

POLICY VOICES SERIES

# Africa Research Institute



**FOR TOWN AND COUNTRY**  
A NEW APPROACH TO URBAN PLANNING IN KENYA

By Peter Ngau

**Africa Research Institute** is an independent, non-partisan think-tank based in Westminster, London. It was founded in 2007. We seek to draw attention to ideas and initiatives that have worked in Africa, and identify new ideas where needed. Examples of practical achievement are of particular interest to us.

Most of our publications are the product of collaboration with partners in Africa. These individuals or groups typically have specific expertise or first-hand experience which is informative for a wider audience within and beyond Africa. Our partners are not remunerated.

ARI hosts regular roundtables and public events in London and Africa. These are usually linked to the launch of a publication. Our meetings bring together friends of ARI, policymakers, diplomats, practitioners and diaspora members for candid and constructive discussions.

Published by Africa Research Institute, December 2013.

For more information about our free publications, events, podcasts and blog please visit

[www.africaresearchinstitute.org](http://www.africaresearchinstitute.org)

Registered charity: 1118470



# Africa Research Institute

Aiming to reflect, understand and build on the dynamism in Africa today

---

## AUTHOR

**Peter Ngau** graduated from the University of Nairobi with a bachelor's degree in education in 1977. He completed a master's degree in urban and regional planning from the same institution in 1980.

In 1984, Peter went as a Fulbright scholar to University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), to study for a PhD. His doctoral thesis focused on rural-agrarian relations and agrarian development in an area near Embu, 120km north-east of Nairobi. After receiving his PhD in 1989, Peter returned to Kenya. From 1989 to 1996 he was a lecturer in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning (DURP) at the University of Nairobi and also, in 1993 and 1995, a visiting professor at UCLA.

Peter was appointed national expert for Kenya at the Africa headquarters of the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD) in Nairobi in 1996. In 2002, he returned full-time to the University of Nairobi and became Chair of DURP.

In 2011, Peter was appointed Director of the Centre for Urban Research and Innovations based in DURP. The centre had been established as the Urban Innovations Project four years earlier with funding from the Rockefeller Foundation.

In 2012-13, Peter was a member of the National Taskforce on Slum Upgrading and Prevention Policy Formulation. He is also on the technical committee for the preparation of the Nairobi City Master Plan and is the incoming Chair of the Association of African Planning Schools.

## THE *POLICY VOICES* SERIES

The *Policy Voices* series highlights instances of group or individual achievement. The publications are collaborations between Africa Research Institute (ARI) and leading practitioners in sub-Saharan Africa, which seek to inform policy through first-hand knowledge and experience.

In publishing these case stories, ARI seeks to identify the factors that lie behind successful interventions, and to draw policy lessons from individual experience.

The series also seeks to encourage competing ideas, discussion and debate. The views expressed in the *Policy Voices* series are those of the contributors

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The publication is based on transcripts of interviews conducted in Nairobi by Hannah Gibson in July 2013.

ARI would like to acknowledge with gratitude the support of the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Nairobi, particularly Charles Karisa, Zack Maleche, Musyimi Mbathi, Jacinta Mbilo, Elijah Ndegwa, Peter Ngau, Samuel Obiero, Mairura Omwenga and Olale Philip; and also to thank Isaak Mwangi, Steve Ouma Akoth, Irene Karanja and Jack Makau for their time and insights.

Vanessa Watson (Professor of City and Regional Planning at the University of Cape Town), Nancy Odendaal (School of Architecture, Planning and Geomatics at the University of Cape Town) and James Duminy (African Centre for Cities) provided invaluable advice.

Cover photo by Shack/Slum Dwellers International adapted by Niki Wolfe.

This project was made possible by the generous assistance of Richard Smith, Chairman of the Trustees of ARI.

---

# CONTENTS

<b>FOREWORD</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1: INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>2: PLANNING FOR A NEW COUNTRY</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>3: A RADICAL PLANNER</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>4: PLANNING THEORY APPLIED</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>5: PLANNING EDUCATION</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>6: NEW DIRECTIONS</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>7: URBANISATION AND EVICTIONS</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>8: COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>9: INTEGRATED PLANNING</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>10: PAN-AFRICAN PLANNING</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>11: RESISTANCE TO CHANGE</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>12: TUNNEL VISION</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>13: INSTITUTIONAL HURDLES</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>14: DEVOLUTION</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>15: CHANGING THE SCRIPT</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>16: A NEW ERA FOR PLANNING</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>17: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>TIMELINE</b> .....	<b>20</b>

## FOREWORD

“Cities are not just Africa’s future: they are its present. Unless collective action is taken now to transform cities like Nairobi into the drivers of economic development and sources of opportunity that they are supposed to be, they will become a tinderbox of perpetual inequality”.<sup>1</sup> This warning from Kennedy Odede, head of a community organisation in Kibera, Nairobi’s largest informal settlement, serves as an emphatic reminder of the realities of urban growth in Africa. Most urban centres have mushroomed without the guidance of any physical development plan. The vast majority of urban residents – the poor – have inadequate access to basic services, such as water, sanitation, health facilities transport and education. They are politically and economically marginalised.

Planning is an essential, but often overlooked, instrument for responding to rapid urban growth. In Kenya, the post-independence Kenyatta administration regarded planning as a tool for “modernisation”. By the 1980s and 1990s, however, a combination of autocracy and straitened economic circumstances prompted the use of planning as a means of political and social control. Legislation based on outdated and inappropriate models such as the UK’s 1947 Town and Country Planning Act was routinely used to justify mass evictions and demolitions in informal settlements. Planners were complicit in the enrichment of political and economic elites. By the end of the 20th century, the planning profession had become irrelevant and discredited in the eyes of all but its few beneficiaries.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the Department of Urban and Regional Planning (DURP) at the University of Nairobi was the main centre for the training of professional physical planners in East and Central Africa. Yet by 2002, when Professor Peter Ngau became Chair of DURP, there were only 206 registered planners in Kenya – a country with a population of about 35 million. In this *Policy Voice*, Peter describes in detail how he and colleagues at DURP – and other institutions – have sought to revitalise the education and training that planners receive and encourage the adoption of more progressive approaches among planning professionals.

Peter’s account is timely and of relevance throughout Africa. It is published as the

residents of Nairobi await the announcement of a new master plan, the city’s first since 1973 – which was never implemented. The devolution of power and allocation of central resources to the 47 county governments created by the 2010 constitution is underway – a process that requires county governments to draw up integrated development plans. Once again, planning is very much to the fore in Kenya.

Peter is adamant that it cannot be “business as usual” for his profession. The realisation of the goals of Vision 2030, the national development strategy, will be impossible if the needs and economic potential of the urban poor are not prioritised. The upgrading of informal settlements which typically house two-thirds of the inhabitants of Kenyan towns and cities, needs to be an integral feature of urban planning – not perceived as a tiresome distraction of marginal benefit.

In Kenya, and most countries in sub-Saharan Africa, sustainable and equitable growth in urban areas is dependent on inclusive, participatory and appropriate approaches to planning. This is a challenging – and elusive – aspiration anywhere in the world. But the ongoing reform of planning education in Kenya can play an important role in the promotion of more progressive values, more imaginative solutions, and more diverse skills in the planning profession. It is a costly and long-term endeavour, the success of which is dependent on changing the mind-sets of government officials, municipal authorities and training institutions as well as planners.

The alternative would be to miss a substantial opportunity – and is even more unpalatable. If urban centres continue to expand without providing any improvement in economic and social prospects for the majority, the likelihood of civil unrest will increase. Planning is not a “silver bullet”, but integrated and inclusive approaches to urban development must be a priority. In the context of a shifting administrative and political landscape, Peter Ngau succinctly points out that “devolution could mean that we just devolve more corruption. We could just devolve the chaos, the slums”.

**Edward Paice**  
Director, Africa Research Institute

<sup>1</sup> Odede, Kennedy, “Understanding Africa’s Urban Challenge”, *The New Vision* (Uganda), 2 August 2013

## 1: INTRODUCTION

I have been involved in urban and regional planning for more than 30 years. For most of this time, I have focused on the education and training that planners receive. I am currently Associate Professor at the School of the Built Environment at the University of Nairobi. I am also director of the university's Centre for Urban Research and Innovations. It is vital that Kenya's planners have access to training that is appropriate for their profession – and for the local context.

Planning embodies the belief that development and the distribution of resources can – and should – be guided. Definitions of the term “planning” vary between disciplines, but in my working environment it typically refers to spatial planning. This is essentially about choices and making decisions that determine the use of outside space and the areas in which people live.

The planning process can identify opportunities and challenges and it can do this in a systematic manner. For planning to be effective, there has to be a belief in society that things should be organised and orderly. It should also be responsive to the changing needs of society, and inclusive. Planning cannot be an issue solely for planners. It has to be on the agenda for society at large.

The planning profession in Kenya has been highly abused in the past. Planners have been exploited and used to grab public land. They have also allowed – and been complicit in – the allocation of land to a small, wealthy elite. The poor have been marginalised through exclusionary planning. People have been evicted from informal settlements and unable to access appropriate, affordable housing.

Following the adoption of a new constitution in 2010, planning is once again in the spotlight. Planning issues are central to future economic and spatial development in the devolved system of government required by the constitution. The distribution of resources to the 47 new counties is dependent on these entities having appropriate, sustainable plans in place. The key question for our profession is whether we, as planners, are going to act with integrity in this new environment or simply allow ourselves to serve the demands of a powerful minority.

My professional life has been dedicated to improving the standard of planning in Kenya. At the university, we have fostered links with a wide range of institutions, from community organisations to government departments. These partnerships are invaluable. They strengthen the planning profession, and ensure that our students can respond to the changing demands associated with practising as a planner. Planning has huge potential to guide development. But it must be collaborative and inclusive to be of maximum benefit for the country and the people most affected by planning: local communities.

## 2: PLANNING FOR A NEW COUNTRY

During the colonial era, planning legislation was used to control – and segregate – the population. Residential and commercial areas were divided into European, Asian and Africa categories. Laws were put in place that dictated who could live and work where. When Kenya gained independence in 1963, much of this legislation was repealed. People could move more freely, and many who had previously been barred from living in urban areas went to the cities in search of work.

The period after independence was one of great optimism. Kenya achieved high rates of economic growth and household incomes grew steadily. Kenyan cash crops such as coffee and tea were sold widely on the international market.

The planning and housing policies inherited from the colonial administration could not cope with the scale and speed of urban growth. There was insufficient housing. As more and more people moved to urban areas in search of employment, informal settlements mushroomed. By 1970, it was estimated that one-third of the population of Nairobi was living in unauthorised settlements. The government responded with a combination of evictions and slum demolitions.

In 1971, at the request of the government, the University of Nairobi established the Department of Urban and Regional Planning (DURP). DURP offered a one-year postgraduate diploma which provided training for planning officers. Planning was seen as the primary

# A brief history of exclusion

By Steve Ouma Akoth

Executive Director, Pamoja Trust

## Inclusion and exclusion

The British colonial administration in Kenya subscribed to an urban policy that was emphatically racist. The city was intended as a residence only for the white population and a few support staff. This culture of inclusion and exclusion permeated the architecture of the city, which was designed to complement discriminatory social relations.

This colonial legacy shaped and informed the trajectory of urban development in the years – and decades – after independence. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the government tolerated the migration of people to urban areas as part of the discourse of “freedom”. But this only propagated a crisis, because the surge in urban population was not planned, nor did it fit into a wider economic project. This triggered a new anti-urban movement. The Kenyan government emphasised the growth and development of agriculture by promoting the rhetoric of *Turudi mashambani*: “Let’s go back to the countryside”.

A new discourse of inclusion and exclusion emerged in the post-independence era. Urban areas were constructed as economic centres, purposefully undermining the notion that they could be places of native habitat or origin. This discourse was used to justify successive periods of large-scale evictions of people who resided on urban land without secure tenure.

## Evictions

The oil crises in the 1970s, which had the knock-on effect of instigating the demise of Kenya’s coffee and tea sectors, resulted in the loss of many jobs and a sharp fall in household incomes. More urban residents became economically – and physically – marginalised. In Nairobi, this led to intensive squatting on the fringes of the central business district. Mass government evictions took place in 1978-79.

The death of President Kenyatta (1964-78) gave informal settlers a temporary reprieve as the new government sought to consolidate support. President Daniel arap Moi initially adopted a more *laissez faire* attitude to informal settlements, which reduced the number of evictions. But after an attempted military coup in 1982, the government quickly turned its attention back to controlling apparently “unruly” slum areas. Evictions became about reiterating state control, as well as restoring the power of title.

The government’s decision to sanction widespread austerity reforms under the pretence of Structural Adjustment Programmes prompted further swelling of informal settlements in 1987-90. People could not afford housing. Food prices rocketed. Land title had little function, because people squatted in any unoccupied part of the city.

A new form of repression emerged in the 1990s. Keen to limit the growth of political opposition that was fomenting in the urban slums, the government mobilised young, unemployed men into gangs in the guise of the Kenya African National Union youth wing. Their purpose was to intimidate informal settlers and drive them out of the city. These gangs became notorious and were linked to high-profile politicians.

It was against this backdrop that Pamoja Trust formed in 1999. The organisation was established in direct response to widespread and rampant evictions instigated, very often, by the state. It seeks to organise, educate and mobilise people to assert their rights and influence policies that relate to urban development and poverty reduction, under the broad concept of the “right to the city”. In particular, Pamoja focuses on sustainable housing and community-led construction, security of tenure and planning.

## Planning ahead

Successive governments in Kenya have played a significant role in leading an urban planning discipline that is based, almost entirely, on a framework designed to exclude people from social, political and economic life in cities. This “disciplinary legacy” is one of the problems we face. The professions that deal with the built environment, such as urban planning, architecture, surveying and land economics, tend to be informed by a mode of reasoning that is highly exclusive. But planning must facilitate inclusion. We have yet to see this on a large scale.

For example, Kenya’s Building Code stipulates that roofing should be thick and flat so that it can withstand snow. Why? Because the original piece of legislation was probably written in the 1950s by a colonial administrator from Coventry who used the same code that applied to his home in England.

Planning needs differ widely throughout Kenya. Nairobi grew out of a railway campsite and has always been “urban”. In Kisumu, however, people occupied the land before an urban settlement existed. Land is customarily owned. People rightly assert that they are not squatters and that, in fact, the city is squatting on their land. In Kenya’s Rift Valley, Kenyatta and Moi are said to have appropriated large swathes of land. Those who were evicted were sent to Nakuru, which caused considerable tensions with the indigenous communities. In Eldoret, Moi wanted a large metropolis near his place of birth, so he ordered the construction of a university and airport for which there was little demand.

A more integrated model of urban planning must be adopted. The proliferation of informal settlements and the indignity associated with them cannot continue. It is only through the adoption of a new approach that urbanisation will bring about a just and equitable society, rather than the perpetuation of inequality.

vehicle for “modernisation” and the creation of DURP was intended as an integral part of policy guiding spatial planning and economic development in Kenya. In 1974, the diploma became a two-year master’s degree (MA), which attracted students from across East Africa and as far away as Zimbabwe and Botswana. The course – and the department – became a sort of regional hub for planning.

In the mid- and late 1980s, the price of commodities fell and the average cost of oil remained far higher than before the 1973 global oil crisis. It became increasingly difficult for farmers to make ends meet. Economic decline ensued. Kenya, like many other sub-Saharan African countries, adopted the World Bank- and IMF-sponsored Structural Adjustment Programme for economic stabilisation. This resulted in the widespread withdrawal of public services.

Structural adjustment also involved the removal of government subsidies to farmers. Input subsidies had been channelled through co-operatives, which also handled the sales of farm produce. The smallholder economy collapsed. Farmers lost their livelihoods and many people, particularly the young, moved to towns. Corruption and mismanagement were rampant, poverty proliferated and the government of President Daniel arap Moi became increasingly dictatorial.

In 2002, Kenya elected a new government in the form of the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC). Things started to change. The economy grew, albeit quite slowly initially. But corruption was still rife. This undermined efforts to revive sound governance and the economy. There were attempts to innovate. For example, a burgeoning horticultural sector emerged and some farmers tried new products that were more marketable. In 2004, coffee prices started to recover from a four-year slump. But improvements came far too late for many people in the rural economy.

Structural adjustment is not responsible for all of the problems Kenya faces. But it was a major contributor to the poverty you find in the rural areas today, as well as the economic hardship in the cities. The country has never really recovered. The situation now is that the rural areas are impoverished and the people who left the countryside live in high-density informal settlements in the towns. Urban areas

do not have strong economies or industries. The new migrants to the slums remain poor. There is little in the way of employment and very little remittance of money back to the rural areas. Planning has a central role to play in the response to shifting rural and urban realities.

### 3: A RADICAL PLANNER

After receiving my undergraduate degree in education from the University of Nairobi in the mid-1970s, I went on to study for an MA in urban geography. The title of my thesis was “The Internal Structure of Residential Areas in Nairobi”. Many of the instructors on the course were planners and I became interested in planning and its potential to contribute positively to society.

In 1983, I went to the USA to pursue a PhD in urban and regional planning at University of California, Los Angeles. This was my first formal introduction to planning as a discipline. My doctoral research examined the growth of small towns in Kenya, and the way that planning could be used to promote opportunities for economic growth. I returned to Kenya in 1989 and joined the University of Nairobi as a lecturer in DURP. I saw it as a great opportunity to contribute to the training of planners and development of the planning profession; and, ultimately, the advancement of Kenya. As a recent graduate, I had very high hopes.

I soon discovered that my philosophy of planning was not readily accepted – either by practitioners or by educators. The prevailing view in Kenya at that time regarded planning as an instrument for control. People thought that the role of planners was to enforce strict standards. Planners wanted to follow Western models and base the planning system on those of the UK and the USA.

This was all very different from my perspective. I was more interested in the ways that planning could be used to ensure equitable distribution of resources and services. I saw planning as a tool for social engagement, rather than just a technical tool. I also thought that it was essential to relate knowledge to the local context if planning was to be responsive to local conditions and realities.

I tried to advance the approach to planning that I so strongly believed in, but I was labelled a



firebrand. Numerous obstacles were put in my way. Initially, I was prevented from teaching any classes in which I might have an opportunity to propagate my radical views. I was only allowed to teach research methods and – eventually – computer classes. Having just come from the USA, I had more experience with computers than most of the other lecturers, so it was decided that I could teach computer skills. But of course there were no computer courses. It was very frustrating for me.

The irony was that I had been trained by some of the world-leading scholars in planning theory – people like John Friedmann, Edward Soja and Peter Marris. Any student of planning theory has to read these experts' books. They were in our library. But I was not allowed to teach a single theory course.

I was also prohibited from registering as a physical planner. Following the introduction of the Physical Planners Registration Act 1996, all planners had to register with the quasi-statutory Physical Planners Registration Board to be allowed to practise in Kenya. By then, people were familiar with my approach to planning and many of them did not approve. They knew I did not believe in simply imposing strict standards. I submitted my application on a number of occasions but received no response.

Many of those working for the Physical Planners Registration Board were former students of mine. People began asking how it was possible that a man who trained planners in this country was not allowed to register as a physical planner. The hindrance arose from a very restricted interpretation of planning that was dominant at the time. I was eventually able to register as a physical planner in the early 2000s, though even then it was essentially because of a technical amendment.

Although there is still a long way to go, I am happy to say that, over the years, approaches to planning have changed. Planning has entered a new era in Kenya.

#### **4: PLANNING THEORY APPLIED**

In 1995, I left the University of Nairobi on partial leave to work with the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD). After all, I was excluded from teaching the topics that lie at

the heart of planning, and I could not undertake research on key urban issues because there was no funding.

While still at the university, I had begun working with a number of development partners in Kenya such as the Overseas Development Agency, the forerunner of the UK's Department for International Development (DfID), the World Bank and USAID. I felt that the work they were doing was more practical and wanted to apply my theoretical knowledge of planning in practice. But I did not want to take on consultancy after consultancy. So I joined UNCRD.

UNCRD conducts research and provides training for developing countries to improve sustainable regional development. I worked at the organisation's Africa headquarters in Nairobi, and was responsible for developing training programmes for African planners. This gave me first-hand experience of some of the challenges that confronted planners across the continent. I travelled extensively and met many people involved in the various stages of planning – economists, administrators and architects, as well as spatial planners.

In 1996, we introduced an annual summer school for mid-career planners – policymakers, practitioners and researchers – which we called the Africa Training Course (ATC). We emphasised the inter-disciplinary nature of the course. This was not popular initially. Administrators wanted to know why they were being trained alongside economists and vice versa. But we felt strongly that this was an important component – and benefit – of such a course. It reflected more accurately the reality of planning, which involves different participants at different stages of the process.

Countries could only send three representatives to the summer school. We encouraged countries to select people from the same departments or institutions each year in order to build capacity and enhance the connections between institutions and countries. Despite the success of the Africa-wide programme, we realised that the number of people we could train was very small. So we introduced an in-country course to run alongside it. I was responsible for implementing these courses in Kenya, Ethiopia, Namibia and Botswana. The ATC has had a major impact on planning in Africa.

# A planning graduate

By Olale Philip

Research Associate, Centre for Urban Research and Innovations (CURI), University of Nairobi

In 2011, I graduated with a BA in urban and regional planning from the University of Nairobi. The course started in 2003, with the aim of creating a new cadre of planners able to meet the needs of Kenya's rapidly changing urban environments.

Urban planning does not have much of a public profile in Kenya. It is not a profession that is regarded in the same vein as medicine, architecture or even education. Many people do not know what a planner is. They think that it is the job of an architect or civil engineer to devise plans for services and facilities in a city. They associate the introduction of infrastructure such as the construction of a sewage system with other professions. Employers also have a poor understanding of the planning profession. Many of my former classmates have been employed in the private sector, but their skills have not been put to good use.

The degree course is both theoretical and practical. Our classes covered broad principles and theories of planning, while also equipping us with essential technical skills in design and drawing. The urban and rural studios enabled students to apply their theoretical knowledge to addressing the planning needs of communities by collecting data on the allocation and distribution of resources, meeting representatives and government officials, and preparing development plans.

All modules in the degree programme are core. There are no electives. The idea is to train students so they are capable of mastering all the facets of planning – such as housing, infrastructure, transport, economic activities and social interaction – in urban and rural areas.

## Addressing informality

There are very few researchers who focus on informal settlements and informal businesses, referred to locally as *jua kali*. In fact, many people regard conducting research on urban informality as risky. Things are beginning to change, but not fast enough.

There are no units in the BA course that focus specifically on informal areas or activities. There is an underlying belief that these issues will be covered within the standard planning processes, frameworks and theories. For example, housing is an important aspect of the course. It is assumed that the needs of upper-, middle- and low-income households will be addressed, and therefore housing issues within informal settlements will be covered. This is not the case. In terms of enabling students to gain a clear and comprehensive understanding of urban informality – and this is not just about informal settlements – I think there is much room for improvement.

There is still resistance within Kenyan planning schools to devising an independent unit on informality. People ask, "Why would you want to teach informality? Planning is supposed to be about formality". This discussion takes place in various forums within the university and among professionals. Many still believe that when you teach people about informal settlements you are teaching them how to propagate informality rather than how to solve the issue.

A course on urban informality would not be about planning more informal settlements. On the contrary, it is the first step towards improving the lives of residents of these areas. I believe that it is imperative to understand what you consider bad before you can begin to make it good. If I were on a committee reviewing the curriculum, I would strongly propose that planning students take a course in urban informality. This view is not shared by everyone at the university.

## The Urban Innovations Project

The Urban Innovations Project (UIP) sits within the Department of Urban and Regional Planning (DURP) at the University of Nairobi. It was started with the aim championing the rights of the urban poor. Most of UIP's work attempts to decipher planning methodologies specifically for informal settlements. In time, we hope to expand the project's remit to research, to prepare innovative approaches for all types of urban spaces and explore how these areas interact.

I am engaged in two main tasks at UIP. First, there is the actual planning of urban areas and municipalities. This involves preparing infrastructure and development plans for informal settlements. Second, we undertake research into the use of space, land tenure and public goods in informal settlements.

Much of the new-found interest in informal issues originated with civil society groups and community-based organisations that resisted unlawful evictions. Since then, more planners and researchers have begun to focus on informal settlements. I even know some architects who have developed an interest in informal settlements. Organisations such as UN-Habitat and USAID have been important supporters of the urban poor at the international level.

Collectively, these organisations and affiliations have lobbied the government, with some success. Now there is a draft slum upgrading and prevention policy, which UIP helped to develop. The government has come to realise that planning is key to urban development.

## 5: PLANNING EDUCATION

In 2002, I returned to the University of Nairobi. Within my first six months I was appointed Chairman of DURP. I saw this as an excellent opportunity. There was a strong feeling that with the end of the Moi era and the election of a coalition, the outlook for Kenya was brighter than for many years.

A lot of administrative changes needed to be made at DURP: many of the courses in the department were still based on the 1974 curriculum; the technology was very outdated; and there was no undergraduate degree in planning. My main focus during this time was on developing new curricula.

In 2003, we introduced a bachelor's degree (BA) in urban and regional planning. This was a major milestone. Practitioners had criticised the two-year MA course for not producing graduates with all the skills necessary to practise as planners. With the introduction of a four-year undergraduate course, we sought to address this criticism and ensure that students were sufficiently exposed to all the core areas of planning. The course was also designed to include more practical elements.

The first year of the degree introduces students to the basic principles and techniques of planning. It provides them with a strong foundation in theory and the key concepts of spatial planning. They are also introduced to a number of skills-based courses such as presentation techniques and technical drawing. In the second year, students are introduced to technological tools, as well as more specific topics such as infrastructure and utilities, housing and transportation. The emphasis also shifts to rural planning and participation in a "planning studio".

The planning studio is an invaluable practical element of the BA course, where students work on a "real" planning scenario. They go to visit the area they have been assigned, identify problems and work on plans to overcome these. They meet with the community, collect data and work with government officials. They then come back and analyse the data they have collected before preparing a report for the plans.

In rural planning scenarios, the students are essentially focusing on the distribution and accessibility of resources. These will typically include water or forests, for example. Planning requires assessment of how these are used, how they can be conserved and the extent to which people can benefit from the resources within a given area. The students are expected to draw on the theoretical concepts they have learned in the classroom and apply these to a practical context.

In the third year, the planning studio is in an urban setting. This can be a town, municipality or even a city. If it is a city, then the course teacher will choose a small section – such as an industrial zone. A whole city would be too big, because students have to conduct a comprehensive practical survey. Crucially, they are expected to consult with the communities living in the area. We encourage them to look at issues and problems that are specific to that urban area.

It is important for students to have a thorough understanding of planning rules and regulations. The Physical Planning Act 1996 sets clear guidelines regarding what is expected of planners, the nature of the plans they are expected to draw up and the ways to go about this. The urban planning studio is supposed to expose the students to an entire process. By the end of the third year, students have gone through all the steps and produced a local physical development plan.

The final year also contains a strong practical element. It includes work on a regional planning studio covering an area that corresponds to what used to be called a district. The region will contain an urban area and a rural area, and gives students an in-depth understanding of the diverse factors involved in planning at the regional level. Students are introduced to regional planning practice and administration management techniques. There are further units that have a more theoretical focus, but the distinguishing feature of the final year is the planning research project.

## 6: NEW DIRECTIONS

In 2007, the Urban Innovations Project (UIP) was established at the University of Nairobi. Its primary aim was to create a forum in which innovative approaches could be encouraged in planning education and urban planning practice. We wanted to enable professional planners to be more responsive to the challenges facing contemporary – and future – urban settlements in Africa. The Rockefeller Foundation provided the initial funding for UIP.

After chairing DURP for six years, I stepped down in 2008. I wanted to focus on working with UIP and undertake more research. In 2011, UIP became the Centre for Urban Research and Innovations (CURI) and I was appointed its director.

At CURI, we continued the work of UIP to foster a more collaborative approach to planning. We wanted to create a centre where an applied approach to planning could be adopted. We also thought that it was important to prioritise research and work in an inter-disciplinary manner. We felt very strongly about a number of issues that were omitted from mainstream approaches to planning. Social issues, inclusiveness and working more closely with community-based organisations were to be at the forefront of our programme. Informal settlements and the environment was another issue that had not been adequately addressed.

We were determined that CURI should contribute to the revitalisation of planning education. The research that the centre conducted would feed into curriculum review and reform, as well as informing continuous professional development for those already employed in planning and urban design.

## 7: URBANISATION AND EVICTIONS

Urban centres in Kenya – and throughout sub-Saharan Africa – are becoming increasingly crowded. According to the 2009 census, the country has an urban population of about 12.5 million people. It continues to urbanise rapidly. The growth of towns and cities, and particularly the unplanned nature of some of these urban areas, is the biggest planning challenge in Kenya. Although the proportion of

the population that lives in urban areas is still quite low – about one-third – the rate at which people are moving to urban areas is staggering.

Rapid, unplanned and unmanaged urbanisation creates centres of destitution, rather than hubs of prosperity. Kenya's urban areas are characterised by exceptionally high unemployment rates, overcrowding and widespread – and acute – lack of access to basic services. The 1990s witnessed pervasive institutional decay. Large-scale evictions and slum demolitions were commonplace as the political elite sought access to prime land. In many instances, planners were coerced into complicity. This eroded the reputation of the planning profession.

In response to the evictions and demolitions, civil society organisations started to form. In 1996, a network of community associations based in the slums in Nairobi and Athi River formed a federation of slum dwellers, Muungano wa Wanavijiji. The federation aimed to address the difficulties experienced by the urban poor in the face of the threat of eviction. Security of tenure and livelihood creation were the focus of much of its work. In 2000, Pamoja Trust, a community-based organisation that works to promote access to land and basic services for the urban poor, was also formed.

The efforts of organisations such as these led to a gradual diminution in evictions and demolitions in Kenya. In 2003, the government signed a memorandum of understanding with UN-Habitat and Cities Alliance to support the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme (KENSUP). The stated objective of KENSUP was to improve the livelihoods of millions of slum dwellers in Kenya by 2020. This signalled the beginning of a new approach on the part of the government in dealing with informality in urban areas.

## 8: COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION

At the university, we have always been keen to collaborate with new partners. We recognised the importance of the work that civil society organisations were doing with the urban poor and in informal settlements. Much of their work affects issues that we try to address. We are all essentially working on planning. In 2008, we began collaborating more formally with civil

# Interview with Irene Karanja, Executive Director, Muungano Support Trust (MuST)

By Hannah Gibson

Africa Research Institute

## What is MuST?

MuST is the secretariat of a federation of slum dwellers in Kenya known as Muungano wa Wanavijiji. The federation is a membership organisation that mobilises people to participate in savings schemes and community-led enumerations. It represents more than 64,000 members in 300 informal settlements in 15 counties. The federation started in 1996-97 as a movement to resist unlawful evictions, land-grabbing and discrimination experienced by slum dwellers, but it has evolved to engineer community-led planning solutions to poverty and underdevelopment. The main objective is to improve the dignity and well-being of all residents of informal settlements.

MuST comprises a small group of professionals that includes planners, architects, sociologists, accountants and journalists. They help members of Muungano wa Wanavijiji to secure better housing, tenure, adequate infrastructure and viable livelihoods. Their work is supported by the Akiba Mashinani Trust (AMT), the financing facility of the federation, which invests in more ambitious infrastructure upgrading and sustainable housing projects.

## Why are savings schemes so important in informal settlements?

Money mobilises people. It is at the forefront of everyone's minds in informal settlements. Historically, the urban poor had next to no access to financial services. Banks and microfinance institutions would charge exorbitant fees when offering credit. For example, I can recall people seeking a loan of 1000 Kenyan shillings (KSh) and being asked to pay KSh500 just to submit an application.

Since the mid- to late 1990s, community-led saving schemes have offered residents in informal settlements the opportunity to pool their money safely at a rate that is affordable. They can then invest in public goods beyond the scope of any one individual or family. For example, communities are able to pay for the fees and taxes associated with making claims over government-owned land. This kind of mechanism was never previously available. Over time, savings schemes have become more sophisticated, with many offering interest on deposits.

Savings schemes encourage democratic and accountable governance. People come together at the point of collection to share views and thoughts on issues that affect their daily lives. Members actively participate in deciding how money will be spent. When people make a financial investment, they are determined to receive something in return. People are very clear about what they want.

When comparing a settlement that has a savings scheme with one that does not, you quickly notice that the differences in terms of infrastructure and access to services are vast. Savings schemes also unite people in their locality, and transcend ethnic, cultural and regional differences.

## What data does MuST collect?

There is a saying at MuST: the middle class acquire knowledge in classrooms, whereas the poor learn by visiting one another. It is only by visiting a community that we can understand what finance is needed or which housing solution to use. Local people are the experts and we must trust them to be involved in decision-making.

The federation undertakes regular household surveys and enumeration exercises. To plan infrastructure development and service delivery properly, we need access to reliable data. This includes information about how long people have lived in a particular location, where they come from, what services they have access to, and how they occupy their time. We also map what goods and services exist in a particular settlement, and where they are located, using a geographic information system (GIS).

Government planners initially showed very little interest in our data, claiming that it was unreliable and collected by untrained personnel. However, DURP realised it was not every day that poor people organised themselves to undertake regular censuses. They saw the potential of what we were doing. We offer them unprecedented access to areas and people usually neglected by planning students and practitioners. In return, students from the university assist our enumerators to collect more robust information.

## How is this information used?

Our partnership with the University of Nairobi has enabled the data collected by slum dwellers to be used to inform primary research on informality and urban sprawl. MuST invests heavily in partnerships with universities to influence research and policy. Financial support from the Rockefeller Foundation has enabled MuST to devise and deepen practical, community-driven solutions to urban poverty.

Kosovo settlement in Nairobi's Mathare slum was the first area to participate in an "urban studio" with the university. The resulting plan provided access to constant piped water for each of the 3000 households in Kosovo. The Nairobi Water and Sewer Company installed new water pipes on the agreement that the community members maintained the service and paid their water bills.

Settlement-by-settlement solutions are not the answer. We must think bigger. MuST, in partnership with the University of Nairobi and University of California, Berkeley, has published the Mathare Zonal Plan, an integrated infrastructure blueprint for all 13 settlements in Mathare. It is a collaborative plan that emerged out of local surveys, and incorporates the aspirations of the residents. It is the first urban development plan of its kind in Nairobi.

By scaling up we bring together local knowledge, improve efficiency and increase the bargaining power of the urban poor in negotiations with the government. In time, we hope that the plan will form the basis of a larger city council master plan to upgrade Mathare, and thereby influence the direction of urban planning in Kenya.

society organisations – and quickly realised that we had a lot to learn.

One of the first collaborative projects we participated in – and one of our greatest achievements – was the Mathare Zonal Plan. This involved the creation of a comprehensive development plan for upgrading a number of villages in Mathare Valley. This is an area about six kilometres north-east of Nairobi’s central business district. It is made up of 13 villages and is one of the oldest and largest informal settlements in Nairobi. During the late 1960s, the population of Mathare grew very quickly. By 1969, there were 30,000 residents; two years later, that number had doubled.

In Mathare, we worked alongside Muungano Support Trust (MuST), the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of California, Berkeley and Shack/Slum Dwellers International. Initially, we developed plans for four villages: Kosovo, 4B, Mabatini and Mashimoni. This involved extensive consultation, workshops and drafting of reports with community members.

One of the key features of the approach taken by organisations like MuST is their use of information gathered by the community. The approach is participatory. Community members are involved – and trained – in data collection and conducting house-to-house surveys. They are often members of saving schemes in the informal settlements. They go around counting the number of people and households and assessing the living conditions. Enumeration and mapping processes seek to “make the invisible visible”.

The end result of the participatory work in Mathare Valley was an immense amount of data. This is invaluable information. For example, the 2009 Kenya census stated that the number of people living in Mathare was 80,309. But our household enumeration estimated the population to be at least 188,183. You cannot plan for a community in any considered and appropriate way if you do not even know how many people are living there.

The knowledge gained by community members of what is around them and the problems they face is also invaluable. The enumeration established average household incomes and expenditures; where people had moved from;

what type of work they did; whether children had access education; and so on. This was all essential to an understanding of the economic and social reality of living in the informal settlements of Mathare Valley.

## 9: INTEGRATED PLANNING

The collaboration on the Mathare Zonal Plan has proved fruitful for the university. CURI has also worked closely with civil society and community organisations in slum upgrading projects in Kiandutu, a major informal settlement in Thika municipality, and in Mukuru Kwa Njenga, in east Nairobi. These projects enabled us to improve the quality of our research, and the tools and methodologies we used for slum upgrading processes. Our work on the Mathare Zonal Plan demonstrated very clearly that an integrated approach to planning is much more effective. It saves time and money – and better serves the residents – if the needs and facilities of neighbouring villages are taken into account.

Our students benefited considerably from being able to acquire first-hand, practical knowledge of planning for informal settlements. They learnt to adopt a consultative approach to planning. This required an acknowledgment that it is the residents who are the experts. Some of the students have secured jobs because they worked with organisations like MuST during their degree studies.

When CURI was established, one of its main objectives was to work more closely with the urban poor. Working with organisations like MuST and Pamoja Trust has enabled us to achieve this goal. Through them, we have established much stronger networks than we imagined would be possible. These organisations have the links, they have the experience in the informal settlements and – most importantly – they have the trust of community members.

## 10: PAN-AFRICAN PLANNING

As I have mentioned, the economic decline and political crises of the 1980s and 1990s had a huge impact on Kenya’s institutions. Planning became impractical and the university was very poorly resourced. We had no chairs. We did not even have any chalk. There were definitely no computers or printing paper. The institution had really hit rock bottom.

The university tried to create parallel teaching programmes to attract more fee-paying students. This meant that staff would spend even more hours teaching and our research would suffer. We started to look for external sources of funding.

We sent proposals to the Rockefeller Foundation, the Ford Foundation and the International Development Research Council. The first proposals we submitted were unsuccessful. But in 2007 I was invited to the Rockefeller Foundation's Global Urban Summit in Bellagio, Italy. At the conference, I met people from the University of Cape Town (UCT), the University of the Witwatersrand and from Nigerian universities – colleagues from all over Africa who were involved in planning and planning education.

We realised that there was tremendous scope for collaboration. The planning profession in Africa has always looked to the UK and the USA for approaches to planning. We realised this was a very outdated viewpoint. We also realised that throughout Africa the planning profession was confronted by similar challenges. We agreed that our planning schools needed to do more to promote relevant research and ensure that our curricula were appropriate for our local contexts.

At a meeting the previous year which was attended by colleagues from UCT and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Kumasi, Ghana the idea of African planning schools forming a loose network had been mooted. After the Bellagio conference, four of us – Vanessa Watson from UCT, Daniel Inkoom from KNUST, Tumsifu Nkya from Ardhi University in Dar es Salaam and me – met in Cape Town and wrote a joint proposal for a project focusing on fostering institutional exchange and revitalising planning education in Africa.

At the same meeting, we decided to launch what would become the Association of African Planning Schools (AAPS). The Rockefeller Foundation agreed to fund the project. By the end of 2007, membership of the AAPS had reached 26 planning schools. In 2008, the first heads of schools meeting was held in Cape Town. This was attended by academics from 22 of the member schools. By June 2013, more than 50 planning schools from 19 countries in anglophone, francophone and lusophone Africa had joined the network.

## 11: RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

Since the BA in urban and regional planning was introduced at the University of Nairobi in 2003, we have produced a large number of planners. From an initial 17 students, the uptake has increased year by year. We are producing more than 40 planning graduates a year at the undergraduate level. I believe that this will strengthen the planning profession in Kenya.

We would like to introduce additional levels of specialisation, so that after receiving the broad professional training of the BA our students can specialise in a particular area, such as design or environmental planning. As it stands, there is too much overlap between the undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The students who have graduated with a BA in urban and regional planning do not want to progress to the MA because a lot of the courses – and the lecturers – are the same.

In 2007, my university colleagues Musyimi Mbathi and Charles Karisa started talking about the need for further curriculum reform. There were important changes to planning education that we wanted to introduce. In addition to promoting a more participatory approach to planning, we were keen to make our course more IT-based.

This was not straightforward. It required new members of staff with appropriate skills. I was asked who we were going to get rid of to create new posts. It was difficult to explain that I was not suggesting we should get rid of anyone, but that we needed new members of staff with different – equally important – skills. Eventually we managed to get over this hurdle.

Planning used to be a very manual profession. When we first introduced computer courses, they were optional. We would invite students who wanted to learn computer skills to do so in their lunchtime. Things are very different now. Planners use so many technological tools that our students must be confident and competent in using. I think the graduates we produce are very marketable because of the technological skills they have.

Another challenge to the process of curriculum reform is that people have a very narrow perception of what planning is. We have often

found ourselves stepping over disciplinary boundaries. As soon as we mention “design”, colleagues in the architecture department holler “No! Design is our domain!” Although they actually talk of “architectural design”, not urban design, and it is acknowledged globally that planning and architecture intersect, they still felt we were stepping on their toes. This raises important questions about the scope of planning.

By 2013, we had developed five specialisations for the MA and two new diploma courses that are designed to produce more relevant, versatile and responsive planning professionals. These new curricula are awaiting final approval from the university, professional registration boards and government planning agencies.

## 12: TUNNEL VISION

I think that the planning discipline has historically been subjected to very narrow definition. In the process of spatial planning, architects would design, builders would construct, planners would advise on layout. However, because there is a natural synergy that takes place on the ground, we have tried to provide for this to a certain extent in our curricula.

From the outset, the BA curriculum was structured in such a way as to encourage inter-disciplinary dialogue and exchange. For example, there is a unit in the architecture degree course – “Introduction to Planning” – which is serviced from the planning school. Similarly, there is a unit in the planning school that includes tuition on aspects of design by the architecture school; and a unit that deals with land values, administration and construction offered by the Department of Real Estate and Construction Management.

Although this exposes students to the different professions, I do not think that it fully achieves the desired result. It just stops there. At the end of their studies students are still very much compartmentalised: the industry tells them, “You are a planner. You are an architect”. We have not yet managed to foster adequate discussion of how architectural and planning work should respond to other larger social changes.

Different disciplines still tend to respond to everything individually rather than collectively.

## The Association of African Planning Schools

In 1999, academics attending a workshop of three planning schools\* in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, decided to foster a new approach to training planning students in Africa. The principal objective was to ensure that future urban practitioners were equipped to respond effectively to rapid urbanisation. The gap between what planning students were being taught and the urban realities they confronted after graduation needed to be reduced.

The establishment of a link with the Global Planning Education Association Network, following the first World Planning Schools Congress in 2001, was an essential spur to the fledgling Association of African Planning Schools (AAPS) network. By the end of 2007, the association included 26 planning schools. Close ties with the African Centre for Cities in Cape Town, and the first of three tranches of funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, enabled the AAPS to launch its “Revitalising Planning Education in Africa” project.

Since 2008, the AAPS has held three major conferences that have focused on the reform and revitalisation of planning curricula. Five main themes have been to the fore: informality; access to land; climate change; collaboration; and the mismatch between spatial and infrastructure planning.

The AAPS also organised three case study workshops in different regions of sub-Saharan Africa between 2009 and 2011. Case study work is regarded as an invaluable way of producing new knowledge that is relevant to practice, enhancing skills and competencies and establishing values that planners will use in the course of their professional careers.

In 2010, a memorandum of understanding with Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI), a global network of community organisations, articulated a shared determination to “promote initiatives, plans and policies which encourage pro-poor and inclusive cities in Africa” and to “change the mind-sets of student planners”. By mid-2013, AAPS member schools and SDI affiliates had completed five collaborative “urban learning studios” that involved planning students and residents of informal settlements in Uganda, South Africa, Malawi and Tanzania.

AAPS members have drafted a new two-year MA curriculum that the University of Zambia will pilot. The first in Africa to incorporate fully the issue of informality, the curriculum is consciously adapted to local issues and staff capacity, and embraces the use of community-based studios. A draft undergraduate planning curriculum was refined at the third AAPS all-schools conference in October 2012, in Nairobi.

By 2013, the AAPS network included 50 of the approximately 70 planning schools in Africa.

\*The three institutions were: Ardhi Institute (now Ardhi University), Dar es Salaam; Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana; and University of Cape Town, South Africa.



This is a priority area for change, but it is very difficult to achieve. If you consider how hard it can be to achieve consensus within disciplines, this becomes even harder when differences of opinion between disciplines are involved.

Planning is not just conducted by planners. We need to produce graduates who can work collaboratively with people from different departments and from different sectors. During the summer, we invite students from other departments to apply for internships with us. We also support our students to attend events in departments. Similarly, we do not want our graduates to adopt an approach to planning that is purely technocratic. Advocacy, for example, needs to be placed at the centre of planning education in future.

### 13: INSTITUTIONAL HURDLES

The process of curriculum revision is highly institutionalised. A department cannot introduce a new curriculum without the necessary approval, even if there is market demand. All changes and amendments must be agreed on at every stage within the university system. In our case, changes have to go through DURP and then the School of the Built Environment. Once they have received this school-level approval, they are passed on to the College of Architecture and Engineering.

The final authority to approve a course rests with the members of the Senate of the University of Nairobi. They are the ones who provide the seal of approval, who can say "This is knowledge, this is not knowledge". However, the impetus for change has to come from within the department. We have to be the drivers of change. These things take a long time to be amended and agreed on.

Universities are difficult institutions to change. Curricula represent culture. People are resistant to change. There is always a tension between conservative and progressive viewpoints. The challenge is to marshal enough support for the change. We have been trying to review and revitalise the curricula of both the BA and MA courses for the past four years. We may have moved closer to making the desired changes – but we are not there yet.

I think that the university authorities have started to realise that the students have moved ahead of their teachers. They are actually leading the way – and we have to respond to their needs. For example, the learners were far ahead of their instructors in understanding the importance of computers and technology. We have realised that any kind of curriculum review and revision should be strongly influenced by the learners.

### 14: DEVOLUTION

In 2010, Kenya adopted a new constitution. It provided for the structure of government to be divided into two levels: national and county government. The whole country is now facing the challenge of how to implement the new constitutional framework. This has far-reaching implications for planners. Under the new system, urban areas are managed by the county governments and no longer have the degree of autonomy they tend to have in other countries.

The main ramification for planners of the devolved governance system is that every county is required to have an integrated development plan. This plan is supposed to address the needs of the county in question. The resources and funds available have to be stipulated, as does the strategy for allocating them according to stated needs and priorities. The development plan must be in place before the central government will release any funds. This means that the counties are very focused on their development plans.

Discrepancies between counties are already apparent. In some, the leadership is organised and experienced. Planners have been employed to draw up considered and sustainable plans. In others, people do not know what the plans are supposed to be or what they should include. Of course, they can just employ someone to draft a quick plan, but the plans are supposed to be participatory – not just something a planner has concocted in isolation.

I think DURP is well-positioned for decentralisation. Over the past four years, we have collaborated with a number of small towns to test our tools and methodologies. One of these is Ruiru, a town in Kiambu County, just north of Nairobi, with a population of about 120,000.

We encouraged Ruiru to hire a planner with a brief to assist this fast-growing small town introduce management and planning. We trained municipal officers and civic leaders and developed land use plans with them. We also introduced a component of ICT training. The results have been encouraging. Now that the decentralisation process is underway, we think we can draw on our experiences from towns like Ruiru to better understand how planning can be most effective in similar settings. We also worked with Thika municipality on its zoning policy.

In September 2013, DURP hosted a national conference on planning and devolution in conjunction with UN-Habitat and the Kenya chapter of AAPS. It was attended by heads of all nine planning schools in Kenya, representatives of national and county governments, civil society, and planning professional organisations. The aim was to discuss how planning can be of practical assistance to Kenya's devolution process and the new counties, and to raise the profile of planning at the county level.

We want county leaders to see that planning is an integral part of the decision-making process. There is likely to be greater understanding and acceptance of planning as a result of the conference. But we want to ensure that the type of planning that takes place is sensitive to everyone's needs.

Planners have a central role in guiding the shape of up-and-coming county towns. In big cities the main tasks involve informal settlements and land use. In small towns, developing frameworks for growth is the priority. In some of the towns that are new county headquarters, there are no formal streets or public spaces. When I talk to planners in the counties they tell me that the necessary administrative structures are not yet in place. This is obviously a problem. We will only be able to sit down and start talking about planning the urban areas once the county government structures have been formed. At this stage, we are all still learning about the new legislation.

Nairobi and Mombasa are in the fortunate position of being city counties. Whatever decisions are made regarding the Municipality of Nairobi, those decisions apply to the whole county. This is not the case for the other municipalities.

## Mathare Zonal Plan

The Mathare informal settlement comprises 13 villages located in the valley of the Mathare and Gitathuru rivers to the northeast of Nairobi's central business district. The 2009 Kenyan census assessed Mathare's population at 80,309. However, data collected in 2011 by researchers and community-based organisations using household enumerations and surveys supported an estimate of 188,183 inhabitants.

The first residents of the Mathare Valley arrived in the 1920s. The population grew most rapidly in the post-independence era, and doubled between 1969 and 1971 from an estimated 30,000 to 60,000. As living conditions declined, residents sought to establish their own schools and community organisations, and began campaigning for services from the Nairobi City Council. The majority of requests were not met. The 1973 Master Plan for Nairobi failed to provide a comprehensive development strategy for Mathare.

In 2008-10, a partnership between Pamoja Trust, the Muungano Support Trust, the University of Nairobi and University of California, Berkeley developed and implemented community-driven infrastructure plans for four villages in Mathare: Kosovo, 4B, Mabatini and Mashimoni. It was the first project of its kind in Nairobi.

In 2011, work began on an integrated development plan for all 13 settlements in the Mathare Valley. The initiative stemmed from the realisation that addressing slum improvement on a piecemeal basis would not tackle the plethora of hardships and disadvantages that residents experienced. One of the first tasks was to document the physical, social and economic characteristics of Mathare – including the size of its population and the income and assets of residents. Surveys for some 650 households were supplemented by field-mapping data gathered between April and August 2011.

Community planning workshops accompanied the release of the draft Mathare Zonal Plan in January 2012. This provided residents with the opportunity to shape the integrated development plan and formulate joint planning solutions. Recommendations for the following were incorporated:

- Improvements to the trunk water and sewerage infrastructure.
- Repair and upgrade of roads and bridges across the valley.
- Introduction of an ecological buffer zone to protect the rivers and preserve social and economic activities in the areas adjacent to the rivers.
- Further co-operation and co-ordination between the community-based organisations in Mathare, building on the momentum gained from the production of the zonal plan.

The Mathare Zonal plan was the first of its type in Kenya. By treating neighbouring areas as a single unit, the plan takes into account the requirement for inter-connected infrastructure and an integrated approach to poverty alleviation in one of one of Nairobi's largest slum districts.

## 15: CHANGING THE SCRIPT

The planning profession in Kenya, and elsewhere, has often been accused of overt and persistent hostility. Planners rely heavily on laws, and presenting people with an order is bound to make them defensive. Stories abound of people being kicked out of their homes, or being unable to move back to their homes after a slum upgrading because the new housing is too expensive or inappropriate to their needs.

The language of planners can be incredibly alienating. Terms like “setback” and “coverage” are not helpful. On the other hand, residents may recognise that it is in their interest to surrender some land so that a pipe can be built that will bring them water. If the situation is presented in these terms, they think about the water, rather than about giving up land or being forced to move.

It is the responsibility of the planning profession – including planning educators – to change perceptions. Planners need to be better equipped to communicate with a wide range of people. This is one of the respects in which the role of the planner is not just technical. The new constitution lays a very strong foundation for planning to make a positive difference. Planners need to build on this.

At the university, we feel strongly that a more progressive approach to planning is needed – one in which we engage closely with the people who are most affected by planning. We have realised that we need to approach planning in terms of how it can be of value to people, rather than as an imposition from above. This is a real departure from some of the traditional approaches to planning and must be reflected in our curriculum. We need to emphasise how planning systems can serve the needs of local people – and how these people must be included in the decision-making process.

It is dangerous to think that a university department, or even a university, can lead the way. Universities are often very conservative. I believe that change should be led by the creative forces in society. Society must play an active role in evaluating and challenging institutions. Universities can be part of this process. They can be innovative and responsive; but they cannot push for change in isolation.

## 16: A NEW ERA FOR PLANNING

In the early days, the primary role of planning was seen as advising government where to locate new facilities and services: schools, transport, administrative centres, health centres, and even small towns. Changing the landscape to introduce these facilities was part and parcel of the “modernisation era” in Kenya. We still have a long way to go and are also confronted by a different set of challenges.

We now have to address the issue of capacity – the ability of facilities and services to serve people’s needs. Are the facilities well managed? Are certain areas neglected? We have moved from a time of basic construction to one of management. Issues of equity and participation are now to the fore.

A number of reforms were introduced after the post-election violence of 2007-08. People were incredibly frustrated. They felt that the system had failed them, that the political system and economy were built on corruption. I think the adoption of the new constitution signals the potential for change. It has created hope that governance can improve – and be more equitable – in Kenya. This is the era we are in now: one of considerable optimism about the new constitution.

Planning is centre-stage in this new era. Given the history of planning in Kenya, it is important that planners now act with integrity. We must ask ourselves fundamental questions. Are we, as planners, going to champion the changes brought about by the new constitution or are we again going to serve the interests of the rich minority? Are we, once again, going to attempt to exploit all the loopholes in new legislation for the benefit of the few? Are we going to enable political and economic elites to wrest control of all decision-making?

The structures and frameworks of devolution that are being formed must follow the spirit of the new constitution. If they do not, they will undermine the constitution. Devolution could mean that we just devolve more corruption. We could just devolve the chaos, the slums. The current environment provides a testing ground for planners. We have to decide what role we are going to play.

## 17: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Urban centres will play a critical role in Kenya's future. Cities – and not just Nairobi – are changing rapidly. Across much of East Africa, small towns are growing at a faster rate than their larger counterparts. This growth has been largely unplanned and unchecked, resulting in widespread inequality, low productivity and acute poverty. We must address this. Planners need to be equipped with the necessary skills to plan for and manage urbanisation.

It is the role of planners and educators to ensure that our profession responds to the changing needs and varying demands of urban spaces. The pressures facing urban residents evolve as the political, economic and social realities change. Challenges manifest themselves in myriad ways. Our responses must be similarly dynamic and collaborative.

Local collaborations and partnerships with community-based organisations in informal settlements have been invaluable in articulating the priorities of the urban poor. In many instances, these organisations formed in response to illegal and oppressive evictions. But over the past 20 years, their scope has extended to devising innovative solutions to housing, finance, unemployment and sanitation. **We must continue to build on partnerships with the urban poor to ensure that solutions are appropriate to local needs and fully embraced by the communities and beneficiaries.**

Practical approaches to the challenges of spatial and infrastructural planning can be found across the continent. We do not always need to look to Europe or America. Many of the challenges facing urban residents in Kenya are similar to those experienced in other African countries. Invaluable lessons can be ascertained from seeing and understanding how problems of urban growth and poverty are being addressed by fellow practitioners, governments and universities across the continent. **We must continue to foster links with partner organisations across sub-Saharan Africa.** Networks such as the AAPS are a vital conduit for this kind of exchange.

DURP would like to carry out more work within the East African region in particular. There is a

strong consensus among my counterparts in Tanzania and Uganda, for example, that greater exchange of ideas relating to urban and regional planning in East Africa needs to take place. This could take the form of workshops and joint sessions on, for example, the use of technology or how to engage with informal urban communities. Furthermore, all East African countries have at least one university with a department dedicated to training planners. We want to bring them together to explore and co-ordinate curricula collaboratively. This could also be a good avenue for regional co-operation. **Regional exchange should be a priority for the university, both in terms of institutional links and joint research.**

In Africa, the standard of research is not as good as it should be. Vibrant research centres exist in southern Africa, but this capacity and quality of output is not replicated in other parts of the continent. CURI is perhaps the exception in East Africa. **Governments, universities and NGOs need to make a concerted effort to promote research into urban growth and poverty.** This must be at the forefront of the agenda to address urban poverty, and to ensure that resources and public goods are distributed equitably in Africa's urban environments.

The state of knowledge about urban spaces generally, and informal settlements in particular, is inadequate. In many cases, we do not have access to reliable data about basic population size and demographic information. Conducting household surveys and community-based data collection – such as enumerations and mapping exercises – provides us with vital details on where people reside, household incomes and the distribution of resources and public goods. **We must continue to recognise that access to detailed information on populations and informal settlements is invaluable and should shape interventions.**

The unplanned nature of urban growth means a large percentage of urban populations live in informal settlements with limited access to the most basic public services. **Understanding informality is a prerequisite for addressing poverty that defines the lives of a growing majority of urban residents.** Acknowledging these realities will not precipitate the growth of informal settlements. Rather, it will facilitate sustainable and integrated approaches to planning. This must be a priority for all:

governments, civil society, academia and donor organisations alike.

Planning has typically been viewed through a very narrow lens. The reality is that in the construction of a sewage system, for example, a whole array of skills and professions are called upon. All the individuals involved are an integral part of the planning process. Planners must have a wider vision for their role. Similarly, their work is dependent on collaboration with architects, engineers, surveyors, developers, government regulators and, most importantly, the community. **Cross-sector collaboration must be an integral component of the training that planners receive.**

Curricula must be fit for purpose. The use of outdated theories and models will only perpetuate inappropriate and misguided planning interventions. Our students must be equipped with the relevant skills to address dynamic urban growth and inequality. **For education to keep pace with the changing realities of urban spaces, curricula must be reviewed on a regular basis and their content updated accordingly.** This is an ongoing process and must involve students, practitioners and policymakers.

## KENYA – A PLANNING TIMELINE

**1926** – Mombasa Municipal Council Plan, the first of its type in Kenya.

**1948** – Nairobi Master Plan draws on the UK's 1947 Town and Country Planning Act.

**12 December 1963** – Kenya gains independence.

1965 – Adoption of Sessional Paper No. 10 on African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya. This provided a policy framework for development in all sectors of the economy.

**1968** – Land Planning Act provides for control of the development of urban land and preparation of town plans. Formalisation of Development and Use of Land (Planning) Act 1961, though Town Planning Act 1931 also remains in force.

**1971** – Establishment of Department of Urban and Regional Planning at University of Nairobi with mandate to train physical planners.

**1974** – University of Nairobi one-year postgraduate diploma for planning officers becomes two-year master's degree.

**1978-79** – Widespread government-led evictions from informal settlements.

**1980** – Kenya receives first Structural Adjustment Programme loan from World Bank.

**1982** – Attempted military coup to overthrow president Daniel arap Moi.

**1991** – Section 2A of the constitution upholding a single-party state repealed.

**1996** – New Physical Planning Act repeals earlier Town Planning Act (Planning in urban areas) and the Land Planning Act (Planning in rural areas) and comes into force in November 1998. Act requires planning work to be carried out by registered planners.

**1996** – Muungano wa Wanavijiji network of slum dwellers forms to campaign for security of tenure for urban poor communities.

**1999** – Pamoja Trust forms in response to evictions and demolition of informal settlements.

**2002** – Opposition National Rainbow Coalition defeats Kenya African National Union in elections. Mwai Kibaki elected president. First democratic transfer of power since independence.

**2003** – Introduction of BA in urban and regional planning, first undergraduate planning course at University of Nairobi.

**21 November 2005** – Voters reject new constitution.

**2007** – Urban Innovations Project established at University of Nairobi.

**27 December 2007** – Kibaki's Party of National Unity contests general election with Orange Democratic Movement led by Raila Odinga and Kalonzo Musyoka's ODM-Kenya. An estimated 1300 people are killed and 650,000 displaced in the election's violent aftermath.

**June 2008** – New long-term planning strategy launched – Kenya Vision 2030 – that prioritises urban infrastructure, land reform, environmental management, housing, urbanisation and a nationwide urban planning and development programme.

**2008** – Start of collaborative project between University of Nairobi, Muungano Support Trust, University of California, Berkeley and Shack/Slum Dwellers International to develop Mathare Zonal Plan.

**December 2009** – Government approves new National Land Policy.

**27 August 2010** – New constitution passes into law following approval in a referendum on 4 August by 67% of voters. Constitution introduces two-tier governance structure – national and local, through creation of 47 counties.

**August 2011** – Local government structure redefined in devolved system of government through the Urban Areas and Cities Act. Part VI of the Act deals with the requirement for every municipality and city to adopt integrated urban development planning. No allocation of public funds can be made without a planning framework as set out in the County Government Act.

**2011** – Creation of Centre for Urban Research and Innovations at the University of Nairobi.

**April 2012** – National Land Commission Bill, Land Bill and Land Registration Bill enacted.

**2012** – County Government Act enacted. Part XI details requirement for 5-year integrated development plans in counties.

**2012** – Transition to Devolved Government Act and Public Finance Management Act enacted.

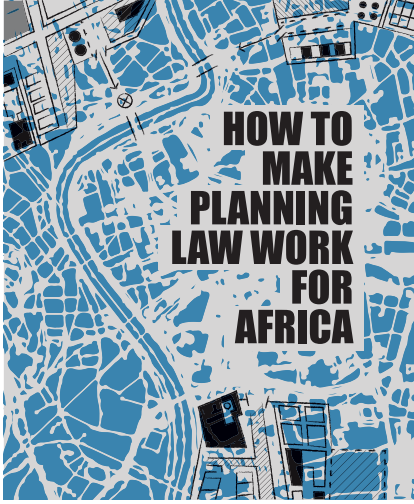
**4 March 2013** – Uhuru Kenyatta wins presidential election. Constitution stipulates that following election county planning and development devolves from Directorate of Physical Planning at Ministry of Lands to county governments.

**May 2013** – Anne Waiguru sworn in as cabinet secretary in the new Ministry of Devolution and Planning and Charity Ngilu as cabinet secretary of Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Planning. The new government promises to honour an election manifesto pledge to build 250,000 housing units annually and "ensure that affordable houses are available to low-income earners".

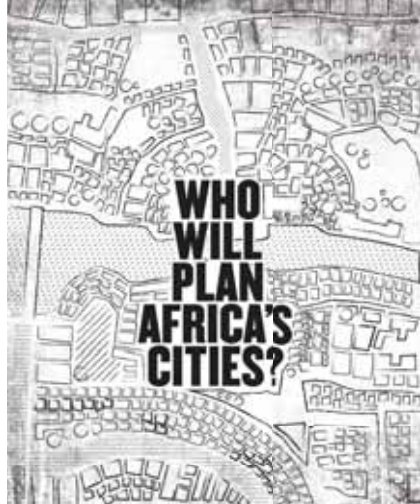
**September 2013** – Civil Society Urban Development Programme publishes popular version of the draft National Urban Development Policy.

**20 November 2013** – Draft Community Land Bill and Evictions and Resettlement Procedures Bill published.

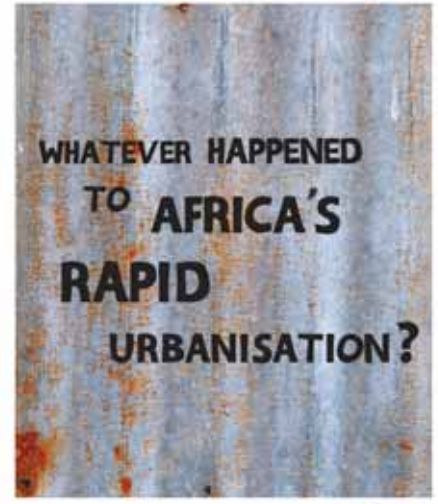
**27-28 November 2013** – Kenya Institute of Planners annual conference with theme "Second Conference on Planning under Devolved System of Government in Kenya".



Africa Research Institute  
COUNTERPOINTS



Africa Research Institute  
COUNTERPOINTS



Africa Research Institute  
COUNTERPOINTS



POLICY VOICES SERIES

Africa Research Institute

**FOR STATE AND CITIZEN**  
REFORMING REVENUE ADMINISTRATION, IN BURUNDI

By Kieran Holmes, Domitien Ndirukubwayo and Chantal Ruvakubusa

POLICY VOICES SERIES

Africa Research Institute

**AFTER BORAMA**

Consensus, representation and parliament in Somaliland

POLICY VOICES SERIES

Africa Research Institute

**DUTY OF CARE**

Constitutional and law reform, in Malawi

By Dr Janet Chikaya-Banda

**AMBASSADOR ZHONG JIANHUA**

CHINA'S SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS ON TRADE, AID AND JOBS

the CONVERSATIONS SERIES

Africa Research Institute  
Aiming to reflect, understand and build on the continent's Africa story

Briefing Note 1301 May 2013

**Waiting for the green revolution**  
Land reform in South Africa

The 1994 pledge by the African National Congress (ANC) to transfer 30% of white-owned agricultural land to black farmers has been undermined by a lack of political will and financial commitment. Other policy priorities have taken precedence over land and agrarian reform. While millions of hectares have been transferred, acute poverty and unemployment are high in rural areas. These notes assess the progress of the land reform programme and emphasise the importance of – and opportunity in – a bolder approach to this emotive issue.

- Implementation of land reform complicated by multiple objectives, inadequate funding
- Food self-sufficiency equated with large-scale commercial farming, hampers agrarian reform
- Precarious tenure rights symptomatic of wider economic and social inequalities
- Much redistributed land deemed no longer productive, insufficient support for beneficiaries
- Potential of smallholders under-exploited, rural unemployment at 52%
- Land reform a significant political and economic opportunity for ANC

**Century of dispossession**

In 2013, South Africa marks the centenary of Act No. 27 – the Natives Land Act. This effectively excluded members of an aboriginal race or tribe of Africa from occupation or ownership of about 90% of the country's land. Under the Act, and more than 17,000 subsequent piece legislation, many millions were forcibly relocated to black townships and 'bantustan' homelands – an estimated 2.5m people in 1960-80 alone. In 1996, two years after the end of apartheid, some 60,000 white commercial farmers owned almost 70% of land classified as agricultural and tilled a further 19%.

A land reform programme initiated by the ANC-led government targeted the needs of historical injustices: more equitable distribution of agricultural land and rural development. About 1.3m hectares are divided as arable in South Africa. Tenure rights of land remain variable only for livestock farming. By May 2012, ownership of 7.75m hectares of land had been transferred under the programme – about one-third of the original target of 24m hectares. From the outset, implementation of land reform was complicated by the multiple objectives of it: three pillars – restitution, redistribution and tenure reform.

The government has been criticised for the slow progress of land redistribution and high cost of land restitution. Both are attributed to the now abandoned willing buyer, willing seller (WBWS) principle. In the absence of compensation mechanisms have been reluctant to sell the state. Collusion between sellers, land valuers and government officials – and instances of corruption – have inflated market prices. Furthermore, purchased land has been widely scattered and often unsuitable for beneficiaries. Redistribution based on WBSB has done little to diminish landlessness, tenure insecurity or unemployment.

Complex legal issues further hampered the progress of land reform. Section 25 of the constitution both guarantees secure property rights and obliges the state to 'enable citizens to gain access to land on an equitable basis'. The ANC government also tried to maintain its appeal with core voters and investors alike. An estimated 40% of the population is urban. Food self-sufficiency is a paramount objective, yet agriculture generates only 7% of South Africa's gross domestic product. While land dispossession was a historical event, solutions must be found amid the economic and social realities of contemporary South Africa.

**Agricultural regions of South Africa**

Source: FAO, adapted by Saba Chikwira

www.africaresearchinstitute.org Registered charity 1118470

Africa Research Institute  
Briefing Note 1201 April 2012

**Elites, inequality and institutions in African elections**

Multi-party elections are a salient feature of Africa's rapidly-evolving political landscape. International support for elections is prioritised above all other strategies for consolidating democracy. The legacies of political reform are diverse, and variable. Technology, natural resource endowments, rising inequality, volatile food and fuel costs, and entrenched elites are influencing elections in ways few anticipated. These notes examine some essential traits of recent African elections, and consider their implications for future contests.

- Elections viewed as democratic benchmark, hegemonies adapt
- Political competition invigorated, old elites recycled
- Fewer civil wars and coups, more electoral violence
- Economic growth attended by inadequate job creation and populist discontent
- Electoral management improved, electoral disputes common
- Extensions to presidential term limits rebuffed, constitutions remain vulnerable

**Democratic Africa**

Africa is undergoing rapid political transition. Governments and politicians are confronted by visible demands for greater transparency and accountability. The proliferation of mobile telecommunications has intensified scrutiny. Hegemonies – old and new – have adapted to fundamental changes in external dynamics and political reality.

African leaders confronted the uncertainties of the post-G8/War era with pragmatism and resilience. In the late 1980s and 1990s, economic liberalisation imposed by the World Bank and IMF coincided with dwindling external patronage. As governments looked to internal constituencies to underwrite their legitimacy, political reform ensued. By 2012, only four countries in Africa lack multiparty constitutions: Eritrea, Somalia, Libya and Somalia.

Multiparty elections are widely regarded as the benchmark for appraising the democratic credentials of African governments. In 1980, three African countries were labelled electoral democracies. By 2011, the number had risen to 18 and 15 countries had presidential, legislative and local government elections during the year. Twenty-two countries have polls scheduled for 2012. Regular participation in elections is equally enthusiastic. South Africa voter turnout has exceeded 70% in all parliamentary contests since 1994.

International donors insist on improving 'governance' in Africa as a daily modicum in the funding, planning and monitoring of elections. The only 2011 elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) cost over US\$700m, of which 17% was spent on voter support and underpinning a belief that democracy will improve the accountability of governments – and development. But multiparty elections have produced diverse political outcomes and myriad unintended consequences, not all of which are progressive.

**Electing in 2012**

**Voting and tactics**

Substantial external funding for elections has meant political competition in Africa. Many multiparty elections include the recycling of protagonists. In Nigeria, former military ruler Major General Muhammadu Buhari ran for the presidency in 2003, 2007 and 2011. Four potential candidates for the 2013 presidential elections in Kenya – Railo Odinga, Uhuru Kenyatta, William Ruto, and Kalonzo Musyoka – were co-leaders of the Kenya African National Union (KANU) which ruled unopposed for 39 years after independence. In most countries, new faces remain a rarity among those competing for the highest offices.

Political House Africa has motivated opposition. Since 1991, 31 ruling parties or heads of state have been voted from

www.africaresearchinstitute.org Registered charity 1118470

# FOR TOWN AND COUNTRY

## A NEW APPROACH TO URBAN PLANNING IN KENYA

By Peter Ngau

Urban and regional planning is under the spotlight in Kenya. The 2009 National Housing and Population Census forecast that the percentage of Kenyans living in urban settlements will increase from 32% to 54% by 2030. Residents of Nairobi await the details of a new city master plan. The devolution of power and allocation of central resources to the 47 county governments created by the 2010 constitution is under way – a process that requires integrated development plans to be in place.

In the post-independence era, planning was deployed as a tool for “modernisation” in Kenya. But in the 1980s and 1990s modernisation was supplanted by autocracy and straitened economic circumstances. In turn, planning became a means for securing control, exclusion and further enrichment of political and economic elites redolent of the colonial era.

Legislation based on outdated and inappropriate models such as the UK’s 1947 Town and Country Planning Act was routinely used to carry out mass evictions and demolitions in informal settlements in Kenya. By the end of the 20th century, the planning profession had become irrelevant or discredited to all but its few beneficiaries.

In this timely *Policy Voice*, Professor Peter Ngau describes in detail how he and colleagues at the Department of Urban and Regional Planning (DURP) at the University of Nairobi – and other institutions – have sought to revitalise the education and training that planners receive and encourage the adoption of more progressive approaches among planning professionals. Curricula reform, research and innovation, close links with other planning schools in Africa, and working partnerships with civil society organisations in informal settlements are the bedrock of the effort to ensure that Kenya’s future urban planners are equipped to manage rapid urban transformation.

Peter Ngau is adamant that it cannot be “business as usual” for the planning profession. Realisation of the goals of Vision 2030, Kenya’s national development strategy, will be impossible if the needs and economic potential of the urban poor are not prioritised. The upgrading of informal settlements which typically house two-thirds of the inhabitants of Kenyan towns and cities, needs to be treated as an integral feature of urban planning – not perceived as a tiresome distraction of marginal significance.

Sustainable and equitable growth in sub-Saharan Africa is dependent on inclusive development. This will require many more planners equipped with appropriate skills to provide creative and equitable solutions. Training and educating these future planners is a costly and long-term endeavour. Its success is dependent on changing the mind-sets of government officials, municipal authorities and training institutions – as well as planning professionals. But the alternative would be to forego a substantial opportunity – and it is even more unpalatable than the prevailing situation. As Peter Ngau succinctly points out, “devolution could mean that we just devolve more corruption. We could just devolve the chaos, the slums”.



**Africa Research Institute**

Aiming to reflect, understand and build on the dynamism in Africa today