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AFRICAN CITIES

*Competing Claims
on Urban Spaces*

*Edited by
Francesca Locatelli
Paul Nugent*

BRILL

African Cities

Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies

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INTRODUCTION

Francesca Locatelli and Paul Nugent

Competing Claims on Urban Spaces

On a daily basis, the media and bodies such as the Commission for Africa and United Nations agencies stress the ‘new’ urbanisation and predict the coming of Africa as an urban continent. There is of course a tremendous history of European ‘discovering’ African processes that have long since existed and urbanism is one of them. African urbanism is certainly not a new phenomenon and in the last few decades historians of urban Africa have been tracing trajectories of African urban growth, challenging the notion of Africa as a ‘rural’ continent. The outstanding contributions of historians such as Cooper, Anderson and Rathbone, Salm and Falola, Coquery-Vidrovitch, Burton, Parker and more recently Freund, just to mention a few, have opened up new analytical horizons on the variety of urban forms developed over centuries in Africa, their multifaceted functionalities, alongside the complex historical dynamics which contributed to their shape.

The rapid growth of African cities in the recent past has, however, prompted further debates among scholars, politicians, aid workers, international donors and organisations on the development and future of urbanism in the continent. Moving to the city has been a global trend throughout the twentieth century and recent figures regarding the new millennium predict an almost uncontrollable urbanisation. It has been calculated, for instance, that at worldwide level the urban population, that already witnessed an increase from 13 percent in 1900 to 29 percent in 1950 and reached 49 percent in 2005, is destined to constitute 60 percent of the global population (UN-Department of Economic and Social Affairs-Population Division, *World Urbanization Prospects. The 2005 Revision*).

There are, however, major differences if we consider the regional dimension of urbanisation. According to the United Nations, “in 2005, 74 percent of the population of the more developed regions was urban, compared to the 43 percent in the less developed regions” (UN 2005). Africa appears as the least urbanised continent in the statistics of the

international organisations. Nevertheless, there is an element that makes urbanism in developing countries, and mostly Africa, particularly unique: the unprecedented rapidity that has characterised urban development since the last few decades. Cities dramatically expanded in terms of population and space, with Lagos, for instance, being “forty times larger” than it used to be in 1950 (Davis 2006: 2) and with a population that, according to UN projection will reach approximately 24 million by 2015 (Akinyele: pp. 109–133). Cities have been transformed into megacities and new urban spaces have emerged, such as Touba in Senegal, alongside much older settlements like Mogadisho in Somalia. These transformations however have been mostly taking place within an economic and social context dominated by lack of industrialisation or even economic development, contradicting the major assumption that urbanisation and urbanism are phenomena related to the implementation of an industrial economy. Urbanisation without development is what has contributed to the image of African cities as degrading, irrecoverable and hopeless places.

To external observers, African cities are perceived as ‘dangerous’, chaotic, dysfunctional and non-productive. They are (too!) often considered as symbol of the general failure of African states (Freund 2007: 156). The international focus on, or obsession for, the corrupted nature of African governments, the lack of national developmental strategies in absorbing and integrating the ever-growing urban masses and on the uncontrollable African ‘informal’ sector are all preoccupations which emerge from legitimate concern about urban degradation in the continent, but they also highlight a degree of interest in forging African cities according to Western criteria of functionality and to serve external interests. “Is your city too chaotic?” was the headline of the BBC in reporting the incapability of Nigerian government in dealing with problems such as “unsightly heaps of waste, poor sanitation, slums, pollution and lack of security” (BBC, Friday 10 December 2004). But are these problems exclusively African? Recent images coming from Southern European cities, such as Naples, covered by thousands of tons of rubbish whose control ended up entirely in the hands of the local Mafia organisation (*Camorra*), should make us reconsider the global dimension of problems related to ‘good governance’, corruption and lack of presence of the state. Similarly, the riots in the suburbs of Paris, the ‘ethnicisation’ of crime and the exploitation of human trafficking and migrant labour in several European urban slums are revealing again the inadequacy, if not total lack, of state intervention. These are problems which highlight

the emergence of new global patterns of poverty, new competition over resources and control of space, as well as new struggles for survival. It is within a wider global framework that the conflictual relations between different strata of urban society should be examined.

But African urban problems display also their own specificity. As already mentioned, it is true that since the 1960s African urban growth has become even more rapid than in other continents, generating anxiety amongst politicians and administrators about how to manage this phenomenon. Clearly there is a need to identify new and specific strategies of urban development in the midst of acute scarcity and poverty, which are phenomena that in the case of Africa have old, as well as new, origins.

There is a tendency to examine these issues as problems related to present-day African economic, social and political situation. Rapid urbanisation is often linked to the problem of rural underdevelopment; scarcity of resources is frequently associated with environmental problems and political inefficacy of ruling classes, and so on. What is more, our understanding of the present situation is altered by pre-conceived schemes and analytical frameworks: a still widespread Afro-pessimism that considers underdevelopment an endemic and specific African feature, and the result of African inability to conform to an idea of 'modernity' of neo-liberal imprint (World Bank, etc.), re-evoking therefore an older colonial prejudice; and a structuralist approach that views Africa as the victim of global processes imposed by external economic forces (colonialism, neo-liberalism and globalisation). African cities in this sense are seen as either parasitic spaces dominated by 'traditional' structures which remerged since independence and hampered the process of modernisation, or as cradle of a poverty generated by international capitalist policies and uniformly widespread in all the 'Third World' (Davis 2006, King 1990).

Both interpretations underestimate people's variety of ways to negotiate, resist, mediate global processes, as well as elaborate their own strategies of survival. They undermine the role of African agency, a notion certainly not new in African studies, that continues however to produce innovative and challenging analyses and identify new research methods (Chabal et al. 2007). The interpretation of agency as a notion 'simultaneously produced by actor and structure' (*ibid.*: 13) allows us to examine the multilayered dimension of economic and social processes and to question the complexity of the interrelationships between local, national and international policies, without underestimating the

constraints and the often limited range of actions that global policies generate. People's ability to develop mechanisms of survival even in extreme economic situations should not be interpreted as naïve 'art of survival' or as strategies to relieve international, national and local bodies from their responsibility in implementing developmental policies, but as capacities built upon people's perceptions of their own status and experiences of their daily life. They should therefore be given priority in the elaboration of more effective developmental intervention. Perceptions and status also imply people's relationship with their own past. In this sense the a-historical framework of the structuralist interpretation of present-day African processes (including urbanism) undermines the dynamic dimension of African development. New developmental strategies cannot be identified aside from an analysis of the historical processes which shaped African cities and the forces which led to present-day problems. A longitudinal perspective is therefore necessary for a better understanding of continuities and change which took place in African cities over centuries, because as highlighted by Freund "[c]ities do not entirely change from one era to another [...] they have longer-term trajectories in Africa as elsewhere" (Freund 2007: 164).

African urbanism therefore must be understood as a phenomenon involving the interrelations between global forces, which influence development on a world-wide scale, and local reactions and initiatives that vary according to social, political and cultural patterns in a specific context and period of time. This approach facilitates the identification of the nature of old and new competing claims on urban spaces and the understanding of how city dwellers forge their own way of dealing with expansion—by creating notions of the urban 'stranger' for example.

Host-stranger relations have longstanding traditions in Africa and have emerged as a major issue in more recent political violence and tensions in African cities. The question of autochthony and imposition of ownership of urban spaces have become particularly crucial in historical moments in which uneven patterns of economic development constrained access to resources and/or in which processes of identity formation contributed to demarcate strict cultural, political and spatial boundaries among communities. The colonial period, and the structural changes it entailed, played a fundamental role in exacerbating divisions and creating a new sense of belonging. Present day host-stranger patterns, for instance, can find their roots in the ethnic, religious, gendered and social policies applied by colonial countries (Fourchard: pp. 187–217 and Locatelli: pp. 219–240), which triggered long-lasting dynamics of

exclusion and inclusion. But cities which experienced the same colonial past can also develop different patterns of inclusiveness, depending on the forces which previously shaped urban forms and cultures. Dar es Salaam and Kampala, for example, were both under British rule, but developed different approaches to ethnic inclusiveness (Bryceson: pp. 241–260). Cape Town is a city of singular interest because the notional autochthons were descended from slaves who were mostly imported from South-East Asia. During the annual “Coon Carnival”, which survived through the apartheid years, the Coloured population attempted to reclaim the streets of the city from the whites who had expelled the majority of them to the Cape Flats. In more recent times, they have been keen to prevent the city from being ‘captured’ by African immigrants from the Eastern Cape. The themes of belonging and exclusion continue to play themselves out.

Can we therefore homogenise the experience of African cities? Did colonial economic policies present the same features and display the same aims? Whereas the majority of African cities experienced colonialism, the way it affected local urban development varied according to the aims of colonial economies, the presence of a variety of local structures of power, social relations and cultures with which colonial authorities had to interact and mediate, as well as the already existent patterns of urbanism which characterised the continent before the arrival of the Europeans. African cities therefore assume various forms, certainly more than those identified by O’Connor (“indigenous”, “Islamic”, “colonial”, “European”, “dual” and “hybrid”) which run the risk of underestimating the wider environment in which cities have developed and the interlink between global, national and local forces which have shaped them (Simon 1992). Regardless of how cities in Africa have emerged, there have been long debates about whether some people have greater claims than others. This becomes contentious where the city also happens to be the capital, and hence is notionally open to all. In some cases, where the city has expanded on top of older settlements, the issue of urban autochthony can become contentious, especially wherever the coexistence, but more often overlapping of allocative systems created in different periods of time, increases conflict over land possession and ownership. As one of the largest and most populated cities in the world, Lagos provides a clear example of how the presence of old and new patterns of land ownership increased claims on urban space. Here competition for land is expressed in the “Omo Onile (children of the owners of the land) syndrome” (Akinyele: pp. 109–133), a sense of

ownership whose foundation lies on old colonial, and more recent, claims on urban spaces from a sub-ethnic group that considers itself as the “custodian of customs and traditions” and as such the only legitimate owners of urban lands in Lagos. The same dynamic has recently become apparent in Accra where the backlash against the Kufuour government in the 2004 Ghana elections was linked to Ga grievances about the privatisation of land that had previously been claimed by the state for the public good. Douala is another instance that springs to mind.

In other cases, where colonial cities were created from scratch, forms of planned segregation emerged and leave their traces today. The legacy of the colonial past is especially apparent in former colonial cities that served as the capital (e.g. Lome or Kaduna) or played a functional role in the colonial economies (e.g. a railway town like Thies). African cities have difficulties in overcoming old spatial forms inherited by previous power structures. Post-colonial urban development is marked by significant continuities with the pre-colonial and colonial past. Segregation of spaces, and in particular urban spaces, is one of the most evident colonial legacies in several African cities nowadays. Whether determined primarily by economic factors, racial ideologies or by both, segregation shaped people’s daily life, social relations and interaction. Despite the expectations of the post-colonial era, present-day Africa is still dominated by socio-spatial organisations which reflect a high degree of segregation (Udelsmann Rodrigues: pp. 37–53), often justified with fears which recall old colonial ones, often related to public security matters, and mirror new social stratifications which resulted from the post-colonial economic policies (Bénet-Gbaffou: pp. 55–79).

The *longue durée* effect of colonial policies on African urbanism is mostly reflected in the persistence of certain patterns of poverty and the limited access to basic resources, such as land and water, among the urban poor. These are problems which originated during colonialism, but were exacerbated by inconsiderate international, national and local policies in the following period, adding new competing claims to older ones. McCaskie’s contribution on ‘Water Wars’ in Kumasi clearly identifies the origin of present-day unmanageability of water supply in the interconnection between colonial economic policies and post-colonial neo-liberal choices which gave centrality to the privatisation of water provision (pp. 135–155). Similar features (Musemwa: pp. 157–185) can be found in the problem of water supply in Bulawayo (Zimbabwe), where in the 1980s the solution of water scarcity was found in the rationing policy that increased the already existent class and gender

divisions inherited by the colonial period. We should wonder, therefore, whether African urban problems are related to issues of management and distribution of resources rather than rapid urbanisation.

But cities are also places of regeneration of resources and locations which favour more varied strategies of survival. Part of the overall economy of African cities, for instance, is formed by the informal sector that provides strategic means of subsistence to the majority of the urban poor, mostly women, but often also to other categories of people forced by social and political circumstances to abandon the formal sector or to individuals who prefer to work in both. The 'crisis' of African cities, measured according to criteria which imply a notion of modernity functional to the world economy, is often attributed to the 'informality', 'illegality' and 'anarchy' of their economies. As argued by Jenkins, however, the 'informality' of urban activities in Africa finds legitimacy in economic, social and cultural structures which originated in the pre-colonial period, survived the colonial one and benefited in the post-colonial (pp. 81–107). Hence, the need to shift the focus from the reasons why African cities do not conform to Western 'developmental' norms to how urban dwellers in Africa develop their own mechanisms of production and create their own urban forms within their societal structures.

Whereas, for instance, a rural-urban dichotomy lies at the root of effort to shape African urbanism throughout the twentieth century, especially in former settler colonies, thereby generating new forms of poverty, other forms of settlements and mechanism of production and subsistence have been created at the outskirts of African cities. Peri-urbanity has recently developed as a trend in African countries and as a coping mechanism of survival. Theodore Trefon (pp. 15–35) defined the notion of 'peri-urban' as "densely populated" areas, governed by "hybrid structures" of power and characterised by mixed economies. As locations linking the urban and rural, but also looking for their own identities in the post-colonial world, peri-urban areas have become source of attraction for the increasing African population looking for better life opportunities, but also forced to relocate by demographic pressure. The dual movement of people from urban and rural into peri-urban areas has recently increased conflict over resources. The situation is aggravated by the scarcity of developmental strategies and specific intervention from international donors, as the result of the lack of conceptualisation of the notion of peri-urban and acknowledgement of problems specifically related to it.

Therefore, African cities (and their fringes) unceasingly continue to attract people. This can be attributed to two interwoven factors. Firstly, in a scenario dominated by an underdevelopment caused by a convergence of international, national and local policies, cities still continue to display remarkable potentialities in regenerating resources, mostly thanks to the initiatives of urban dwellers themselves. Secondly, the choice to become an urbanite is dictated by economic constraints as by individual aspirations. In the past and present day time people move to the city because of ethnic, cultural and family links, because of the presence of multicultural, political and leisure networks (Suriano: pp. 261–289) and the possibility of capacity building which many African cities still offer. In Simone’s words, they move because despite the economic constraints cities are still “densities of stories, passions, hurts, revenge, aspiration, avoidance, deflection and complicity” (Simone 2004: 11).

Structure of the Book

This book emerges from a two-day debate on new and older competing claims on African urban spaces that took place at the AEGIS thematic conference held in Edinburgh in June 2006. The event brought together the contribution of social scientists and historians on four key issues affecting African cities: the reorganisation of space after independence, the competition over resources such as land and water, the inclusiveness/exclusiveness of cities and their identity. The reorganisation of space is concerned with pattern and form. New forms of urban segregation build on older patterns of (often colonial) segregation. The reorganisation of space is also concerned with reconfigurations of peoples’ links to their rural hinterlands. In the process, new challenges to old urban-rural dichotomy emerge. Competition for resources creates new ruptures in African urban centres. For example, water supply lubricates the city and its availability or lack of availability shape how people live their lives and experience the city. At the time of writing, power shortages have become live issues in urban centres across Africa, from Johannesburg to Lagos, in which the ownership of private generators increasingly differentiates the haves from the have-nots. Resource asymmetries such as access to land and housing create urban hierarchies, giving birth to new, repeated “struggles for the city” (Cooper 1983). The creation of hierarchies shapes citizenship of the city and patterns the city with areas of exclusion and inclusion. Questions such as: ‘who belongs to

the city?', 'what is 'community'? and 'who controls the city?' are central concerns. The control of space, resources and urban citizenship are other concerns: how do people shape their identity within the city and by extension the identities of the cities themselves? And what are the implications for other processes of identity formation in Africa: national, ethnic and the position of Africa within the world. These were some of the issues and questions that were discussed in Edinburgh with the aim of contributing to some of the ongoing debates on African urbanism in the past and present.

Some of the following contributions come from authors already familiar with issues and problems related to African urbanism, others result from a newly discovered interest that testifies an increasing importance of cities in African studies. All of them provide an analysis that links the present to the past or *vice versa* and at the same time takes into account the interrelations between international forces and local initiatives in shaping the development of African cities. Most of the authors adopt a comparative approach among cities and try to do justice to the varieties of urban forms present in Africa. Case studies include cities in Central, Southern, East and West Africa. What is more, cities with different colonial experiences, ranging from British to Italian, from French to Portuguese colonialisms, have been taken into consideration in order to broaden the analytical perspective on African urban past. All chapters cut across the themes discussed above.

The book opens with Theodore Trefon's chapter on peri-urban areas in Central Africa. Drawing on larger projects and extensive fieldwork, Trefon's contribution not only offers an original and useful conceptualisation of the notion of the 'peri-urban', thereby widening the theoretical perspective on African perceptions and experiences of space, but sheds also new light on conflicts over space, power and resources in the specific case of Central Africa's peri-urban areas.

This is followed by two contributions on issues of organisation and control of urban spaces and 'new' forms of segregation by Cristina Udelsmann Rodrigues and Claire Benit-Gbaffou. To what extent these spatial divisions reflect old patterns of segregation and what perceptions of 'urbanism' they generate among African city dwellers are the central themes of Udelsmann Rodrigues's contribution on "(re)-segregation" in Angolan cities. Overcoming major assumptions of urban development trends which interpret urban space as either the main factor in shaping social relations (such as the human ecology interpretation of the Chicago school) or the result of them (a socio-spatial perspective),

the author examines their inter-interaction by adopting a “contextualised approach”: the interaction between space and social relations is here analysed in its development from colonial to post-colonial period and taking into consideration the dynamic and complex inter-relations between “social stratification, urban courses, dependences and reciprocities” (Udelsmann Rodrigues: pp. 37–53). Present-day forms of segregation in urban Angola are based not only on the re-adaptation of the colonial centre/periphery urban structure, but also on the creation of new social “enclaves”, which resulted from the intermixing of the independence period and which originated new competing claims on urban spaces.

Urban spaces and their control are central issues in Claire Bénit-Gbaffou’s chapter on crime, ‘community’ and the state in Johannesburg. Whereas the post-apartheid period offered the possibility to introduce new policies for the development of public space, and to enhance them through strategies which favoured collective actions, the question of ‘control’ of public spaces in residential areas remains an unsolved issue. Bénit-Gbaffou (pp. 55–79) argues that “the need to (re)build community links ‘from below’ and regain control over one’s environment”, which in political terms was implemented by the ANC through a *laissez-faire* approach that aimed at empowering civil society participation, generated new forms of discriminatory practices, an increase in crime and a privatisation of crime control activities.

Four chapters of this book deal specifically with matters related to shortages of, and competition over, land and water, as well as strategies (and struggles) for surviving urban underdevelopment. Paul Jenkins examines the development of land accessibility and control, and the social relations which resulted, from the period of European expansionism to the present-day. Stuck in between the diktat of a globalisation that prioritises Western models of productivity and the needs of local societal customs, practices and needs, “current approaches to urban land development in African cities—argues Jenkins—run the risk of creating wider social exclusion and economic marginalisation” (Jenkins: pp. 81–107). The author provides a general framework of the problem of urban lands in Africa and at the same time contextualises his analysis of Maputo. Jenkins offers an interesting contribution to an ever-increasing literature on urbanism in Africa broadening the general theoretical perspective on notion of ‘modernity’. Land and its ownership is also the focus of Rufus Akinyele’s contribution on the development of land rights in Lagos from the fifteenth century. Akinyele vividly

analyses the shift from an initial flexibility in assimilating migrants in the original communities of the city to a stiffening of the mechanism of land access, which reached its apex with the land policy applied by the British in the nineteenth century. Based on extensive fieldwork in Lagos, Akinyele's analysis of a delicate case-study such as Lagos (in which competing claims on urban spaces gave birth to riots and violence) enriches the political and academic debate on land ownership and the legacy of the past.

The long-lasting crisis of water supply in African cities has been examined by Tom McCaskie and Muchaparara Musemwa with reference to Kumasi and Bulawayo respectively. Drawing on his long personal experience in working 'in' and 'on' Kumasi, Tom McCaskie traces the origin of the 'Water Wars' in what was once considered the 'Garden City of West Africa', but has been transformed into a big built 'battlefield' where the poor struggle to have access to basic needs. McCaskie's contribution challenges the often aseptic analysis of social science literature on lack of basic needs in Africa by examining the historical trajectories and the human dimension of water scarcity in Kumasi. Central to the author's analysis are the urban dwellers' perceptions and everyday experiences, as well as how their daily struggle is reflected in their folklore, language, culture and social relations. The contribution also demonstrates how, in a context of scarcity, 'strangers' (in this case Ewes) become the scapegoats for a systemic failure. Musemwa's contribution too, the originality of which lies in its interview testimony, highlights how water scarcity in the township of Makokoba, in Bulawayo, affected the daily life of urban dwellers—in particular their health and dietary conditions, but also their ability to identify 'coping mechanisms'.

The manner in which a lack of sources generates tension among urban communities is the focus of two historical chapters by Laurent Fourchard and Francesca Locatelli which deal with the impact of colonial policies in shaping the relationship between different communities. By comparing various African cities in West Africa under British and French rule, and combining local with more general level analysis of the development of host-stranger patterns, Fourchard explores the transformations in the relations among different communities in West African urban milieu from the end of the nineteenth century to the 1960s (approximately), and the ways in which colonial rule altered them. Whether these changes were the result of ethnic and religious criteria in allocating residence in urban areas, as in the case of British West African colonies, or of professional and class strategies as in the case of

French territories, forms of discrimination against minority groups and polarisation of cultural diversities increasingly emerged in West African cities—degenerating in more recent times into violent conflicts, as in the case of some Nigerian cities. How colonialism altered the relationship between urban communities is also examined by Locatelli with regards to the case of Asmara during the Italian administration. The author examines how Italian colonialism applied segregationist policies not only to demarcate racial boundaries between colonisers and colonised, but also to enforce a hierarchisation and division among ‘indigenous’ urban communities whose legacy was destined to have a strong impact also on the political events in the post-colonial period.

The last two chapters of the book deal with the issue of identity within cities. Deborah Fahy Bryceson examines the relationship between urban growth and ethnicity in Dar es Salaam and Kampala, two cities which, despite sharing similar historical experiences in the “ethnically divisive nineteenth century East African ivory and slave trade” (pp. 241–260), developed different patterns of ethnic integration: a ‘volatile’ one in the case of Kampala and an inclusive one in the case of Dar es Salaam. Twentieth-century urban growth and cultural encounters are here examined in relation to the different local (pre-colonial) power structures and the ways they administered land and labour policies in an historical moment of rapid urbanisation. By adopting a comparative and longitudinal perspective, Bryceson sheds light on the complex spectrum of agencies involved in the making of the two “most economically and culturally diverse settlements” in twentieth century’s East Africa, and at the same time highlights the political consequences of these diverse development in the more recent history of the two cities.

Using as a key reading leisure, in particular popular music, Maria Suriano analyses how urban communities’ struggle over ‘free time’ in Mwanza (Tanzania), particularly during the 1950s, forged anti-colonial (in this case anti-British) feelings which developed through constant processes of mediation and negotiation between political leaders and ‘common’ people. At the same time the author argues that these struggles over leisure time also triggered off generational, class and gender conflictual relations within local urban communities and enhanced dynamics of cultural changes which contributed to shape new ‘modern’ identities in the city ‘from below’. Suriano’s chapter is based on the results of her extensive fieldwork in Tanzania and her numerous interviews with a wide spectrum of urban dwellers.

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HINGES AND FRINGES: CONCEPTUALISING THE PERI-URBAN IN CENTRAL AFRICA

Theodore Trefon

Straddling the Urban and the Rural

City dwellers in central Africa have been going through a long and exhausting phase of post-colonial rupture. The last decades have been characterised by severe social and economic crisis, political turmoil and violence. At the social level, this has resulted in the creation of a host of new livelihood strategies. Psychologically, it translates into an ongoing quest for identity, meaning and definition. Although many new and creative forms of positive social change have been borne of rupture—such as new forms of solidarity, shifts in family and inter-generational relations, re-definition of dealings with authority and the state—its consequences have been dramatic and wide-ranging. It is primarily the urban poor who have had to adapt to crisis and at the same time have become the main protagonists in the process of change. Another implication of this rupture—the one addressed in this chapter—is the way urban populations have reconfigured the complex relations that inexorably link them to their hinterlands. African urban hinterlands are the peripheries of the global periphery, the suburbs of the suburbs. The hinterland concept is consequently best understood as being embedded in the fields of political ecology and political economy. African urban hinterlands are fascinating spaces of imbalance where ordinary people have imagined new constructions of space and time. Peri-urban areas are ‘fringe’ areas because they lie both at the edge of the city and at the limit of the rural hinterland. These worlds overlap and intermingle, making it difficult to establish where the city ends and where the rural space begins.¹

Until recently, development specialists and academics tended to consider urban issues and rural development priorities as separate

¹ This chapter is based on work carried out in the framework of two research projects funded by the development branch of the European Union. For information concerning the research context and methodology, see annex I.

realms, a dichotomy studied in detail by Cecilia Tacoli (1998). While the latter have made progress in narrowing the gap between these two realms, the former still favour a sectoral approach. It is nonetheless clear today that city and village, from both conceptual and utilitarian perspectives, are inseparable—notably by the people most concerned. The arguments put forward in two once important books (Lipton 1977, Chambers 1983) about ‘urban bias’ now have little conceptual utility in understanding the dynamics of contemporary central Africa. Their arguments about separate rural and urban worlds have lost currency because attitudes and behaviours of city dwellers and villagers increasingly overlap. Both straddle the disintegrating boundaries that once distinguished the two worlds. Moreover, the terms ‘city dweller’ and ‘villager’ are used here with reserve: the naming exercise is nearly impossible due to all the contradictions and ambiguities that it entails. This straddling, or ‘rurbanisation’, can also be viewed in terms of a linguistic paradox. In Lingala,² the word ‘city’ does not exist in its own right. The word *mboka* signifies ‘village’ and *mboka ya mundele*, translates as the ‘white man’s village’, is used to name the city. Popular expression still opposes what was formerly the European city with the African *cit  *. People say ‘*nakai na ville*’ (I’m going to town) when they go to ‘downtown’ Kinshasa to work, bargain, take care of administrative or banking business, shop or solicit a friend or a friend of a friend who is perceived as being able to help solve a particular urgency. They say ‘I’m going to the *cit  *’ when returning home. Administrative boundaries also make little sense because cities in central Africa often include rural enclaves or interstices: Kinshasa, for example, has institutionalised the weird notion of *communes urbano-rurales*. These refer to urban districts (from an administrative mapping perspective) that overlap with rural landscapes on which people engage in village-type activities. This situation supports Kurotani’s (2004: 205) assertion that here is no perfect match between geography and culture or Bryceson’s reference to “the fuzziness of administrative versus operative boundaries” (2006: 4).

Linkages between city and hinterland take various tangible forms. City dwellers have a vital dependence on peri-urban agricultural produce and small livestock. They also need wood (for cooking and building) and non timber forest products (to eat, heal and perform ritual ceremonies). Much of this activity is subsistence but commercial activities are also

² Lingala is the main vehicular language used in and around Kinshasa.

significant. Members of households based in peri-urban areas—men, women and children—constantly shuttle back and forth between city and peri-urban space. Trade is the main motivation, but family visits, social obligations, medical visits, addressing administrative problems or attending school also explain the long columns of people walking or taxiing between the two geographies. Commercial activities can be both small-scale and local (with negligible profit margins) or larger-scale, especially as urban elites appropriate large concessions for themselves through political manoeuvring. In addition to this production-and-trade dimension, there is a strong dependence on peri-urban space for new housing settlements: demographic pressure is particularly intense in these areas because of the cumulative dynamics of rural migration and ex-urbanisation. These new settlement and economic patterns put considerable pressure on land tenure systems. They are gradually developing the appearance of urbanised districts but infrastructure is not sufficient: haphazard urbanisation is taking place but without what is commonly understood to be urban planning.

Linkages also take many intangible forms. Peri-urban spaces are geographies of psychological transition, ‘hinging’ village to a neighbouring city and sometimes beyond. People often use the word *provisoire* (provisional) to account for their trajectories. They find themselves in these places because of the forces of random fate. People living in Maluku on the outskirts of Kinshasa, for instance, have nicknamed their district “Morocco”. They perceive themselves as living and working in a temporary transit space that will allow them access—one day, God willing—to the prestige and pleasures of the emblematic capital of Congo, in much the same way that waves of other Africans see the real Morocco as the threshold to Europe and all that it entails with respect to dreams of modernity, consumption, money and success. The peri-urban dweller, in this sense, resides in a state of limbo: out of the hell of the village world while not yet having ascended to urban paradise. It is not surprising, given these sentiments, that the Lingala word *lola* is synonymous to both paradise and Europe. People living in these areas have entered into a new phase of post-colonialism. Selectively rejecting the legacies of colonialism, they combine global approaches to local problems while blending ‘traditional’ belief systems and behaviours with their own unique forms of ‘modernity’.

Drawing on my own field work and concepts from the available peri-urban literature, I propose the following multivariate definition: peri-urban areas in central Africa are characterised by proximity to a

densely populated urban settlement, rapid population growth, severe environmental degradation, hybrid governance structures that juxtapose state agencies and traditional authorities, extractive and productive economic activities for subsistence and trade (heavily dependant on natural resources and agriculture) and a 'hinge' dimension linking peri-urban areas to both cities and rural hinterlands. This complex combination of factors and actors exacerbates rivalry and conflict on space and resources: peri-urban space is thus clearly an arena where competing claims are constantly re-negotiated.

Urban...

A relatively rich corpus of social science literature has focused on the cities on both sides of the emblematic Congo River.³ Although some pioneering works testify to a commitment to early urban studies in Congo/Zaire (Comhaire-Sylvain 1968, Houyoux 1973, Houyoux and Lecoanet 1975) it was around the mid-1990s that significant social science studies were carried out (De Herdt et Marysse 1996, Biaya 1997, Gondola 1997, Yoka 1999, Dibwe 2001, Sizaire 2001 and 2003, de Villers et al. 2002, Jewsiewicki 2003a and b, Petit 2003 and 2004, Shapirio and Oleko 2003, Lelo and Tshimanga 2004, Simone 2004, Trefon 2004, De Boeck and Plissart 2005, Trefon in collaboration with Ngoy 2007). Urban anthropology has clearly come into vogue in Congo over the past few years as evidenced by these works published in both French and English. Conversely, one would be hard pressed to draw a similar list of studies on rural Congo (Petit and Trefon 2006). Researchers have clearly opted for the city, abandoning fieldwork in the village—a situation that can be accounted for by political, logistical and personal security reasons.

Brazzaville, the capital of the Republic of Congo across the river, has also drawn the interest of social scientists and historians, starting with the father of French-speaking African urban sociology, Georges Balandier (1955). Other import studies include those of Martin (1985), Gondola (1997), Dorier-Apprill et al. (1998) or Stewart (2000). In both Congos, large cities' predominance in terms of jobs, infrastructure,

³ The Congo River has been a source of fascination, shaping our images of Black Africa starting with Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* to Thierry Michel's recent (2006) full-length film *Congo River: Beyond Darkness* (www.congo-river.com).

investments, administrations, services and image is overwhelming. The political economy of these countries—and the same applies to all of central Africa—is dominated by cities and city dwellers, even though national wealth (minerals, diamonds, tropical timber) emanates from the hinterland.

... and Peri-urban Literature

Trying to theorise the importance of peri-urban areas in central Africa is a difficult challenge. Little work has been done on defining what is meant by the broad concept of peri-urbanity, especially from a social science perspective. Even less work has been done trying to characterise how people living and working in these areas perceive themselves and their environment. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) defines a peri-urban area as “an area on the periphery of the urban area of the town and its suburbs” (Ciparisse 2003: 52). Perhaps geographically logical, the definition needs considerably greater nuance at the social and political levels. Another attempt at a definition has been made by Birley and Lock (1998: 89): “the peri-urban zone can be broadly characterised as a mosaic of different land uses inhabited by communities of different economic status, in a state of rapid change with a lack of infrastructure and a deteriorating environment”. Pierre Vennetier, a French geographer who was one of the first experts to examine peri-urban space, emphasises two major forms of peri-urban land use. Like the FAO definition, however, Vennetier’s work does not take social factors into adequate account: it focuses instead on two dominant agricultural practices—small plot farming by city dwellers who pay rent to local chiefs for use of their land and larger scale exploitation by the urban bourgeoisie who buy land (Vennetier 1989, 1991).

Jean-Marie Cour has studied the interdependency between cities and their hinterlands: “...towns are now closer to the rural world as rural populations and rural activities tend to become concentrated in peri-urban areas, closer to markets and urban services” (1996: 6 quoted in Baker 1997: 12). The narrowing of the rural-urban gap has resulted in large part from improved transportation possibilities, a situation examined in detail around the city of Dar es Salaam by Briggs and Mwamfupe (2000). Peter Little (1999) has focused on the proliferation of petty traders on peri-urban Africa, emphasising their low level of welfare. The tendency of city dwellers to colonise agricultural space

in urban hinterlands as well as increased rural-type activities within cities, referred to by Devisch (1995) as ‘villagisation’, has led to what can be described as the ‘rurbanisation’ phenomenon (Baker 1997: 12, Trefon 2003).

Demographic pressure caused by outside actors such as urban elites, traders and rural migrants is a major source of conflict in peri-urban areas. As housing plots and agricultural space within the city become rare and expensive, people move towards the city’s outskirts. Likewise, new migrants hailing from rural areas also tend to occupy land in these areas for the same reasons. From an Australian case study, it is possible to compare similar existing demographic patterns in central Africa and foresee patterns that may emerge in future years. Tania Fisher has conceptualised a model to explain population growth in peri-urban areas in developed countries that included the combined effects of four growth processes. They are: (i) “suburbanisation” (in-migration from metro area to peri-urban locations adjacent to the metro boundary); (ii) “counter-urbanisation” (in-migration from throughout the metro area to peri-urban locations, both adjacent to the metro area and those more distant); (iii) “population retention” (increased period of residence and reduced rate of out-migration); and (iv) “centripetal migration” (in-migration from outlying rural areas) (Fischer 2003: 553).

This relative absence of conceptualisation and related research is a handicap at the policy level because there is paradoxically a concentration of international donor activities in urban hinterlands. Support of *ceinture verte* initiatives⁴ and fuel wood projects (Kalipendi and Zulu 2002) are the most obvious examples. There are also numerous examples from the health, transportation and water distribution sectors. The good intentions of development schemes often fall awry in peri-urban areas because the complex land tenure and social determinants that govern these spaces—and consequently the projects that are based there—are frequently overlooked in the project design phase (Farvacque-Vitcovic and Godin 1997: 4). These authors make particular reference to infrastructure and housing problems in peri-urban areas (ibid.: 32). The complexities of land tenure in Africa have been studied in-depth by

⁴ The *écocité* programme (<http://www.ecocite.org/>) is a notable example. It seeks to improve stakeholder involvement in natural resource management around a number of West African cities.

an interdisciplinary network of social scientists: AFREFA (*Association pour la Promotion des Recherches et des Etudes Foncières en Afrique*) (Le Bris et al. 1991). They suggest a model of land tenure which suits the peri-urban context relatively well. In their view, the totality of social relations are based on land and space. These social relations are primarily conditioned by politics, economics, institutions and the nature of infrastructure (ibid.: 13), making land tenure a “total social fact” (ibid.: 21)—to add a new twist to Durkheim’s concept. Somewhat surprisingly, AFREFA did not include ecology or environment in their model.

Hybrid Spaces: Authorities, Land and Peri-urban Economy

The reports that the research questions outlined in annex I have generated a wealth of information about what peri-urban space is and how people living there organise their lives. The reading that I have chosen to focus on for the purpose of this chapter pertains to the hybrid and ambiguous character of peri-urban space. Particular emphasis is given to the ambiguity that surrounds any form of administrative procedure. The term ‘hybrid’ here is used in its literal meaning because peri-urban space is clearly a fusion or an amalgam of two different types of settings. While there is evidence of urban and village attitudes and behaviours being simply juxtaposed, or mutually “borrowed” where they co-exist next to each other (Simone 2004: 1), there is greater evidence of a process of transformation and rupture that makes these spaces unique. Three examples will be developed to express this process of fusion. They pertain to (i) the relations between state and traditional authority, including the ways that justice is enforced; (ii) habitat and land use; and (iii) peri-urban economic activities.

Traditional authorities and state agents vie for power, access to resources and legitimacy in an unending negotiation process characterised by ‘turf wars’ and hard bargaining. Relations at the level of authority tend to be characterised by conflict, even though a situation of fragile accommodation has been worked out. Other civil society actors such as religious figures, NGO workers and international development experts have also become important actors in these landscapes, competing for constituencies, clients and ‘beneficiaries’. Representatives from all these categories of authority and legitimacy have some clearly

defined prerogatives with which they are identified. There are, however, a number of vague overlapping areas where prerogatives are not clearly defined. These are the problem areas where ordinary people are taken hostage between the different manifestations of authority.

Like Jeffery Herbst (2000), who theorised how states diffuse power over their territory and Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan (1997b) who described why 'the state stops twelve kilometres from Bangui', our results confirm that the degree of political control in central Africa decreases in relation to the distance from the capital city. Land tenure practices around Kinshasa, Lubumbashi and Brazzaville clearly support this hypothesis because traditional authority is just as important to local populations as is modern law with respect to access, usufruct and ownership of land. In the Zaire of Mobutu, huge parts of the country were beyond the effective reach of any form of state authority, a situation that has not been resolved today despite the relative success of post-conflict political agreements. The quest of the Congo state to maintain effective control over its vast territory is an ongoing challenge (Pourtier 1997).

Communities living in peri-urban areas in central Africa are handicapped by the juxtaposition of two contradictory land tenure frameworks. According to the DRC government, land (literally *le sol et le sous-sol*) belongs to the state. As a response to conflict-ridden patrimonial colonial land tenure policies, the 1966 Bakajika law enabled the state to regain (in theory) full ownership of land, including the awarding of agricultural, forest and mining concessions. The other logic is the one maintained by the people, particularly rural communities. They consider themselves to be the real landowners based on ancestral rights: they perceive themselves as the guardians of the land guaranteeing the continuity between their ancestors and future generations. The Bakajika law for them is no more than illegitimate fiction invented in Kinshasa for political reasons. Research on land use in peri-urban Accra (Ghana) confirms these observations about the potential for conflict due to the co-existence of customary land tenure and state involvement in the land market (Gough and Yankson 2000).

The potential for conflict in peri-urban areas results from this hybrid political system, which is further exacerbated by the ambiguity that surrounds procedures. There is no clearly defined set of rules in these spaces. In the context of state failure and economic crisis, whoever has the slightest form of power or authority exploits it to maximise gains or personal advantages. This may be little more than the price of a

bottle of beer but for the peri-urban dweller who lives in an economic environment where relatively little cash circulates, the price of a bottle of beer can be a serious burden. Bribes, money to 'buy beans for the kids' (*madesu na bana*) or even a promise to reciprocate at a later date are all commonplace forms of 'motivation'.⁵ The nature of the relationships that link state actors and people in peri-urban space is synthesised in Table 2.1. The information in this table also highlights those public services where the state is present and those where it is absent. It is noteworthy that in peri-urban Kinshasa, for example, there are—at least on paper—twenty-six different national, municipal or communal departments or services.

The relationships that people have with figures of authority are similar to the relationships that they have with neighbours, co-workers or even extended family members. The collective social values and practices once characteristic of rural life in central Africa have given way to the demands and contradictions of a corrupted market economy in which the individual is central. Attitudes and behaviours have evolved due to the degree of crisis and specifically the difficulties in finding cash-earning employment. Always looking for new ways to cope, peri-urban folk have been forced to psychologically transform poverty into 'despair solidarity'. While they are able and willing to extend psychological support, financial and material constraints limit this solidarity to a pragmatic system of exchange. People help each other primarily if they can expect something in return. Debt, whether it is in the form of a loan, a service rendered or a favour, is expected to be redeemed at some point (Trefon 2002).

The justice system is a good example of the hybrid and ambiguous context that characterise power relations in peri-urban areas. If in the village, traditional forms of justice prevail, and if in the city modern law is the standard, in peri-urban areas the two forms of justice overlap. Interaction between European legal structures and indigenous legal systems is common in most post-colonial states in Africa. In most of these states, the two systems have fused together to provide a legal framework that serves to address a range of conflicts and problems. This hybrid order of law is commonly known as 'legal pluralism', which is defined as a situation whereby two or more legal systems coexist

⁵ The nature of everyday corruption in West Africa has been analysed with finesse by Blundo and Olivier de Sardan et al. (2006).

Table 2.1. State actors and services

Questions	Synthesis from the three sites
What state actors/services are present in the site?	State actors are present in all of the sites, particularly Maluku where 26 services are represented. The contrast between the strong presence of security services and the absence of social services is striking.
How efficient are they?	There are three levels of efficiency: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In the three sites, basic services (e.g. Population statistics) or technical support (Farming and Animal Husbandry) exist more in theory than in practice. – Given the opportunities for formal and informal taxation, services linked to natural resource exploitation are active (Land Registration, Water and Forestry). – Police, Customs and Security agents are omnipresent and efficient in controlling the movement of people and goods.
How do local stakeholders perceive them?	The predatory nature of these state agents is confirmed in our findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “When we can avoid a state agent, we do so. If he can’t be avoided, we negotiate and pay the smallest amount possible”: vegetable grower, Maluku. – “Agents prefer being posted to positions where they can get a few crumbs from us”: trader, Loukanga I. – “We are the hens that lay golden eggs for the state”: charcoal transporter by bicycle, Kawama.

Source: Gepac field reports 2005.

in the same social field. Another way of expressing this dichotomy is written law versus oral law. Customary tribunals moreover are held outdoors (usually in the chief’s compound), whereas modern legal hearings take place within an administrative building. This coexistence functions in those legal matters where rights and responsibilities are clearly defined. Administrative authorities refrain from intervening in *les affaires coutumières* and the chiefs avoid getting involved in criminal cases. This *entente cordiale* works, but it can break down in the gray interstices. In legal situations that do not fall clearly in one domain or the other, actors do whatever they can to outmanoeuvre rival forms of legal authority.

In the DRC, traditional authority in the form of the chief and his council of elders has jurisdiction over certain legal matters that are clearly defined and generally respected by all stakeholders. Depending on the type of administrative entity, there are different categories of chiefs.⁶ The situation is complex and extremely ambiguous because their mandates derive from negotiations that straddle traditional authority and state prerogative. State agents also have a series of clearly defined areas of legal jurisdiction. Recourse to one system or the other is dependent upon the type and severity of the conflict or crime. When the conflict is benign or has not caused serious injury, it is resolved by *le chef*. Most common types of conflict that fall within the realm of *le chef* pertain to adultery and incest; witchcraft accusation; conflicting inheritance claims; feuds about land use and borders; marital problems that result from infertility or repeated deaths in the family; expenditures relating to weddings and funerals; and financial and social settlements to be made for unmarried young mothers. Intra-family disputes also fall into this category and are very frequent given the fact that children often live with re-composed and/or extended families (grandparents, uncles aunts, step-mother, step-father, etc). While this situation exists at both the village level and in towns, it occurs frequently in peri-urban areas given the high degree of mobility among young adults.

When settlements are agreed upon due to the intervention of *le chef* or his council of elders, reparations usually consist of the purchase of a calabash of palm wine or the offering of a live animal such as a chicken or goat, depending on the severity of the offence. The animal will be slaughtered because 'blood must flow' (*makila etanga* in Lingala). The spirits of the ancestors—guardians of the entire community—have to be calmed by offering warm blood on the land. It is rare in these types of conflicts that money is paid as settlement. When modern judges, courts and police are involved, by contrast, cash settlements are the norm and are paid as fines or retribution. In peri-urban areas recourse to modern law takes place mainly when traditional authorities are unable to resolve a dispute through negotiation (*palabre*), in cases of repeat offences or in instances of physical violence.

Habit and land use are also visible examples of hybrid situations. Some houses are built of adobe and sticks with either thatch, or more generally, corrugated iron roofs. For the peri-urban dweller, a corrugated

⁶ Mainly, *chefs de localité*, *chefs de groupement*, *chefs de secteur* and *chefs coutumier*.

iron roof is a priority and a manifest sign of modernity, an attitude that characterises rural based populations throughout the region. Use of cut boards, recycled materials, cinder blocks or baked bricks (opposed to sun-dried bricks) is also common, reflecting a more urban style. Glass windows are rare and houses are invariably single story constructions. Older neighbourhoods in peri-urban zones are more similar to village settings while the newer constructions are influenced by urban areas.

Construction can take years and it is not uncommon to see partially built houses waiting for their owners to find the money needed to buy material or pay workers. Markers on lots can take the form of a single planted tree or a very small construction that looks more like a shed than a house. Both serve to prove that the lot is occupied and should discourage anyone who could covet it. Hand painted signs *cette parcelle n'est pas à vendre* (lot not for sale) accompany these markers.⁷ Housing development is generally the initiative of individual owners: investment in land acquisition and construction is rarely carried out by developers as is common in more densely populated urban zones. This helps explain the highly fragmented juxtaposition of built-up patches adjacent to vacant space. It also results from the fact that housing in these areas precedes urban planning and not the more logical reverse situation. Housing takes place, in other words, in the absence of roads, water and electricity provision or waste removal strategies. People gather water at wells or rivers to meet basic needs, although the risk of water-borne disease is high. Few houses are connected to an electricity distribution network so people simply do without lights, refrigeration or cooking appliances. Curiously, radios, televisions and refrigerators can, however, be found in peri-urban houses because people hope that electrification systems will be set up one day. Houses tend to be surrounded by trees and vegetable gardens throughout the peri-urban areas we studied. Domestic animals such as chickens, ducks, pigs and goats are omnipresent and roam freely around the lots which are much larger than urban plots. In peri-urban Brazzaville, for example, more than half of the lots we inventoried were 800 square metres or larger, while in the city, they average approximately 400 square metres.

⁷ For a series of photos representing this phenomenon, see Müller and Quednau et al. (2006: 101–135).

A very specific characteristic of peri-urban land use is the types of fences used to separate or demarcate lots. In African city centres, high cement walls topped with barbed wire or broken glass separate lots and the public street or sidewalk. In the African village, there are rarely any forms of physical boundaries or markers even though people know exactly where their invisible boundaries lie, a situation expressed by Hernando de Soto in his famous “the dogs know where to bark” metaphor (2003: 8). In peri-urban areas, an in-between alternative exists. There are fences made of sticks, recycled cut lumber or low hedges grown out of indigenous shrubs or grasses. Here, the idea is not to keep intruders out but to prove that the land is measured and occupied. When more solid fences are put up in peri-urban space, they generally testify to the presence of families who have migrated from the city. Local folk say that “fences come from the city”, although they also testify to competing land claims or inheritance disputes.

Burial practices also reveal the hybrid nature of peri-urbanity. Tombs of deceased family members are common at the village level but very rare in town. In peri-urban space, the village practice generally applies. In the Kongo cosmogony, which covers both peri-urban Kinshasa and Brazzaville, the ancestors protect the clan and can do so best by being close to the family. When official cemeteries do exist in the area people are supposed to bury their dead there after having made the necessary declarations to the competent administrative services. As these services exist more in theory than in practice, people just ask the local chief for authorisation to bury their dead at home.

The hybrid nature of peri-urban space is particularly obvious with respect to economic activities which play important interface roles. This results primarily from the availability of space and natural resources in close proximity to urban markets. These close urban markets respond to both consumption and provision needs. Exploitation of resources in these areas is carried out by people living in them but also by the swelling numbers of urban or under-employed who perceive the hinterland as an economic escape valve: “If all else fails in town, we can turn to nature for survival” is a commonly heard leitmotif. A telling ‘hinge’ example is the polygamist trader who has one wife in the peri-urban space farming and another in town selling the produce of the other at market. Underpaid civil servants and/or their wives form a large corps of peri-urban farmers. It is not uncommon to see them shuttling between town and field with a cell phone in one hand and a machete or hoe in the other. Most people interviewed in our studies claimed that

approximately 80 percent of their revenues are spent on food, housing, school fees and clothing. People with many years of experience in these areas have the perception that resources are becoming increasingly scarce. They have to walk farther to their farms or harvest areas and return home with smaller sized bundles. Hunters have to camp in the forest over longer periods of time before finding the same amount of game they could catch in shorter periods in the past.

Agriculture is the most important economic activity linking the peri-urban area to a neighbouring city: cassava and corn are the main staple crops. It is the ways that crops are produced that differentiate rural techniques from those developed in peri-urban areas. The size of the plot, use of improved seeds, insecticides and chemical fertilizers that are acquired in town and the short duration of fallow periods are some examples. An association of farmers in peri-urban Kinshasa declared trading corn for fertilizer, highlighting economic exchanges outside the cash economy which would be rare in the city or in village areas where use of chemical fertilizer is rare. Peri-urban agriculture takes place in three main types of space: farming within (i) the *parcelle* (the house lot), (ii) just beyond the village limits, and (iii) increasingly, due to soil fatigue, farther and farther into the village outskirts referred to as *nsamba* (forest) by farmers outside of Kinshasa, for example. The types of crops grown and their ultimate use (sale or family consumption) determine where they will be grown. Vegetables for household consumption are grown on the *parcelle* and are supplemented by staples grown beyond the village limits. *Maraîchage* (market gardening) takes place on perennial space in proximity to the village to grow tomatoes, leeks, celery, cabbage, carrots, etc. for sale in the urban market. Farming in the *nsamba* is also largely destined for commercial purposes and takes place on large plots of up to approximately one hectare. In all of these cases, work is labour intensive and is carried out with rudimentary tools such as the axe, hoe and machete. A fourth category of agricultural space is the 'plantation', ranging in size from between five and thirty hectares. These considerably larger plots are owned by urban elites and exploited exclusively for commercial purposes.

Fuel wood harvesting and charcoal production is the second most important commercial activity. Urban populations throughout central Africa have a vital dependence on *makala* (charcoal) for cooking. Even those relatively few households that have access to electricity or gas invariably have a supply of *makala* to prepare certain foods or as an

alternative source of energy in case of power shortages or supply problems. Peri-urban deforestation and land degradation is largely a result of charcoal production, notably around the larger urban areas. While charcoal is produced approximately 20 kilometres from Lubumbashi and Brazzaville, Kinshasa is supplied by areas of at least 80 kilometres away. In some cases, the wood used to make *makala* is a by-product of land cleared for agriculture while in other cases trees are cut specifically for charcoal production (Trefon 1999). It is transported by lorry to Kinshasa but by bicycle to Lubumbashi: the means of transportation is a good indicator of increasing resource scarcity. One example of the hybrid nature of charcoal politics comes from our research in Lubumbashi. Both charcoal producers and transporters have to respect a hybrid form of authority, having to negotiate with the traditional chief and with state authorities responsible for environmental issues: access to timber and the right to transport it as charcoal is conditioned by a careful blend of good social relations, traditional tributes and modern taxes.

A third economic activity in peri-urban central Africa that supports our hybrid system argument is animal husbandry. Pigs and chickens primarily, but also ducks are produced in conditions that range from village-like practices where animals roam around freely and feed themselves to semi-industrialized systems where they are bred in pens or cages and nourished with commercially purchased feed and treated with veterinary products purchased in town. As semi-industrialized farms are relatively expensive, they tend to be the initiatives of politically well-connected urban elites. Fish farming (mainly tilapia, clarias and catfish) and increasing examples of small-scale cane rat and guinea pig breeding are also observable. A very serious handicap to these initiatives, as well as peri-urban agriculture, is widespread theft. This ranges from an employee pilfering a few fish or a small amount of manioc leaves to looting by hungry soldiers. Both examples represent significant disincentives to invest in peri-urban areas.

Analysis of trade and commerce practices also provides useful insight into the specificities of peri-urbanity. In exchange for the food that is grown, bred or harvested outside of the city, peri-urban residents depend on a wide range of medicines, processed foods (*baguettes*, palm oil, tomato paste, tinned sardines and corned beef, smoked fish, salt, sugar, *le cube maggie*) and basic necessities (soap, candles, pens and paper, batteries, cigarettes) that come from the city. One notable

difference between the rural village and the peri-urban area with respect to commerce is the place of sale. In the village, these urban imports are generally sold on the ground in markets. In the peri-urban area they are sold in makeshift wooden structures referred to as *boutiques* or *kiosques*. The degree of extreme micro-commerce is a tendency that is striking all over central Africa. Given limited purchasing power, it is possible to buy a single cigarette, a plastic packet of two or three cloves or a quarter of an onion.

Our research provides numerous other examples that highlight peri-urban specificity that lie beyond the above categories. These include the use of a petrol generator to power a mill for grinding manioc outside Brazzaville; a bar outside of Lubumbashi that sells locally distilled alcohol (*lutuku*) alongside industrial beer (*Simba* and *Tembo*) that is kept cool by blocks of ice bought in town; another bar outside of Brazzaville that has a two-tier tariff system for palm wine: one price for the locals on weekdays and another on week-ends for the city dwellers who leave the city to reminisce and commune with nature. Another case is the TV, video and DVD clubs where people meet to talk, drink and watch karate, action and music films, also powered by petrol generators.

Unresolved Competing Claims

There is little doubt that demographic pressure will continue in peri-urban areas, that the environment will be increasingly degraded and people living in these areas will find access to land for housing and agriculture more and more challenging. Access to basic infrastructure (transport, health, education, drinking water) will remain a daily pre-occupation for ordinary people. Their economic activities may help respond to immediate survival needs but this is far from being a basis of sustainable development. At the same time, they will continue to invent new strategies enabling them to keep going, pursue the quest for improved well-being and dream of reaching distant worlds, be it the neighbouring big city or paradise further beyond. The challenges they live with stem in large part from deeply rooted political failures. State administrations have never fully come to terms with the importance of traditional authorities in these areas, and *vice versa*, traditional authorities have never fully accommodated themselves with state actors. This hybrid juxtaposition results in the ongoing existence of varying intensities of tension and conflict between stakeholders. The way

forward, therefore, can only be based on a mutual acceptance of this hybrid governance context by stakeholders at all levels. In a situation characterised by ambiguity, opportunism, greed and strikingly stratified power relations, finding the means of reaching such a consensus remains an overwhelming challenge.

*Annex I:
Research Context and Method*

This chapter is based in large part on work carried out in the framework of two research projects funded by the development branch of the European Union. The first project, *Avenir des Peuples des Forêts Tropicales*, had a strong focus on forest-city relations in central Africa (Trefon 1999, 2000a and b). Based on extensive field research, it documented the dependence city dwellers (from Libreville, Yaoundé and Kinshasa) have on forest resources to meet daily needs. An ongoing follow-up project, *Gestion Participative en Afrique Centrale*, aims specifically at explaining why peri-urban space (around Kinshasa, Lubumbashi and Brazzaville)⁸ is important from a development perspective.⁹ Both projects address fundamental—but still unresolved—boundary questions. These include: where does the city end and where does the hinterland start? Where are the lines of demarcation and what are the markers? And is the city in the forest or is the forest in the city. A holistic approach is used, drawing primarily on social, political, micro-economic and ecological factors. This work contributes to narrowing the gap between theoretical analysis of state failure and anthropological fieldwork by providing ethnographic data on how ordinary people perceive, live and work in peri-urban areas. The objective of this chapter is to present findings that help embed the concept of peri-urbanity in the dynamic processes of social change taking place throughout central Africa.

The methodology used to gather data for work in peri-urban areas has been described elsewhere.¹⁰ Collaboration with a small network of local experts was essential in addressing the six following sets of topics. The first set seeks to characterise the peri-urban space being studied by using a multivariate and comparative approach. The three sets of variables are (i) the geo-physical setting, (ii) demographic and social factors and (iii) peri-urban residents' perceptions of themselves and their environment. The goal is to identify contrasts

⁸ The specific research sites are Maluku (80 km outside central Kinshasa but administratively part of the city), Loukanga I (20 km from Brazzaville) and Kawama (20 km from Lubumbashi).

⁹ Information about GEPAC is available at <http://www.ulb.ac.be/socio/anthropo/Gepac/index.html>.

¹⁰ The project's detailed research protocol based on a stakeholder approach was published as Trefon and Cogels (2005) and the specific steps followed to implement our adaptation of 'remote control' research appeared as Trefon and Cogels (2006).

and similarities that will help us conceptualise what is meant by peri-urbanity. Results here will help us understand how people live in and perceive these challenging social spaces.

The second set is identifying all the actors involved in natural resource exploitation or management, categorising them according to 'strategic groups', and analysing the relationships between these different sets of actors. This work draws on the Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan (1997a) theory of political arenas to understand how these sets of actors interact. The processes of negotiation between actors are crucial here, as is their degree of accommodation and conflict. The local, national and international political contexts are addressed in this section and will ultimately help respond to the overriding questions of who has power over natural resources in the research site and what is the impact of this power on the environment. This section also takes into account the way people perceive the challenges of environmental management and the ways of improving it and making it more participatory.

The third set pertains to access to natural resources and peri-urban space. To respond to the question 'how do people gain access to resources and land in peri-urban areas?', this section focuses on the negotiation processes between stakeholders. It also addresses the rights and practices that enable people to access resources individually and collectively.

The objective of the fourth set of questions is to identify all forms of environmental conflict in the research site and the strategies designed to resolve them. Questions in this section are raised to provide information on environmental issues. The first step is to interview a sample of actors from each strategic group and have them respond to the questions about their involvement in conflicts over natural resources. The information collected from these questions is necessary to establish a typology of conflicts which is the second step in this activity. The third step is to describe conflict management strategies in these categories.

The fifth set focuses on the economic activities carried out in the research sites. The information required here is less conceptual than the previous ones and is more matter-of-fact. The objectives are to have an overall picture of economic activities in the research site, understand the environmental impacts of these activities and analyse local dynamics of credit and savings. This can be done by inventorying economic activities, identifying all economic actors, studying the perceptions stakeholders have about the impact of their activities on the environment and the sustainability of their activities and finally describing the financial dimensions of these environmental economic activities.

The sixth set describes the links between the peri-urban area and adjacent social spaces. This pertains to social and economic links, trade networks and perceptions that peri-urban populations have of themselves, their social space and their counterparts in the city or in the hinterland. The sub-sections are: links between people in the peri-urban area and their family in the rural hinterland; commercial relations between the peri-urban area and the rural hinterland; links between peri-urban populations and city dwellers, commercial relations between the peri-urban area and city dwellers and perceptions that peri-urban populations have of the city and city dwellers.

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ANGOLAN CITIES: URBAN (RE)SEGREGATION?

Cristina Udelsmann Rodrigues¹

Colonial Angolan cities were built according to the racial, economic and social stratification of the time. After independence, ideologies of social egalitarianism, together with massive migration towards urban centres, profoundly changed this spatial organisation, creating socially and economically mixed areas in the cities. This spatial blending lasted until very recently, when new, closed districts began to be built and when the old 'rich' *bairros* began to be bought up and renovated by upper-class families. The new urban segregation, which is a tendency documented, for example, in the former apartheid cities or in the cities of other developing countries, is essentially the result of new social and economic differentiations.

The forms that this segregation takes are not necessarily colonial centre/periphery distinctions (although this configuration has been partially readopted) but, as in other developing countries, there is a certain tendency to create new social 'enclaves', closed and guarded residential spaces. As in other African cities, the discourse of violence and the 'fear of crime' are used to legitimate these social, economic, and spatial divisions. To different degrees and taking on different forms, the new socio-spatial organisation of Angolan cities tends to recover old spatial differentiations and to create new ones. This phenomenon is most evident in Luanda, the capital, but even in very small cities like Ondjiva or in medium-sized urban centres like Benguela, Lobito or Lubango, it is possible to affirm that socio-economic stratification is gradually being translated into spatial and residential differentiation. These appropriations of the urban space create and recreate new competing claims while, at the same time, shape new urban sociability.

The most significant debate on the question of the spatial configuration of social relations is, undoubtedly, that which opposes the human ecology interpretation of the Chicago school to a socio-spatial

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perspective (Spinks 2001: 6). If for the former² the composition and social organisation of space in distinct zones—which are contiguous, but do not interpenetrate—determine the characteristics of the social groups that occupy them, for the latter, social space and social mechanisms establish reciprocal relations, i.e. space is at the same time a consequence and a cause of social relations (*ibid.*). According to the ecological school, the inhabitants of cities are various and independent from/to each other in their struggle for a social position and a suitable localisation in the city, which results in an ecological ‘segregation’, whether voluntary or involuntary (Villaca 2001). The social determination produced by inhabited space, however, has been the object of various criticisms.

Other lines of argumentation, also determinist, support the analysis of urban space in a historical and evolutionary determination of socio-spatial configurations. For evolutionary theories, industrialisation represents the determining factor for the stages of evolution of which urban centres are a part. But these theories have never been able to explain the phenomena in developing countries where weak industrial development has not blocked urban growth. Another type of determinism can also be identified in the analysis of the socio-political structures that inform the rules for socio-spatial segregation. Structuralists believe that the dualistic nature of cities in developing countries is directly related to colonial capitalism (Savage and Warde 1993).

The difficulties of these types of approaches in developing countries are numerous: not only do the rapid and sometimes abrupt transformations of urban configurations question ecological determinism in its strictest sense, but they also prevent the clear delimitation of the stages of development of urban centres. Moreover, socio-political transformations have rapidly and profoundly altered the dual nature imposed by colonialism in countries like Angola; in various urban contexts in the developing countries, we can see the increase in conflicts between social classes and strata, producing new forms of auto-segregation of space, for example by creating enclaves.

In analysing the segregation of space in today’s Angolan cities, the argumentation used here takes into account the analysis of other urban contexts in southern countries. Thus it is stated that the intentionally dual structure of colonial urban space in Angola—the wealthy city centre

² For example, Park et al. (1925).

as opposed to the poor periphery—created socio-spatial configurations similar to those of other African and South American countries. However, recent processes have been somewhat different: the post-colonial context in Angola caused this socio-spatial dichotomy to disappear, and a mixed and imbricated structure was created.

But recent tendencies with respect to the organisation of spaces—and its correspondence to social organisation—show an almost resilient re-creation of space segregation in dualistic terms: the urbanised centre where the most favoured social strata circulate and live, and the precarious peripheries where the least favoured are located. On the other hand, this rough spatial division has been characterised by the eruption of precarious constructions in the centre while, in the last years, new wealthy, planned and modern sites have been built in the periphery. The abovementioned socio-spatial mixture and the rapid growth of the population has in Angola—as in South America and South Africa—given rise to enclaves of more affluent social strata, supported with a similar discourse of the increase in crime. They translate new social relations, resilient urban social organisation and the pertinence of spatial codes to the understanding of social competition.

Space Segregation in Third World Countries

The high urban concentration in various developing countries is not based on the same economic and institutional bases as that of developed countries (Cheru 2005: 2), which is, according to Cheru, the difference between the concepts of ‘urbanisation with development’ and ‘urbanisation without development’. In the cities of developing countries, increasing differentiation and inequality are expressed in the enormous diversity of access to services by the various inhabitants of the cities: there are considerable distinctions in terms of investment in infrastructures between the poor and degraded districts and the more prosperous zones (ibid.).

This differentiation also generates social polarisation between the rich and the poor, with the result that this social and spatial fragmentation also influences the capacity of African urban centres to grow and compete: there is not the same technological advance or concentration of a qualified workforce as in other modern cities. Consequently, globalisation reinforces the formerly existing processes of urbanisation without development, and inequality and fragmentation tend to worsen (Cheru

2005: 12). This argument is one way of analysing urban transformations in developing countries because it makes it possible to go beyond the impasse of the dualistic theories of socio-spatial configurations, which have been shown to be unsuited to urban contexts where cohabitation, intense sociability and reciprocity between the various strata and social classes have long been a dominant reality.

This perspective was adopted, for example, for urban studies in Brazil, where the productive reorganisation and the adjustment which were implemented to ensure the insertion of the country into the global economy exacerbated the problems of occupation of space, vulnerability and socio-spatial segregation in the cities (Carvalho 2004: 1): “The increase in inequalities and the superposition of deficiencies contributed to the degradation of the models of sociability and the growth of conflict and violence...” (ibid.: 10), between the marginalised peripheries and the centres, while it led—as a reaction to this conflict—to the building of ‘fortified enclaves’ where the medium and high-income social strata create their exclusive spaces of circulation, consumption and residence, “which enable them to live among peers, insulated and protected from contact with urban poverty, disorder and violence by large walls, a complex surveillance system and a complete set of rules of avoidance, prohibition and exclusion” (ibid.: 11). This socio-spatial recombining—which implies the setting up of enclaves—is somewhat different from the dualisation of urban space that existed before. This reinforces the point that it is necessary to analyse the specificities of urban trajectories. In Brazil, the recent processes of globalisation and social recombining seem to have visibly changed relations between the urban social classes and the values associated with them: the relations of clientelism—and reciprocity—dominant in urban traditional society which ensured relative social peace, were gradually replaced by individualism and a subsequent rise in conflict and violence (Velho 2004), and this phenomenon is particularly apparent in the metropolitan areas of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. In Mexico, the same phenomenon dominates recent processes of socio-spatial recombining: a study based on the analysis of five enclaves in the capital of Mexico showed that the conditions of the emergence of these closed communities also results from a voluntary separation of the wealthy classes from public space through the construction of barriers in order to avoid disorder, the lack of regulation existing in urban space, crime and violence (Giglia 2003: 12). This closure results in closed streets and residential districts, and is based on the demarcation of social differences (ibid.: 12).

Closed communities—spaces of sociability and cohabitation isolated from the remainder of urban spaces—appear in North America, Brazil and South Africa (Spinks 2001: 10) and are based on the discourse of the fear of crime. The social consequences of the creation—by their inhabitants and/or city planning—of these enclaves are the production of unequal development (spatial concentration of opportunities and resources), consolidation of difference and segregation (*ibid.*: 11). In this regard, space generates social configurations and, at the same time, social structures produce and transform spaces of residence and sociability. This perspective constitutes a fundamental approach to the socio-spatial dynamic beyond the determinisms and rigid models that dominated urban analysis until recent decades.

The specific analysis of space segregation in the cities of developing countries has shown that urban inequalities are anchored in the colonial model and that this model is reproduced by present-day local elites. In South America, this process of reproduction and substitution of old by new elites began, generally speaking, in the 1940s, while in Lusophone Africa it was only in 1975—the year of independence for the Portuguese colonies—that a clear socio-spatial recombining movement started, along with the replacement of the terms of colonial organisation. Even bearing in mind that “the artificialism of dualistic socio-spatial divisions was often more the result of the ideologies which conceived them than a reality in the life of the inhabitants” (Zaluar and Alvito 1998: 16), and also that in Angolan cities the interference between multiple socio-economic realities also existed in terms of the intersection of residential and relational spaces, the bulk-heading of certain social groups and the creation of enclaves appear to be a recurrent phenomenon in the cities of developing countries³ and shows that the dynamics of social groups have visible implications in the organisation of space.

The processes which started during different times produced, however, identical characteristics in the present time and, among the general factors which are possible to identify in the analysis of the cities of the south, some should be taken particularly into account: the rapid population growth, the prevalence of poverty, weak socio-economic development.

³ See, for example, Gilberto Velho’s reference to Copacabana in Rio de Janeiro, where he points out that interactions between distinct social categories are permanent and intense, even though ambiguous, based on reciprocities and conflict (Velho 1999: 16–17).

In Angola as in other cities of southern Africa, the phenomenon of socio-spatial recomposition, resulting from the recent transformations of power relations, characterises modern urban centres. In Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa, it is possible to see the occupation of the old white colonial areas by middle-class Africans (Morris 1999: 76), which implies that the process of abolition of the largely segregationist systems like apartheid did not result in the disappearance of social inequality, but the recombination of the strata and social classes based on different criteria from those in place before. Apartheid, which was the factor that had most influence on space in South Africa,⁴ has then been replaced by social inequality grounded on socio-economic criteria and reinforced by the discourse of the fear of crime: “post-apartheid fear of crime facilitates a new form of internal residential spatial order remarkably similar to apartheid segregation” (Spinks 2001: 4). The obstacles created by apartheid and inherited by South Africa are reproduced and maintained through this discourse, transforming cities like Cape Town into more polarised and segregated ones than those in the 1980s, by creating closed and protected residential spaces (ibid.: 30).

This analysis of cities in developing countries is centred, therefore, on two significant tendencies: on the one hand, on the forms of recovery of the old spatial separations created by colonialism and the terms by which these recoveries develop; on the other, in the creation of new spaces, closed and fortified, by social groups which have an economic advantage and constitute an increasingly significant minority in relation to the poor inhabitants of the cities of the south, and which, by using the discourse of the growth of crime and violence (a consequence of the growth of poverty and the degradation of living conditions in the urban milieu), take refuge in isolated spaces where they reproduce their advantageous social conditions.

Urban Dynamics in Angola: Centre and Periphery

In post-colonial Angola, socio-spatial inequality has been translated into a clear separation between the ‘town of cement’ and the peripheral

⁴ See Bill Freund (1999) and Owen Crankshaw (1999), who explore these dynamics in detail.

districts which, in Luanda, are called *musseques*,⁵ although this name has been adopted in other Angolan cities to describe areas that do not have asphalted streets. The expression has thus acquired an almost national use, even in contexts where Kimbundo is not the dominant language. The expression assumes a "...sociological significance when it is used to indicate the agglomerations of *cubatas* [precarious houses] built in these areas by those expelled from [the centre of] the city by urban development" (Mendes 1988: 233) and which, however, "by semantic extension ended up similarly indicating the periurban zones occupied by the underprivileged population of the capital" (Carvalho 1997: 68).

The process of urbanisation in Angolan cities is very different. In the capital—the oldest city in the country, where from the end of the nineteenth century there was accentuated urban dynamism—the organisation of space according to the colonial model became evident from the very first decades of the following century: "In Luanda, from 1920 on, the city began to make an obvious segregation of spaces, especially with regard to dwellings and services" (Carneiro 1987: 45).

In Ondjiva, the process of urbanisation only began in 1917—after the battles to conquer Baixo Cunene⁶—and, even during the years before independence, the level of settlement in the area and the growth of the city, promoted by the colonial authorities in the logic of territorial conquest, were still very weak. The town of Pereira d'Eça assumed the status of city only after independence, and the area of Baixo Cunene was an integral part of the district of Huíla up until 1971, when it became the capital of the subsequent district of Cunene (Rodrigues 2005). Until 1975, the area and even the town were predominantly rural, except for a small central area occupied by the services and the houses of the colonial civil servants. Before independence, there were five districts in the town—Naipalala, Kachila, Os Castilhos, Okapale and Kafito—but even there, the urban level was still very relative.

In Lubango, which became a city in 1923, with its first Urban Plan in 1957, demographic growth was rapid in the 1960s and 1970s, caused by strong transcontinental immigration, which caused the growth of the

⁵ The word *musseque*, from the Kimbundo language, is made up of *mu* (place) and *seke* (sand), indicating "the red sanded areas of the Luanda plateau, different from the fishing villages (...) and from the 'cement city' of the Portuguese..." (Kasack 1996: 66).

⁶ Angolan resistance to colonisation lasted longer in the south of the country; the Kwanhama king Mandume and his army were only defeated in 1915 after a massive military effort.

urbanised area. The city was a point of reception for the population coming primarily from Portugal, which was framed by the colonial policies of settlement and development of the area. The strong economic growth of the area during the last decades of the colonial period made the city a centre of development for the whole area, consequently attracting a great number of people of a rural origin who moved into the peripheral zones of the city, creating, as in Luanda, new shanty towns.

In fact, the socio-spatial organisation imposed by colonialism had the same effects in different Angolan cities, albeit on a different scale. Firstly, there were urbanised centres, where services and the administration were located and which were mainly inhabited by the population of European origin, together with spaces of sociability and movement of this same population. Secondly, the native population and the migrants of rural origin lived in the peripheral zones of the cities, where precarious construction was prevalent and where asphalt and public services were absent. Nevertheless, there was a certain specific intersection of residence and circulation spaces because the less favoured population worked and provided services in the central zone. The marginalised peripheries and the centre represented an opposition rooted in and maintained by the colonial power, assuring its reproduction and, at the same time, the dependency of the native population of jobs and commercial opportunities located in the central areas. For the inhabitants of the peripheral neighbourhoods, proximity to the centre and the investment in the intensification of the economic and social relationships with the centre represented an important social investment, as the few options for mobility were highly dependent on this integration.

With the independence of Angola and the departure of the Portuguese from the cities, the abandoned buildings were occupied en masse by the inhabitants of the peripheral districts and the new migrants who came to the cities following the civil war between the governing party—the MPLA⁷—and UNITA.⁸ These new urban inhabitants were then characterised both by a ‘partial’ participation in the urban life. The majority of the old peri-urban dwellers were employed in the commercial and industrial sector in the cities, while the majority of the war migrants had no urban experience. The operation of the administrative services, industrial business management and commercial units were transferred

⁷ Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola.

⁸ União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola.

to Angolans, especially those that already had an urban background. The phenomenon that occurred afterwards, with this recombination of the urban social foundation, can be characterised as a 'rurbanisation of the cities', as deployed by Felipe Amado in the case of Luanda (Amado 1992). In other cities, however, the dynamics following independence were radically different: in Ondjiva, the city had been emptied due to South African occupation and subsequent war. The depopulation of some Angolan cities after independence and the outbreak of civil war was a phenomenon which also characterised this phase in Huambo and Cuíto. Nevertheless, in urban centres like Lubango, Benguela and Lobito—where the war did not reach—the processes were similar to those of Luanda. In 1983, the growth of Lubango became more significant with the migration of the population fleeing the war with South Africa. It started in Cunene (Robson and Roque 2001: 49), and this rapid exodus would lead to the increase in precarious construction in the city and the growth of the peripheral districts. There was an agglomeration of anarchical constructions in the central district dedicated to trade, on waste ground and along the main rivers and at road junctions.

Apart from the rapid growth which, in general terms, led to an exponential increase in precarious *musseque* areas, it is also possible to note the rise of precarious construction—as a consequence of the displaced, less prosperous population—in the central spaces, previously occupied by the wealthier population, the settlers and the African elites. Only very recently has a reconfiguration of a certain organisation of spaces and social groups occurred according to socio-economic realities, even if a certain socio-spatial overlap is still maintained.

Immediately after independence, the social and economic ideologies adopted in the country were based on the idea of social equality and, therefore, the former spatial divisions were to be abolished and all citizens would ideally have access to the city centres, regardless of their economic, social or political background. The Urbanisation Plan of Luanda, in 1995, allowed for the identification of seven groups of sectors according to types of housing (Jenkins et al. 2002): higher quality housing of the population located in the centre of the city; the historic formal centre; the peri-urban areas which were developed at the beginning of the 1970s (areas of transition); clandestine zones from before 1975; the zones where housing was built on state-owned land; the zones in which the housing units were built by the Cuban cooperation programme; and finally the old and new *musseques*. It should be mentioned, however, that the capacity of the state in the field of urban

planning, intervention and management has always been very limited, both due to the inefficiency of the mechanisms and structures created and to the rapid changing socioeconomic, population and political conditions.

Spatially, the analysis of Angolan cities allows for some systematisation of the various areas in terms of urbanisation, which corresponds—roughly speaking—to a certain type of population that lives there. The proposal of an analysis of the city of Luanda made by Colaço (1992) includes the delimitation of a modern area, a peripheral area of transition and a third green area. According to the degree of development of the areas, it is possible to identify a gradation in Luanda on the basis of the more urbanised centre and finishing in the less urbanised municipalities of Viana and Cacuaco. For Almeida, (1997), the units of analysis of Luanda must be based on the homogeneity of the units of vicinity and not on local administrative divisions. Another perspective, however, systematises better the differences between the various areas of the city, while distinguishing: (i) the formally urbanised city, (ii) the *musseques* closer to the centre, with limited urban services built before 1974, (iii) the *musseques* built after 1974, without urban services, (iv) the *musseques* in the peripheral areas, without urban services (Robson 1997: 27). The most pertinent—and common—distinction is, however, that which opposes the asphalted areas and the *musseques*, which at the same time, synthesizes Luanda's bi-spatial character, the traditional reference to the *baixa* and *musseques* (Carvalho 1997: 71). As for the *musseques* of Luanda, some scientific analysis allows for a reflection on their genesis and evolution (Amaral 1968, Monteiro 1973, Mendes 1988, Kasack 1996, Almeida, 1997), and in all of these studies it is stated that the dynamics of growth which characterises these areas is the result, in recent decades, of the progressive expulsion of African inhabitants from the centre of the city (as a result of the increase in the European population at the time of its greatest influx) as well as of the arrival of migrants from other provinces of the country in search of better living conditions. The prevalent idea is that this growth made spatial management and the planning of construction difficult, and that this difficulty has been accentuated in recent decades, despite recent efforts by the municipal authorities, especially in Luanda.

The analysis of the *musseques* must, however, take into account that each one of them has particular characteristics and that the *musseques* are not a homogeneous unit. In Luanda, for example, there is not just one *musseques* but "...several (...), each with its specificity which it is

necessary to evaluate and take into account” (Carvalho 1997: 134). Similarly, it was difficult until very recently to clearly identify areas and districts in the asphalted core where a certain type of dwelling or economic stratum would be dominant. The distinction between the centre and the *musseques* does not imply the inexistence of intersections and mixed zones, primarily at the borders but also in the centre of the ‘asphalt’ or in the very middle of the *musseque*. It is possible to find ‘small islands’ and spaces with characteristics that are differentiated from the surrounding areas, both in the centre and in the periphery.

Ever since the first years of the growth of Luanda, it has not been possible to establish a clear separation between “... the town of cement and *musseques* (...) the white city and the black city (...) given the confusion between finished houses, semi-finished houses and cubatas” (Monteiro 1973: 80). This confusion and interpenetration has lasted until today and there is even a certain “*mussequisation* of the whole city” (Carvalho 1997: 133) and of its green belt whereas, at the same time, it is possible to find, in the peripheral areas, elements characteristic of central areas. In other Angolan cities, the dynamics of growth also cause mixed and overlapping spaces. In Lobito, in the 1940s, clandestine occupation of the old compound of precarious houses left by the English railroad builders meant that by the 1950s—when the district of Compão was the object of urbanisation—a population with fewer economic resources had settled in the central area of the city. The same process took place in the districts of Caponte, Canata, Ngolo and Galo.

In Luanda, “two very old designations suit perfectly the topographical definitions: the upper city (*Cidade Alta*) and the lower city (*Cidade Baixa*)”, which corresponded to the plateau area of expansion of the city and to the flat ground which surrounds the bay of Luanda. Both these areas, identified by Amaral, are currently included in the asphalted part of the city.

However, the old spatial separation of the city of Luanda does not correspond to strict and definitely identifiable borders: “... the *musseques* do not only surround the concrete city, they interrupt it, penetrate it” (Messiant 1989: 130). This process, which was ongoing during the years of colonial growth of the city (between the 1930s and 1960s) produced a ‘topographic racialisation’ (ibid.: 131) in which the distinction between the lower part, the higher part and the *musseques* corresponded to a “... segregation of spaces, especially in terms of housing and services” (Carneiro 1987: 44).

The *musseques* are always regarded as one of the most serious problems which have accompanied the cities' emergence and growth, and they constitute one of the principal features of their history and development: "... today, more than ever, the *musseques* are looked upon especially as the expression of an explosion, a gigantism, an urban macrocephaly which carries in itself the germ of all threats, all violence, all illicit trafficking, all informalities..." (Carvalho 1997: 134).

In the centre of the city, in the asphalted zone, the adaptation of families to the constructions built before independence is also the result of adaptation to living conditions in general and to working conditions and the state of infrastructures. In the centre there has always been very little self-construction or new building. The households of various sizes, the various forms of access to water or energy, the differentiated capacities to improve construction give the dwellings different characteristics. The differences in landscape between the *musseques* and the centre are indicators of the differences that exist between the various degrees of urbanisation. Generally—but not without exceptions—the population that lives in the more central areas has been in the city a long time, whereas the *musseques* and their different periods of creation reflect the arrival, at different times, of the migrants into the city.

In Benguela, the distinction between the peripheral and the asphalted areas also corresponds to a separation that becomes clearer, although not rigidly so, between the various social strata. The old area of the hospital, the area of the Rua de Angola or the Rua Fausto Frazão, which were occupied after independence by all sorts of socioeconomic strata, have gradually become the property of the wealthier families. In the old urban centre, even in the districts of São João and Benfica, inhabited by a population of low/middle income, a strong presence of the higher-income families is becoming evident. Also in Lobito, in the area of the sand-bank (*Restinga*), an up-market area of the city inhabited by the prosperous socio-economic strata, where the housing was once occupied by migrants and/or the displaced, there is a resilient recomposition of the population in the same fashion: "The *Restinga* was once [after independence] very degraded with all these occupations; it was nothing like it was in the colonial times; now, as poorer people are moving away and houses are being recovered, it is again a *chique* place to live in" (Lobito interview, 2005).

In Lubango, in general terms, unconsolidated construction is prevalent in all districts—84.8 percent are made up of anarchical constructions and only 15.2 percent of solid buildings in areas with infrastructures

(GPH—Governo da Província da Huíla 2003). The weight of anarchical constructions is significant in the districts of Mitcha and Nambambe, accounting for 95 percent of the urban area. The districts of Comandante Dack-Doy and Comercial are, of all the others, those which have the least contrasting types of construction—46.2 percent (Comandante Cow-Boy) and 47.5 percent (Comercial) correspond to consolidated buildings. The areas of anarchical construction are restricted in these latter two districts to very concentrated and confined pockets.

In Ondjiva, the return of the displaced population which intensified in 2000, along with the new migrations of the rural population, attracted by the rebuilding of the city and its infrastructures, as well as the intensification of trade across the Namibian border, have led to the reappearance of a city where, in the central areas, the old colonial houses were recovered and reoccupied by civil servants and administrative staff, especially in the *bairros* of Bangula and Pioneiro Zeca. The majority of the inhabitants of the city—including administrative staff—have massively taken refuge in the neighbouring province of Huíla from 1975 on and remained there until the capital of the province was recovered by the Angolan government. The administration of Cunene was for long done in Huíla, until the government considered that it was safe to send back to Ondjiva the administration and the civil servants. The remainder of the incoming population, with fewer economic resources and without access to the houses allotted by the state, settled in the peripheries, forming new districts of precarious constructions or extending those already existing.

In almost all Angolan cities, socio-spatial recomposition today is thus the result of a re-localisation of the population according to its economic capacities: the families which occupied the central areas but now have limited resources end up selling the houses to the wealthier families or, for example, foreign firms or NGOs. They move to other neighbourhoods that are further and further away from the centre, according to the various degrees of impoverishment.

Another tendency that is becoming common in Angolan cities, especially in the most populated ones, is the proliferation of closed and protected residential spaces. Luanda, of all the Angolan cities, is the best example of this tendency, with the creation of closed condominiums in the new urban areas like Luanda Sul, and with the re-qualification of some other areas and colonial wealthy neighbourhoods (like Alvalade, Miramar or Cruzeiro) and their increasingly dominant closed nature. This is shown through the increase in the number of houses surrounded

by high walls and palisades and through the number of private security and surveillance services. Although the 'condominium' style can only be found in Luanda, the tendency to increasingly select the access to certain areas and neighbourhoods is quite widespread in other Angolan cities. It is often stated by city dwellers and urban specialists that this phenomenon has its origins in the settlements belonging to foreign firms and/or institutions of varied types like the Cuban cooperation in the early 1980s, the United Nations settlements in the 1990s and the oil and construction companies throughout the last decades, just to name a few. The model seemed to suit the emerging wealthier inhabitants of the city in Luanda and gradually became being applied, to a certain extent, in the 'rebuilt' and 'reoccupied' central districts of the cities.

The precarious nature of living conditions in the urban milieu, associated with poverty and the growth of violence, has led to an increase in elaborate protection systems, and since the independence of the country there has been a growth and vulgarisation of protection systems for houses in general. In practically all houses, grids and barbed wire have been installed, and the enclosing walls are increasingly higher. As families have more economic resources—but also in buildings where the dwellers organise themselves accordingly—as well as in the majority of the buildings of foreign and/or large firms, guard and security services are contracted. The growth in the number of private surveillance and security firms in Luanda—and also in other cities—in recent decades illustrates well this reality and also the weight that the discourse of the increase in crime and violence has taken on in the urban context: "Even knowing that our guards may be the very first to steal from us, we must have at least one guard, preferably wearing a uniform, to keep more dangerous criminals away from the house" (P., Luanda interview, 2005).

Although this increase in crime and violence is evident and factual, it ends up being the only argument used to justify the creation of these enclaves. Socioeconomic differentiation and its translation into spatial segregation is grounded on these more 'concrete' arguments, which shows how roughly social strata are still defined in Angola: "We can no longer live in our older [poor and degraded] neighbourhood because our neighbours would immediately know what we possess at home and would certainly rob us" (P., Luanda interview, 2005).

The creation of enclaves in the form of individual housing or in the form of buildings, and the creation of enclaves in certain areas of the cities, can then be considered an important tendency in the growth of Angolan agglomerations. Some new areas which appear in certain cities

are based on the idea of a certain distance, insulation and protection of its residents, like Luanda Sul, a large urbanisation project in the south of the capital, and in other cities the new modern (and more expensive) districts correctly reflect the social and economic re-composition in progress. It is estimated that 75 percent of the current residents of Luanda Sul belong to a class with high incomes and 22 percent to the middle class (Jenkins et al. 2002: 146). This was not the initial intention of these projects, as the building of housing for poorer displaced families was also envisaged. The tendency towards the creation of enclaves is, therefore, associated with processes of social self-exclusion—associated with physical separation—which will possibly shape the forms of evolution of social relations in Angolan urban spaces. Despite the generalised degraded conditions in all Angolan urban centres, a small number of families take refuge in protected, better organised, cleaner and upper-class areas, in order to “relax, at the end of the day or at the weekend, from the surrounding poverty, degradation and violence” (M., Luanda interview, 2005). With the end of the war and increasing stability in Angola, as well as with the growth of investment, it looks evident that this tendency will become more and more widespread. It reflects urban dwellers’ perception of social separation, which is now acquiring a clearer contour, challenging urban planning and urban intervention. The enclaves dwellers’ social and economic position gradually contributes to the formation of new social identities, which become more clearly translated in the residential space.

One of the many questions that should be posed before these changing landscapes concerns urban reorganisation in the current post-war context. How can these social dynamics be integrated into the planning and reconstruction of cities in Angola and what is the possible and desirable role of local and national government institutions in this process? Are these processes of social recomposition likely to imprint strong spatial differentiations on the future in Angolan cities or are they just a transitory situation that over the years will be attenuated?

Conclusion

In Angolan cities, colonial socio-spatial configurations created an economically more favoured population corresponding to the urbanised and asphalted areas, whereas the peripheries remain the space where the poorer and excluded sections of the population localise and socialise. The erosion of this dual structure, after independence—more acute in

urban centres like Ondjiva—created a socio-spatial mixture, the effects of which persist even now. However, with the intensification of the market, with the prevalent tendency defining social strata according to economic capacity, a recombination of space with resilient characteristics of Angolan cities has become apparent. The spaces inhabited by the old colonial elites are now occupied by the population with higher economic resources, which contributes to the re-making of social identities and to the construction of new social relationships. Nevertheless, the mixtures produced after independence and the rapid growth of population in some urban centres (in particular in Luanda) have caused the appearance of enclaves, where the affluent social groups live protected and safe behind high walls. As in other cities of the developing countries, where social inequalities have worsened, here also the discourses of fear and violence are the principal arguments used for the proliferation of these enclaves. Urban space is now subject to a type of appropriation based on social differentiation, on economic and social criteria, which (re)create competing claims on space. The new spatial configurations are, however, more complex than the centre/periphery colonial design and therefore require a contextualised approach that integrates the complex relations between social stratification, urban courses, dependences and reciprocities. They also call for a new approach to the urban relationships and conflict, between the urban enclave dwellers and the periphery, focusing on the potentials for urban development and urban policies in such complex and changing contexts.

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WHO CONTROL THE STREETS? CRIME, 'COMMUNITIES' AND THE STATE IN POST-APARTHEID JOHANNESBURG¹

Claire Bénit-Gbaffou

Probably the most effective means of controlling and preventing crime is the one least open to the State: the reestablishment of effective means of community and social control. (Shaw 2002)

Introduction

The issue of control over urban spaces was central under apartheid, where the segregationist project led to implementation of a powerful bureaucratic, police and military apparatus to control movements, activities and residence in South African cities. Such a tight control obviously encountered resistance, growing in particular in the 1980s with civic movements seeking to render the townships ungovernable: but it was more or less 'contained' in the townships. The collapse of the apartheid regime led to urban spaces being given back to the people, guaranteeing freedom of movement and banning any form of institutional racial discrimination.

In post-apartheid Johannesburg, the issue of control over public spaces re-emerges in a quite different setting, revolving around crime and insecurity. The city has indeed been characterised by an increase in crime—or at least its geographic spread into formerly protected suburbs (Leggett 2005), partly due to necessary police restructuring (Shearing 1998) and the collapse of former mechanisms for social control at the local level, in a transitional context (Shaw 2002). In both suburbs and townships, groups of residents organising into 'communities' tend to take the law into their own hands in order to regain control over an environment perceived as undergoing rapid change amidst a lack of public or collective regulation.

¹ A former version of this chapter was presented to the IFAS-IFRA Conference on "Privatisation of Security: urban dynamics and emerging forms of governance", University of Ibadan, Nigeria, November 2–3, 2005.

Controlling the neighbourhood implies defining insiders and outsiders—often along racial, ethnic and class lines—and setting up collective devices to control the latter, from street patrols to physical barriers restricting access to what remains legally public space. The battle over the control on public space therefore does not only oppose different social groups (insiders against outsiders, white versus black, rich versus poor, South Africans versus foreigners, etc.). Such a privatisation of security and space is considered a direct challenge to State authority, which sometimes strongly retaliates against community security initiatives. In the case of road closures, for instance, the state accused concerned residents of reproducing apartheid, as road closures are preventing freedom of movement and enhancing racial discrimination. However, the attitude of public authorities is quite ambiguous, since they have been explicitly encouraging ‘communities’ to participate into securing their environment, particularly through the development of a ‘sense of place’, of ownership over their neighbourhood. While this seems in line with worldwide security governance principles, this model, giving a strong role for groups of residents to build and enforce social order at the local level, cannot but encourage racial stereotyping and exclusionary practices that the post-apartheid society is theoretically combating.

The chapter will first seek to illustrate the idea of the weakening, or restructuring, of local social orders in this South African transitional period. Much has been said about the disruption it has created amongst the white middle-class residents, whose place in South African society is questioned by the transformation—having lost the political power that ensured them access to privileges under apartheid, and not knowing what their future might be in the democratic and predominantly Black South Africa (Dirsuweit 2003, Ballard 2005, Durrington 2005, Lemanski 2006). We need to stress that community social organisations have been shaken by the transition in other types of neighbourhoods as well (inner-city and township), even if, of course, in a very different way. This weakening of social order at the local level, and of the relationship with the State in particular, has led to a growing need for community, or at least collective, organisation in order to regain control over their environment.²

² The research was conducted under the French Institute of South Africa research programme on “The privatisation of security in African cities: urban dynamics and

This need to (re)build community links ‘from below’ and regain control over one’s environment has met the State strategy regarding crime prevention. Our argument is that this public enhancement of a sense of collective ownership over public space simultaneously creates amongst the residents the impression they have a right to exclude or to punish whoever they consider a risk for the community. Whilst the municipality and the police severely condemn the most publicised exclusionary or vigilante practices, their crime prevention strategies, continuing to rely on community policing, still encourage *de facto* and *de jure* such anti-constitutional shifts. We want to question these contradictions.

The Weakening of Social Control over Urban Space, the Rise of Crime and the Need to (Re)build Community Links

The South African political transition has led to the restructuring of the balance of powers between different stakeholders interacting at the neighbourhood level, leading to a certain disorganisation of previous modes of social regulations. The end of white privilege and of political alienation of the non-Whites, the establishment of a legitimate, democratic State, the policies implemented in order to restructure and amend the apartheid past still have tremendous consequences for the way individuals and neighbourhoods consider their future.

Firstly, public authorities have legitimately redirected their attention, focus and expenditures from the former privileged (white) areas to the townships, for instance in terms of infrastructure equipment and maintenance expenditure. This has led to a general feeling of neglect amongst white residents, reflected in growing complaints about a diminished ‘quality of life’ and the decaying maintenance of public spaces. Somehow, in order to catch up with the huge backlogs in terms of public services in the townships, the service levels in the suburbs have,

emerging forms of governance” (2003–2005). It consisted of extensive fieldwork on ‘community responses to crime’ in different types of neighbourhoods—as far as income level and urban setting are concerned (suburban, inner-city, township). Interviews were conducted with the major stakeholders (civics and residents associations, community policing forum and crime sector forums, street committees and street patrols, police and local councillors), and we also used observation and attendance at a number of meetings in each case study.

or are at least perceived to have, decreased. As one obviously critical Democratic Alliance councillor puts it:³

This is the age of do-it-yourself local government. For instance, you need to report yourself the street lights that are not working, the pipes that are leaking, the holes in the roads... The only way is to do it yourself (Ward Councillor, at a Craighall Residents Association meeting, 2005).

In the townships, huge expectations regarding public intervention, and in particular the development of infrastructure and housing, also disrupt former modes of mobilisation. Civic structures, built in the 1980s to confront the apartheid government, now face schizophrenic tendencies, some affirming their support to the government and some trying to keep a critical distance (Heller 2003, Zuern 2004).

Secondly, there was an important shift at the local level. Crime, which was more or less contained to the townships under the apartheid regime, has been spreading to the entire metropolitan area. Therefore the suburbs have undergone an important rise in the rate of property crime (Schönteich and Louw 2001), whilst the police personnel was partly redeployed to the much more densely populated townships. Crime levels have also been rising overall, as both a result and a cause of the loss of collective control over local space (Shaw 2002).

Thirdly, the demise of the apartheid regime and the end of South Africa's international isolation has accelerated socio-economic transformations, in particular the shift towards a post-modern economy: the deindustrialisation and tertiarisation of Johannesburg, promoting its 'world class' status, have led to rapid urban changes. Some parts of the city have been undergoing a swift urban decay, as the inner-city and its surrounding areas (Morris 1999), whilst other business and commercial centres have been developing in the north-eastern suburbs of Johannesburg (Beavon 2004). Some townships have undergone a rapid increase of unemployment (up to 60 percent in parts of Soweto), and few have actually so far benefited from the economic transformation. Urban change is not specific to Johannesburg. But its rapidity, adding up to the tremendous political changes, makes it exceptional. This leads to an increased feeling of the loss of collective control over ones' urban environment, that is sometimes expressed, strikingly by the Black residents, through an 'apartheid nostalgia' (Kynoch 2003).

³ The Democratic Alliance is the major opposition party to the African National Congress.

This weakening (or restructuring) of forms of social control has obviously taken different forms according to the neighbourhood and the individual; it has taken different senses, which I want to illustrate through three case studies.⁴ The first concerns a lower middle class, Congolese engineer living in inner-city Yeoville and trying to organise his street in a committee (eventually to close it off). The second quote is from a middle class, white estate agent resident of suburban Observatory who had been an ANC activist under apartheid, and also attempts to organise her neighbourhood to erect road closures. The last example presents the thoughts of a low income resident from Soweto (Meadowlands), an activist belonging both to the ANC Youth League and to the Meadowlands Community Policing Forum (CPF). All three have had direct experiences of crime and more broadly of the loss of collective, public or social control, that has led them to direct involvement in mobilising their communities to fight crime.

Three Illustrations of the Feeling of Loss of Social Control

I have been robbed, in my own home. The theft was organised by my gardener, a guy from Zimbabwe. He was taking drugs, I had been helping him a lot. But he still came, with six other guys, they had guns. My son was at home, they pointed the gun at his face. "Tell your father we will be back". I went to the police, they gave me a docket number, "we will call you". They came one week later, they took some fingerprints, they asked me if I had a gun, I said yes, and that was it! They were not going to do anything. In spite of the threat on my son and me! I was very angry. I could see the fear in the eyes of my children. I told myself, Danton, you have to do something, to give them at least a little bit of hope. If one could arrest one, only one! That was when I decided to do something about it: I am not going to wait for them; I am going to look for them. The kids were so happy (Danton,⁵ Chair of M. Street Resident Committee, Yeoville, 2004).

⁴ This research is based on a series of in-depth case studies in Johannesburg observation, interviews with the main local stakeholders, attendance at meetings at the street and neighbourhood level, etc., involving several types of urban neighbourhoods reflecting a variety of income levels and urban settings: inner city, suburban and township. This variety allows me to claim some degree of generality in the chapter's analyses, all the more that beyond the obvious social, racial and urban differences, the chapter stresses the commonalities of crime concerns and crime local solutions adopted by the various communities.

⁵ Due to the personal views and details quoted here, all the names, except for the officials and interviewees responding in their public capacity, have been changed.

After the mugging, I went for counselling. I was shocked on a spiritual level, I could not work it out. I found a lady, a spiritual healer. She told me, "You have never been scared of African people, you have married an African guy, you work with African people; now you have broken your link with Africa, but you must realise it is not personal". But... our child has also been affected, she becomes neurotic, "Mom, why did you and Dad not protect me? Why did not God look after us?... Mum is being killed!". You know, I have been living in Soweto. But in the last seven years I have never driven in a township. As a political activist you were part of the community. Now the 16 year olds, they say, "we do not care about the struggle". George [her husband] says I must learn how to shoot, but I cannot! It is the biggest scourge in our country. It brings the animal out of you (Geraldine, member of the J. Street Residents Association, Observatory, 2004).

Many elements can be read in those two excerpts, from the refuse to remain powerless and victimised, to the central role played by children and the urge to give them moral and psychological references and confidence in their future, to the crisis in the sense of belonging to the South African society, as stressed by Ballard (2005). What is striking is the feeling of the loss of control and regulation, either by the State (the police), or by the society as a whole (here, the Africans): the feeling not only of loss, but even of betrayal, as if a pact (with the Hobbesian State, with Africa) had been broken. This feeling leads to the need, expressed by both of these community leaders, to regain a form of control over their direct environment, in a way or another. First in their individual capacity ("do something": investigate and find the criminal; "learn to shoot"), and later on, at the neighbourhood level. Shortly after the incident, both started to get involved in their street committee and promote road closure, in the inner-city Yeoville for Danton, and in suburban Observatory for Geraldine.

In the townships, the way social order was maintained has also undergone important changes, even though it is less politicised and therefore publicised than in the suburban spaces.

Vigilantism was big in 1994! The vigilantes used to beat up the criminal until he confesses, and then the police come. Everyone knew: if I do something they will all come to my place and burn my house. It was a certain system that made people to fear them. In a way it was successful. (...) They managed crime at the time... Now we have a new government, and now we have crime. The government said, "there are human rights", even if you are a criminal. [...But] the community still wants it the old way. Did you see last week, what M. [an old activist] was saying at the CPF [Community Policing Forum] meeting? Get a stick, you hold it like

this, you hit like that. But what can you do? (Given, ANC Youth League, Meadowlands CPF, 2005).

The townships used to be regulated by a very strong form of community control, and that is currently disturbed both by the end of the struggle (and a certain form of de-mobilisation)⁶ and by the intervention of a legitimate State (in the form of the police and ward councillors, in theory implementing the constitutional principles). Here, the “breakdown the crime control arrangements”⁷ as a consequence of the transitional period (Shaw 2002), are very clear.

In front of this locally differentiated, but in a way common, feeling of loss of control over one’s direct environment and future, many residents express the need to form communities, or at least collectivities.

Fear of Crime, Fear of Urban Decay and the Need for Community Building

An upsurge in crime level, or a particularly shocking criminal incident, is often a catalyst for ‘community building’. In Observatory, a middle-class mixed suburb next to the poor and decaying neighbourhood of Yeoville (Bénit-Gbaffou 2006a), residents have set up several road closures as their response to growing crime and urban decay. Sethole, a former ANC activist and black resident of Observatory, got involved in the community mobilisation for the erection of road closures:

What started my involvement, three years ago, is that one of my neighbours was hijacked. The family contacted everyone in the street: they did a good job. I was very positive and enthusiastic, for it created neighbourliness, it brought people together. Sixteen families agreed to get a common security system: an emergency button that rings in all the houses. [But] things were getting worse in other streets of Observatory: in the street north of us, there were three car hijackings a week. [...] This led to contact

⁶ The demobilisation of the civics in post-apartheid South Africa has been well documented (Heller 2003, Zuern 2004). It is linked to the fact political parties have been legalised; the battle against apartheid has been won; the government, now democratic, is no longer systematically perceived as ‘the enemy’; the main federation of civics (SANCO) has concluded an alliance with the ANC; and several prominent civic leaders have joint government or the ANC—creating a void in local leadership.

⁷ Crime control arrangements are informal, locally constructed devices (often not legal but tacitly accepted by state authorities) to tackle crime at the local level. It includes for instance vigilantism, as understood by the police to be a pragmatic solution in some contexts, even if they cannot publically endorse it (Schärf and Nina 2002).

with other street groups that had already been formed. (Sethole, member of an Observatory Road Closure committee, 2004)

The erection of booms, the need to raise funds for its management, and the necessity to negotiate (or to fight) with the City Council in order to legalise the road closure, indeed required a certain amount of collective organisation and, as it became more politically vocal, community building (Bénit-Gbaffou 2008).

The need to know better one's neighbour is shared by Norman in Meadowlands (Soweto), in charge with a street patrol and encouraging residents to know their neighbours:

If you see something unfamiliar in your area, call your neighbours. Give the patrollers the name of your lodgers in your yard. Because sometimes when patrolling, we see people we do not know in the yard, and we cannot tell if these are criminals or lodgers. We need to know, if we see a person, where he stays. (Norman, Meadowlands Crime Forum Chairperson 2005)

In all these examples, community building is driven by security issues. Fears of crime and more broadly of social change and a loss of control over society as a whole and their neighbourhood in particular, lead the residents to create or strengthen forms of community links. These communities are *ad hoc* communities, and they generally unite around a common project, intended for regaining control over collective space.

Regaining Control over Local Space: A Rising Sense of Collective Ownership and the Birth of a 'Right to Exclude'

The 'theory' of the broken window (Wilson 1982), which states that the slightest sign of urban decay or maintenance neglect in the public space is an enhancement for crime, reflecting the abandonment of collective (public, private, community) control on the neighbourhood, has been widely adopted, at least in the discourses both of the police, the municipality and a number of residents. But if uncut lawns or broken pavements can be read as a sign of public disorder and the demise of local social control, the reverse is also true: the concern for crime expressed by residents is also a broader concern for collective control over their direct environment, whose decay epitomises the fear of a rapidly changing society and the loss of control thereupon. Indeed, com-

munities that have initially been mobilised to fight crime quite rapidly shift their concerns towards regaining control over public space.

Developing a Sense of Ownership over Public Spaces: A Fundamental Contradiction?

With the decline in the maintenance of public spaces, or rapid moves toward urban decay, or identification (together with the police) of open spaces as a crime hot-spots, residents are encouraged to develop a sense of ownership over those public spaces, through intensified uses and 'community' management. Such developments can prove problematic, since they enhance confusion about the status of those spaces, which are legally public, used collectively, and increasingly maintained by the community. This is what a prominent member of the Combined Chairpersons Committee (a federation of enclosures) stresses:

Look at Sandton Manor, in Hurlingham. It is a small road closure, only fifty houses. Inside, there is a small park, very small, not bigger than my front garden. It is not closed off; you can walk to the park. The residents pay for having the grass cut by a private company, otherwise it becomes a security hazard. They have Bible Society in the park, domestic workers go there and have picnics and meetings... It is a wonderful community asset. Their application is rejected on the base they have a public facility. Five kilometers away, in Strathavon, there is another road closure, about fifty houses. It is almost an identical layout. Alongside, inside the closure is a public park. Nobody cuts the grass: the park is never used, the grass is overgrown, nobody wants to use it. The road closure was approved! (Pamela, Combined Chairperson Committee, 2006)

This is clearly the case in this quote, where a member of a federation of road closures, while challenging the arbitrary decision of the municipality to legalise or not road closures⁸ in two neighbourhoods, questions the definition of public space in both neighbourhoods: the community appropriation of an open space (though maintenance and usage) transforms it into a 'community asset', whereas the neglected, non-maintained open space is still considered a 'public park'. In return,

⁸ Since 2003, enclosures require an application for legalisation by the City of Johannesburg. The criteria for the legalisation are very numerous and sometimes unclear (they range from traffic impact survey to crime statistics, agreement of 80 percent of residents and users, letter of agreements from the main local stakeholders, etc.). This makes the decision making process lengthy, somehow arbitrary and often contested by residents.

the municipality has been considering the uses of those open spaces: when there is an intensive collective use, the park is considered ‘public’; when there is none, it can remain within a privatised enclave.

To some extent, the same question arises in the township of Meadowlands, where the open spaces, as former buffer zones in the apartheid planning (they are very numerous in Soweto), are in the same way identified by community and the police as ‘hot spots’. Long grass and scarce lighting indeed make them a place for theft, assault and rape. Public authorities therefore encourage residents to watch those open spaces and make use of them, but not in a way that would threaten the public property of such spaces. Given, a youth activist in Soweto, shares the contradictions of the public authorities policy: encouraging appropriation but not too much, tolerating some forms of individual uses, but not all:

The majority of open spaces are owned by City Park and identified for development. But it takes ages. They say, “make use of the spaces”, but do not want permanent structures to be built. Some build a wall around the area; some come up with workshops for motor mechanics, permanent car washes (then you need a tap), there is a project to build a gym (...). One guy even built fifteen rooms to rent out: it is for his personal gain, not for the community. They also encourage us to develop gardens for poverty alleviation, but when the time comes, we need to clean the place. After four years my garden is beautiful, now the civic want to build a clinic. So these people are helping us fighting crime but they should understand these places are earmarked for development. (Given, ANC Youth League, Meadowlands CPF, 2005)

Given himself is caught between his personal belonging to the community and his position within the ANC structure as well as in the CPF, as is obvious from his shifting use of ‘they’ and ‘we’ to designate public authorities. These contradictions—almost a double-bind—epitomise the difficulty of encouraging community participation, particularly in policing issues, whilst limiting it below a certain line to avoid self-justice, or “autonomous citizenship” as Johnston (2001) puts it.

Road Closures as a Perfect Application of the CPTED Principles?

These contradictions are particularly acute when the sense of ownership takes the form of the privatisation of the access to the suburb, through road closures as is the case in many middle and upper class areas in Johannesburg. This can be seen as the next step in this appropriation of collective space; but it can also be read as a perfect illustration of a form

of planning encouraged by the public authorities: Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). Indeed, CPTED aims:

to reduce the causes and opportunities for criminal events and to address the fear of crime by applying sound planning, design and management principles to the built environment. [It] includes ideas like natural surveillance and visibility, a sense of ownership among people living or working in an area, and other factors that make it more difficult or risky to commit crime in a particular place. (Landman and Lieberman 2005)

CPTED's main focus is on preventing a crime from happening in a certain place, using design solutions adapted to the place and type of crime. This crime prevention strategy is very broadly encouraged by the public authorities⁹—largely inspired by American theoreticians and practitioners promoting the notion of 'defensible spaces' (Newman 1996), which itself includes such initiatives as street closures.

In Observatory, for instance, road closures are seen by residents as a tool to prevent the 'spillover effect' that has started affecting the area: vacant houses being squatted, absentee landlords, *shebeens*¹⁰ and brothels, etc. Residents assert that "the booms will allow controlling this", they will "limit the rat-running from Yeoville" (Bénit-Gbaffou 2006a).

If the closures are mostly symbolic in this regard, they are not entirely inefficient, as they are limiting the number of cars driving by, looking for prostitutes or drugs, or an opportunity to hijack drivers going home. This is what led Danton, the Congolese engineer quoted at the beginning of our text, to promote a road closure for his neighbourhood, with the objective not to stop crime but to displace it:

The first problem here is crime, the second: drugs. Hard drugs, you find them just here, on M. and D. streets [in front of his home]. Drug dealers are from Bellevue, their customers are mainly White people. Previously they used to go to Yeoville, corner R. and R. [streets], but it changed. The customers are afraid to go there now. So they are looking for quiet places. As they closed off Observatory West, they came here. If we close off our streets, they'll find another place. (Danton, M. Street Committee, Bellevue)

⁹ 1996 National Crime prevention strategy (Whose second pillar is entitled: "Environmental design: limit opportunities and maximize constraints"); 2004 Johannesburg City Safety Strategy.

¹⁰ Informal and generally illegal taverns.

This initiative follows quite exactly the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design. Whilst enhancing a feeling of ownership over the street, it is conveying a locally adapted design to a specific crime pattern at the neighbourhood level, and it manages to prevent the crime to happen at that place, even though very consciously displacing it rather than suppressing it. It is difficult to deny here that the very principle of CPTED contains all the elements conducive to road closure and privatization of public space.

Neighbourhood Watch: Defining and Excluding the 'Risky Elements'

In most areas, regaining control over the streets does not imply the actual privatisation of public spaces: the neighbourhood watch principles have been widely adopted, encouraged by the public discourses (both municipal and police) as the 'lighter' form of appropriation of public spaces. Neighbourhood watches are considered the paramount form of 'community participation into the production of security', since they require a commitment to place and the development of inter-neighbours relationships. However, I argue that they are not actually so different from road closures in the effect it can have on social exclusion and spatial segregation.

Indeed, this very principle encourages segregationist behaviour. As the residents are given the 'duty' to identify whoever can be a 'risk' for their neighbourhood, they tend to design broad categories of 'the other', outsider to the community; and they feel they have the right, in protecting their neighbourhood, to exclude whomever has been defined as a risk, or a potential enemy. The definition of the enemy is obviously place-related, and thus impossible to generalise:

In Atholl, an upper-middle class suburb not far from Alexandra township, the residents have hired permanent staff as well as permanent private guards at each entrance of the suburb, to fight urban decay and crime but also to chase away—using means that are not developed by the interviewee, but are possibly quite violent—what they call 'unwanted elements':

We got rid of any unwanted element in the area: garbage collectors, hawkers, broom sellers, illegal immigrants, etc. The people started getting the message. You have got to have a clean suburb, it makes it easier. We need to take away of the surprise elements, the tree branches, cleaning out the drains. The lawns were not cut, there was illegal gambling, drug sellers, stones and rocks on the pavement, trolley pushers... we got rid

of that and there is no more house breaking. (Hans, Atholl Security Project, 2004)

Regaining the streets is not less important in the township of Meadowlands, even though the definition of the other is not the same:

There are about ten guys, they play soccer in the street. After, they gather at a street corner, talking. I am not saying they are criminals, I am just checking. They know I am watching them: I told them, "if anything happens in the location, then you are in big trouble". They just kept quiet. (...) There are guys who move around in the streets, drinking or drunk: that must end. We are going to deal with them as well. (Norman, Meadowlands Crime Forum Chairperson)

In an inner-city neighbourhood as Yeoville, the danger is not the Black, the poor or the youth: it is the foreigner, as clearly emerges from Thabiso's words:

Immigrants? We have one family from Rwanda, lots of people from Zaire. They are bad guys. We signed a petition against them, they are running unlicensed restaurants and *shebeens*. They are causing noise, they are drunk and sing the whole night. They slaughter live animals, blood spills into other people's yards, they do dry chicken and fish and it stinks. (...) These people open a lot of *spazas*¹¹ and phone booths: this brings crime; people hang around. Sometimes it is just a camouflage for exchange for drugs, or for mugging people just around the corner. We took the decision we are not allowing this. (Thabiso, Yeoville Street Committee Chairperson)

What to conclude from such examples? First, that there is a great variety of locally defined 'unwanted elements'. One could say that in the suburb, what is mostly feared is 'outsiders', whereas the risk comes in general from within in lower income neighbourhoods. That could be one of the reasons (apart from an obvious financial one) why road closure or private guards posted at the suburb entrance are considered the best solutions in the area, whereas street patrol and intimidation of (or violence against) criminals are more widely used in the lower-income neighbourhoods. However, it is far from being always the case. Some suburban residents are also starting suspecting their own domestic workers or the migrants employed on the building sites, described as 'the enemy from within'. On the other hand, township residents have been

¹¹ *Spazas* or *spaza* shops are informal shops (in a house or on the pavement) generally selling small items.

identifying 'hostel dwellers', living in the periphery of the township, as criminals—a different category of outsiders. Eventually, the temptation to close off some streets exists not only in suburban neighbourhoods, but also in Yeoville, in lower-middle class areas.

There is also a variety of community policing devices in different neighbourhoods. Some devices can be community-building, enhancing dialogue and fighting prejudice, often through the mediation of the police (for instance within the Community Policing Forums). But many community security initiatives can be violent. This violence can be symbolic violence, through targeted surveillance with high technology devices in the suburb or narrow social control in the townships (it is obviously more difficult in inner-city neighbourhoods where most people are highly mobile). It also can be physical violence: in the low-income neighbourhoods obviously, as vigilantism is common, but also in middle-class suburbs, in a more hidden way, through the use of under-controlled security agents for instance.

However varied the community security initiatives may be, the commonality lies in the identification, by a number of residents encouraged to form a community, of who constitutes 'a risk' and who does not behave according to the dominant norm, in order to control collective or public space at the local scale. Whilst this definition of the community by excluding as well as including is very typical (Elias and Scotson 1965), the element that makes it dangerous is the public enhancement of community policing which gives the residents the duty to participate in their own security, that entitle them to exclude, in a risk management strategy, whomever they consider a risk.

Reasserting State Control over Public Space? The Contradictions of Public Policies Regarding Community's Initiatives

Control over the streets and over public open spaces in residential neighbourhoods is therefore disputed between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', whatever the definition of both terms may be in different local contexts. But the State, through various types of public authorities (the police and the municipality being the driving forces in the matter), is also an important actor in defining the way this control is exerted. Unlike maybe other African cities characterised with weaker public authorities and bigger levels of informality, the state is indeed able to assert some control, or at least to be a significant regulating actor,

over these contested public spaces. After the shaky transitional period where both local government and the police were being restructured and many initiatives were left to local ‘communities’ (sometimes in line with what had been happening under the apartheid years), there are indeed different elements showing that the State is engaging with the community’s ways of controlling their area.

The first area of state contest over what is considered excessive privatisation of control over public space is the very hot debate regarding road closures—in the context of the establishment of a City Safety Strategy, in line with the attempt to construct Johannesburg as a global city. Indeed this requires greater attention to the image of a modern, efficient and well-managed city, in which both informality and the crudest forms of segregation (as well as the traffic impediments) epitomised by highly visible enclosures can damage the image of a thriving post-apartheid city. In this politicised debate around road closures, the City therefore attempts to reassert the limits to privatisation over the control of public spaces.

The second state engagement with security-oriented community initiatives is the attempt to organise and structure those initiatives, though various pieces of legislation as well as structural changes in the police, justice and city administration. However, the principles driving this engagement are heavily reliant on community participation in the production of security, therefore enhancing the exclusionary dynamics we have been presenting above.

State’s Contest over the More Visible Forms of Privatised Control on Urban Spaces

Whilst the road closures were discussed amongst the residents,¹² the harshest confrontations arose between groups of residents and the City of Johannesburg on the question of the legalisation of some 300 enclosures concentrated in the northern part of the city. Indeed, the City, broadly opposed to road closures in general, did not manage to forbid them totally, and set up a number of restrictive conditions for

¹² The requirement for an enclosure’s approval, namely to gather the consent of 80 percent of the enclosed residents sometimes led to heated debates within neighbourhoods. Many conflicting opinions have also been expressed in the medias, for instance in the northern suburbs local newspapers as *The Sandton Chronicle* or the *Rosebank-Killarney Gazette* (Wafer 2005).

the enclosure's approval (Tshehla 2004), paving the way for discussion on a one-to-one basis (depending on a complex set of local conditions) rather than on a clear and uncontested basis of principle. The dialogue between enclosed communities and the municipality was—and still is—very difficult, the latter accusing the former of being creating a new form of *laager*,¹³ secluding themselves from the new South African society and enhancing racist behaviour and practices. The debate was echoed and amplified in the South African Human Rights Commission report (2004) on boom gates/road closures, which concluded with strong recommendations against the road closures, considered to be infringing on constitutional principles such as the right of movement and to be promoting racist behaviour. Many researchers (Landman 2005, Naudé 2004) are supporting this analysis by condemning this social change as a 'new apartheid'.

Whilst such a stance can be regarded as legitimate to discard urban practices that are unsustainable at the metropolitan level, the racialisation of the debate makes dialogue impossible—the enclosed residents being treated as 'racist whites' (as stated by one of them), the government being criticised as unable to fight crime efficiently and to enhance the right to security. Moreover, the analytical grid of the civic¹⁴ versus the *laager* in order to discard or to encourage community security initiatives, although politically very powerful (Bénil 2004), prevents the City from understanding their dynamics—and to see other forms of segregationist practices in non-enclosed neighbourhoods (white or black).

The debate has also an important political dimension, with the ANC-led municipality fighting with what are predominantly wealthy, white¹⁵ and DA¹⁶ constituencies. The debate on road closures echoed the northern suburbs residents' stance against the 'unicity' in 2000 (Wafer 2005)—the construction of a metropolitan powerful government

¹³ The notion of the *laager* (referring to the defensive circle of wagons the Afrikaners used to set up during the Great Trek to fight African armies) is used to criticise conservative and segregationist forms of community building.

¹⁴ The 'civic' (inherited from the local residents associations set up in the 1980s in the township, in the struggle against the apartheid regime) is considered in political as well as in academic discourses as the 'good' form of community building (inclusive, vibrant, progressive).

¹⁵ Although the rise of a black middle-class and bourgeoisie is nuancing this picture, the enclosed suburbs and residents associations remain predominantly white, which gives room for the racialised debate on road closures.

¹⁶ Democratic Alliance, see footnote 3 supra.

replacing the former municipalities.¹⁷ Some of those municipalities (in particular the Northern and the Eastern Metropolitan Local Councils, encompassing the middle- and high-income suburbs the most concerned with the development of road closures) had granted the right for residents to enclose their neighbourhoods. The creation of the unicity in December 2000, scrapping this municipal (sub-metropolitan) level of government which gave opposition parties decision-making powers at the local level, suppressed this possibility for suburban residents to have a say on the legality or illegality of enclosures.

This battle has since then taken a judicial twist, showing the impossibility of dialogue and the harshness of the confrontation. A number of law-suits have been successfully engaged against the City by very powerful residents associations, who have often joined their effort under umbrella organisations such as the Combined Chairperson Committee (grouping about 50 enclosures within Johannesburg area). The growing and increasingly coordinated legal contest around City's decisions regarding road closure is facilitated by the high complexity of the City's regulations, often leaving legal breaches in which residents are quite happy to engage.

So far, these increasingly organised groups of residents have been winning their cases—and the City's attempt to reaffirm power over the streets (and wealthy, opposition party- constituencies) has partly failed: road closures, even those denied legal authorisation by the City, are still standing for some time. However, through this ongoing battle, the City has set the framework around which enclosures are considered in the overall urban society—changing discourses and raising awareness of the impact of such localised street control on the city. The battle for the control over urban space has definitely changed the stakes and the scale local to metropolitan. It has crystallised a number of broader issues around the appropriate scale of governance and decision-making in the city, and raised questions about the nature of participation—sometimes too unilaterally considered as democratic, progressive and legitimate, without considering the possible contradictions with broader, metropolitan-wide objectives.

¹⁷ Or MLCs, Metropolitan Local Councils as they were called (co-existing with a weaker form of metropolitan government). The suburb of Sandton, for instance, the main metropolitan growth area, was included in the Eastern MLC, a very powerful municipality able to contest metropolitan, ANC decisions.

Encouraging Street Patrols under the Police's Eye: Regaining Control over Communities' Initiatives?

The other forms of community control over local environments, however, continue to enjoy large public support, which can be seen as contradictory to the very aggressive public stance against road closures—but of course, this does not take place in the same political, racial and income contexts.

Although vigilantism is (softly) condemned, street patrols remain widely encouraged as a good form of community participation in the production of security in the township. The police are even trying to spread the formula in the whole metropolitan area, encouraging street patrols via the Community Policing Forums (CPF) in inner-city neighbourhoods and even in the suburbs. In Yeoville, an inner-city, low-income and migrant neighbourhood, CPF and street meetings give the police officers the opportunity to recruit street patrollers—unofficially but very efficiently promoting use of (legalised) firearms (Bénil-Gbaffou 2008). In the suburbs, police enhancement of residents' patrols can lead to quite unexpected results—with community patrols consisting of recruiting 'an army of domestic workers' to patrol the streets on behalf of their employers.

Thus, far from equalising the conditions and forms of community policing across the metropolitan area, the enhancement of street patrols by the police leads to the reproduction of inequality and to a rising risk of vigilantism in lower-income areas.

Why such a public policy then? An optimistic interpretation reads this enhancement of street patrols as a way to regain public (police) monitoring on already existing practices. That is in line with the evolution of the nature of Community Policing Forums, which have started as citizen-empowering instruments in the 1995 legislation (the police were to be accountable to the residents), but has been reduced to a mere consultative forum by subsequent legislation.¹⁸ It is now, if not replaced, at least paralleled, by 'crime sector forums': local sub-forums

¹⁸ One of the reasons for this shift might be the use of this powerful oversight instruments by the wealthiest residents—who sometimes used CPF as a platform for political grievances, with difficult confrontations between white, wealthy an opposition parties residents and black, low-paid and predominantly ANC police officers (Bénil 2004). The other, more general reason is the police's resistance to being managed by residents' groups.

headed by police officers (unlike CPFs headed by residents) within each police station.

This interpretation is in line with the current reform of the CPFs legislation led by the Gauteng Province,¹⁹ in order to level the playing field: to homogenise CPFs' practices whose heterogeneity can promote inequity, and to enhance 'real' participation at the local level. In particular, the way wealthier communities participate, often relying on sometimes complex formulas of fund-raising to 'help the police' in many different ways (Bénit-Gbaffou 2006b), are often implicitly discarded. Publicised in a negative way through the road closure issue, they are criticised as 'non participative'.

However, a less optimistic understanding of this shift can be developed. From experience on the ground, street patrols are not happening—and probably will not, but it is not necessarily a bad thing—in higher income areas, whereas they remain largely under-monitored by the police in low-income areas. The public attempt at winning control over community initiatives seems therefore at best a failure, at worst hypocrisy: encouraging without saying a form of crime containment in the townships where residents are encouraged to take the law into their own hands.

Zero Tolerance Policy and the Criminalisation of Poverty: Tightening Public Control over (Some) Urban Space/Residents?

This last hypothesis is in line with the wider Johannesburg City Safety Strategy, developed in 2004 to support the 'global city vision' developed in the strategic plan Joburg 2030. It relies largely on American theories of crime prevention—crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) as well as the 'zero-tolerance' approach, a possible recipe to fight crime at a metropolitan level and have quick and visible effects as seemed to be the case in New York (Wacquant 2004). Increasing competition between cities to appear as globally competitive, as well as what Brenner (2004) has called the 'rescaling of the State', have encouraged cities to develop crime prevention strategies with the tools they are able to implement and to use: town planning and by-law enforcement (through the development of municipal police, as has been the case in Johannesburg since 2001).

¹⁹ *Gauteng Provincial Guidelines for the Community Policing Forums and Boards*, draft paper, 2005.

‘Zero tolerance’ has indeed a very efficient media image, showing the firm resolution to deal with crime, be it serious or petty. In New York, this policy is based on the broken window ‘theory’ (Wilson and Kelling 1982), which can lead to a very strict enforcement policy against petty crime, anti-social behaviour and even informal activities: dealing with ‘little things’ aimed at showing the strength and the resolution of public action against crime. These approaches have been accused, not without grounds, of leading to the criminalisation of poverty (Wacquant 2004).

Indeed, one of the objectives of such a policy—which obviously cannot be led equally in the whole metropolitan area—is to focus on specific areas where the priority is to fight against crime, or at least the feeling of insecurity grounded on the mere sight of poverty. The City Safety Strategy quite openly adopts this approach, focusing on public ‘premium’ spaces, where poverty and crime must at least be rendered invisible:

The City intervention should be focused on ‘geographic focus areas’. [...] They are generally areas where the City, Gauteng [Province] and the private sector are investing or planning to invest. [...] It must be remembered that Joburg 2030 strategy requires the Johannesburg City Safety Strategy to focus on the crimes which affect the perception of investors. The majority of violent crime takes place out of sight of investors.²⁰

Even if mostly applied in the city’s ‘premium spaces’, this zero-tolerance approach is being internalised by a number of residents, and constantly encouraged by public discourses on community policing. For instance, the police support broadly the involvement of domestic workers in neighbourhood watch in the suburbs—and in meetings they are explicitly taught (by employers seconded by the police) to adopt discriminatory practices against vagrant, for instance, or any pedestrian in the street (Bénil-Gbaffou, 2008).

Moreover, a whole set of public policies encourage the residents to phone the police as soon as they see something they consider suspect. The municipality has passed several by-laws, allowing the police to arrest beggars, vagrants who are drunk or drinking in public, and even ‘loiterers’, defined as people who “unlawfully and intentionally lie, sit, stand, congregate, loiter or walk or otherwise act on a public road in a

²⁰ City of Johannesburg, 2004, *Johannesburg City Safety Strategy*.

manner that may obstruct the traffic".²¹ This definition gives the police a great flexibility in whom to consider a loiterer.

The justice system has also started applying the same zero-tolerance approach, opening community courts and municipal courts aimed at punishing the crime each community considers as prevalent in its area, as well as by-law infringements. The national prosecutor of Hillbrow Community Court,²² for instance, has been attending the main CPF meetings in order to capture the local priorities regarding crime.²³ This also encourages the police to make those types of arrests, as is obvious in the following list, reporting the weekly arrests in Parkview, a wealthy neighbourhood in the north of Johannesburg:

illegal immigrant (10), possession of unlicensed firearm (1), possession of dagga [marijuana] (2), possession of drug (1), possession of suspected stolen items (1), fraud (1), drinking in public (3), dealing in liquor (2), theft (9), begging (20), drunkenness (4), robbery (1), housebreaking and theft (1), assault (2), drunken driving (1), negligence (3) [sic].²⁴

This public attempt to regain control is exerted on places (strategic in terms of visibility and foreign investment), but also on people—with a variety of locally targeted categories of 'undesirables' deemed potentially dangerous. This war on poverty is condemned by some—but few dare to contest the very fashionable principle of zero tolerance in a state of perceived or real under-policing and high criminality.

Questioning the Public Contradictions towards Privatised Control of Urban Space

As we have seen, in spite of a strong reassessment of the state's authority regarding security matters—taking the form of a public disapproval of road closures—current public security strategies are *de facto* encouraging forms of privatisation of control over public space, by relying

²¹ Section 13(1) of Notice 832 of 2004: City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality Public Roads and Miscellaneous By-laws.

²² Which covers a number of northern suburbs neighbourhoods (Parkview, Rosebank, Norwood) as well as inner city's (Hillbrow, Yeoville).

²³ The custom is to arrest 'loiterers' (beggars, prostitutes, hobos) on Fridays, and keep them in jail for the weekend: then they are 'judged' in a package, 30 by 30—they just have to plead guilty when confronted with their 'crime', and they are out on the Monday afternoon. As the National Prosecutor hesitantly explained to me, it is mostly a preventive measure—keeping those people out of the street for the weekend: 'preventive justice' is a new and promising concept.

²⁴ "Police update", *Rosebank Killarney Gazette*, week ending on June 3, 2005.

on two security principles adopted worldwide: community policing and the zero-tolerance approach. How to explain these public policies contradictions? We will present three hypotheses, which are not mutually exclusive.

The 'cynical' hypothesis stresses that segregation and containment are actually in line with the current South African neo-liberal agenda. Focusing on areas of growth through a zero-tolerance approach; using 'quick fix' solutions to limit opportunistic crime in these areas, displacing it (and containing it) in the urban peripheries, are explicit crime prevention strategies to attract investment in the business and commercial areas. Protesting against road closures that make racism and fear visible, whilst allowing communities or the private security companies to have similarly segregationist practices, are clearly contradictory state discourses. This contradiction can be explained in this perspective as well—the higher visibility of road closures in the northern suburbs could have an impact on international investors' perception.

The 'pragmatic' hypothesis underlines the difficulty in finding the right balance between principles (constitutional rights and democracy) and efficiency, in a context of limited public resources, rising crime levels, and growing internal and international pressure to 'do something about crime'. If rich households can pay for their own security, if the poorer communities can effectively deal with crime on an internal basis, it may be necessary to make use of this, and as Mark Shaw argues (2002), try to manage it instead of vainly attempting to suppress it. But the policy seems here more of a *laisser-faire* approach, jointly with the strong affirmation of principles whenever possible (as in the case of road closures, even if it has not actually led to their interdiction), and a public focus on small, target areas, as the commercial and business public space.

The 'transitional' hypothesis argues that the public authorities are still engaged in a learning, experimental process, trying to find a balance between harsh and soft policing practices, between short and long term crime prevention strategies. So far, the former options have prevailed. The New York crime prevention strategies (broken window theory, zero-tolerance approaches) have been wildly adopted, without taking a critical distance from it, in spite of numerous criticisms addressed to this model, and without adapting it to the South African context. This policy is starting to be criticised, even if very timidly.

Conclusion

Control over public spaces in residential areas is in constant redefinition in this specific period in South Africa. There has been a time of experimentation where groups of residents have been given *carte blanche* (because of an initial appraisal of civil society initiatives in the ANC government, as well as a period of state restructuring that affected its efficiency), which has led to various community building processes as well as discriminatory practices. In this regard, it is quite useful to mix analyses on low-income and higher income residential areas. The means differ, and the impact on the city as well, but the dynamics behind residents' initiatives can be said to be similar: the urgent need to find a collective way of controlling the urban environment, in a context of reduced public management of urban space. This understanding has been largely blurred in South Africa due to the political context and racialised vision of society, that kept civics and ratepayers associations, streets patrols and road closures, as separate entities, the former representing the good, the latter the bad side of community (Bénil 2004).

Currently however, public authorities (and particularly the City) are attempting to monitor and regulate this privatisation of collective control over space, a very easy shift in areas with strong community structures or residential character (where streets are not conceived as a public but as a collective good), no matter the income level of the neighbourhood. This takes the form of very politicised battles between the city and organised groups of residents, but also of less visible by-law and policy adjustments attempting to regulate community initiatives. Therefore, it would be wrong to assume, as in much literature on African cities' governance, that the state is absent. Its interventions, whether successful or not, significantly shape the way communities take control over their local space, structure their initiatives and consider some behaviours legitimate or not.

Finally, public authorities are not really combating the principle of privatisation of control over public space—neither in the centres, through the encouragement of City Improvement Districts, nor in residential areas where community policing is still considered the key element of efficient control over public space. It relates to the general understanding that private ownership or 'appropriation' is the necessary condition of participation and involvement—of residents, business and the civil society in general—without addressing the fundamental contradiction in such a statement, as epitomised in the road closure

issue (that can be read as a perfect illustration of this principle). It also illustrates the shift in the understanding of what crime prevention means, led by a rising actor, the City (Brenner 2004) as a main stakeholder in the provision of security. Place-based crime prevention strategies displace rather than prevent crime, and target ‘undesirable’ population rather than groups considered to be in danger of turning to criminal activities. Such devices and objectives are quite in line with community practices, but in a way give up a broader, longer term and wider-scale crime prevention strategy in the overall society.

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AFRICAN CITIES: COMPETING CLAIMS ON URBAN LAND

Paul Jenkins

Many African cities are considered to be in crisis, as measured by the 'formal' institutional order of late capitalist modernity: based on individualism as the basis of social relations, mediated by the idea of the nuclear family as the elementary unit of social reproduction; on citizenship in a representative democracy administered by a constitutional state as the basis of political relations; and on utilitarian rationality in a system of generalised commodity production and market exchange (mediated by state redistribution) as the basis of economic relations. As such, much of the actual functioning of these cities is considered 'informal', a nomenclature which inherently is based on negative concepts of the 'illegal', 'un-authorised' and 'non-regulated'. However these 'informal' activities are often more socially and culturally legitimate, as well as economically essential, for the majority and hence politically powerful. African urban areas in many ways draw on norms and institutions derived from indigenous and often pre-capitalist socio-cultural orders, in which now dominant 'Western' rationalities are likely to have played a limited role. Here the basis for social relations may be more kinship and community-based than individualist or nuclear family-oriented; the basis for political relations may draw more on accepted authoritarianism or negotiated patronage than elected representation; and the basis for economic relations may draw more on principles of social redistribution or reciprocity than on market exchange.

This chapter examines these issues, with reference to other recent research on urban land in Sub-Saharan Africa, whilst drawing on a long engagement by the author with urban land issues in Mozambique in particular. It argues for an approach to urban land rights and management (including land use and environmental planning) that is based on understanding of both a) the realpolitik of urban land in the region as well as b) the mental models and organisational practices of so-called informal land access mechanisms. If we continue with the prevalent assumptions of late capitalist modernity as the norm, and with approaches based on limited actual socio-political analysis, the current approaches to urban land development in African cities run the

risk of creating wider social exclusion and economic marginalisation as the region urbanises rapidly. To be more effective in facing such issues requires transcending the current disciplinary boundaries of urban studies in a move to a collective understanding of ‘perceptions of the possible’.

The chapter suggests that urban land in Sub-Saharan Africa has been used primarily for elite group benefit from the pre-colonial period all through the colonial period, with different forms of control of access. Many of these, however, have been based on, or have included, forms of social redistribution to underpin elite hegemony. In the post-colonial period controls of access to urban land were relaxed in practice although many ruling elites established an anti-urban bias in development, which is arguably just a different form of the same approach. In recent years mechanisms to control urban land access are currently being re-instated, which the chapter argues primarily benefit elite groups. This is related to the interests of international capital as well as changing class structure. Will these new developments mean a radical change in approach to urban land access, or is it just a transition period to another manifestation of negotiated power balance?

The chapter argues that the normative analysis that underpins development approaches to urban physical and economic development (e.g. Devas 2004) need to recognise factors such as the above in dealing with the contextual specificities of urban areas and their predominant realpolitik. However it is also based on dissatisfaction with a separate largely descriptive literature that—while suggesting that what is taking place is not all bad but to be celebrated—does not acknowledge the inherent problems and suggest how these can be mitigated (e.g. Simone 2004). In this it suggests the need for an investigative approach that is firmly based on the parameters of contextual analysis as well as understanding ‘perceptions of the possible’. Thus, instead of investigating why African urban areas do not conform to essentially Northern norms, or indigenous rural ‘traditions’, we need to investigate with African urban dwellers how they continue to produce and adapt urban forms within their socio-cultural and political economic realities—and consider how this might be realistically enhanced within specific and general contexts. In the words of Coquery-Vidrovitch:

As long as we lack a theoretical and historical account of the forces that underpin global differentiations, we remain unable to account for processes that lie at the heart of African urban underdevelopment: the

integration of the household into new networks of capitalist production; the invention of a new web of concepts and practice on land and land laws, on housing and rental; new patterns of foodstuff consumption; new regulations governing social and political life; all of these processes involving new relationships to the broader political economy which is definitely neither Western nor native behaviour (1991: 73).

Historical Review

Elite Roles in Land Control: Pre-colonial Period

Despite general perceptions to the contrary, urban areas were relatively widespread in pre-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa, many existing before the fifteenth century, usually with economic (trade and craft) and political/ceremonial functions. Most were situated on trade routes and key nodes between ecologically distinct zones, and many developed defensive roles over time (Davidson 1957, Anderson & Rathbone 2000). There is limited detailed information, however, on how early urban areas in Sub-Saharan were managed, but this appears to have been mainly on ethnic/kinship lines (O'Connor 1983, Bruschi 2001) and arguably represented elite interests (Connah 1983, Hull 1976). While dominated by state and urban elites, these urban areas seem to have been generally governed through hierarchical redistributive mechanisms which underpinned the elite hegemony, including access to land, albeit with periods of instability as relations between the elite and the majority changed.

After European expansion, other urban areas in the macro-region were developed prior to colonisation per se, and in tandem with expanding exploration and trade (i.e. along the Western seaboard, rounding of the Cape, up the Eastern seaboard), sometimes described as a pre-capitalist transitional period for urban development (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1991). In this process some earlier indigenous urban settlements faded away or were surpassed by new settlements, and some were strengthened, especially as trade shifted to agricultural export from mined and natural products (e.g. ivory) and slaves. These often became colonial urban areas later on.

From the early written historical records it would appear that initial land access by external pre-colonial groups was generally negotiated with pre-colonial local elites and/or land rights holders, albeit with different attitudes to land rights—involving concepts of freehold and

leasehold as opposed to usufruct. While traditions in land use and environmental control (and forward 'planning') were predominantly rural in orientation and involved multiple and often overlapping rights (i.e. a 'bundle of rights'), Europeans brought with them concepts of exclusive land rights. The situation of negotiated settlement between (often elite) existing rights holders and Europeans changed, however, with competition between European powers over access to resources and secure transport nodes, and with changing political economy within indigenous peoples as trade stimulated larger and more competitive indigenous state forms. In this context, conflict and conquest became more dominant as the mechanism for land access, with urban land increasingly becoming annexed by foreign powers (this was evidenced as early as seventeenth century in the southern Cape). However in this period, while European forms of urban settlement developed—including geometric forms of land layouts—land access continued to be controlled by elite interests, represented by alliances between foreign and indigenous military and mercantile powers. This entailed seemingly more narrow forms of socio-economic redistribution, such as represented in growing restrictions on land access by the indigenous majority as markets became more important as a mechanism for land transfer, as well as previous elite forms of allocation.

Elite Roles in Land Control: Pre-colonial Period—the Maputo Case

There is evidence of human habitation in the area now occupied by Greater Maputo (capital of Mozambique) from 1st century AD and of more permanent settlement from the ninth century, more or less at the extreme southern limit of the eastern seaboard trade. The first European historical accounts date from early sixteenth century and were mainly from shipwrecked sailors as Portuguese ships slowly explored the trade routes to India, monopolising European contact, and inserting their activities within existing well-established trade networks. From the middle- to late-eighteenth century increasing competition between Europeans for trade led to establishment of temporary forts in the area. However no permanent settlements were successful until the 1780s.

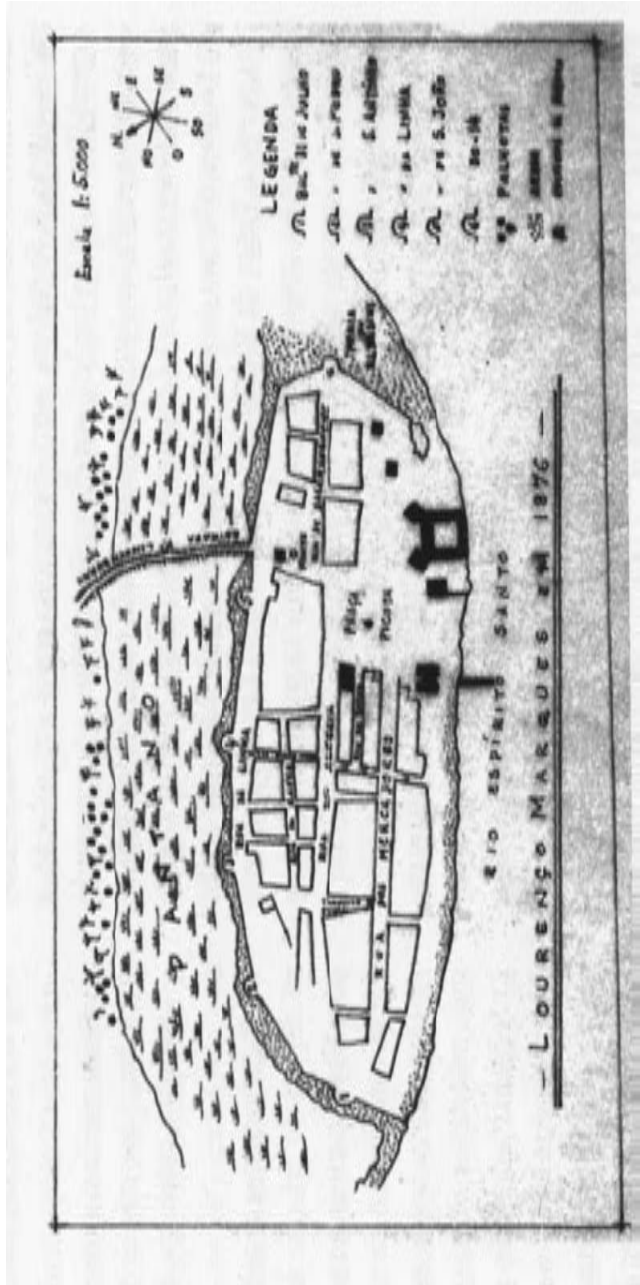
Liesegang (1987) details changes in clan formations and territorial occupation in the Maputo region from 1720 to 1780, with some of tendencies in territorial expansion. During this time there were various attempts at European settlement as different powers contested the

trade, with the Portuguese establishing the first 'permanent' settlement from 1780. From the early to mid-nineteenth century there was growing indigenous state formation and socio-political disruption which aided establishment of a wider area of Portuguese control (circa 10 km radius) around the nascent settlement, which occupied a sand-bank surrounded by marshes on the north side of the bay on land allocated by the Mpfumo clan. This general socio-political instability led to series of attacks in this period by indigenous states (especially the Nguni from Natal), and a general period of instability as the region became a buffer zone between different Nguni states: the Gaza state to the north, Swati state to the west and the Zulu state to the south. This aided Portuguese consolidation and treaties with other immediate neighbouring clans.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century land access in and around the small permanent trading settlement (see Map 5.1 above) was controlled by the Portuguese Crown and consolidated through the establishment of land leasing arrangements from 1858. This led to a period of relatively large scale foreign land speculation in the 1860s in the immediate hinterland—notably the large concession to the Norwegian Dr Sommerschild to the northeast, north of the area that was settled predominantly by other non-Portuguese foreigners on the headland overlooking the bay. The European contest for control of the south of the bay with the English—who had strong trading agreements with the Zulu—was settled in Paris in 1875. However the settlement continued to be attacked for some time by various indigenous states such as the southern Nguni. Of great significance for the city's development was the discovery of gold in the Transvaal in the 1870s, leading to rapid growth of the port and a series of proposals to expand settlement, including initial land concessions in the hinterland. This new economic burst led to state investment in major public works such as landfill and drainage of the marsh, expansion of the port and, eventually after some ten years, the railway connection to the gold fields. In parallel, the Portuguese administration annexed the territory to the north of the expanding settlement, and established an indigenous hut tax in 1882 as it consolidated its control over neighbouring clans.

Elite Roles in Land Control: Colonial Period

Despite broad differences of approach to economic development and forms of governance in the colonial period per se, urban areas were



Map 5.1. The city in 1876. Source: from author's personal collection.

generally considered to be primarily for the benefit of colonial elites, and secondarily for the benefit of indigenous elites with whom governance relations were established as part of colonial rule. This form of urban policy was closely allied to new forms of land use control including land surveys and cadastral registers of ownership, as well as a range of state-controlled access mechanisms, and subsequently forward provision for land use through forms of urban planning (Home 1997).

The exclusionary effect of urban planning and land use controls in both indigenous and new urban areas in this period is well documented in the literature (e.g. King 1990, Mabogunje 1990) and there is some discussion of the differential adoption of colonial land and planning laws (McAuslan 2003). But the wide variety of land rights which actually continued to be held in urban areas, including pre-existing indigenous rights, has been less generally documented. Of note is that often colonial access to land was not based purely on market principles, although this may have been in operation within certain parameters, but on different forms of redistribution in the colonial elite's favour—e.g. to settlers from the metropolitan areas. This was often expressed also in preferential/exclusionary access to urban land rights in this period, with indigenous elites having their position of (albeit now secondary power) undermined through this process.

In many ways control of access to urban land was an important component of colonial development policy, and varied between controlled access to mining settlements for male workers, through to acceptance of a limited cohort of indigenous urban households to perform service functions, albeit relegated to 'townships' and 'locations'. This racial, socio-economic and spatial segregation was taken to extremes in the post-war Apartheid regime in South Africa, but somewhat similar forms of segregation were in operation throughout most of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa, where colonial settlements was the predominant development strategy. In West Africa the situation was different with more indigenous rights being retained, albeit circumscribed and subordinated to the colonial elite, and also generally segregated spatially: for example, through new colonial urban areas established outside indigenous cities.

Essentially what happened in the colonial period was an overlaying of previously held rights by a different incoming elite, with these prior rights being either extinguished or subordinated (and in some cases submerged). However colonial forms of land control were not purely market-based, but also relied to a great extent on forms of state

allocation, albeit with subordinated market functions. In this, different forms of land markets were permitted to operate to a greater or lesser degree, but essentially reflecting the need for the colonial rulers to maintain hegemony through negotiated settlement with their main constituents—not different in concept, but very different in practice, to previous governance regimes and their control of urban land access. Two main challenges to this came from the advent of the Second World War: the desire to decolonise to avoid the increasing costs of colonies and the growth of industrialisation which needed indigenous skilled and settled labour force and hence a different attitude to indigenous urban residence.

Elite Roles in Land Control: Colonial Period—the Maputo Case

The railway to the rapidly developing economic hub of the Transvaal was built between 1886 and 1895 and the town was raised to city status by the Crown in 1887. In parallel the first urban land register was established in 1886 and with an associated urban plan in 1894. During the intervening period, existing elite land ownership disputes were resolved as was the incorporation of the separate ‘foreign township’ on the headland. At the same time as the state was establishing firmer urban land use control, indigenous land rights were removed (1890), except in ‘reserves’, which were only created from 1918. The partition of Africa after the Berlin Conference in 1884/5 required the consolidation of the allocated colonial area through military control, and this led to the subordination of the indigenous Gaza state to north of the city by the end of the century. The city became the capital of the colony in 1895, reflecting the importance of the South Africa economy, and this led to more public works in the early 1900s (municipal market, cathedral, hospital etc.).

Early in the twentieth century, the state bought back land holdings on the northeast headland, outside of the previous boundary, and incorporated this in the land registry (Map 5.2). However some foreign speculators resisted, such the Johannesburg-based Delagoa Bay Land Syndicate which had purchased the Sommerschield concession, and legal disputes lasted until the mid-twentieth century. For a considerable period of the early twentieth century, there was slow physical development of the planned settlement until trams were installed in the 1920s. However in parallel the urban area expanded informally to the northwest with small disorganised colonial land concessions



Map 5.2. The city in 1903. Source: author's personal collection.

which were used for informal rented African housing from 1920s. In 1915 the area covered by the land cadastre was also expanded to a 10 kilometres radius, incorporating many areas of indigenous settlement, where traditional land rights were usually dealt with fairly summarily when land was required for colonial use.

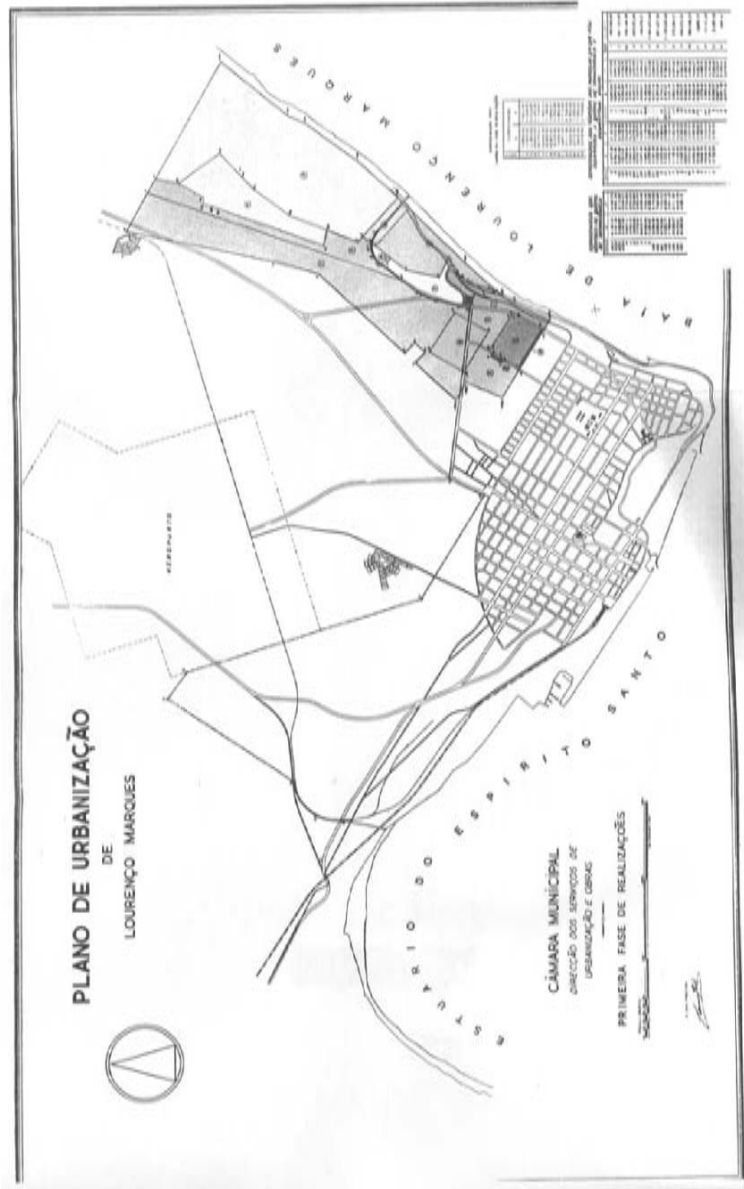
During the first half of the twentieth century colonial settlement schemes and indigenous labour migration—to the mines in South Africa as well as the city—underpinned rapid urban expansion. The former was generally in the Southern European style, so-called ‘cement city’—with clear class and racial division—and the latter in informal settlements which were mostly created by renting land or housing from settler landowners in the northwest of the centre—called the *suburbios* (see Map 5.3).

During the late 1940s industrial production started to have some significance in employment and some new satellite urban settlements developed, such as Machava to the west, with a market garden area near the first main railway station. The only formal housing scheme for non-Europeans was built in the 1940s for the ‘*assimilados*’, although many preferred to live in the *suburbios*. A new urban master plan was prepared by 1952. However, this avoided dealing with most of the northwest informal settlements, but entailed expropriation or engagement with the large foreign landowners to the northeast, where it immediately spurred a new wave of speculative land development (Maps 5.4, 5.5).

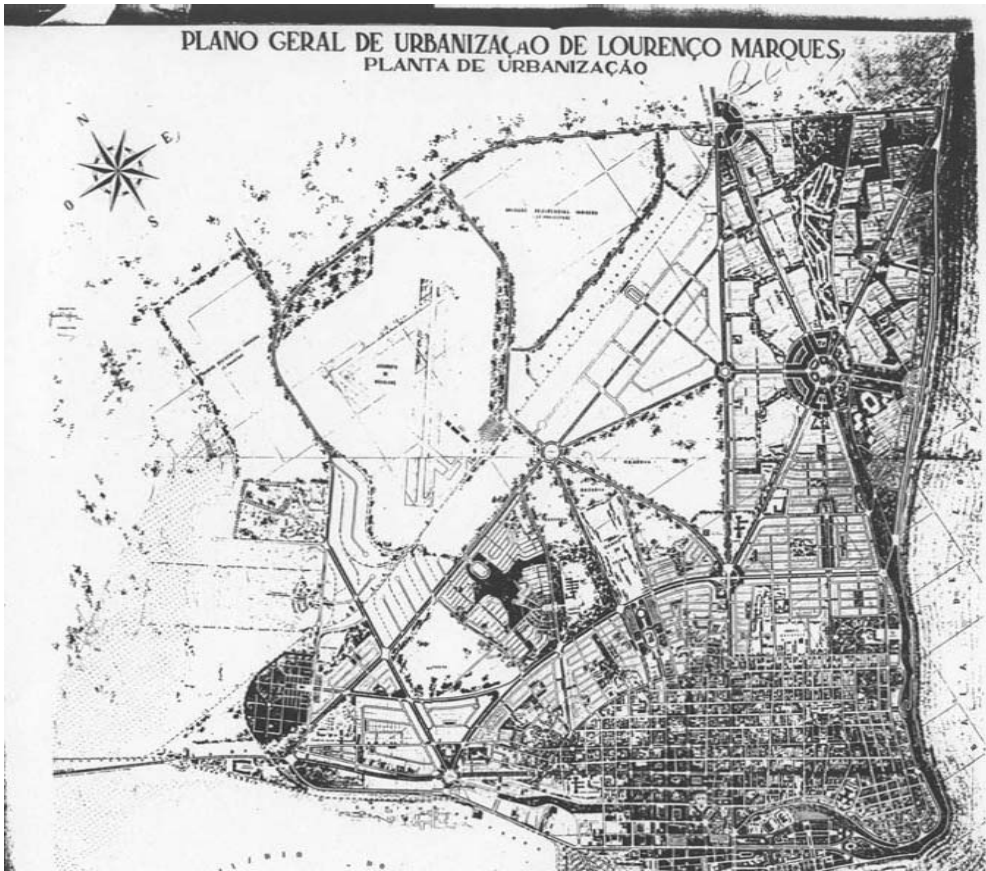
Rapid demographic expansion continued in the 1960s with sponsored immigration from the metropole and the limited effective control of inward regional rural migration. Formal residential development was pushed upwards into higher rise building mainly due to the informal settlement barriers to the northwest and slow resolution of northeast land disputes. As part of a way to resolve this, the urban land registry area of the city was expanded significantly to the north in 1965. At this time it was reported that 88 percent of the total urban area of 770 Ha was in private freehold/leasehold tenure, 85 percent of this being held by 11 landowners (Jenkins 1997). With regime changes in Portugal, and a change of legislation on foreign inward investment a rather belated industrial boom was experienced from the mid 1960s. However this was generally in a new municipal area created to the southwest (Matola), leapfrogging the informal areas and problems of land availability/cost deriving from rampant speculation around the city. This new town also demonstrated a different attitude to indigenous residence, with associated sites and services areas developed for the new industrial



Map 5.3. City centre land cadastre map 1940. Source: author's personal collection.



Map 5.4. Sommerschild concession. *Source:* author's personal collection.



Map 5.5. 1952 Urban Plan. *Source:* author's personal collection.

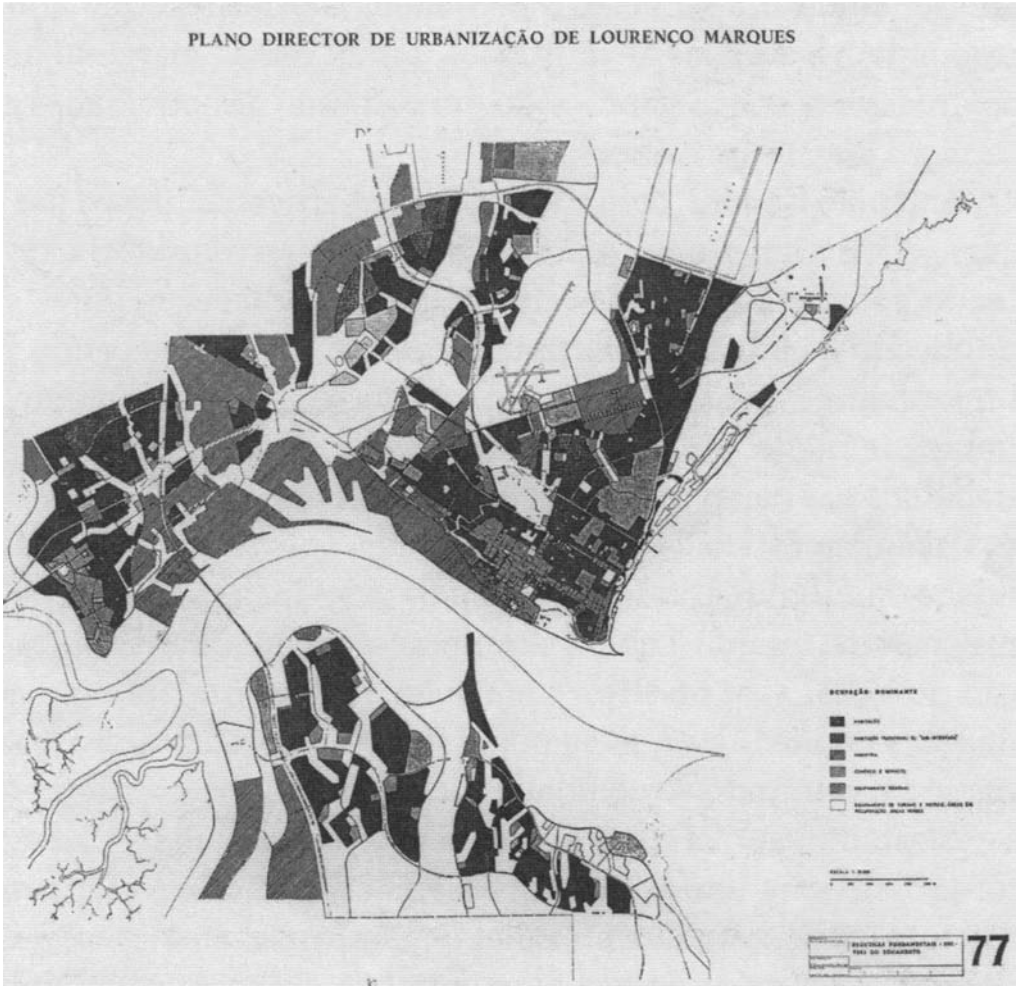
workforce being possible due to a change of legislation which allowed indigenous urban land holding.

In the early 1970s the city attempted to control increasing informal settlement by establishing a new Metropolitan Urban Planning Authority and preparing a new Master Plan for the expanding metropolitan area, including Machava and Matola, approved in 1972 (Map 5.6). This also included new sites and services developments and improving services to informal settlements, as a way of countering the effect of the liberation war in the north (and associated clandestine activity in the city). This plan was associated with continued high rise speculative development in the city centre as well as new large scale speculative residential land developments in the (finally) released northeast area (previous Sommerschild Concession). However all this quickly came to a stop as Portugal entered rapid political transition and settlers began to flee the colony from 1974.

Relaxed Urban Land Control in the Immediate Post-colonial Period

There were different managed de-colonisation processes for Anglophone and Francophone Africa, which overlaid already complex differential colonisation processes and dualistic (at times multiple) legal structures of relevance to urban land. A key factor in the de-colonisation process was often the handover of power to new indigenous elites, trained in European contexts, who adopted existing colonial models of government and development in forms of neo-colonial modernisation (Simon 1992, Rakodi 1997). These included the urban planning and land management mechanisms established in the early and middle colonial periods. This was arguably the peak of approaches to modernisation in urban development, with large scale investment in urban regeneration and new towns and capital cities (Mabogunje 1991).

Lusophone countries had a much later and more violent, un-managed, de-colonisation process which also brought in new governing elites, albeit with a marked attempt to introduce different government and development forms. In terms of urban development, the aspiration to modernisation was also prevalent, but the mechanisms to achieve this were very different, with nationalisation/confiscation of land being a key feature, as well as state allocation of land in urban and rural areas. The precarious nature of some of these post-independence regimes however is illustrated by the limited legal application of such



Map 5.6. 1977 Master Plan. *Source:* author's personal collection.

approaches in practice, leaving considerable ambiguity concerning pre-existing land rights.

Despite very different approaches to land rights and forms of access (that is, market or state-allocated), there were similar negative attitudes to urban development across the macro-region in the initial post-colonial period, but a lessening of controls over urban in-migration. This led to an initial surge in urban growth, with the widespread inadequacy of 'formal' land access which continued to predominantly be based on forms of (now state-based) redistribution, as the formal market (where this existed) did not respond to the rapidly growing low-income demand. The result was widespread informal access—that is, that which was not authorised, planned and regulated by the state. Informal mechanisms were complex as they were based on socially and culturally acceptable forms, some being previous traditional ('neo-customary') forms of access, some based on forms of inheritance and intra-family transfer, and others being negotiated with local leaders representing state power, or even local 'squatter warlords'.

By the mid-1970s and into the 1980s most neo-colonial and post-colonial major development objectives were failing as the region became more marginalised from macro-economic global developments as global capital re-structured (Jenkins et al. 2007). Apart from the political crises that this encouraged, urban in-migration was also accentuated by lack of rural opportunity and general demographic growth, and attempts at land use control and anti-urban biases often became more violent with forced re-location being a feature of many states. A key example is the 'Operation Production' in Mozambique, which was focussed on relieving demographic pressure in the main urban centres and forcibly removed the 'parasitic' from the cities to the northern under-developed province of Niassa.

However, in the light of the failure of these policies, an unofficial *laissez faire* attitude predominated in the later 1980s, expressed often in local level political redistribution of urban land—informal as well as formal. As such, 'informal' or *de facto* land use was superimposed on the 'formal' or *de jure* land use (e.g. land use plans). In this context internationally sponsored state urban land development programmes (e.g. sites and services) were doomed to fail in their wider objectives as they were appropriated (directly or politically) by urban elites which undermined their development rationale. Most of these projects suffered from relatively high degrees of political nepotism and low economic rates of return as the ruling elite were not interested in alienating the

groups who achieved access. While not formally negotiated per se, this laissez faire approach to urban land represented a calculated re-adjustment of the relationship between the urban-based elite, who benefited from improved access to urban land, and the growing urban majority, whose access to land through informal systems was tolerated, and even encouraged by local political administrative mechanisms as a means to avoid more open conflict.

*Relaxed Urban Land Control in the Post-colonial Periods—
the Maputo Case*

Map 5.7 shows the extent of urban expansion based on aerial photography from 1969, showing evidence of the sites and services in Matola and the start of a similar approach in Maputo. Map 5.8 shows the situation by 1979, with widespread in-migration and limited state action through a UN supported sites and services scheme in Machava, and an informal settlement upgrading project (Maxaquene area of Maputo). Soon after the Maputo City council initiated a 'basic urbanisation programme' in the urban periphery which provided 10,000 new plots for lower income groups through free allocation in the 1980–5 period, but collapsed soon afterwards due to growing political clientelism in land distribution and resistance to formalising wider land access (Jenkins 1997). By 1989 (Map 5.9), 'Operation Production' had failed to restrict urban in-migration, and civil war increasingly affected the southern provinces, accelerating rural-urban movement in the region.

*New Initiatives in Urban Land Control and the Current Manifestation
of Competing Claims on Urban Land*

As the macro-economy of most Sub-Saharan countries went through structural adjustment in the late 1980s and 1990s, arguably one of the few resources which could be predominantly controlled by national and local elites was land access (Simon 1992). Together with rising demand for urban land, and de facto valuation thereof through growing informal market mechanisms, this led firstly to increased land grabbing through the wide range of allocative mechanisms ('traditional', informal and formal) and later to the political desire to adjust the continuing adopted colonial legal situation to permit formalisation of market values. In countries with formally existing land markets, these legislative changes focused on establishing the exclusive access to land through



Maps 5.7, 8, 9. Urban expansion, 1969, 1979, 1989. *Source:* maps prepared by author based on aerial photography.

formal titling, thus permitting the new landowning elite to consolidate their holdings. In countries with post-colonial state allocation systems and no formal land markets, this led to calls for privatisation of land, hotly contested by strong peasant lobbies, with the same general intention of creating and consolidating the landowning elite.

In both contexts, however, a growing force is the emerging middle class, largely excluded from past large scale land allocation, and wanting cheaper access to land, but as yet with limited political clout. This group has either had to accept limited access to state-provided housing, or also invest in the formal sites and services schemes (generally termed 'downward-raiding' as these were targeted officially at low income groups) or opt for the informal sector, as the formal housing markets do not offer them affordable options. They have usually not benefited from the above land-grabbing process, and thus face more expensive access to urban land through the growing legal and other restrictions to informal supply as well as the significant reduction in formal state land development. However they do have some degree of technical and administrative influence in policy-formation and implementation.

Despite the growing evidence from rural development sectors of the lack of success of titling programmes, which tend to dispossess the poorer rural population, recently there has been a major push from international agencies for titling of land as the basis for kick-starting development of capital. This has, to a greater or lesser extent, been enthusiastically endorsed by Sub-Saharan governments, ostensibly for its economic development potential. The rationale for titling is that with massive titling programmes the majority can access capital through mortgaging their land. However this is very unlikely as the financial system is weak in many countries in the region, and as such loans based on mortgaged land are unlikely to be forthcoming—especially for the majority who will be perceived as a high risk, high administrative cost, lending portfolio. In addition there is limited funding available in domestic savings to fund long-term loans, and hence such loans would have high interest rates making them inaccessible, or unsustainable for the majority.

Apart from the likely lack of supply of finance, the titling programmes are likely to fail in a widespread way due to the generalised lack of institutional and technical capacity to undertake such programmes—that is, to replicate internationally funded pilot projects or colonial land survey and registry systems. Related to this is the lack of sound economic (fiscal) bases for wider programmes as urban elites resist land

taxation and the urban poor cannot afford to pay, and the inadequate political will to exact taxation on land as well as enforce repossession on defaulted loans—partly due to these activities undermining the rich speculative opportunities in urban land of the elite. As such any titling programmes are likely to be limited in scope and unsustainable in a wider sense, effectively supporting the on-going process of consolidating urban land holdings.

Arguably this is the real interest of governing elites—that of consolidating a local capitalist sector within the elite—and in this the claim to kick-start capital formation may have some basis. But another major question remains—who is likely to buy the consolidated land holdings, as the realisation of the capital gains requires such exchange? Despite anti-foreign sentiments in many countries, in fact, the immediate targets seem to be inward investors, and thus control over the nature of access to land by this group is one of the main current elite interests—for example, through joint ventures and leasing arrangements. There is a secondary interest in providing land for the emerging middle class, but the lack of adequate banking infrastructure and domestic savings is hindering this.

The current programmes of urban land titling are thus likely to have a limited impact—rather like the previous sites and service schemes—as they are being undertaken for realpolitik objectives which are different than those which are officially espoused. Competing claims to urban land will continue to exist between the political and economic elite, who are pushing for selective formalisation as part of a (relatively protected) capitalist market system—which may slowly expand to include an emerging middle class—and the largely uncontrollable demands of the majority who will continue to act ‘informally’—that is, outside the state and regulated market systems. This is inevitable as the next decades will see rapid and increased urbanisation, but still limited economic growth (Jenkins et al. 2007). As before some form of negotiated settlement may be established between these competing claims, as otherwise there is the possibility of deeper unrest and regime instability.

Growing demand and restrictions on supply (legal and access-related) has led to informal access to land that is becoming increasingly commoditised, including in secondary urban areas which are the most likely to experience the growing surge of urban growth in Sub-Saharan Africa. However given the marginal position of the macro-region in global economic terms, and the proportionally increasing poor majorities in urban areas, the widening of formal urban land development is unlikely.

As such, informal access to land and/or housing (e.g. through rental) is likely to remain the predominant form of urban land access for the foreseeable future. In this scenario, how can competing claims for urban land continue to be resolved and what role can there be for proactive normative engagement within this on behalf of the less economically established majority, which is the ostensible target for ‘development’?

New Initiatives in Urban Land Control and Competing Claims on Urban Land—the Maputo Case

Discussion of a new land law in Mozambique (to replace the immediate post-independence 1976 law) started in the early 1990s, linked to public debate on the new Constitution. Proposals to ‘de-nationalise’ land were partly driven by the state’s involvement from the late 1980s with multinational companies, who were in joint ventures taking over state farms (e.g. Lonhro), but were rejected in widespread public discussion, mainly driven by the peasant lobby. As a result the new land law (1997) retained nationalisation and usufructure title, but established customary rights as formal rights—based on ‘bona fide’ use over ten years and oral testimony—as well as community titles, with no distinction between rural and urban land in law. As a result a debate on urban land rights arose over the formulation of the land law regulations as bona fide occupation over ten years would cover most informal settlements. Two positions were put forward: that of the lawyers who accepted the pre-eminence of the approved law and argued for widespread legal adjudication of urban land in informal areas; and that of the ‘technicians’ who argued that these rights could only be applied after planning and identification of ‘appropriate’ land use. Stalemate between the relevant ministries led to no action being for years for urban land, although rural land regulations were approved by 1998.

Compounding this legal stalemate, the effects of state retraction due to structural adjustment and increasing corruption in government service led to very limited formal supply of urban land in the 1990s, in exactly the same period as the increasing effect of war led to continued rapid in-migration. This fuelled the growing informal land market as well as densification of land use. The 1990s policy changes had however permitted a formal housing market and during this period this market focussed on upper income groups, often based on illegal and hidden land sales. What limited formal land supply was undertaken for other groups generally focused on re-locations, such as those associated with

the 2000 floods. During the 1990s and into the new millennium formal and informal markets increasingly pushed outside the two city boundaries, where even more limited land use control was possible.

In parallel, government decentralisation led to the two new autonomous local authorities (Maputo and Matola) to recognise the importance of land values. However there has not been any political acceptance of land taxation. The recent focus in fact is on resolving the growing problems of litigation for the upper middle class who benefited from the rapid formal land expansion of the 1990s which was based on often corrupt and poorly documented practices. In addition the lack of land for expansion in Maputo city (sea to the east, Matola to the west, estuary to the south and provincial boundary to the north) has led to attempts to confiscate under-used land allocations, but the city president was apparently 'warned off' such an approach. More recently the local authority's main interest has been to register the 1990s formal land sub-divisions and establish a clear topographic cadastre and also negotiate with the province on northward expansion (with the adjoining provincial authority). However many essential supports are not as yet in place. A new physical planning law was recently approved by Parliament and is meant to become the basis for new urban land regulations to apply the land law. While this includes a regularisation process for informal settlement after re-planning, the main focus is on establishing land transfer rights for the formal housing sector market to operate. In the meantime large key urban areas continue to be tied up in speculative land grabbing outside municipal control—probably leading to stalemate in land development as in previous century.

An example of the currently competing claims for urban land is in the area just north of the Maputo 'cement city' (in the old Sommerschild concession). Land which had been cleared of temporarily permitted use in the speculative areas in the 1960s and planned for large scale urban expansion in the 1970s (following the 1952 and 1972 master plans) was rapidly occupied in the late 1970s, and then subject to a UN urban upgrading project in the final parts of that decade.

However, no formal land sub-division was registered and these land rights were continually contested by the city council from 1985 onwards, despite attempts to incorporate them in the land registry in the early 1980s. In the 1980s the areas surrounding this were once again informally occupied, including the coastal escarpment, as in-migration peaked in the early 1990s. This informal occupation competed with the city council's desire to benefit from the newly formalised land market

and a new urban residential area for upper income groups was created in part of the university land reserve, being extended by a World Bank funded project in the early 1990s, re-locating people from city centre flats (which then were rented/sold to higher income groups). The new formal land market also attracted foreign private developers, who achieved land allocations nearby, at the foot of the escarpment—with a forced relocation of occupiers. This form of development was then continued piecemeal by the city council until most of the coastal plain was occupied. The informal and formal occupation of the areas around the escarpment led to increasing erosion problems which in early 2000 had disastrous effects in cutting the main north road and forcibly re-locating many informal residents to new sites and services areas in the very northern periphery. This land is still contested for re-use, with foreign developers offering to reconstitute the road in return for land allocation in the area.

Reinforcing Rights to the City

One of the tenets of more recent development approaches has been a rights-based approach. Such an approach to urban development is, however, fundamentally based on the precepts of liberal capitalist democracy—not the realpolitik of urban areas in Sub-Saharan Africa. African urban areas in many ways draw on norms and institutions derived from indigenous and often pre-capitalist socio-cultural orders, many of which survived under, and were at times subservient to, colonialism. In these, as noted earlier, the now globally dominant ‘Western’ rationalities actually play a limited role. As such the basis for social relations may be more kinship and community-based than individualist or nuclear family-oriented; the basis for political relations may draw more on accepted authoritarianism or negotiated patronage than elected representation; and the basis for economic relations may draw more on principles of social redistribution or reciprocity than on utilitarian exchange.

Evidence for this exists in the urban land context, where what is considered socially and culturally legitimate is often not legal, and *vice versa*. Also, even though so-called ‘informal’ land markets operate commercially, that is using monetary exchange, these are often heavily modified by social relations (e.g. differential pricing and information exchange), and often rely on protection of ‘informal’ authorities (e.g.

local 'headmen'). In this less clear cut milieu, politicians also often have to present a different position from that in the formal institutional order, and often manipulate the situation to their own benefit and those of the formal economic elite with which they have close relationships. As such, these political 'big men' (and women) can not only be part of the formal order (for example, receiving preferential loans from banks), but also get free/cheap access to urban land, both formally and informally as part of their consolidation process. They then use this largesse to further their power through informal redistribution and reciprocal arrangements (Nielsen forthcoming). In this context there is little real interest in a formal 'free and fair market' developing, whether from the elite or the majority.

The pressure to democratise and decentralise is leading to a distinction between *de jure* and *de facto* governance and this where a rights-based approach can fail. *De jure* governance is what is legally adopted, but often not acted on—due as much to weakness in legal and governance systems as political connivance. *De facto* governance is what maintains the system operational—often in the light of citizen non-engagement this is based on negotiated settlements between powerful elites, with a degree of populism to maintain wider support at key moments (e.g. elections). Arguably this hegemonic situation of regime dominance will only change with wider changes in urban power structures.

Such changes in power structures could potentially include the weakening of the economic power of national elites due to the penetration of foreign capital and the undermining of the economic basis for current regimes, or the more severe alienation of the urban poor majority which leads to forms of political instability. However, current national elites are very careful about the terms on which they accept foreign capital in this area of reproduction, as opposed to the area of production where it is largely accepted. There is limited foreign direct investment in general for the region, with even less being directed at urban development. There is also a fairly well developed sensitivity for the limits to alienation of the majority, and there are very small skilled working classes, most of which are not organised. As such the growth of a middle class which asserts its rights is perhaps the greatest challenge to the current renegotiation of rights to urban land.

Should proactive urban policy thus focus on widening the middle class and not the urban poor? Would titling of urban land assist this process? Or is it more important to secure rights to land for the majority—without expensive titling—and encourage, support and guide wider

household residential investment? If the latter, how can this be politically championed in specific contexts? These are questions for debate which require specific contextualisation to be relevant, and as such not possible in this chapter.

What is more to the point is the need to base urban development approaches on a more sound analysis of the actual institutions which act in controlling access to, as well as use and transfer of, urban land. Our current conceptions of urban land use control are largely based on the legal and institutional forms imported during the colonial period, including survey, registry, use definitions, regulatory and fiscal instruments, as well as forms of forward planning. These are imbued with the traditions of capitalist modernity, which this chapter argues have never been fully absorbed in the region, even in the late colonial or early neo-colonial periods. This is not to argue that capitalism in its various forms (mercantile, state-led, global etc.) has not impacted on the mental models and organisational forms that control of urban land are based on. On the contrary these are often partially adopted and adapted to indigenous forms, as is evidenced in the urban fabric itself of Sub-Saharan African cities and towns. That the pre-existing forms of socio-economic integration of reciprocity and social redistribution are inevitably articulated with capitalism has long been argued, including a wide variety of ways this is manifested.

What is therefore clear is that within the marginal global position of the macro-region, the current phase of rapid urbanisation will manifest itself in different forms that are contextually distinct. To be more effective in facing such issues, urban studies arguably need to base their approaches on a better understanding of the actual form of urbanism which emerges within these broad parameters and—rather than continue to adapt imported normative models—seek to develop responses which are embedded within the real political, economic, social and cultural ‘ambience’. This requires a ‘new way of seeing’ that transcends the current disciplinary boundaries of urban studies, and which a variety of African urbanists are beginning to investigate (e.g. Enwezor et al., 2002). This, however, needs to be investigated not only in academic circles, but on the ground with urban governing elites and the wider urban majority, in a move to a collective understanding of ‘perceptions of the possible’.

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CONTESTING FOR SPACE IN AN URBAN CENTRE: THE OMO ONILE SYNDROME IN LAGOS

Rufus T. Akinyele

We wish to make known to you that as a family land, only the family Head and Principal members of the family have the right to alienate to any individual, group or corporate organisation, any portion of our client's family land. This category of the members of our client's family is clearly not your vendor, and is unaware of any sale to your organisation. It would therefore appear as if you have dealt with impostors and charlatans, who have no interest or right whatsoever to convey to you. As highly educated and articulate members of the public, we have no doubt in our mind that you are aware that the doctrine pertaining to the sale of land is 'buyers beware'.¹

The above is an extract, from a letter addressed to the Chairman of Faculty of Arts Cooperative Society of the University of Lagos by a solicitor to a land owning family in the suburb of Lagos. The key issue raised in the letter generally illustrates the problem of competition and access to land and housing in Lagos. The activities of the traditional landowners, popularly known as Omo Onile, are now widely recognised as "a serious menace and impediment to land market operations in Lagos".² This chapter discusses the subject of land ownership in historical perspective and shows that it is essentially through the control of access to land that the indigenes of Lagos have distinguished themselves from strangers and migrants as true Lagosians in a city that has often been described as 'a no-man's land'.³

Lagos has the record of being the first city in West Africa to have a population of over one million people. This record was attained as far back as 1963 (Sada and Adefolalu 1975: 79–107). The phenomenal

¹ Letter from Foluso Fayokun & Co. to President and Chairman of University of Lagos Cooperative Society, Faculty of Arts, dated 14 October, 2005.

² Iseh, F.I. 2005. "The Omo Onile Syndrome and the Urban Land Development Question: The Case of Lagos Metropolis". Special Report, presented at the Faculty of Environmental Science Seminar, University of Lagos.

³ Kunle Lawal has tried to respond to this claim in a lecture delivered at the Centre for Lagos Studies of the Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Otto/Ijanikin on 18th June 2002. See Lawal, K. 2002. *In Search of Lagosians: Social-Political Issues of the 21st century*. CEFOLAS Distinguished Lecture series.

growth in recent times has also informed the projection that by 2015, Lagos might become the third most populous city in the world, with a population of 24 million coming after Tokyo with 28.7 million and Bombay with 27.4 million people (Osuntokun 2001: 495).⁴ The rapid expansion is best understood in the context of the opportunities Lagos offers different categories of people (Olukoju 2003: 7). As Margaret Peil (1991: 1) rightly noted, the problem of the city appear intractable and the condition of the masses is appalling. Yet, the ‘invigorating liveliness’ and the ‘entrepreneurial spirit’ of Lagos have continued to attract people into the city. Indeed, Lagos, ‘Ilu Ogbon’,⁵ is one place in which “much of the world is represented”, even though majority of the inhabitants have always been Yoruba whose culture is also dominant.

Lagos is made up of two parts, the Island and the Mainland. The Island comprises places like Isale Eko, Obalende, Ikoyi, Victoria Island, Ajah while the Mainland includes Iddo, Oyingbo, Yaba, Ebute Metta, Agege, Ikeja, Alausa, Ipaja and so on. The radius between the core area in Isale Eko and the outermost part of the mainland section in any particular direction is over 20 kilometres. Since the 1980s, the city has witnessed phenomenal growth in the northern and eastern directions. It has spilled over into the neighbouring Ogun State in Iju and Ogudu areas.

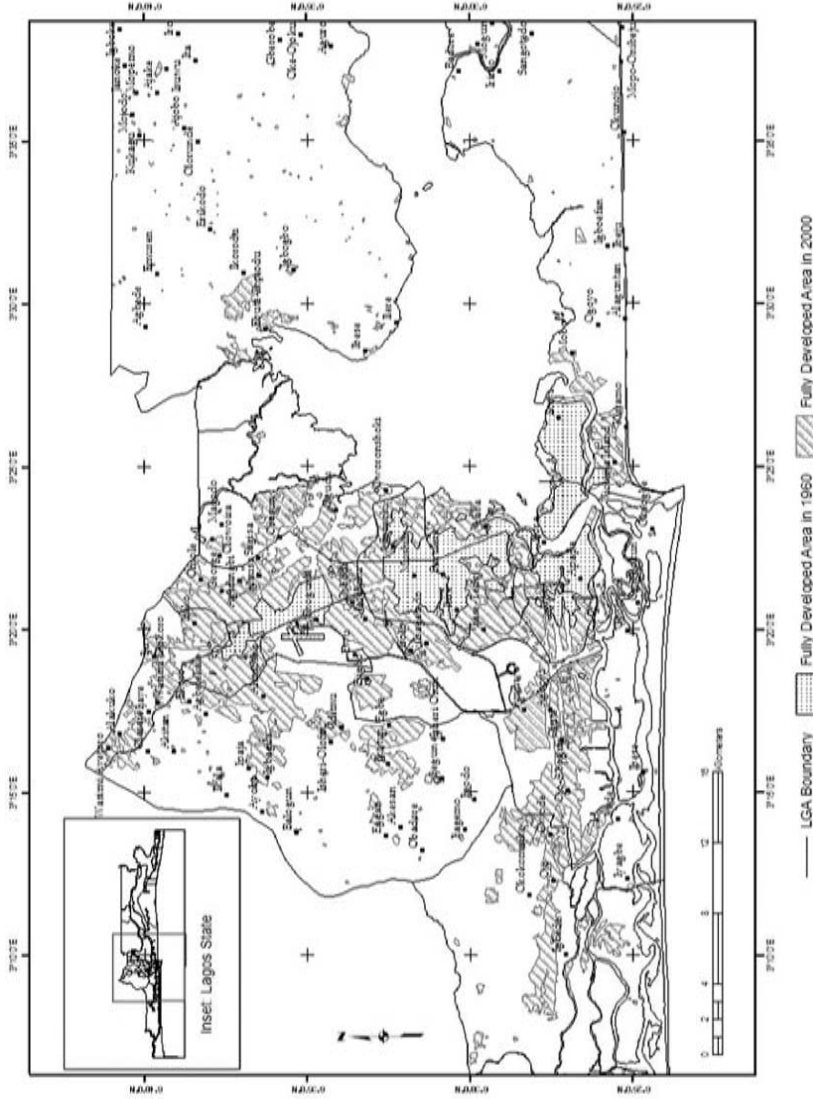
Incidentally, the city is poorly planned and the government housing schemes provide accommodation for only the privileged few who can afford the cost. The different administrations have established different housing schemes, starting with Yaba and Ebute Metta in the 1930s. However, the number of the units has always been inadequate. Now, the cost of a two-bedroom apartment is about N3.5 million which is clearly beyond the reach of the middle class. This has left majority of the people no other choice than to struggle to rent their own accommodation or acquire the piece of land to build their own houses. This is where the encounter with the *Omo Oniles* becomes crucial.

The word *Omo Onile* is a Yoruba expression that means ‘children of the owners of the land’. According to Chief David Olalekan Orisan,⁶ the

⁴ See also the article of Adeyeye, J. 2006. “Lagos is the fastest growing megacity in the world’—UN report”, *The Punch*, June 19 (2), quoting the UN—HABITATS, *State of the World’s Cities*, Report 2006/7.

⁵ Ilu Ogbon means the city of the wise.

⁶ Interview with Chief David Olalekan Orisan, Baale (traditional ruler) of Isawo in Ikorodu, Palace, March 2006.



Map 6.1. Metropolitan Lagos. Source: author's private collection.

Omo Oniles are the rightful and legitimate owners of a given piece of land or the indigenous landowners in a given community. He explained in an interview that the only condition for becoming an Omo Onile is by birth or inheritance and that as aborigines of the community, the Omo Oniles oversee the affairs of the community since they are the custodians of the customs and traditions. The Baale distinguished the Omo Oniles from the 'land speculators and land grabbers', who he said the Omo Oniles sometimes employ to fight their course especially in places "where people have hired thugs to challenge the authority of the rightful land owners".

The typical image of the Omo Onile is painted by Adisa Owonikoko who assisted a friend in England to purchase a piece of land which was resold by the same Omo Oniles within the space of three months:

I see them as thugs because you will find even Igbos and Hausas among them. I believe they are a group of people who have no ambitions but go about disturbing people whenever they want to have a construction on a particular land. They demand for money and if they are paid, they would go, but otherwise they cause trouble. At the end of the day, it's either you go to court or settle them.⁷

In the particular case involving Adisa, he and his friend for whom he had purchased the land visited the site only to discover that another person had started erecting a building on the plot. The narration of the 'settlement' that followed illustrates the experience of many people with the Omo Oniles:

When the Omo Oniles came, they said they had to resell the land since we did not come back on time. It was just a space of three months. At the end, we had to repay for that same land because my friend wanted that particular land. I do not know how they settled the other party but we got our land back.⁸

The activities of the Omo Oniles have become so pervasive that no section of the society is immune from their harassment. In a country where the government has consistently turned down the suggestion to impose tax on church properties, on account of the fact that heaven and earth belong to God and the fullness thereof, the Omo Oniles have never

⁷ Interview with Chief Adisa Owonikoko, Business Man, Ikorodu, 25 March, 2006.

⁸ Interview with Chief Adisa Owonikoko, Business Man, Ikorodu, 25 March, 2006.

exercised any restraint in collecting their own ground rents.⁹ Recently, the inhabitants of a farm settlement created by government had course to appeal to the Lagos State Government to save them from the constant harassment of the Omo Onile.¹⁰ It may also sound unbelievable that on Adeyemi Street in Oshodi, the Omo Oniles have repeatedly sealed off the premises of a number of schools on the ground that they were yet to receive adequate compensation for the land on which they were built.¹¹ In markets, they collect tolls before a consignment of good is offloaded. This was partly responsible for the outbreak of the Ketu riot of 25 November 1999, which began at the popular Mile 12 market and resulted in the death of over one hundred people.¹² The Omo Oniles also compel allottees of government land to buy their plots from them before commencing work at the site. This is the experience of many people of Magboro and Arepo along the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway. While the frequency of the complaints of the masses against the Omo Oniles had influenced the creation of a special radio programme where people could receive free counsel,¹³ the on-going tussle between the Onikoyi Family and the Federal Government over the ownership of the land on which government properties and the old Federal Secretariat are situated shows that the State and the Federal Government are also not free from the problem.¹⁴

⁹ The local branch of the Deeper Life Bible Church, Agberin District, at No. 41 Ogunnoiki street, Oworonsoki suffered this fate until the police stepped into the matter in 2005. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Eti Osa Branch, had appealed to the Lagos State Government to save the churches in Ikota Estate from the “harassment and terrorism” of the Omo Oniles. See report in THIS DAY Online of 16/11/2004 at <http://www.thisdayonline.com/archive/2002/10/0220021002news31.htm> (accessed on 13/2/06).

¹⁰ The New Town Development Authority (NTDA) a government agency created to open up the Lagos hinterland has also complained of harassment of Abijo and Ajah. See P.M. News of 18 March 2005 at www.thenewsng.com/modules/magazines/article.php?articleid=1597.

¹¹ The schools are Community Primary School, State High School and Central High School, Oshodi.

¹² The Ketu riots pitted the Yoruba against the Hausa for the control of the market. One of the key issues in the crisis was whether the Yoruba have the right to collect ground rent (Isakole) from the Hausa traders who also collect trade commission (Lada) from their customers.

¹³ This programme is called ‘komaroki’. It is presented by Olasunkanmi Ayanmo on Eko Bond F.M. 92.9 on Mondays from 9–10 a.m. I am grateful to Mr. Taiwo Akinsola, the former producer of the programme for this information.

¹⁴ See the article in *The Punch* of 13 March 2006, captioned “Appeal Court halts proceedings on Ikoyi properties” the case is listed as suit FHC/L/CS/461.2005.

However, the control, which the Omo Oniles now exercise over Lagos land, is not a right that was recently acquired. Rather, it is rooted in Yoruba land tenure system, shaped by the dynamics of inter-group relations at the early stage of Lagos history and modified later by the British idea of private ownership in a rapidly changing urban environment. To understand the contemporary dimension of the Omo Onile syndrome in Lagos, it is important to explain how the major land owning chieftaincy families (the Idejo white cap chiefs) emerged as well as the factors that have helped them to consolidate their hold on the land since the fifteenth century. It is to this vital aspect of the chapter we shall now turn.

Land Rights in Lagos: The Idejo Factor

Generally among the Yoruba, the group that first settled in a place is regarded as the founder and owner of the land. Hence, the Awori subgroup has laid primordial claims to Lagos on the basis of being the first arrivals. The details of the migration and settlement of the Awori in Lagos have received attention from different scholars (Agiri and Barnes 1987, Adefuye 1987, Faluyi 1987, Dioka 2003).

To start with, the Yoruba generally trace their origins to Ile-Ife. The foundation of Lagos conforms to this general rule. Oral tradition indicates that Ogunfunminire, a hunter led some people from Ile-Ife to settle at a place called Isheri. This group became known as Awori. From Isheri, the Awori founded other settlements including Iddo, Agege, Ota, Ado-Odo, Igbesa, Ebute Metta, Ogudu. The group that settled at Iddo came under the leadership of Olofin. One of the children of Olofin, known as Aromire, subsequently moved into Lagos Island to sojourn there. After a while, he planted herbs and pepper at a place now called Isale Eko. The palace of the Oba of Lagos is located on the site of Aromire's farm. Gradually, other people joined Aromire at Isale Eko, the first part of the Lagos Island to be inhabited.

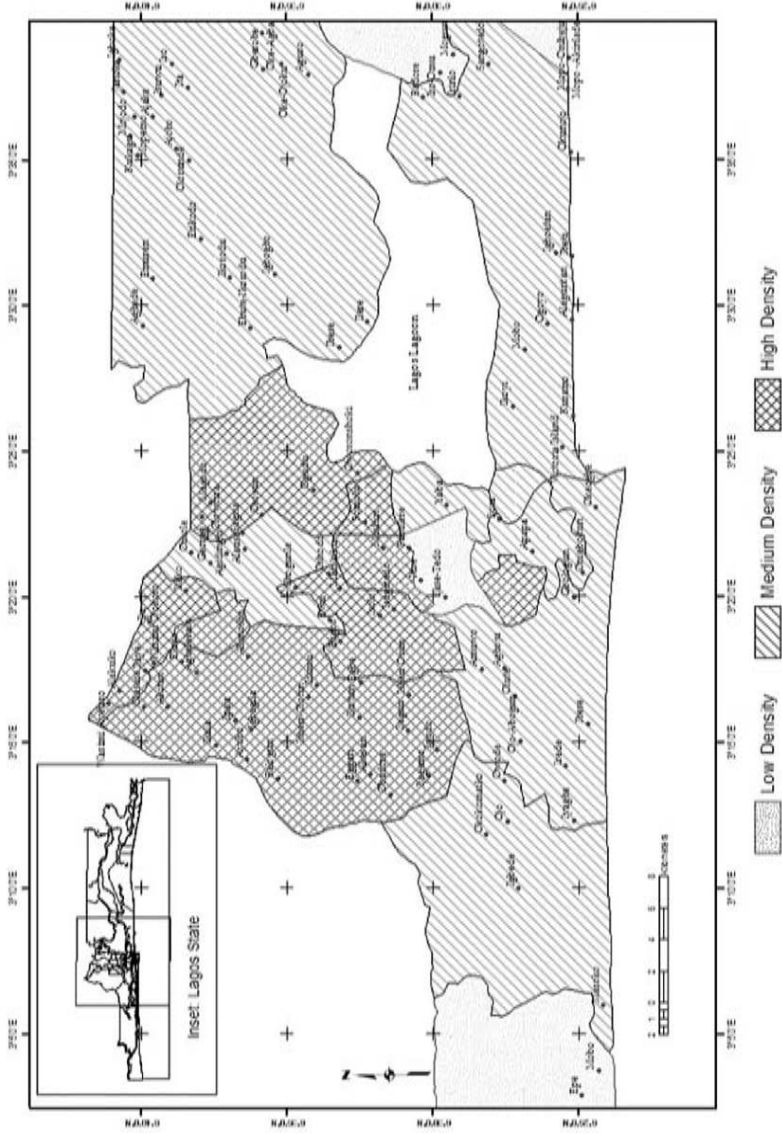
The example of Aromire seem to have encouraged the other children of Olofin (collectively known as Idejo) to establish camps in different parts of Lagos Island and along the Lagoon towards the mainland. For instance, the Oniru settled at Iru (Victoria Island), the Onikoyi at Ikoyi and the Onitolo at Itolo.

Since fishing was the primary occupation of the people at that early period, it had become very necessary to allocate fishing rights to each

of the children of Olofin and certain powerful individuals related to the family by marriage at least to avoid future disputes. As Agiri and Barnes (1987: 23–24) noted, Aromire, Oloto and Ojora who had settled at the existing wharfs retained control over the surrounding waters. Their control stretched from Lagos Island, east to Five Cowrie Creek, across the Lagoon as far as Akoka and westward to Apapa. The Oniru who had established a village at Iru close to the present site of the Federal Palace Hotel overlooking the beach of the Atlantic Ocean received the right to control Victoria Island. Similarly, the Onikoyi and his descendants became the owner of the land and waters around Ikoyi. The Oluwa enjoyed similar rights in Apapa and Ajegunle area and the Onisiwo in the creeks and lagoons in Tarkwa Bay and Tomaro area. The right of Olumegbon in Ajah similarly dates back to the early period of Lagos history. The claim of different Awori families over the suburbs of Lagos metropolis followed the same pattern. This traditional mode of land allocation formed the basis of the operation of the Omo Oniles in Lagos.

Several factors helped to consolidate the hold of the Awori and the Idejo Chiefs on the lands of Lagos, in spite of the developments that transformed Lagos from an insignificant fishing settlement into a mega-city that it is today. The first is the flexible nature of the Awori social system that permits inheritance from both the male and female lines and the continuous assimilation of immigrants into their kinship system. This factor was particularly crucial at the early period. For instance, Lagos witnessed the influx of other Yoruba sub-groups such as the Egba, Ekiti, Ijebu, and Oyo between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Ajah, Nupe and Hausa were also well represented. These immigrants were allowed to marry Awori women, given land grants and many of them were eventually incorporated into the different Awori chieftaincy families. Faluyi has shown that the Awori of Abesan and Ejigbo incorporated the Oyo into their midst just as those in Isolo assimilated people from Benin and Dahomey (Faluyi 1987: 235). The study of Fakayode on Agege similarly shows the varied background of the people now collectively known as Awori (Fakayode 1996).

It is also significant that many of the Idejo Chiefs were brought into that class by marriage. The Onikoyi who hailed originally from Ikoyi in Oyo was incorporated into the Aromire family through marriage. The Ojora came from Ekiti and was similarly integrated. Oniru, Oluwa and Onisiwo migrated from Ghana, Badagry and Porto Novo respectively. Agiri and Barnes have shown that these three strengthened their ties



Map 6.2. Population densities in Lagos. Source: author's private collection.

with Lagos by marrying the daughters of Oba Akinsemoyin who subsequently promoted them into the Idejo class (Agiri and Barnes 1987: 22–24). Today, many of the early migrants are simply recognised as Awori (Asiwaju 1976: 213–214).

Even when Benin army overran Lagos during the reign of Oba Ehengbuda (1578–1660), the Benin conquest as Faluyi (1987: 231) notes, did not result in the dispossession of the Awori of their land. Following the defeat of the Olofin/Aromire group in Iddo, the Benin army was given a parcel of land at Isale Eko to settle, precisely the pepper farm of Aromire. Lagos became a Benin camp and the effect of the invasion was felt as far as Ado Odo and Igbesa. The Yoruba spoken in Lagos became affected to an extent that it was classified as Bini-Awori, that is the Awori that has been diluted by Bini (Edo) loan words. Although the Benin conquest eventually paved the way for the emergence of the Obaship institution which started with Ashipa,¹⁵ the circumstances under which the invasion took place left the control of the land in the hands of the traditional landed aristocrats—the Idejo Chiefs. Although the details of the development that led to the invasion is yet to be unravelled, evidence points to competition for the control of the coastal trade. At any rate, as Lagos derived great wealth from the trans-Atlantic Slave trade, the focus of the Oba was on the control of trade rather than the land. Peil expressed this point lucidly when she noted that the Oba was not an owner of the land but an owner of money and drew his power from it (Peil 1991: 6). Cole similarly notes that the income from foreign trade rather than patronage from the Oba of Benin was responsible for transforming the Oba of Lagos from an agent of the Oba of Benin into the ruler of a Yoruba Kingdom with all the rituals associated with the office (Cole 1975: 31). Paradoxically, while the power of Benin gradually began to decline, the wealth from the slave trade brought increasing fame to Lagos. Consequently, the Oba of Lagos felt less need to look up to the Oba of Benin. Gradually, the Oba of Lagos and the other Benin agents began to intermarry with the local people and eventually became incorporated into the Awori social system. In effect, the Benin conquest did not alter the existing traditional basis of land ownership in Lagos.

¹⁵ Ashipa, an Isheri man, was said to have conveyed the corpse of Asheru, one of the Benin leaders in Lagos to Benin for burial. It was in appreciation of this that the Oba of Benin was said to have given him the authority to rule over Lagos. This event happened around 1570.

The role played by Lagos in the slave trade paved the way for the British bombardment of the city in 1851 and the subsequent annexation in 1861. This episode opened a new chapter in the history of Lagos. British rule, which began by threatening the hold of the Idejo Chiefs on the land of Lagos, ended up entrenching it. This phase began in 1861 when Dosumu ceded Lagos to the British. The reaction of the Idejo Chiefs was spontaneous. Faluyi reveals that the Idejo Chiefs sent a protest letter to the British arguing that the Oba had no right to cede any portion of Lagos to an outside or foreign power without their knowledge and approval (Faluyi 1987: 234–235). Adekunle Alli explains that the protest continued for about six months until the British Governor of Lagos, Mr. Freeman, gave them “personal assurance of the security of their landed rights and privileges”.¹⁶ The test of this assurance came in 1911 when the colonial administration seized the Onisiwo landed property at Abekun off Takwa Bay for the erection of the western mole or lighthouse. The Onisiwo responded by suing the government. The legal battle was first fought at the Divisional Court of the Western Province at Lagos where the government laid claim to the land by virtue of the Treaty of Cession of 1861. The Acting Chief Justice, J. Winkfield, ruled in favour of the Onisiwo on 2nd December 1912. The appeal of the government was heard by C.J. Osborne at the Supreme Court. The landmark judgment was that the government could not acquire the land of the Onisiwo without paying adequate compensation.

This case was followed by the Apapa Land Case of 1919 between Amodu Tijani, Chief Oluwa of Lagos and the Secretary for Southern Provinces. Here again, the Government sought to prove that since Dosumu’s sovereignty on Lagos Island passed to the British Crown under the treaty of 1861, the control of the land in Lagos had passed to the British Crown. This particular case went as far as the Privy Council where the rights of the Idejo Chiefs over the land of Lagos were confirmed. In the end, the Government had to pay compensation to Oluwa family for acquiring the land for the development of Apapa Port (Barnes 1986: 31–36) The practice of paying compensation for the land acquired by the colonial administration created the precedents for future demands for adequate compensation by the land owning families and communities in Lagos.

¹⁶ Alli, A. 2006. “Postscript on Idejo Chiefs”. *Island News*. 27 February, 8.

Even when the colonial administration sought to prove its status as the government of the day by distributing the land as crown grants, the development culminated into the introduction of the lease agreements that form the basis of the present annual collection of ground rents by the Omo Oniles. The development is quiet interesting.

Soon after the annexation of Lagos, the Acting Governor started granting land in the name of the Crown. By 1880, about 3,200 grants had been made. In fact by 1869, four ordinances had been issued to facilitate the process. These were Ordinance No. 9 of 1863, Ordinance No. 10 of 1864, Ordinance No. 9 of 1865 and Ordinance No. 9 of 1869. Although Ordinance No. 13 of 1877 repealed these ordinances, Elias has shown that more than 4,000 grants were issued between 1863 and 1914 and that many of the allottees later argued that such grants conferred on them “absolute and indefeasible titles” to such lands (Mann 1991: 85–107, Elias 1951: 257–295)

In order to forestall further government acquisition, the Idejo Chiefs also began to sell or give away their lands to non-Awori groups including liberated slaves from Sierra Leone and Brazil, many of whom had imbibed the western idea of private ownership. The rate at which the Idejo Chiefs were alienating the land and the fear that the development could encourage the formation of ‘a landless rabble’ or produce a crop of ‘landed Africans’ powerful enough to challenge the authority of the colonial masters made the government ban the sale of land to foreigners through the Native Lands Acquisition Ordinance No. 32 of 1917, which later appeared as CAP 89 of the Laws of Nigeria. This Ordinance invalidated absolute transfers of land from Africans to foreigners, approving only leaseholds of up to ninety-nine years. Violation of the ordinance was punishable by forfeiture of the land in addition to fines and prison terms.¹⁷ By 1939, the Government had thrown its weight completely behind the customary land tenure system which stresses communal ownership and the temporary hold of the allottees on the land.

By 2016, all the lease agreements signed in 1917 for 99 years will expire and the tenants would have to negotiate a new deal with the Omo Oniles. Presently, the Omo Oniles are busy collecting annual rents, which they change without notice. At the same time, they are busy selling land or drawing up new agreements for lease agreement of 50–70 years that have already expired. The need to ‘verify’ the

¹⁷ See also National Archives Ibadan (NAI) File CSO C/60/7 Lagos Town Planning.

category into which every parcel of land falls seems to explain the spate of activities of the Omo Oniles in places like Oyingbo, Iddo and Ebute Metta in recent times.

The last aspect of the colonial land policy that has a direct bearing on our analysis of the Omo Onile syndrome in Lagos is the right of reversion, which the chieftaincy families enjoyed during the colonial period. It must be emphasised that the right was not given to them on a silver platter but won after several legal battles. Reversion of rights is recognised under customary law and one of the elements is forfeiture of the land if the occupier should alienate it without the consent of the original owner. The Idejo Chiefs sought and received the extension of this principle to cover the use of land under Crown grants. In 1867, some parcels of land were given to Governor Glover for allotment among Egba refugees at Ebute Metta. Some of the allotments were not taken up and the Governor decided to share these among the Ishan group. The Oloto simply took possession of such land and redistributed it to other people. One of the persons affected later sued the Chief for trespass. The West African Appeal Court held that the Oloto's right of reversion remained intact.¹⁸ Elias has also shown that titles acquired under Crown grants cannot under the customary law be of such absolute character as to deprive the chief of his right of reversion. According to him, the realisation of this fact apparently led to the passing of Ordinance No. 19 of 1947 (Para. 4) and Ordinance No. 21 of 1947, both of which provided for the Chiefs right of reversion in spite of any previous Crown grants of land in Lagos.¹⁹ This provision is the basis of the current claim of the Onikoyi on the land on which some government property is located in Lagos. We shall return to this point latter.

Just as the Idejo Chiefs managed to survive the colonial period with much of their powers intact, they also found an escape route from the land use Decree of 1978 which vests the control of land in the state governors. Adekunle Alli affirms that as soon as the decree was promulgated, the Idejo Chiefs held mass meetings at the Palace where they denounced the measure. He opined that it was probably in response to their protest that a loophole was found in the Act where corporate

¹⁸ Davies, L. "Colonial and Policies in Lagos" Term Paper, University of Lagos, Department of History, His 906,2005, 39-40.

¹⁹ Elias, T.O. 1951. *Nigerian Land Law and Custom*. London: Routledge, 110-140 for full detail.

bodies could hold more than one hectare of land under the Land Use Act.²⁰ This is the basis under which the Idejo Chiefs now hold their landed property. On the whole, all the developments discussed in this section, spanning more than five centuries of Lagos history, have combined to shape the present forms and manifestations of the Omo Onile syndrome in Lagos.

Forms and Manifestations of Omo Onile Syndrome

The majority of people who have fairly constant interaction with the Omo Oniles in Lagos do so in the form of payment of annual leases, whose origins we have traced to the colonial period. The result of the fieldwork in Mushin, Ilupeju, Isolo, Agege, Ajegunle, Ikoyi, Victoria Island and Ajah shows that the rate is N5,000 per plot except in Ajegunle where it is as low as N1,000. Besides, the lease is not collected haphazardly. Rather, each land owning family has its own land register that facilitates the 'street by street' collection of the rent. The big families, notably the Oluwa and Ojora, have created secretariats or area offices where tenants can pay their lease at their own convenience within the expected period. While the breach of agreement is generally frowned at, in the case of the Ojora family the non-payment of the ground rents for five years automatically terminates the lease. For instance in 1994, the Onikoyi family sued the Federal Government for N98,566.251 as compensations for lands acquired in old Ikoyi, South West Ikoyi and Obalende plus the interests on the delayed payment for 87 years. This claim was reviewed by the Lands Division and consequently pegged at N23,179,360 for the family's land acquired inclusive of interests for delayed payment for a period of 20 years.²¹

The Federal Government Property in Ikoyi consists essentially of 300 housing units of old colonial patterned houses on low density plots built by the colonial government as staff quarters and offices for government agencies. In the recent past, some of the houses were given on temporary residency to some international organisations such as WHO and UNICEF. Others were released to the Lagos State Government,

²⁰ Alli, 'Postscript'.

²¹ See document Ref No. 124/10/s.247/vol. 1/4 titled "Renewal of Expired Crown Leases in Ikoyi and Obalende", signed by K.N. Buah, dated April 1994 in the old Lagos land office, Obalende.

Eti Osa, Mainland and Island Local Government Councils. The other types of Government possession in Ikoyi are the Crown leases granted by the colonial government to companies and individuals. These were building leases with terms ranging from 50–99 years. Some multinational companies were granted such leases for the construction of their European staff quarters. It is also important to note that the Old Federal Secretariat Complex is situated in Ikoyi. The most imposing government building in the neighbouring Victoria Island is the 1004 flats, originally built as residential quarters for the senators of the Second Republic but later converted into quarters for the civil servants. At any rate, the lease so collected is shared out at the end of every year by the Head of the Family to all the branches that make up the extended family.²²

Many Lagosians have also experienced the worst side of the Omo Onile through multiple sale of land and ‘land grabbing’, as illustrated by the experiences of the following victims: First, we have the narration of Mr. M.O. Awobajo of his experience with the Omo Oniles at Oworonshoki:

I first came in contact with them in the year 1970 when I came to buy this place. I brought the place from Odumade who is the original owner through his vendor Baba Laja. After some time, we were about to start building the place, we had ten rooms in the front there but eventually they came during the night and destroyed the whole ten rooms. They even cut my vendor on the head. Then, we went to court. We spent almost seven years in the court. We started the court either 1971 or 1972 and we finished the case in 1977. I was declared the owner of the land. It was then that the land owner, that is Odumade told me that he had no time to go to court again, nor is he interested in making any problem with me and that I should go and erect a structure on the land even if it is one room. That was how I came about these four rooms built here.²³

The second is the encounter of Mr. Akin Olugbade, an Insurance Broker, with the Omo Oniles at Ikorodu:

²² For instance, Mr. Tunde Oluwa, Personal Assistant to Chief Oluwa of Lagos, disclosed that the proceed is shared among the five branches of the Oluwa family, Oral Interview, Ajegunle, 15 April, 2006.

²³ Interview with Mr. M.O. Awobajo, Retiree, 4 Alaba Street, Oworonsoki, 5 April 2006. I am grateful to Mr. Lanre Davies of the Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, Onabisi Onabanjo University and the students of HDS 306 who assisted in the collection of data.

That was about two years ago when a friend helped me to get a plot of land here in Ikorodu, Bayeku to be precise. I bought the plot for N150,000 and was issued a receipt with the family name on it. After about two months, the friend that helped me got the land told me to come because he had been noticing strangers on the land. When I got there, I realised they had started building on it and I had to go back to the family I bought the land from. In order to settle the issue, they got me another plot, which is quite far from the initial location.²⁴

And, as to why he did not take every measure to get back the original plot allocated to him he stated:

Well, in the first case, I went to inform the police. Then I got an advice from some of these Omo Oniles that if I should inform the police, it means that I am going to get the case worsened. Due to the advice, I went to the family I got the land from and I saw the Head of the family who appealed to me that it was just due to the fact that I fail to start something on it but I still persist on relocating instead of collecting back my money which of course is the deed and I accepted it and it was renewed.²⁵

The third illustration is the case of a lady who purchased 16 plots of land from a family in 1977. The lady immediately fenced it round and commenced farming on it until she has enough money to start developing the site. To ensure that the land is secured, she appointed a member of the family that sold the land to her as the caretaker. In 2001, the caretaker sold six plots of the land to someone who immediately began to develop it. When the lady complained to the caretaker, the latter simply threatened her with the sale of the remaining plots if she failed to commence work on them. And when she acted on this advice, the caretaker prevented her until she had paid additional 'Owo Ile' or further charges, which is the alleged shortfall of what she ought to have paid to their families as the correct purchase price of the land. Under pressure to secure the remaining plots she agreed to pay additional sum of N800,000 and made a part payment of N120,000 before she was allowed to commence development work on the site. Then in 2004, the caretaker connived with another person, who is not of Yoruba origin, to sell the remaining plots. The caretaker then beefed up security

²⁴ Interview with Mr. Akin Olugbade, 17 Akinola Street, Ikorodu, 25 March, 2006.

²⁵ Interview with Akin Olugbade.

around the site to prevent the lady from entering the land. Subsequently, she reported to the police and it was taken to the court.²⁶

Several deductions can be made from all the cases cited in this work about the forms and manifestations of the Omo Onile Syndrome in the area of acquisition of land in Lagos. First, it will be noticed that the multiple sale of land is very rampant—in one of the case studies, barely two months after the land was purchased. The extended family system, called Ebi, and the traditional mode of inheritance have created a conducive environment for multiple sales of land. Polygamy was the common form of marriage among the Yoruba until the recent past. A successful man could have four or more wives and all the children, and by extension their descendants, are traditionally entitled to his landed property. The challenge of managing or regulating the use of the land, at any particular time, rests on the oldest male member of the extended family called Olori Ebi. Incidentally, the Olori Ebi does not have the power to act unilaterally. He has to carry the rest of the family along. This is done by calling a meeting of the representatives of all the branches of the family tree before any major decision is taken.

The choice of these representatives or principal members of the family often depend on prevailing circumstances. Some are chosen because they are the only prominent members of the family at home; others are called because of their levels of education and the rest on account of advanced age. The composition often cut across the gender line. The fluid criteria of selection create room for internal wrangling, especially when the Olori Ebi can not exercise effective control on the family. In that circumstance, any member could contest the sale of the family land by claiming that his or her own line of the family was not duly represented in the negotiation. This can eventually lead to multiple sale of the land.

Besides, the Omo Oniles habitually exploit the death of the Olori Ebi to review all transactions on the family land, irrespective of the nature of the paper documentation. In most cases, the undeveloped plots are deemed to have reverted to the family for the new Olori Ebi to reallocate. These could be sold to new people especially where the original buyers are not willing to pay additional money.

²⁶ This case is listed as MIK/B/145/2004 in Ikeja Magistrate Court and discussed by Mr. F.I. Iseh in the Special Report presented at the Faculty of Environmental Science Seminar, 2005. I am grateful to him for giving me a copy.

Even when the land under consideration is a single plot and belongs to a single individual, the possibility of multiple sales is not completely ruled out. For instance, any of the children of the owner, male or female, could sell the plot under the pretence that he or she is acting on behalf of the parent. The illegal sale could be contested by the owner or any of the siblings. The buyer could adopt any method to recover his or her money or negotiate with the authentic owner.

On the whole, there is no regulation that clearly stipulates who can sell a parcel of land; whether it is the father, mother or the eldest male child. Whoever owns the land, male or female, can sell the property directly or through an agent who might also sell the land to more than a single person in the hope of making maximum gain. The risk of multiple sales is higher if the land is family land and when family ties are slack. To reduce the risk to the barest minimum, potential buyers now employ lawyers to handle their transactions with land vendors. In addition, the eldest son of the land owner is often included as a signatory, especially where the vendor is an illiterate. The system is, however, not foolproof.

Second, the late commencement of development project on the land could attract additional charges, often calculated to reflect the current value of the land. For example, the lady in the third case study had to accept a further payment of N800,000 for her remaining plots of land.

Thirdly, there is the involvement of non-indigenes in the Omo Onile saga of land grabbing. Among the ranks of the Omo Onile are to be found Igbo and Hausa elements.

Fourth, the cases cited also show that the Omo Onile pose a threat to the security of their victims while some even had their properties damaged. The lady in the third case study had her fence destroyed while Mr. Awobajo who started with the construction of ten rooms ended up with four.

Fifth, it is also clear from the letter of the solicitor of a section of the Olaribigbe Family of Agura village to the Faculty of Arts Cooperative Society of the University of Lagos that the Omo Onile can always argue that the purchaser did not obtain the consent of all principal members of the family to justify the resale of land or their demand for additional money.

Six, experience has also shown that the Omo Oniles are in the habit of selling government acquired land to unsuspecting buyers. This practice generally takes place during what is called the 'Protection Period', that

is the duration between the time of acquisition and the actual utilisation of the land by government.

Even if one is lucky to purchase a trouble-free land, there is no way one could escape from the hands of the Omo Oniles at the construction stage. At every stage of the development, from foundation to the roofing, the Omo Oniles would show up to demand for one payment or the other. The experience is the same for the erection of fence and the sinking of a borehole. The payment at each stage depends on the location and the type of the building being erected. The ability of the owner to negotiate is also crucial since the whole affair, is like 'buying and selling'. Payment by instalment is even allowed. But while the Omo Onile may accept N5,000 for the sinking of a bore hole in Oworonsoki, the amount could be as high as N30,000 in Lekki or Ajah. To ensure payment the Omo Onile habitually carries away the tools of the construction workers. All the artisans interviewed in connection with this study—bricklayers, carpenters, electricians, bore hole engineers and so on—have one story or the other to narrate about their encounter with the Omo Oniles.

Incidentally, the demand is not confined to the construction of new buildings, but extends to renovation works especially in places like Lagos Island and Ilupeju where there is virtually no vacant plot to sell. Jamiu Ajomale, the Secretary to one of the Omo Oniles in Mushin provides an insight into their mode of operations:

What we do is to go and meet the owner of the house as Omo Onile to pay a certain amount of money to the family of Omo Onile that sold the land, or else we would not allow them to carry out any form of renovation on the house. Also for a house that has been demolished for reconstruction, we collect a certain amount of money, such as foundation money, and in case the owner wants to deck the house before roofing, we also collect money for decking. All these monies are collected step by step.²⁷

Lastly, the Onikoyi family is currently locked in a legal battle with the Federal Government over the privatization of government property in Ikoyi. It appears that the family has fallen back on the reversion rights it enjoys under the customary law to demand for the return of the

²⁷ Interview with Mr. Jamiu Ajomale, Secretary to Omo Onile, Isolo Road, Mushin, 128 Isolo Road Mushin, 20 March 2006.

lands once they are no longer used for the original purpose for which they were acquired.²⁸

A Comparative Analysis: Lagos and Accra

On the whole, several aspects of the land ownership and control in Lagos conform to the established pattern in most cities in sub-Saharan Africa, where land in pre-colonial period was not just treated as a physical entity but a vital link between all generations.²⁹ The analysis might become more revealing by comparing the situation in Lagos with Accra, another coastal city that has a similar colonial experience and heritage.

In both places, traditional claim of ownership of land is tied to migration and settlement. Just as the Idejo Chiefs base their claim to control the land in Lagos on the status of the Awori as the first settler, the chiefs of Accra similarly anchor their rights on the status of the “Ga” as first settlers among the groups that settled in the greater Accra Metropolitan Area. Pressure on urban land has encouraged the chiefs and families that control the land in Lagos and Accra to abandon the customary practice of demanding bottles of schnapps or ‘drink money’ from strangers in exchange for the right of occupancy. Today, the process of land commercialisation has reached its farthest point in Lagos where a plot of land is sold for over N60 million (about USD 500,000) in places like Ikoyi and Lekki. Although the chiefs who control the land are expected to exercise such rights on behalf of the community, evidence suggests that the proceeds from land sale in Lagos and Accra are rarely used for public good, but are squandered by the chiefs and the principal members of the families. The only notable exception is the case of Gbawe, ten kilometres west of down town Accra, where such funds have been used for the construction of roads and other projects.³⁰ In essence, the chiefs are not accountable to the people. However, in Ghana, the Head of The Family Accountability Law (PNDC Law 112)

²⁸ See article in *The Guardian* of 14 November 2005 page 7 captioned “Government asks court to stop Ikoyi Property’s Suit”.

²⁹ For a recent study of the land Question in Africa see Kuba, R. and C. Lentz (eds.) 2006. *Land and the Politics of Belonging in West Africa*. Leiden and Boston: Brill.

³⁰ See CFP Report 23: Farming in the shadow of the city: changes in land Rights and Livelihoods in peri-urban Accra (1998) in www.idrc.ca/en/ev-4692-201-1-DO_Topic.html-127k. (Accessed on 05/09/06).

makes it mandatory for family heads to share whatever is allocated to them with other members of the family. The chiefs who control the stool lands are however exempted by this law. On the other hand, there is no similar legal framework in Nigeria. At any rate, since leasehold guarantees the perpetual hold of the family on the land, the youths and unborn generations can always 'wait for their own time to eat'.

In Lagos and Accra, the co-existence of the Western notion of private ownership with the indigenous system of land control and administration has created tension and given rise to litigation. But while the problem in Accra arises mainly from border disputes, the problem in Lagos centres more on multiple sale of land by members of the same family.

As early as 1926, the problem created by the overlapping nature of the rights of the chiefs and the sub-chiefs in Ghana, and between the chiefs and the families, had been noted by Honourable W.G.A. Ormsby—Gore who described land litigation as the "curse of the country" (cited in Kay 1972: 212). The situation does not appear to have changed so much in the post-independence period. On the other hand, the process of defining the boundaries of the Idejo chiefs at the dawn of Lagos history seems to have reduced the likelihood of border disputes among them. The only exception is Ajah area which is presently contested by two chieftaincy families. Thus, while the multiple sale of land is not unknown in Accra, the degree of publicity which the celebrated case of Efua³¹ attracted suggests that such occurrence is still considered as an aberration unlike in Lagos where it is dominant.

Another major difference between Lagos and Accra relates to the degree of compensation the land owning families have been able to extract from the government for land compulsorily acquired. In Lagos, the Idejo chiefs, through series of court actions dating back to the early period of colonial rule, have successfully got the government to recognise their right to adequate compensation, and, as the on-going legal tussle over Ikoyi properties suggest, could sue the government for that purpose. On the other hand, in Ghana compensation is rarely paid for land compulsorily acquired, particularly under the Lands Acts of 1962. Nevertheless, in both Lagos and Accra, chiefs often sell parts of the acquired land to unsuspecting buyers if the government fails to

³¹ See the story by Orla Ryan titled "Ghana Chief's land rows spook investors", on the internet at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/475433.stm>. (Accessed on 10/03/06).

commence the development immediately. This is the fate of the land acquired for the National Sports Complex at Abeka and the Ofankor Residential Area.³²

Lastly, in both Lagos and Accra, government intervention to streamline or regulate the dual system of land ownership has focused more on the registration of title deeds rather than settling the issue of ownership. This is why land litigation has continued to persist and the land market has remained a risky business.

Conclusion

It is evident that the Omo Onile syndrome has affected Lagos negatively. In fact, controversies and bloodshed often mark the trail of the Omo Oniles as recent events in Ajah show.³³ The question then is what is the way out? To start with, the existing legal system and the law enforcement agencies are incapable of solving the problem. Many of the people interviewed are of the view that the court is the last place to seek redress on account of the high cost of litigation and the delay associated with it. Indeed, such a step could compound the problem. At the same time, the police cannot be trusted to act fairly where the issue at stake involves money. The traditional rulers are not entirely neutral either since they receive directly or indirectly part of the proceeds collected by the Omo Oniles. Victor Olajide, a prominent land vendor along the Lagos-Ibadan expressway disclosed that the money collected by the Omo Onile is often shared into three: one part for the 'youths' that participate in the collection, one part for the Oba and some palace chiefs and the rest for the family that owns the land.³⁴

Ironically, the Land Use Act that could have provided the cure for the Omo Onile ailment has been distorted in its implementation. The Act that gave birth to the Law had the following objectives:

³² This is well discussed in the CFP Report 23, already cited.

³³ For some of the reports in the newspapers see *Daily Independent*, 23 November 2005 page XI. Captioned "Igbo Elerin Community at War with hired thugs: two residents missing", *Daily Sun*, 16 May 2006, 10, captioned "Tinubu, Ehindero's Intervention sought in Ajah" *The Punch*, 2006, 9 titled 'Who owns the land'.

³⁴ Interview with Mr. Victor Olajide, 5 Victor Olajide Close, Arepo, 29 March 2006. It is also significant to note that the late Oba of Lagos, Adeyinka Oyekan II, had elevated the Oniru, Oloto and Onisiwo into Obas of their respective domains thus confirming them as rulers and landlords at the same time.

- (a) To remove the bitter controversies, resulting at times in loss of lives and limbs which land is known to be generating.
- (b) To streamline and simplify the management and ownership of land in the country.
- (c) To assist the citizen, irrespective of social status to realise his ambition and aspiration of owning the place to live a secure and peaceful life.
- (d) To enable the government to bring under control the use to which land can be put in all parts of the country and thus facilitate planning and zoning programmes for particular uses (Olahanmi & Co. 2005).

However, in practice, the Land Use Act has become a tool for acquiring public lands and distributing them to close friends and relatives of the governors. The issue of revocation of Certificate of Occupancies and other problems connected with the Land Use Act are already well documented (Olahanmi and Sodimu 2005). Hence, the Land Use Act has not been able to curb the excesses of the Omo Onile. Besides, the government position has been weakened by the practice of paying compensation for lands acquired, thus affirming the rights of the chieftaincy families over the land. In any case, the Omo Oniles have also perfected the art of exploiting the 'village excision clause' in the Land Use Act, which gives them control over their settlements and the immediate environment to their own advantage. They shift boundary pillars at will or could inform the government that the burial ground of their fathers is still located a good distance away from the settlement just to claim an extension of territory.

The introduction of Electronic Document Management System (EDMS) into the Land Registry of Lagos State in January 2006 has been advertised as a solution to the problem of land ownership in Lagos. The system, which has the backing of Her Majesty's Land Registry in the United Kingdom in the area of training and logistics, is designed to enhance efficiency in assessing the status of land. A search would now take between 15 to 30 minutes instead of several months, while the registration of vesting deeds, court orders or memorandum of loss certificates can be done in days instead of two months. Those wishing to buy land can register under three types of deeds or titles, namely: Registration of Title Act, Registration of Deeds under the Land Instrument Registration Law and Registration of Certificate of Occupancy under the Land Use Act and Land Instrument Registration Law. During

the launching of the scheme, Governor Bola Tinubu expressed optimism that the new system would eliminate shady land deals by touts and speculators and promote systematic use of land for sustainable development while providing accurate knowledge of about 90 percent of registered land in Lagos.³⁵

For EDMS to achieve the goal, the government must be prepared to solve the problem of erratic power supply. Besides, government should devise a means of encouraging the Omo Oniles to register their lands. As of now, many of the buildings in Lagos, particularly in the urban fringe communities, are without approved plans or government papers. It is also obvious that the heart of the Omo Onile problem lies in the co-existence of two land tenure systems in Lagos, customary and private ownership. For as long as the situation persists, the Omo Onile will always exploit their differences to their own advantage. For now, the only way to reduce the multiple sale of land that has created the greatest problem is for government to compel the Omo Oniles to agree on a uniform period of two years as the probation period before any land is resold. This clause should be included in every land transaction, a copy of which should be deposited in the Lands Office for proper documentation.

Lastly, there is need to reduce the pool from which the Omo Oniles can recruit their thugs. Experience has shown that the Omo Oniles often recruit the land grabbers from jobless youths residing in the neighbourhood. This is where the empowerment of the youths, through education and employment, becomes very crucial.

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'WATER WARS' IN KUMASI, GHANA

Tom C. McCaskie*

Introduction

This chapter is about water supply and provision in Kumasi, capital of the historic West African forest kingdom of Ashanti and now Ghana's second city. Discussion focuses on the situation today but ranges back to the start of colonial rule in 1901. Importantly, historical perspective reveals that current circumstances have deep structural roots. Present crises in Kumasi's water supply are born of a constellation of factors that have existed throughout the twentieth century but have recently become unmanageable. This history is absent from development studies and social science literature on the present state of affairs. It needs to be explored for the light it casts on the colonial and postcolonial sources of what is happening now.

The present crises in Kumasi's water supply are an instance of a generic urban phenomenon in contemporary West Africa that is set to get worse. Over the past twenty years, and with a visible and seemingly unstoppable acceleration, the cities of West Africa have exploded in population and size. A new urbanised footprint is emerging along the coast of the sub-region. This is an archipelago of increasing connectedness running from the oil-rich Niger Delta and Lagos westward to Accra and Abidjan. Kumasi, like the Yoruba cities of Nigeria, is an inland outrider of this configuration. Unplanned, runaway urbanism is metastasising right along the littoral. It is reaching out to connect with, and foreseeably to incorporate, similarly expanding inland nodes in the course of the present century. Commentators have drawn attention to the breakneck speed of this phenomenon in West Africa.

Kumasi and West Africa are part of a much wider African and global trend. Whatever causes are ascribed to this (for Africa, Rakodi 1997, Bryceson 2000), or whatever possibilities are discerned in it (most

* I thank all in Kumasi who have contributed to this chapter on and, for obvious reasons, off the record. I thank too the late Dr. S.N. Benson of Cambridge University who worked with me in Kumasi in 2000, 2002 and 2004.

famously, de Soto 2000), its material reality is the calling into being of 'a planet of slums' (UNHSP 2003, Davis 2004). Galloping urbanism means unprecedented demand on resources and the agencies and mechanisms that provide them. The consequence is infrastructural overstretch, dysfunction or collapse. Fundamental to this suite of faltering amenities is a potable water supply. This too is a global problem in which armies of the newly urbanised poor struggle to gain access to this most basic human need. Alarms over worldwide freshwater supplies (Shklomanov 1996, de Villiers 1999, Mayor 2001) are now intertwined with discourses and practices that contest the status of drinking water as right or commodity. The case of Kumasi reflects and exemplifies all of these global issues, but within the context of a specific historical experience.

A short word about background and approach is in order. I have worked in and on Kumasi for nearly forty years, publishing much on the history of the town and on Ashanti generally. I am prompted to the reflections offered here by personal experience. I have observed large and accelerating changes in Kumasi over the last ten to fifteen years. Old Kumasi friends tell me they have come to think of themselves as strangers in their own town as the former 'Garden City of West Africa' has become hugely expanded and ever more diversely peopled. I have felt this too as the village and forest landscapes of my earliest research have disappeared into the city's built environment.

I wrote a history of one part of this process (McCaskie 2000) that combined together socio-cultural reportage of Kumasi lives and urban folklore with more conventional fieldwork and archival materials. I employ a similar approach here. That is, I give an account of the past and present of Kumasi's water supply, but interweave this with the kind of testimonies, anecdotes and fragments that all too often get 'lost in transposition' (Lefebvre 1996) in the literatures of social science. Simply, this chapter reports on the history of structures but in their interaction with the practices of everyday life (de Certeau 1990, Benjamin 1999) that take their shape from myriad conjunctions of locality, itinerary and sociability (Pred 1990, Gregory 1994, Cohen 2005). An underlying theme is the Kumasi concept of 'water wars' (*nsu sa*), an urban folklore rooted in long experience of battling for this and other resources and now given new sharpness by crisis conditions. In this, the vocabularies of articulation and explanation find voice and audience in a public arena that throws up both heroes and villains. In their turn, such incarnations embody and express Kumasi people's views of history, their relations with power and the state, and their expectations of a constantly deferred

modernity. I confess that incompleteness is built into this approach but it is hard to see, except in the most mechanical sense, what completeness or closure might mean or intend in this sort of context.

Creating Kumasi's Water Supply

The British formally annexed Ashanti in 1901, following a last failed insurrection against their presence. Kumasi, which had never fully recovered from dynastic wars in the 1880s, was now in ruins and depopulated. A census count in 1901 listed only 3,000 inhabitants. However, swift recovery was prompted by the growth of the cocoa industry, trade and the arrival of the railway from the coast in 1903. By 1911 Kumasi had 18,853 residents. Many of these were immigrants from rural Ashanti and further afield, pioneers of a trend that rose sharply as the twentieth century progressed. Early colonial Kumasi accessed its drinking water from old and new shallow wells and streams. It became clear, however, that such resources were finite and a health hazard because of pollution. Colonial aspirations to create a modern town in its own image for the growing population meant searching out a reliable source of water that could be delivered by pump and pipe.

In 1914 Sir William Duff, who had created pipe-borne water systems in Bombay and Nagpur, was commissioned to do the same for Kumasi. He looked at and rejected lake Bosomtwe as a water source, and reviewed sites along the Ofin and Oda rivers. His choice fell on Esereso on the Oda, eight miles south of Kumasi. Damming, gravel filtering and piping would supply the Ashanti capital with 500,000 gallons a day. Duff also inspected the town's existing well and stream supply and judged that replacement was urgent. The problem with Esereso was cost. It was budgeted at a considerable £297,000. Government demurred, and the matter was shelved when the First World War broke out (Duff 1914).

In 1917 Esereso was reassessed. Local reports of heavy seasonal silting proved to be accurate and the site was ruled out. In 1920 the search was resumed. Attention moved to Mprem in the headwaters of the Ofin river just north of Kumasi. This had a better throughput of water flow than Esereso, but at £644,000 the so-called Upper Ofin Scheme was massively more costly than Duff's proposal. Government balked but it ordered another inspection. The Gold Coast Geological Survey reported a fatal flaw. The Ofin riverbed at Mprem could not sustain a

dam. Alternative sites were looked at upstream and downstream with the same result. In 1924–5 the Upper Ofin Scheme was abandoned (Junner 1924). By then, the need for a new water supply was urgent. In 1921 Kumasi had 23,694 people and the water supply was causing alarm to the town's sanitary engineer. Then in 1924 Kumasi suffered a serious outbreak of plague (Brown 1972). Something had to be done. Government in Accra now promised to defray development costs and an intensive search began to find a reliable water source.

Spurred on by government, surveyors identified a new site less than five miles north-west of Kumasi. This was at the village of Owabi on the river of the same name, a westward flowing tributary of the Ofin. The Owabi river had been overlooked because its flow was vigorous, but less so than the Ofin and Oda. However, it had peerless advantages. The riverbed at Owabi was not gravel but metamorphosed phyllites that could support a heavy dam; and the strike of the rocks upstream from the site created a natural retaining wall for an impounding reservoir built behind a dam. The rainfall catchment area was extensive, and only five miles of pipeline would need to be laid to connect to a service reservoir and its distribution system in north Kumasi. The Owabi Water Scheme was given the go-ahead. A 55 foot high composite dam was built. Behind it an impounding reservoir held 121 million cubic feet of water. A pipeline to Suame in north Kumasi provided an immediate draw down capacity of 200,000 gallons of gravel-filtered water and a maximum daily throughput of 1 million gallons. The system was opened in 1930 and came fully on stream three years later (Gold Coast 1930).

Kumasi now had a modern pipe-borne water supply, but problems lay ahead. First, the Accra government balked at the £700,000 price tag and amortised £220,500 of the building costs at 4.5 percent interest to be charged to the Kumasi municipal authority. This was the first instance of a recurring process in which the colonial and postcolonial states underwrote such schemes and then offloaded a substantial part of the costs plus interest on the Kumasi ratepayers. Second, future planning was shaped by the imperative to save money. It was decided the Owabi Water Scheme should be revisited, improved and extended twenty years after its construction. The year 1951 was chosen for this exercise. Planners were ruled by budgetary considerations and one result was a reluctance to face facts that led to a consistent underestimation of needs. The view from Accra was that Kumasi was approaching the limits of its growth. It was estimated that the population in

1951 might be 50,000, but if anything this was to err on the high side. Upgraded water provision was planned on this assumption. But in 1948 Kumasi's population was 71,436. In 1951 it was estimated to be 75,000, and relief from inadequate water provision was not provided by that year's improvements (Kumasi Town Council 1952). Third, delivery of the Kumasi water system was the responsibility of a succession of complicated and highly politicised municipal authorities. Outflow standpipes were in short supply, and the authors of a comprehensive (but unadopted) 1940s city plan noted that the Suame reservoir had no pipe connection to most of the city (Fry and Drew 1945). A key issue here was the vicious circle of household rates. To meet outlays and also debts to Accra, successive municipal authorities levied a water rate. This went largely unpaid and continues so to this day. A decision was then taken to impose a designated standpipe connection charge, but people refused to pay for this service on the grounds that it was already covered by general rates. In any case, householders had already learned that payment did not guarantee connection. In 1949 people from Aboabo and Amakom in central Kumase rioted outside the Asantehene's palace because they had paid over their dues for standpipe water, but none had been provided. This was an early instance of 'water wars' and is still perceived as such today (McCaskie 2002a).

In 1953 it became clear that the limited upgrading of two years before was inadequate. Efforts were made to go on patching up the system. An ambitious two-stage plan was devised to link up much more of Kumasi to the Suame feeder system. A High Level Zone was to carry pipes east and west from Suame across north Kumasi. A Low Level Zone was to run through two pipelines to south Kumasi. Work began on the High Level Zone, but budgetary problems and then delays in shipping equipment from the U.K. slowed and then halted construction in 1959. By then, in north Kumasi there were new standpipes in Bantama, a few in Suntreso and none at all in Kwadaso; the wealthy chiefs and businessmen of Mbrom, Ashanti New Town and Manhyia were connected; but in Tafo the installed pipes had no overground outlets (PRAAD, Kumase, ARG 1/11/1/1-11 and 2/15/3/4). In 1948 Tafo had 350 inhabitants, but by the end of the 1950s immigration meant that 7,000 people lived there. Residents made long daily trips to standpipes elsewhere in Kumasi to collect water. People in Tafo banded together to demand redress under the slogan 'Fight for Water.' The fight became literal when a riot took place in Tafo. Local spokesmen

for Nkrumah's ruling political party were chased and beaten up, for "what was Osagyefo's socialism if it even failed to bring drinking water" (McCaskie 2002b).

It was Kumasi's expansion that finally provoked action. At independence in 1957 the Owabi Water Scheme's catchment area was redesignated as city electoral wards 21 and 22. This was belated recognition of the fact that the catchment area, unavailingly defended by the British, was an illegal building site. A new source of water had to be found. The Ofin river site chosen to expand Kumasi's water supply in the 1960s had already been rejected in the 1920s. It was at Asumenya, where much improved engineering was now able to drive reliable dam supports into the gravel and construct a partially prefabricated dam wall at affordable cost. The idea was to create a reservoir in the Ofin watershed larger than the old one at Owabi, and to build a new treatment plant at the large village of Barekese north of the river. The pipeline from the Barekese reservoir ran south-east for a dozen miles to meet the Owabi Water Scheme system at Abrepo. The two then ran south to a hugely expanded reservoir facility at Suame. During its construction, the Ofin project twice ran out of funds as government withheld support because of stuttering progress, cost overruns and persistent allegations of corruption within the Kumasi municipal authority. The final cost of the Ofin project is unknown, at least to me. Surviving documentation is patchy, but it is impossible to know if this is due to deliberate suppression or faulty archiving (Kumasi Metropolitan Authority 1973, 1987, 1992, Naston 1991).

Once more demand rapidly outstripped expanded provision. In 1960 Kumasi counted 180,642 inhabitants. Immigration continued, but an added problem that continues to this day was that the city boundaries were continually extended to incorporate growing peri-urban settlements. In effect this created new ratepayers, but it also meant that their legitimate demands for urban services like drinking water needed to be met. This was never going to be the case. First, by 1970 the city's population was 346,000, and planners thought this might rise to 500,000 by 2000 (Brempong and Abugyei for Kumasi City Council, 1972). In fact, the population of the city in 2000 was 1,100,000. In 2005 it was officially estimated at 1,400,000, but informed opinion put the figure as high as 2,000,000. Like other cities in West Africa and around the globe, Kumasi had become a magnet for the poor and desperate of Ghana and its neighbours. The environment that produced this flight to the cities generated other effects. From the 1980s on neo-liberal economics

and World Bank directives cut public service provision to the bone. In the specific case, this meant that Kumasi's booming population could not be supplied with drinking water by a system that was now doubly overwhelmed by demand and a lack of funds to maintain existing plant and equipment. In the 1980s Kumasi's water supply came close to collapse, and remedial upgrading since then has failed to meet ever rising demand. In 2003, inspection revealed that the seventy-year old Owabi dam was near to collapse. It had 'outlived its useful life', but there were no funds to replace it (www.mclglobal.com/History,Jun2003). By 2005, the Barekese facility on the Ofin had a broken pump and was able to supply only 12 million gallons a day of its inadequate 48 million gallon capacity (www.ghanaweb.com/news, 17 March 2005). The situation was desperate, but the nature of the problem had changed. In 2001 the Ghana government determined to privatise water provision. In Kumasi as elsewhere the date scheduled for this changeover was 1 May 2002 (Amis 1998, Nickson and Franceys 2003, Yeboah 2006). We will return to this matter below.

Over a century, planning and provision have failed to meet Kumasi's water needs. Colonial and postcolonial governments alike have consistently failed to devote timely attention and/or adequate resources to the problem. Often such resources have been lacking, but governments have failed to deploy such technological and monetary inputs as they possessed to best effect. Once built, systems have neither been maintained nor extended in cost-effective and rational ways. It might be said that colonial and postcolonial governments, notably in the 1970s-80s, simply did not have the funds to do more. But the real charge is that they often squandered such funds as they did have on belated and piecemeal responses to needs already overtaken by events. Events are the key. The growth of Kumasi might have been better predicted and better managed over the first three-quarters of the twentieth century (Adarkwa and Post 2001). Since the 1980s, however, and with gathering acceleration, government has found itself in a new urban situation. Explosive growth in the last decade or two has outrun predictive models. Having noted all that, it needs to be said that if government is the ultimate agent and actor in water provision, then it is still remote from the people of Kumasi. We must turn now to local conditions, to the organisation and performance of Kumasi's metropolitan authorities, and to the needs, wishes and actions of the people they were and are elected to serve.

*Consuming Kumasi's Water Supply**'Water Wars'*

Kumasi has had a bewildering succession of municipal authorities. From 1910–24 a Sanitation Committee ran the town on an ad hoc basis. After the 1924 plague outbreak this was replaced by the Kumasi Public Health Board (1925–43), a statutory body of nine nominated Europeans and Africans that met monthly. In 1943 the need for an expanded and elected authority led to the foundation of the Kumasi Town Council. By 1953 the ever-growing city had 23 electoral wards and the system needed an overhaul. The Kumasi Municipal Council (1954–62) had 24 elected members in a ward structure revised to reflect the city's expansion. In 1962 Nkrumah conferred city status on Kumasi so as to recast the municipal authority in his own interest. It was reorganised as the Kumasi City Council (1962–74) with a strong executive. After the fall of Nkrumah in 1966 the KCC was purged but survived (Government of Ghana 1968). Then in 1974 Acheampong's military regime formed the Kumasi District Council as the new local authority. Legislation rezoned electoral wards. It also reserved seats for 10 nominees selected by the Kumasi Council of Chiefs, a reversal of Nkrumah's policy of excluding the traditional elite from the city's local government (Rathbone 2000).

In 1981, Rawlings's PNDC suspended the KDC and replaced it with an Interim Management Committee that ran the city, much to the chagrin of the traditional Kumasi ruling elite. In 1989 this committee was formally replaced by the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (KMA) which still runs the town today. Designed to be broad based and inclusive, the KMA was (and is) in fact large and unwieldy. This gave enormous power to the Chief Executive Officer, making him in effect the mayor of Kumasi along American lines. The first CEO, who served until the end of the Rawlings era in 2000, was the remarkable Akwasi Agyeman. A Kumasi royal who competed unsuccessfully to become Asantehene in 1970 and 1999, he was the most exalted supporter of Rawlings among a vehemently anti-Rawlings traditional elite. Expecting support from Accra in any bid he mounted to become Asantehene, Akwasi Agyeman was patrician, authoritarian, unpredictable and famously devoted to adding to assets that already gave him the public reputation of being Kumasi's richest man (for very cautious published comment, King, Inkoom and Abrampah, n.d.).

Intense politicking for advantage and prestige has always marked Kumasi's local rulers. One former member of the KMA described the system to me as 'doing favours to get followers.' An ability to attract clients by delivering resources is a deeply rooted norm of Ashanti culture, going back to the 'big men' (*abirempon*) of the precolonial era. Patrimonialism of this sort situates the Kumasi politician in public circuits of reciprocity. Success must be announced, advertised and acknowledged. Display and enjoyment of power (*tumi*) are markers of status, to the point where the most successful—Krobo Edusei in the 1960s, Akwasi Agyeman in the 1990s—proclaim their power by flouting the rules in acts of defiance (*mpoatwa*) that are all at once deplored and admired by onlookers. The system works through informal connections not formal structures, and Kumasi people are aware of this fact. Bolder spirits lacking patronage also practise defiance by pitting themselves against politicians who have excluded them from access to resources (for historical context, McCaskie, 1983; 1986; 1995). Pipe-borne drinking water is a scarce resource, and struggles over its allocation are endemic. The most famous of these are Kumasi's 'Water Wars', conflicts that produce narratives that exceed the facts of the case in tales that resonate with and in Kumasi's popular culture.

It is widely recalled that James Owusu, leader of Nkrumah's local authority, used pipe-borne water to reward supporters in pro-government areas of the city while denying it to those who lived in anti-Nkrumah wards. He was nicknamed *hwie nsu ma me*, 'pour out water for me', because that is quite literally what he did. He was also called 'Zongo Boy', because he used promises of a pipe-borne water supply to bribe Kumasi's northern immigrants to support him. In 1965 anti-Nkrumah residents of Kwadaso-Pataase in west Kumasi petitioned against water rates. The local authority turned off the water. Consumers remonstrated but this led to all mains outlets being disconnected, capped and sealed under police supervision. The outlet in front of Block 6 in the Kwadaso Extension housing project had concrete poured into it to stop it up. After Nkrumah's fall it became a local landmark, an iconic site of the politicised struggle for water. It was nicknamed 'Freedom and Justice', in parody of the motto inscribed atop Nkrumah's Independence Arch in Accra. For a number of years its 'birthday party' was celebrated on the anniversary of Nkrumah's overthrow, when a band of young men from Pataase called 'Water Fighters' danced before it (McCaskie 2002c).

Tafo's water problems in the 1950s–60s have already been noted. In the early 1970s residents were still drawing drinking water from a polluted tributary of the Aboabo river and a stagnant pond. Ten public standpipes were scheduled to be installed. A pipeline was run from nearby Suame, but only six of the promised outlets materialised and all were on the western edge of Tafo. Elders from the Assembly of God Mission Chapel supported by Tafo chiefs asked for the other four, but KDC politicians demanded bribes to install them. At a meeting the churchmen upbraided the politicians who were present and denounced the corruption of the Acheampong government. Surprisingly, their fortitude was rewarded and the outlets were completed. Tafo people give two explanations for this outcome. Some say a senior KDC politician was struck in the face at the meeting and gave in out of fear. But most say that God intervened on behalf of his servants to work a miracle. Whatever happened the church dignitaries became heroes and this story circulated throughout Kumasi. A variation on this theme occurred in Oforikrom in east Kumasi in the 1990s. The place had pipe-borne water, but one outlet at an Elementary School kept overflowing. The flooding bred mosquitoes and children died of malaria. KMA engineers repaired the outlet, the flooding ceased and the malaria subsided. The credit for this was given to a female teacher who persuaded the engineers to pray with her after she had a vision of the school's standpipe gushing crystalline water. This story has potent resonances. In both Ashanti and Christian tradition water is linked to spiritual purity (*dwira ho*). To be able to access clean drinking water is a benefice as well as a resource. To drink it refreshes spirit as well as body. Water then is a metaphysical and physical substance, and in both aspects it sustains life. We will return to this in a different context below (McCaskie 2002b, 2002d).

Anloga

Some 'Water Wars' have desperate causes and dispiriting outcomes. In the 1990s the Kumasi water supply went into crisis because of inadequate investment, soaring demand and, so many believed, corrupt mismanagement by CEO Akwasi Agyeman's KMA. What happened then (and happens still) in Anloga is an instructive illustration of the depth of the crisis and of the problems of those who cannot secure the political attention and patronage that might give them some kind of victory in the 'Water Wars.' The history of the water supply in Anloga is a tale of people struggling against abandonment.

Along the left hand side of the main Accra road going into east Kumasi, in the few hundred yards running from Bomso downhill to the traffic lights at Oforikrom, the verge is lined with stacked up wooden furniture. It is all new and unpainted, and from a car window in the rain its wet yellow sheen blurs past like a continuous glistening wall. This is the northern limit of Anloga, the woodworking centre of Kumasi and Ghana. Before proceeding, let me note here that repeated visits to Anloga over the past decade have left me with the sharpest vision I have of the ways in which the relatively open city of the 1960s has turned into a congested warren characteristic of the new urbanism.

After the Second World War economic immigrants streamed into Kumasi. Among them were numbers of Ewe-speakers from the eastern Gold Coast. They worked at charcoal making or entered the woodworking sector as carpenters. Kin groups and families encouraged younger relatives to join them. They founded a self-help association called the Ewe Migrants' Union (EMU). In 1951 the EMU entered into a long term rent agreement with the Amakomhene to lease unoccupied land from his stool alongside the Kumasi-Accra road. A Kumasi street map of 1955 shows the new residential layouts in Abrotia and New Amakom, as well as in historic Amakom village itself. To the east, where EMU members were already settled, the map is blank to indicate unimproved bush lying outside the town limits. This area came to be known as Anloga, after the Anlo-Ewe coastal town of that name in the south-eastern Gold Coast. By no means all the immigrants came from that town, but the EMU leadership did. Over the succeeding decades, as Kumasi expanded eastwards, the Amakom stool tried repeatedly to evict Anloga's residents so the area might be re-zoned for profitable development. Every such attempt failed, largely because Anloga's Ewe-speakers proved effective at banding together and mobilising themselves. They themselves now think they paid a price for their tenacity. Ashanti-Ewe relations were historically conflicted, and all successive Kumasi local authorities punished what they saw as obdurate Ewe clannishness by denying Anloga access to municipal services. None the less, the settlement flourished and it rose to become the centre of Kumasi's large woodworking industry (on Anlo Ewe and Anloga, Greene 1996, 2002, Akyeampong 2001; on Anloga's early history, MRO C.117; the 1955 map is 'Kumasi: Northern Sheet 12000-26000' produced by the Gold Coast Survey).

By the mid-1990s Anloga was a 90 hectare site surrounded on all sides by urban sprawl (apart from my own fieldwork see, Simon, Poku and Nsiah-Gyabaah n.d., DFID 1999, Ward and Gilbert 2001). Its

estimated 20,000 inhabitants both lived and worked on site. Of these, 1,100 were master carpenters training 5,000 apprentices in 138 workshops. Other trades included charcoal making and automotive repair. Women did not work at these jobs but many carpenters' wives roasted and bagged cassava (*gari*) for resale. Every day up to 25 trucks and 50 tractor-trailers from the south Kumasi sawmills unloaded planks, blocks and offcuts in Anloga. Obsolete machinery meant woodworking efficiency was only 40–60 percent. All this made for a massive volume of sawdust, a very small proportion of which was burned in processing cassava. The air was permanently thick with dust and smoke. Anloga was extremely crowded, hemmed in between the Kumasi-Accra road and the Aboabo and Sisa rivers. Along the river banks the ground was raised by several metres from decades of dumped sawdust and wood chippings. Both rivers were choked with these and household waste. In the rainy season the rivers backed up and poured over the man-made sawdust ramparts. Anloga flooded and had high incidences of cholera, typhoid and malaria.

By the 1970s the Aboabo and Sisa rivers were already too polluted to be used for drinking water. Following a cholera outbreak, a pipeline was brought in via Amakom from the mains junction at Asafo. Four public standpipes were installed on the western edge of Anloga. Two more were added in the late 1980s. All these went offline in the rainy season because flooding clogged the stopcocks with waterlogged sawdust. The standpipes silted up. By the 1990s the demand on these facilities was overwhelming. There were other problems. All the standpipes had been installed as close as possible to the Asafo-Amakom downflow and were quite far from the carpentry workshops. Residents complained about this, and about the fact that their standpipes were used by people from Amakom and Oforikrom. However, an acute shortage of potable water was only one problem in a place without amenities. The KMA claimed drainage could not be installed in waterlogged ground. The few public toilets were choked with waste for Anloga had no removal or cleaning services. People used what they called 'air conditioned toilets', that is platforms suspended over the Sisa river. The Sisa suffered eutrophication and the prevalence of oral-faecal diseases increased alarmingly. Since there was no safe electrical system in Anloga wood fires were common. They were also difficult to control, for water had to be pumped up from the Amakom mains to put them out (for example, www.ghanaweb.com/news, 7 January 2000, 1 July 2003, 14 January and 7 October 2004).

Anloga was a slum but it was not without resources. The EMU had successors, most notably the Small Scale Carpenters Association (SSCA). This was founded in 1987 to represent its members in disputes with the authorities and to fight for amenities. Its leader was (and is) the remarkable Revd. Togbe S.K. Fugah, spokesperson for Anloga's Ewe and a Baptist minister. He led the fight against the Amakom stool and well-connected property developers. Members of the SSCA pay a levy. Part of this is earmarked to pay KMA water rates. Fugah tried hard to improve the drinking water supply and lobbied the authorities about disease in Anloga. He got a hearing because in the 1990s the SSCA grew into a national organisation with 20,000 paid up members. But if he was listened to then this produced no results. He is said to have given offence to Akwasi Agyeman by failing to behave himself as an Ewe supplicant before a royal of the Golden Stool. If true, this explains his failure. Certainly, many in Anloga believe that their lack of amenities comes from anti-Ewe prejudice on the part of Ashantis. In the 1990s I often heard Anloga's Ewe described as 'Rawlings's boys', and one prominent Kumasi citizen told me if they wanted clean water they should 'apply to Nana Konadu', that is Ashanti born Mrs. Rawlings. My response that Akwasi Agyeman himself supported Rawlings produced a withering look and the comment that the KMA CEO was 'indulging in politics as he is born to do' but that the Anloga Ewe were 'strangers' in and 'parasites' on Kumasi.

In the late 1990s the SSCA changed its strategy. Since the KMA refused to provide water and other amenities, Fugah suggested the Anloga community be relocated to a purpose-built, fully serviced site at Akyawkrom six miles out of Kumase on the Accra road. KMA politicians, the Amakom stool and city businessmen saw a chance to free up Anloga for redevelopment. But instead of allocating funds to improve Akyawkrom, the KMA offered Fugah a new home at Nkankansin in Kaase in south Kumasi. Kaase has an inadequate water supply and few other amenities, so the SSCA refused the offer. Since then, Anloga has existed in a kind of limbo. A series of gestural promises has been made, but residents are convinced that this is just to keep them outside while the KMA's politicians and developers decide how to evict them. Anloga people remain where they have been for fifty years, but there is no discernible improvement in their water supply.

Private Initiatives

Selling drinking water has a long history in Kumasi. In 1910 two men were jailed for selling water of unknown origin to the garrison. Their defence was simple. They supplied demand (MRO, Case No. 131). Over the twentieth century supply has continued to meet demand in a business that depends on yawning deficiencies in public provision. For years itinerant vendors sold water by the cup from buckets filled with ice. By the 1990s, however, a combination of soaring demand, acute shortages, new technologies and increasing desire to inhabit the world of globalised capitalist modernity produced a revolution in the business of selling water. The key technology was disposable plastic sachets and bottles. Sachets first appeared in the 1980s when they were introduced by the State Distilling Corporation to hold single shots of alcohol. Entrepreneurs adapted this technology to the water supply business. Kumasi street vendors used to wear strips of water sachets like bandoliers, but this has given way to the head-loaded basin crammed with bigger single sachets. Plastic bottles were introduced as a mass produced item by the Coca-Cola Company, which has a big bottling plant at Atonsu in south-east Kumasi. Coca-Cola marketing strategists looked at Ghana's failing public water supply, and at the modernist aspirations of its increasingly well travelled middle class, and began to import and sell its own Dasani brand bottled water. Local brands like Insu, Voltic and Aquafresh appeared. By the turn of the century, there were numerous private water producers and Kumasi's streets were littered with non-biodegradable water sachets and bottles. These have become a major waste disposal problem.

In the 1990s government strengthened legislation to try to control the booming private water industry. The concern was production standards in relation to public health. In Kumasi water producers were required to obtain a long series of licenses; one from the Registrar General's Department; one from the Ghana Standards Board; one from the Ministry of Health's Board of Licensing, which was mandated to inspect all private water producing facilities twice a year; and one from the KMA. The industry had its own watchdog in the Ghana Association of Processed Drinking Water Producers. There are a number of licensed producers like Voltic, in which government is a shareholder. However, licensed private producers sell expensive water in bottles to the wealthy, middle class or expatriate market where returns are highest. Their products are tested and the results are open to public inspection. But such

companies have only a small share of the market. Most commercial water in Kumasi is sold in sachets or more rarely bottles by unlicensed producers. People I have met in this business say that licensing is a cumbersome and expensive procedure. They say too that the costs of chemical additives and quality control would consume the profits to be made from poor people in a very competitive market. Be that as it may, unlicensed sachet water production is all profit, for there are few if any overheads and inexhaustible demand.

Kumasi is now the site of a struggle between KMA regulatory agencies and unlicensed water producers. In 2000, four privately owned but unlicensed Kumasi water companies were told to cease trading because their product was hazardous to health. Regulators told me they had taken two years to find, investigate and close these businesses. 'Heart in Jesus Pure Water' in Adiebeba, 'Daily Hope Pure Water' in Kwadaso, 'Blessed Treated Water' in Asokwa, and 'Clouds Fresh Filtered Water' in Amakom all sold sachets that were seriously contaminated with bacteria, pollutants and additives. Regulators say that at any given time there are up to forty such ventures operating in Kumasi. Once shut down, they commonly reopen in another location. One facility that I was taken to see by a friend was in a large lean-to shack behind a house in Atonsu off the main lake Bosomtwe road. This venture 'acquired' bottles and crates from the nearby Coca-Cola plant. At another business in Oforikrom, bulk water was stored in two rusted boilers taken from large engines. I asked the owner where he sourced his water. He told me he used public standpipes 'late in the night', but that when this appeared too risky he filled fifty-five gallon drums from 'ponds by the waterworks.' The 'waterworks' are Suame reservoir, and its runoff is now dangerously polluted by cadmium and other chemicals from the surrounding automobile repair businesses in Suame Magazine. With a laugh, this man told me there had been no complaints about his product.

In 2003 microbiologists tested water sachets on sale throughout Kumasi. They found 82 percent of these to be dangerously contaminated, some with typhoid bacteria. They found too that 95 percent of Kumasi's inhabitants regularly drank this sort of water. Another study found that licensed Ghanaian bottled water was of good quality, but that even some factory-bagged sachet water was unsafe (Obiri-Danso, Okore-Hanson and Jones 2003). Much unlicensed sachet water has coliforms and enterococci, and iron and manganese are often present. A lot of it tastes of the unspecified chemicals used in attempts to

sterilise it. Kumasi people are well aware of these hazards. City taxi drivers renamed 'Taste of Heaven' water sachets 'Go to Heaven', because of their overpowering chemical taste. People drink this water because often there is little or no alternative. Even where pipe-borne water is available, consumers claim it is too expensive to use, too unreliable and now, in a failing system, contaminated. But, I am told, sachets are to be preferred to the water available in peri-urban villages. There people still drink from pools and streams that are polluted, a perception fully confirmed by research (Cornish, Aido and Ayamba 2001, Thompson, Quashie-Sam and McGregor 2001, Korboe, Diaw and Devas n.d.).

Drinking water is now a class issue in Kumasi, and understood as such. Wealthy and middle class people now source their water from a wide range of licensed sources or via expensively installed technologies (Yeboah 2006). Ordinary people call these fellow citizens 'whitemen' because of their penchant for drinking brand-name bottled water. The poorer mass of people has little choice but to take their chances with unlicensed sachets or, when they can access it, a deteriorating public supply. Unlicensed water producers are aware of the facts, and some of them have a very Ashanti perception of adding value to their product. Mention has been made of the spiritual values invested in water in Ashanti and Christian traditions, both of which are powerfully at work in Kumasi. Thus, a product like 'Heart in Jesus Pure Water' shows skills in naming and marketing. It resonates with and speaks to people's ideas and aspirations. All unlicensed Kumasi water producers promote the spiritual value of their product, drawing on Ashanti and Christian traditions to represent their sachets and bottles as vessels for quenching thirst in all meanings of that term. This is water as transcendental substance. A more basic description was offered me by a Bantama entrepreneur. "People", he said, "want to think that water will make them pure when they drink it. They want to be better people to have a better life. I am selling them more than water". I may say that this man refused to drink the water offered him in the Bantama hotel where we met. He laughed and pointed up the street saying, "I don't want to go there". He was pointing at Komfo Anokye Hospital.

Privatised Water?

In 1995–8 the Ghana government commissioned two consultancies, one British and the other American, to review its failing public water provision. Both suggested radical reorganisation to produce deregula-

tion leading to privatisation (Halcrow 1995, Berger 1998). A number of western multinationals—Vivendi, Ondeo, Thames Water, Suez—were already involved in the global business of profit-taking by restructuring and privatising national public services so as to make consumers pay for water at 'realistic' market rates. Neo-liberal economic orthodoxy, the World Bank and multinationals all proposed privatisation of water as a solution for Ghana and countries like it. The mantra is familiar. Deregulation promoted efficiency that attracted inward investment that returned profit to government (or members of government). In turn, consumers were reliably served at a bearable cost. The Ghana government restructured its Water and Sewerage Corporation, itself becoming the chief asset holder and offering delivery, management and maintenance to bids from interested companies. It split the urban from the rural sector of water provision, and further divided up urban Ghana into Units A and B (which included Kumasi) to create appealing economies of scale and markets for investors. Handover to private companies was scheduled for 1 May 2002 (Nickson and Franceys 2003).

This schedule had to be postponed indefinitely because of concerted consumer opposition. A Coalition Against Privatization of Water (CAP) united under the auspices of the Trades Union Congress and the Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC), a not-for-profit Ghanaian NGO, mounted a vigorous and widely supported campaign against the privatisation of water (ISC, 2001; www.holycrossjustice.org/capofwater.htm). In May 2001 CAP held a mass rally that produced the "Accra Declaration on the Right to Water" as a manifesto. As noted, an alarmed government cancelled the proposed 2002 date for handing over to the private sector. It then backtracked, now limiting privatisation to management responsibilities on fixed-term contracts. In 2005 it signed twelve year management contracts with Dutch and South African companies to manage the water supply as part of a World Bank sponsored project. It also paid the Uganda Water and Sewage Corporation to send experts to provide technical advice in a move much resented by the people of Ghana. Presently, the issue of water privatisation is in something of a limbo although it has not gone away. Stalemate, produced by the actions and events just described, has been reinforced by hesitancy on the part of multinationals about the business sense of trying to operate in the many countries around the world where movements like CAP have emerged.

In Kumasi CAP was widely supported, at least in principle. Many people regard privatising water to attract foreign companies as blatant

neocolonialism. There is also a widespread sense of revulsion at the very idea of commodifying a basic human need and right. More thoughtful interlocutors make points and reveal attitudes that link the current situation with the history of water provision in Kumasi over the past century. A commonly voiced opinion is that Kumasi water has always been 'privatised.' No government or local municipal authority, colonial and postcolonial, has delivered on its promises about providing a clean, potable, pipe-borne water supply that is reliable and available at a regulated fixed cost. "Akwasi Agyeman sold water so how can businesses not do the same thing?" expresses this view succinctly if mordantly. Here we are back in the world of 'Water Wars.' Amenities, water included, are a negotiable asset in the dialectics of power in Kumasi. Colonial politicians provided water to their own schedule and determined issues of need and use. One person reminded me that the British had thrown many people off the land in the Owabi catchment area without consultation or leave (and see Anokye 1997). Postcolonial politicians talked about the public good but used the resources at their disposal to curry influence, recruit followers or 'do sika business' (make money). "How do you think Krobo [Edusei] got his houses and his gold bed except by selling everything that was not his property?". Philosophical (or pessimistic?) informants asked why water could not be sold "for every other thing that can turn to profit is peddled by those put in charge over it". This line of reasoning presumed a morally neutral universe. Ashanti politicians sold water and if "you want it you must give them in return or find some other big man who can fight them for you to get some". Why should it be any different with legally privatised water? "You will still be fighting these Broni Brefo [white businessmen] for something to drink. It will be same as always". Finally, a recently deceased royal Linguist and political insider said: "Everything here is war. If you want something you must get some big man to give it to you. If he will not give it you must find someone to help you get it. This is how we eat (*di*, meaning to eat, but also meaning to consume in every sense) and drink!" Indeed.

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COPING WITH WATER SCARCITY: THE SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE 1982–1992 DROUGHTS ON MAKOKOBA TOWNSHIP, BULAWAYO, ZIMBABWE

Muchaparara Musemwa*

At this point, I must thank you for rallying to the call to conserve water. This is yet another indication of the harmonious relationship that exists between the elected Council and its electorate.

His Worship, The Mayor, Councillor N.K. Ndlovu,
July 31st, 1983¹

The drought brought in its wake water rationing and restriction [...] the residents of the City rallied behind the water ration scheme marvellously and without this kind of support the scheme would have been unworkable. I must thank the people of Bulawayo for their gallant efforts in this regard.

His Worship, The Mayor, Councillor E. Mdlongwa,
July 31st, 1984²

Basically, we were caught unawares. They never prepared us for such situations. They did not even tell us the reason for water rationing and the cutting off of supplies. We were then forced to go around searching for water in places like Amakhosi Theatre.

Rose Mutipforo, a resident of Makokoba Township, Bulawayo³

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¹ Bulawayo City Council Minutes (hereinafter referred to as the BCC Minutes). These minutes are located at the Bulawayo City Hall: Minute of His Worship, The Mayor for the Year Ended 31 July 1983.

² BCC Minutes: Minute of His Worship The Mayor for the Year Ended 31 July 1984/85.

³ Interview with Rose Mutipforo, Makokoba, 19 July 2002.

Introduction

These official assertions attesting to the residents' 'magnificent co-operation' and the existence of a 'harmonious relationship' between the Bulawayo City Council (BCC) and its electorate belie the harsh lived experiences of Makokoba residents' survival under conditions of water scarcity during the triple water crises of 1982–1985, 1986–1988, and 1991–1992 in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest city. Contrary to these affirmations, as one of the residents, Rose Mutipforo remembers, the water crises and the attendant water rationing schemes and other water use control measures instituted by the BCC to avert a complete collapse of the city's water supply ruptured the majority of the residents' ways of life. This chapter analyses the social, environmental, and health implications of water scarcity between 1982 and 1992, and explores the effects of the three water crises on the daily lives of Makokoba residents. Whereas competing claims on urban space are often construed as ethnic in character, the inequalities of suffering followed a class dynamic. The people who moved to the city from the rural areas during the recurrent droughts joined the ranks of the urban poor in the townships as opposed to the opulent northern suburbs of Bulawayo. Thus, the line of division followed residential, and hence class lines. The chapter also examines how the residents coped with, and creatively adapted to these water crises. The central proposition is that these droughts were the result of both natural and anthropogenic conditions. The chapter argues that it was the residents of Makokoba, and not the state or municipal bureaucrats, who picked up the social costs of water scarcity. Far from being merely victims of the post-colonial policies that induced water scarcity, residents often devised creative strategies that insured against the adverse impact of water shortages.

Much of this chapter is based on the BCC 1980–1992 municipal archive—the principal repository of material concerning this period. The archive provides important insights into the official view of the state of water supplies in dams, plans for new dam projects, water-rationing measures, and monthly and annual water consumption rates in Bulawayo between 1980 and 1992. The accounts, as alluded to in the first two assertions above, suggest a story of success. Yet, there were occasional dissenting contributions from questioning councillors challenging the dominant municipal representation of the water management regime in Bulawayo.

For all the valuable insights of this written archive, it is firmly rooted in an official discourse that camouflages the social realities of how the residents of Makokoba grappled with the daily challenges of accessing limited water supplies. The BCC archive is, however, silent on how municipal bureaucrats' agendas on managing water in times of scarcity impinged on the residents' daily lives. In cases where documents mention residents, often the residents' words, ideas, and experiences have been mediated through the eyes and ears of officials not residing in Makokoba and whose interests and programmes were presumably shaped by their own class, gender, and positions within the municipal structures.

As such, because this chapter is concerned largely with the lived experiences of Makokoba residents, their stories feature prominently as evidenced by 43 interviews that I conducted with residents, the majority of whom live in the Township, a minority of former inhabitants of Makokoba who now live in other parts of Bulawayo, City Council officials, civic group members, and vendors.

This chapter builds upon the preceding, but thin, scholarship on Zimbabwe's water crises in the 1990s as well as the broader literature on contemporary water politics in Africa. To date, only a few scholarly articles by Nel and Berry, Gwebu, Musemwa, and Musandu-Nyamayaro have systematically explored the problems of water delivery within and outside conditions of water scarcity; and central and local government relations over management of water scarcity in Bulawayo in the wake of the 1992 drought (Nel and Berry 1992, Gwebu 2002, Musemwa 2006, Musandu-Nyamayaro 1992). All four articles render narratives about state (both central and local) inertia as well as conflicts over who had the power and authority to ensure an adequate supply of water, who was to blame when the 1992 water crisis emerged, and the use and abuse of water as a weapon of social and political control. As important as these narratives are in demonstrating the political basis of water scarcity, neither offers a detailed account of the impact of water shortages on the ground. This chapter therefore highlights the social history of water scarcity by locating the experiences and voices of the urban poor at the centre stage of scholarly analysis. The chapter underscores the critical insights of Ben Page on how the "prosaic historical topics" or oral testimonies of the urban poor can be used to "disturb the dominant political discourse in contemporary situations" (Page 2005: 35–69).

Geographical and Climatic Conditions in Bulawayo

The City of Bulawayo was officially founded in 1894. It is Zimbabwe's second largest city after Harare, the country's capital city. The geographical conditions in Bulawayo, which lies on the western end of the central watershed of Zimbabwe at an altitude of 1350m, are such that the area receives low rainfall in terms of quantity. The precipitation is unreliable, run-off is poor, and so is the catchment capacity as the rivers in most of Matabeleland are also perennially dry.⁴ These ecological constraints necessitated the regular development and planning of water sources to keep water supplies to the city flowing, as dependence on rainfall alone could not guarantee a lasting solution to the city's water needs. Moreover, rising population density in Bulawayo during the period 1980–1992 also increased demand for water, thereby exceeding supply. When the City was hit by a series of droughts in 1982–1985, 1986–1988, and 1991–1992, the impact was deleterious. Exacerbating the problem was the systemic failure of both the colonial and post-colonial governments to develop a single dam for Bulawayo between 1976 and 1992. Consequently, all this had a cumulative impact on most poor residents in the western townships like Makokoba as well as the overall economy of Bulawayo.⁵

Barely a year after recovering from the effects of the first drought, the residents of Makokoba were caught up in another cycle of water shortage from late 1986 to the end of 1988. This drought was greater in degree as well as its human impact than the previous one. In addition, this drought coincided with the beginning of Zimbabwe's economic down-turn in the shape of comparatively low and volatile growth, rising unemployment, foreign exchange shortages, investment levels scarcely high enough to ensure minimum capital replacement, large and rising budget deficits, and above all no overall improvement to people's living standards.⁶ Unemployment rose sharply in the late 1980s. Against

⁴ W.G. Wannell and L.L. Hindson. 1968. "The Hydrology of the Semi-Arid Regions of Rhodesia", Papers from the Symposium on Drought and Development, First Rhodesian Science Congress, The Association of Scientific Societies in Rhodesia, M.O. Collins [Pvt.] Ltd., 83; E. Goetz, *The Rainfall of Rhodesia: Proceedings of the Rhodesia Scientific Association* 3 (3) (London 1909) 44.

⁵ Chapter 7 of my doctoral thesis discusses at length 'the social effects of the water crises on Makokoba residents' between 1980 and 1992. See Musemwa 2003: 310–378.

⁶ Roger Riddell. 1992. *Zimbabwe to 1996. At the Heart of A Growing Region*, London, Economist Intelligence Unit, Special Report, No. M205.

this backdrop, the 1986–87 water shortages, “adversely affected the development of the city and the living conditions of the people in the year 1986/87”.⁷ Although the subsequent rainy seasons between 1988 and 1990 overcame the drought conditions, this temporary respite was to be followed by the drought of 1991/92, which had devastating consequences for the poor people in townships such as Makokoba in particular, and Bulawayo in general.⁸

Bulawayo residents generally described this drought as the “worst drought in living memory”⁹ Margaret Kriel who, in the wake of the drought of 1991–1992 spearheaded the “Bulawayo Must Live” campaign spoke for many residents when she said of the severity of the drought:

We have had droughts and water shortages ever since I can remember, but none quite so bad as that of 1992. Droughts in past years had been easier to comprehend, there had never been enough water in Matabeleland, but it was not as awful a spectre in the past when the City was a manageable size.¹⁰

Lungisa Manzini, a long-time resident of Makokoba Township in Bulawayo recalled some of the effects of the water shortages:

Things got to a point where—because of recurrent water shortages—for as long as there was ‘enough’ water in the house to drink and cook people would care less about water to bath. One would simply wake up and begin the day’s work without worrying about bathing—only bathing in the evening, at the end of the day. You would not even feel that there was a shortage of water. This became a way of life here in Makokoba. Water would be cut off in the morning and restored in the evening, as long as you had enough water to drink and cook with in the day, it was okay.¹¹

Therefore the magnitude of previous cycles of droughts pales in significance and impact when compared to this drought. Towards the end of 1991, and the beginning of 1992, there were clear signs that the City was in the throes of a water crisis. Numerous building plans that had

⁷ BCC Minutes: Report of the Director of Housing and Community Services, 1987/88, 2.

⁸ In my doctoral thesis, I argued and demonstrated that the challenges of water scarcity were particularly acute in Makokoba Township than in any other African suburbs of the semi-arid City of Bulawayo. For a sustained discussion on this, see Musemwa 2003.

⁹ *Masiye Pambili*, 14 (May 1994), 27.

¹⁰ *Masiye Pambili*, 14 (May 1994), 27.

¹¹ Interview with Lungisa Manzini, in Makokoba Township, 13 May 2002.

been approved in 1990, exceeding Z\$65 million (US\$16 million) such as serviced stands for residential, commercial and industrial purposes were suspended because of their pressure on water resources.¹² By June 1992, reports on dam-levels were bleak. Three dams, out of five, had “any abstractable water left”.¹³ The Council had lost use of the Umzingwane and Upper Ncema Dams due to excessive depletion. Worse still, in December 1992 water levels in dams were down to less than 5 percent and the water available for consumption would only last for forty days.¹⁴ Bulawayo’s population of 495,317 in 1982 had risen to 620,936 in 1992¹⁵ as a growing number of people moved from the drought affected rural areas in the provinces of Matabeleland North and Matabeleland South to Bulawayo, thereby exerting pressure on the city’s scarce water resources.¹⁶ The fluctuating water inflows into the city’s reservoirs and the irregular water consumption figures between 1989 and 1994 illustrate the state of water shortage that gripped the city:

Table 8.1. Comparisons of water inflows, dam levels and consumption details from 1989 to 1994

Year	Total inflow (million m ³)	Vol. end of March (million m ³)	Average daily consumption (m ³)
1989/90	26	147	123 800
1990/91	10	71	112 510
1991/92	7	32	82 100
1992/93	130	128	66 300
1993/94	38	102	86 723

Source: BCC Minutes (Water Rationing Box 2744): Director of Engineering Services’ Report to the Future Water Supplies and Water Action Committee Meeting held in May 1994.

While these figures refer mostly to the City of Bulawayo at large it is reasonable to assume that at the height of these crises, the residents of Makokoba, like any other townships in the city, were subjected to a life

¹² BCC Minutes: Minutes of the 2259th Meeting of the Bulawayo City Council, 19 June 1991.

¹³ BCC Minutes: Minutes of the Future Water Supplies and Water Action Committee, 12 October 1992.

¹⁴ Nel and Berry, “Operation Pipeline”—Bulawayo’s Search for Water”, 314.

¹⁵ Zimbabwe Central Statistical Office Census of 1992: Preliminary Report (Harare, 1992), p. 18.

¹⁶ BCC Minutes: Minutes of the General Purposes Committee Meeting, 4 April 1993.

of insecure, erratic, and regulated water consumption as well as stiff penalties as and when stipulated consumption levels were exceeded. But, for the purposes of this chapter we shall focus on the effects of the first and third droughts because of their severity.

Water Rationing and Its Impact on the Residents of Makokoba

Between 1982 and 1985, Zimbabwe experienced a long dry spell with nearly devastating social, economic, and environmental consequences. However, as in subsequent droughts, Bulawayo was the most affected because of its long-standing history of perennial aridity. This drought was described as “having the lowest rainfall experienced (in Bulawayo) since records were first kept in 1896”, as the City Engineer noted.¹⁷ An ‘extraordinary low run-off’ over a period of two consecutive years, coupled with escalating water consumption levels brought about the severe depletion of the City’s Ncema and Umzingwane Dams.¹⁸ The gradual demographic increase in the City in the early 1980s also led to a corresponding increase on water demand (Moyo, O’Keefe and Sill 1993: 311).

Problems associated with water scarcity for the residents of Makokoba in particular, and Bulawayo at large, began with the BCC’s panic responses to the impending water shortages after a prolonged three-year drought from the end of 1981 until 1985.¹⁹ Writing about a very different context, El-Ashry and Gibbons observed that when natural or man-made droughts occur in an urban conurbation, the most apparent urban water management strategy is for local authorities to cajole and educate the urban public into cooperation through the imposition of water-use restrictions, and water rationing measures (El-Ashry and D.C. Gibbons 1988: 11). This was precisely the action that the BCC immediately adopted.

Confronted by an incremental depletion of water resources in municipal dams, the BCC began by introducing water restrictions on 1st June 1983 to prevent the dwindling of water levels in the Ncema and Umzingwane Dams before the end of that year.²⁰ The restrictions—imposing

¹⁷ BCC Minutes: Annual Report of the City Engineer, July 1984.

¹⁸ BCC Minutes: Annual Report of the City Engineer, July 1984.

¹⁹ BCC Minutes: Report of the City Engineer for the Year Ended 30th June 1985.

²⁰ BCC Minutes: “Water Restrictions”, Advertisement No. 203 prepared by the Town Clerk, I.G. Edmeades, 14 October 1983. It was the BCC’s standing policy of never adopting rationing without first adopting restrictions such as banning the use of

a total ban on the use of hosepipes—“for all purposes including the watering of gardens, the washing of paths, and motor vehicles”, proved ineffective.²¹ The Council simply shifted gear by introducing a far more stringent control measure: water rationing.²²

Imposed on 6 February 1984, the new regulatory mechanism was aimed at ensuring that the remaining water resources in the City’s dams would stretch to the next rainy season towards the end of 1984 or, at least, last until projects such as the Ncema-Criterion pipeline expansion, itself mired in controversy,²³ had been completed. Daily water consumption levels were therefore reduced from 100,000 to 70,000 cubic metres.²⁴ Essentially, two different restrictions were imposed. First every household was to consume no more than 800 litres per day, and flat dwellers’ consumption limit was pegged at 600 litres per day.²⁵ Exceeding these limitations attracted a surcharge of Z\$5 for every kilolitre on all domestic consumers (in Makokoba as well as the City at large).²⁶ Pitted against the per capita average daily water consumption, estimated at 600 litres for the entire population in Zimbabwe compared with about 1200–1800 litres in industrialised nations, this restriction does not seem alarming at face value (Moyo, O’Keefe and Sill 1993: 326). It is when one considers the practical implications of the restrictions on the ground, as well as the reactions of those affected that one begins to realise that the effects permeated the residents’ ways of life.

There were two mutually reinforcing problems with the water rationing scheme as a panacea to dealing with water shortages in Bulawayo,

hosepipes, regarded as the significant factor in domestic water consumption. Extract from the Minutes of the Engineering Services Committee, 14 March 1983.

²¹ Both municipal officials and residents in Makokoba acknowledged that the ban on hosepipes in Makokoba had little effect because most of the residents had smaller gardens to warrant the use of hosepipes, a fact acknowledged by some residents: See interview with Lungisa Manzini, Makokoba, 13 May 2002; BCC Minutes: Minutes of the 2103rd Meeting of the Bulawayo City Council, 19 December 1984.

²² “Water Restrictions Notice”, inserted by the Town Clerk in *Masiye Pambili*, 13, 1 (March 1983). See also, BCC Minutes: City of Bulawayo: Minute of His Worship, The Mayor for the Year Ended 30 July 1983; and Minutes of the Engineering Services Committee Meeting, 14 February 1983.

²³ For a detailed account of the conflict over the laying of the pipeline, see Nel and Berry 2002 and Musemwa 2006: 243–244.

²⁴ BCC Minutes: Minutes of the Engineering Services Committee Meeting, 14 February 1983.

²⁵ BCC Minutes: Minutes of the Engineering Services Committee Meeting, 17 December 1984.

²⁶ *The Chronicle*, 2 February 1984.

and existing documentary evidence hardly suggests that it was not very well thought-through. First, the scheme was predicated on the principle of one property, i.e. each dwelling would be allocated, 600 and 800 litres per day, for flat-dwellers and householders respectively. Second, the policy was premised on only two categories of people in Makokoba and the City, namely householders and flat-dwellers. The BCC did not define what constituted a property—that is, how many people occupied one dwelling at any given time? In the second, the BCC overlooked the differentiation between the Township and City populations, as well as various divisions according to class and gender within each of these residential domains. It is an established fact that the population of Bulawayo was historically divided on a racially based system of residential segregation during the colonial period, which ended in 1980.²⁷ Further divisions were to be found within the African Township of Makokoba (as was the case in most colonial townships in Zimbabwe), based on marital status, spatial differentiation in housing for ‘single’ male migrant labourers (‘bachelor’s quarters’ such as Burombo and Sidojiwe Hostels), ‘spinster’ quarters for ‘single’ women such as the Gertrude McIntyre Hostel, and housing for married people. In the mid-1960s flats for family accommodation named Vundla and Mabusela were also built in the Township.²⁸ Given these levels of differentiation, therefore, the allocation of water at 800 litres per household and 600 litres for flat dwellers was naturally bound to be problematic and engendered feelings of undue disregard for existing social realities on the ground.²⁹ Practically, the policy left many large households with insufficient water to meet their daily demands such as bathing, laundry, and cooking.

The BCC’s inattentiveness to what seemed apparent—that large and small families required different quantities of water—was received with resentment by both householders and flat-dwellers alike in the Township. Most residents challenged the Council’s understanding of the definition and meaning of what constituted ‘a single property’. Most households in Makokoba accommodated more people than the official carrying capacity of the rooms.³⁰ Householders vehemently opposed to this principle argued that the number of people living in one dwelling

²⁷ For a detailed discussion on spatial and social differentiation in Makokoba, see Chapter 3 in Musemwa 2003.

²⁸ Chapter 3, Musemwa 2003.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ See Chapter 2 in Musemwa 2003.

should have been the basis for the allocation because most householders either rented out rooms to lodgers or had large nuclear families or the extended family residing at the same property.³¹ One such resident opposed to the BCC's formulation was Matilda Mabhena, whose property accommodated three families, before, during, and after the 1980s and 1990s water crises. Listen to what confronted her:

In the main house, I used to live with my children only. But we have lodgers who stay in the building outside. The water we were allocated during the water rationing periods was not enough at all, because for us mothers, we had children whose clothes needed to be washed. We could not wash the clothes or even cook. If you cooked then all the water would be used. The two lodgers on my premises also live with their families in their one-rooms. You can imagine how difficult it is to share 800 litres of water per day with three families living on one yard.³²

Similarly, Jesta Zondai recounted the hardships of trying to live within the stipulated figure of 600 litres for a disparate 'family' residing in one apartment in Mabusela Flats in 1984. The 800 litres allocated to them by the BCC left them without water to meet other household needs such as laundry, and bathing:

First the 600 litres at the Flats, and then the 800 litres in the households in Makokoba permitted by the Council were really mere drops in the ocean. We therefore had times when we just had to wash once a day, did laundry once a week in order keep within the limit of our ration.³³

Contrary to the sweeping claims made by the *Chronicle*, as well as the BCC, that the water rations were generous, Makokoba residents simply dismissed the quantities as niggardly insufficient. A socio-economic survey carried out on Makokoba in 1996 revealed that 22 percent of the households in Makokoba had ten people or more.³⁴ Forty-eight percent of the households comprised between five and ten members, and 31 percent of households had between two and five members. The survey concluded that by national standards (five people per household in 1992) the majority of households in Makokoba were overcrowded.³⁵ Moreover, many householders over the years developed extra structures

³¹ *Herald*, 25 February 1984.

³² Interview with Matilda Mabhena, Makokoba, 4 July 2002.

³³ Interview with Jesta Zondai, Makokoba, 18 July 2002.

³⁴ S.G.G. Nyoni and N.R. Matshalaga. March 1996. *Makokoba Constituency Socio-Economic Survey Report*, Bulawayo Province, Zimbabwe, 10.

³⁵ Nyoni et al., *Makokoba Constituency*, 10.

on the little space on their yards which they then rented out to those in dire need of accommodation. These self-help developments were not accompanied by a corresponding expansion of water services to cater for the new additions, as they were not sanctioned by the BCC.³⁶ This exerted considerable pressure on water services for individual households—and the township at large. Overcrowding simply put a strain on available water resources particularly this and subsequent droughts, as Ernest Msipa stated:

The problem that we had was the overcrowding of people here in Makokoba. There was not enough housing, even today [2002], because no one is extending these houses. So then, it happens that if there is water rationing, a lot of problems spring up because people are so populated, they outstrip the available resources.³⁷

An interesting irony in the residents' protest is that their arguments disregarded the fact that it was against municipal by-laws to erect additional structures over and above those that had been provided by Council, however much the former had turned a blind eye to such developments.³⁸ It was a case of 'selective amnesia' in which they conveniently 'forgot' the illegality of the very additional structures that gave rise to overcrowding on one property. The very act of trying to use what was illegal as justification and a plea to have access to more water is indicative of the lengths to which people in dire need can go.

As it happened, the residents' appeals to the BCC to revise its formula for water allocation by taking into account the number of people living on a residential property were summarily rejected. The BCC refused the residents' alternative suggestion on grounds that such a route was "fraught with dangers of abuse given the problem of verification of

³⁶ Most of these have now been destroyed under the infamous "Operation Murambatsvina" (Operation Remove Dirt) instituted by the Government of Zimbabwe in June 2005.

³⁷ Interview with Ernest Msipa, Makokoba (interviewed by Itayi Mudimu) 8 August 2002.

³⁸ *Chronicle*, 3 February 1984. The BCC had imposed the first water rationing scheme a month after other cities, Harare and Mutare had introduced similar schemes as they were also affected by the same drought conditions. However, the drought in Harare and Mutare did not have the same impact as the Bulawayo one because these two cities are located in relatively high rainfall areas and their water development projects were implemented without many political hitches and glitches as in Bulawayo. By comparison, Harare's water ration was 20 kiloliters per household per day, and 13 kiloliters per day for flat dwellers.

family size”.³⁹ Equally, the City Engineer maintained that rules would not be bent to accommodate the needs of the residents as no such provision to increase the ration for a family of large size existed in the water rationing policy.⁴⁰ Once again, the Council skirted the issue of what was meant by ‘household’ by merely introducing another amorphous term—‘family’—without defining it.

Flat-dwellers in Makokoba, like householders, were adversely affected by the water-rationing scheme. What irked them most was what they perceived to be discriminatory practices against them in comparison to householders in detached houses. The flat dwellers argued that their accommodation and family situations were “exactly the same as those living on small stands in the adjoining areas”.⁴¹ Makokoba flat dwellers also resented being lumped together and allocated the same rationed amount of water with flat dwellers in the City Centre. Makokoba flat dwellers contended that their circumstances ‘differed completely’ from these families in the City Centre.⁴² The Council’s water rationing sub-committee refused to accede to the grievances of the flat dwellers on grounds that it would be ‘morally wrong’ for the Council to give any class of consumer preference over the other.⁴³ However, even more problematic and contentious was the issue of a surcharge of Z\$5 charged by the BCC for excess water consumption.

Just as the BCC had applied an across-the-board restriction on water, so too did it impose a universal surcharge in total disregard for existing socio-economic differences within and outside Makokoba. Both rich and poor were expected to pay the same penalty. The disregard for class differences meant that the poor, if they went beyond their limit, and they often did, had to pay the penalty. A survey conducted in 1995–96 in Makokoba, shows that one percent of workers residing in the township were earning up to Z\$250 a month, and forty-five percent earned between Z\$250 and Z\$400 per month.⁴⁴ These wages were often eroded

³⁹ BCC Minutes: Water Rationing Box No. 2200, Memo from Acting City Treasurer to the Town Clerk and City Engineer, Re: Water Rationing: Extended Family Allowances (no date).

⁴⁰ BCC Minutes: Water Rationing Box No. 2200, Memo from City Engineer to the Town Clerk, Re: Water Rationing, 16 February 1984.

⁴¹ Memo from City Engineer to the Town Clerk, Re: Water Rationing, 16 February 1984.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Nyoni and Matshalaga, *Makokoba Constituency Socio-Economic Survey Report*, 1996, p. 13.

by the fact that many working families in Makokoba had to carry the burden of unemployed kin, with no social security. Most residents I interviewed related how they had to make difficult choices between paying for excess water, rent, food, and sending money to the rural areas for the upkeep of the family.⁴⁵

To the contrary, a surcharge as small as Z\$5 was not an effective deterrent to using water excessively for the middle and upper classes residing in the opulent Eastern suburbs of Bulawayo. These formerly 'European-only' suburbs were now predominantly occupied by the African elite who, unlike the poor workers in Makokoba, received comparatively higher salaries of Z\$50,000 per annum in the early 1980s and Z\$100,000 per annum by the end of the decade (Weiss 1994). Councillors spent a great deal of time deliberating on how to make the measures effective especially in the Eastern suburbs where water consumption levels kept rising despite the water restrictions. Some councillors within the BCC discouraged any attempts to increase penalties for the Eastern suburbs for purposes of political expediency. It was feared that such a move would contradict the 'One City' concept initiated at independence.⁴⁶ Thus, in order to preserve the unity of a formerly divided city along racial and class lines, it was the poor who bore the brunt of such decisions.

Amidst the resentment detailed above, this chapter would be remiss to offer a narrative which projects municipal officials as entirely insensitive to the plight of the residents. Indeed, many were aware of the adverse effects of the water rationing policy on the Bulawayo public so that towards the end of the year, given improved water levels in dams, they wasted no time in calling for the relaxation or total lifting of the stringent restrictions.⁴⁷ In general, both municipal officials and

⁴⁵ Interviews with Paurino Thompson Mhlanga, Makokoba, 25 July 2002; Sotsha Makope, Makokoba, 20 July 2002; and Bonasi Dlomo, Makokoba, 23 June 2002.

⁴⁶ The administration of the City of Bulawayo was run along racial lines, with Advisory Boards being the only legal representative structure for Africans without participation in the Whites-only City Council. This racial division ended in 1980. Water Restrictions Notice inserted by the Town Clerk in *Masiye Pambili*, Vol. 13. No. 1, March 1983. See also, City of Bulawayo: Minute of His Worship, The Mayor for the Year Ended 30 July 1983, and Minutes of the Engineering Services Committee Meeting, 14 February 1983.

⁴⁷ BCC Minutes: Minutes of the Engineering Services Committee, 19 November 1984. As at 31 October 1984 municipal storage dams had made a considerable improvement in the water supply levels. Figures presented by the City Engineer showed that the five main storage dams contained 58,578 million cubic meters of water, and Lake

councillors recognised the extent to which domestic consumers had been 'the hardest hit' by the water crisis and the water rationing policy. A significant number of municipal councillors supported the proposed relaxing of water rationing measures—a proposal which generated intense debate in Council chambers.⁴⁸ Some municipal officials argued for a reversion to the preliminary ration imposed on 6 February 1984, which would allow an increase of 200 litres per day to householders and a further 100 for flat dwellers. Others proposed a lifting of the ban on the use of hosepipes. Still others suggested the lifting of surcharges that had been used as a deterrent to those consumers who exceeded their ration. Fewer totally opposed any form of relaxation of water rationing at that particular time (December 1984) arguing that such considerations could only be made at the end of the rainy season or when the inflow in municipal dams was such that no imminent danger to the City's water supplies was in sight.⁴⁹

These opposing positions were finally reconciled by the fall of 'reasonably good rains' at the end of the year, which significantly improved the storage position in dams and resulted in the relaxation of water rationing with effect from 14 December 1984.⁵⁰ Two months later the BCC completely lifted the restrictions on 20 February 1985 following the spilling of Lake Cunningham.⁵¹ However, the improved water supply situation proved to be just a temporary respite for the residents of Makokoba and Bulawayo at large. There was yet another crisis in 1986/87 followed by the re-introduction of tougher water rationing measures. The measures affected the economic and commercial development of the City and even more importantly the living conditions of the urban poor in Makokoba.

The dry spell of 1986–1987 reintroduced the same hardships of water shortage before people had completely recovered from the previous one. To prevent a total drying up of the dams, the BCC imposed rationing once again. To give a sense of quantity of water rationed, the total

Cunningham (Insiza Dam) held about 55 million cubic meters. At the same time in 1983, the storage dams contained 1,5 million cubic meters less than they had in October 1984, a marked increase. BCC Minutes: Minutes of the Engineering Services Committee, 19th November 1984.

⁴⁸ BCC Minutes: Minutes of the Engineering Services Committee, 19 November 1984

⁴⁹ BCC Minutes: Minutes of the Engineering Services Committee, 17 December 1984

⁵⁰ BCC Minutes: Minutes of the 2103rd Meeting of the Bulawayo City Council, 19 December 1984.

⁵¹ BCC Minutes: 'Report of the Water Branch', in Minute of His Worship The Mayor for the Year Ending 31 July 1984/85.

water storage in the dams on January 1, 1987 had been 80,006,000 cubic meters. After seven months of 'stiff water rationing', the total storage in the supply dams was down by only 50 percent, i.e. 41,979,000 cubic meters by September 30, 1987. The Acting Director of Engineering Services gleefully reported that, "the water rationing exercise had been effective and useful".⁵² In his perception, this was an indication of "good co-operation from the public".⁵³ This assertion overlooks the fact that the so-called 'good co-operation' from the public came with a litany of social and environmental costs to the residents' livelihoods and welfare.

The 'good cooperation' came from the perspective of the public, not from voluntary cooperation, but from stiff sanctions. Enforcement measures included high fines and intermittent cutting off of supplies to induce co-operation: "We had to follow those restrictive measures because if we did not the water bill would escalate to high levels and they would then cut off your supplies", explained Loyce Dube.⁵⁴ The BCC only lifted the water ration scheme on 2 March 1987 not because the residents of Makokoba or Bulawayo at large had suffered unbearably under conditions of water insecurity, but because the City's dams had received sufficient run-off at the end of 1987.

Mutipforo's recollection of the 1986–87 water rationing also points to the 'bite' of enforcement. She remembers how, in the earlier rationing of 1982–1984, the BCC courteously forewarned residents about the impending water cuts during specific hours of the day: "In those days (1984) they would go around notifying the residents about the coming shortages and rationing. They would announce to the residents of any possible water cuts".⁵⁵ These courtesies changed with the 1986–87 water rationing. This time residents received no advance notice of water cut-offs:

Basically, we were caught unawares. They never prepared us for such situations. They did not even tell us the reason for water rationing and the cutting off of supplies. We were then forced to go around searching for water in places like Amakhosi Theatre.⁵⁶

The water rationing introduced in 1986/87 lasted until 2 March 1988.

⁵² BCC Minutes: Minutes of the Engineering Services Committee, 13 October 1987.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Interview with Loyce Dube, Makokoba, 20 July 2002.

⁵⁵ Interview with Rose Mutipforo, Makokoba, 19 July 2002.

⁵⁶ Interview with Rose Mutipforo, Makokoba, 19 July 2002.

The Third Water Crisis: 1991–1992

A third water crisis in 1991–92 occurred at a time when Zimbabwe was experiencing many economic constraints, including a rampant inflation. The year-on-year inflation rate increased from 28.1 percent in 1991 to 48.8 percent during the last quarter of 1992. Minimum wages that were introduced after independence were rendered useless by the declining value of the Zimbabwe dollar. In the 1990s, unemployment rose five times higher than in the 1980s.⁵⁷ In this economic context, the absence of rain during 1991–1992 exacerbated an already difficult situation. It exposed many people in poor urban townships to social, health, and environmental risks.⁵⁸

By the end of March 1992, the 600 litres per household per day imposed on the residents in January 1991 had not improved the water levels. This necessitated a desperate reduction to 300 litres per day with industry slashed down to 50 percent of its normal usage. That there were scant water resources remaining in the Council's dams was not only a result of the consequences of natural conditions, but largely of the state's refusal to play a pro-active role in developing new water resources.

Predictably, the urban poor paid most for these efforts to save the last drop of water to guarantee the City's survival, as well as the risks associated with water insecurity they had always been subjected to before and after colonial rule. In Makokoba, there was growing resentment over the apparent lack of support from the central state as families struggled with issues of hygiene, residents with large families bathed in buckets, heavy penalties were imposed on offenders who exceeded their monthly allowances, and sewers blocked and burst threatening the health and environmental sanitation of the inhabitants.

⁵⁷ The number of school-leavers rose from some 30,000 a year in the early 1980s to around 260,000 by 1993. Only 3 percent of school-leavers could be absorbed by the formal sector, with a job creation of 80,000 annually. For more on the summary of 'Economic Constraints' see Weiss (1994: 147).

⁵⁸ Interview with Thomas Nkomo, Makokoba, 20 May 2002.

Effects of Drought and Water Rationing on Livelihoods

Water scarcity cut the lifeline for residents who supplemented their livelihoods by growing and selling maize and vegetables. Small gardens were common in Makokoba because they saved people from buying vegetables at the *eMkambo* (The Market) where prices could be quite high. Residents recalled how the water shortages of the 1980s and 1991–1992 virtually destroyed their livelihoods, when the once thriving small gardens of vegetables (mostly *chomolia* i.e. collard greens) ceased to exist.⁵⁹ Water rationing therefore profoundly affected one of their sources of food, and increased their expenditure on buying supplementary vegetables.

One of the ripple effects of the water shortages during the 1982–1985 dry spell on the people of Makokoba was the increased cost of vegetables. Makokoba residents came to rely more on produce at the *eMkambo* or that sold by street vendors. The price of vegetables in times of drought tended to be high because traders added transportation charges for importing them from farms around and beyond Bulawayo. According to Grace Ngulube:

The droughts made vegetables very expensive, as they were no longer produced in Makokoba that much. They came from outside. So things we were used to producing for ourselves, we now had to buy, and you cannot buy everyday. You end up just eating *sadza* with beef, if you could afford it, but without greens, and you know what that does to your health.⁶⁰

The increase in the cost of vegetables also made it difficult for Violet Nikisi to feed her family:

I realised that during those days of acute water shortages the cost of such essential vegetables as tomatoes, onions, spinach, and cabbage went up, somewhat. This had a negative impact on my ability to feed my family as the vegetables became unaffordable.⁶¹

The disruption of vegetable gardening affected Makokoba families in different ways, revealing existing forms of class differentiation. While

⁵⁹ Interviews with Lungisa Manzini, Makokoba, 13 May 2002; Beauty Mkhuhlane, Makokoba, 30 July 2002.

⁶⁰ Interviews with Grace Takarova Ngulube, Makokoba, 16 July 2002, E. Simela, Bulawayo, 20 June 2002, and Beauty Mkhuhlane, 30 July 2002.

⁶¹ Interview with Violet Nikisi, Makokoba, 5 May 2002.

for some middle-class families (teachers, nurses, church ministers, etc.), having the staple *isitshwala* (*sadza* in the Shona language) with *umbhidha* (i.e. collard greens) was a matter of maintaining a balanced diet, as they could afford to buy white and red meats and vary their menu, the same was not true for low-income families. For the latter, a meal of *isitshwala* with *umbhidha* was all they could afford. Low-income families depended on vegetables mostly and once in a while, when they could afford it, they bought red or white meat to go with *isitshwala*. Thus, they felt the impact of the droughts most severely. Simela described the diet of many households in Makokoba in 1991/92:

Their diet was reduced or was changed. They did not have any greens or if they did they would have one or two leaves (of vegetables or *chomolia*—collard greens) or they had *amatumbu* (tripe) only—you know what I mean. So that was the worst thing about the drought experience that we had, particularly 1991–1992. It was terrible and at the end of it all, you would find a number of people paying a lot of levies for excess use of water because the City Council was very strict on that.⁶²

Similarly, Beauty Mkhuhlane noted:

Stopping gardening obviously affected our diets. The vegetables from the garden supplemented our diets, and we could afford to have a balanced diet. We were left with very little choice as we ended up having to buy vegetables from the *eMkambo* or street vendors but it was very expensive because these people also ordered the vegetables from farmers who were also struggling to farm under drought conditions.⁶³

The Impact of Water Shortages on Health

In a period of prolonged and constantly recurring water crises, it is surprising that there are no statistics on diseases linked to water scarcity in Makokoba, or any other township in Bulawayo, for that matter. Because of the glaring silences in archival documents, which are also fragmentary, we are only able to glean some of the possible epidemiological consequences of water scarcity from conversations we carried out with women in Makokoba. While this qualitative method gives a nuanced view of how some of the residents experienced the

⁶² Interview with Edward Simela, Bulawayo, 20 June 2002

⁶³ Interview with Beauty Mkhuhlane, Makokoba, 30 July 2002.

consequences of disease first-hand or at times, via a third party, the same method of teasing out such information may not necessarily be scientifically accurate. In the absence of quantitative data on the occurrence of water-borne diseases in Makokoba because of its specificity, oral evidence offers us a glimpse into the threat to public health caused by water scarcity. Comparative evidence from other parts of Africa also strongly suggests the potentially devastating effects of water scarcity on personal hygiene, the nutritional status of children, and dehydration (Feierman 1985: 91–92; Ngalamulume 2006:73–95).⁶⁴ Scarcity of water during the periods 1982/85, 1986/87, and 1991/92 led to inadequate hygienic practices resulting in food contamination. In the absence of a dependable source of water, people took chances with contaminated water, resulting in widespread cases of communicable diseases such as gastro-enteritis, diarrhoea, skin and eye infections, and acute respiratory infections in the township.⁶⁵ Both women and men in Makokoba confirmed the existence of diarrhoea in particular, and its prevalence among young children. Esther Moyo recalled that:

During the drought of 1991, the disease of diarrhoea, especially in young children, occurred. Headaches, chest-related diseases (asthma or respiratory diseases) blood-related diseases; diarrhoea where you would pass out blood, not that other type of diarrhoea, is not we have two kinds of diarrhoea the one involving the passing out of blood, and the other one, water diarrhoea? Yes, these were the common diseases.

Esnath Mutisi echoed Moyo: “The diseases that were common during these droughts were the likes of diarrhoea and the developing of wounds (blisters) etc. all these diseases were common because of lack of hygiene and water”.⁶⁶ For Obert Masuku, diarrhoea was not only confined to children: “The disease of diarrhoea was the common prevalent disease which was affecting the majority of the people”.⁶⁷ Children aged four and below were particularly vulnerable to diarrhoea during the water

⁶⁴ The data which exist for the entire City during the period under examination are not classified according to each township but rather under ethnic groupings, and where it is intended to be more specific it is classified under ‘High’ and ‘Low’ density which generally corresponds to the ‘low-income’ suburbs and ‘high-income’ suburbs respectively.

⁶⁵ BCC Minutes: Minutes of the Health, Housing, Amenities and Liquor Committee, 29 June 1992.

⁶⁶ Interview with Esnath Mutisi, Makokoba, 18 June 2003 (Interviewed by Itayi Mudimu).

⁶⁷ Interview with Obert Masuku, Makokoba, 27 June 2003.

rationing periods between 1984 and 1987.⁶⁸ The Director of Health noted that during these periods, while mortality rates in all groups in the City was higher in Blacks than other ethnic groups, it was particularly worse in infants where the rate of mortality was said to be thrice as high.⁶⁹

The report highlighted the unequal distribution of resources as the main cause of deaths among children in high-density areas, including Makokoba, and urged both the City Council and the state to channel more financial resources into the townships where 80 percent of Bulawayo's population resides.⁷⁰ It is therefore logical that an urban area as poor as Makokoba would be left reeling from the devastating consequences of water scarcity. During the drought of 1991–1992, high incidents of water-borne diseases such as bloody and water diarrhoea in children of between 1–15 years in the high-density suburbs, were reported. With regards to bloody diarrhoea a total of 1255 cases were recorded for the period 1991–1992 and 1416 cases for the 1992–1993 period.⁷¹ Incidences of water diarrhoea stood at 15 507 and 13 732 during 1991–1992 and 1992–1993 respectively.⁷²

An investigation into the causes of these cases pointed to contaminated water (Maya 1996: 41–43). There were class differences in terms of the occurrence of the water borne diseases between children in high and low (affluent) density suburbs. The incidence was lower in the low-density areas, where borehole water use in several households increased during the drought of 1991–1992 (ibid.: 42). The variation between Makokoba and the low-density suburbs in the impact of diseases is explained by the fact that wealthier people in the low-density suburbs could afford alternative sources, unlike those in Makokoba.

⁶⁸ BCC Minutes: Report of the Director of Health Services, Dr. B.B. Nyathi, 1985, and 1989.

⁶⁹ BCC Minutes: Report of the Director of Health Services.

⁷⁰ BCC Minutes: Report of the Director of Health Services.

⁷¹ R.S. Maya. 1996. *Perspectives on Water Quality and Water Conservation in Zimbabwe's Urban Centres*. Harare: Southern African Centre for Energy and Environment Natural Resources Programme, 41–43.

⁷² Ibid.

“Water Rationing Killed Makokoba”: The Impact of Water Shortages
on the Environment in Makokoba

Water scarcity had as much an impact on the Makokoba residents' environment as it had on health and livelihoods. Nothing represents the destructive effects of water shortages on the Makokoba environment than the spoliation of the once 'beautiful' green lawns of a space called *eFusini*, once the 'pride' of many in the township for recreation and leisure for old and young, men and women. The residents with whom I spoke at different occasions all strikingly pointed at the *eFusini* each time I asked them to talk about the impact of the drought and consequent water shortages on the environment in Makokoba. Established in the late 1970s when the 'redevelopment' of Makokoba was taking place, the *eFusini* was an expanse piece of ground near the Big Bhawa (Big Beerhall) with green lawns, a swimming pool, and swings for children. Some residents were not certain why this park was called *eFusini* but one, Beauty Mkhuhlane speculated that the name may well have come from its 'good looking' appearance: "For *eFusini* to be called that, it must have been good looking. That surrounding square was green, the lawn also going down there in the area around the New Bhawa (New Beerhall)".⁷³ Municipal caretakers watered and mowed the lawns regularly. They also oversaw the upkeep of the nearby swimming pool, swings and slides for children. According to oral testimony, the lawns survived the water rations of 1982/84 and 1986/87 compared to the 1991/92, which made it virtually impossible for water to be spared for recreational facilities.

The water rationing schemes introduced between January 1991 and 1992 curtailed water supplies for the maintenance of *eFusini*, resulting in the wilting and drying up of the lawns. The swimming pool also dried up: "In 1992, they (the BCC officials) told us that because there had been little rainfall, they would start closing down all recreational facilities that involved water, e.g. swimming pools", recalled Doris Makombe.⁷⁴ The residents interviewed generally stressed that of all the three droughts, it was the 1991/1992 which 'killed' the *eFusini*, the leisure and recreational focal point of Makokoba: "You would hear people asking, where is so and so? And you would be told that he is relaxing on the lawn", said

⁷³ Interview with Beauty Mkhuhlane, Makokoba, 30 July 2002.

⁷⁴ Interview with Doris Makombe, Makokoba, 16 July 2002.

Beauty Mkhuhlane.⁷⁵ The *eFusini* was a place where the residents of Makokoba used to socialise at weekends. Parents would take their children to have fun at *eFusini*. According to Rose Mutipforo:

At *eFusini*, it was a hive of activity on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. People would flock into that place enjoying themselves, and the young selling eggs. There were swings and a lot of other things like slides. So the elders would take the young ones to play while they were enjoying themselves drinking beer.⁷⁶

While the residents we interviewed blamed the destruction of the *eFusini* on water rationing, they were also critical of the BCC officials who even after the rains had fallen did not attempt to revitalise the recreation park: “The water rationing destroyed everything here. They (the BCC officials) failed to revive these facilities after that drought of 1991/1992. They never picked up after that setback”, recalled Violet Mawodza.⁷⁷ Obert Masuku, agreed: “I would not say that the change at the *eFusini* was caused by the drought. I think it was because of carelessness from the Council authorities”.⁷⁸ This had negative effects on the people’s leisure, recreation, and socialisation.

The impact of the water crises left, in the people of Makokoba, a legacy of indifference about improving and regenerating their environment. The combination of limited water supplies and the prohibitive costs of water dissuaded some residents from continuing with activities such as gardening and the decoration of yards with flowers and lawns, as Samuel Moyo observed:

Because of the previous droughts, particularly the 1991/92 one, it would appear people are no longer interested in doing that—growing vegetables in the backyard, in decorating their yards with flowers and lawns and trees, things like that. This is really something that is very clear and people have had many problems about water rationing here and there. Therefore, you can see people were generally affected that way.⁷⁹

Some residents became pessimistic about reviving their own surroundings as they expressed fears that beautifying their yards with flowers

⁷⁵ Interview with Beauty Mkhuhlane, Makokoba, 30 July 2002.

⁷⁶ Interview with Rose Mutipforo, Makokoba, 19 July 2002.

⁷⁷ Interview with Violet Mawodza, Makokoba, 14 July 2002.

⁷⁸ Interview with Obert Masuku, Makokoba (interviewed by Itayi Mudimu), 18 August 2002.

⁷⁹ Interview with Samuel Moyo, Bulawayo United Residents Association (BURA) Secretary, Bulawayo, 27 June 2002.

and lawns was pointless as there could be another drought any time sooner, as Matilda Dungeni Mabhena stated:

You know, with the way these droughts have been coming this decade, and water rationings, as well as the high water bills, it is not advisable to go on planting things that will eventually die from lack of water. Many people have now adopted a wait-and-see attitude. That is they now wait for the time when it is clear that the water will not be cut off or reduced again.⁸⁰

Coping Mechanisms

The imposition of water rationing schemes on residents in Bulawayo to stretch remaining water reserves in the face of droughts and man made scarcity between 1982 and 1992 left most Makokoba residents socially vulnerable.⁸¹ However, the residents were not helpless victims of state induced water scarcity. Life within the household, though impaired by water shortages, had to move on. For example, people in Makokoba did not simply wait for water to be restored in the evening after having been cut off in the morning. In times of hardships, when people are confronted by the exigencies of life, they often come up with life sustaining or coping mechanisms. These may not be the type that would lead to the eradication of water scarcity in the short to medium term, but they go some way in ameliorating the impact of water insecurity on the urban poor, and in enhancing their households' options for survival.

One of the most important coping strategies for many residents in Makokoba was to rely on community networks when water supplies had been cut without being sufficiently forewarned, or just before they had been suspended. The first time water restrictions were introduced in 1983 and then in 1984 the necessity for such networks was not immediately felt, as the BCC officials were still efficient. They would announce

⁸⁰ Interview with Matilda Dungeni Mabhena, Makokoba, (Follow-Up Interview with Itayi Mudimu) 12 June 2003.

⁸¹ Social vulnerability is a negative state endured by groups or individuals. Vulnerability is a chronic and pervasive state related to the underlying economic and social situation, not only in terms of lack of income and resources but also with respect to a range of factors determined by government policies, societal trends, etc. For a more nuanced discussion of the theoretical and empirical underpinnings of social vulnerability, resilience, and adaptation to constraints and opportunities that impact on livelihood security see Adger, Kelly and Nguyen Huu Ninh 2001.

the time schedules for water cuts on loudspeakers dotted around the township. “During the first restrictions, they used loudspeakers to tell us that they were going to switch off the water supplies. There was one right in front of Mabusela Flats”, explained Matilda Dungeni Mabhena.⁸² But as the droughts intensified these announcements became few and far between, forcing the residents to fall back on their community networks. Residents relied on street networks or their neighbours to warn each other of impending water cuts. If one neighbour heard over the radio or those with television sets heard about the imminent water cuts for a number of hours during the day, the ‘rumour’ would quickly spread across the street, and beyond. Such news saved the day for some women, as they would immediately fill up their water buckets. Lungisa Manzini explains how this worked:

When they (municipal officials) used to close water, the rumours would just spread that they are going to close water, you’d better fetch water. If your supplies were still open you’d collect water and fill up your buckets. If not then you had to run around.⁸³

Some residents who had received warnings about water supplies being cut off the following day used to wake up very early in the morning and fill up their drums. Zodwa Dube described how she and her immediate neighbours used to get up early before the majority of people woke up:

We would wake up early in the morning, knowing that they are going to cut supplies, fill up the drums for use throughout the day. Sometimes we woke up as early as 4:00 a.m. so that when others were crying about water we would have had enough water, reserved water.⁸⁴

Those not as fortunate to get the message in good time had to depend on their kith and kin living on other streets in Makokoba. In cases such as this, one often collected water from friends and relatives just for immediate crucial uses such cooking and drinking. Lungisa Manzini spoke about the effectiveness of such community informational networks and how they not only helped some residents in ameliorating

⁸² Interview with Matilda Dungeni Mabhena, Makokoba, 12 June 2003. The loudspeakers were a communications system installed by the BCC to communicate official messages to the residents of Makokoba. Matilda Mabhena recalled that these loudspeakers were also used to announce funeral notices for anybody or to connect people from the rural areas with their townfolk if they could not find them for some reason.

⁸³ Interview with Lungisa Manzini, Makokoba, 13 May 2002.

⁸⁴ Interview with Zodwa Dube, Makokoba, 24 July 2002.

the impact of the water ration schemes, but also helped them in coping with its disruptions:

If the water had already been cut off, you had to go to the other streets and ask for water, say if you had friends or relatives living in these other streets you could fetch water from them. Sometimes if you knew the person you could ask for water from them and they would give, even from your next door, if you had forgotten to get water you could ask for some and they would give you. There was a strong sense of community. You could even ask for things like salt if you ran out of it. All you needed was enough water to drink and to cook with.⁸⁵

In cases where the whole of Makokoba had no water, some residents who did not have enough reserves in the house to fall back on during the day, had to walk to the Renkini Rural Bus Terminus where they jostled for scarce water with travellers and vendors or to petrol stations where they were often chased away. Indeed, in 1984, the *Chronicle* reported that as water cuts became a daily occurrence, garage owners said that whilst they were sympathetic to the women's hardships, they 'were getting fed up' with the rising demand for water, and started prohibiting the practice.⁸⁶ Residents also sought water from beer-halls such as MaKhumalo (the Big Bhawa) where they were routinely chased away by the municipal police.⁸⁷ Others walked to the adjacent suburbs such as Mzilikazi and Nguboyenja, and recreational places such as Amakhosi Theatre.⁸⁸

In order to cope with the new rations and stay within limits, mothers in a number of households adopted new ways of bathing their children. For example, women resorted to washing their young ones, not one by one, but they would wash them all at the same time, using the same water in a big dish. During the three droughts, residents reduced the frequency of washing their clothes or bathing. Some of them remembered that bathing and laundry were activities around which households could save water during the two 1980s droughts. However, in the 1991/92 drought, the decision to curtail the regularity of bathing and laundry was almost automatic because the amount of water allocated, first 600 litres per household per day in 1991, reduced by half to 300 liters in 1992 was woefully inadequate. Hence, many households had to forego regular daily bathing and laundry as a way of coping with

⁸⁵ Interview with Lungisa Manzini, Makokoba, 13 May 2002.

⁸⁶ *Chronicle*, 31 August 1984.

⁸⁷ Interview with Loyce Dube, Makokoba, 20 July 2002.

⁸⁸ *Chronicle*, 8 January 2002.

the water shortages. Violet Mawodza, recalling people's experiences of living with water shortages noted that it was not uncommon to find "especially the males just wiping only their faces—what they called 'dry cleaning' i.e. using just a wet towel to clean oneself".⁸⁹ School children also went to school without taking a proper bath, for lack of adequate water. Whatever water was in the house was for life-saving purposes: "Even you the teens, you would have water to bath only half your body before going to school".⁹⁰ Such water saving mechanisms had obvious implications for the personal hygiene of men and school kids, as Samuel Moyo, a former headmaster of Muhari School and the 2002 Secretary of the Bulawayo United Residents Association (BURA) recalled: "The children came to school dirty in most cases because perhaps they washed a uniform once a week and that affected their personal hygiene".⁹¹

As with bathing, some Makokoba residents drastically reduced the number of times they had to do their laundry. Although such stringent coping methods hit hard on those who had babies, most did their laundry once a week or in a fortnight. Household members had to agree on a day they collectively did their laundry as opposed to doing it individually, as was done in Atalia Moyo's household: "In my house we also agreed that we had to do laundry once a week, on one occasion because water was not always available as before, as there were regular cuts in the Location".⁹² While these coping measures did indeed lessen the impact of the water shortages this was in large measure short-term. In 1991, most of the Makokoba residents began to look for long-term sustainable water sources by responding to and supporting efforts at implementing the proposed project of drawing water from the Zambezi River to the City of Bulawayo.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the extent to which technical and political decisions can create social, health and environmental costs that often only the poor end up paying for. It has shown how Bulawayo City Council officials made drastic decisions about how to stretch

⁸⁹ Interview with Violet Mawodza, Makokoba, 14 July 2002.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Interview with Samuel Moyo, 27 June 2002.

⁹² Interview with Atalia Moyo, Makokoba (Interviewed by Itayi Mudimu) 9 June 2003.

remaining water resources without taking into account the possible consequences of their decisions. In times of crises such as the water shortages that faced the City of Bulawayo, it behoves the historian to treat official accounts of how their decisions and methods of implementation succeeded circumspcctly. Listening to alternative voices presents challenges and disturbs the official discourse which in this case sought to demonstrate that water rationing was welcomed by all and sundry as a panacea for minimising the effects of water scarcity. Absent from the official archival are the critical voices of the people for whom decisions were made. Only by exploring their lived experiences do we get a sense of how they reacted to the official decisions and how they avoided becoming hapless victims of water scarcity. As with all primary or secondary sources, oral testimonies need to be interrogated for they too only represent a partial account of what may have occurred.

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DEALING WITH 'STRANGERS': ALLOCATING URBAN SPACE
TO MIGRANTS IN NIGERIA AND FRENCH WEST AFRICA,
END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY TO 1960

Laurent Fourchard

This chapter does not intend to review the different notions attached to the stranger in West African cities. It rather wants to look at the way British and French public policies have considered some African groups as strangers, how a set of colonial officers have dealt with them in allocating specific urban space and what were the social and political effects of such a policy.¹ It is established that colonial rule dramatically altered the pattern of host-stranger relations in Africa. French and British administrations, however, dealt very differently with the presence of strangers in West African cities. This chapter would like to understand the competing claims on urban space that these different colonial policies may have induced.

In Nigeria, the British did develop areas reserved exclusively for African strangers whereas a policy of allocation of compulsory residence to a specific African group did not exist in French West Africa (FWA). Pioneer works on Nigerian cities have partly examined this policy (Cohen 1969, Paden 1973, Plotnicov 1967) but general works on 'strangers' in African societies do not mention specifically this difference (Shack and Skinner 1978, Coquery-Vidrovitch et al. 2003). Admittedly, there were many commonalities in the French and British hierarchisation of ethnic groups. As noted by Geschiere and Jackson, "a recurrent contradiction all over the continent was between the formal effort by colonial regimes to territorialise people, on the one hand, and their equally common preference for migrants, on the other. Both indirect rule and *la politique des races* were inspired by the idea that people should be kept where they belong in order to facilitate ruling them" (Geschiere and Jackson, 2006: 4). Nevertheless, the practical administrative arrangement to rule

¹ The term stranger is used in this chapter as a generic term to design a number of categories (strangers, non native, aliens, non indigene and so on) that have been used by colonial administrators to designate African people who are supposedly not 'rooted in the soil'.

different groups in an increasingly mixed ethnic environment, i.e. in towns or in cities was significantly different between French and British authorities and consequently shaped West African cities differently: divisions between the so called 'natives' and 'non natives' has not only been institutionalised in Nigerian cities, it has largely been internalised by the various communities themselves before being exacerbated by their leaders, especially around the independence.

The debate on competing claims between 'natives' and 'non natives' is central on the emergence of what is often referred today as the autochthony issue. Scholars have considered the recent resurgence of autochthony in various African countries. According to Whitaker, the use of the label 'stranger' to disqualify the opposition has accompanied the democratisation of authoritarian regimes in different African countries (Whitaker 2005). In many cases, autochthony has exacerbated the claim over the ownership of a locality by different communities which have sometimes led to violent conflicts in Nigerian cities while in Ivory Coast it has divided the country as a whole. If the resurgence of autochthony is often linked to the development of an increasing competition among political parties in the 1990s, it should be remembered, however, that autochthony was also part of the formation of the colonial and the postcolonial state (Bayart, Geschiere et Nyamnjoh 2001). Competition between 'first comers' and 'later comers' has been found in pre-colonial West Africa but colonial authorities generally contributed to the reification of the boundaries between the first and the second ones (Lenz 2006). While the growing literature on autochthony has focused attention on the national dimension and on the increasing land competition in the countryside (Crummey 2005, Lund 1998, Pierce 2005, Chauveau 2000, Lentz and Kuba 2006), the number of studies on the urban origin of autochthony is much more limited, generally to some Nigerian case studies (Anthony 2002, Higazi 2007). The aim of this article is to evaluate the differences between French and British policies towards strangers residing in town, and to trace the possible colonial origin of autochthony using a few cities as case studies.

Because many urban studies remain encompassed in a local approach, David Anderson and Richard Rathbone (2000: 11) have suggested developing comparative historical analysis on African cities. Such approach is however confronted with the difficult task of combining a local level analysis and generalisation on city patterns. These two levels of analysis are present in this chapter. The town planning policing in FWA and Nigeria is mainly based on secondary material while some case studies

on Kano, Ibadan, Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso (Burkina Faso) are informed by primary sources.² The chapter is divided into three parts: a pioneer period (end of the nineteenth century—1920s) in which allocating urban space to strangers was implemented in very different ways in the two colonial federations; a 'routine' period (1920s to 1950s) in which the former patterns were reinforced; and a decolonisation period (1940s and 1950s) in which the politics of mobilising ethnic and religious differences are analysed through three case studies (Kano, Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso).

*Allocating Neighbourhoods to Strangers:
End of the Nineteenth—circa 1920s*

The presence of permanent stranger communities in West African societies has for long been analysed through the development of regional trade networks or commercial diasporas. Some groups of merchants in the region—the Hausa and the Dioula—contributed to the development of cities all along the trade routes in between the Sahel and the Atlantic Coast from the fifteenth century onward. With few exceptions, these African traders were under the control of local political authorities, and stayed only at the sufferance of their hosts (Skinner and Shack 1978: 5). Local authorities welcomed foreign traders, merchants, artisans and Islamic scholars because they were bringing new products and contributed to the wealth of local aristocracy. There were, however, important differences from one region to another in the nineteenth century host-stranger relationships.

Host-Stranger Relationships in the Nineteenth Century

Lovejoy (1980) makes an important distinction between cities where Muslim merchants formed a minority (significantly in the Asante kingdom and the middle Volta basin) and cities where the government claimed to be Islamic (such as the Hausa cities, especially after the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate in 1804). In the first cities, Muslim traders frequently lived in separate towns or distinct wards which

² Coming from the National Archives in Nigeria (Kaduna, Ibadan), Sénégal (Dakar) and Burkina Faso (Ouagadougou, Bobo-Dioulasso).

protected their economic, social and religious autonomy. According to the author, “this isolation helped the dispersed Muslim settlements to retain their international connections with other commercial centres outside the local states and was based on a division between Muslim foreigners and non Muslims local citizens” (Lovejoy 1980: 42). For instance, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Asante government confined foreign Muslim traders to Salaga which then became the focus of commercial activity between Asante and its Northern neighbours. Among the 50,000 inhabitants in the mid-nineteenth century, there was an Asante community which served the needs of the Kumase government, an indigenous Gonja section, Dioula merchants connected with Bonduku and Yarse from Mossi states while Hausa settlers formed at least one fifth of the population (*ibid.*, 32–33).

In Hausa cities the pattern of hosting foreign traders seems rather different. Hausa governments welcomed all Muslim immigrants and pilgrims, traders from the west and North African merchants: this immigration policy promoted the integration of strangers into Hausa society (*ibid.*, 52). After the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate, assimilation of foreign Muslims even accelerated. Both domestic and foreign merchants lived within the walls of the cities. In Katsina—the most important eighteenth century Hausa city—Gambarawa ward housed non Hausa and Hausa traders; in Kano—which overtook Katsina in the nineteenth century—North African merchants were mixed with local inhabitants in Dalla ward. Some traders settled near the major gateways, either immediately inside or outside the city walls (Barth 1857: 463) but according to Lovejoy, this arrangement was closely associated with problems of wholesale (establishments on the outskirts of the cities reduced the difficulties of provisioning livestock). The Kanuri, Tuareg, Fulani and Burnoan settlements in Fagge, the ward just outside Kano’s gates, fit this pattern and earned the subsequent sobriquet of *garin barki* (visitor’s town) (Lovejoy 1980: 53, Adamu 1999: 146–7). Similarly, ‘Yoruba’ merchants from Oyo, Ogbomosho and Ilorin were very soon given a land (in the early nineteenth century) within the city close to the central market (called *ayaji quarters*) (Olaniyi 2004a: 48–49). These early Yoruba families have completely been assimilated into Hausa culture by adopting language, customs, kinship and religious practices of their hosts (Olaniyi 2004b: 89–92).

This clear cut division between cities which integrate their migrants and cities which separate them from their indigenous settlements cannot probably be extended to the entire region. First, in many Southern

cities, Hausa traders settled amidst the local population as was the case in Ibadan and Lagos outskirts in the second half of the nineteenth century (Falola 1985: 27, Fourchard 2005: 304). Second in savanna cities, authorities generally provided a land amidst other neighbourhoods as was the case in many Dioula cities such as Bobo-Dioulasso, Kankan, Bouna or Kong (Goerg 1986, Boutillier 1993, Kodjo 1986). This did not necessarily divide up hosts and migrants. Dioula language became the *lingua franca* of these cities and a process of '*dioulaisation*' changed the cultural practices of local societies (Traore 1996). In many cases, the original Dioula colony was central in the new political organisation. In Bobo-Dioulasso for instance, Kombougou, a settlement created by Dioula merchants and soldiers from Kong, also welcomed, in the nineteenth century, Hausa from Katsina, Fulani from Segou and Mossi traders who were all collaborating with the local aristocracy (Fourchard 2000: 23–27). But by the early part of the twentieth century, colonial rule dramatically altered these different patterns of host-stranger relations.

At the end of the nineteenth century, British and French colonisers had a long experience of colonial town planning acquired in other territories: planning was largely dominated by military cantonments inherited from India, Algeria and Senegal (Home 1997, Sinou 1993). Comparative studies on colonial town planning in West Africa have shown that differences were small between the French and the British administration (Goerg 1998, Fourchard 2003b). The discovery of tropical fevers at the end of the century led many officers to implement new segregation schemes. The relocation of Africans to a sanitary distance from the European residential area was considered the central element for the safety of the European minority.³ If this is largely known, comparison of public policies implemented by the two administrations in dealing with migrants and strangers has received less attention.

British and French officers were effectively confronted by different urban situations. In French West Africa, most of the colony headquarters were set up on space inhabited only by a few villages (Dakar, Conakry, Abidjan, Lomé, Bamako, Niamey) and more rarely by a small town (Porto Novo, Ouagadougou, Rufisque, Saint Louis), whereas in Nigeria, British officers set up administrative and commercial centres within or

³ In West Africa however the total separation of European and Africans were difficult to implement and many cities kept a mixed population (Lagos, Dakar, Lomé, Saint Louis du Sénégal, Conakry).

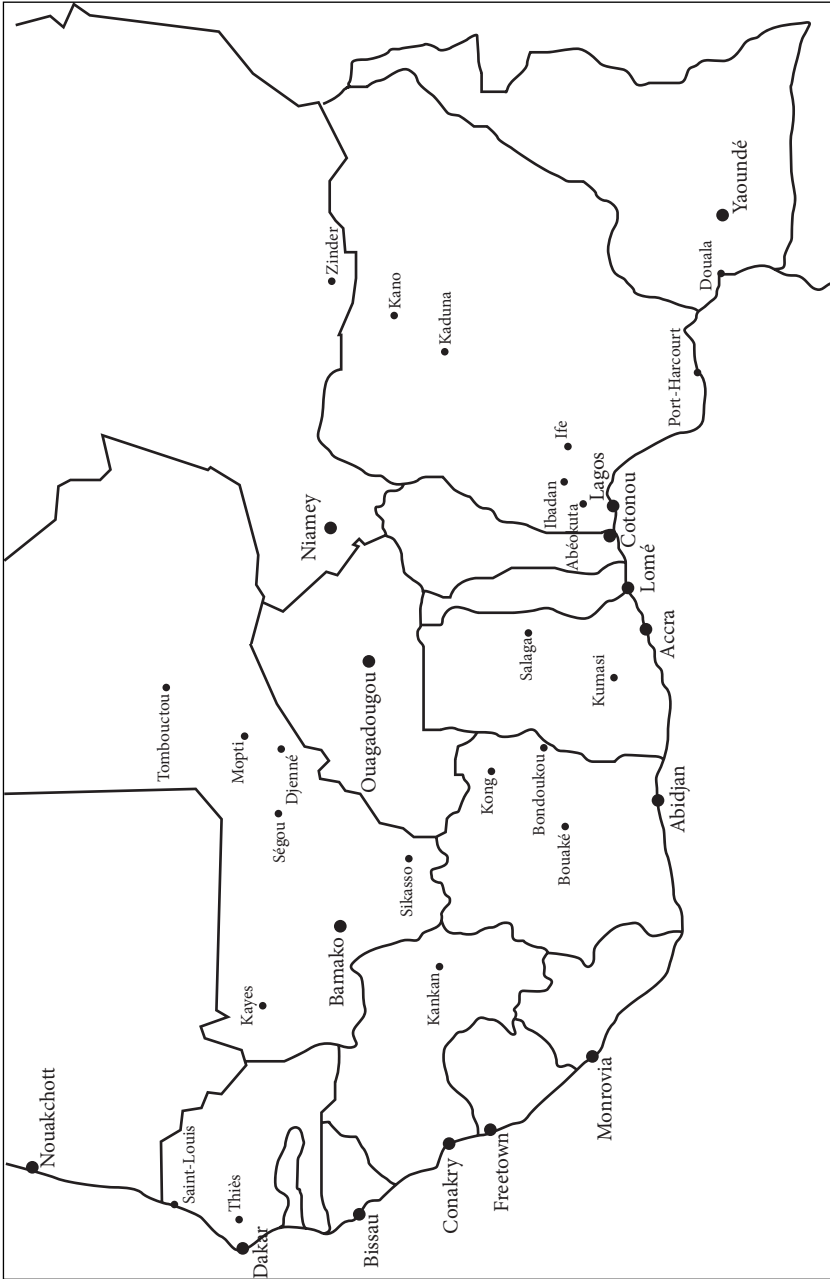
very close to larger pre-existent cities: Lagos, Ibadan, Ilorin, Oshogbo, Abeokuta, Kano, Katsina, Sokoto, Zaria, etc. (map 9.1).⁴ Many of these cities, especially in the South-west and in the North, were headquarters of royal authorities and became necessary intermediaries to rule larger hinterlands. The relationships established by the British officers with these authorities largely determined their policy towards the ‘strangers’ of these cities. This is particularly the case, in Northern Nigeria, and notably in Kano.

Kano as a Laboratory for Nigeria

The presence of Southern Christians immigrants in Northern Nigeria was considered by the administration to be a problem even before the conquest of Northern emirates was completed in 1903. On the one hand, the policy of free trade as well as various taxes collected from the immigrants limited the extent to which their activities could be restricted (Albert 1996: 93). On the other hand, there was soon a fear about the unrestricted migration of the Southerners into the North because they introduced new cultural values, a new religion, while some of them were not necessarily ready to conform to Emirate administration orders. Kano, reached by the railway in 1912, became the city in which these contradictions first arose.

Around 1909, the new Resident of Kano Province, Charles Temple, ordered all Southern Nigerians and other West Africans scattered over the city to reside in the first military cantonment created in 1904. This later became formally known around 1911 as the Sabon Gari—the ‘new town’ in Hausa language—(ibid., 94). The area had an initial master-plan of 300 compounds, 215 being occupied in 1914 by Yoruba (Olaniyi 2004: 53–6). In 1915, the Sabon Gari was constituted into an administrative enclave under the jurisdiction of a British Station Magistrate who administered the area in accordance to British law (Fika 1978: 211). The basic reason for establishing the Sabon Gari was to provide an area within the precincts of the township where native foreigners were not ordinarily subject to the jurisdiction of the Native Authority (NA). The function of this enclave was following the politics of cantonments set in the Cantonments Proclamation of 1900 by Sir Frederick Lugard

⁴ New towns were also created (Jos, Enugu, Kaduna).



Map 9.1. Cities and colony headquarters in West Africa (first half of the 20th century). *Source:* map drawn by author.

who estimated that special jurisdictions were necessary for European and Alien Natives (Perham 1937: 101). Temple mainly believed that the “educated Africans from the coast whose clerical services were necessary to the government and European and African traders from the coast should have the minimum contact with the real Northerners as they, the aliens, were a solvent to the customs and institutions of the indigenous people” (Ayandele 1966: 147). This decision was in line with a more general policy of indirect rule implemented by Temple who wanted to reinforce the prestige of the Emir of Kano against a supposed policy of direct rule implemented by the former British resident Cargill (1903–1909) (Fika 1978: 129). The difference between Fagge (the visitors’ town of Kano) in the nineteenth century and Sabon Gari is that the latter was an aspect of colonial policy from which the emir’s authority was at first totally excluded (Ubah 1985: 93). Southern traders, Lebanese and Europeans companies were forbidden to settle in the middle of the city as they did before. In 1913, the emir of Kano used his power to exclude unwanted commercial competitors especially from the South and to forbid selling land and houses in the old city to ‘outsiders’ (Cristelow 2005: 256–262) while in 1918, a regulation made it possible for Southern Nigerians to hold title plots in the Township area. The idea was also to avoid Christian interferences in ‘Islamic cities’. After a period in which some Christian missions were authorised to open stations in the North (1900–1906), the governor of Northern Nigeria, Percy Girouard (1907–1909), asked to prohibit missionary enterprises from the predominantly Muslim areas in order to avoid political conflicts with the Emirs (Ayandele 1966: 146). The Church Missionary Society was asked to remove its station outside the town of Zaria in 1907, and non Muslims were prohibited by the Emir from living inside Kano city (Ayandele 1966: 150, Paden 1973: 316). Yoruba who were ready to accept the executive authorities of the Emir were allowed to live in the city while others who did not adhere Islamic laws concerning liquor or rigid separation of sex were sent to Sabon Gari (Ubah 1985: 93).

This physical division among Africans was enacted into the township ordinance of 1917, the very first statute on town and country planning in Nigeria (Oyesiku 1998). This ordinance should be understood in the larger framework of the amalgamation of Northern, and Southern Nigeria and the Colony of Lagos in one single administration unit (Nigeria created in 1914) and the imposition of Indirect Rule principles to most parts of the country under the governorship of Lord Frederick

Lugard between 1912 and 1919 (Kirk Greene 1968).⁵ The Ordinance abandoned the term of cantonment (used in the Cantonment Proclamation of 1900) in favour of 'township' which was defined as "an enclave outside the jurisdiction of Native authority and native courts, which were thus relieve of the difficult task of controlling alien natives and employees of the governments and Europeans" (Home 1997: 128). Lugard recommended that the township be reserved "as far as possible for native alien to the local population", while local natives, "even though employed as carriers or labourers by Europeans, should (not) be allowed to withdraw from the control of their own Native Administration and Native Courts by residing in a township" (Kirk-Green 1968: 163). The ordinance attempted a categorisation of cities in the country into first, second and third class townships. Lagos was designated a first class township, while Ibadan, Kano, Kaduna along with other 15 cities were designated second class township and 49 others as third class township.⁶ Subsumed in the township ordinance of 1917 was the deliberate policy of segregation. All towns were to be segregated on the basis of enclaves for Europeans (to be known as Reservations), 'Sabon-Garis' for Southern Nigerians in Northern parts of the country and 'Sabos' (a corruption of 'Sabon-Gari') for Northern Nigerians in Southern cities (Oyesiku 1998: 41).

The ordinance thus generalised an initial pattern of town planning. What was initially attempted in Kano was then replicated in many Nigerian cities first in the North and during the war under Lugard's governor-generalship. In the North, Sabon Gari were traced in new colonial settlements (Kaduna, Jos around 1912) as well as in older cities (Gusau, Zaria) (Home 1998: 130, Paden 1986: 113–114, Plotnicov 1967: 41). It was also introduced in the main cities in the South. In Ibadan, Hausa traders used to live amidst the city since the 1840s. Their increasing number led to some conflicts with the Yoruba (over the price to pay to landlords and the monopoly of cattle trading). The first demands to create a special settlement for Hausa were systematically rejected by the first British residents (1907–1913). It was officially approved in 1916 when establishment of specific Hausa quarters in Southern cities became part of the general policy of the British

⁵ Before becoming Governor General, Lord Lugard was the first Governor of Northern Protectorate (1900–1907).

⁶ In 1922, Sir Hugh Clifford, governor general of Nigeria, changed the classification of townships into five classes (Olukoju 2003: 278–9).

administration. The Resident asked the District Officer of Ibadan to force all Hausa to move to Sabo by the end of the year to be under the authority of a Hausa Chief, a movement completed a few years later and which formally institutionalised Hausa ethnic exclusiveness in Ibadan (Cohen 1969: 113–117). A similar policy was introduced in the part of Cameroon attached to Nigeria after 1918. In the small town of Bamenda, the former Hausa settlements was displaced in 1918 to a specific, distinct and segregated area called Abkapa (the strangers' quarter) (Awasom 2003: 292). Not so different policies were implemented in Gold Coast before World War I.⁷

Some Limited Attempts in French West Africa

The policy of allocation of residence to an African group on racial or ethnic lines did not probably exist in FWA. Because some quarters had been built for civil servants the allocation of housing plots was organised on a professional basis rather than on ethnic or religious lines. First layouts designed for Africans were initially devoted to troops and migrants in search of temporary employment and secondly to the staff necessary to run an embryonic administration (civil servants, skilled labour). Civil servants were either hosted in specific cantonments (*camp des fonctionnaires* or *camp des cheminots*)⁸ and more generally after World War I lodged in neighbourhoods close to the administrative part of the colony headquarter: Dar Salaam in Bamako in the 1910s, Koulouba in Ouagadougou in the 1920s, Treichville in Abidjan and Hanoukopé in Lomé, after 1930s. Most of these wards hosted a large part of strangers coming from other colonies: citizens from the Four Senegalese communes in the so-called second or third zone in Conakry, Senegalese workers from Ouolofou Bougou in Bamako, Sudanese of Koulouba in Ouagadougou, Dahomeians in Treichville and Hanoukopé (Goerg 1997: 153–154, Fourchard 2000: 179, Le Pape 1997: 39).

At first glance, their presence did not differ from the presence of Southerners in Northern Nigerian cities. Both were educated and possessed the administrative and commercial skills necessary to the

⁷ In Kumase, Zongo and Aboabo, where immigrants from the north had congregated before British occupation, were now reserved for non Asantes. In 1913, Fante New Town was laid out for what were expected to be more affluent and westernised immigrants from the Colony (Berry 2001: 69–70). For an anthropological approach of Zongo in Ghana see Schildkrout (1978).

⁸ Respectively civil servant cantonment and railway worker cantonment.

colonial process: they helped setting up headquarters of colony (FWA) or provincial and local administrative centres (Nigeria), they served as economic intermediaries between African societies and European trading interests. Many of them bought—or were given—plots in new layouts rather than setting up amidst the older city or amidst pre-existent villages which were either removed when necessary (Conakry, Dakar, Abidjan) or left untouched when they were out of the colonial plan of the city (Niarela or Bossola in Bamako, Moogo Naaba neighbourhoods in Ouagadougou). Despite these common features, there was an important difference: the discrimination between the host and the strangers was never institutionalised nor imposed as it was the case in most of Nigerian cities. In our state of knowledge, no monographs on French West African cities mentioned the administrative will to impose from above a division between indigenes and strangers.

One attempt was however initiated in Upper Volta cities after the creation of the colony in 1919. Interestingly, the two main cities, Ouagadougou, the administrative headquarters and Bobo-Dioulasso, the main commercial centre, were ancient pre-colonial towns. The building of a new headquarter, the arrival of civil servants and European traders and African migrants from neighbouring colonies (Senegal, Sudan and Ivory Coast) led the governor, Edouard Hesling (1919–1927) to propose allocating specific space to Europeans, to African foreign migrants and to indigenes of Upper Volta. In 1926, he gave official recommendations on the way the cities should be traced:

Indigenous part of the city should be divided into two areas. The first area, the closest from the European centre, should be reserved exclusively to *semi-evolués* and should be separated by a 40 metre avenue to a second area reserved for the indigenous who live according to their own customs. In the category of *semi-évolués*, there are traders from Sudan, Senegalese Muslims and Indigenous from Ivory Coast. In this group, can be included Dioula whom a certain number are indigenous of Upper Volta. In the second area, there are indigenous not "*évolué*". They live in mud houses without any comfort and they still need to learn much in the contact of their more advanced brothers.⁹

This circular was mainly implemented in Bobo-Dioulasso between 1926 and 1929. Migrants from Guinea, Senegal, Ivory Coast and Sudan generally accepted to take a new plot in one of the three new layouts

⁹ *Journal Officiel de la Haute-Volta* (JOHV), circulaire du 14/4/1926 au sujet des instructions pour la concession des permis d'occupation urbaine.

(in the so called *semi-évolué* area) whereas one ‘indigenous’ quarter refused this proposal before being removed by force to a distant area (Fourchard 2003: 440–442). The main issue was financial: new layouts were supposed to generate new revenues. Proposing to African traders to settle in the new layouts was a way for constituting a useful statistical tool essential to levy taxes on the African trade (dioula tax, trade licence, hut tax higher for traders) and to generate additional revenues in imposing street taxes (Fourchard 2000: 66–73).

Thus, Hesling’s intentions did not differ radically from Lugard’s ones. Both of them used new colonial classification. Hesling distinguished ‘*évolués*’ for ‘Senegalese’ ‘*semi-évolués*’ for Sudanese and Dioula and ‘*arriérés*’ for Voltaïques according to the degree of acculturation to the French colonisation. Lugard also resorted to clumsy categories. He distinguished ‘native aliens’ (someone not allowed to acquire rights in land) from ‘native foreigners’ (Africans from outside Nigeria) and ‘non native foreigners’ (Lebanese and Syrian traders) (Home 1997: 132). All these categories were however subjects to change, many were abandoned and only some of them became widely and permanently used such as ‘*évolués*’ in FWA. In Nigeria, the term native alien was dropped at the beginning of the 1920s in township residents in Northern Nigeria and replaced by the expression of ‘non European aliens’ in administrative language (Olukoju 2003: 277). The expression natives and ‘non natives’ remains however common before being replaced in the 1950s by broader new categories such as Southerners and Northerners (see below).

Township residents in Nigeria and residents from colonial layouts in FWA (*quartiers lotis*) were not under the jurisdiction of a native chief but were placed directly under the authority of a district officer. Colonial officers had thus a list of identified and numerated plots with designated heads: plot holders in Sabon Gari Kano and *chef de parcelle* to whom was delivered a residence permit (*permis d’habiter*) in French West Africa. A new environment largely shaped by the sanitation obsession of health officers was also proposed. There were specific building regulations which did not apply to the older city: houses were supposed to be spacious, ventilated and should not cover more than one third of the plot (Ordinance of 1917). In Upper Volta, houses should be ventilated with a minimum size of the rooms in colonial layouts.¹⁰

¹⁰ J.O.H.V., arrêté du 22/12/1928 déterminant le mode d’occupation des terrains réservés exclusivement à l’habitation des indigènes dans les centres urbains lotis ou à lotir de la Haute-Volta.

The administrative practices were however different. In the Nigerian case, there was a clear intention to allocate specific neighbourhoods to specific groups. The Sabon Gari of Ibadan and Kano could only be inhabited by strangers who were not under the jurisdiction of native authority. In Upper Volta, some parts of the new city of Bobo-Dioulasso became mainly inhabited by migrants such as Hamdallaye which then became considered as a 'Sudanese neighbourhood' whereas Sikasso Cira became known as a 'Guinean neighbourhood'. However, there is no evidence of procedures which tried to exclude indigenous from new colonial layouts or to forbid the settlement of migrants in indigenous parts of the city. These initial differences tended generally to be exacerbated in the following decades.

*Building Frontiers between Host and Stranger Communities
(1920s–1950s)*

Three decades after these first planning experiences, cities have changed considerably. In many colonial layouts as well as in some parts of the pre-colonial city, a process of densification and social diversification occurred almost everywhere (Fourchard 2003a). In Nigeria, however, residential segregation between 'Southerners' and 'Northerners' as well as the maintaining of dual institutions remained strong till the 1940s (in Southern cities) and 1950s (in Northern cities). According to Abner Cohen, Hausa in Ibadan developed and maintained their tribal exclusiveness; they built an internal organisation of political functions and they simultaneously militated for an exclusive settlement. This is what the author called the 'retribalisation' process (ibid.: 2). "If the Hausa in Ibadan are more retribalised than the Western Ibos it is because their ethnicity articulates a Hausa political organisation which is used as a weapon in the struggle to keep the Hausa in control of the trade" (Cohen 1969: 190). Similar processes have occurred in Hausa communities in other Yoruba towns and in Southern Ghana (ibid.). French West Africa is left aside however. In Cohen's analysis one important element is underestimated. The Hausa were recognised by the British as a distinct 'tribal' group with separate residential base and specific institutions to represent them. This was fundamental in shaping and reifying differences between hosts and strangers. While the British did institutionalise differences and enclosed strangers in a specific area, the French administration did not allocate urban spaces for an identi-

fied ethnic group nor did they provide them with specific institutions within the city.

Spatial Exclusiveness and Dual Institutions in Nigeria

In Ibadan, the British throughout the colonial rule (1920s–1950s) tried to keep Hausa group as exclusive as they could. If the Hausa chiefs were subordinated to the Yoruba chiefs, Hausa sought, whenever possible to deal directly with the British (Cohen 1969: 114). Only Hausa were allowed to build houses and to live within the quarter. When in the 1940s and the 1950s, Yoruba became landowners in the quarter, only Hausa were allowed to live in those houses as tenants (Cohen 1969: 115). If Sabo was totally dominated by Hausa (400 in 1916, 4184 in 1963) not all of them were able to live in the neighbourhood because of the increasing number of Northern settlers in Ibadan.¹¹ New quarters initially reserved to ‘Northerners’ such as Mokola, a closed neighbourhood of Sabo, was not so exclusive in the 1950s: “Of the 466 plots that have been (initially) allocated, approximately 290 have been allocated to Northern strangers and the remainder to other strangers (mainly from Ijebu province) and natives of Ibadan”.¹²

In Kano, the exclusiveness seems to have been stronger until independence. It was apparently very difficult in the 1950s for Southerners to live in other places than Sabon Gari. Figures of ethnic exclusiveness are eloquent. In Kano, there were different Southern groups in Sabon Gari but the dominant group became progressively the Igbos whereas the number of ‘Northerners’ became negligible in the 1950s (0,4 percent in 1955) (Paden 1973: 314–315).¹³ Until the very end of colonial rule the division of urban space according to race and religion was striking in Nigerian cities. This division contributed to the invention of larger label group referred as ‘Southerners’ and ‘Northerners’ even if the process of consolidation of smaller ethnic identities grew simultaneously.

¹¹ According to Cohen (1969: 29–30) people of Sabo did not regard them as forming a part of their community.

¹² National Archives Ibadan, NAI, Oyo Prof 1, 592, Letter divisional office land section, Ibadan, to the secretary Western provinces, Ibadan, 12 December 1950.

¹³ In 1921 there were 2000 people in Sabon Gari of Kano (74 percent of Yoruba). In 1954–55, they were 21 624 people, in 1964–1965, 40,000 inhabitants (80 percent of Ibo). Some Northerners lived in Sabon Gari in the 1930s but their number declined afterwards (Ubah 1985: 93).

The first practical consequence of enclosing people in specific areas was overcrowding. Very soon, the number of plots became insufficient. In the 1930s, Sabo in Ibadan and Sabon Gari of Kano were considered to be overpopulated.¹⁴ For Kano, officers of health stated in 1939 that "on many plots the population ranges from 30 to 40 individuals, excluding innumerable children".¹⁵ The British had created the conditions for the Sabon Gari to be permanently overpopulated: in 1964, the average number of persons per room was seven in Sabon Gari, three in Fagge, the neighbouring layout for Hausa migrants, and only 1,4 in Kano city. The very existence of two land regulations (authorisation of renting plots and buildings in a restricted area and interdiction of renting to strangers in the rest of the city) created wealth opportunities for a handful of landowners. Renting rooms, running hostels for temporary migrants, letting houses and building shacks within plots soon became a fruitful business. Colonial officers regularly deplored the situation. According to the health officer of Kano in 1942, "plot holders built as much as they liked and these buildings were of very poor structure. Most plot holders put as many rooms as possible, dividing up others, all to be let out on hire. Most of these rooms are dark, ill-ventilated and it is unfair for tenants to pay high rentals for quarters on plots where as many as 35 to 40 souls live."¹⁶

Actually some plot holders were able to accumulate as many as ten plots. In Ibadan, Hausa could own their hostels and houses which were central in the organisation of the long trade distance of kola and cattle. In 1963, 30 business landlords, known as *Maigida*, controlled over half of the housing in the area (Cohen 1969: 71–93).

This spatial division was initially reinforced by the existence of dual institutions at the local level. The policies implemented in this part of the city were often different from the policies implemented in the rest of the African city. One significant example is the Sabon Gari's administration in Kano. From 1915 to 1940, Sabon Gari Kano was part of the township which also included the European and the Lebanese quarters and came under the direct supervision of European

¹⁴ National Archives Kaduna (thereafter NAK), Kano Prof, 6122, Resident Kano Province, Overcrowding in Sabon Gari, 3rd April 1935. For Ibadan, see Albert (1994: 125).

¹⁵ NAK, Kano Prof, 6122, Medical Officer of Health, Overcrowding in Sabon Gari, Feb 25, 1939.

¹⁶ NAK, Kano Prof, 6122, Medical officer of Health to Local Authority, Kano, March 16, 1942.

authority. The local officer was helped from the 1930s onward by a *Sarkin* (executive head) and two community members who acted as an advisory board. They assisted him for the collection of taxes and to regulate relationships between Sabongari, the Kano Emirate Council and the colonial authority.¹⁷ Actually, British officers did not find the solution of administrating the township costly and they rapidly thought this could be afforded by the Native Authority.¹⁸ As soon as 1926, the resident's conference recommended transferring the Kano and Zaria Sabon Gari to Native Authority (Home 1997: 129). In the mid 1930s, the emir was complaining: "How men could come and reside at the gates of the city and have dealings with the men of the city and yet not be subject to the rules of the city?" (Perham 1937: 101). As an extra-territorial jurisdiction, the Sabon gari was eventually seen by the British as a threat to the Emir's authority and this led them to integrate the enclave into the emirate administration (Fika 1978: 211).

This was eventually done in 1940 for the townships of Kano, Zaria and Kaduna.¹⁹ The Sabon Gari was excised from the township and the European part of the city and become part of a larger area known as Waje and placed under Native Authority jurisdiction. The city became divided into three parts: the pre-colonial walled city, Waje which included colonial layouts reserved to Africans (Fagge, Sabon Gari, Tudun Wada and Gwarwarga, populated by recent Northern immigrants), and the Governmental Residential Area (GRA) reserved to Europeans. The imposition of NA rule was denounced by different Sabon Gari tribal unions and civic associations. They contested the nomination of representatives by the NA and protested against "segregation and discrimination".²⁰ Actually, representatives of the area were asking for a democratic local government elected by the population. In 1956, Northern region allowed the constitution of two separate councils, one for Fagge including Sabon Gari and one for the old city. At independence there was no truly integrated decision-

¹⁷ NAK, Kano Prof, 6115, Organisation of Sabon Gari administration by Wesport, 1938.

¹⁸ This was proposed very soon by colonial officers. See for instance, NAI, Comcol 1, 3031, Plots in Native Locations, Secretary Southern Province to Chief Secretary Lagos, 1922.

¹⁹ Townships of Kaduna, Kano and Zaria (Change of Limits) Order, 1940.

²⁰ NAK Kano Prof, 6115, Representatives of various tribal and federated unions in Sabon Gari to the Senior Resident, Kano Province, 1st November 1944.

making institution and no central mechanism for conflict resolution within the Kano area as a whole (Paden 1973: 317).

In keeping their exclusiveness, stranger neighbourhoods were building their own identity, with economic, religious, social and familial patterns different from the host community. Sabon Gari was a mix of Southern migrants who did not necessarily share the same cultural background. Cultural distance with Northerners was, however, exacerbated by different common values shared by Sabon Gari inhabitants concerning economy, education, language, social relationships and religion. The trade of Kano began to be concentrated in the new Sabon Gari market (established in 1915) to the detriment of the market within the city walls and soon allowed the Southern settlers to dominate the commercial sector of the colonial economy (Fika 1978: 211, Cristelov 2005: 262). The disparity between Kano City and the Sabon Gari in western education and English facility is illustrated by the official figures for percentage of children attending Western schools in 1965: 5 percent for Kano city, 98 percent for Sabon Gari (Paden 1973: 320). Language and religion were important factors in reinforcing communal identities. Even if many Southerners were able to speak Hausa, English was the *lingua franca* in the Sabon Gari, just as Hausa was the *lingua franca* in the city (ibid.: 314). Additionally most of Southerners were attending various Christian churches.

Not all Nigerian cities followed this pattern. In Southern Nigerian cities, Native authorities (including the ones for Hausa settlement) were progressively abolished with the development of elected local government councils in the late 1940s and the 1950s. Moreover, with the coming of party politics in the late 1940s and 1950s, the whole formal basis of Hausa distinctiveness was undermined. By 1963, the three main Southern parties were operating in Sabo Ibadan revealing the political divisions within the community (Cohen 1969: 148–184). Finally, joint Islamic ritual and ceremonies with Yoruba Muslims also threatened ethnic exclusiveness.

Eventually strangers in Nigeria became associated with crime, prostitution and/or alcohol. In the North, this was partly due to legislation. Sales and consumption of alcoholic drink were forbidden in the Islamic city whereas in Sabon Gari like in Southern Nigeria, imported spirits and locally beer could be sold under certain conditions such as paying taxes (Olukoju 1991: 363). Consequently, Muslims started to consider the area as lawless zone where prostitution, free alcohol, lawlessness elements could develop easily (Ubah 1976: 416). In the late nineteenth

century Ibadan, Hausa were also associated with theft mainly because of their economic success and their monopoly over the kola-nut trade (Watson 2003: 61). More generally an image of Hausa people as thieves, robbers and prostitutes became very common in the South. Cohen (1969) and Falola (1995) have largely and uncritically insisted on such association. They based their affirmations on the fact that Hausa heads claimed that their own people were thieves. But it was an easy way for Hausa chiefs and for the administration to force all Hausa traders to settle in Sabo in order to keep a tight control over their community. Rufus Akinyele's study (2003) has well indicated how criminal perceptions were still adduced in the 1950s as reasons for separating Hausa migrants from the other inhabitants in Ilesha, a small Yoruba city. There is then a gross overestimation of Hausa criminal patterns which do not fit statistical evidence when available²¹ and which underestimates that youth offences and armed robbery concerned the city as a whole and not one only section of its population (Fourchard 2006). Similarly, if prostitution was effectively common in Sabo it was obviously not limited to this area.

The stigmatisation of the ward by political authorities, the media or local communities did not prevent many inhabitants from interacting with their immigrants. In the case of Kano, friendship, marriage, commercial and political cooperation and simple civility played key roles in connecting individuals and sometimes communities (Anthony 2002: 33). Economic activities and even political activities in the 1950s helped Igbo traders to broaden their personal networks beyond Sabon Gari before the Biafran war (*ibid.*: 223). Simultaneously the Sabon Gari market became a place of trade exchange for the city as a whole while the Sabon Gari became also a place of leisure and distraction for the city as a whole and not only for the resident's neighbourhood.

Administrative Weaknesses and laissez-faire in French West Africa

In French West African cities, migrants from similar origins could gather themselves in specific neighbourhoods but unlike Nigeria, no identified spaces and no public institution were exclusively reserved for one specific ethnic group within urban areas. In most of French West African cities, the first colonial layouts became inhabited by groups from

²¹ Among 205 accused of homicide cases occurred in Western Nigeria between 1966 and 1972 there was no Hausa accused (Bienen 1974: 75).

various origins (Dresch 1950). Socially and ethnically mixed layouts and 'compounds' (la *cour*) inhabited by different groups became the norm of living in fast growing cities such as Abidjan and Dakar (Antoine Dubresson et Manou-Savina 1987). The main driving force in African neighbourhoods, especially after World War II, was the price of housing markets, the availability of plots and the distance from the main market work places, i.e., the European centre. While the city was becoming denser in the centre, it tended also to grow spatially. Additional layouts (or *lotissement complémentaire*) set up in the prolongation of first layouts was the dominant norm of the town planning services in FWA, even after World War II (Sinou 1993: 186). These additional layouts absorbed new waves of migrants. If the resident permit was imposed for these new plots former lists of resident permits were in most cases not updated. This facilitated the development of a non-declared housing market by plot holders who considered themselves as owners without land titles and who divided up their plots in rooms to let (Fourchard 2003). This process was central in mixing people from very different origins at the compound level.

The municipal institution was also different from native authority and local government in Nigeria. Except for the four Communes of Senegal which elected their mayor since the 1870s and 1880s, the local government pattern in French Africa was the *Commune mixte*. It was a municipality administrated by a French officer assisted by an advisory board of European and African members nominated and selected within a list of notables. By 1937, all the 37 *communes mixtes* of French Africa were directed by colonial officers nominated by governors. The democratisation of municipal life in FWA arrived very late (mayor and council advisors were elected for the first time in 1955) and most of them were suppressed by new independent governments. We do not have many studies on the daily routine of municipal administration in French West Africa except for the four communes of Senegal (Rufisque, Saint Louis, Gorée, Dakar) (Johnson 1971, Benga 1996, Diouf and Diop 1993). Generally the city was considered and managed as a whole by the municipal council (Four Communes) or by the Colonial officer (*Administrateur Maire*) assisted by an advisory board *commission municipale* without real power (*communes mixtes*). The municipal administration was thus heavily centralised in the hands of the district officer. To assist him neighbourhood chiefs (most often referred as *chefs de quartier*) were asked to levy taxes, to implement health regulations and to control the floating population in their areas. In Conakry for

instance, tax officers were under the authority of neighbourhood chiefs and there was no official ethnic representation within the city council (Goerg 1989: 273–275).

If there was no official policy to distinguish migrants from indigenous in FWA cities, locally, access to land ownership was contested in many places. Rufisque for instance was divided into three parts: the city inhabited by Europeans, Lebanese and families from Saint-Louis, the original Lebu settlements and the new layouts inhabited by Wolof migrants. After World War I, the Lebu organised themselves to limit the access to land ownership to migrants (Diouf 1989: 294–295). Ouagadougou until the 1950s was divided into three areas: the European city, a more densely populated area inhabited by Sudanese, (Koulouba) Hausa (Zangouetti), Mossi (Tiedpalogo) and Christians (*quartiers saint*) while the third part was inhabited by the Ouagadougou princes (Fourchard 2000: 175–180). Interestingly most of Hausa traders were mainly concentrated in Zangouettin (1,300 inhabitants among 40,000 people in 1954) while no policy of compulsory residence was implemented in Ouagadougou. This concentration did not lead to ethnic exclusiveness however because Hausa were integrated into the host society through common Islamic practices, shared economic interests and common residence and social life with Mossi neighbours. This area was actually a common economic space as well as the city night life centre (Fourchard 2000: 220–221). The retribalisation process described by Cohen and considered to be common in all Hausa communities in Nigeria and Ghana did not happen in Ouagadougou even if some religious differences had emerged between Mossi clerics and Hausa mallams in the 1950s (see below). According to us the main difference is due to the fact that ethnic exclusiveness in Ouagadougou was not legally recognised, nor officially organised.

*The Politics of Mobilising Ethnic and Religious Differences,
1940s–1950s*

The relationships between the legacy of this division of space and some of the host-stranger conflicts arose within the decolonisation process and the development of ethnic politics. Discrimination among groups did not lead automatically to conflict whereas an integration of foreign communities into the city did not necessarily avoid host-stranger conflicts. Actually, the politics of mobilisation of ethnic and religious

differences was facilitated when different communities had no social, political or religious institutions in common. The antagonism between reformists and Sufi brotherhoods in the late 1940s and 1950s Upper Volta cities and the 1953 Kano riot are used as case studies.

Conflict over the Control of Friday Mosque: The Upper Volta Case

Islamic reform leaders in Africa generally distinguish themselves from Sufi brotherhoods and defend an Islamic identity closer to the origins, the development of Arab teaching and education, and a better understanding of the Koran and Islamic Law.²² Under colonial rule oppositions grew between reformist movements and Islamic leaders suspected to be collaborating with the colonial administration. Reformists started to refuse to follow their traditional Islamic leaders and militated for the building of a second Friday mosque, a conflict which became known in French West Africa as the *querelle des deux mosquées*. These 'quarrels' occurred in the 1940s and in the 1950s in cities where a reformist group had developed (Dakar, Bouaké, Sikasso, Bamako, Kankan, Kayes, Ouagadougou, Bobo-Dioulasso etc) (Triaud 1987). These conflicts were influenced by the development of 'mass political' parties after World War II and in certain cities developed around an antagonism between indigenes and strangers. In Upper Volta, the reformist movement was associated with a network of foreign traders. It mainly involved the Hausa community of Zangouettin quarter in Ouagadougou whereas in Bobo-Dioulasso, the Dienepo family—a lineage whose origins was in French Sudan—led the movement. To what extent did the conflict of the two mosques reveal an antagonism between host and stranger communities?

In Bobo-Dioulasso, there was since the beginning of the nineteenth century one Friday mosque. In 1947 however, Bamoye Dienepo, imam of the small mosque of Hamdallaye quarter, was given the authorisation to build a second Friday mosque. The imam was then considered apolitical by the administration. But soon the new mosque became the gathering place of many Islamic traders of the city who were also known

²² Reformist movements have been described as anti-sufi movements reacting to popular forms of religious practices in Africa. After Second World War, this movement, led by an educated and urban elite, often trained outside, started to challenge the local indigenous administration, asked for a large reform of Islam and denounced the supposed wrong direction took by Islamic brotherhoods and the lack of Islamic knowledge of cleric courts. See for French West Africa and Nigeria: Loimeier 1997, Kaba 1974, Triaud and Kane 1998.

as local leaders of the *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* (RDA), the Houphouët-Boigny political party affiliated to the Communist Party in France. From the end of the 1940s onward, the Muslim population of the city divided up in two equal parts to pray in the two different mosques. A new religious and political geography of the city appeared with two Muslim territories divided along certain social, political and ethnic lines. In some specific years (1951, 1956), clashes were avoided by a large deployment of police forces in between the two mosques.²³

On the one hand and to a certain extent, inhabitants of the new town (Sikasso Cira, Hamdallaye, Diarradougou) were following Dienepo. These neighbourhoods were the popular basis of the RDA in the colony and were inhabited by numerous traders from Sudan, Guinea, Senegal and Upper-Volta. On the other hand, the old city (Dioulassoba, Farkan) was the place of residence of local aristocracies and Sufi Islamic leader as well as the main place of party opposed to RDA (Union Voltaïque, UV).²⁴ This first Friday mosque enjoyed the support of local chiefs and colonial administration. This opposition was quiet classical in French West Africa; trade networks were in the 1940s and the 1950s, the main support of reformist Islam and RDA in Southern Sudan, Eastern Guinea, Northern Ivory Coast and Western Upper Volta whereas sufi brotherhoods were still strongly associated with local aristocracy and colonial administration (Kaba 1987: 312–318). All the inhabitants did not necessarily adhere to the political or religious affiliations of their leaders but local leaders still had a strong social, economic, political and religious influence over their dependant and neighbours (Fourchard 2000: 265). The conflict was however fuelled by a strong opposition between the leaders of the two main political parties (RDA and UV). The reconciliation of RDA and UV in 1956 and the imposition of RDA as a unique party in 1960 temporarily reduced religious oppositions within the city. A similar conflict re-emerged however in the 1960s and 1970s at the national level (Kouanda 1989).

In Ouagadougou, like in Bobo-Dioulasso, the opposition was religious (reformists/traditionalists), political (UV versus RDA) and also

²³ Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique, V B 2, lettre du 7/7/1951 du gouverneur de la Haute-Volta au directeur des services de la Sécurité à Dakar. Archive des Pères Blancs, Bobo-Dioulasso, aperçu sur l'islam dans les cercles de Bobo, Banfora, Diebougou et Gaoua, 1/6/1956.

²⁴ Ministère de l'Administration Territoriale et de la Sûreté (MATS), déclassé, rapport du 10 juillet 1949 du chef de la Sûreté à Bobo-Dioulasso au gouverneur de la Haute-Volta.

ethnic (Mossi against Dioula and Hausa).²⁵ The main opposition was in between clerics of the Hausa quarter (Zangouettin) and other Muslim leaders. Hausa leaders blamed Mossi and Yarse clerics for their lack of Islamic knowledge, their close proximity with autochthonous religious practices and their unalloyed support of Mossi princes. For several years (1950–1954), the small Hausa community of Ouagadougou refused to follow El Hadj Mahama Bagyan, principal Imam of Ouagadougou (1951–1966) whose family was traditionally associated to Moogo Naaba.²⁶ However, most of the Hausa community were strongly integrated into the local economy and had many social relationships with the Mossi. By 1954, most part of the Hausa population of Zangouettin disobeyed the order of their imam in accepting to pray under the direction of Mahama Bagyan.²⁷ The religious exclusiveness of Hausa mallams was largely limited by the connexions between the Hausa community and the local society. In the two cases, the conflict over religious leadership revealed a slight antagonism in between host and stranger communities (Bobo/Sudanese or Mossi/Hausa). This opposition was largely a mobilisation of ethnic differences by political parties (UV opposed to RDA until 1956). With the blurring of frontiers among political parties in the mid 1950s this opposition did not formalise along xenophobic line anymore.

The 1953 Kano Riot

The 1953 Kano riot was more a case of ethnic politics degenerating into communal clash. John Paden considers that the removal of colonial authority produced tensions between natives and foreigners (Paden 1973: 335). If colonial authority might have appeared as intermediary between groups, we have however largely shown that it has increased the gap between host and strangers communities. Discriminatory practices are however not sufficient in explaining conflicts. Douglas Anthony usefully reminds us “to avoid the trap of linking the potential for conflict across ethnic frontiers with a belief in that conflict’s inevitability. Actually ethnic difference is not sufficient to engender antagonism, nor

²⁵ MATS, déclassé, bulletin de renseignements du 15 février 1951 et renseignements sur la communauté hausa de Ouagadougou, 9/12/1950.

²⁶ MATS, déclassé, note confidentielle à l’attention du gouverneur non daté.

²⁷ Archives Nationales du Sénégal, 10 G 23, bulletin mensuel de renseignements du mois d’août 1954 et revue mensuelle de juillet 1954.

does the presence of antagonism necessarily leads to violence” (Anthony 2002: 34). Ethnic politics was a central dynamic in exacerbating tensions. Ethnic minorities did not become a part of the political vocabulary in Nigeria until after the process of regionalisation was begun in the mid 1940s (Osaghae 1991: 238). According to Osaghae ethnic nationalism was instigated by the elites in the majority groups in the three major regions (Northern, South-western, and South-eastern) that brought about the ‘problem’ of minorities. Minorities formed opposition groups and aligned themselves with the major party in rival regions. The major party was the Northern Peoples’ Congress (NPC) in Northern Nigeria, while the minority party was NEPU (Northern Elements Progressive Union) which formed an alliance with the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), the South-eastern leading party. This alliance of NEPU and NCNC won the 1956 elections town council in Sabon Gari, while NPC remained strong in the old city.

Major parties in the South were in favour of self rule and independence whereas NPC was opposed to it. Northern leaders feared that the lack of a Northern-educated staff would lead to a domination of ‘Southerners’ in the country. One of the key political elements of the period was the northernisation process launched in 1952 by Northern Premier, Ahmadu Bello, a broad plan directed to train, to employ and to promote as many Northerners possible in the public service. The plan also included provisions to limit the influence of Southerners by restricting land use and access to government contracts (Douglas 2002: 44, Paden 1973: 319). This initiative was very important especially because it was replicated in the other regions in the 1950s and after independence. In Sabon Gari, resentment against restricting land use dated back to 1940 when the Kano NA strictly implemented the 1917 ordinance in the area (destruction of illegal buildings, interdiction to sell building without administration control).²⁸ More generally, Sabon Gari inhabitants had a strong disagreement with the NA over the daily management of their area. The May 1953 riot took place in this general context.

The events of the riot are known.²⁹ In April 1953, Northern representatives attending a federal budget meeting in Lagos were harassed by

²⁸ NAK, Kano Prof, 6122, SG plot holders Association to the Resident Kano Province, 1944.

²⁹ The main source concerning the riot comes from the Northern Region (Nigeria), *Report on the Kano Disturbances, 16–19 May, 1953*, Kaduna, Government Printer, 1953.

crowds protesting the NPC's opposition to self-rule. This harassment led to a press campaign in the South and to a wave of anti-Southern sentiment in the North. The Northern leaders were repeatedly charged with being unrepresentative of their people; they were called 'imperialist stooges' (Coleman 1958: 399). When Chief Akintola, a Yoruba politician representing the AG planned a visit to Kano the following month, NPC politicians organised a march in protest on the 16th of May. Members of the crowd, gathered to protest the AG visit, started to attack 'Southerners' in the Sabon Gari. Violent fighting continued for four days, until the government brought in police reinforcements. The first 'ethnic riot' in Nigeria led to the death of 36 people (15 Northerners and 21 Southerners) while 241 persons were wounded (163 Northerners and 71 Southerners).³⁰ The main victims among Southerners were Igbo and not Yoruba. This led the Government investigators as well as John Paden to consider the riot as spontaneous violence set off by longstanding economic tensions and not by any immediate political manipulation (Douglas 2002: 46). A limited number of studies seem to consider that NPC masterminded the riot (*ibid.*).

A few elements can be added in this debate from the report written by the *West African Pilot*, the daily newspaper funded in 1937 by Nnamdi Azikiwe. As a journal opposed to the NPC, it obviously militated for a political manipulation organised by the leading Northern party. Their argument should not be taken for granted. Three points could be summarised from their report. 1) While most of the Southerners victims were Igbo, many Northerners were found dead or wounded. The newspaper indicates that Igbo armed bands possessed a fair number of dane-guns and shot-guns which were used for defensive operations but also as armed offensives on neighbours' quarters.³¹ 2) Not surprisingly, the newspaper considers that lawless Northern elements started the troubles. 'Hooligans' also launched attacks the following day hoping that, by "renewing the disturbances, greater opportunities for looting would be forthcoming". The issue is then to know whether thugs were recruited by NPC politicians for rioting. The question is important: 'thuggery' became central in the practices of Nigerian political parties since their development in the 1940s (Fourchard 2007: 19). If there is no archival evidence, it is important to remember that telegrams referring

³⁰ Report on Kano disturbances, p. 3.

³¹ "Kano Riots. General Conclusions". *West African Pilot*, August 19, 1953.

to rumours of attacks on the AG and NCNC delegations in Kaduna and Kano the same day tend to prove that the attack was prepared and organised.³² The speech given the day before the riot by Inuwa Wada, Secretary of the Kano Branch of the NPC is also indicative of how local politicians obviously exacerbated the already existing tension.³³ Undoubtedly, the NPC demonstration wanted to prove to Southern leaders that NPC in the North was popular. 3) Before the riot, rumours of armed bands were circulating in both areas leading groups to find out more arms. Then after the first day, other rumours exacerbated the tension which led to an uncontrollable situation.³⁴

These additional elements are partial and other sources are still necessary to cross check the development of the Kano riot. However, the violence was probably not so spontaneous and local political leaders have probably played a determinant role at least the first day. In the following days, people mobilised to defend themselves or to launch collective attacks in order to prevent more aggression. No social or religious institutions were able to channel antagonist behaviour. The only common institution (NA) was considered illegitimate by Sabon Gari inhabitants whereas political parties were clearly divided along spatial lines (NPC in the Old city, NEPU in Sabon Gari). With no place of exchange and no channels for discussion, the rumour became central in exacerbating tensions. Thus if segregation of space and separate institutions cannot alone explain the violence they largely helped in fuelling them.

Conclusion

Ethnic politics developed in FWA at the local and the national level especially during the decolonisation process but then it took different forms in the different independent countries. In none of them, however, did it become as dramatic as in Nigeria after independence. Nigeria has witnessed a civil war (1967–1970), endemic communal violence and policies that have discriminated against the indigenes of other regions

³² “Kano Riots. The Wide Scene”, *West African Pilot*, August, 17, 1953.

³³ “Having abused us in the South these very Southerners have decided to come over to the North to abuse us, but we are determined to retaliate the treatment given us in the South. We have therefore organised about 1000 men ready in the City to meet force with force”. “Kano Riots. Preparing for Assault”, *West African Pilot*, August 15, 1953.

³⁴ “Kano Riots. General Conclusions”, *West African Pilot*, August 19, 1953.

(Bach 1997). Urban riots have increased mutual incomprehension and conjectural fear among minority groups. The 1966 anti-Igbo violence which preceded the Nigerian civil war has many similar ingredients with the 1953 Kano riot.³⁵ It led to the massacres of thousands of Igbo and the forced migration to almost two other millions to the East.³⁶ This “as much as any other set of events, set the country down the path to the Nigerian civil war” (Anthony 2002: 87). The origins of the civil war have their own political dynamic in the environment of the First Republic (1960–1966) of the Ironsi military regime (January to July 1966) followed by the Gowon coup (July 1966) which altogether increased ethnic polarisation and political divide among the ruling elite. In this general framework, the Sabon Gari system limited opportunities for residential, social and political integration, exacerbated tension at the local level and facilitated the circulation of rumours central in the 1966 violence in Kano. The township became the main target of attacks alongside a few other places where Igbos were known to dominate the employment structure, for instance the post office and the railway station while those few who were integrated into the host community in the old city were generally not victims of violence (*ibid.*: 68, 102–106). Obviously, the colonial legacy of separation between natives and non-natives had significant effects on the organisation of anti-Igbo violence in the 1960s. Interestingly, ethnic values were also used by Igbo who after the war came back to Kano and other Northern towns to restart their business within their networks of ‘tribal’ unions (*ibid.*).

Colonial and post colonial Nigeria shows thus a strong continuity in the division between ‘autochthonous’ and ‘strangers’ under various blanket categories: natives/non natives (during the colonial period), Northerners/Southerners (before and after independence) and indigenes/non indigenes (since the 1970s). While the British administration was obsessed by the control and residence of non natives and by the power to be given to Native Authorities, independent regional governments became particularly concerned with who could get access to jobs,

³⁵ The spectre of an Igbo domination after the 1966 Ironsi coup, the connection between a political decision (the decree which abolished the regions on the 24th of May 1966) and the bloody riots against Igbo in several Northern cities, the role played by political leaders in planning the violence, and the role of rumours in the escalation of violence (Anthony 2002: 55–85).

³⁶ Among all the towns in the North, Kano recorded the most important number of victims in 1966 (between 1,000 and 7675 according to different sources) (Anthony 2002: 103, Onyiuke 1966).

land, public service and public function. The process of northernisation initiated in 1952 by Ahmadu Bello was the first public policy to forbid non Northerners from getting access to public jobs. Such policy was replicated with conjunctural variations by the twelve states in the 1970s and early 1980s (Bach 1997: 338–340) and by the states and local governments created subsequently. Today the population of every state and local government is officially divided into two categories of citizens: those who are indigenes and those who are not. Certificates of indigeneity are produced by local governments and those who do not have them face discrimination in access to civil services, right to compete for academic scholarships and provision of basic services and infrastructures (Human Rights Watch 2006).

In this regard, the autochthony issue has evolved differently in Nigeria and Ivory Coast. In Ivory Coast, the distinction between autochthonous and migrants is also a colonial and postcolonial process of state formation but the politics of Ivoirité and the official discrimination against the ‘Dioula’ is mainly a 1990s affair which eventually led to the war (Marshall 2006, Chauveau 2000). In Nigeria, the unequal access by ‘indigenes’ and ‘non indigenes’ to rights such as city residence, land, public jobs or tertiary institutions is a process which has been gradually institutionalised by the colonial and the post colonial state and which has eventually been assimilated by a majority of Nigerians. Interestingly, there is today no national contestation of this policy (Fourchard 2007). Conflict around autochthony issues remain potentially violent in Nigeria however but unlike Ivory Coast, it is today mainly a local or a town affair limited to certain localities such as Warri, Ife, Jos and to certain states (Plateau state in the centre of Nigeria). Competing claim over urban space and the claim to be indigenous of a locality are today again, as in the colonial past, strictly connected.

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BEYOND THE CAMPO CINTATO:
PROSTITUTES, MIGRANTS AND 'CRIMINALS'
IN COLONIAL ASMARA (ERITREA), 1890–1941

Francesca Locatelli

Kombishtato is a recurrent word in the urban language of Asmara. This word originated from the Italian expression Campo Cintato (fenced camp), the area in which the Italians, who colonised Eritrea from 1890 to 1941, established their first settlement.¹ During the Italian period, Campo Cintato became the 'European area', as a result of the segregationist policies applied by the colonial administration, and was modelled following criteria which had to accommodate the needs of the Italian settlers and reproduce the 'style of life' of Italian cities. Today, *Kombishtato* identifies a specific zone of the city—the centre—one of the richest areas of Asmara and the location of political and administrative power.

Amongst elderly *Asmarini* (Asmara's urban dwellers), however, *Kombishtato* also invokes painful memories of the Italian period: the segregationist policies applied by the colonial administration, the humiliation and struggles caused by the expropriation of lands and spaces, the policy of fragmentation of urban communities and the imposition of models of life and limits which heavily affected the experience of African urban dwellers. In its spatial definition and symbolic meaning *Kombishtato* epitomises the entire experience of Italian colonialism and its implications on the daily life of Africans living in the city, whose stories still remain underexplored by scholars.

Drawing on new archival material found in Eritrea and on interviews undertaken during my fieldwork in the country in 2001–2002, this chapter examines the models of urban order Italian colonial administration attempted to impose in Asmara and the ways in which African men and women experienced the city and shaped the pattern of their own life in a context which limited their freedom of action and generated

¹ I am deeply indebted to Nazareth Amleson, an expert on linguistic and socio-linguistic studies, who provided me with this information and other help in understanding cultural changes in the Tigrinya language.

new struggles over resources and space.² The analysis will mainly focus on the life of urban migrants, particularly those coming from neighbouring Ethiopia and their confrontational relations with the colonial administration and with other urban communities. For its consistency, social significance and political implications the presence of Ethiopian migrants not only marked the life of the city, but also contributed to redefine patterns of exclusion and inclusion in Asmara which later became expression of broader cultural and political divisions in the Horn of Africa.

The Creation of a Colonial Urban Space

The Emergence of the Campo Cintato: Early Colonial Asmara

The occupation of Asmara in 1889 symbolised for the Italians the establishment of the first African colony, the so-called *colonia primogenita* (the first born colony), and the possibility of starting a new phase in colonial expansion that viewed the occupation of Ethiopia as its main goal. The Italian defeat at Adwa in 1896, however, redefined Italian aspirations and marked the beginning of a new chapter in Italian colonial history. As well as representing the largest defeat in Africa during the colonial era, the Italian defeat at Adwa became a watershed in Italian colonial policies and practices (Aquarone 1986, Del Boca 1997). Relations with neighbouring Ethiopia remained problematic throughout the Italian presence in the Horn of Africa, heavily affecting the internal situation of both countries and impacting on all aspects of Italian colonial policy in Eritrea. The development of Asmara significantly embodies the confrontational relations between the two countries.

Before the Italian conquest, Asmara was the headquarters of Ras Alula who was appointed by the Ethiopian Emperor Yohannes IV as

² The new archival material consists of the Registries of the Indigenous Tribunal of Hamasien found in one of the archives of the Municipality in Asmara and court records of the Italian Tribunale Civile e Penale (Civil and Penal Tribunal) collected in the High Court of Asmara. This chapter is mainly based on the sources of the Registries of the Indigenous Tribunal of Hamasien a huge body of evidence consisting of the summaries of civil and especially petty criminal cases regarding the entire area of Hamasien and especially Asmara. The Indigenous Tribunal dealt with cases concerning so called 'colonial subjects'. See Locatelli (2004).

administrator of the Mareb Mellash.³ In the 1870s, Asmara's population was estimated at 5,000, and in the 1890s, at the very beginning of the Italian occupation, at 5,000 Africans and 300 Europeans, who soon became 800 (Pankhurst, 1968: 693). Italian colonial army occupied Asmara in 1889, but the fear of a possible attack from Ras Alula forced the Italian military to adopt a policy of entrenchment in the city. The establishment of Campo Cintato was the result of this policy. Campo Cintato became the location in which the colonial troops, primarily formed by the *askaris*,⁴ as well as Italian soldiers, entrenched themselves and started the fortification of all occupied areas. Asmara functioned as a military base for attacking Ethiopia, until the defeat at Adwa, as mentioned before, forced Italy to adopt a policy of 'pacification' with Ethiopia and to focus on the consolidation of the *colonia primogenita*. On 26 October 1896, Italy signed a treaty with Ethiopia, recognising the "absolute independence, without conditions, of the Ethiopian Empire, as an independent and sovereign power" (Aquarone, 1989: 96) and in 1899 Asmara officially became the capital of colonial Eritrea.⁵ This period of 'colonial peace' allowed Asmara to become a laboratory for Italian colonial policy. The majority of investments funnelled into the city that was gradually transformed into a small colonial urban settlement with villas, bars, administrative buildings, but also the indigenous market, the camps of the *askaris*, who were coming from different geographical areas and cultural backgrounds, and the pre-existent villages.

During the first phase of colonial presence in Eritrea, establishing political relations with local authorities was crucial for the Italians, especially in strategic areas such as the Hamasien (Asmara's region), the smallest in territory, but politically the most vital. Asmara was Italy's most important conquest achieved in the highlands. Above all it was the military base of Ras Alula, "the implacable foe, usurper of the powerful reign of Hamasien".⁶ In order to guarantee the *pax coloniale*,

³ The Mareb Mellash indicates 'the land to the north of the Mareb river', present day Eritrea. In the nineteenth century, the Egyptians profited from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and in 1865 they occupied Massawa and the coastal region. The Egyptians were also able to control the areas of Keren and the Senheit in the west. Thus, two-thirds of Eritrean territory came under Egyptian bureaucratic control. Egyptian influence in a vast part of present-day Eritrea led to collisions with Ethiopian Emperor, Yohannes IV, who succeeded in holding the central highlands (Barhu Zewde 2001: 42–49).

⁴ The *askaris* were indigenous soldiers in the colonial army.

⁵ Before 1899 the capital of colonial Eritrea was Massawa on the Red Sea coast.

⁶ Archivio dell'Ufficio Storico dello Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito [hereafter AUSSME], Roma, *Archivio Eritrea*, L7, cartella [hereafter c.] 85, fascicolo [hereafter f.] 3, Francesco

the colonial government had to reinforce the local ruling class which at the end of the nineteenth century was shifting to the Italian side. At the same time, it also had to legitimise and empower those sections of the military that had played a crucial role in the occupation and control of the Eritrean highlands. Districts in different Eritrean regions began to be assigned to chiefs who fought on the Italian side during the occupation of the highlands. This strategy was soon accompanied by the policy of land expropriation that contributed to the creation of new hierarchies and new forms of social relations in the area.

Chiefs appointed in Asmara were coming from well-known families in the Hamasien area or were loyal *askaris* from the highest ranks of the colonial army. Being appointed chief under the Italian administration became the most direct way to acquire status in colonial Eritrea, especially in Asmara. The city developed primarily as a location for the settlement of soldiers who participated in the occupation of the highlands. They were accommodated in the so-called *campi famiglie* that were villages in which the *askaris* could settle with their families. After the occupation and creation of the *colonia primogenita*, *askaris*, chiefs and notables were given some administrative positions and participated at different levels in the construction of Asmara, its administration, economy and social life. Alongside the Italian administrators, they were the founders of the new colonial Asmara, although they often covered only marginal positions.

In Asmara, both the new urban population and the new indigenous elite appointed by the colonial government represented the backbone of the early urban community and shared the same experience: direct participation in the Italian war against the Ethiopian empire. The initial social structure of the town was homogeneous in terms of shared experiences and heterogeneous in terms of cultural composition. As will be examined below, this heterogeneity was a trend destined to increase due to the constant migration of men who came into town to be enrolled in the colonial army and of urban migrants searching for new economic possibilities. This phenomenon developed throughout the Italian period and reached its peak in the 1930s, when the preparation for the war against Ethiopia generated massive urbanisation.⁷

Grazioli, Tenente nella Compagnia Cannonieri, *Il Forte Baldissera di Asmara*, Studio critico-descrittivo, Asmara, Marzo 1897.

⁷ According to a census of the Municipality, during the first decades of Italian colonialism, Asmara's population counted approximately 2,000 "Europeans" and 10,000

Building a 'Modern' City: Asmara in the Twentieth Century

During the first decade of the twentieth century, Asmara was described as the “best example” of an urban centre and as the only place in the Eritrean highlands that “deserves the name of City”.⁸ A city, of course, planned for Italians, although it was only in the mid-1930s, in the wake of Mussolini’s war against Ethiopia, that Italian colonial administration could fulfil the dream of crating a colony of settlement for Italian workers.

The ‘pacification’ with Ethiopia and the consolidation of the *colonia primogenita* gradually attracted migrants from other regions of the Horn of Africa and from overseas, involved in various economic activities. The statistical data on the composition of Asmara’s population during the early twentieth century testify to the presence of small Greek, Indian and Arab communities, whose settlement in the city probably dated back already to the nineteenth century before the arrival of the Italians. Arabs and Indians, defined in colonial terms ‘*assimilati*’, were primarily involved in import-export businesses.⁹ So were Europeans (mainly Greek and Italians) who ran most of the activities linked to the tertiary sector and owned import-export firms which supplied products necessary for the survival of the Italian community. Within the trade sector, *Jeberti* (Eritrean Muslims who were traditionally involved in long distance trade) were also favoured by colonial economy.¹⁰ Alongside the community of Arabs and Indians, they were considered the backbone of the urban economy in early colonial times. Ethiopian and Eritrean Christians, instead, tended primarily to work as labourers in

“indigenous” people, while after 1935 the town numbered 54,000 Italians, including 277 foreigners and 38,365 “indigenous” people. These data, however, are not completely reliable, as explained in municipal reports as well due to the difficulties in undertaking the census in the “native quarters” and to the mobility of the Italian population. Archive of the Municipality (AM), box “Population”, folder *Relazione sull’attività municipale*, Municipality of Asmara, Asmara 14/3/38, 1–28.

⁸ O. Marinelli. 1913. ‘Uno sguardo geografico all’Eritrea’ in *L’Eritrea Economica*, prima serie di conferenze tenute in Firenze sotto gli auspici della Società di Studi Geografici e Coloniali. Novara and Roma, 55.

⁹ ‘*Assimilati*’ were “those foreigners who belong to every population that does not have the same level of civilisation of Europe”. Therefore, they were considered *assimilati* (assimilated) to Africans defined, instead, as ‘*sudditi coloniali*’ (colonial subjects). The *Ordinamento giudiziario* (art. 2) of 1908 sanctioned these racial criteria for dividing the local population of the colony (Solinas De Logu, 1912: 17–18).

¹⁰ See Renato Paoli, “Le condizioni economiche dell’Eritrea” in *L’Eritrea Economica*, prima serie di conferenze tenute in Firenze sotto gli auspici della Società di Studi Geografici e Coloniali (Novara and Roma, 1913), 191–194.

the developing industrial sectors, as apprentices to artisans, white collars or, as will be analysed below, were enrolled in the colonial army for the Italian colonial campaigns in Somalia, Libya and later on Ethiopia.

The growth of the population soon required a more rational reorganisation of the urban spaces. The first significant town planning of Asmara was elaborated in 1908, under the administration of governor Salvago Raggi. It covered all areas of the town and gave Asmara a more definite shape (Gresleri et al. 1993: 145–154). The city was distinguished by four areas: the first one for Europeans, the second a mixed area in which Europeans, Africans and ‘assimilated’ shared the same space, the third a mainly ‘native’ area, and the fourth a suburban area in which the industrial sector later developed. The second, ‘mixed’, area was basically inhabited by ‘assimilated’ Arabs and Indians who were primarily involved in trade, while the third area became the location of African labourers and included the ‘native quarters’ of Abashawel, Ghezza Berhanu, Haddish Addi, mainly those areas surrounding the market (ibid.).

The town planning policy of the early colonial period aimed primarily at creating a comfortable environment for accommodating European settlers who were approximately 5,000 until the mid-1930s. The central area, Campo Cintato, had to satisfy the colonial administrative, commercial and military needs and presented features similar to metropolitan cities. Such a town planning was also the expression of the economic structure that Italian administration provided for Asmara, based up to the 1930s on the commercial activities of local products destined to the internal market, import-export businesses and the service sector. In the years following the elaboration of Salvago Raggi’s town planning, Campo Cintato was embellished with a splendid post office building, stunning villas, such as the Villa Hamasien, transformed into a hotel in 1935 and the beautiful Asmara Theatre, which remains a major tourist attraction in present-day Asmara as well. In contrast, the ‘native’ areas, frequently ignored by the colonial administration, seemed to function as a mere container for an ever-growing African population of local people and especially of migrants coming from other Eritrea regions and from ‘*oltre confine*’ (‘across the border’, Ethiopia).

This pattern of development and division of urban spaces was not unique in colonial Africa between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially in countries with large population of white settlers. Cities were created to represent the new colonial order and to satisfy primarily white settlers’ needs. At the same time, however, they attracted

consistent numbers of African labourers, women and young people in search of new economic opportunities. The frequent uncontrollable fluctuation of the urban population and the colonial anxiety towards the development and the politicisation of an African urban working class reinforced segregationist policies and practices. Class, racial and gender division of urban spaces became an institutionalised policy in most colonial contexts. The 1922 town planning of Nairobi, for example, already demarcated the urban spaces into a white area, a 'native' zone, with Pumwani representing the first so-called Native Location, and a buffer zone inhabited by Asians (Myers 2003: 35–54). Urban segregation was institutionalised in South Africa between 1923 and 1937 with the endorsement of regulations aimed at restricting and controlling the influx of Africans in urban areas (Beinart and Dubow 1995: 119–125. On urban segregation see also Freund 2007).

The shape of Asmara did not undergo significant changes until the mid-1930s. The conquest of Ethiopia in 1936 represented a turning point in the development of the economic and social structure of the city. In the period between 1936 and 1938, the Italian population reached almost 60,000 people compared to the approximately 5,000 of the pre-war period. This was also the time during which more rigid rules were applied to demarcate urban segregation and to create different spheres of life for Africans and Italians. Italian settlers were required in Eritrea for implementing the industrial sectors and build the 'new fascist empire'. After the occupation of Ethiopia, Asmara became the most important city of the East African Empire: although in 1936 Addis Ababa was the capital of the fascist empire, the Eritrean city remained the nucleus of the biggest commercial and industrial enterprises, as well as the urban centre with the highest concentration of Italians.¹¹ It was from the 1930s that the industrial sector witnessed a radical boom due to the attack on Ethiopia and the utilisation of Eritrea as a base for the war. According to an economic census of 1939, reported by Tekeste Negash, there were 2,198 industrial firms in Eritrea (1987: 52).¹² Most of them were concentrated in the capital, Asmara. Yet despite this rapid

¹¹ See Teruzzi, A. 1939, "Le opere pubbliche". *Gli Annali dell'Africa Italiana*, a.II, vol. IV, 383–393. Teruzzi was vice-secretary for the colonies.

¹² According to historian Tekeste Negash there were 383 firms of construction, 846 of transport, 227 of repair workshop, 25 of beer and tea, 18 of chemicals, 269 of mills and pasta, 241 of brick production, 96 of furniture, 51 of cinematography, 13 of graphic, 7 of leather tanning, 3 textiles, 19 of electricity.

industrial development, the survival of these industries relied upon the financial support of the Italian state. Eritrea, therefore, depended almost completely on Italy and on the fluctuations of the Italian economy whose collapse at the outbreak of the Second World War strongly impacted on the Italian colonies overseas.

In the early 1940s, when the British Military Administration replaced Italian colonial government, Mr Dower from the Ministry of Information described Asmara as a “European city of broad boulevards, supercinemas, super fascist buildings, cafes, shops, two-way streets and a first class hotel” and a “remarkable levitated white elephant” (Dower 1944: 12) that behind the grandiosity of the colonial architecture hid the reality of a city that had grown out of fascist military policy, rather than through a policy of urban development. Dower’s description is quite revealing:

In this strange city lived 60,000 Italians, who could not obtain enough fresh milk for their small children and who imported their vegetables from Rome, and 100,000 natives crowded into a latrineless native quarter, which lacked enough water for even their unambitious needs. (ibid.)

The 100,000 vaguely classified as ‘natives’ constituted the numerous population of Asmara’s ‘native quarters’, forced to live in specific areas of the city according to the urban segregation policies applied by the colonial administrations. They gave birth to the communities and sub-communities of the areas beyond the Campo Cintato, mainly formed by casual labourers, unemployed and migrants as a result of the economic policy developed by the colonial administrations throughout the Italian presence in Eritrea. It is to the analysis of some aspects of their life, their inter-relations and competing claims on urban spaces that we shall now turn.

Life in the ‘Native Quarters’ of Asmara

Italian Colonial Policy and Migration from ‘oltre confine’

The economic policy of the Italian colonial state was based on the reorganisation of the agricultural system, the development of the commercial and industrial sectors, but mainly on the massive recruitment of local soldiers into the colonial army.¹³ People migrated to Asmara,

¹³ A census of 1939 estimated the total population to be 617,000 (men and women) and 40 percent of men joined the colonial army (Negash 1987: 51).

where the Recruitment Depot was located, primarily to be enrolled in the colonial army used for Italian wars against Somalia (occupied in 1908), Libya, occupied in 1912–1913 but ‘pacified’ only in 1929, and Ethiopia in 1935. Up to the mid-1930s, commerce, trade, the urban service sector and a fledgling industry developed, but it was during the war against Ethiopia in 1936 that industrial expansion accelerated, especially in areas relating to the construction of infrastructure. The combination of these factors prompted rapid urbanisation, especially during the years of preparation for the war against Ethiopia with the huge inflow of Italian manpower and capital into the area.

Italian colonial projects, however, often met with limited success. Throughout the colonial period, the Italian state contributed more to the Eritrean economy than it received, with the exception of the period between 1920–1926.¹⁴ The state contribution was mainly directed to specific sectors. Public works and infrastructure, for instance, benefited the most, while other economic sectors were left to the private capital of the colonisers and the indigenous middle-class. At the same time, the economic sectors supported by private capital were subjected to the constant fluctuations of general colonial economy and policy, which did not always guarantee stable and long-lasting results for investment (Taddia 1986: 293–305).

The productive system created by the colonial administration led to cyclical unemployment and to unstable labour relations. Throughout the colonial period, casual rather than regular labour predominated amongst Africans. On top of that, consistent growth of the indigenous population in the Hamasien area must be taken into consideration. Migration was a phenomenon not easily controllable by the colonial authorities. There were moments when intra-regional and international migration was managed by the colonial state, above all during the phases of infrastructural investment. Nevertheless, the colonial economy was not always able to absorb indigenous manpower, forcing several urban dwellers to find other means of survival.

Migrants, especially those from ‘*oltre confine*’, and considered ‘strangers’ in the city, were the most affected by this policy. Among all migratory patterns, migration from Ethiopia to colonial Eritrea became the most striking phenomenon during Italian colonialism, not only for

¹⁴ As reported by historian Irma Taddia, the inversion of this trend between 1920–1926 can be explained by a reduction in Italian public investment, particularly in the military and infrastructure, rather than any notable development in the local economy (1986: 293–305).

its consistency, but also for the political implication it triggered off in the relationship between the two countries.¹⁵ According to Pankhurst, internal migration was a marginal factor in pre-colonial Ethiopia and Eritrea until the end of the nineteenth century (1968: 48–50). Migration into Eritrea from neighbouring countries, and particularly from Ethiopia became, instead, a regular phenomenon throughout the Italian presence in the Horn of Africa. It was boosted by the Italian government during moments of high demand for labour in the colony, but the internal situation in Ethiopia, constituted a significant factor in determining people's migration.

A crucial moment in Ethiopian history for the development of migration was the warfare, famine and pestilence which affected the area of Tigray (Northeast Ethiopia) between 1889–1892, a well known episode in the history of the Horn of Africa. As reported by James McCann, the memory of the “cruel days” of the 1890s represents “the benchmark against which informants measured all subsequent environmental disasters” (1987: 30). It took more than a decade to recover from the 1889–1892 famine and pestilence. Moreover, subsequent famines in 1906, 1917 and 1918 followed the “cruel days”, impoverishing the neighbouring areas of Eritrea and creating the conditions for further waves of mass migration.

Throughout the colonial period, Tigray became a region of constant migration that neither Ethiopia, nor Italy was able to control, despite some strict measures issued by both countries. Lack of evidence in the colonial archives does not permit an evaluation of the number of people crossing the border throughout the colonial period.¹⁶ However,

¹⁵ Compared to migration from neighbouring Ethiopia, migration from overseas was not massive. As reported by historian Redie Bereketeab, apart from the migration of Greeks, Indians and Arabs in the early period and Italians in the mid-1930s, further migration from overseas was promoted by the colonial government in specific moments. According to a census, in 1935–36, for example, there were 10,680 Sudanese and Yemenites in Eritrea employed in road construction in the hottest areas of Eritrea. Yemenites were porters and their manpower was required in the hottest areas of the colony (2000: 133).

¹⁶ Some indications are provided in a report of the Four Power Commission of Investigation for the former Italian Colonies, set up after the Second World War, according to which “non-European immigrants have entered the territory continuously since the early days of the Italian occupation, but at a particularly high rate since 1935. The largest group, numbering approximately 13,000, is composed of Ethiopian nationals who live principally in the towns of the plateau. A considerable community of Arab migrants, numbering approximately 9,000, is scattered amongst all the towns of Eritrea, while Sudanese and Nigerian immigrants, numbering about 2,000 and 3,000

the new archival sources in Asmara allow us to partially understand the role migrants from ‘*oltre confine*’ played in the urban context and the position they acquired in the colonial social hierarchy. Economic and political reasons played a fundamental role in the redefinition of urban identities in colonial Asmara.

In Asmara, urban migrants from ‘*oltre confine*’ were considered as people who used to come to the city to accumulate money and then return to their place of origin. For this reason their migration was considered as an “invasion of bloodsuckers” (Paoli 1908: 79). Suspicious attitudes towards migrant from ‘*oltre confine*’ developed as a result of the Italian defeat at Adwa that generated anxiety among colonial administrators and deteriorated the relations with Ethiopia. Although labourers from ‘across the borders’ were welcomed in some particular circumstances, their presence in Asmara was perceived as a danger. Indeed, Ethiopian migrants used to quickly form “some small colonies with their own comrades coming from the same region”.¹⁷ They were mostly attracted by the possibility of being enrolled in the colonial army, but the majority remained casual labourers or unemployed. As such they often survived committing ‘criminal’ activities, as court records testify, and were labelled as ‘idle’, ‘vagabonds’, ‘uncontrollable’ and ‘*agame*’ (poor).¹⁸ They did not fit into the colonial categories of ‘faithful *askari*’ and ‘civilised good labourer’ which were notions often associated with the Eritrean strata of the urban population, especially with those who contributed to the consolidation of the *colonia primogenita*.

Being newcomers in the city, the urban migrants from Ethiopia were also the category of people most affected by the lack of care for the poor. They were migrant labourers searching for a means of survival rather than for extra money or fortune, unlike several urban migrants coming from other Eritrean regions. The latter had close family ties and

respectively, live for the most part in the towns of the Western province. In addition to these major groups small communities of Indian (200) and Somali (700) immigrants also exist”. Bodleian Library, Rhodes House, University of Oxford [reference code: MSS. Brit. Emp. S 367 Box 2(A)] Item 1–2 Four Power Commission of Investigation for the former Italian Colonies Vol. 1 *Report on Eritrea*, 1947, 6. This part of the document has been gently provided by Mussie Tesfagiorgis during his archival research in Oxford in September 2004.

¹⁷ Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (ASDMAE), *Archivio Eritrea (AE)*, pacco (p.) 816, Telegramma da Dessie al Governo dell’Eritrea, Asmara, 16–6–1917.

¹⁸ *Agame* was (and still is) a derogatory term indicating a “poor”, but also “stingy” and “greedy” person. *Agame* is a specific region of Tigray from which many migrants used to come to Asmara throughout the colonial period.

were mostly sons and daughters of Eritreans (and Ethiopians) who had settled in the colony between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, who were almost all *askaris* and who returned to their villages with the capital they had accumulated during military service in order to carry on their agriculture activities. In this particular urban context, social status cannot be measured by wage alone, but also by other elements, such as the presence of family ties and social networks. As in other colonial contexts, prostitution proved to be an essential factor for the survival of migrant labourers coming from '*oltre confine*' and especially from Tigray.

Prostitutes, Beer Sellers and the 'Venereal Disease Syndrome'

Rapid urbanisation contributed to the introduction of important changes in gender relations, and the urban environment of Asmara offered some remunerative opportunities to women, although very limited in terms of choice. During the early colonial period women who migrated to Asmara were primarily *askaris*' wives, but the military feature of the city and the development of commercial activities also favoured migration of women who became *sewa* and *tej* sellers and prostitutes.¹⁹ It is difficult to reconstruct their background, but from some insights available in the court records of the Registries, it is possible to deduce that these were women without a strong economic base of their own, possibly escaping arranged marriages, or orphans (of one or both parents) or girls without dowry. In this sense the city represented for them a relatively safer and/or more economically stable refuge. Alongside casual labourers and migrants, women selling alcohol in their houses and prostitutes came to form the underworld of Asmara's 'native quarters' and played an important role in the creation of the African urban life.

With regard to prostitution, archival sources highlight that prostitutes from 'across the borders' were the pioneers of migration from Ethiopia and, unlike most of their male fellows, were women who enjoyed a certain degree of economic independence. As in other colonial context (White 1990), they represented a secure shelter for the migrants coming into the city in pursuit of new economic possibilities and played a fundamental role in the creation of a network of migrants from '*oltre confine*.'

¹⁹ *Sewa* and *tej* are home made local beers. *Tej* is the Amharic term for *mess* in Tigrinya.

Prostitution in colonial Asmara is a phenomenon that requires special attention for the social implications it triggered off in this specific urban context rather than for its consistency. As a trend that grew out of rapid urbanisation, it became another manifestation of the exploitative nature of colonial social relations, treated and regulated as a phenomenon impacting public security, criminality and hygiene. As Richard Pankhurst points out, prostitution in Ethiopia and Eritrea was certainly not a new phenomenon (1974: 159–179). In the pre-colonial period, prostitutes were generally women who used to run ‘drinking houses’ (*sewa* houses) and sometimes practiced prostitution, in order to earn more money. Thus, in the pre-colonial context the phenomenon was neither criminalised nor entirely commercialised. Its criminalisation was introduced by Italian colonialism, which made a clear-cut division between clandestine and legal prostitutes. First of all, the colonial state attempted to separate the commercial activity of the ‘drinking houses’ from the activity of prostitution itself. Secondly, after defining prostitutes as carriers of disease, the colonial government attempted to segregate them in well-defined areas of the city and began a forceful campaign to criminalise clandestine prostitutes. The colonial government was especially concerned about the latter as it was frequently run from the *sewa* houses as in the pre-colonial period and considered dangerous for public security reasons. As will be examined below, during the Italian period, *sewa* houses were places of African aggregation and the few leisure activities allowed to the local population. Thus, the campaign of the Italian administration against clandestine prostitution became an excuse to exercise stricter controls over the social life of the ‘native quarters’.

Prostitution was seen by the Italian authorities as an inevitable phenomenon that, nevertheless, required strict control. Control over prostitutes was justified by colonial fear of the spread of venereal disease, especially among the European population. However, what we can call the colonial ‘venereal disease syndrome’ became more an ideological cover for justifying other forms of control not only over women, but also over the African population living in Asmara’s ‘native quarters’, especially the migrants from ‘*oltre confine*.’ An analysis of colonial regulation on prostitution and its application in Asmara helps to clarify the relationship between control over women and migrants living in the ‘native quarters’.

Regulating prostitution seems to have been one of the most urgent issues tackled by the Italian administration since the early colonial

period. Surveillance over the prostitutes of the 'native quarters' was to be exercised by colonial authorities, including doctors and local *carabinieri*, "to avoid the spread of venereal disease and syphilis" and fight 'illegal' (i.e. clandestine) prostitutes.²⁰ The 'war' on clandestine prostitution contributed to increase control over all the population of Asmara's 'native quarters', especially women working around the market and indigenous areas. For instance, in 1909 the regional *commissario*, Teodorani, pressed by the venereal disease syndrome of the Ministry of the Colonies, the military and the sanitary authorities, arranged for strict control in the market areas and also over the saleswomen of *tej* and *sewa*. However, according to Teodorani's report, out of 220 women who were "invited" to have medical checks, only four were found to be affected by venereal disease.²¹ Of those 216 left, 34 continued to have medical checks every week, some were found not to be prostitutes, while some others proved to be married. In 1916, another law regulating prostitution was issued, governor Giovanni Cerrina Feroni deciding to segregate prostitutes in particular areas of the town "established by the regional *commissariato*" and each controlled by an older woman, called the *caporala*.²² Street patrolling was reinforced as well.

The venereal disease syndrome seems to have been used to exercise more police controls in urban areas considered dangerous for 'public security'. Instructive example of social control and colonial anxiety towards the 'native quarters' are provided by the several cases dealt with by the Indigenous Tribunal of Hamasien. Case number 171 of 1922, for example, is explanatory.²³ Summoned before the court was Debalican C., a 33 year old man from Adwa in Ethiopia, who worked as a guard in Asmara. The police chief of Asmara's market sent a guard and Leggheset B. (the *caporala* of the prostitutes) to pick up a suspected clandestine prostitute, Sindai C. Leggheset and the guard were received by Sindai's brother, Debalican C., who threatened them with a cudgel. Some preliminary investigations made by the police revealed

²⁰ *Bollettino Ufficiale dell'Eritrea*, "Regolamento pei commissariati regionali e per le residenze", supplemento al n. 31 del 1 agosto 1903. The *carabinieri* are military police corps and also have civil police tasks. The indigenous *carabinieri* in Eritrea were called *zaptie*.

²¹ ASDMAE, AE, p. 808, foglio (f.) "Meretricio", commissario regionale dell'Hamasien, Teodorani, al capo della pubblica sicurezza, Asmara 20 giugno 1909.

²² *Bollettino Ufficiale dell'Eritrea*, Decreto Governativo, 14 settembre 1916, n. 2634.

²³ AM, Registro del Tribunale Indigeno dell'Hamasien (Registry of the Indigenous Tribunal of Hamasien RTIH), year 1922, case number 171.

that in order not to be brought to the *commissariato*, the suspected prostitute escaped from her house, and sought shelter in the house of a guard working at the Ethiopian Consulate. Debalican C. was accused of resisting public security officers and aiding and abetting clandestine prostitution. He was found guilty on the first charge only, and made to pay a fine for his indiscretion.

The issue of clandestine prostitution became in this case (as well as in other cases found in the registries) an expedient to control and punish the activity run by the entire family in the market area. Sindai's mother and brother owned a *sewa* house. Leggheset, the *caporala*, insinuated that Sindai was involved in the profession of clandestine prostitution because "it is notorious that many men are regular costumers of that place only because Sindai is there, and she does not have a permanent relationship with any man".²⁴ The suspicion justified the intervention by public security officers in the *sewa* house. As revealed by many other sentences in the registries, during the colonial period, and especially during the 1930s, *sewa* houses became not only recreation centres for indigenous people, but also threatening place for the colonial urban order.

Sewa Houses and the Criminalisation of Urban Migrants

African 'free time' took place mainly in the *sewa* houses and bars of the indigenous areas of Asmara. Colonial sources rarely provide insights regarding the social life in the indigenous quarters of Asmara, although court records highlight some interesting facets of it. The development of Asmara as a commercial and later industrial city and the presence of the military led to the sudden spread of services such as restaurants and bars. *Sewa* houses became the main feature of African urban life in colonial Eritrea and by 1912 there were already around 109 *sewa* houses or *teccerie*, as they were called in colonial terms, primarily run by women.²⁵ Drinking places were part of what Justin Willis defined, with regard to the broader East Africa context, as a "thriving alternative economy, in which women could seek refuge from the authority of fathers and husbands; selling sex, food and alcohol" (2002: 102). The mushrooming of drinking places in Asmara was a result of this

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ *Teccerie* (singular *tecceria*) is the Italian name for drinking places where *sewa* and *tej* was sold. *Tecceria* is derived from the Amharic term *tej*. *Tecciara* (plural *tecciare*) were beer sellers in Italian jargon.

economic structure. Traditionally *sewa* houses run by women were associated with prostitution, but, as already mentioned, the Italian administration attempted to separate the activity of prostitution from the *sewa* business. *Sewa* houses were overcrowded during the colonial period. Evidence from the court records of the Indigenous Tribunal of Hamasien highlight the presence of a variety of customers drinking *sewa*, ranging from soldiers to migrants, casual labourers and indigenous civil servants.

As Mr Gebremedhin Tessema pointed out, drinking *sewa* together allowed people to share common problems, values and thoughts. Referring to the post-colonial period, Mr Tessema highlights how people used to talk about equal payment and issues relating to the social condition of post-colonial Eritrea. This was the time that witnessed the formation of working class organisations in Asmara, and during which debates on social and political issues became more common and free. Songs and music were the most widespread form of political expression. As told by Gebremedhin, in the post-colonial period people used to sing in the *sewa* houses: “With the Italians you can eat as much as you can, but you cannot speak; with the British you can speak as much as you can, but you cannot eat; with the Ethiopians you cannot speak and you cannot eat either!”²⁶ A fascinating study has been undertaken by Christine Matzke on women performers in post-colonial Eritrean *sewa* houses. The author examines the development of women’s role in developing a national consciousness through their compositions and songs.²⁷ It is not difficult to imagine that similar social dynamics existed already during the Italian period, although police controls in the *sewa* houses were frequent and very strict. Colonial administration used to delegate to the local police, the *zaptie*, the task of controlling the indigenous locations. A sarcastic song intoned by Ethiopian migrants with the accompaniment of the *krahl* reveals the methods used by the *zaptie* in exercising their power over the ‘uncontrollable’ customers from ‘*oltre confine*’ who attended the *sewa* houses: “Asmara is a pretty

²⁶ Interview with Gebremedhin Tessema, Asmara, April 2002.

²⁷ See Christine Matzke, “Of *Suwa* Houses and Singing Contexts: Early Urban Women Performers in Asmara, Eritrea”, in Hg. Martin Banham, James Gibbs und Femi Osofisan, Gasthg. Jane Plastow (eds), *African Theatre: Women* (Oxford, 2002), 29–46.

town, there are many places where to drink, there is some meat to eat, there is almost everything...but beware the *zaptie!*"²⁸

As highlighted by Mr Tessema, in the crucial moment of social and political redefinition of Eritrea's future, such as during the 1940s and 1950s, leisure places, the *sewa* houses in this case, represented indispensable spaces of urban political networking. Identifying a similar pattern for the Italian period presents several problems due to the scarce availability of sources on this topic. However, court records again highlight interesting aspects related to the African social life in the *sewa* houses. As noted by Phyllis Martin, "leisure time and place were arenas of contest and mediation within European and African sub-communities as well as between them" (1995: 3). Indeed, this proved to be the same in colonial Asmara. Despite police controls, throughout the colonial period *sewa* houses became arenas of urban changes. Fights in *sewa* houses and an increase of drunkenness in the city highlight a growing tension in the 'native quarters'. Urban migrants and new-comers seemed to be the most 'turbulent' sector of the indigenous population. In December 1933, for example, five Amhara were arrested in Asmara for provoking a fight in a *sewa* house in the market. The fight occurred after an exchange of insults between the group of Amhara and some Eritreans who said: "All the ill people from across the border come here to Eritrea and become *padroni* (masters)". The reply was: "The government of Eritrea prohibits our enrolment, but enrolls the pastoralists of Eritrea". After a violent throwing of fists and glasses, the *zaptie* arrested the Amhara, who were sentenced to three months of prison.²⁹ It has been highlighted already how the defeat at Adwa marked a significant point in the definition of the relationship between the Ethiopian Empire and colonial Eritrea and how the Italian colonial administration pursued a policy of social stratification that frequently located the migrants from '*oltre confine*' at the bottom of the African social hierarchy. Due also to economic reasons, this policy was reinforced in the early 1930s as Italy prepared for the attack on Ethiopia, increasing social tensions which already existed and developed throughout the colonial period. Governor Zoli clearly stressed this in a confidential document addressed in 1930 to the Ministry of the Colonies in Rome. As he noted: "From last year due to the precarious

²⁸ Interview with Gebremedhin Tessema, April 2002, Asmara.

²⁹ AM, RTIH, year 1933, case number 604.

economic resources of the colony, I was forced to increase the number of Eritreans in recruitment to the detriment of Ethiopians, provoking in this way an overabundance of candidates from across the border who permanently stay around the Recruitment Depot... when they do not steal or create disorder at the caravanserraglio, around the market or in the hospitable houses of our indigenous 'tecciare'!"³⁰

The Registries of the Indigenous Tribunal for the 1930s also show an increase of drunkenness in Asmara's 'native quarters'. People were frequently arrested for being drunk in the streets and drunkenness was also accompanied by crimes against public security. Unfortunately, the sources do not always provide information regarding the reasons of these crimes. However, they show that while in previous years drunkenness was more an isolated phenomenon, during the 1930s it acquired a different shape. The peculiarity of these years is that drunkenness, accompanied by other forms of crimes, developed as a group phenomenon and again people from 'oltre confine' had a leading role in its development. A variety of brief cases, dealt with by the Indigenous Tribunal of Hamasien, regarded groups of Amhara who caused fights in the *sewa* houses.³¹ Moreover, others concerned the arrest of groups of drunken people in the streets causing disturbance.³²

Insights from the court records can help in establishing a correlation between the intensification of activities such as the *sewa* houses and the spread of certain crimes in Asmara. The cases regarding *oltraggio al pubblico ufficiale* (verbal and sometimes physical assault of a policeman) as well as the crime of resistance to public officers increased throughout the colonial period, reaching a peak in the early 1930s. In March 1933, for example, six young men (all of them from 'oltre confine', apart from one who was from the Hamasien region) were condemned to from two to 12 months of imprisonment for insulting the policemen in the market area with the words: "What do you want, you guard of prostitutes!"³³

³⁰ ASDMAE, *Archivio Storico del Ministero dell'Africa Italiana (ASMAI)*, posizione (pos.) 35/5, f.18 "Informazioni sull'Eritrea. Politica indigena (1927-1935)", governatore dell'Eritrea, Zoli, al Ministro delle Colonie, riservato, *Politica Indigena*, Asmara 30 giugno 1930. It is also interesting to notice how Zoli uses in a sarcastic way the word "hospitable" and quotes the word *tecciare* implying that they were conducting other activities, such as prostitution.

³¹ See for example AM, RTIH, year 1930, case number 17.

³² See AM, RTIH, year 1933, case numbers 577, 586, 609, 613, 627, 628.

³³ AM, RTIH, year 1933, case number 88.

From the court records, it emerges that *askaris* were insulted or even beaten by some of the defendants.

Resistance to public security officers was a very severe crime in the Italian penal code, especially during the fascist regime. In the colonial context these typologies of crime were dealt with by other tribunals, since the Indigenous Tribunal of Hamasien only dealt with cases of petty criminality. Less serious cases, however, fell under the competence of the Indigenous Tribunal as well. In 1919 the percentage of crimes against public security was around 2 percent, while in 1922 it reached around 4.3 percent of the cases reported in the registries. In 1929, the percentage was still around 4.2 percent. The data for the year 1933 is quite interesting. Crime against public security was around 3.2 percent, but it is interesting to note that this kind of crime took the form not only of general resistance against public security officers, but also *oltraggio* (offence).³⁴ It can be argued that if on the one hand this type of crime diminished in terms of percentage, on the other it seemed to take a more rebellious shape. Moreover, as already noticed, the early 1930s witnessed also an increase of group crimes in the 'native quarters' (frequent fights in the *sewa* houses and crimes against the police) which testify to the development of a gradual dissatisfaction amongst some fringes of the indigenous urban population towards local authorities.

The 1930s represented a crucial period for the colonial government. The labour market was sluggish due to the depression and the inability to reintegrate *askaris* coming back from Libya into the urban economy. The growth of poverty in the 'native quarters', the spread of social crimes and the danger of a possible development of the political consciousness amongst the indigenous population led the Italian administration to tighten its security measures. It was in this period that expulsion of 'criminals' and 'undesirables' from the colony was massively applied.³⁵ The use of this repressive public security measure represented for the colonial administration a very quick way to solve the problem of poverty and to avoid eventual social revolts in the city.

³⁴ Elaboration made by a personal calculation of the cases of crimes against public security in the mentioned years.

³⁵ In 1919 expulsion was applied in 1 percent of the cases dealt by the Indigenous Tribunal of Hamasien, in 1922 3.4 percent, while in 1929 in 7.14 percent. Finally, in 1933 it was applied in 17.11 percent of all cases. This is a personal reconstruction of the data.

Rising unemployment in the late 1930s as a result of the arrival of a massive wave of Italian settlers, the issuing of the fascist racial laws and the economic collapse at the outbreak of the Second World War increased social tension amongst the indigenous population of Asmara. In the early 1940s, this tension began to acquire a more political shape and exploded into severe urban riots which saw the urban migrants from *'oltre confine'* as main protagonists.

Conclusion

Throughout the period of Italian colonialism, Asmara underwent significant change, the legacy of which still affects its present-day life. The city experienced different stages in its development, which were linked to the economic policy applied in the country, the internal political conditions and the financial support from Italy upon which the entire Eritrean colonial system relied. By 1941, Asmara had acquired the shape of a 'modern' city in its spatial forms and architectural features, with Campo Cintato symbolising the idea of 'modernity' that Italian colonialism attempted to impose on the city. The life of people living beyond the Campo Cintato, however, highlights all the contradictions of this idea of 'modernity'. The growth of Asmara's population increased the ethnic, social and cultural diversity of the urban inhabitants and gave birth to a variety of communities and sub-communities which created, recreated and negotiated their own presence and identities in the city in relation to their environment. They contributed to the development of different consciousnesses and networks in the 'native quarters', but also to new struggles and divisions which heavily affected the post-colonial development of the city and the country.

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THE URBAN MELTING POT IN EAST AFRICA: ETHNICITY AND URBAN GROWTH IN KAMPALA AND DAR ES SALAAM

Deborah Fahy Bryceson*

Small groups with continual face-to-face encounters are widely believed to facilitate the development of trust, mutual support and cooperation amongst individuals and secure group solidarity (de Waal 2001, 2005). Urban areas defy such moral scales. City populations grow to sizes far beyond the limits of interpersonal encounters, begging the question of how social distrust, economic envy, political friction and violent confrontation are avoided in the cultural and economic space of expanding urban settings.

Kampala and Dar es Salaam, two of East Africa's capital cities, are barely a century old as metropolitan centres. They have grown significantly over the past four decades since national independence, absorbing people of a variety of ethnic identities. Comparing Kampala's and Dar es Salaam's ethnic foundations and their malleability in the urban growth process, this chapter explores how willing indigenous ethnic groups were to 'share' the city, its land and amenities, with newcomers. The following two sections examine Kampala and Dar es Salaam in turn. While Kampala has witnessed ethnic divisions and political violence during the twentieth century, Dar es Salaam is exceptional in East Africa for a record of relatively little ethnic tension. Key differences in ethnicity and urban growth patterns in the two cities are juxtaposed to illuminate why Kampala has been so volatile whereas Dar es Salaam has remained tranquil despite sharing historical roots in the ethnically divisive nineteenth century East African ivory and slave trade.

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Kampala: Tribal Kingdom in a National Capital

Kampala, located less than 10 kilometers from Lake Victoria, commands majestic views of the lake and the surrounding lush environs. Kampala's indigenous population are the Baganda, who, at the time of British colonial conquest, were the most powerful tribal kingdom in the lacustrine region having subjugated neighbouring peoples in a considerable radius under the leadership of their king, the *kabaka* (Southall and Gutkind 1957, Reid 2002). The origin of the name Kampala belies the royal foundations from which Kampala emerged. Rather than having an agrarian or trading association, 'Kampala' refers to the *kabaka's* hunting ground. When the British encountered the area it was a hilly region rich in impala antelope, the 'hill of the impala', translated into Luganda as '*kasozi k'impala*', shortened to '*ka mpala*'.

The British colonial government strategically established a commercial settlement proximate to the *kabaka's* palace and the Baganda's military fortifications, thereby gaining legitimacy and challenging the region's dominant power. Indeed the colonial protectorate of Uganda borrowed its name from Buganda. A love/hate relationship between the two powers ensued on the basis of mutual admiration and political rivalry. The British colonial government thought of Buganda as the most highly organized kingdom in East Africa with a cultured and politically sophisticated population enjoying a form of parliamentary government (*lukiiko*), not unlike their own constitutional monarchy and parliament.

Nonetheless, tensions were strained early on. An insurrection against colonial rule erupted in 1897, prompting the colonial authorities to deport the kings of Buganda and Bunyoro to the Seychelles. Reconciliation came in 1900 when the colonial government designated the Kingdom of Buganda to be a constitutional monarchy and granted it political autonomy. In return for this favoured status, the British relied on Baganda as administrators and tax collectors in the country's outlying areas. This overt form of divide and rule was bound to have subsequent repercussions.

Dualism of Land Tenure and Urban Services

Delineation of power was fudged with long-term implications for the spatial coherence of Kampala as an urban unit. Parts of Kampala

(Nakasero, Old Kampala and a section of Mulago) were physically located in Buganda's tribal capital, Kibuga, causing confusion regarding political jurisdiction. The majority of the urban African population lived there in a settlement that was mostly rural in character and unregulated by the municipal authorities. During the colonial period, the population of Kampala consisted primarily of Asians and Europeans who were served by the municipal government in contrast to the relatively small African population residing within Kampala who were nonetheless subject to the *kibaka* (Gutkind 1963).

In addition to the confusing overlap of municipal and tribal land as well as Kampala's urban areas outside of the Kibuga, a key issue was land tenure (Nuwagaba 2006). The 1900 Buganda Agreement between the colonial government and the *kabaka* initiated the titling of land in Uganda, creating a propertied landlord class of Baganda notables who 'owned' the *mailo*¹ land as opposed to landless commoners who became their tenants. Land in the Kibuga became a commodity but one that continued to embody many aspects of traditional usufruct land rights and patron-client ties between landlord and tenant. Baganda landlords allowed increasing numbers of tenants and squatters onto their land which obviously boosted their rental income but also has to be seen within the traditional thinking of Baganda political economy in which authority over people rather than land was primarily at stake. Mair (1983: 155) cites a Baganda commoner's observation about a chief's territorial power: "He doesn't rule land, he rules people".

The Kibuga, however, encompassed both rural and urban parishes and its population density was mounting. The urban services, notably roads, water supply, sanitation, drainage and mosquito control, street lighting, and policing were far inferior in the Kibuga relative to those in municipal Kampala. Municipal authorities were particularly concerned with public health, seeing the overcrowded housing conditions of the urban parts of the Kibuga as a threat to Kampalan residents. Not surprisingly, the authorities became accessionist in their attitudes towards

¹ Under the 1900 Buganda Agreement, the British colonial state superimposed *mailo* freehold tenure on land that already had an existing usufruct land-rights tradition. The Kabaka and his notables were given title to *mailo* land that they used for patronage purposes, allowing the longstanding residents to stay on the land as rent-paying tenants. Thus *mailo* had aspects of common property rights as well as private land rights (Nuwagaba 2006).

the Buganda kingdom, which they sought to control to ensure urban environmental standards.

Dualism extended beyond health and infrastructure to the employment sphere. Africans residing in Kampala municipality were generally in formal employment or working as domestic servants for Europeans and Asians whereas occupationally the Kibuga's residents constituted what could be considered East Africa's first sizeable informal sector. Patron-client relations couched in a discourse of the client's devotion to the patron and the patron's welfare concern for the client infused economic interaction (Hanson 2003). Residents of the Kibuga and Africans in Kampala survived without a coherent municipal government given the cultural embeddedness of economic and political relations of the traditional Baganda social order. African access to land and employment was largely dependent on allegiance to the *kabaka*. There was a blurring of rural and urban livelihood pursuits while daily political and economic life meshed into a seeming harmonious tribal collectivity. Nonetheless, there were clear spatial delineations. The *kabaka* and his power bloc associated with the Baganda patrilineal clan structure were headquartered on the hilltops, his tribal subjects resided on the hillsides, and farmed in the fertile valley bottoms for their subsistence food needs (Amis 2005).

Tribal Tensions amidst Decolonisation and Power Seizure by Idi Amin

The nationalist struggle of the 1950s deepened the layered complexity of the city's politics. Nationalist aspirations were entwined with tribal loyalties. Worries over the possible merger of a post-colonial Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania engineered by the Colonial Office fired Baganda political activism to try to preclude the elevation of the centre of power beyond their reach. *Kabaka* Freddie demanded that Buganda be separated from the rest of the Ugandan protectorate. The colonial government deported him to London creating a martyr around which the Baganda rallied forcefully. After two years of protest, the *kabaka* was reinstated under the condition that he would not oppose Ugandan independence. In return he was given the power to appoint and dismiss Baganda government officials as a 'constitutional monarch'. This caused polarisation within Buganda between those for and against the *kabaka*. The *kabaka* was constitutionally a Protestant which drove a wedge between him and the half million Baganda who were Catholics.

So too non-Baganda who constituted two-thirds, approximately 4 million people, of Uganda's population generally opposed the *kabaka's* preferential power.

As events unfolded Baganda separatists realised that they would have to become involved in nationalist politics or otherwise their influence would wane. They founded the Kabaka Yekka (KY—The King Only) party and proposed a federal government in which they would exercise a degree of internal autonomy. Meanwhile Milton Obote founded the Uganda People's Congress (UPC). It was impossible to separate the politics of the Baganda tribe, Kampala municipality and the Ugandan nation-state. Demands for Baganda autonomy were destined to undermine the possibility of a coherent post-colonial government.

In the twists and turns of pre-independence politics the UPC and KY formed a strategic alliance which eventually brought to power Milton Obote as President and the *kabaka* as ceremonial head of state at independence in 1962. Friction between the newly independent state and the traditional royal kingdom however blew up in 1966 when Obote raided the *kabaka's* palace and abolished the kingdom causing the *kabaka* to flee into exile where he remained for almost 30 years (Doornbos and Mwezigye 1994). The civil unrest and eventual military destabilisation of Uganda, catalyzed by this event, culminated in the overthrow of Obote by Idi Amin in 1971 (Mutibwa 1992).

Amin devised his own form of divide and rule. While expelling the Asian merchant class and persecuting the northern Acholi and Langi who had supported Obote's rule, he gravitated to the Baganda on the principle that the enemy of his enemy should naturally be his friend. For much of the Amin period, Kampalan Baganda and Amin co-existed despite the fact that tens of thousands of Ugandans were executed in Kampala and at times the Nile River was reported to have been red with the blood of those massacred.

In 1979, Kampala was seized by Tanzanian soldiers in retaliation for Idi Amin's troop incursion into northwest Tanzania, ending Amin's eight-year reign of terror (Avirgan and Honey 1982). A series of successive leaders including Obote tried to establish a national rule of law and economic recovery by seizing Kampala and attempting to quell rebellion in other parts of the country. Not until the guerrilla leader, Musuveni, gained power in 1986 did Kampala and the country at large find stability. Musuveni, a shrewd military strategist, promised to reinstate the *kabaka* to gain the support of the Baganda. In 1994, Kabaka Ronald Mutebi was brought back from exile abroad and ceremoniously

crowned, but Musuveni was careful to restrict his role to that of a cultural figurehead (Doornbos and Mwesigye 1994).

Demographic and Land Tenure Change

Meanwhile the city of Kampala had encroached on the kingdom. Throughout its years of political destabilisation Kampala had become more ethnically diverse through in-migration. Non-Baganda residents were keen to keep Baganda power at bay. Furthermore, municipal authorities and city residents were exasperated with the sprawling slums on the *mailo* land of the Kibuga (Obbo 1980, Nuwagaba 2006). The Baganda landlords, some of whom were absentee, retained their land monopoly. Many had little capital to develop their land and tried to maximize their rental income by allowing an influx of tenants who lived in ramshackle dwellings devoid of basic road, water and sanitation infrastructure. They were joined by other occupants who were squatters on the land or had informal borrowing arrangements with landowners. Overcrowding was acute to the extent that slum dwellings were increasingly being built in the valley bottoms formerly used for urban agriculture (Amis 2006). These low-lying houses were liable to malarial infestation and flooding during the rainy season. The complexity of land tenure arrangements made it impossible for the urban authorities to enforce existing legislation to control building design specifications, land use and urban infrastructure provisioning (Nuwagaba 2006).

In an attempt to give some clarity to land rights,² a new Constitution in 1995 was enacted which made all land freehold vesting holding and user rights in private citizens. The hope was that this would encourage Baganda landlords to sell to tenants the land parcels that they occupied, thereby ending the traditional patron-client relations, which underpinned Baganda power in Kampala. However such deeply entrenched social relations could not disappear simply with legal enactment. Poor tenants had low purchasing and bargaining power to procure their residential land from their Baganda landlord. In 2003, a demonstration was staged in Kampala by Baganda separatists involving an estimated

² The confusion about *mailo* land was compounded by President Idi Amin's 1975 Land Reform decree which stipulated that all land in Uganda was public, a law which was flagrantly ignored in the case of the on-going *mailo* landlord-tenant relations in Kampala (Nuwagaba 2006).

200,000 people chanting 'Federo'. Their demand was for a new federal constitution that would guarantee their tribal kingdom as a semi-autonomous state incorporating Kampala city (Englebert 2002).³

This re-assertion of Baganda political power has to be seen against the demographic reality that Baganda no longer constitute a majority in the city and while some rely on rental income from their *mailo* land, for the most part their economic standing derives from being a relatively more educated and economically successful ethnic group employed in all spheres of the Ugandan national economy. In effect the Baganda need Uganda and its capital, Kampala, just as Uganda and Kampala need the Baganda.

Dar es Salaam: Harbour of Peace along a Creole Coastline

The Zaramo are considered the original African inhabitants of Dar es Salaam, having culturally accommodated themselves to the influx of successive waves of migrants of different racial and ethnic backgrounds (Sutton 1970). They are themselves relatively recent migrants to the East African coast, arriving in the nineteenth century at the request of Arabicized Shomvi coastal traders who enlisted their support to ward off attack by the marauding Kamba (L.W. Swantz 1970). Thereafter the Zaramo were closely identified with the Shomvi. Zaramo women often married and bore the children of the Shomvi traders. Furthermore, many up-country Africans, who came to the coast as slaves, remained and were absorbed by the Zaramo first by working in their plantations and later through inter-marriage (Burton 1860, Iliffe 1979). Hence the Zaramo are not a cohesive tribal group with a clear identity.

The intimate political and cultural ties between the Zaramo and Shomvi often make it difficult to distinguish them as two separate ethnic identities. The Shomvi, claiming descent from Persian traders who had frequented the East African littoral several centuries before, and subsequent waves of Arab traders, were perceived as cosmopolitan town-dwelling traders and owners of coastal slave plantations (Nicholls 1971). The Zaramo, on the other hand, were considered, by virtue of being African, to be the 'original' inhabitants who farmed the land. Nonetheless, the Zaramo were lodged between the extremes of slave

³ See "Give us Freedom, and Kampala: The Baganda on the March", *The Economist*, 6 February, 2003.

and slave master in a polarized social hierarchy. Seeking to distinguish themselves from the African slave population, many aspired to Swahili metropolitan culture associated with Arab influence and Islam (*ustaarabu*), preferring to identify as Shomvi. The Zaramo's dual identity, afforded them claim to tribal clan ties and usufruct rural land rights, on the one hand, and participation in Swahili town culture, on the other (M.-L. Swantz 1970, Glassman 1995).

In Dar es Salaam, the Swahili, representing Afro-Arab cultural fusion, were the local manifestation of a creole culture, which stretched the length of the East African littoral in what is now Tanzania and Kenya. Creolization of Arabs and Africans had coalesced over several centuries upon the economic foundations of foreign trade and domestic slave plantation production.⁴ Historically, the Arab traders established their main settlements on the coastline or on islands such as Kilwa and Mombasa. Kiswahili, which evolved as their *lingua franca* for trade with the African hinterland, was also spoken within their enclave settlements. The language had a Bantu grammatical structure, which incorporated Arab, Portuguese and other foreign vocabulary traceable to trading contacts.

Dar es Salaam was established as a planned settlement in the mid-1860s when Sultan Majid of Zanzibar shrewdly relocated some of the export-bound caravan trade from Bagamoyo to Dar es Salaam's more sheltered harbour. One of Majid's reasons for establishing Dar es Salaam was to deflect power from a truculent Shomvi leader (*diwan*) at Bagamoyo, which served as the primary mainland entrepot for the Omani ivory and slave trade (Brown 1970). Dar es Salaam, as a new settlement, was considered to be more controllable with fewer vested interests and antagonisms against the sultanate. The local Zaramo, long accustomed to the presence of the Shomvi trading class, witnessed the new wave of Arab plantation owners and increasing numbers of Asian and Arab traders.

Meanwhile European rivalry between Britain, France and Germany threatened the Sultan's dominance (Sheriff 1987). In 1886, the Sultan conceded to an Anglo-German agreement limiting his mainland claims

⁴ Middleton (1993) and more recently Fair (2001) have written extensively about the Swahili sense of identity and coherence as a mercantile culture. Nonetheless, the Swahili are generally not identified as a creole population in the East African literature. They however evidence all the major distinguishing features of a creole society (see Hannerz 1987 and Cohen 2007).

to a 10-mile coastal strip and allowing the Germans to collect custom duties at Dar es Salaam. The following year the Germans occupied Dar es Salaam and demanded the right to customs collection along the entire coastline. The Bushiri rebellion erupted quickly thereafter. Otherwise known as the Arab revolt, the uprising of a coastal coalition, led by Abushiri and Bwana Heri who represented the Swahili landed-property elite, was reflective of layer upon layer of internal tension in Swahili society.

Colonial Blueprints

Dar es Salaam, where the intensity of the rebellion was subdued compared to the other Swahili towns, became the headquarters of the German East Africa Company in 1891 (Glassman 1995). The next thirty years of German rule were decisive in setting the parameters for governance and resource access in Dar es Salaam (Deutsch 2006). The asset base of the creolized Zaramo-Shomvi people seriously declined during German colonial rule. The gradual abolishment of slavery and dwindling caravan trade erased the material conditions under which their creole culture had thrived. The Shomvi had been reliant on domestic and farm slave labourers who were no longer being supplied to the local economy. Indian traders were more responsive to the town's changing political economy than the more localised Shomvi entrepreneurs. In the urban labour market, Zaramo labour was devalued relative to that of upcountry migrants. Last and certainly not least, the cultural compass of town life was being radically reoriented from that of *ustaarabu* to racial rigidity and exclusivity of 'non-natives'.⁵ This severely constrained African urban aspirations residentially and occupationally and actively discouraged if not pre-empted inter-racial relations between the sexes designated as 'natives' and 'non-natives'. Lacking politically assertiveness and facing a contracting resource base, the Swahili's ambiguous

⁵ British colonial officials used the term 'non-native' to refer generally to non-Africans, but as Brennan (2006: 409) argues, when challenged over the dividing line between native and non-native, they were loathe to equate natives with an African race label *per se*. Instead they considered the descent and 'mode of living' of people in question on a case-by-case basis. Thus someone of African origin borne elsewhere (e.g. a black American) was clearly not from an African tribal background and would be labelled 'non-native'. Those tracing their descent from Arab parentage, however distant, could and did seek non-native status.

cultural identity inclined them towards negotiating their access to other town resources on an *ad hoc* and often individualised basis rather than unifying to collectively confront other groups or political enemies.

Under British indirect rule, the Zaramo-Shomvi population indigenous to Dar es Salaam posed conceptual difficulties because they were not considered to constitute a 'proper tribe' in terms of clan structure, leadership and customary land tenure. 'Detribalisation' was seen as the road to moral degeneration and crime (Burton 2005). The Zaramo were the prime suspects, failing to present themselves as tribally coherent in terms of leadership.

Piecing together a picture of African ethnicity in Dar es Salaam during the British colonial period is hampered by lack of primary source material. Colonial reports of Baker (1931) on social conditions and McCleery (1939) on land tenure provide slivers of insight for the inter-war period. The most notable colonial study is Leslie's (1963) survey of Dar es Salaam, conducted in 1956, which is remarkable for its sociological detail. A number of PhD studies (Westcott 1982, Anthony 1983, Kironde 1995, Burton 2000, Moyer 2002, Sherrington 2006) have touched on various aspects of ethnicity. Brennan (2002) provides the most focussed and penetrating analysis of ethnicity during the British colonial period, highlighting Zaramo-Shomvi-Arab ethnic issues relative to Dar es Salaam's African migrant population.

Colonial Land Tenure

Land tenure in and around Dar es Salaam evolved as a complex layering of traditional, German and British conventions resulting in a patchwork of Zaramo smallholder plots premised on customary usufruct rights interspersed with statutory freehold and leasehold land owned mostly by non-natives. People identifying themselves along the spectrum of Zaramo-Shomvi-Arab ethnicity had wide scope for manoeuvre in land matters. The Zaramo had usufruct rights, which they used in the first instance for cultivating their subsistence needs. They could also, in an individual capacity, temporarily loan land to non-Zaramo cultivators on a sharecropping basis, given the demand for land from Dar es Salaam's African migrant population who experienced high rates of unemployment.

Land loans were generally negotiated on an informal and mostly amicable basis in which the Zaramo land custodian received a portion of

the harvest. Furthermore, making use of inconsistencies and loopholes in the land law, people claiming Zaramo-Shomvi-Arab ethnicity were often able to buy and sell land. In an official memorandum, McCleery (1939) expressed concern that some 'Swahili' Africans redefined themselves as Arabs to gain freehold land and would eventually sell the land.⁶ In the meantime, considerable land was leased to non-Zaramo at relatively high rents.

Despite their favoured access to land, the Zaramo were not generally inclined to excel as farmers. They grew subsistence crops but were less attuned to cashcropping on any notable scale (Bryceson 1987, 1990). Slavery had been closely associated with toiling in the fields as plantation labour. The Zaramo preferred to project themselves as cultured townspeople with leisure time for conversation and board games (*bao*). Their command of the Kiswahili language, urbane outlook and awareness of markets and the wider world of trade gave them an air of insular sophistication vis-à-vis *wabara* (upcountry migrants).

By contrast, the *wabara* tended to hold the *waswahili* in low esteem. In Dar es Salaam's expanding economy, the Swahili constituted the lowest rung of the labour force, working as casual wage labourers in the port and construction sites as well as domestic servants. Leslie (1963) and Tsuruta (2003) refer to the cultural stereotyping of the Zaramo by colonial officialdom as well as the city's migrant population. The *waswahili* were seen as indolent (*wavivu*) reluctant farmers who were cunning (*mwenye akili*) but unreliable (*wajanja*).⁷ As the *wabara* of Dar es Salaam expanded in number and raised their formal education levels relative to the *waswahili*, this characterisation was further embroidered. Amongst themselves *wabara* might jokingly call each other *mswahili* inferring that they were 'going native', becoming unreliable, work-shy and fatalistic.

⁶ McCleery (1939: 16) stated: "Many persons who are in fact Swahilis (literally people of the coast), persist out of false pride in calling themselves Arabs. The laws relating to these people are conflicting, and the resultant chaos is only natural... Under the Land Tenure Ordinance (Cap 68) anyone with Arab Blood, (and this could include at least 20% of the coastal Wazaramo) is a non-native and persons of mixed descent are allowed to opt... The Native Authority never knows where or over whom it has jurisdiction, since these 'African Arabs' continually change their status to evade the Law".

⁷ Tsuruta (2003: 64) cites a well-known adage in Dar es Salaam: "Zaramo *kuiba*, Ndegereko *ficha* (Zaramo steal and Ndegereko conceal) believed to have originated amongst Dar es Salaam's Indian population who employed them as domestic servants".

Within sight of national independence, Nyerere, well aware of the divisiveness of ethnic chauvinism moved to excise tribalism from national politics. In 1960, TANU announced that chiefs' political power was to be removed at local as well as national level. Ethnic and voluntary associations dissolved extremely rapidly to be replaced primarily by TANU-led local level political mobilisation (Vincent 1970).⁸ It is pertinent to ask how ethnicity was so quickly erased from TANU's nation-building strategy given that tribal identity had been the main means to secure mass support for the nationalist movement. Iliffe perceptively observes:

TANU escaped it [regional and tribal fragmentation], partly because no ethnic group was large enough to contemplate a separate future, partly because Swahili bridged ethnic differences, and partly because the party machine was already strong before most people obtained the vote (Iliffe 1979: 569).

Having laid the foundation for a non-sectarian, multi-racial⁹ nation-state, Nyerere expounded a national ethos of *ujamaa*, posited on his interpretation of commonly held social values of agrarian tribal communities scaled up to apply to the collective welfare of the national population. The proclaimed national aim at independence was to eliminate ignorance, poverty and disease. This necessarily entailed addressing divisions between haves and have-nots. The Arusha Declaration of 1967 marked the official beginning of socialist policies in the country. A number of political leaders including Bibi Titi openly expressed their disapproval of the Leadership Code, which required them to divulge their financial assets and property and banned ownership of more than one residential property (Geiger 1997). Property ownership, especially land, was to become a major political issue.

⁸ It should be noted that this political move was not linked to any effort to end traditional usufruct land rights nor were traditional powers transferred to the new TANU structures *per se*. Nyerere was bent on creating a modernist nation-state which, nonetheless, left customary law at the local level largely intact.

⁹ At independence in 1961, TANU was still an 'Africans-only' party. The following year Amir Jamal, an Asian, and Derek Bryceson, a European, were accepted into the cabinet, signposting the multi-racial character of Nyerere's vision of the Tanzanian economy and politics.

Swahili Housing and Land in Dar es Salaam

Many aspects of the market economy were disavowed in socialist Tanzania. The urban housing market posed several dilemmas for a socialist government vigilant against land speculators and private property developers. Housing was a basic need but the government could not afford to become a massive provider of low cost housing, nor did it want to encourage urban migration with a cheap housing policy. In the post-independence period, Dar es Salaam grew very rapidly and the shortage of housing became acute (Stren 1975). For low-income earners and the unemployed, there were generally three options: renting a room in a private owned 'Swahili house', renting a room in 'quarters' that were government built, or 'squatting' by illegally building a makeshift dwelling on unauthorised city land.

The 'Swahili houses' consisted of a large building with a central corridor and three rooms on each side of the corridor with a shared courtyard at the back of the house where a kitchen, toilet/bath facilities and storeroom were also found. House building was a form of individual capital investment and creole Swahili, notably Arabs and to a lesser extent the Shomvi, had historically built such houses to provide rental income. The multi-tribal, multi-occupational nature of the tenants renting rooms in the Swahili houses, and their frequent turnover, ethnically mixed the city's population. Landlords were reasonably tolerant of late payment because a high level of indebtedness was the norm, given the low earnings of most Africans (Leslie 1963).

In nearby peri-urban areas, where the Zaramo had their coconut and rice farms, squatters were becoming ever more prevalent. The Zaramo negotiated understandings with the newcomers, which in the short-run were likely to be advantageous to the Zaramo. In the late 1950s, Leslie (1963) had observed that coconut plantations and rice fields were slipping out of Zaramo control, often as a way of resolving their heavy indebtedness.

During the colonial period Zaramo land sales had been frowned upon as a transgression of tribal land rights. After independence they were a transgression of socialist principles as well. Tanzania's post-colonial land law was designed to be 'anti-capitalist' against the interests of landlords and property owners, which in theory would place the landholding Zaramo in a poor bargaining position. On the other hand, this disadvantage was mitigated in their favour by legal and administrative confusion, affording the Zaramo ample opportunities to engage in the

land transactions that had become part of their peri-urban way of life. Although the Tanzanian state would have been loathe to acknowledge it, these insidious transactions not only gave Dar es Salaam physical room to expand, but provided a pressure valve for African households who may have otherwise become highly critical of the socialist government's failure to meet the urban housing demand.

Currently, the Swahili population of Dar es Salaam, specifically the indigenous Swahili encompassing people of Zaramo, Shomvi and Arab descent, are submerged in a metropolitan area in which they are a relatively small percentage of the total population. Ethnically they are not a salient political or economic force within the city or nation. Yet, by virtue of being the city's 'original inhabitants', they have played a central role in supplying land and labour in the city's urbanisation process historically to the present.

The to and fro movement of the Zaramo's migration to the city from the surrounding rural areas of Uzaramo and the city's encroachment on these areas has in the main not been an economically rewarding process for them.¹⁰ Their heyday came during the nineteenth century Omani trading empire. But as the descendants of the mercantile population, which generated Kiswahili as a versatile *lingua franca* and an *in situ* urban cosmopolitanism, their cultural legacy has made an inestimable contribution to Dar es Salaam's urban society and the political stability of the Tanzanian nation-state.

Ethnicity and Urbanisation in Two East African Capital Cities

Despite British colonial policies designed to prevent African urbanisation, the twentieth century witnessed Kampala's and Dar es Salaam's continual growth to become the most economically and culturally diverse settlements within their respective national borders (Bryceson 2006). Non-agrarian divisions of labour pivoting on trade and, to a very limited extent, industry developed. Both cities attracted migrants from

¹⁰ Dar es Salaam's expanding size was estimated to be: approximately 25 km² in 1945 (Caldas de Castro 2003), 70 km² in 1967, 170 km² in 1978 and 570 km² in 1992 (Mwamfupe 1994: 113 citing Dar es Salaam municipality statistics which exclude forest reserve land). See Briggs and Mwamfupe (2000) for further discussion of Dar es Salaam's spatial growth pattern. See also Map 1 of this chapter.

extremely wide ethnic spectrums. Evidence presented in this chapter suggests that Dar es Salaam provided migrants with easier access to land and labour opportunities affording them a more secure foothold relative to Kampala's migrants who contended with the Baganda monopoly on land in the Kibuga and advantageous position in the urban labour market. Troops storming the *Kibaka's* palace under Obote's orders in 1966 marked the end of the Baganda's ethnically favoured status in national politics. Amidst the political destabilisation that followed Idi Amin seized state power in 1971 catalyzing violence and high rates of insecurity in the city. There was a marked deceleration of urban growth in Kampala during the 1970s (Figure 11.1). The urban growth rate began recovering in the 1980s, but by then Kampala was dwarfed by Dar es Salaam's size, which was on course to become East Africa's largest city, surpassing Nairobi in the twenty-first century.

To this day, Uganda remains a primarily rural country with acute ethnic consciousness. Parts of northern and western Uganda continue to be sites of military insurgency. In this wider national context, Kampala is a peaceful refuge, but one in which there is a tribal sub-text. Kampala's residents daily contend with language and tribal cultural differences, which have the potential to impede commerce and social understanding.

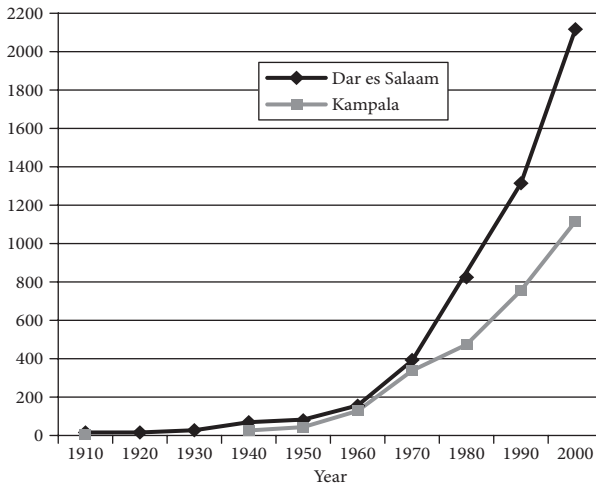
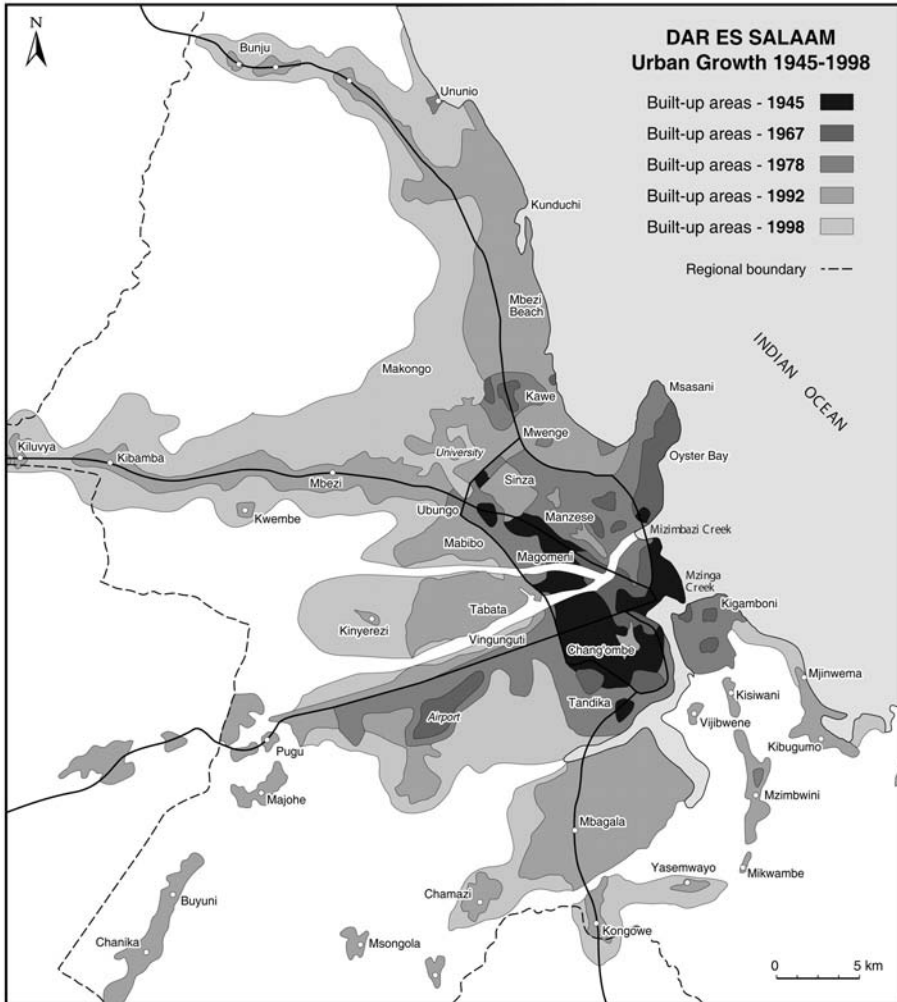


Figure 11.1. City population, 1910–2000. Sources: UN Population Division 2005, early Tanzanian census figures cited in Bryceson 1985, early Ugandan census figures cited in Lwasa 2004.

Tanzania, as a more urbanised country, has a far larger and more cosmopolitan economic capital. As an ethnic city, Dar es Salaam poses a paradox. The Swahili are the bunt of many jokes and disparaging comments about their alleged fecklessness. Nonetheless, their creole cultural legacy with its urbane tolerance of ethnic diversity and Kiswahili as a general communication medium, may well be a key reason why Tanzania is now seen as one of Sub-Saharan Africa's most stable nation-states. In the pre-colonial period, racial inter-marriage between Africans and Arabs generated a creole language and culture, which bridged racial and tribal barriers. Adherence to cultural and Islamic values, rather than skin colour *per se*, were the outward markings of the Swahili identity. It could be argued that the Swahili population's creole identity founded on ethnic diversity has been more conducive to the growth of an urban metropolis.

Using an ethnic melting pot analogy to compare the two cities, it is apparent that a melting point had already been achieved at the outset of Dar es Salaam's urbanisation process and continued to meld the population as it grew in scale. The Swahili culture facilitated ethnic integration. Although the majority of migrants to the city did not adopt a Swahili identity and retained their own tribal affiliations, nonetheless urban Swahili cultural values promoting multi-ethnic harmony were foundational. By contrast, Kampala in effect started burning before reaching the ethnic melting point and only in recent years shows signs of ethnic tolerance and mixing as the population and national ethnic power balance has reached a threshold in which Baganda separatism has taken on a quaint, out-moded appearance that few now see as politically threatening.

The experiences of these two cities suggest that scale is not necessarily the decisive factor in achieving trust across ethnic divides. Dar es Salaam's 'moral sociology of ethnicity' operated when it was a small settlement and persisted through time to the present whereas Kampala's ethnic equilibrium is being realised in the process of growth into a large, ethnically diverse population. Both cities were built upon the legacy of a regional ethnic hierarchy inherited from the nineteenth century East African slave trade. The Zaramo/Swahili historically gained their identity through creole inter-marriage rather than conquest, spoke Kiswahili as a *lingua franca* that was embraced by waves of newcomers to the city and did not assert dominance in post-colonial urban and national politics, making them a strong cultural influence rather than a political



Research data supplied by John Briggs, University of Glasgow and Davis Mwamfupe, University of Dar es Salaam.

Cartography by Mike Shand, University of Glasgow.

Map 11.1. Dar es Salaam. Urban growth 1945–1998. Sources: Research data supplied by John Briggs (University of Glasgow) and Davis Mwamfupe (University of Dar es Salaam). Cartography by Mike Shand (University of Glasgow).

threat. The Baganda were the opposite in all respects. Their combined cultural, economic and political domination in a city whose boundaries overlapped with their tribal kingdom made them a central and highly volatile force in Kampala's urban growth process. Kampala followed a combustible path towards large municipality status and is only now achieving a functional degree of ethnic harmony as the Baganda shrink in political and demographic importance amidst urban expansion. Dar es Salaam, on the other hand, represents a 'meltdown' model of urban coherence that is relatively unique in East Africa.

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POPULAR MUSIC, IDENTITY AND POLITICS IN A
COLONIAL URBAN SPACE: THE CASE OF MWANZA,
TANZANIA (1945–1961)

Maria Suriano

Introduction

This chapter aims to contribute to the recent historiography which attempts to understand the complex relationship between leisure, popular culture, identity and politics in colonial urban Africa. The focus here is on Mwanza, on the shore of Lake Victoria (North-Western Tanzania), in the space of a relatively short period of time, that is, from the end of the Second World War up to independence in 1961.¹ This contribution will particularly concentrate on the 1950s, when the Tanganyika African National Union (henceforth TANU, formed in 1954 in succession of the Tanganyika African Association, TAA) openly demanded independence. In those years, cultural institutions and leisure activities—such as music performances and football matches—became highly politicised.

By focusing on African agency and community based socio-political struggles for the control over urban space and leisure time,² this chapter seeks to show how in Mwanza the so-called ‘common’ people made use of welfare institutions and pastimes partly provided by the British authorities, yet successfully manipulating them. Mwanza residents actively re-interpreted both already existing and new recreational activities for political purposes, but also for the shaping of ‘modern’ identities.

¹ This chapter is based on my Ph.D. field-research. I wish to thank the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH) for having allowed me to do research in Tanzania from 2004 to 2005. I wish to extend a special word of thanks to my interviewees. I would also like to thank James Brennan, Preben Kaarsholm and Bodil F. Frederiksen for their comments on an earlier draft. All drawbacks remain entirely mine.

² Both social life and power structures are inscribed in time and space, which are important aspects of leisure (Cooper 1983: 23, 31, Bonner and Lodge 1989: 2, Martin 1995: 3–7).

Studies of leisure in Africa—partly built on E.P. Thompson-inspired social history—have been established during the past decade (see for example Martin 1995, Fair 2001, the special issue of the *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 2002: 1–136). According to these studies, the analysis of leisure and popular culture highlights cultural and social practices together with political issues, beyond the description of the daily lives of Africans usually neglected by ‘official’ history.

In colonial towns, promoting “disciplined”, “healthy” (Martin 1995: 125), “decent”, “constructive” (Kaarsholm 1999: 235), “purposeful” (Akyeampong and Ambler 2002: 11), or “appropriate” (Burton 2003: 332) forms of recreation for Africans, became a preoccupation for administrations, who realised that leisure could represent a threat to order (Akyeampong and Ambler 2002: 15, Couzens 1985: 82). In urban spaces, local concepts of pastimes “often clashed with the efforts of colonial officials” (as well as missionaries and local elites) to regulate “what they regarded as appropriate leisure activities for African workers and town dwellers” (Akyeampong and Ambler 2002: 5, see also Cooper 1983, Martin 1995, Burton 2003: 335–40, 363). The reference here is to town dwellers and urban contexts, since in the colonial period the city was by definition the place in which the political dimension of leisure had more visibility.

Over the last decade it has been demonstrated—mainly through oral research—that during the struggle for independence in Tanganyika, many dance societies provided the base from which TANU activists were recruited, partly because these associations were channels of communication less controlled by the British administration (Nchimbi 1995, Geiger 1997, Suriano 2001, Tsuruta 2003).³ Terence Ranger had already pointed out that the ability of Beni *ngoma* societies to mobilise and unite people—forging “a degree of co-ordination which the Europeans had certainly not intended or expected them to be able to achieve”—constituted an unsettling element to British power (Ranger 1975: 44). Before TANU was established, “among the founder members of the African Association were men who had earlier taken a leading role in the Beni associations” (ibid.: 94).⁴

³ My field-research conducted in 2000 was mainly based on interviews with elderly women in Dar es Salaam, Morogoro, Kilosa and Kimamba.

⁴ As Kelly Askew (2002: 95) has recently underlined, when TANU was formed, it was not by chance that a strong core of its leaders and activists was made up of musicians,

Although this chapter does not provide a counter-narrative to the theory on the relationship between leisure and politics, it presents new material by focusing on a relatively small town which has been quite neglected by social historians.⁵ It also shows how the reconstruction of musical activities, particularly ‘jazz’ performances, reveals that British efforts to organise and control pastimes in Mwanza remained largely unsuccessful.⁶

Mwanza Town

Originally inhabited by the cultural-linguistic group of the Sukuma (or Basukuma, which in Sukuma language means “people from the North”), Mwanza—located in Sukumaland—began to take shape as a colonial town at the turn of the nineteenth century. An important trading centre since pre-colonial times, at the beginning of the twentieth century Mwanza attracted many people from other parts of the country. The township (the African residential area of the town) was also inhabited by coastal people, who settled in the mid nineteenth century. Amongst them were the Swahili (Muslims whose first language is Swahili), whilst others were non-Muslim migrants and upcountry Muslims. After the Second World War an increasing number of people from other upcountry towns, such as Tabora, Bukoba, Singida, moved to the town to go into business.⁷ As a result, the African population was quite heterogeneous.

Colonial Mwanza belonged to the Lake Province, and since German occupation the township was segregated in three racial zones, for Europeans, Asians,⁸ and Africans. In 1956, the exact African population

poets, and dancers. Among those poets who became political activists in the Lake Province, it is worth mentioning Saadani Abdu Kandoro (Kitogo 2002).

⁵ I have chosen to ‘give a voice’ to my interviewees, both because the oral testimonies for that period are becoming more scarcely available day by day, but also because the theme investigated requires the backup of oral sources. All interviews quoted here were conducted in Mwanza. All translations from Swahili are mine. Tape recordings of the interviews are in my possession.

⁶ This observation can be applied to British social policies in general (Burton 2003, Eckert 2004).

⁷ Interview with Ibrahim Omar Aladin, 15 September 2005.

⁸ In East Africa the term “Asians” is referred to people who originated from the Indian sub-continent. Before the partition of Britain India in 1947, immigrants from South-Asia were known as “Indians”. Thereafter, this term was no longer acceptable to the Muslims who form the majority of Asians in Tanzania.

was not known, however according to the District Commissioner F.J. Riddel, there was “no doubt” that it was “well above the 1952 Census figure of 10,668 Africans”, of whom 4,411 were “male adults between the ages of 16 and 45; this compares with the figure of 7,119 taxes paid in Mwanza (Urban) District in 1955”.⁹ In spite of its small scale, Mwanza had a vibrant cultural life.¹⁰

A feature of political life in Mwanza was that before its inhabitants became TANU supporters, many of them had previously been TAA members. For instance, some interviewees, who were in their twenties and thirties during the 1950s, first became TAA and later TANU supporters. Interestingly, they commented that “there was no difference between the two parties”,¹¹ whereas TAA is commonly viewed as a “social organisation”, a “proto-political”, “proto-nationalist” or “semi-political” association (Maguire 1969: XXII, 64–5, 82). It must be underlined that by late 1952 while “the Dar es Salaam TAA was practically moribund” (Geiger 1997: 137), the TAA branch in Mwanza was very active (Maguire 1969: 65). An important innovation in the new TAA’s constitution, drafted in early 1954, was “to prepare the people of Tanganyika for self-Government and Independence”, and “to advance education, trade unions, and cooperatives”.¹² According to Iliffe (1979: 512), the very idea of preparing the country for independence, “probably came from Mwanza”.

The concept that independence was initially called for by an educated (male) elite does not fully reflect the situation in Mwanza, in which the end of colonial rule was demanded, among others, by Muslim, semi-

⁹ F.J. Riddel, District Commissioner, Mwanza (Urban), to the District Commissioner, Dar es Salaam, 16th February, 1956, “Councils, Conferences, Boards, etc. Township Ward Councils”, Tanzania National Archives [henceforth TNA] 41 C.5/9/61. Other sources indicate that Mwanza in the mid-1950s had a population of 14,044 (Burton 2001–2002: 23, quoting J.F.R. Hill and J.P. Moffett. 1955. *Tanganyika: A Review of its Resources and their Development*, Dar es Salaam, pp. 821–22).

¹⁰ The files “Cinemas, Circus, Games of Skill, Ngomas, etc.”, 1957–1959, TNA 41/T.2/11/II, and “Township and Minor Settlement. Cinemas, Circus, Games of Skill, Ngomas, etc.”, 1959–1961, TNA 246/T.2/11/VII, are entirely composed of requests and licenses to hold performances and other leisure activities in various urban spaces. These bulky files apparently tell us nothing except for a list of names and roads where the Mwanza sociability took place, but they indicate the extent to which the township was alive from the point of view of entertainment.

¹¹ Interview with Erasto Masunga, 3 October 2005. See also Maguire 1969: 65.

¹² The Tanganyika African Association: Constitution, enclosed in District Commissioner Singida to Provincial Commissioner, Central Province, Dodoma, 29th June 1954, TNA 68/R.2/3.

educated, mostly non-Sukuma TAA leaders (Maguire 1969: 65, 137; on “unsophisticated militants” from the Lake Province, see Iliffe 1979: 510). It had been precisely the radicalism of the TAA branch in Mwanza which made the British seriously alarmed at political developments in the Lake Province, to the point that in mid 1953 they took the step of prohibiting civil servants from joining TAA. Moreover, between 1954 and 1958, TANU branches were banned in the Lake Province, although for non-civil servants there was no official provision against being a TANU member (Maguire 1969: 181).

In 1958, when multi-racial councils were experimented with in the Geita District (see Maguire 1969: 223–8), strong civil disobedience arose, which in July 1958 ended up in a march from Geita by thousands of protesting people who gathered on a sports field about one block from the provincial government offices, located in Mwanza. During the demonstration “to refuse the coalition, and colonialism in general”, the police threw tear gas bombs at the crowd—*mzee* Amani Magongo recalls—“because here, when [nationalist] politics began, it began with great strength”.¹³ In 1958, shortly after the ban on TANU was lifted, Julius K. Nyerere visited Mwanza (Maguire 1969: 256). Asked how many TANU members there were among the crowd, all the people showed their cards. In spite of the official ban, cards were sold clandestinely (*ibid.*: 188), and Mwanza inhabitants had already become TANU members.¹⁴

Another feature is that Mwanza—to an extent comparable only to the area of Kilimanjaro—witnessed the establishment of a powerful cooperative movement, which in 1955 took the shape of the Victoria Federation Cooperative Union (VFCU), “a cooperative of cotton growers against the exploitation [perpetrated] by Indian traders”,¹⁵ whose first general manager was Paul Bomani.

Many interviewees shared the opinion that without Bomani, Nyerere would not have become popular in this zone. More generally, Tanganyikan independence was not a process just led by Nyerere and other educated leaders, but rather the result of a continuous negotiation with ‘ordinary’ people. Without a widespread popular support, Nyerere would not have been able to obtain his personal success in

¹³ Interview with Amani Magongo, 4 November 2004. *Mzee* (literally, “old person”), is a term of respect for an old man.

¹⁴ This story is popular among my interviewees. Zuhura Mussa gave a similar version to Geiger (1997: 154); see also Maguire 1969: 196–234, 250.

¹⁵ Interview with Moses Kaseko, 13 September 2005. See also Maguire 1969: 82.

so short a time, and the country would not have got its independence after a relatively brief period of struggle. Moreover, if it is undeniable that Tanganyikan independence was achieved through the backing and the support of the United Nations, it must be taken into account that this whole phase was influenced and shaped by mostly non-educated activists and supporters.

As regards the ways in which TANU operated, important tools were recruiting tours and missions from headquarters.¹⁶ TANU activists throughout the country also organised collections of subscriptions and fund-raising activities as well as the selling of membership cards. In Dar es Salaam, many illiterate women beer brewers “organised house-to-house canvassing” (Iliffe 1979: 531; for a parallel role played by women brewers in Arusha see Nchimbi 1995). Similar tasks were carried out by women and men who belonged to dance societies and football clubs (Geiger 1997, Suriano 2001, Tsuruta 2003).

Mwanza Welfare Centre

Since 1946, British authorities established Social Welfare Centres throughout Tanganyika, which were supposed to have a certain importance in the geography of colonial towns.¹⁷ This is not the place to expand on the complex and accelerated political developments that took place in the country during and after the Second World War, which led to the creation of Welfare Centres (Cooper 1996: 470, Burton 2003: 331; for social development, see Eckert 2004). These Centres were meant to provide principally former soldiers and ‘detribalised’ African workers with educational recreational activities which were “western in character”.¹⁸ In this context, and with something of a lack of finances, British authorities established the Mwanza Welfare Centre. No construction work was undertaken, as it was decided to utilise the Aga Khan Gymkana Club, a club house leased by the Ismailia com-

¹⁶ For more on TANU’s means of expansion, see Iliffe 1979: 518–22.

¹⁷ See Burton 2003. On Dar es Salaam, see TNA 540/3/70.

¹⁸ “Dar es Salaam’s Community Centre”, *Tanganyika Standard*, 8th December 1952.

munity.¹⁹ In 1948, the centre had 106 members.²⁰ Erasto Masunga spent his life in Busweru, near Nyakato, a trading centre a few miles from Mwanza on the Musoma road. He recounted to me that the Centre “was initially leased by Khoja Indians”, adding that “the whole Asian community resided near there, in Nyerere Road”—the name of which was Ikoma road at that time—and utilised the building “on their days-off for enjoyment, such as weddings, for their picnics, to play cards and Indian games”, whereas Africans “played different games and lived in different zones”.²¹

To give an idea of the purposes for which the Welfare Centres were intended, I will refer to the case of Dar es Salaam, about which there are more archival sources. The Alexandra Hall of Dar es Salaam was to provide people with illustrated books and games, and in the evening the hall would be used for meetings, lectures, dances, and cinema shows.²² In other urban contexts, attempts to establish a library turned out to be unsuccessful. In the Report on Social Welfare for the year 1946, we see that in Tanga, although the centre had not yet been built, there was a welfare library which “had to close down during the year owing to lack of patronage.” Allegedly the main reason for its lack of popularity was that it was “situated some distance away from the African residential quarter”.²³

In the same report we see that the “density of population in the immediate vicinity of the selected site” was deemed an “obvious point of importance,” for people would not “walk far to make use of it except for the purpose of attending some special function such as a dance, a film show or a theatrical performance”.²⁴ It suggests that people were willing to walk long distances in order to have what they conceived as ‘fun’. By 1955, however, “the 40 such so-called ‘Welfare Centres’” existing in Tanganyika “were generally moribund [and] there were plans

¹⁹ E.C. Baker, Social Welfare Organizer, Annual Report on Social Welfare, 1946, Native Affairs, African Social Welfare, TNA 540/3/70.

²⁰ Notes on Welfare Centres, Appendix B, Annual Report on Social Welfare, 1948, TNA 540/3/70.

²¹ Interview with Masunga.

²² The Social Welfare Organizer, to the Municipal Secretary, Dar es Salaam, 2nd October 1948, TNA 540/3/70.

²³ Annual Report on Social Welfare for 1946.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

to turn them into attractive Community Centres with beer gardens attached".²⁵

The Mwanza Welfare Centre became a "Community Centre" in 1959, "for the formation of Youth and Boys' [*sic*] Clubs" and "to encourage such activities as boxing, handicrafts, literacy classes and scouting".²⁶ Also "provision of bar facilities and the profits" were seen as "an essential feature of the financial solvency of the centre". Then a "soft bar" was opted for, since the *Liwali*—the town's most senior 'native' official—said that a bar close to the library would discourage "more respectable people" to patronise the centre.²⁷ In Mwanza, as well as in other—both coastal and upcountry—Tanganyikan towns, leisure activities, such as attending adult literacy classes in the Welfare Centres, were provided by the British administration with educational aims. Other pastimes, such as drinking *pombe* (home-brewed beer) at the African clubs, playing and watching football, performing and listening to jazz, *ngoma*,²⁸ and *taarab*,²⁹ were mostly African initiatives, and seem to have been deep-rooted in the township. Nevertheless, their meanings changed over the years.

The Mwanza Welfare Centre: An Occasion to Socialise

Quoting the Report on Social Development in Tanganyika for 1950, Andrew Burton (2003: 348) underlines that "contrary to European expectations", by 1952 the most popular activity in the "thirty-eight centres operating in Tanganyika's urban and semi-urban areas" was

²⁵ Extracts from Minutes of PCs Conference, June 1955, TNA 50424, in Geiger 1997: 31.

²⁶ The DO, Proposed Mwanza Community Centre, 1959, "Social Development and Welfare, Mwanza Community Centre", TNA 246/S.1/2. Besides the *Liwali*, in Mwanza there was an assistant *Liwali* and five Town Headmen, each Headman was in charge of one of the Wards of the Town. TNA 41 C 5.9/61. For the native administration in Dar es Salaam, see Burton 2001–2002.

²⁷ Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of the Management Board of the Mwanza Community Centre Held at the Office of the District Commissioner (Urban), 10th February 1960, "Social Development and Welfare, Mwanza Community Centre", TNA 246/S/2.

²⁸ *Ngoma* (literally "drum, dance"): is commonly used to mean an event involving drumming, singing and dancing.

²⁹ *Taarab*: sung Swahili poetry, a genre which originated in Zanzibar at the turn of the nineteenth century.

dancing “of the European sort, but to African bands”.³⁰ People interviewed in Mwanza in fact remember the local centre as a place to go in order to relax and dance. The very Swahili term for Welfare Centre is *Jumba la Starehe* (literally, “building for enjoyment”).

For *mzee* William Kafiti, born in 1933 in Nyakato, outside the town, the Welfare Centre was only meant “for white people”, conceiving white as “high class”, the “educated ones”.³¹ This would suggest that within the Mwanza Welfare Centre, class tensions, if not a conflict, arose between the “social snob” educated elite, and uneducated manual workers, as would appear from the case of Dar es Salaam (there are hints about this tension in Burton 2003: 352–3; Eckert 2004: 480). This chapter will not, however, expand of this subject, which would require more research.

Mzee Amani Magongo, born in 1922 in the Mwanza township, where he still lives, was the District Commissioner’s driver from 1947. He dealt with the activities of the local Welfare Centre, which:

was patronised by businessmen, government clerks, every kind of people [...]. You would not have entered unless you were a member. There were many *dansi* [jazz] concerts [...]. At that time we imitated the Cuban music a lot. There were many bands, and the centre was frequented by young people. [...] Since I am a Muslim, I could not allow my [two] wives to go there with me. So, I used to dance with unmarried Muslim women, or with Christian ones.³²

In 1934, the District Officer Edward C. Baker had already observed that in Tanga, amongst the “difficulties connected with this form of recreation”, i.e. jazz dancing, one was that “no Mohammedan will dance with his wife or with his female relations, while the non-Mohammedan natives are also generally unwilling to allow their womenfolk to attend the dances” (Baker 1934: 99).

In 1959, however, the District Commissioner reported that “the Welfare Centre” in Mwanza was “not fully utilised”.³³ When it was used, it seems that in Mwanza—as everywhere throughout Tanganyika—“as

³⁰ Report on Social Development in Tanganyika, 1950, PRO/CO/859/220/10, in Burton 2003: 351.

³¹ Interview with William Kafiti, 10 September 2005.

³² Interview with Magongo.

³³ The DC Social Development and Welfare, Mwanza Community Centre, 24th August 1959, TNA 246/S.1/2.

usual, dances [...] were the [most] popular activities”.³⁴ Significantly, it is a townswoman, Martha Katani, a Catholic, and a housewife, born in 1937, who stressed the importance of the Welfare Centre as an opportunity to attend various courses, literacy classes and women’s meetings. She did not use to go to the clubs, nor did she attend jazz performances. She took pride in emphasising that if she went out, it was in order to attend sewing or cooking courses for women. At that time, “people were not educated, they did not study English. If a woman set out to study”—she points out—“people would say: ‘She will become a prostitute!’”³⁵

*Mwanza Jazz: The “Seduction of Modernity”*³⁶

Since the town was segregated, in African areas there were clubs in which jazz, *taarab* or *ngoma* groups performed—including *lelemama*, a female dance style which originated along the coast³⁷—and also where *vichekesho* (local theatrical farces) took place.³⁸ These groups needed a written permit from local authorities. Although there were many *ngoma* groups which hired bars for performances, in Mwanza town the popular music was by definition jazz.³⁹

Tanganyikan jazz—commonly referred to as *dansi* (or *densi*, from dance), or *muziki wa dansi* (dance music)—is quintessentially urban and pan-ethnic music, performed with both African and Western instruments, sung in Swahili and composed by men. In the 1930s, Tanganyikan jazz was danced by “the detribalised native with social aspirations” in clubs or “dance-halls rented for the purpose” instead of in “public streets” (Baker 1934: 99).⁴⁰ Later on this music began to reach more socially diversified audiences, including Muslims, coastal people and lower class city dwellers. African jazz bands were strongly influenced by Latin-American music (such as *charanga*, *pachanga*, bolero, cha cha cha, tango), the emerging Congolese rumba, but also

³⁴ Annual Report on Social Welfare for 1948.

³⁵ Interview with Martha Katani, 15 September 2005.

³⁶ This term is borrowed from Odhiambo 2001–2002: 264.

³⁷ *Lelemama* was roughly the equivalent of *Beni* male groups.

³⁸ Liwali’s Office, Mwanza, to District Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police, Mwanza, 19th October 1960, TNA 246 T/2/177. For *vichekesho*, see TNA 246/T.2/11/VII, and Annual Report on Social Welfare for 1946.

³⁹ Interview with Masunga.

⁴⁰ Also quoted by Ranger 1975: 94, and Askew 2002: 92.

by waltz, twist, swing, cakewalk, etc. A research team of the African Music Society who visited East Africa in 1950, observed that “dance bands in all East Africa” were “playing Africanized versions of Brazilian rumbas, congas and sambas.” (Tracey 1952: 45).

Born in 1936 in Mtakuja Street, in the township, *mzee* Mustafa Ally still lives there. His source of revenue was agriculture, but he is a former member of the Scout Rumba, a local jazz band which lasted up to 1959. He played “for entertainment”—musicians were not paid, and the band leader was Juma Samson, whose father was from Mombasa.⁴¹ No better words can express the significance of jazz music than the following:

We used to perform love songs, with messages for society, on the rules of good living, on how to keep ourselves out of trouble, not to end up in jail or injured. Also songs with offensive words were prohibited. [...] We imitated songs from Congo, love songs, and the voice modulation of Congolese singers. However our lyrics were in Swahili. [...] Later on I joined the Tanganyika Jazz Band, composed of people from other groups that had split [...]. In order to perform at the Community Centre, one would need a written certificate. Musicians went to ask for permission, then spread information of the concert, and the audiences would come, paying one shilling [...]. *Dansi* was seen as the music of the new generation. [...] There were also women going to ballroom dance alone. So, these dances encouraged the beginning of new romances [...]. Elderly people complained that: “The youth of today like this music. They throw their arms around each other, they dance holding each other tight, in the way a man holds a woman around her waist. They make love in front of everybody. But these things are supposed to be done privately! [...] The youth of today! Things are going astray.” Because if males and females meet in a certain place, it is obvious that changes will occur!⁴²

Jazz events were an occasion for meeting people, and what E.S. Atieno Odhiambo (2001–2002: 264)—referring to Kenyan guitar music—has called “the seduction of ‘modernity’”, can be discerned in the same years in Mwanza. This music was also the place where generational, gender and class tensions could arise. For instance, jazz is referred to by Iliffe (1979: 392) as “the international, individualistic ballroom dancing whose personalised sexuality shocked the elderly.”

The rapid diffusion of jazz also led to a debate in the Swahili press. In a letter published in 1947, we find these comments:

⁴¹ It is worth noting that since the beginning of the twentieth century Mwanza was into the Mombasa economic orbit (Jones 1991: 63).

⁴² Interview with Mustafa Ally, 7 September 2005.

In the afternoons, in [Tanganyikan] towns, lots of young people sit in music bars, in *mahoteli* [tea houses] or in other places where you can chat, and it is impossible to hear a single youth talking about constructive things to do with their future, they talk rather about what happened the day they went to dance clubs.⁴³

It is clear from this letter that jazz was a typical urban pastime, and spaces such as music bars and tea houses were central to social life in urban Tanganyika. Despite the title of the letter, “*Dansi destroys us young people*”, the negative judgment toward this music—which in the 1940s was widespread especially amongst educated youths—would lead us to think that it was written by a middle-aged man. There is, however, no further evidence of this. Moreover, the opinion of African elders with regards to these ‘promiscuous’ dances often coincided with that of British officials. According to the Report of the Social Welfare Office for 1946:

This western style of dancing cannot be viewed with unreserved approval until such time as a man can dance with his wife and allow her to dance in public with other men [...] and the necessity of inviting spinsters to provide partners for the men is to be deplored.⁴⁴

From these lines, as well Martha Katani’s testimony, it can be perceived that urban leisure activities were highly gendered. Married women (both Christians and Muslims) usually spent their leisure hours at home, and some of them attended domestic courses at the Welfare Centre. *Mzee Ally* and *mzee Magongo*’s words show that both Christian and Muslim unmarried women were able to attend dances, and meet several male dancing partners, who sometimes became their husbands.

Good Standards of Dress and Behaviour

The rules for attending ballroom dances in the Welfare Centres—partly established by Africans themselves—did not allow people inside unless they were properly dressed and behaved politely (that is, dancing correctly and avoiding drunkenness).⁴⁵

⁴³ Letter of Gibson C. Kumwenda (Labour Office, Tanga), “*Vijana tunaharibika kwa dansi*”, *Mambo Leo*, January 1947. For more on the Swahili press, see Suriano 2007.

⁴⁴ *Tanganyika Standard*, 8th May 1948 (also quoted in Burton 2003: 351).

⁴⁵ Annual Report on Arnautoglu Community Centre, 1956, PRO/CO 822/1803.

Dressing well could even affect the degree of success of a group. It is well known—*mzee* Ally explained—that in Mwanza, the most successful band was Lake Show Show, which was loved by the audiences because:

it was formed by respectable people, of a certain age and a certain *uwezo* [social and economic ability], who could afford to buy good *sare* [uniforms], and clothes. [Male] audiences would not have gone to their shows dressed carelessly, but wearing ties and suites. All the musicians from this group have since passed away.⁴⁶

As regards the social composition of this band, it is unclear whether it was actually formed by well-off men, or whether it succeeded in representing such so common desire of social mobility and acquisition of ‘modernity’ (for modernity see Appadurai 1996, Ferguson 1999, Raftopoulos & Yoshikuni 1999, Deutsch et al. 2002), shared by both musicians and their audiences. In Senegal, Cuban-influenced music has been “a tool for forging a modern cultural identity, [and] an alternative modernity to the Europeanized models” (Shain 2002: 84). Can this outlook be applied to Tanganyikan jazz? Both oral testimonies and the local press show how in Mwanza this creolised genre helped to mould a modern cultural identity. However, in my understanding, both Tanganyikan jazz bands and their audiences had nothing in particular against “Europeanized” models *per se*, for they appreciated western influences in music and clothes, at the same time appropriating them for political purposes.

The Appropriation of Urban Jazz for Political Purposes

Mzee Masunga was a civil servant, so he had to buy his TANU card clandestinely. He traced the circulation of political songs back to the official birth of TANU, arguing that political themes appeared in jazz songs even before the official setting up of TANU, “which was in 1954, let us say only officially. [...] Because before this date, this party already existed: between TAA and TANU there was no difference”.⁴⁷

According to *mzee* Ally, jazz musicians aimed to praise their TANU leaders, and “to produce positive publicity to promote them, so that

⁴⁶ Interview with Ally.

⁴⁷ Interview with Masunga. This opinion is shared by other people interviewed in Mwanza.

people would respect them”, and “*citizens* would know who their leaders were”, and what exactly TANU was, “so that Tanganyika would become independent”.⁴⁸ When TANU was formed, his band, and also other groups, composed and sang politically-engaged songs, always in Swahili, the idiom of the struggle for independence.⁴⁹ One of these songs said:

“Let us build the Country, let us emancipate our Country, TANU, we must love TANU”. We sang this song even before the lift on the TANU ban. It was a song that everybody subscribed to. You know, at that time [...] we, the Tanganyikans, were supposed to invest our energy in this party, to obtain independence. While TANU had been officially banned, [...] it was prohibited to sing political songs in public [...]. When the party was readmitted, this song was like an announcement [that it was back]. In 1958, things went along nicely and we were able to sing: “Let us expel the colonialist, he has sucked us dry for a long time. We have to free ourselves”.⁵⁰

Not only did British laws prevent civil servants from joining TANU or any other political association in the whole country, but in Mwanza any kind of political activity was officially banned in the crucial years of TANU diffusion. As a result, according to my informants, jazz performances were tools to ‘mask’ independence claims, encourage audiences to join TANU through “positive publicity” to its leaders, and unite townspeople. Much of these activities were spontaneously organised by TANU supporters. On the other hand, TANU leaders themselves to some extent encouraged jazz performances to recruit new members, and allow information circulation (see Fair 1994: 316–19). Broadly, in periods of “difficulties and dangers of engaging in ‘open’ politics”, cultural forms acquire “a special significance” (Kaarsholm 1999: 229).⁵¹

⁴⁸ Interview with Ally.

⁴⁹ According to Iliffe (1979: 530) Sukumaland was one of the few Tanganyikan areas in which Nyerere needed an interpreter. However, it seems that in Mwanza town Swahili was the most common language of communication.

⁵⁰ Interview with Ally. Their songs were not recorded, and I was unable to collect song lyrics.

⁵¹ In Bulawayo, when “political meetings were banned, [...], cultural activity took on a new significance as ‘substitute politics’” (Kaarsholm 1999: 245). On the “paradoxical” relationship between culture and politics, according to which “culture can become a rehearsal for politics, trying out new values and beliefs permissible in art but forbidden in social life”, see George Lipsitz. 1990. *Time Passages*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 16–7, quoted by Fair 1994, XV. For the tolerance, in many central and Southern African societies, towards socio-political attacks made via artistic form,

During the 1950s, both concerts-and-dance parties, especially when competitions between two bands took place, were utilised to collect money for the TANU.⁵² These dual competitions seem to have been already widespread in the 1930s among the dance clubs. They could be traced in the older *ngoma* societies, and were inherited by jazz groups as well as football clubs.⁵³ In Kabwela's words:

In the case of a competition between two bands which played *dansi*, one from Mwanza, and the other from another town, people would pay a ticket price: a certain amount of which was given to the guest bands from the other town, the rest designated to the Community Centre. With those funds, people would set up an evening class. My wife studied at the evening school, where people were taught how to read and write. The British gave us the permit, the District Commissioner helped organise it. A percentage [of money] was reserved for the visiting bands [...], for their travel expenses, accommodation, and food. The rest went [...] to TANU, to run TANU.⁵⁴

In Tanganyika, jazz performances and ballroom dancing were among the main sources of revenue of the Community Centres,⁵⁵ the "self-financing nature" of which, was considered as "essential for the development of the social and financial responsibility" needed to build a "community spirit of self-help." (Burton 2003: 350, quoting the Report to UN on Administration of Tanganyika for 1950, para, 563).

Ironically, oral sources tell us that this "spirit of self-help" was reinterpreted as collecting money to help the TANU. From this testimony, it seems that the remaining amount of money collected at the entrance of the centres was eventually given to TANU, and was utilised to organise evening classes.⁵⁶

see Vail and White 1983: 887–8. Kelly Askew (2002: 95) has briefly commented that before independence, Tanganyikans voiced "their political agendas in song", and used "musical events as opportunities for education and organization". On jazz in urban Zanzibar, there are similar clues in Fair (1994: 318–9).

⁵² Interview with Ismael Juma Mlima, known as *mzee* Kabwela (literally, "proletarian"), 14 September 2005.

⁵³ For football and politics in Dar es Salaam, see Tsuruta 2003.

⁵⁴ Interview with Kabwela.

⁵⁵ Arnautoglu Community Centre, 1956.

⁵⁶ I have no further evidence of this. Nonetheless, there were dance clubs in other areas, such as the "Garden Enjoyers Dancing Club" of Manyoni, which opened night schools "for everyone who wanted to study English, and to read and write." *Mambo Leo*, January 1947.

Competing Claims

An element that emerges from the analysis of the meanings of jazz in Mwanza is that my interviewees omitted any reference to competition between TANU and other parties,⁵⁷ as well as any mention of internal conflicts within this party, and the different aspirations which could lead townspeople both to demand independence and attend jazz performances. Here as elsewhere, informants “glamourise” and “romanticise” the past (Bonner and Lodge 1989: 6–7).⁵⁸ As remarked by Luisa Passerini, “seemingly loquacious”, oral sources “finally prove to be reticent or enigmatic, [...] they force us to reformulate problems, and challenge current habits of thought.” (Passerini 1980: 4, quoted in Bozzoli 1991: 245, footnote 15). Thus, it would be interesting to have the opportunity to understand how informants deal with the repression of memories of conflict. Such silence in their testimony might be due to institutional amnesia in some cases, but may also be a sign of the “rich cultural evidence concerning popular consciousness”, as observed for the South African case (Bonner and Lodge 1989: 7). The reproduction of a sort of ‘heroic’, one-dimensional narrative of an African population united against the British, suggests the need of taking into account the production of memory at different points in time, particularly in light of the post-colonial changes in individual and collective identities. Representations of the past are always re-negotiations, rather than mere remembrances.

Another emerging element is that the requirements to attend dance-and-concert nights were apparently in line with British bids and expectations to shape a respectable and disciplined urban population. Mwanza inhabitants, nevertheless, benefited from their participation in ballroom dancing in unexpected ways, and jazz music in the 1950s became functional to the nationalist movement.

In urban Tanganyika, in the early years of nationalist organisation and socialisation, it was precisely the British imposed construction of a “spirit of self-help”—mainly experienced within quintessentially urban spaces—which gave townspeople an opportunity to build new

⁵⁷ For more on UTP see Iliffe 1979: 521, 528–9.

⁵⁸ According to Bonner and Lodge, “in some ways this presents itself as a problem peculiarly South African, where the dispossession and relocation of subordinated communities has been less the exception than the rule” (ibid.). However, my interviews seem to suggest that this cannot be considered as a peculiarity of South Africa.

networks, demonstrate their capacity to self-organise as well as exercise ‘power’ and ‘modern’ organisational skills not only in symbolic forms, but also in concrete terms.

This “spirit of self-help” might have allowed Mwanza inhabitants—both the ‘masses’ and the elite—to build “potentials for a new political culture”, and “for the articulation of democratic initiative from below”, as happened in Bulawayo (Kaarsholm 1999: 230).⁵⁹

However, it would be misleading to consider Community Centres, clubs and urban halls only as spaces in which the terrain for the nationalist campaign was prepared. Jazz had a political nature, but also played an ambivalent role. What might have encouraged a number of young people to attend jazz concerts and ballroom dancing instead of *ngoma* performances could have been a component of challenge to parental control, and antiauthoritarian rather than nationalist concerns. However, for youths residing in Mwanza, jazz music and western clothes were not necessarily a way to oppose religious and moral rules, but rather, a tool to appropriate the “means of modernity”.⁶⁰ This was the case of both Muslim and Christian mainly unmarried youths, as showed by my interviews. Oral testimonies show how *ngoma* performances were seen by many urban youths (both educated and not) as “matters of the old generations”, related to the “old fashioned” rural culture.⁶¹ Both musicians and their audiences wanted to secure a place in the ‘modern’ world, which could be gained through jazz, ‘good’ appearance, and ‘polite’ behaviour.

It seems that attending jazz concerts did not differ much according to such variables like social class. For example the peasant Mustafa Ally was based in town and played guitar in a local jazz band. Nor did religious belonging prevent people from joining jazz bands and attending spectacles—as shown by the case of Mustafa Ally and Amani Magongo. In addition ethnic belonging does not appear as an important element in the choice of the preferred band. Rather, it was the display of elegance and *uwezo* that really mattered for the audiences.

While attending jazz performances, men and women appropriated—primarily in a symbolic way—those elements of British power which allowed them to express new identities, as well as their autonomy, while

⁵⁹ Kaarsholm makes this observation for drama groups in Bulawayo (*ibid.*).

⁶⁰ This term is borrowed from Appadurai 1996.

⁶¹ Interview with Ally. This view is shared by other people I interviewed in Dar es Salaam.

remaining well within the sphere of ‘respectability’, a concept intertwined with ‘modernity’.⁶² The fact that these elements were apparently in line with British conventions, is perhaps one of the reasons why the British were not alarmed by the development of urban jazz.

It can be underlined that in the 1950s, the intensified access to new fashions and musical styles allowed both elite and non-elite townspeople to further distance themselves from their rural counterparts, and enabled youths to differentiate themselves from adults.

Whereas in South Africa “the demonstration of worthiness [through jazz and clothes] had ultimately to take place before the eyes of the whites” (Ballantine 1991: 134), it seems that in Mwanza such “demonstration” was probably directed not only towards the British, but also towards their fellow Africans. This brings us to the statement that, unlike in South Africa, British administrators in Tanganyika did not define urban spaces as white. In South Africa “the policy of segregation has made the contestation of space one of the central political struggles” (Bonner and Lodge 1989: 2), while in Tanganyika British attempts to control urban spaces were ineffective and segregation policies were not fully implemented. If nationalist grievances involve a claim to space, Mwanza inhabitants, even during the ban on TANU, considered urban space as fundamentally their own.

Not only the aspirant elite-to-be (once they had obtained self-rule; see Fair 1994: 316–19), but also non-educated people, could demonstrate their worthiness through urban jazz, as indicated by the case of Mustafa Ally. Similarly, in South Africa, the concert-and-dance pattern held for both working-class and middle-class entertainment (Coplan 1985: 129). Also in Senegal, “for both western-educated Senegalese and urban workers, a shared passion for Afro-Cuban music constituted an important common meeting ground” (Shain 2002: 94). Although urban jazz had the power to unite townspeople, especially youths, class distinctions were still felt at a local level, as revealed in the Tanganyikan press. A comic strip entitled “Juha Kasembe and the modern world” published in

⁶² Similar processes are mentioned in other works. In colonial urban Zanzibar, through jazz, “educated” and “progressive” people appropriated “symbolic power and cultural capital from colonialists”, thus proving “their equality and ability to govern themselves along European lines” (Fair 1994: 317). Likewise, in colonial Ghana, “to have mastered [...] ballroom dancing was also to have mastered the cultural refinements many European believed Africans lacked” (Newell 2006: 221, quoting A. Cohen. 1981. *The Politics of Elite Culture: Explorations in the Dramaturgy of Power in a Modern African Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press).

1956 derides a boy who begs his grandfather to lend him his overcoat in order to attend a jazz night. However, the overcoat is neither elegant nor appropriate for the event. Juha Kasembe is represented while dancing alone, wielding a stick, wearing sunglasses, sweating, and stamping on other dancers' feet, while the other dancers are depicted as well dressed, dancing in couples and behaving 'politely'. The last cartoon strip depicts Juha Kasembe going back home feeling wretched. The name of the boy, *Juha*, in Swahili means "simpleton", "fool": in the sense that he represents precisely one who is unable to fit into the modern world.⁶³ This opinion is confirmed by the fact that Juha Kasembe was the main character of other comic strips, representing him clumsily going up a ladder, unsuccessfully trying to drive a bicycle, etc.⁶⁴

The very fact that, in the comic strip, the young Juha Kasembe is dressed as an old man, probably contributed to the comic effect due to his clearly not conforming to the conventions which regulated 'modern' ballroom dancing. In addition, it is worth noting that at that time both sticks and overcoats were used by elderly men in a coastal *ngoma* called *tondoo* (and possibly in other *ngoma* as well).

In other words, this comic strip might be viewed as an example of how disenfranchised new jazz aficionados were depicted by local educated elites, more familiar with this style. This confirms the impression of internal divisions among urban Africans.

Taarab, Ngoma and the Banning of TANU

Also *taarab*, an originally coastal genre characterised by the use of metaphorical texts, served political purposes in Mwanza. Without British knowledge, almost all musicians, including *taarab* ones—as *mzee* Kabwela recalls—took TANU cards. In his words:

Songs appealed for increased effort, they gave hope, encouragement. Apparently [they expressed] just the joy of *taarab* music, but inside [...] there was a political message. Music united people, and induced them to perceive themselves as TANU members with a sense of belonging. Colonialists did not understand that. They thought that [*taarab* bands] were just Swahili groups, playing some kind of music from the coast, which

⁶³ Comic strip, "*Juha Kasembe na ulimwengu wa leo*", *Baragumu*, 23rd December 1956 (in Suriano 2007: 14).

⁶⁴ See various issues of *Baragumu* from 1956 onwards.

taught upcountry people *ustaarabu* [civilisation], such as the renouncing of ethnic belonging. But within it there was a political message. Other songs praised Queen Elizabeth II and King George VI, it was necessary to insert them in the repertoire.⁶⁵

A similar testimony was given by *mzee* Masalu Ngoffilo, a former policeman. He remembers that,

taarab groups were everywhere, with their political songs [which] were not openly sung. [...] In *taarab* and *dansi*, people made use of covert lyrics, [...] because policemen were sent with the purpose of controlling those people. Since political hymns were prohibited, as soon as an *askari* came along, people would fall silent.⁶⁶

It was clear, *mzee* Ngoffilo explains at a later point of the interview, that not only in Dar es Salaam, but in upcountry towns too, “in occasion of a *taarab* or jazz performance, or a football match, people would meet and talk about politics”.⁶⁷ *Mzee* Kabwela declared that in the 1940s and 1950s in Mwanza there was already a local *taarab* group, *Mwanza Taarab*, and many Mwanza residents used to go to Zanzibar, in order to learn this genre.⁶⁸

Although Askew (2002: 276) asserts that compared to jazz (*dansi*) and *ngoma*, *taarab* “played a less obvious political role on the mainland in the years leading up to independence”, oral evidence shows that *taarab* bands were well established in Mwanza too, and were used as a cover for political action and nationalist mobilisation.

It must be highlighted that amongst Sukuma as well as other East African communities, songs have been utilised as a socio-political commentary since pre-colonial times, and “Africans historically have treated performance genres as legitimate, even necessary, modes of social action in political contexts” (Coplan 1994: 24–5).

Mzee Ndonho recalls that while TANU was banned, in Mwanza it went on being spread not only through jazz and *taarab*, but also through ‘traditional’ *ngoma*, most of which were sung in Sukuma. When people attended *ngoma* performances, both in Mwanza and in its outskirts, they were provided with TANU cards, while members of *ngoma* groups used to make collections of money for the party. According to

⁶⁵ Interview with Kabwela.

⁶⁶ Interview with Masalu Ngoffilo, 7 October 2005.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Interview with Kabwela.

Ndonho, in Sukumaland there were various attempts to control *ngoma* performances precisely because they were suspected of being subversive. People, however,

continued with their *ngoma* [...]. If they had organised political meetings, they would have been arrested. But *ngoma* performances [...], you could not forbid these, because doing so was the same as killing the Sukuma people! The British thought that if they opposed *ngoma*, [Sukuma] would not have had any way of enjoying themselves.⁶⁹

An important point of interest emerges here: the common belief according to which Sukuma people have a vital necessity to sing. By arguing that according to the British, it was impossible to prohibit Sukuma's *ngoma*, *mzee* Ndonho accepts this colonial view. The outlook that the Sukuma are particularly good at dancing *ngoma* has been rooted in Tanganyika since at least the 1930s.⁷⁰

While a detailed analysis of Sukuma *ngoma* is far beyond the scope of this chapter, it is worth noting that there is a long history of Sukuma protest and resistance songs, which had already clashed with colonial authorities. For example during German occupation, Gumha Misinzo, probably the first Sukuma singer who criticised colonial power, had been threatened with arrest by German soldiers for his mocking songs (Songoyi 1988: 10, 2005: 209).

During the 1950s, another Sukuma singer, peasant and TANU member, Kalikali Ng'wana Mbagule, sang protest songs. In 1958 he railed against multiracial district councils, and composed a song which registered people's objection to this perceived injustice. According to Elias Songoyi (1988: 48), Kalikali did nothing other than use the Sukuma tradition of *Wigashe* songs (characterised by invective and teasing) in mobilising the masses, and fighting against colonialism. In another song Kalikali, who lived in the outskirts of Mwanza, encouraged his fellow peasants not to wear animal skins, but instead to dress like Europeans. This adoption of external symbols of European-ness might have intended to exhort Sukuma to demonstrate their worthiness to self-govern (Songoyi 2005: 222).

Summarising, British attempts to control *ngoma* in Sukumaland might have been motivated by the fact that they were historically inter-

⁶⁹ Interview with Ndonho.

⁷⁰ See "*Wasukuma mafundi hasa ya kucheza ngoma*" (Sukuma are particularly good at dancing *ngoma*), *Mambo Leo*, June 1932.

twined with resistance and protest. Moreover, *ngoma* had the potential to bring subversive messages even as far as remote villages.

Urban–Rural Mwanza

Mwanza had a strong link to its rural outskirts, and many Sukuma residing in the township owned farmed land outside the town, considering it important also to be involved in agriculture and cotton farming.⁷¹ Several Sukuma farmers became quite wealthy, and Iliffe (1979: 523) pointed out that in Sukumaland “the commercial economy provided the framework of political organisation”. According to some interviewees, Mwanza inhabitants did not ‘mix’ politics and cultural activities in a significant way.⁷² This is due to the fact that in Dar es Salaam “there was not much money in circulation” as was in the case of Mwanza, “so there people had to use other means, such as music [performances], whereas in Mwanza it was not so necessary”.⁷³ *Mzee* Mathias Budodi, born around 1918, growing up in the rural environment of Nyakato, and maintaining himself quite distant from urban affairs, expressed a similar concept, observing that only townspeople attended jazz performances or played and watched football, while village and semi-urban inhabitants had their *ngoma* and their own Sukuma games and pastimes.⁷⁴

If we look closer, these observations were made by Sukuma men who spent their lives in trading settlements located in the outskirts of Mwanza, and probably witnessed the spread of TANU through channels other than those of the town. Thus from interviews conducted in the outskirts of Mwanza it emerged that especially in rural environments well-off Sukuma peasants contributed to financing the TANU, and a significant amount of money was collected through the co-operative movement—namely the VFCU—more than through music performances.⁷⁵ However, interviews with Mwanza townspeople demonstrate that in this relatively small urban space popular music became intertwined with the struggle for independence.

⁷¹ On the complex relations between urban and rural areas in Zambia, see Ferguson 1999. On rural-urban interactions, see Baker 1990, Giblin 2001–2002.

⁷² Interview with Masunga.

⁷³ Interview with Kabwela.

⁷⁴ Interview with Mathias Budodi, 9 October 2005.

⁷⁵ Divisions within the cooperative movement were not mentioned by my interviewees (for this topic, see Maguire 1969).

Conclusion

British regarded urban jazz as a fundamentally “western in character” leisure activity, and did not manage (or did not try) to prevent Africans from attending *taarab* and *ngoma* performances and competitions. According to oral sources, *taarab* was seen by British administrators as a form of entertainment imported from the Swahili coast to teach upcountry people “civilisation, such as the renouncing of ethnic belonging”, as in the words of *mzee* Kabwela. Yet, from this chapter it has emerged that the role of *taarab* in Mwanza town presents similarities to the one played by this genre along the coast and in Zanzibar, where there was a well established urban Muslim culture.

In other contexts, *ngoma* performances were seen by the British administration as ‘innocuous’ forms of entertainment, while in Sukumaland they had carried socio-political overtones for a long time. Some British attempts to control *ngoma* in semi-rural outskirts of Mwanza might have been motivated by this ‘subversive’ component. However a comparative view was not pursued here.

Although British created a system of permits and licenses needed to host a musical performance, they did not have a real grasp of the meanings attributed to them by town-dwellers. They had an oversimplified view, if not little understanding, of the town life and aspirations of the local community, as well as of the changes that were occurring in Mwanza, especially after the Second World War.⁷⁶

The British did not regard the popularity of urban jazz with unreserved approval due to its promiscuity—as in the Report of the Social Welfare Office for 1946—and many African elders and educated elites shared this view, mainly for the same reasons. However, in spite of British expectations (to say nothing of local adult elites) regarding welfare institutions and pastimes, it seems that town-dwellers managed to change their meanings, in Mwanza as elsewhere.

Whereas at first glance people’s strategies and forms of mobilisation in Mwanza do not constitute a special case, placing it alongside the historiography of other urban contexts, yet there are some peculiarities which are of some interest. Data collected in the field support the perception that the Sukuma community in rural environments had a long-lasting ‘tradition’ of dance societies with songs having socio-politi-

⁷⁶ For similar opinions on Dar es Salaam, see Burton 2003: 332–3, Eckert 2004: 467.

cal overtones. Moreover, oral evidence gives us clues to the fact that jazz bands, *taarab* groups, and their audiences imagined themselves as a ‘community’, and had a sense of belonging for a shared, multi-ethnic, Swahili-speaking urban culture, rather than for the Sukuma group and language.

In Mwanza—even before TANU leaders declared their agenda of achieving independence—popular music served as a political tool awakening people’s consciousness. In the 1950s, popular music was indeed functional to the nationalist movement, and new relationships created through music sometimes took on the form of anti-colonial struggle.

Other times, music played an ambivalent role. It is true that performances had a political nature, but for my interviewees they were primarily moments and forms of entertainment, not necessarily outlets for people’s grievances or a challenge to British colonialism or parental control.⁷⁷

From data in my possession it can be understood that Mwanza inhabitants sometimes articulated their interests and staked their claims on ‘freedom’ beyond the channels of official politics.

Broadly speaking, popular music—and more generally, leisure time and spaces—became a sort of ‘test bed’ for new values, ‘modern’ identities, and—in the case of urban jazz—a means to ‘accommodate’ the ‘modern’ world. In other words, popular culture in Mwanza, even before the 1950s, had a subversive potential, and did not only express conflict, but also negotiation.

Finally, although this chapter has focused on popular music as a central terrain of the daily struggle between British administrators and African town dwellers to control the use of leisure in a relatively small urban space, oral sources hint at contrasting ambitions between African elites and the working class, and between youths and elders. However, oral accounts often tend to repress memories of conflict. The production of any tightly-knit group memory often includes a certain degree of nostalgia, and my informants were no exception.

⁷⁷ For a similar view on Luanda’s music scene see Moorman 2004: 262; for colonial Zanzibar, see Fair 1994.



Picture 12.1. "We are not satisfied unless all Africa is free!" TANU supporters in Makongoro road (Mwanza), late 1950s. Sources: Photo supplied by Hamadi Mbara, former football player, and reproduced with his kind permission. Photographer unknown.



Picture 12.2. The former Community Centre, Uhuru Street, Mwanza.
Sources: photo taken by the author.

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