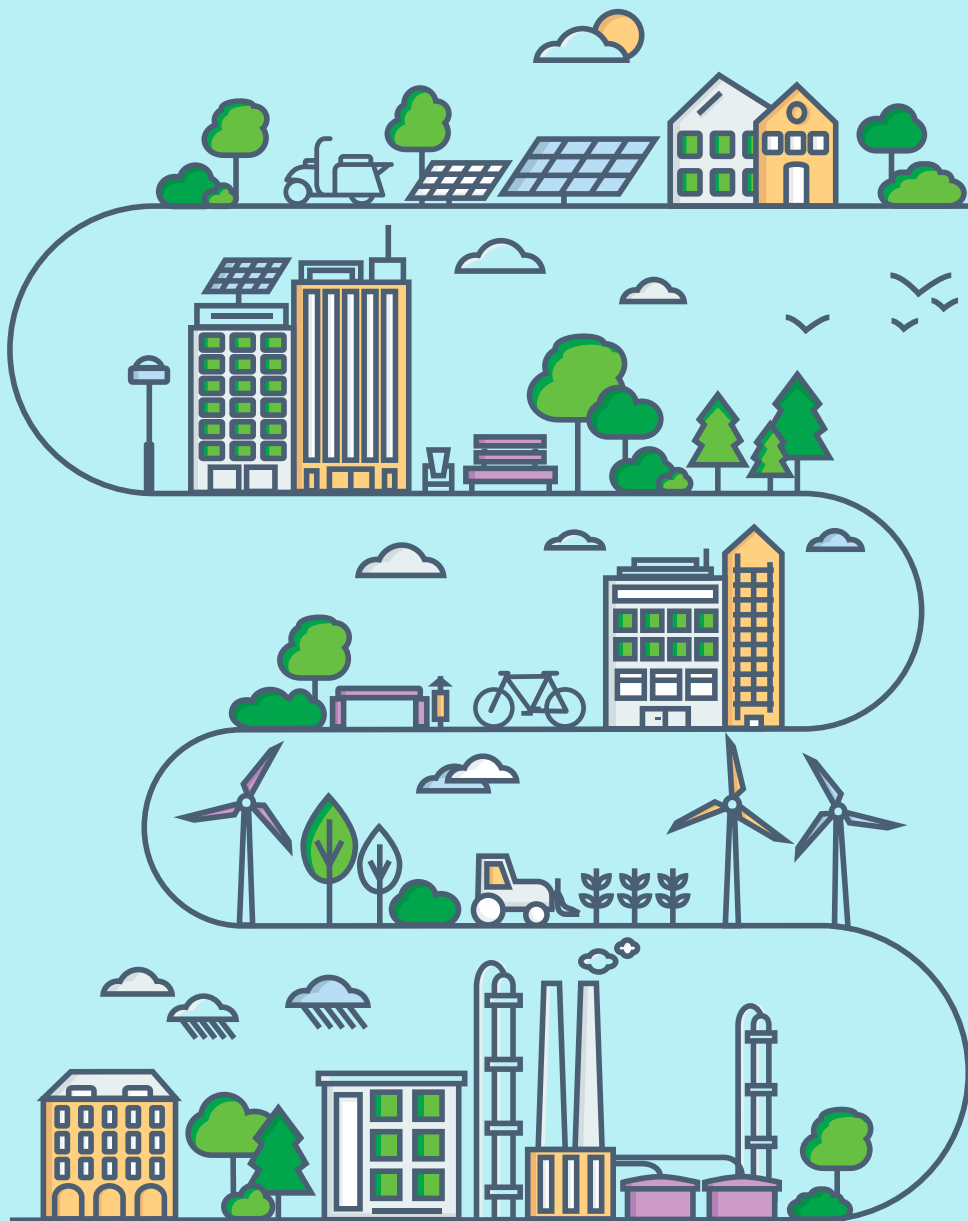


PATHWAYS TO JUST, RESILIENT AND LIVABLE AFRICAN CITIES



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INTRODUCTION

AFRICA'S FUTURE IS URBAN



While agriculture is still the mainstay of predominantly rural African economies, in an increasing number of highly urbanised African countries, cities are not only driving national economies but also expanding economic opportunities.

United Nations estimates indicate that urban areas in Africa will be home to nearly one billion people, or slightly more than half the continent's population, by 2035. Africa is rapidly urbanising; in the last three decades, the number of cities in Africa has doubled from 3,300 to 7,700. This massive expansion of urban populations will challenge urban areas' resources and lead to calls for urban governments to scale up rapidly and efficiently to ensure planning, management and financing of infrastructure and public services that match the needs of this growing population.

Data shows that despite the high levels of urban poverty and inequality, urbanisation has brought about significant social and economic benefits to urban populations in Africa. Urban children receive nearly five years more education than their rural counterparts. City dwellers also have better access to services, such as water and electricity, than people living in rural villages. Wages in large African cities are twice as high as in rural areas and underemployment is less prevalent. In an increasing number of highly urbanised African countries, cities are not only driving national economies but also expanding economic opportunities.

Africa's Urban Population (2015-2035)

Year	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035
Population (millions)	492	588	698	824	966

Source: UN-Habitat, *World Cities Report 2022*

Cities generate agglomeration economies that increase productivity, and are the sites of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship. According to a joint OECD-UN report, labour productivity in five African countries (Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda) increased by an average of 0.3 per cent when the urban population increased by ten per cent. African national and city governments should, therefore, view urbanisation as an opportunity to raise citizens' quality of life and to bring about prosperity, not just to cities and their citizens, but to countries and the region as a whole. This means investing in urban areas, both large and small.

African cities are sites of immense innovation and creativity and arenas for social interactions. They are creating wealth, attracting investment, and harnessing resources to bring about sustainable urban development. In our new knowledge-based economies, cities have also become hubs for information and communication technological innovations that are improving the lives of millions of people across the continent.

It is now generally recognised that problems such as climate change and rising inequalities require an urban response. By highlighting the positive achievements of African national and local governments in bringing about just and sustainable urbanisation, we can inspire hope, confidence, collaboration and support among those who are trying to make African cities more just, democratic, resilient, inclusive and liveable

INVESTING IN AFRICA'S URBAN FUTURE

The question the White Paper seeks to answer is how urbanisation can be a positive force in Africa's transformation. It is guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's principle and the New Urban Agenda (NUA); to Leave No One Behind (LNOB) and the framework of the "Just City" as conceptualized by FES.

The concept of the "just city" envisions urban environments where diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to city design and governance, ensuring that all residents, regardless of race, gender, socio-economic status, or ethnicity, have equal access to opportunities and services such as decent work, health care, transport, education, and housing. This idea aims to create spaces that foster dignity by recognizing residents of informal areas as equal citizens and emphasizes democratic urban planning that incorporates diverse voices and perspectives. Public safety is a priority, focusing on physical safety, adequate space, and social safety mechanisms, especially for vulnerable groups like women, the elderly, children, and people with disabilities. Accessibility and affordability are key.

The topics covered are informed by transformative trends and significant processes that are already driving policy responses to urbanisation. They might either translate into short-term, sectoral, reactive and sometimes hostile approaches. Or result in a more flexible, coherent and aspirational response that creates conditions for the effective management of and a long-term commitment to improving urban development and livelihoods.

PART 1 provides insights on how African cities coped with the COVID-19 pandemic and the lessons they learned from this global disruption of public health systems and economies. This part underscores the importance of good urban planning for resilience and the critical role of the informal sector in African economies.

PART 2 shows how digital innovation is already impacting African urban dwellers and, in some cases, increasing their access to services, but warns that without adequate data protection and regulations, digitalisation could be used to weaken democracy and deny people their rights to the city. There is need to ensure that technology does not further marginalise those who are excluded from the benefits of urban life.

PART 3 explores how climate change – one of the greatest threats facing humanity in the 21st century – is impacting African cities. This part demonstrates practical solutions of how African cities are coping and can mitigate against climate change by bolstering their resilience through appropriate policies and practices.

PART 4 looks at how African countries can take advantage of the “urbanisation dividend” to drive their economies through key investments in urban infrastructure and more decentralised forms of urban governance that distribute the cities’ benefits to all citizens. Investing in Africa’s largely youthful population is also a prerequisite to maximising this dividend.

If implemented, the lessons and recommendations listed could go a long way in making African cities more liveable, democratic, just, prosperous and resilient. The decisions made by city leaders and national governments at this point in Africa’s history will have a massive bearing on the future of urbanisation on the continent. National governments must, therefore, consider urban areas as an integral part of economic planning, and develop and implement urban policies that support sustainable urbanisation. Since Africa’s future is urban, the decisions taken by African cities and governments today will determine what the continent’s future will look like.



URBAN RESILIENCE – HOW TO MOVE PAST COVID-19 AND OTHER OBSTACLES

COVID-19 laid bare the significance of informal economies in Africa's urban areas.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, most African governments implemented various stringent public health measures, partly because they were acutely aware of the need to put in place protocols that would prevent communicable diseases in an environment where health systems are weak or ill-equipped.



The COVID-19 pandemic in its multiple forms has had a significant negative impact on African countries and, more so, their urban areas. According to the World Bank, the pandemic is estimated to have pushed up to 40 million people on the continent into 'new' and extreme poverty. Job losses in the formal and informal economies and business closures due to lockdowns and curfews led to a rise in the number of people living in poverty. This section is not too much about the helplessness and victimhood in this situation. Instead, it is about innovations and resilience which seem to have ensured that 'no one is left behind'. Notably, these interventions tended to inform or were to some extent informed by the values of Just cities more so dignity, democracy, equity and diversity, rights and responsibilities.

ned with the World Health Organization (WHO) principles of outbreak response (World Health Organization, 2020), the containment measures issued by African governments to curb the spread of the virus, such as curfews and restricted movements and interactions, had a substantial negative impact on the urban poor, most of whom rely on casual, informal work for their daily earnings. The population group most affected by COVID-19 restrictions regarding food security were the urban poor, whose precarious income trends meant they could not afford the precarious measures of 'stockpiling' food and other necessities. The measures that required removal from active public life brought low-income housing more so in urban areas into sharp focus during the COVID-19 pandemic because of their struggles to adhere to COVID-19 containment measures. More specifically, the urban poor who are majority residents of informal settlements found themselves faced with the threat of the rapid spread of the virus given that a majority of residents' lack access to proper sanitation and live in overcrowded houses (Azunre GA et al, 2021).

This situation presents a double dilemma in Africa that may undermine its attempts to fulfil its numerous economic and social rights obligations and commitments. Amid its numerous commitments, this crisis was a significant setback towards attaining the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The consequence to date is that Africa will need at least \$432 billion (African Development Bank, 2022) to address the effects of COVID-19 on its economies and the lives of its people.



AFRICA'S INNOVATION AND RESILIENCE

There is now greater understanding of the need to integrate the urban informal economy into the formal economy's planning strategies and processes to improve the former's resilience.



The innovations seen in the realms of health, planning, urban markets, housing and education should not be lost as the most intense phase of the COVID-19 pandemic ended; rather, lessons learned should be incorporated into long-term policies that would guarantee African cities' resilience to future shocks

However, Africa's resilience against the disease was notable. Response measures were robust in many countries. Various African innovations in multiple areas, ranging from public health to governance, planning, housing and education, contributed to the continent's resilience and robust response measures. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, most African governments embraced vaccines as soon as these were available in the global market to prevent the infectious disease in an environment where health systems are weak or ill-equipped.

Owing to the nature of cities as cosmopolitan and high population density areas, most African cities, including Sousse, N'Djamena, Nairobi and Rabat, sterilised public spaces to help curb the spread of the disease. In Nairobi, Kinshasa and Niamey, the national authorities, in coordination with local authorities, opted to isolate some of their epidemic cities from the remainder of the country to avoid becoming a national contamination vector. South Africa mobilised field health workers and conducted extensive mobile testing more so in urban areas. This plan was to reduce the movement of potentially infected people. For those who tested positive and faced difficulties in self-isolating at home, some cities set up isolation centres in schools, football stadiums and parks. In Rwanda and Ghana, technological interventions in primary healthcare included the use of drones to spread messages and to deliver medicines (World Health Organization Rwanda, 2021).

Several African governments established institutional structures to coordinate actions vertically and horizontally between sectoral institutions and ministries. These structures included task forces, such as Equatorial Guinea's National Coronavirus Surveillance Technical Committee, Ethiopia's National COVID-19 Ministerial Committee, Uganda's Presidential Scientific and Strategic Advisory Committee and Kenya's COVID-19 Presidential Task Force (Alice, 2022). Partnerships between the public and private sectors were initiated to create innovative solutions to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, just after the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, Kenya launched the *Wheels for Life service* for pregnant women to access free transport to health facilities during curfew hours, when no transport was available (Arabella, 2022).

A single-purpose intervention with multiple benefits, the Kenyan government's initiative, *Nyumba Kumi* – the ten-households initiative, a form of community policing – provided young people in Nairobi with opportunities to get involved in community-level decision-making about COVID-19 responses. In Somalia, the Youth Peer Education Network, with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), sought to raise awareness about COVID-19 in Mogadishu using social media and local radio stations on the disease (Semu-Banda, 2021).

The "new normal" also brought into focus the role of the home as a space for work and study, with increased deployment of technology. Schoolchildren were compelled to learn from home since schools were closed. However, many innovations across the continent enabled children to bounce back and recover lost learning time. For instance, when COVID-19 broke out in Algeria, the government made use of its e-learning education *platform BeeForm* to students through the Ministry of Education on YouTube (Zerman et al., 2020).

OPEN SPACE: MICHUKI MEMORIAL PARK



Beyond the call to quarantine and keep social distance, the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the role of open public spaces in well-being. In Nairobi city, one such place that became useful for Kenyans of all walks of life was the Michuki Memorial Park. The park is downtown Nairobi, and is located within the riparian segment of the Nairobi River. It was initially a waste dumping area that was notorious for criminal activities. The Nairobi River to which its adjunct was also known as an outlet for human waste and dumping of mainly household refuse. But this trend was reversed under the leadership of the then Minister for Environment, John Michuki who used the state apparatus and largely 'command and control' approach to facilitate not only the cleaning of the Nairobi River, but also the protection of riparian catchments. Years after his demise, the Riparian areas were rehabilitated and later opened for public use under the management of the National Government and the Nairobi City County. When Covid pandemic hit the city, the park became a useful open and 'safe space' where many residents of Nairobi and more so those with precarious housing. The need for public open spaces stands out as one of the requirements for Just cities

Source:

Elizabeth, A.O and Israel, N.N (2021)

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Kenya Office

LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE URBAN

Two key areas where lessons must be incorporated are urban planning and the informal economy. Resource allocation in development planning and management was prioritised (Nuwematsiko R, 2020). Cities that could set their priorities right and reallocate resources to the areas of most relevance for minimising the negative economic impact of the pandemic fared much better than cities that did not. The lack of adequate and affordable housing came into sharp focus during the pandemic as those who lived in poor-quality housing were not able to self-isolate and did not have access to sufficient sanitation facilities. There is now greater recognition that housing strategies should be created with the meaningful engagement of all groups, including the most marginalised, such as residents of informal settlements.

There is more awareness of the importance of open green spaces and recreational areas and their role in city planning that follows the logic of Just Cities. In urban areas all over the continent, COVID-19 interventions underscored the need for larger, more accessible open spaces that are an integral part of the urban fabric to improve local residents' air quality and mental and physical health. Integrating larger open spaces within the urban fabric allows cities to implement emergency services and evacuation protocols during health crises with considerable ease.

In Nairobi, Kenya's capital, there have been attempts to restore and reclaim green spaces following cases of privatisation and grabbing of green spaces and urban forests, and neglect of riparian land and open spaces. There are also efforts to rehabilitate public parks. There has been an ongoing rehabilitation of the city's Michuki Memorial Park, which involved the establishment of tree nurseries and solid waste management by the Nairobi Metropolitan Services (NMS). Nairobi's iconic Uhuru Park has additionally witnessed a face-lift, with new walking and jogging paths and artistic design features, such as sculptures (Elizabeth & Israel, 2021).

COVID-19 also laid bare the significance of informal economies in Africa's urban areas. Like in many parts of the world, the informal economy in Africa was particularly affected by the pandemic; millions of informal sector workers in urban areas across the continent lost their jobs or had to endure significant reductions in income because they were the most vulnerable to governments' initial response measures that included lockdowns of whole or parts of cities and closure of informal markets. Consequently, there have been efforts to invest in informal livelihoods to create employment opportunities for people, especially the urban poor, and to help them sustain themselves. The *Kazi Mtaani initiative* in Kenya, also known as the National Hygiene Programme (NHP) that kicked off in April 2020, was designed to improve hygiene in informal settlements all over the country but also to create employment for the youth who could have been rendered jobless during the pandemic (Women's Economic Empowerment Hub, 2022).

Development agencies and governments focusing on economic reconstruction for formal businesses often miss the local economic potential of the many smaller informal enterprises that flourish in post-conflict cities despite unsupportive regulatory frameworks or hostile local government actions. In Somalia, for instance, informal enterprises and workers have found ways to thrive in a hostile business environment with little regulation and few financial institutions to manage and support both the formal and informal economy (UN-HABITAT, 2022).

CONCLUSION

The innovations seen in the realms of health, planning, urban markets, housing and education should not be lost as the most intense phase of the COVID-19 pandemic ends; instead, lessons learned should be incorporated into long-term policies that would guarantee African cities' resilience to future shocks, including pandemics. Two key areas where lessons must be integrated are urban planning and the informal economy. The COVID-19 pandemic brought about interventions by African governments to improve the planning and implementation of urbanisation policies to make their cities more economically and socially resilient to future shocks and crises. This should help improve the overall resilience of urban economies across the continent. With a large proportion of the urban economy in Africa being informal, governments must focus their energies on supporting this sector that has played a crucial role in sustaining African cities.

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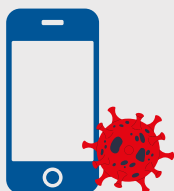


HARNESSING THE DIGITALISATION DIVIDEND IN AFRICAN CITIES

Digital technologies have permanently changed how information is generated, shared and used around the world. These technologies now play a crucial role in enabling the global exchange of goods, money, knowledge, data and information while rapidly becoming central to almost every aspect of governance, impacting all segments of society and transforming rural and urban landscapes. Africa has made notable strides to digitalise, leveraging technologies to improve access to financial services, healthcare, civic engagement and education (African Union, 2020). Undoubtedly, digitalisation offers a clear opportunity to close development gaps, advance economies, enhance citizens' interactions, and improve the quality of life.

The potential of digital technologies to improve citizens' access to goods and services, reduce the cost of government, stem corruption, and improve public service management and delivery has been amplified as cities and citizens struggled to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. Africa's technology industry showed its strength during the pandemic, giving rise to a proliferation of contextual and adaptive digital solutions that enable citizens to cope

CORONAPP: EMPOWERING PEOPLE THROUGH THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND EDUCATION



The COVID-19 pandemic manifested with misinformation and fake news. In an effort to quell panic and provide South Africans with reliable and accurate information about the coronavirus (COVID-19), two young innovators in South Africa invented the Coronapp. This is a centralized repository that positioned itself as relevant and accurate information regarding COVID-19 in South Africa. Its purpose is to make reliable information highly accessible to South Africans to help people and prevent panic. Coronapp not only informs people about the basics of the virus but encourages those of us who can afford to stay at home to practise social distancing to lessen the load on the South African healthcare system. The Coronapp is not just about news updates, rather it has proved to be a useful technical innovation for empowering people through the use of technology and education.

Source : The University of Cape Town, 2024

In Rwanda and Ghana, technological interventions in primary health care included the use of drones to spread messages and to deliver medicines (World Health Organization, 2022)

Africa is the only region in the world to record three-digit growth in venture capital funding in the first six months of 2022. Funding hit a record \$2.275 billion, compared to \$2.15 billion in the whole of 2021.



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While largely borderless, it is in the urban areas where technology propels economies and everyday life in new directions as it recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic and other climate-related and economic shocks. The International Financial Cooperation and Google estimate that Africa's internet economy will contribute \$180 billion to the continent's economy by 2025, rising to \$712 billion by 2050 (Google and IFC, 2020). However, because there are significant variations in internet usage across Africa, countries with the lowest internet penetration will likely lag in benefiting from the digitalisation dividend. Morocco (84 per cent), Seychelles (79 per cent), Egypt (72 per cent) and South Africa (68 per cent) have the highest rates of internet usage compared to the Central African Republic, Eritrea and the Comoros, which have less than 10 per cent each. With 109 million internet users, Nigeria has the most significant number of people who are online, followed by Egypt (76 million), South Africa (41 million), Morocco (32 million) and Ethiopia (30 million). More than 500 million people across the continent were using the internet in 2022.

Digitalisation promises to make cities smarter and to ease residents' lives. It promises to enhance public service delivery, to foster economic growth and enable effective citizen engagement. This moves the meaning and dimensions of Smart cities beyond ease of doing business. In other words, Smart cities are becoming integral to urban planning, governance and management. It offers parking and traffic management solutions, waste disposal, healthcare, education, billing and revenue collection, driving efficiency and opening new avenues for citizen engagement and participation. It is helping to stem criminality and corruption (Asendorpf, 2020). African cities were already moving firmly in the direction of digitalisation before the big nudge from the COVID-19 pandemic. The sector that best illustrates the digital transformation of Africa is mobile banking and financial services.

EQUITY CONSCIOUS SMART CITIES

With the potential benefits also come concerns and risks. The fact that digitalisation depends on data and algorithms can obscure the human aspects of urban life introducing a potential to ignore, or even harm and worsen social inequalities. Vulnerable populations that lack digital literacy or access to electricity and connectivity and other enablers of digitalisation, run the risk of being further marginalised. Thus, when looked at from the criteria of inclusive governance and the wish to leave no one behind, increasing reliance on digital technology has to be conscientious to reverse the familiar societal divide between digital city residents, who are adept at navigating the digital landscape, and analogue residents, who lack access or the knowledge and skills necessary for using the tools and platforms required for access. Yet all belong and should have equal rights to the city. Digitalisation is also raising concerns around state surveillance, data privacy and other potential negative uses, including the growth of increasingly sophisticated misinformation campaigns and cybersecurity threats that exploit the networked nature of the emerging world. Related to this, privacy

and personal data protection concerns have advanced with the increasing use of the Internet for service delivery. With the growing use of technology in an ever-increasing number of settings, citizens must make daily choices and weigh the decisions on whether to cede their data to a growing number of governments, businesses and other organisations in exchange for goods and services. This has given rise to privacy concerns and an increasing resistance to sharing such data, as evidenced in the case of Kenya's the government of Kenya introduced the National Integrated Identity Management System, NIIMS, which came to be popularly known as Huduma Number in January 2019. The problems with the Huduma Number which has since been nullified by the High Court of Kenya include the lack of public participation in the process, inadequate frameworks to guarantee data privacy and protection, and the risk the system could further entrench discrimination and exclusion of marginalized groups in Kenya (Nubian Rights Forum & 2 others v Attorney General & 6 others, 2020).

CITYTAPS: IMPROVING ACCESS TO WATER IN NIAMEY



In Niamey, Niger's capital, CityTaps, a private, French technology company partners with water utilities in Niamey to provide a payment system through a combination of prepaid smart water metering and an integrated software management system that processes PAYG (pay-as-you-go) payments through mobile money. The PAYG business model used by CityTaps allows customers to make incremental payments for water services. They can access running water at home by paying for any amount of water at any time using mobile money, thereby gaining control of their bill. Previously disconnected users can also make micropayments towards their accrued bills. About 43 per cent of customers became new mobile money users as a result of the service.

Source: GSMA, January and April 2020.

African governments understand the transformative potential of digitalisation, as evidenced by the aspirational master plans for a growing number of digital hubs and Smart cities they are establishing across the continent. These hubs and cities aim to use information and communication technology to improve operational efficiency, share information with the public, and provide better quality service to citizens. As with other Smart cities worldwide, their ultimate goal is to optimise city functions and promote economic growth while improving residents' quality of life.

Innovation and entrepreneurship have also been critical drivers of the uptake of digital technologies across the continent, most dramatically in mobile technologies. GSMA (formerly Groupe Spécial Mobile), a global organisation that brings together operators in the mobile economy, projects that \$155 billion of economic value added will be generated by mobile technologies and services in sub-Saharan Africa by 2025. In 2020, transactions on mobile money platforms reached \$490 billion. The fantastic array of digital applications from private sector start-ups has caught venture capital's attention, fueling their growth and expansion. For example, international collaboration and

cooperation allowed the emergence of Pan-African partnerships, such as the payment gateway Cellulant, created by two young entrepreneurs living on opposite sides of the continent – one in Nigeria and the other in Kenya. Fresh from a 2021 relaunch, after almost 17 years of testing different digital products, the mobile payments gateway built a huge Pan-African footprint. By 2014, it had a 450-member workforce split into 18 country teams serving 35 countries in Africa, had partnered with 35 financial institutions, served 200 businesses and had 13 million active consumers (Cellulant, 2024). Notably, while funding from global venture capital organisations has shrunk in recent years, Africa is the only region to record three-digit growth in venture capital funding in the first six months of 2022. Funding hit a record \$2.275 billion, according to the start-up portal Disrupt Africa, compared to \$2.15 billion in the whole of 2021 (Jackson, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic led to an accelerated digital enterprise offering solutions to businesses and is visible in the emergence and multiplication of Pan-African e-commerce platforms and payment gateways. In the early days of the pandemic, global platforms such as Jumia (Germany), Uber (United States) and Bolt (Estonia) quickly responded to the market needs by offering dedicated brands for the delivery of food, medicines and parcels. These digitization initiatives were not only enablers during restriction of movements associated with COVID-19, rather, digitalization has provided new payment pathways for consumer spending more so in the urban areas. They are new markets and forms of interactions with potential to expand markets and enhance relationships amongst urban dwellers.

Yet, urban authorities, by their very nature, are collectors and repositories of massive datasets, including food, health and demographic data, asset ownership and transfers, business ownership, trade, transport, mobility and internal migration, education, crime, natural resources, revenue collection, spatial plans and policy research and so much more. Ensuring that African cities benefit fully from digitalisation requires that certain fundamentals are in place. The priority is a framework to support universal access and ensure that digitalisation serves the needs and rights of all citizens and that it does not undermine or replace sovereign institutions, nor does it exuberate inequalities. Purpose-built Smart cities may act as living labs and be used to benchmark best technological practices; they allow for the piloting of new learnings and innovation in ideal conditions, lessons that can be particularly valuable for Africa's smaller secondary or intermediary cities that are home to almost 200 million people but carry less infrastructural baggage. The reverse is also true; successful stand-alone smart initiatives in existing urban centres can be adopted by purpose-built Smart cities.

We can only realise 'Smart and Just Cities' when technological advancement is intertwined with a normative justice framework. This is paramount because, at the surface value, the concept of a just city contrasts sharply with that of a Smart city, in which data and digital technology rule. Smart cities promise to enhance efficiency and improve the quality of life for residents by leveraging data to optimise urban services such as transportation, energy management, waste disposal, and public safety. They promise streamlined traffic flow, reduced energy consumption and efficient public transportation systems that self-adjust based on real-time data. They promise to improve public services, including healthcare and education, and enhance participation and water and resource use optimisation through green technologies and environmentally sustainable practices.

NAKURU'S APPLICATION OF AN INNOVATIVE SOCIAL PLANNING TOOL

Nakuru City is the capital of Nakuru County that lies in Kenya's Great Rift Valley region. With a population of around 400,000, the city is the fourth largest in Kenya, after Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu. One of the most innovative projects that Nakuru City has undertaken is applying the Urban Collective Design (U_CODE) social planning tool through support from the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Kenya office, within the Kenya Meat Commission (KMC) settlement that allowed the community to design their settlement to meet their local development aspirations. This settlement, located 5 kilometres from the city centre, comprises about 150 households.

U_CODE is an innovative co-design platform designed by the Technical University in Dresden, Germany, that enables communication between large numbers of people and professional experts. It is designed to use the public's creativity, to gauge public opinion and to derive urban design and planning ideas from the communities participating in the process. Members of the community and city planning staff were trained in how to use the application. The process saw 85 per cent of the settlement's residents participate in the process. This is the first time the U_CODE application has been used in Africa.

In collaboration with the Technical University, the community has been using the social planning tool to collect data on their settlement, which has helped it to identify its priorities, which include access to clean water, housing improvement and proper healthcare. The project has allowed the residents to translate their vision for their settlement into a 3-D design that will be used to lobby the Nakuru City and development partners to implement "just" interventions within the settlement. Most recently, the city government of Nakuru has identified the need for floodlights in key area, based on the U_CODE platform, highlighting its practical implementation.

Through this and other initiatives, Nakuru City hopes to capture more public views on how the city can be transformed so that it can be a model city for other Kenyan cities and towns that are struggling to deliver services to residents.

Sources:

*Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Kenya Office
Ehrensperger A, Mbugua S. (2015).*



Disaggregated data is the fuel of effective and efficient e-governance and service provision. The importance of data disaggregation is that it makes all citizens visible irrespective of their diversities, more so race, sex, pregnancy, marital status, health status, ethnic or social origin, colour, age, disability, religion and culture.

To mitigate the potential tension between Just cities and Smart cities, the proposal is to follow the suggestion offered by the UN-HABITAT for a people-centred approach. In this scenario, the responsibility of ensuring that all residents can participate fully in a digital society falls on national and urban governments, which must consider the impact of each proposed technology on access to services and life in cities using a human rights lens for assessment. In this endeavour, consolidating datasets to make them available for digitalisation and analysis for policy-making is essential, as is providing end-to-end data management. This must include inter-phasing/inter-communication between urban and national government datasets and the digitisation of data available in every institution and sector. Many countries do not disaggregate data, and this may affect the outcome of digitalisation and the way services and products are delivered to different groups of residents.

When undertaken within Just cities, digitalisation should enhance citizens' ability to participate in their democracy and economies. Investment in appropriate digital technologies is a key factor for realising the digital dividend for African cities. However, inclusive urban development also hinges on the ability of all urban citizens to participate fully and take advantage of the opportunities presented by digitalisation; digitalisation will only be useful to urban development if people can access and thrive in a digitalised world that requires digital literacy. Digital literacy is to digitalisation and digitalised environments what the ability to read and write is in the offline world. UNESCO defines digital literacy as: "The ability to access, manage, understand, integrate, communicate, evaluate and create information safely and appropriately through digital technologies for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. It includes competencies that are variously referred to as computer literacy, ICT literacy, information literacy and media literacy" (UNESCO, 2024). It also requires that digitally literate members of the city must be able to establish and manage their digital presence in the world.

CONCLUSION

The digital transformation of African cities holds immense potential for economic growth and social progress. However, achieving this requires a comprehensive approach that includes active interrogation of new digitalisation efforts to ensure their use does not marginalise any group, robust data management, stringent data protection, improved cybersecurity and investment in innovation. The people-centred model framework for digitalisation would support universal access to technology and enablers of that technology, address digital literacy and the digital divide and serve and protect the needs and rights of all urban residents. They would include support for strengthening data management and developing capacity for its use in service delivery, analysis, planning and management of cities, including the consolidation and aggregation of data for informed policymaking and efficient service delivery, including interplaying with national data.



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CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE AFRICAN CITY

The climate emergency facing the world, and Africa in particular, has moved beyond environmental concerns to numerous aspects of life, including governance, health, housing, planning, demography, and so on. While the spectrum of climate change impacts spans various sectors, it is within the ordinary communities, irrespective of their places of domicile, that it is most severe. In these lower rungs and vulnerable sectors of our society, the debate is much more about loss and damages than mitigation and adaptations to Climate Change. That general rule applies everywhere in the world, including countries like Canada, Australia, and Sudan (Lelenguyah et al. 2023). The indigenous people in these countries, as is the case predominantly with the Pastoralists in Eastern African countries, are disproportionately impacted by climate change (Lelenguyah et al. 2023). This is one reason the language between climate change and Climate Justice keeps changing. Climate justice is the intersection between social justice and climate change and how the most marginalised communities all over the world, both on a local and global level, will be disproportionately impacted by climate change. In any case, irreversible changes in critical ecosystems and the global climate system may already have been reached (McGrath, 2022). To consolidate their political and scientific responses, the international community adopted the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992, which obligates the state parties to appreciate and use science in making their political decisions that focus on adaptive strategies and mitigation actions towards climate change.

The obligation to mitigate climate change is national but can only be realised through international cooperation because emissions from one country are everyone's problem. In the subsequent years, the parties to UNFCCC developed the Kyoto Protocol and, more recently, the Paris Agreement. The latter embodies commitments from all state parties to reduce their carbon emissions and work together towards a carbon-zero planet by the year 2050 (Paris Agreement, 2022). Subsequent to this, Africa's Development Dynamics 2022 report indicates that, while progress is slow, cities in Africa are managing to deliver on several fronts, including improving education and household incomes, boosting GDP, driving economic transformation and improving access to financial and health services (AUC and OECD, 2022).

However, it is regrettable that cities and urban centres play a significant role as environmental offenders and casualties in the ravages of climate change (African Climate Change Policy Centre, 2020). Africa's cities and urban areas contribute substantially to environmental degradation and global emissions due to their industrial activity, energy consumption, waste production and transport, land and housing needs. The most widespread manifestation of climate change in African cities often relates to rising temperatures and unpredictable rainfall. Cities record extensive damage and loss of life because of floods and droughts, the resurgence of infectious diseases and the incidence of new diseases, pest outbreaks, rising sea levels and a reduction in biodiversity, all of which pose direct threats to human health and safety, food supplies, water services and safety, and socio-economic development. Most recently, and in some contradictory scenarios, countries are witnessing an increasing number of internal migrants (that are becoming known as climate change refugees) moving to urban areas and putting pressure on already strained infrastructure and services (Dontoh et al., 2019). While most internal migrants in Africa are fleeing conflict-affected regions, a growing number are impacted by climate-induced disasters, according to the Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and the Red Cross/Red Crescent.

Despite the challenges posed to urban planning, management and financing by the burgeoning African population, city-focused climate agendas can yield significant long-term co-benefits for climate mitigation, adaptation and improved livelihoods on the continent. This has been attested by many peri-urban and rural dwellers who move to the urban areas as 'climate change refugees'. Currently there is a policy vacuum in the international community to address the issues regarding climate migration. Even though knowledge in this field remains limited and fragmented, urban policies

can make use of available data to respond to the gender and human rights implications in these changing environmental urban contexts.

Climate migrants join millions of Africans moving into cities each year, expecting to find centres for growth, jobs and opportunities to improve their standard of living. They shelter with family and host communities or end up living on the margins in unplanned informal settlements, adding another dimension to the climate crisis (Cities Alliance, 2023). In Tanzania, studies found that Maasai pastoralists travel to the capital city, Dar es Salaam, to take up jobs as security guards, hairdressers, or small goods sellers (World Bank, 2021). They migrate from rural areas like Simanjiro, where drought has weakened their livestock herds and food is in short supply, to seek paid employment that will help sustain themselves and their families. These extreme weather systems devastate the lives of millions of people, leaving them in absolute poverty and sweeping away communities. *Carbon Brief* estimates that over 15,000 people died, and 34 million were impacted by extreme weather in Africa in 2023.

BUILDING RESILIENCE IN TANZANIAN CITIES

In 2020, an estimated 2 million people in Tanzania's commercial capital, Dar es Salaam, were affected by flooding as a result of intense rainfall. Many of these people live in the unplanned settlements of the Msimbazi River valley region of the city, which between 2017 and 2020 was hit by seven major incidents of flooding, causing major disruptions to the bus transit routes and communication in the city, and interrupting businesses. At least 15 people died in the April 2018 floods and 2,000 families were displaced. Household losses were estimated to be over \$100 million.

The Government of Tanzania has taken a bird's-eye view to building the climate resilience of cities across the country to set them up as centres for growth and jobs. With the assistance of the World Bank, Tanzania has implemented projects worth close to \$1 billion. The major focus is on Dar es Salaam, one of the fastest growing cities in the world, with an estimated 1,000 new residents arriving every day. The city also happens to lie on the Indian Ocean and so is threatened by sea-level rise.



A collaborative drainage design process was initiated in 2019, with widespread participation from the community with the goal of finding a solution to the flood problem. Issues needing to be addressed included silting of the river with sediment from settlements along its route and solid waste dumped into the river. More than 65 kilometres of storm drains have now been constructed in and around these flood-prone areas and over \$100 million is being used to upgrade community infrastructure in the poorest neighbourhoods, including roads, drains, public toilets, water kiosks and quality recreational spaces.

Over 200 kilometres of local roads connected to the mass transit network are being constructed in the city. Along its beaches, Dar es Salaam has built seawalls to stop the ocean from eroding the coastline. Vast areas of mangrove forest are also being restored to offer protection against storm surges.

Similar improvements are being made in 30 other urban centres across Tanzania. The aim is to strengthen solid waste management with the construction of eight new sanitary landfills and more than 500 solid waste collection points. To enhance mobility and connectivity, the country aims to construct over 400 kilometres of roads with street lights, 30 footbridges, 20 bus terminals, and 150 kilometers of drainage

Source: The Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR)

In 2019, the combination of extraordinarily heavy rains on the heels of successive years of drought contributed to the worst desert locust outbreak to hit the Horn of Africa countries in 25 years and, while not directly related to the concerns of African cities, it may be a harbinger of future pest infestations. Left unchecked, the vulnerabilities outlined above are likely to trigger secondary risks, including crime, civil unrest, political instability, food insecurity, mass migration and worsening human rights violations, according to research by the global risk consulting firm *Verisk Maplecroft*. The *Verisk* firm has found that the cities likely to be worst affected are the low-lying, populated coastal cities of Lagos, Luanda and Dar es Salaam, where flooding, erosion, and storm surges are already a significant problem, and Addis Ababa, where drought and water shortages recur often.

Following their obligations under the UNFCCC, nearly all African countries have developed and adopted National Climate change adaptation strategies and action plans. Until recently, these strategies have not been city-focused; they have targeted sectors, such as food security, agriculture and livestock, water, forests and other natural resources, and energy – all of which impact how cities run but do not necessarily address the additional coping needs of urban areas in the face of climate change.

It is for this reason that much more is required for cities to adopt and implement Governance systems and institutions that not only localise the national policies but also carve out clear directions for the urgent expansion of essential services and development of climate-ready, affordable housing, building and climate-proofing of well-connected transport systems and other infrastructure, and creation of jobs and safety nets for their ballooning populations. Many cities are also called on to reassess urban land use and planning to ensure that cities and towns remain livable and avoid urban sprawl that can complicate service delivery and will be locked in for generations; once a city goes up, its physical form tends to remain that way for decades and dictates how it works (World Bank, 2021). Some of Africa's municipal governments are directing vast chunks of their budgets to address climate action. National climate change mitigation and adaptation programmes and projects, based on countries' climate change policies and aligned with the UNFCCC's commitments, are being funded by municipal levies and through national budgets and donor grants passed to municipalities.

INNOVATIVE CLIMATE CHANGE ACTIONS

Climate change is forcing cities to focus on climate resilience and adjust their infrastructure priorities and standards to address drought, withstand higher temperatures, increased precipitation and flooding, and embrace new building codes and materials and higher maintenance and rehabilitation while factoring in the possibility of climate-related damage and building these costs into the life of the infrastructure.

African municipal governments are taking a proactive approach, directing significant portions of their budgets towards climate action. National climate change mitigation and adaptation programmes and projects, in line with countries' climate change policies and the UNFCCC's commitments, are being funded by municipal levies, national budgets, and donor grants. These funds are then channelled into municipalities and used to climate-proof urban development investments.

South Africa does not have a dedicated climate fund. However, the government has committed to investing 10 percent of GDP (\$35 billion based on 2020 GDP) into three key sectors—transport, energy and water—over the next ten years. The Development Bank of South Africa has launched an innovative climate finance facility, committing \$56 million to drive investment into climate mitigation. Cities in South Africa are working to increase climate finance by issuing municipal green bonds, with one in Cape Town worth \$76 million funding water and low-carbon transport projects and another in Johannesburg worth \$143 million supporting biogas energy and low-carbon transport projects.



AFRICAN CITIES ATTRACTING CLIMATE FUNDS



The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is supporting Liberia in its efforts to deal with coastal erosion resulting from climate-induced sea level rise. Nine out of Liberia's fifteen counties suffer the effects of coastal erosion that is undermining individual and private investments.

In 2021, Liberia received a Global Climate Fund (GCF) grant of \$25.6 million to construct coastal defence revetments in Monrovia's West Point township to stave off coastal erosion that has eaten up 30 metres of the city's shoreline in the past decade. The Monrovia Metropolitan Climate Resilience Project is being undertaken with support from UNDP, and funding from GCF. The project will protect the lives, homes and livelihoods of hundreds of families in the township, and the lives of a quarter of a million people living in neighbouring coastal areas. The project will also protect critical infrastructure, such as schools and fish landing beaches.

Source: The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2020)

The priority climate response for African cities appears to be job creation through infrastructure projects, trade and (re)building their economies. Still struggling to come out of the devastation inflicted on their economies by COVID-19 with knock-on effects on the population, and with 10 to 12 million young people coming of age and joining the largely city-based labour force every year, this seems appropriate.

Research shows that, in general, investors favour countries with large urban populations, decent transport infrastructure, trade openness, adequate telephony, internet bandwidth and a regular supply of water and electricity. The drive for the cities in this context is movement towards models of cities that grow in line with sustainable urban development. These are expressed under descriptive categories such as "Healthy City", "Sustainable City", "Low-Carbon City", "Transit-Oriented City", "Compact City", "Smart City", "Green City", and "Livable City".

As Nigeria continues to lead in urbanisation, there is a focus on integrating aesthetics with livability. The project, Eko Atlantic, is an example of the new Lagos. The city will introduce world-class transport systems, eco-friendly urban infrastructure, and mixed-use buildings. It's the efficient, healthy, and safe city of the future (*Eko Atlantic City, September 13, 2022*)

With climate change-related water scarcity, Cape Town has implemented extensive water conservation programs and infrastructure to harvest rainwater and recycle wastewater. Cape Town has also launched feasibility studies to construct several desalination plants and water

recycling systems. Meanwhile, the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, has developed a light rail transit system to provide an efficient and sustainable public transportation option, reducing traffic congestion and emissions. Climate change-responsive governance in African governments has produced climate policy frameworks such as NAPAs that cascade from the UNFCCC. The limitation has been the slow pace of meaningful implementation of the various commitments and obligations.

CONCLUSION

Institutional capacity-building, including climate change learning and awareness raising, is weak in Africa. This may slow the ability to pivot quickly and address emerging challenges at the city level. However, sharing learnings and knowledge from climate action has the potential to accelerate climate action, underscoring the urgency and importance of the issue. Learning and communication are required for each initiative to ensure the lessons are accurate and replicable.

Africa's vulnerability to climate change highlights the need for urgent, focused action. The climate emergency coincides with the challenge of coping with Africa's rapidly urbanising population, which is projected to outnumber the rural population within a couple of decades. The twin challenges of climate change and an increasingly urban population also presents an opportunity to target climate mitigation and adaptation efforts in urban areas where dense human populations, industrial activities, environmental degradation and harmful emissions are also concentrated.

Urban climate initiatives must, however, be integrated with a governance system that is aligned to the Just City principles that prioritises how social justice and basic human needs can yield multiple co-benefits, promoting economic growth, improving livelihoods and resilience for millions, and preventing further environmental degradation. Inclusive and accountable urban governance that engages city residents in the design and implementation of such climate action will ensure that policy and practice are people-centred and foster collective responsibility. This will require robust communication and capacity development at every level of government and community.



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**MAXIMISING
AFRICA'S
URBANISATION
DIVIDEND
DRIVERS OF
INVESTMENTS IN
AFRICAN CITIES**

The future of Africa's economies will be in urban areas. African countries are already starting to put in place mechanisms to attract urban investments, especially in secondary towns.



Urban investments are crucial to driving Africa's economies. In recent decades, the increasing concentration of youthful populations in Africa's urban areas has strengthened interest in these zones. Cities have become attractive from investors' point of view because of the vast array of opportunities and growing need for investment (AfDB, 2019).

For effective urban investments, it is critical to have a deep understanding of the nature of urbanisation in Africa. Although Africa remains a predominantly rural region, with about 55 percent of its population living in rural areas, the social and economic circulation amongst the people and governance mechanisms in most African countries have maintained good rural-urban continuum and linkages, especially through secondary and tertiary towns.

While it is apparent that many cities in Africa trace their origin to the colonial moment, the most recent urban growth in Africa is happening in secondary towns (Snieska & Zykien, 2015). The secondary urban areas have the potential to depart from the colonial urban era, which featured violence and extraction and forms of governance that simply manned and deepened the exploitative systems and structures created by the colonialists. Well-planned, governed and resourced secondary towns provide an excellent platform to entrench an urban future of economic growth, job creation and prosperity. Instead, they also have the potential to emerge as products of multiple social interactions that equally advance the values of Just Cities.

This paper argues that as the urban areas surge as the frontiers for progress in 21st-century Africa, they ought to be anchored on the understanding that equitable economic development and growth require strategic urban investments. Urban investments need to be equitable so that no one is left behind. This requires strategic collaborations between national, local and sub-national governments, the private sector and civil society. For many cities in Africa, what is envisaged in Urban investments is some sort of reversal of the colonial era cities that had featured violence and exploitation systems of governance. This shift also underscores the importance of urban governance and proactive policies at national and subnational levels to create conducive environments for urban investments. Besides, it shows the transformative move of African countries to shift towards resilient investments, especially to cushion them from the vagaries of disasters such as climate change and economic recessions. Resilient investments are already leveraging local and global funds, notably for climate change mitigation, at national and city levels. However, in African urban areas, including secondary and tertiary towns, there is a need for policies at the national and sub-national levels to attract investments. Since most cities are driven by commerce, the business climate must be improved through conducive legislative and policy regimes and frameworks. The creation of an investor-friendly environment is critical in this endeavour. The future of Africa's economies will be in urban areas.

We know cities are 'promising machines' (Simone and Rao, 2011). The upsurge of the secondary cities in Africa and the mega investment in the former colonial cities is about the people. The people in Africa know this and see these investments as a promise, where cities enable moments of potential. This is why, even with crises such as unemployment, insecurity and housing shortage, the cities are fragments of hope for a majority of the population to look up to. African countries are already implementing mechanisms to attract urban investments, especially in secondary towns. The incremental development of these

secondary cities draws attention to the social, political, material, and ecological relations that assemble contemporary urban areas. This means that the ‘new urban areas’ in Africa that we call secondary cities are not just products of investment in built environments. Instead, they are intertwined in relational social and political processes tied to the production of space. For these reasons, urban investment must target multiple layers of interventions.

MULTIPLE LAYERS OF URBAN INVESTMENT

» Invest in transport networks to strengthen rural-urban value chains and the inter-city trade

Cities and towns in Africa are intertwined and operate in a continuum with rural economies – they serve as gateways to domestic and international markets for agricultural and other goods. Rural areas closely connected to urban areas through transport networks, mass media and mobile telephony tend to perform better economically than remote rural areas. Many towns have grown and prospered due to their solid linkages and dependence on rural agricultural communities. Therefore, investments in transport networks linking cities and towns to rural areas are critical for both rural and urban productivity and prosperity. As observed in the New Urban Agenda, rural economies are not the only ones inextricably linked beyond the economies (Simone and Rao, 2011). More so, even the urban areas themselves, when looked at beyond national boundaries as the case of the Nairobi-Kisumu-Kampala cluster that links 36 million urban inhabitants in East Africa and the Kumasi-Kano-Port Harcourt cluster that links 15 West African cities with populations of over one million, one observes interweaving economically, socially and environmentally.

» Invest in Infrastructure linkage for Intra-regional trade

It is moving beyond the narrow rural-urban continuum and thinking of African cities as clusters, one imagery and vision of collective African economies. The Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) advances this concept. It should go a long way in increasing intra-Africa trade as it will create a massive market for goods and services across the continent and reduce tariffs among member states. The World Bank estimates that when implemented, AfCFTA will lift 30 million Africans out of extreme poverty and boost Africa’s income by \$450 billion by 2035 (World Bank, 2020). Intra-regional trade currently accounts for only 17 per cent of Africa’s exports compared to 59 per cent in Asia and 69 per cent in Europe. This ironical discrepancy is exacerbated, by amongst others, poor transport networks; it is indeed on record that Africa has the lowest density of roads in the world, both in terms of kilometres per area and kilometres per capita. Efficient Road and rail transport networks linking African cities and countries will yield significantly better economic results.

» Make investments more equitable through decentralisation

While it is well established that financing sustainable urbanisation is an investment for the present and the future, all urban areas benefit from support from national governments. That said, the role of national governments in reducing the risks and realising the benefits of urbanisation is more critical in African urban areas. This is partly because of the scale of the urban challenge: population growth is

EAST AFRICAN CITIES ARE BUILDING BRIDGES AND ROADS



The skyline in major East African cities is changing. In Nairobi, Kenya's capital, a 27-kilometre expressway has been built, giving hope to commuters who had to spend hours on the road going from one end of the city to the other. The Nairobi Expressway from Mlolongo in Machakos County through the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport to the city's Westlands suburb has eased congestion and significantly reduced the city's notorious traffic jams.

Similarly, in the coastal city of Dar es Salaam, new flyovers and bridges are being launched, linking various parts of the city that were hard to reach before. Tanzania's commercial capital also plans to develop five satellite cities, thereby bringing jobs and services closer to the people and easing congestion.

However, these projects have come at a heavy financial cost and there are concerns that both countries' rising debt to fund these infrastructure projects may not be sustainable.

Source: The East African, 17 May 2022



Weak or ineffective urban governance not only affects provision of basic infrastructure and services to urban dwellers but also repels potential investments.

rapid, infrastructure deficits are large, and humanitarian crises are common. Additionally, governance capacities are sometimes notably weak or absent at the local/city level. Weak or ineffective urban governance not only affects the provision of basic infrastructure and services to urban dwellers but also repels potential investments.

Decentralisation and devolution have brought tangible benefits to sub-regions and urban areas, as demonstrated in Kenya, where countries are taking the lead in bringing about local and sub-regional development. The push towards decentralisation is often seen in emerging economies, where uneven regional development is expected. As the population gets more empowered and participation in decision-making increases, they have become more conscious of equitable distribution of services. Residents and firms start demanding the improvement of public services more aggressively. All these forces and movements lead to more accountable systems of urban governance systems, thereby leading to better outcomes in cities and towns.

In this schema, just cities pay attention to both citizens and businesses. In essence, the policy framework, as well as the practice of equity envisaged here require that both the national and the sub-national governance infrastructure be expanded to harness private sector participation, leverage local assets through land value capture, and partner with central governments to invest in urbanisation. Governance infrastructure, including the nature of the legal system, is an essential determinant of the level of private investments in the urban economy.



Africa's youth population is expected to double to over 830 million by 2050.

Governments must do more to ensure that youth have the required skills for an urban-based economy and are gainfully employed so that the opportunities presented by the urban advantage are not lost.

Ultimately, it is in urban areas that societies develop and advance the most competitive representative governance. This governance is instrumental in fostering political participation and negotiations with politicians and state institutions. These negotiations are crucial for the development of essential urban infrastructure such as sewerage lines, paved streets, sanitation, schools, clinics, and most importantly, for ensuring access to affordable land and housing. A functional multilevel governance system is a prerequisite for realizing the 'urbanisation dividend', where rapid urban population growth drives economic productivity and a better quality of life within a healthier local environment.

» Invest in young people.

Youth are Africa's greatest asset. Africa's youth population is rapidly growing and is expected to double to over 830 million by 2050. Africa's urban areas are home to youthful populations, the majority of whom are below the age of 35, with most having tertiary education and skills. This demographic dividend in Africa's urban areas needs to be harnessed through education, training, and skills development investments.

If properly harnessed, this increase in the working-age population could support increased productivity and stronger, more inclusive economic growth across the continent. This demographic dividend in Africa's urban areas needs to be harnessed through investments in education, training, and skills development. If properly harnessed, this increase in the working-age population could support increased productivity and stronger, more inclusive economic growth across the continent.

FALUN INCREASED YOUTH INFLUENCE



Falun Municipality, together with Mogale City in South Africa, has been working since 2021 within the framework of a municipal partnership focusing on youth influence. The aim is to develop and enhance young people's opportunities to participate in and influence what happens in their respective municipalities. The goal of the initiative is to create sustainable structures for youth influence in urban governance that can "promote democratic development (... and) open perspectives towards a broader world." Through the initiative, the Falun Municipality has established a youth panel at Hälsinggården's secondary school, which has strong support from the school's management. It consists of about 40 students in a physical panel and 135 students in a digital panel. The panel is currently linked to the Culture and Recreation Committee and the Recreation Department and will now, during the project's final year, be expanded to more schools and committees. The panel is based on a research-affiliated method called UNIK. The method emphasizes the importance of representativeness among the participating youth. It's about achieving a mix of young people from different residential areas but also of engagement types developed by the method, ranging from those interested in society to young people who experience distrust towards adults and politicians.

Source: Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy

CONCLUSION

The urban areas in their historical and contemporary form in Africa present many opportunities for a variety of things. However, most importantly, when seen as social production alongside commercial investment with progressive politics of care that aim at leaving no one behind, it presents the possibility of everyday politics. This is done by bringing together diverse stakeholders at national, local government and sub-national levels to create a better functioning Just city with accountable governance. These dividends are not restricted to urban places. Instead, owing to the interweaving of Africa's urban and rural areas, the justice cities governed by conscientious politics of care are essential agents in forming a cohesive public.

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