically) preaching the gospel of sustainable land use in a bid to reify the narrative on densification. They have all the answers to ‘why’ but none to ‘how’. My argument is that, considering the urgent need for the densification of our cities, the question ‘how?’ needs to be answered.

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2 “This refers to a building characterised either by expansion or leapfrog development” (Lall et al).

## How Do We Densify Nigerian Cities?

There is general agreement that any physical intervention in Lagos should include (but not be limited to) the following:

1. New housing types and equipment – elevators, basements, parking spaces, lightning and air-conditioning
2. Centralised systems for energy, power and water supply
3. Health and sanitation – waste and sewage disposal, recycling systems, groundwater storage, widened streets, large open spaces and urban parks

But, specifically, should Lagos pursue the development of high-rise buildings solely? Or could high-density plots be a more practical alternative? Can a high-rise and/or a high-density built environment address the scale and speed of urbanisation in Nigeria? I suggest there are two ‘intelligent’ speculations or maxims for a nuanced discourse on densifying Nigerian cities: land sharing<sup>3</sup> and density readjustment. Both point to how to densify Nigerian cities, if all else, they could be a (our) new approach to urban growth. They are neither rules nor principles; rather they are matters upon which policymakers, urban planners and/or architects should reflect.

## Two Maxims: Land Sharing and Density Readjustment

It needs restating that rethinking the concept of access to land, land rights and ownership is a necessary first step if land sharing and density readjustment are to work. Here is why: Prior to the Land Use Act (LUA) of 1980, Nigerian towns were subjected to British land administration laws which sometimes meant: the conversion of “all lands into public lands, held and administered by the colonial governor for the benefit of natives in the north”, and the “compulsory acquisition of land for public purposes in the south” (see Adeniyi 8 for a robust account). The LUA classifies “all lands in Nigeria into urban lands (vested with state governors) and rural lands (vested with local governments), with the exemption of lands under the control of the federal government” (Birner and Okumo 7; Adeniyi 8).

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3 Land sharing for example has been a relatively successful approach to urban development in several Asian cities. Phnom Penh (Cambodia) and Bangkok (Thailand) are typical examples.

This has since served as the basis for land administration in Nigeria, designed to unify land policies (traditional/customary land tenure systems), and to curb land speculation in urban areas. The challenge is that while the LUA formalises the distribution of land rights in Nigeria, it has not been able to provide adequate lands for development. The result has been an excess of demand over supply and limited access to urban lands for development. The LUA has been heavily criticised in recent years on a number of grounds, including the slow approval of Certificates of Occupancy due to needless bureaucratic bottlenecks and local governments having no powers in relation to lands in urban areas.

Land sharing refers to the “partitioning of a piece of land such that it can accommodate land occupants on one portion of the site, and landowners or commercial development on the other portion” (Rabe 2). Where land sharing has been used, studies show that it has enabled the “verticalization of low-rise or low-density residential uses”. This aligns (at least in part) with Slone’s pathways to pursuing densification, which are to “fill open spaces with high-rise buildings”; “increase the height of existing buildings”; “completely replace existing low-rise buildings with high-rise buildings”; and “combine the first three approaches” (Slone, quoted in Ezema and Oluwatayo 3).

These pathways sound simple, but they aren’t, not in Lagos at least. For context, if there were open spaces to build on, would reclaiming land from the lagoon be vigorously pursued in Lagos? Eko Atlantic<sup>4</sup> – a city (still under construction) sitting on ten million square metres of land reclaimed from the ocean is one prominent example of this attempt to circumvent the shortage of open spaces in the city. The project exemplifies Slone’s notion of “filling open spaces with high-rise buildings”, and has been lauded amongst other things as a solution to the chronic shortage of prime real estate in Lagos, and a way of reversing coastal erosion in the city. The project has been criticised as well, not necessarily because of the science and engineering of land reclamation, but because the political economy of creating world-class buildings, bespoke urban infrastructure, and beautifully crafted homes, does little to solve the housing crisis in Lagos if these houses are for luxurious living and not affordable.

With land sharing, policy makers can begin to consider lands near the urban core, in slums and squatter settlements for urban transformation and rejuvenation projects. To do this, slums and squatter settlements have to be recognised by some form of formalisation and legalisation. This formalisation is

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4 Observers have avowed that the Eko Atlantic project is “more than a prime location; it is a new gateway to Africa”. <https://www.ekoatlantic.com/>.

required before initiating a process of urban transformation, where the state prepares (alongside an active civil society) development plans for all squatter neighbourhoods with the hope of transforming the areas into apartment blocks. In other words, land sharing on the one hand allows squatter owners to turn over their plots of land to private developers in return for a few flats in the apartment block that would be built there (Sengul). On the other hand, landowners can be re-housed in apartment blocks built by private developers such that the developer is allowed to build on a portion of the rest of the site (Rabe).

The second approach is that of density readjustment, and by this, I mean high-density plots rather than high-density zones should be allocated. Schedule 4 of the Lagos State Urban and Regional Planning and Development Law (2005), and Lagos State Physical Planning and Development Regulations (2005), outlined the zoning classification and plot sizes for low density (1,000 m<sup>2</sup>), medium density (864 m<sup>2</sup>) and high density (648 m<sup>2</sup>) residential zones. I do not disagree with the plot sizes, but would argue that in the pursuit of higher densities, individualised or single-family land allocation and use has to change. This sentiment resonates in a different twitter thread, where the tweep<sup>5</sup> argued along these lines: “we could have a small plot allocated as high density with 6-8 families’ as opposed to high-density single-family plots, which is the current and widespread practice, and “a larger plot as low density with 2 families.” Slone’s second and third pathways to densification speak of volume to density readjustment. However, it is important to point out that high density doesn’t necessarily imply high rise, should any keen observer ask: how high-rise will these buildings be?

Density readjustment addresses the problems and issues around the height of buildings in Lagos. To do this, let’s go back to the Physical Planning and Development Regulations referred to earlier. Schedule 5 addressed the permissible height of buildings in different parts of Lagos (four floors for social housing; six floors for medium-density; and ten floors for high-density). I contend however it would be wrong to assume that the position of the law on permissible building heights in Lagos is clear and concise. Here is why: Although the existing and maximum permissible building heights were outlined per designated street/local government area, there was no allusion to the specific uses to which the buildings are to be put. For example, is it solely for residential development, or commercial developments, or a mixed-use development? What comes close to the specifics is that in the case of tenement housing in high density residential zones, the same law stipulated that “max-

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5 @TheMolash in September 2022, <https://twitter.com/TheMolash/status/1573690087761641472>.

imum of four (4) floors shall be permissible provided that four car parking spaces per floor are provided". Whether or not these inconsistencies can be interpreted as a contradiction is besides the point. The point being? Regulatory barriers – physical planning regulations<sup>6</sup> that are inimical to sustainable urban development, in this case, higher densities – particularly, those that limit building heights to a maximum of four floors, need to be reviewed.

## Conclusion

I do not pretend that this essay has offered a full treatment for a nuanced discourse on densifying Nigerian cities. I have, however, argued that land sharing and density readjustments are intelligent answers to the question – how do we densify Nigerian cities? To be fair, it wouldn't be out of place if the reader were to brand this proposition utopian. Surely, there are cultural, political and economic factors which may affect the acceptance of these proposals. One cultural factor is the perceived prestige and status that owning a piece of land confers on individuals in Nigerian society. In other words, land allocation is still largely tied to the individual instead of shifting to the logic of a market-led urban development where housing is delivered through developers. But who says a culture shift is not possible? If anything, the new million-dollar tower apartments in Lagos, not to mention the Eko Atlantic project, seem to suggest that Nigerians can still find prestige outside single-family gated compounds.

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6 For Lagos, Lagos State Urban and Regional Planning and Development Law 2005 gives a detailed provision.

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**Figure 1** Lagos, Nigeria

**Figure 2** Lagos, its high-rises and low-rises

**Figure 3** A high-rise building under construction

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# Architecture, Decolonisation and Education in South Sudan

*Chan Simon*

Education is the heart of any society. It is an institution through which society provides its members with knowledge, survival techniques and an understanding of cultural norms and values. In the past, education in today's South Sudan as in much of Africa was seen as a matter for the entire community. It was a shared duty.

This view greatly changed during the colonial period. The Eurocentric education system is an enduring 'inherited circumstance' of colonialism in Africa. The purpose of this system was not to inculcate and develop African Indigenous knowledge and cultural values, but to undermine African history and the ideas of the Indigenous people to pave the way for so-called 'civilisation'. It has contributed serious barriers to the continent's advancement and entrenched the continent's inability to influence decision making, agenda setting, and thought control in international issues. It continues to disempower people struggling to find solutions to Africa's political, social, economic, and technological challenges.

The decolonisation of education in the African context can be defined as the process of exposing and dismantling colonialist power in all its forms. This involves knowledge, language and the entire institutional culture that sustains education. Decolonisation of education calls for the inclusion of humanity's knowledge systems into the curriculum and knowledge selection systems of universities and schools. It would require a mental shift in all of us, Europeans, Asians, Africans, Arabs, and Americans, a move away from a single understanding of the world to a more pluralistic view. It would include the process of 'Africanisation', a recognition of the validity and relevance of African ideas in global knowledge production. This calls on faculty to address a series of curricular, pedagogical and evaluative challenges.

In the South Sudanese context, decolonisation of education means working for an education system that prioritises the search for national identity, building the broken social fabric, and raising a generation that takes pride in itself, with the confidence to solve its own problems. A collective effort from the government, the South Sudanese people, and developmental partners is required to achieve this goal. To bear even more fruit, a rethink of former and current attempts to decolonise education is essential as the process requires collaboration and critical thought, concern for the community, and a need to be more creative.

For this essay, I will focus on the role of architecture as a tool to decolonise Early Childhood Development (ECD) Education using personal recounts of the design studio experiences, views on what architecture is, and its current and potential role in society to start a conversation that I hope can later be extended into basic, secondary and tertiary education.

I focus first on ECD because it is a key phase when children develop very rapidly intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally. It is also a time when they are exploring the world and finding their place within it. ECD is the foundation of the later years of education.

Confidence, creativity, critical thinking, concern for community and the spirit of collaboration lie at the heart of the decolonisation process. They are tools that enable people to question themselves and this helps them break away from the colonial mindset of waiting for solutions to their problems. Architecture can develop these tools in South Sudanese children by teaching them the story of their place in the world.

## Why Architecture for Decolonising Education in South Sudan?

The teaching of architecture itself is not perfect. It needs to be decolonised too, to produce a curriculum that is contextually relevant to the social realities of the continent, one that acknowledges the prevailing exigencies of local economies, culture, climate and urban fabric, and can become a base for tropical vernacular architecture, sustainable building materials, low-cost housing and design in multi-ethnic societies. However, my argument here is about the ways architecture itself is perhaps uniquely positioned to develop transposable, decolonisation methodologies with the potential to resonate across a range of other disciplines. Its contents are epistemologically diverse and draw on knowledge and processes from the humanities, the arts, the natural and the social sciences. Architecture is the only discipline that combines art and science; its unique position gives it great potential for reforming the way we teach young children.

## Architecture as a Guide for ECD in South Sudan

After 22 years of civil war between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement, Sudan was divided into two nations, Sudan and South Sudan on 9 July 2011. As a new nation, South Sudan faces the daunting task of building itself from scratch.

For this task to succeed, it needs a new education system. In September 2015, the Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoEST) launched the first comprehensive national education curriculum for South Sudan. Its four key aims were to create (1) good citizens of South Sudan, (2) successful

lifelong learners, (3) creative and productive individuals, and (4) environmentally responsible members of society. The revised curriculum also aimed to promote national citizenship, unity, and cohesion, as well as peace education and equality between men and women. To this end, it introduced subjects such as citizenship and the requirement that Sudan's national languages should be used in teaching early years.

Although the current curriculum addresses important national and global issues, there is a need to reshape the contents and pedagogical approaches of the curriculum to better fit South Sudanese current and future realities. I will show how architectural teaching techniques and architectural principles can be used to do this reshaping.

## Using Architecture Studio Pedagogy to Devise a Curriculum Framework

The architecture design studio is a unique space and pedagogical method in higher education. It usually involves a group of students working together in a flexible space led by instructors – importantly, always more than one. Students learn by doing, making, critiquing, understanding and developing ideas. Through the studio, they learn principles such as respect for others, teamwork, innovation, optimism, knowledge-sharing, discipline and most importantly, design thinking.

The core skills that are fostered in the design studio fit well into the early years of education:

- **Communication.** In the classroom studio, children have many opportunities to talk with teachers and to each other. They are encouraged to ask questions and suggest their ideas, which are valued by their teachers.
- **Critical and creative thinking.** At the heart of learning, children explore the world around them and try to make sense of it. This is a period when young children go beyond an individual point of view. In the design studio, there is more than one teacher, so that children learn to evaluate different perspectives.
- **Collaboration.** Work and play with others are a crucial part of children's development in the design studio. In this, children learn to help and accept help from others.
- **Culture and heritage.** All learning at this stage is part of the induction of young children into their culture. From behaviour and beliefs to the songs, rhymes and stories, all learning contributes to their cultural development. Context is a crucial element of the design studio setup. Children are taught to examine and think about the environment in which they are learning.

## Using Architectural Aspects to Derive ECD Curriculum Contents

Equipped with this broad approach, we can develop a curriculum content across three areas:

1. Architecture (the built environment) as a 'teacher' and a learning tool
2. Architecture as method: design studio experience
3. Architecture as interdisciplinary

### 1. Architecture (the Built Environment) as a 'Teacher' and a Learning Tool

A well-thought-through built environment can enhance learning and teaching by transmitting social-cultural values and norms. It does this best if it stimulates creativity and causes joy. Today, in a typical South Sudanese early childhood development setting, teaching and learning are through play both indoors and outdoors. They are done through a set of activities such as outdoor and physical activities in which children move and play with a fixed or moveable apparatus or equipment and indoor activities such as music, mathematics and religious activities in which children sing songs and hymns and recite numbers. The current setup is not flexible enough to allow children to fully learn problem-solving. And it doesn't give children opportunities to learn about themselves as individuals and about their role in their communities.

Children engage in learning through sensory exploration. They take charge of what is right for them, determine what is not, and learn most by themselves. We should design the built environment and play equipment to encourage adventure – for example, enabling children to play at slightly greater heights, playing at a greater pace and playing with potentially harmful objects. We should also design play equipment that is flexible, incomplete and inviting for further exploration. With opportunities to learn for themselves, children will develop critical thinking, confidence and creativity and they will learn to solve relatively complex problems by themselves.

Interesting and dynamic play spaces with natural features such as water, sand, and trees can not only enable children to discover and study the natural world but also help them learn about themselves. They might make toys such as cattle out of the sand and develop a healthy attitude towards honest labour and the value of effort when growing plants in gardens.

### 2. Architecture as Method: Design Studio Experience

As briefly described in the framework section, the architecture studio is a remarkable space. There are several ways in which its principles can be brought into ECD.

- **Drawing on the support of the community.** Traditionally, education in Africa was considered a concern of the entire society. It was viewed as a whole rather than as a set of specialisations, and understood as a collective responsibility. I suggest we draw on this tradition by bringing in elders from the surrounding communities to pass down knowledge to the young ones. Complementing the professional teacher in class with an elder or two would support the principle that there is more than one teacher in class and help the children to feel understood individually and collectively as a group.
- **Learning from other age cohorts.** Another key point that can be derived from the studio experience, is the need to integrate ECD with elements of basic education. In this, certain elements of learning that are shared are done together. One example is physical education lessons for the upper classes (Primary 1, 2, and 3) which can be shared with the nursery-age classes. The younger children would benefit from the elder children's influence and example and the older ones would gain added confidence and responsibility.
- **Valuing knowledge from homes and communities.** Children's homes and communities are rich sources for fostering knowledge and skills. They can be brought into classrooms through home visits by teachers and children to notice important 'tools/items' (technology) in the home such as cooking and eating utensils. This is related to learning about the relationships between the function and structure of common household materials.

These kinds of activities highlight the values of existing local knowledge that can be used to decolonise the curriculum by demonstrating to the children that there is knowledge of value rooted in the places from which they come. The values would also communicate to the professional teachers and the learning institution at large that there is a far more relevant pool of knowledge to draw from than just Western-style text books.



### 3. Architecture as Interdisciplinary

Architecture is both an art and a science. Architects have to make structures that serve a function and purpose and reflect ideas and culture in interesting or pleasing ways. Architecture is practical and aesthetic. Borrowing from this approach gives children a much broader understanding of the world around them, helping them to link ideas and materials, thinking and making. The objective is to introduce architecture and design straightforwardly and creatively through the use of building, painting and drawing while developing an understanding of scale, colour, structure and space. Such work, which enables cultural idioms to be tested in practice concerning the various facets of art, is well suited for inclusion in curricula.

This approach is a decolonial activity as it fosters children's confidence to think and create for themselves as they now have a better understanding of the world around them making physical interaction much easier.

### Conclusion

There is so much to be done to uplift education within a country so young and to educate its citizens to think and make for themselves. I believe that architecture can take a lead in reshaping education within the country. Architecture is a diverse field that draws its knowledge and process from other disciplines, unique in its approach to learning and teaching and most importantly concerned with the betterment of human life. With the decolonisation of education through architecture comes the decolonisation of the spaces we inhabit, and through that comes the reshaping of the social fabric.



Children playing in an ECD programme (Chan Simon)



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