

## **Contemporary challenges to an open city in Sub-Saharan Africa; the case of Kampala City.**

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### **Key Words**

#### *Globalization*

A set of processes which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions—assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact—generating transcontinental or inter regional flows and networks of activity, interaction and the exercise of power.

#### *Integration*

The process where by communities, societies or nations combine socially, politically and economically in such a way that each individual unit becomes fully a part of the other.

#### *Inclusion*

A state where everyone, regardless of wealth, gender, age, race or religion, is enabled to participate productively and positively in the opportunities cities have to offer.

#### *Exclusion*

Exclusion can be explained as what happens when urbanization unfolds selectively, including and excluding segments of economies and societies in and out of the networks of information, wealth and power that characterize a new dominant system.

#### *Urban trap*

The vicious cycle of socio-economic deprivation that rural-urban and economic immigrants get entangled in and are consequently controlled by in their new urban environment. This is mainly a result of powerlessness and vulnerability to stiff competition for scarce resources and livelihood opportunities.

## **Abstract**

This paper analyzes the nature of contemporary cities in sub Saharan Africa in light of the social forces of globalization and regional integration. The objectives of the paper are to expose the evolutionary process of these cities, highlight the relationship between globalization, regional integration and urban growth and analyze the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of the open city. Secondary data has been used as the main source of information in the process of writing this paper. This owes to the fact that this paper is an analysis of predominant issues that have been observed by various studies in Sub Saharan Africa's urbanization trends in the recent past.

This paper begins by giving a historical background to Urbanization in Sub Saharan Africa and goes on to explore the intricacies of urbanization with a focus on Kampala city. Critical emphasis has been put on explaining the challenges of cities in sub Saharan Africa and finally proposing ways through which the future cities can be shaped and developed.

## **Background**

In trying to explain what an open city is, Pile, Brook et al (1999) refer to the porosity and permeability of urban spaces. They assert that even gated communities are both 'open' and 'closed', as are ghettos. People are constantly moving into, through and out of urban spaces, yet not everyone is free (nor able, nor wants) to travel or communicate everywhere. For purposes of subsequent discussions in this paper, it is argued that in the current era of globalization and the consequent drive towards regional integration in Sub Saharan Africa, many cities including Kampala continue to grow in population as a result of being open to new entrants both from within the country itself and from other countries.

Cities are growing fast worldwide, at present, nearly half of the world's population lives in urban areas. Demographers agree that that proportion will continue to grow, with most of the growth occurring in developing countries. Africa and Asia have the lowest urbanization levels but are experiencing the most explosive urban growth rates. Satterthwaite (2006) indicates that at the beginning of the 20th century, the now developed regions had more than twice as many urban dwellers as the less developed (150 million to 70 million) but despite much lower levels of urbanization, the developing countries now have 2.6 times as many urban dwellers as developed regions (2.3 billion to 0.9 billion). UN-Habitat (2007) observes that cities offer more opportunity for employment, entertainment and delivery of social services and as such attract more people. This translates into increased economic activity, greater levels of consumption, greater dependence on transport systems, sanitation systems and environmental resources in the peri-urban areas. Conversely, more waste is produced, pollution is on the increase and accident risks are on the rise.

In most of sub-Saharan Africa, the emergence of urban settlements was spurred by outside settlement forces or the development of trade. Colonization gave an impetus to the emergence of cities in the region. Colonial cities were mainly administrative and trading posts. Africa's rates of demographic and urban growth are the highest in the world. Urban growth rates in many African countries exceed 4%, whereas in developed countries urban growth is static or even negative. In Africa, the percentage of the population living in urban areas is 37%. This is expected to reach 54% in 2030, and in a few countries it will be as high as 80% (Chandra, 2002).

The economic, social and political importance of Sub-Saharan cities is well known. However, scholarly of urban issues declined markedly in number during the 1970s and early 1980s. Chandra (2002) argues that the resurgence of interest in the burgeoning metropolises of the South, their growing problems and the challenges to urban management and government which these pose, is attested to by the steady stream of new research in recent years.

It ought to be noted that very few developing country cities generate enough jobs to meet the demands of their growing populations. On the other hand, the benefits of urbanization are not equally enjoyed by all segments of the populations. The people who are left out are the poor, the women, migrants and ethnic minorities who traditionally face social and economic exclusion.

### **Kampala City**

Over the years, Kampala has grown into a city and is continuously expanding. With this expansion come both positive and negative implications for the people living within and around the city. However this research focuses on the challenges of Kampala as an expanding open city.

According to the Population and Housing Census (2002), Kampala's population grew at a rate of 3.9% per annum in the inter-censal period between 1991 and 2002. Also, the 2002 Census put the City population at 1.2 million people but the City has a daily transient population of about 2.3 million people. The City population growth rate is at 3.9% (average density: 51 in/ha). Urban areas in Uganda constitute 12.2% of the national population of which 41% of the urban population is in Kampala city alone (McGill 2008).

Whereas there is rapid growth of the urban population in Kampala, the quality of poor people's lives is continuously deteriorating. Although poverty in Uganda has a "rural face", the urban poor in Kampala are much more disadvantaged. They live in very poor and shanty housing conditions characterized by lack access to a supportive social network. Most of the population (54%) lives in one-roomed houses. Poverty is one of the underlying causes of low functional accessibility to health services since most people cannot afford service costs (KCC 2006).

Rapid urbanisation as a construct is far more than just about numbers, which are in any case in many cases badly well recorded and/or understood.

In the absence of appropriate understanding of urban life dynamics, cities and towns, those that dwell in them, the institutions that they use to organise their relations, as well as the environment in which all of these are located, it is impossible to make reasonable conclusions and interventions. The environment suffers, services severely stretched, even the dead in search of a place to rest. The poor, the most vulnerable, as always, suffer most (Oranje 2005)

The different aspects of urban poverty are inadequate income, inadequate, unstable or risky asset base, inadequate shelter, inadequate provision of public infrastructure, inadequate provision of basic services, limited or no safety net, inadequate protection of poorer groups' rights through the operation of the law and poorer groups'

voicelessness and powerlessness (Satterthwaite 2002) These various aspects need to be examined in analyzing Kampala's urbanization trends.

### **The Open City**

The development goals of any city are shaped by urban governance and the improvement of life of its inhabitants depends on the same. Urban governance of an open city aims to increase the capacity of local governments and other stakeholders to practice good urban governance and to raise awareness. Urban governance in an open city ought to focus attention on the needs of the excluded urban poor and also promotes the involvement of women in decision-making at all levels, recognizing that women are one of the biggest levers for positive change in society (UN 1999).

The inclusive city is a place where everyone, regardless of wealth, gender, age, race or religion, is enabled to participate productively and positively in the opportunities cities have to offer. Inclusive decision-making processes are an essential means to achieve sustainable livelihood in Sub Saharan African cities.

There is a global debate that good urban governance is characterized by the principles of sustainability, subsidiarity, equity, efficiency, transparency and accountability, civic engagement and citizenship, and security, and that these principles are interdependent and mutually reinforcing through a participatory process at the local, national, regional and global levels. The good governance for an open city is guided in its operation by the principles of inclusiveness and decentralization.

The pursuit of the inclusive city rests on the understanding that inclusive decision-making is at the heart of good urban governance. Inclusive decision-making is a practical strategy for translating the norms of good urban governance into practice. It is at the local level that universal norms for good governance meet the messy reality of competing interests and priorities. The means and methods used to balance, reconcile and trade-off competing interests, must be inclusive to ensure the greatest likelihood for sustainability. Thus the inclusive city represents both the final vision and the process used to create it.

The idea of the inclusive city has global applicability – north as much as south. The notion of inclusion, however, has a different resonance in each region with exclusion of specific groups being most significant in some regions and exclusion of the poor majority more important in others.

UN Habitat (2002) asserts that while “who” is excluded may vary according to region, the inclusion of women and men on an equal basis is a theme that unites North and South. This revolves around a three-pronged approach to addressing the issue of good urban governance. First, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other internationally agreed human rights instruments, that women and men are equally entitled to the benefits of urban citizenship. Second, it demonstrates and argues that urban planning and management is made more effective, equitable and sustainable through the equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes. Finally, the campaign specifically targets its interventions to be responsive to the needs of women, carefully monitoring the impact of these interventions.

## **The nature of Urban Growth in Sub Saharan Africa**

Sub-Saharan Africa is urbanizing fast and it is therefore timely to conduct an analysis of the challenges that open cities face specifically examining the context in which this rapid urbanization is taking place; how the emerging cities and towns can be made to contribute positively to the development of the continent in a global environment, reducing the pervasive poverty among both peri-rural and urban residents, what requirements need to be met to make this happen, what is at stake or what are the opportunity costs to African countries if these requirements are not met; and what are the strategic and operational choices and priorities that would enable most Sub Saharan African countries to gain the best in the process of transition to a largely urbanized society (Kessides 2006).

These are all weighty questions to ask and even more daunting to attempt to answer. For the truth is that the urban transition in Africa is at the centre of two other major revolutions which are being played out with varying degrees of success in virtually all countries of the continent. These revolutions are, on the one hand, the increasing sway of democratic culture and values with its emphasis on decentralization and devolution of powers and resources to local and municipal governments; and, on the other hand, the displacement of state controlled economies by a very expansive free and globalizing market economy.

These revolutions justify the concern about the implications of the urban transition in sub-Saharan Africa for its economic growth and poverty reduction. This research stresses that the urban transition in sub-Saharan Africa is proceeding at a historically unprecedented rate averaging over 5 per cent per annum over the past two decades. Consequently, the critical issues that each country must face in dealing with the expected high increases to its urban population in the next decade relate to the nature of the institutional and other arrangements being made to receive these additional populations, provide them decent housing and ample employment opportunities, strive to reduce poverty among them, and ensure that they enjoy a tolerable quality of life and standard of living.

This concise paper theorizes on evidence and analysis on themes that together inform the research on nature of open cities taking into account three key dimensions of African urbanization. First, while Sub-Saharan African cities are growing rapidly, the overall share of the population living in urban areas is on a familiar upward trend compared to the experience of other countries. Second, urbanization and economic growth typically go hand in-hand in Africa as elsewhere in the world. Third, urbanization is not the cause of poverty but can make a significant contribution to its alleviation (Kessides 2006).

## **Challenges facing Sub Saharan African Cities**

This string of challenges is drawn from observations in the course of this research but with specific reference to the environment of the open and inclusive city which is also inhabited by groups of people that are victims of exclusion.

- Cities in Africa are growing faster than in any other region. Most of the increase is the result of migration, reflecting people's hopes of escaping rural privation more than actual opportunity in the cities. In fact, under the burden of structural adjustment

programmes, formal employment in Africa's cities is not growing, while informal-sector job growth is not likely to keep pace with the anticipated growth rates in the working-age population.

- The quality of life in many Sub Saharan African cities is increasingly threatened. Urban infrastructures are already under great stress. Shrinking budgets for social services have left schools overcrowded and ill-equipped, medical services understocked and overburdened, transport less reliable and basic electrical and water supplies increasingly intermittent. Economic pressures and rising school fees have reversed the trend towards higher enrolments for basic education; male primary school enrolment and completion rates have continuously been on a decline.
- The most important African cities were developed as colonial administrative and trading centres rather than industrial and commercial centres equipped to support large populations. A generation after independence, well-serviced but expensive city cores are surrounded by rings of development supporting most of the population, where the quality of housing and services varies greatly. Urban authorities providing administration and services have been unable to keep up with the explosive growth of squatter communities and shanty towns.
- Slow economic growth and poor transport have limited the relocation of industry and industrial suppliers, impeding job growth in secondary cities. This has fuelled continued migration into larger cities by people in search of work.
- As employment stagnates and services deteriorate in many urban areas, social and economic conditions continue to worsen. As a result, crime and homelessness increase and family systems break down, especially under the added strains of internal political turmoil and the ravages of AIDS.
- Decentralization of authority has accelerated change in the management of basic services, but public and private initiatives alike are hampered by haphazard tax collection and poorly functioning credit markets. A number of countries allow the private sector to supplement or replace overburdened public services such as buses.
- High population in cities has placed an increased demand on basic infrastructure and services such as housing, sanitation, water, schools and health facilities. There has not been corresponding infrastructure and service development. Urban environments in Africa are therefore characterized by insufficient provision of safe water, appropriate sanitation, disposal of solid waste, drainage of surface water, housing, education and health infrastructure. As a result, a large number of urban populations are exposed to hazards of poverty, poor sanitation, disease, and psychological and social stress.
- Two thirds (2/3) of migrants from rural to urban centres are in the age group 15–2 years. They create a demand for employment that only a few cities are able to meet (UNFPA, 1996).
- High rates of rural-urban migration, expansion of the informal economy and low levels of capital investment have led to the emergence of mega-slums in several African cities. There is an increase in the number of squatter settlements.
- High rates of rural migration and low levels of economic growth are causing an increase in urban poverty. The root cause of urban problems is poverty; Poverty of rural areas that drives people to the cities and poverty of underemployment and unemployment that keeps poor people trapped in slums and squatter settlements.
- The informal economy of urban settlements in the region contributes to the degradation of the environment through, weak regulatory structures that lead to haphazard disposal of industrial byproducts, poorly constructed residential workplaces with large amounts of air, soil and water pollution, and poorly enforced

emissions regulations for factories and motor vehicles. In many countries, the urban population has outgrown the benefits from surrounding land, forest and water systems. The result is environmental degradation, decreased agricultural production, natural and man-made disasters, scarcity of drinking water and increased landlessness.

- Urban poverty causes child labour, child abuse, sexual exploitation, prostitution and street children. The migration process affects community and family structures common in rural areas and often leads to a breakdown of families and social support networks. This is a major contributing factor to the increase in drug abuse and mental health problems.

- Residents, especially the poor, of African cities are suffering from health problems related to both underdevelopment and industrialization. Under development is characterized by low incomes, limited education, overcrowding, inadequate food and unsanitary conditions. There is a heavy burden of communicable diseases: Malaria, Diarrhoea, upper respiratory tract infections and skin diseases.

- Industrialization, on the other hand, is characterized by pollution, traffic, stress and alienation. Some of these lead to chronic social diseases. Unsuitable housing, inadequate means of transport, traffic problems and poorly organized workplaces contribute to the burden of diseases and trauma. Poisoning, burns and injuries increase under stress. At the same time, insecure tenure, unemployment, job insecurity and discrimination contribute to stress, mental health problems, violence, drug and alcohol abuse.

### **The future of cities in Sub Saharan Africa**

Many of the challenges and opportunities that are coming to define the early part of the 21st century are at their most visible in the cities in which a growing proportion of the world's population now lives. PwC (2005) presents a practical framework through which a prosperous future of cities can be realized. This framework breaks the constituent elements of the city into a number of different asset groups, or capitals that form the basis for developing a strategic agenda that can be used to take a city forward. These capitals cover the people, knowledge, natural resources, technical infrastructure, finances, democratic and political aspects and cultural values that a city embodies. This section adopts the discussion that examines these capitals as a starting point in understanding how development of a city can be realized. It should be noted that this strategy for future cities revolves around making the best use of the capitals that a city has and developing those which may be in shorter supply.

These different types of capital are:

- Intellectual and social capital – people and knowledge
- Democratic capital – participation and consultation
- Cultural capital – values, behaviours and public expressions
- Environmental capital – natural resources
- Technical capital – man-made capital and infrastructure
- Financial capital – money and assets

Managing these identified capitals effectively means taking a holistic approach, since each of the capitals depends on the others. Managing all of these capitals together requires strong leadership. City leaders need to develop a style of leadership that is both highly consultative and directional. They need to inspire and fulfil the dreams

and visions of the future that they share with the people and organizations that their city comprises. Values are a critical element of good leadership. A value based approach is one that city leaders are increasingly adopting. Value-based leadership operates on the basis of a number of specific, shared values that are communicated clearly throughout an organization and used by the leaders to guide their daily thoughts and actions.

With the right frameworks and competencies in place, cities can start to manage the different assets they possess and begin to address the specific challenges that each type of capital presents.

### **Intellectual and social capital**

Intellectual capital is identified by the city leaders as one of, if not the most, important assets that their cities possess. In the knowledge economy, it is the people in a city – their skills, capabilities and knowledge – that can make a critical difference to a city’s ability to compete successfully for investment. Measuring intangible assets is very difficult and it is evident that to date, very few cities have specific initiatives in place to do so.

However, it is important to develop policies that will make cities attractive to the skilled and entrepreneurial people that will help their cities to succeed in the economy of the 21st century. One of the key drivers of a city’s attractiveness is the extent to which people feel connected to one another, in other words, the degree of social capital that exists.

Social capital is, again, hard to define but expresses itself in the quality of informal and formal relationships that characterise a city. The degree of social capital in a city is linked closely to low levels of crime, to educational achievement and to physical and mental health. Building a sense of cohesion though is not easy. There is always a challenge of ensuring that divisions and segregation are not allowed to develop between rich and poor, and between different cultures. Engaging all citizens is therefore a major challenge for cities.

### **Democratic capital**

Collaboration and participation are central to harnessing democratic capital. City governments – like other political entities – are faced with the challenge of declining participation in the democratic process. To renew the interest and activity of their citizens, cities have to develop ways to make themselves more accountable, increase the transparency of their decision making and engage citizens directly in the creation of policies and decisions.

Cities need to develop new partnerships with the different stakeholders they serve. New forms of partnership that go beyond simply listening to the views of others but take action together are a vital part of this. Citizens become more than a voter or customer – they are engaged as co-producers in the policies that will shape the city’s future.

Channels for interaction are also expanding and, most significantly, the Internet is providing a new forum for real interaction. More than simply providing information, the Internet provides a platform for genuine dialogue between cities and citizens in a way that traditional channels cannot easily accommodate.

Developing accountability should be a key aspect of the strategies that cities are adopting to engage their citizens. They should do this by disclosing their own targets and recording their performance against them; by creating collaborative forums with specific interest groups such as (business) and by arranging their services around the needs of their citizens.

### **Cultural and leisure capital**

A city comprises a complex array of attributes that provide it with its unique identity. Cities that have succeeded in attracting visitors, residents and businesses do so by creating a city brand that encapsulates the qualities that the city offers and generates powerful and memorable positive associations. Sadly, this has been lacking in Sub Saharan cities. In building a brand, a city has to be aware of how it is seen by the outside world. What are the cultural qualities it is seen to have? What is the lifestyle associated with the city? Strategies designed to develop cultural capital need to understand how they are seen now and, from that understanding, develop the steps they need to take to move their city forward to the experience that they wish to offer. Various different strategic directions are available. Global attractions can put a city on the map to draw the world's attention. But a city cannot rely only on single attractions or events; it has to use these as a starting point for the beginning of a much longer journey. A city wishing to compete for attention in the global market place needs to undertake a wide-ranging audit of all the qualities that differentiate it from others. Once these qualities are understood, they need to be developed and promoted to the type of people that the city wishes to attract. The 'experience economy' is an increasingly important concept in understanding what makes one city different to another. It goes beyond simply the institutions (cultural or otherwise) a city offers. The experience economy consists of the whole range of associations and emotions that people experience when they spend time – or consider spending time – in a particular place. Creativity – the bedrock of the experience economy – cannot be 'bought in'. Instead, city planners have to tease out their city's unique qualities, and invest in nurturing and developing them.

There is no single plan for creating a successful city brand. However, there are several strategies available that can help cities to draw attention to their qualities. For cities wishing to embark on this journey, there are some critical questions to ask. They need to consider what will attract the attention of the world to their city and, more importantly, what will keep it there?

### **Environmental capital**

The quality of life that a city offers is a fundamental aspect of its ability to prosper. Offering citizens a clean, green, safe and attractive environment should be high on the list of priorities for city leaders. Balancing economic development with environmental impact is a significant challenge. Pollution, in all its forms, is a major problem for many cities and so city governments have to develop policies that incorporate economic and environmental considerations.

Developing policies for sustainable development necessitates a joined-up approach to decision making. This means that environmental considerations are an integral part of policy development across the spectrum of city government. Planning, transport, finance and economic policies all need to reflect the environmental goals that a city sets for itself.

Citizens, too, need to be engaged in the development and implementation of environmental policies and be encouraged to take responsibility for the quality of the environment in which they live. Engaging citizens is more than important; it is a prerequisite for success in developing sustainable environmental improvements.

### **Technical capital**

The enormous complexity of cities today means that the demands on their infrastructure are relentlessly challenging. Not only are the 'basic' needs of transport, housing, water and energy under strain, but new demands for effective communication make the supply of, for example, broadband and electronic networks an increasingly important element of infrastructure provision.

To cope with these challenges, many cities ought to adopt an integrated approach to their urban planning. Rather than planning for the separate provision of transport and housing, for example, a more holistic view should be adopted that seeks to measure the combined impacts of different types of development. This integrated approach also means that cities are looking to establish partnerships and new forms of collaboration that allow them to deliver infrastructure requirements in new ways.

Public-private partnerships to deliver infrastructure are now a common feature of many cities, and allow city governments to share the risks of provision with partners from the private sector.

The pressure on cities to operate more efficiently and at the same time improve their services to citizens should be increasingly responded to by the adoption of technological solutions. Improving processes and workflows within the city administration itself is a key focus for many cities. Using new technology to improve communications and the flow of data within an organization is made possible through the application of e-Government solutions that can connect departments and cut across the traditional boundaries to allow more effective collaboration, resulting in better service for citizens.

### **Financial capital**

Cities face a number of common financial challenges. Budgets are under intense pressure from a host of competing demands. At the same time, citizens demand better services but are reluctant to pay more for them. The familiar dilemma of having to do more with less is one that all cities are facing. In order to respond to this challenge, cities have to do a number of things. They have to establish accounting policies and analyses that allow them to understand their financial position, and introduce financial disciplines and performance management methodologies based on these findings.

Cities need to adopt an entrepreneurial approach to the way that they finance and provide services. They need to understand the true costs of the services and products that they supply in order to evaluate whether alternative provision (such as shared services) may be more efficient. Some cities may be more effective in certain areas than others. They should seek opportunities to 'trade' with other cities – selling those services that they perform most efficiently and buying in those where it makes financial sense to do so.

New forms of partnership are also critical. Many city authorities are discovering the advantages of working with the private sector to fund the provision of services and infrastructure in innovative ways. Taken together, the demands on a city's finances call for planning that sets out the goals and tasks that the city wishes to achieve, and

establishes how the funding and investment they require can be most effectively put in place. By consulting and examining the experience of others, they will be able to begin developing the financial structures that will allow them to meet their present and future needs.

## **Conclusion**

Aside from a city's physical infrastructure and geographical location, its most obvious characteristic is its people. And there are some significant forces shaping the future of people in all cities. An ageing population in many parts of the world is creating demographic pressure and some tough economic challenges that all city governments have to face. Communities are becoming more fragmented, as individualism and consumerism are increasingly dominant modes of behaviour. Faced with the increasingly global influences that are shaping the way people live and work, cities have to find ways to understand and react to their citizens' needs and preferences in rapidly changing circumstances.

The world is getting faster. Change happens more rapidly than ever before and high-technology is now one of the most powerful drivers of that change. Cities have to learn how to embrace the possibilities of new technology in order to create thriving communities in which employment can flourish and citizens can make use of the opportunities for interaction and dialogue with their city that new technology creates. At the same time cities must be careful not to leave people behind – the digital divide may be invisible but it can create very real problems if cities are not able to address the differences between the digital 'haves' and 'have nots'. More people live in cities than ever before. Increased urbanization and the revival of previously abandoned areas of cities, brings great opportunities but is not without its challenges.

Cities also need to establish a dialogue with their citizens and create mechanisms and structures that make them more accountable and open to the changing demands they face. Public trust is a key issue for cities and they should develop the corporate governance structures that will deliver the transparency and accountability required to make sure that their engagement with citizens (both on an individual and corporate level) can inspire confidence and trust to create the sense of partnership that cities need to deliver their visions for the future. Leadership is a critical quality within cities. Strong, courageous and imaginative leaders are needed to make sure that the futures that cities have envisioned for themselves can be realized, with all citizens participating and actively engaged with the collective effort to embrace and react positively to the global trends sweeping the world's cities.

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