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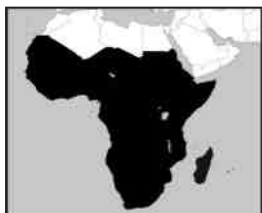
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African urban fantasies: dreams or nightmares?

VANESSA WATSON

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1. UN-Habitat (2009), *Global Report on Human Settlements 2009: Planning Sustainable Cities*, Earthscan, London, 306 pages.

2. McKinsey & Company (2012), "Africa at work: job creation and inclusive growth", McKinsey Global Institute, 18 pages.

ABSTRACT Labelled as the "last frontier" for international property development, sub-Saharan Africa's larger cities are currently being revisioned in the image of cities such as Dubai, Shanghai and Singapore, which claim top positions in the world-class city leagues. Draped in the rhetoric of "smart cities" and "eco-cities", these plans promise to modernize African cities and turn them into gateways for international investors and showpieces for ambitious politicians. Yet the reality in all of these cities stands in stark contrast to the glass-box towers, manicured lawns and water features on developers' and architects' websites. With the majority of urban populations living in deep poverty and with minimal urban services, the most likely outcome of these fantasy plans is a steady worsening of the marginalization and inequalities that already beset these cities.

KEYWORDS African cities / eco-cities / property development / satellite cities / smart cities

I. INTRODUCTION

The urban plans for Africa's larger cities, if they exist at all, are usually to be found in dilapidated condition, perhaps pinned to the wall in a central government ministry or folded into a large technical report. Most often, they reflect a static land use zoning plan covering the older parts of the city and they usually bear little relationship to what is actually on the ground.⁽¹⁾ But this is changing fast. The proposed new urban master plans for many of Africa's larger cities are now to be found on the websites of international architectural, engineering and property development companies, and they depart even further from African urban reality than did the post-colonial zoning plans. Visions for these future cities reflect images of Dubai, Singapore or Shanghai, although iconic building shapes from elsewhere in the world may be thrown in for good measure. And while the glass tower buildings and landscaped freeways suggest a revived Corbusian modernism, the accompanying texts also promise that these plans will deliver the more fashionable eco-cities and smart cities.

The urban fantasies portrayed on these websites reflect a notion that Africa is "rising" (a term used frequently by both politicians and global investors and following on, perhaps, from earlier assertions that India, China and Asia have been "rising"). Pronouncements from investment analysts such as McKinsey⁽²⁾ that Africa is economically the second fastest-growing region in the world, that by 2035 it will have a larger workforce than India or China, and that it is set to urbanize faster than these two regions, have no doubt excited the interest of the international property

development sector, which can anticipate a steadily rising demand for urban projects and infrastructure.⁽³⁾ In fact, African cities have been referred to as the “last development frontier”,⁽⁴⁾ anticipating that as urban land and development move to saturation in Asia and the East, Africa’s urban property market will be coming on stream and growing fast.

However, these new urban visions and development plans appear to disregard the fact that at the moment, the bulk of the population in sub-Saharan Africa cities is extremely poor and living in informal settlements. Some of these settlements are on well-located urban land that is also attractive to property developers. Attempts to implement these fantasy plans within existing cities will (and is already) having major exclusionary effects on vulnerable low-income groups through evictions and relocations. Moreover, these development interests bring with them a host of additional demands – for new and particular forms of urban infrastructure and for forms of governance and decision-making that facilitate the realization of property investment interests. Michael Goldman⁽⁵⁾ has termed these processes “speculative urbanism”, drawing on the case of Bangalore where the main business of government has become that of land speculation and the dispossession of those living on land earmarked for private development.

The purpose of this paper is to suggest that processes of speculative urbanism, although undoubtedly set to take different forms from those in South Asia and in Bangalore, are beginning to make an appearance on the African continent. Private sector urban development in Africa is certainly not new, but the interest of international property companies in developing anew at the citywide scale, or often the city-region scale where satellite cities are involved, seems to post-date the 2008 financial crisis and may well be tied to the wider downturn in property markets elsewhere. There is little published research on these new plans as yet, and this paper is based largely on internet sources. The information was compiled primarily through an internet search using African city names and the term “master plan” and through a scan of the websites of the dozen or so international property development companies that focus on Africa. New images for Africa’s cities appear on the internet with great regularity, with many of these now compiled by the website www.urbanafrica.net.

This paper begins with a review of the new plans, which tend to take the form of urban renewal, urban extensions or entirely new satellite cities. It then locates them within the broader discourse on urban form: “new urbanism”, “smart cities” and “eco-cities” are all globally circulating terms that have all found their way into these plans as part of their promotion. These concepts link in various ways to a growing network of interests in “future cities”, which includes an interesting mix of property developers, designers, engineering and infrastructure companies, finance and IT firms and those promoting urban sustainability. The last part of the paper considers what the possible impact of these proposed urban interventions might be, both in terms of those currently living in these cities and those on surrounding land.

II. AFRICAN URBAN FANTASIES: MAKE-OVERS, SATELLITES AND EXTENSIONS

The plans reviewed here have the following in common:

3. See the Knight Frank reports (<http://www.KnightFrank.com>) for an overview of the African property market.

4. <http://www.kenyahomesguide.com/227/tatu-city-estate-launches-in-nairobi/>, accessed 24 August 2013.

5. Goldman, M (2011), “Speculative urbanism and the making of the next world city”, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* Vol 35, No 3, pages 555–581.

- they are large scale, in that they involve the re-planning of all or large parts of an existing city or (more often) restructuring a city through the creation of linked but new satellite cities;
- they consist of graphically represented and three-dimensional visions of future cities rather than detailed land use plans, and most of these visions are clearly influenced by cities such as Dubai, Shanghai or Singapore;
- there are clear attempts to link these physical visions to contemporary rhetoric on urban sustainability, risk and new technologies, underpinned by the ideal that through these cities Africa can be “modernized”;
- they are either on the websites of the global companies that have developed them or are on government websites with references to their origins within private sector companies;
- their location in the legal or governance structures of a country is not clear – where formal city plans exist these visions may simply parallel or over-ride them; and
- there is no reference to any kind of participation or democratic debate that has taken place.

There may be currently only one plan that aims to replace an existing city with something entirely new, namely the plan for Kigali, in Rwanda.⁽⁶⁾ The rest of the new plans propose major projects within a city, urban extensions or new satellite cities. The Kigali Conceptual Master Plan⁽⁷⁾ was developed by the Oz Architecture Team, based in the United States, and was adopted by the Rwandan parliament in 2008. Oz and the Singapore company, Surbana, developed more detailed plans. Figures 1A and 1B suggest high-modernism (glass box towers, landscaped boulevards and freeways), yet the rhetoric is about sustainability. Dubai and Singapore are clear sources of inspiration, although London’s “Gherkin” (the popular name given to a 41-storey building at 30 St Mary Axe) can be seen in the background of one graphic. Rwanda considers itself the “Switzerland of Africa”, with a clear commitment to business-friendly development, and the plan reflects this vision of its government. Doherty⁽⁸⁾ reports that implementation of the new plan is underway, although the new statement towers are sparsely occupied. Finance and construction can be linked back to global circuits of property construction – with the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation and New Century Developments (a real estate company based in Hong Kong and with a Rwanda branch) having jointly constructed and financed most of Kigali’s simulated skyline. By contrast, a 2010 UN–Habitat report⁽⁹⁾ stated that 90 per cent of Kigali’s population lives in informal housing or with unregulated (unrecognized) tenure. Evictions in Kigali had been reported prior to the adoption of the new plan, but seemingly have been stepped up to make room for the new urban projects. The extent of these evictions, or where these households have moved to, is not clear.

By far the bulk of new urban fantasy plans takes the form of new satellite cities adjacent to an existing larger city. Eastern and western sub-Saharan Africa seem to have attracted most of these to date, although there are also examples in Angola. Just a selection of these is described below.

The Nairobi 2030 Metro Strategy⁽¹⁰⁾ was unveiled by the Kenyan government in 2008. Its stated aim is to make Nairobi “a world class African metropolis” and the emphasis on world class appears in almost

6. Although the *Ethiopian Herald* (1 July 2013) does make reference to a new master plan for Addis Ababa, which aims to “... give the capital a majestic look”, and the online publication *AllAfrica* (7 July 2013) reports on plans in Addis for the tallest building in Africa – a 99-storey hotel/retail tower to be built by the Guangdong Chuanhui Group.

7. http://www.rdb.rw/uploads/media/KIGALI_CONCEPTUAL_Master_Plan.pdf, accessed 30 June 2013.

8. Doherty, K (2013), “Kigali – remaking the city”, *Cityscapes* Vol 3, pages 30–31, available at <http://www.cityscapesdigital.net/>.

9. UN–Habitat (2010), *The State of African Cities, Governance, Inequality and Urban Land Markets*, Nairobi, 270 pages.

10. “Nairobi 2030”, accessed 1 July 2013 at http://www.tatucity.com/DynamicData/Downloads/NM_Vision_2030.pdf.



FIGURES 1A AND 1B
Kigali Conceptual Master Plan

NOTE: Plan/graphics developed by OZ Architects, Denver, USA (<http://www.ozarch.com>) and Surbana (<http://www.surbana.com>).

SOURCE: http://www.rdb.rw/uploads/media/KIGALI_CONCEPTUAL_Master_Plan.pdf.

every section of the document. Thereafter, an international competition was launched to design a spatial concept to accompany the plan. Some 15 satellite cities were proposed in this plan, but so far none have materialized. The rationale in the 2030 Metro Strategy for these new cities is that Nairobi is over-congested and the satellites will redirect future population growth away from the “mother” city. The strategy document notes that these new centres will provide “... a wide range of lifestyle choices outside of work [which] will complement the envisaged business success of the region.”⁽¹¹⁾

Two of these new cities have reached an advanced planning stage and have established websites. Tatu City,⁽¹²⁾ to be built on productive coffee land, is planned for 70,000 residents and 30,000 day visitors. The developers claim that Tatu City “... will attract discerning residents, companies and retailers who wish to live, work and play in the most modern, well-planned urban development in East Africa.”⁽¹³⁾ Financing was supposed to be underwritten by Moscow-based Renaissance Partners, which the Tatu City website describes as the world’s leading emerging markets investment bank, but the project is now tied up in a court case over land acquisition. Figure 2 shows the hoped-for landscaped lawns, uncongested freeways and commercial buildings.

Konza Techno City,⁽¹⁴⁾ 60 kilometres from Nairobi, is planned for 30,000 residents and is supposed to be a Kenyan Silicon Valley. The first phase is expected to cost US\$ three billion and will include a 5,000 acre “technology park” (Figure 3). The Kenyan government has evidently been looking for a single developer to plan and fund this project, but a lack of part-funding of infrastructure by government appears to have been holding up the process. The online news publication *AllAfrica* has also been reporting on disputes with local landowners.⁽¹⁵⁾

A third proposed satellite city, called Machakos City,⁽¹⁶⁾ is to be located next to the existing and older town of Machakos, which is close

11. See reference 10, page 12.

12. <http://www.tatucity.com/>, accessed 1 July 2013.

13. See reference 12, page 1.

14. <http://www.konzacity.co.ke/>, accessed 1 July 2013.

15. See *AllAfrica*, 13 May 2013 and 26 June 2013.

16. <http://www.machakosgovernment.com/GovernmentPhotosMachakos.aspx?PhotoID=6>, accessed 4 August 2013.



FIGURE 2
Tatu City, Nairobi

NOTE: Plan/graphics developed by Rendeavor (Renaissance Group) (<http://www.rengroup.com/UrbanDevelopments>).

SOURCE: <http://www.tatucity.com/>.



FIGURE 3
Konza Techno City, Nairobi

NOTE: Graphics developed by Pell Frischmann (<http://www.pellfrischmann.com/search.php?query=Konza+City&x=10&y=11>).

SOURCE: <http://www.konzacity.co.ke/>.

to Nairobi. The interesting aspect of this proposed satellite is that it is being promoted by the government of Machakos County rather than by national government, reflecting a regional initiative under Kenya's new

system of devolved government. The new governor of the county promises an airport that will compete with Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, a Formula 1 racetrack and free land for investors⁽¹⁷⁾ in Machakos City, indicating a degree of regional competitiveness emerging in Kenya. Gibb International (also Gibb Africa), originally a British engineering company but now Kenyan owned, has produced the plans and designs.

Hope City is a new satellite "technology" city to be built at Prampram outside Accra, in Ghana. It was designed by Italian architect Paulo Brescia and will be built by RLG Communications, a Ghana-based IT company, at an estimated cost of US\$ 10 billion. Reportedly, Microsoft will be a partner in this development. It will consist of six linked towers (Figure 4), which will house 25,000 residents and 50,000 workers. These towers, which seem to bear no relationship to their surrounding environment, were supposedly inspired by ancient mud and thatched huts arranged into a compound typical of traditional African society. It will also, according to the website, be highly sustainable and promote green building technology.⁽¹⁸⁾ The site for Hope City was recently shifted from Dunkunaa to the larger site at Prampram, but Dunkunaa residents claimed the project had incurred the displeasure of the gods when the developers refused to acknowledge the chiefs and elders of the area.⁽¹⁹⁾

Luanda, the capital city of Angola, seems to have spawned a range of satellite cities, including the well-publicized Chinese-built "ghost towns": these are cities comprising tower blocks of apartments selling at between US\$ 150,000–200,000 each, when most Angolans live on less than US\$ 2 a day.⁽²⁰⁾ In addition, Luanda Satellite City (for 890,000 people) was designed by the property development company Dar el Handasah Shair, which has head offices in Beirut, Cairo, London and Pune. This is a luxury development, but the same company is developing "resettlement areas" many kilometres outside of Luanda for residents who currently live in Luanda's informal settlements or who are displaced by new developments

17. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9MSz3M_6pKU.

18. <http://www.rlgghana.com/index.php/2013-02-07-11-25-04.html>, accessed 4 July 2013.

19. <http://www.modernghana.com/news/468095/1/confusion-rocks-hope-city-project.html>, accessed 4 July 2011.

20. <http://mg.co.za/article/2012-11-23-00-angolan-trophy-city-a-ghost-town>, accessed 5 July 2013.



FIGURE 4
Hope City, Accra

NOTE: Plan/graphics developed by Italian architects OBR (<http://www.obr.eu>).

SOURCE: <http://www.rlgghana.com/index.php/2013-02-07-11-25-04.html>.

there. These are tiny matchbox houses with little sign of any facilities, and clearly very far away from work opportunities. Nova Vida, for 30,000 people, is another Luanda satellite city being built by Aurecon, a South African-based construction company with global reach. These five- to six-storey apartment blocks, like the ghost towns, are likely to be financially unaffordable for most Angolans.

Taking a somewhat different form from separate satellite cities, a number of Africa's major centres are also developing large urban projects within or on their urban edges. But like the satellite city or whole-city plans, they are commercially driven and aimed at a middle- and upper-income market.

Kigamboni City (Figure 5) on the edge of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) claims it will be an eco-city that will relieve Dar es Salaam of congestion and land shortages. This project has been supported by the current Minister of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements, Anna Tabaijuka (previous head of UN-Habitat and remembered for her promotion of inclusive cities), and the first phase will be developed by the companies Mi World from Dubai–United Arabs Emirates and China Hope Limited. Plans were developed by a state-owned Korean company, LH Consortium, which appears to initiate new cities in various parts of Africa and Asia. The

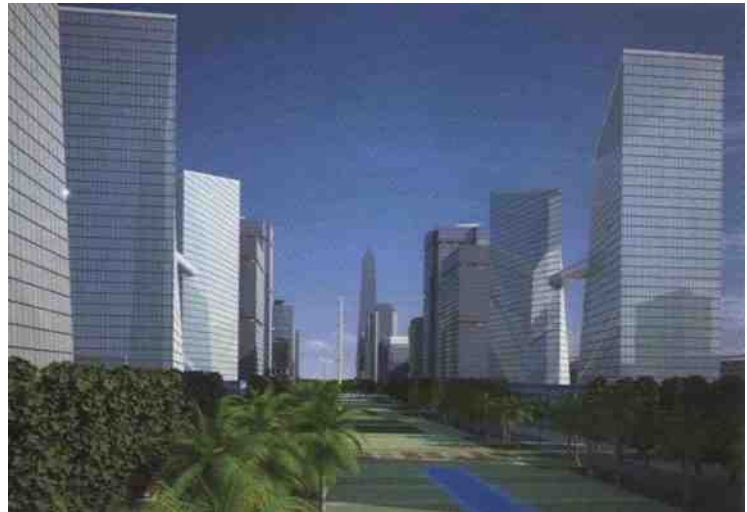


FIGURE 5
Kigamboni, Dar es Salaam

NOTE: In order to bring the plan to its actual realization, the government engaged a Korean consulting firm, LH Consortium, to prepare a master plan for New Kigamboni City. In May 2010, the consultant submitted a main report – entitled *New Kigamboni City Three-dimensional Master Plan*, LH Consortium (http://world.lh.or.kr/englh_html/englh_biz/biz_5.asp) – although there is no mention of Kigamboni on their present website.

SOURCE: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201305291042.html>.

some 82,000 households currently living on the site have been promised compensation to cover part of the costs of accessing the new units that are to be built there. Yet the proposed “dream city”, anticipated to deliver “... an ultra-modern urban centre with facilities competing with those in places like Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Hong Kong and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia”,⁽²¹⁾ may only be affordable for a very few of these residents. Traditional mono-functional zoning demarcates the area into five land use zones, namely business, industry, education, residential and tourism, and a road hierarchy that is oriented towards a car-owning public divides these zones.

In Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, a new development called Cité le Fleuve (Figure 6) has been designed by a consortium of international design companies and will occupy two “islands” on reclaimed land in the Congo River.⁽²²⁾ It will include mixed retail, office and residential development and one of the islands will be devoted to up-market residential accommodation. Hawkwood Properties (described as a specialist fund manager based in Africa but serving European and US investors) appears to be coordinating the development. De Boeck⁽²³⁾ describes billboards in the city for this and other urban renewal projects that promise to bring “modernization” and make Kinshasa a “model for the rest of Africa”. In reality, though, Kinshasa is a war-ravaged city of some nine million people, the majority of whom live in deep poverty and eke out a living from small informal businesses.

A further example of this kind of project is Eko Atlantic, located on an infill site on Victoria Island in Lagos, and the stage of development is clearly visible on Google Earth. This project is close to central Lagos and only peripheral to the extent that it is situated on newly created land that projects into the sea. The developers are Dar el Handasah Shair with MZ Architects, based in the Middle East, and funders are local and international. Eko Atlantic claims to be the largest urban development project in Africa, which will solve Lagos’ problems of congestion and infrastructure decay. It will be a city built on 10 square kilometres of reclaimed land and will hold 250,000 people.⁽²⁴⁾ As with other projects discussed here, the graphics (Figures 7A and 7B) show strong influences of high modernist architecture, and visual references to other “iconic” eastern cities.

III. RATIONALES: REAL AND IMAGINED

These new city plans, satellite cities and large urban projects in sub-Saharan Africa are a relatively recent phenomenon. Most date from the last five or six years, although certain projects such as Eko Atlantic were considered earlier but only gained momentum in the last few years. While detailed research needs to be carried out, the fact that the private sector (with bases in, or links to, economically stronger regions of the world) has become a dominant player in nearly all of these projects (excluding the Chinese-built ghost cities) suggests that global economic forces are interacting with local African contexts in new ways. It is possible to speculate that the downturn in demand for property and urban development in global North regions after the 2008 financial crisis drove both built environment professionals and property investment companies to seek new markets in those parts of the world where economic growth and demand for new urban growth continued: particularly in the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

21. <http://www.allafrica.com/stories/201305291042.html>; also http://www.hhhggg.netorage.com:8711/harddisk/user/37/vision/mission/tanzania/Kigamboni_A.pdf, accessed 4 July 2013.

22. De Boeck, P (2012), “Spectral Kinshasa: building the city through an architecture of words”, in T Edensor and M Jayne (editors), *Urban Theory Beyond the West: A World of Cities*, Routledge, New York.

23. See reference 22.

24. <http://www.ekoatlantic.com/broadcast-media/journey-of-eko-atlantic-2012/>, accessed 4 July 2013.



FIGURE 6
Kinshasa: Cité le Fleuve

NOTE: Plan/graphics developed by Hawkwood Properties (<http://www.lacitedufleuve.com/aboutus.php>). The major shareholder is Mukwa Investment (<http://www.hedgeweek.com/2007/01/19/hedgeweek-interview-hillary-duckworth-chief-investment-officer-mukwa-fund-unearthing-oppo>).

SOURCE: <http://www.lacitedufleuve.com/>.



FIGURES 7A AND 7B
Eko Atlantic, Lagos

NOTE: Plan/graphics developed by Dar al Handasah Shair (<http://www.dargroup.com>).

SOURCE: <http://www.ekoatlantic.com/broadcast-media/journey-of-eko-atlantic-2012/>.

The African continent is very diverse, however, and there is no doubt that foreign capital in search of investment opportunities would be influenced in various ways by particular local economies and income growth as well as by political factors, available local partners, land and banking conditions, infrastructure and so on. The price per square metre

of property⁽²⁵⁾ can give some indication of which cities are attractive to investors, and Kenya and Tanzania show up as third and fourth ranked on the continent. South African property prices are four times higher than in either of these countries, but growth of value here has been slow or negative relative to Nairobi or Dar es Salaam. However, cities such as Kinshasa, Kigali or Luanda do not show up on these charts, so there are clearly other factors attracting private investment. The MasterCard African Cities Growth Index⁽²⁶⁾ assesses the investment potential of cities based on a range of criteria (including political stability, rule of law etc.). According to this index, Accra is the best performer across all indices, followed by Lusaka and Luanda. Both Accra and Luanda have fantasy satellite cities but there is nothing of a similar scale evident in or near Lusaka yet. Clearly, it is not possible to generalize about the factors driving these projects other than the willing engagement of senior government officials and politicians, without which such projects would have little traction.

Other local factors that are probably playing a role in the appearance of these new projects are the expected increase in the size of Africa's urban population (this could double in the next 20 years and urban populations are growing at 3.9 per cent per annum⁽²⁷⁾) and a growing urban middle class. Again, however, both of these claimed attractors must be viewed with caution. Statements that Africa now has some of the highest urbanization rates in the world are found in many policy and assessment reports on sub-Saharan Africa. Certainly, urbanization (and urban growth as a result of natural increase) is occurring and is fuelling demand for urban land and property development. However, recent United Nations Population Division figures show that Asia is urbanizing more rapidly than Africa,⁽²⁸⁾ and Potts⁽²⁹⁾ has argued that claims of very rapid African urbanization may be overstated and rates may be higher in smaller towns than in the largest and capital cities. Despite these indications, it is the largest cities that are attracting most property development interest.

Agencies such as Deloitte⁽³⁰⁾ state that Africa's middle class has tripled over the last 30 years and is now the fastest growing in the world. A growing urban middle class generates demand for formal housing, public facilities and amenities, retail outlets and transport routes for growing car ownership, and are certainly potential customers for the kinds of urban environments portrayed in the urban fantasy plans referred to above. This class also provides a consumer market for goods and services of all kinds, and hence investment in production and services buildings. A growing middle class therefore fuels demand for well-located and serviced urban land and development projects as well as architectural styles considered "aspirational" or "modern". Deloitte are cautious on the definition of a middle class. They note that the African Development Bank uses as a definition those spending US\$ 2–20 a day, and even the "upper middle class" as US\$ 10–20 a day spenders. It is difficult to imagine how households with such minimal spending power can afford the luxury apartments portrayed in the fantasy plans (as well as the vehicles needed to move around these new cities), and (as in the case of Luanda's Chinese ghost cities) it may be that prospective property developers are seriously misreading the African market.

African middle-class consumer tastes probably align closely with the images portrayed in the fantasy plans, as they all offer environments that are (hyper) modern, high status, clean and well-serviced; and they appear

25. <http://www.globalpropertyguide.com>.

26. Angelopulo, G and Y Hedrick-Wong (2013), "MasterCard African cities growth index (2013)", MasterCard Worldwide Insights, 20 pages.

27. The World Bank (2012), *The Future of Water in African Cities: Why Waste Water?*, Washington DC, 168 pages.

28. United Nations Population Division (2011), *World Urbanization Prospects: the 2011 Revision Highlights*, New York, 50 pages.

29. Potts, D (2009), "The slowing of sub-Saharan Africa's urbanization: evidence and implications for urban livelihoods", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 21, No 1, pages 253–259.

30. http://www.deloitte.com/assets/Dcom-SouthAfrica/Local%20Assets/Documents/rise_and_rise.pdf.

31. Acuto, M (2010), "High-rise Dubai urban entrepreneurialism and the technology of symbolic power", *Cities* Vol 27, pages 272–284.

32. See reference 31.

33. Hollands, R (2008), "Will the real smart city please stand up?", *City* Vol 12, No 3, pages 303–320; also *Urban Studies* (2013) "Special issue: Planning 'smart' city-regions in an age of market-driven fundamentalism", Vol 50, No 11, pages 2151–2387.

34. See reference 33, Hollands (2008).

35. See reference 33, Hollands (2008).

to be free of the congestion, pollution and what is often described as the "disorder" of existing cities. The support given to these plans by local politicians and governments is also significant. Both may consider that they will gain some political support from the successful implementation of these projects and there may be direct or indirect financial gain as well. But the frequency of references to a desire to become a "world-class city" suggests that other rationales are present. Acuto⁽³¹⁾ has attempted to explain this phenomenon in the context of Dubai by examining its quest to use "symbolic power" to establish itself as a twenty-first century global city. The exercise of symbolic power involves the production of narratives promoting the city and addressed to global elites; it also implies a concern with the importance of a city in relation to other cities rather than the extent to which it functions for its citizens. One important vehicle for promotional narratives is the built environment, which has to be not only "modern" but also has to display an iconic identity: skyscrapers (towers) are commonly used but also ultra-modern and distinctive airports, trade centres, office blocks and retail centres. Acuto⁽³²⁾ notes the tendency to describe new tower block complexes as self-contained ("a city within a city") and themed: examples from Dubai are Internet City and Waterfront City. Populations that live, work and shop in these gigantic "gated communities" therefore never need to interact with the rest of the city.

The tendency to label buildings in ways that confer particular identities and emphasize their modern-ness has also been extended to whole new planned cities. The two most common "rationales" used by the architects and developers of new satellite cities and major in-city projects are that they are smart cities or (less frequently) eco-cities. Nairobi's satellite Konza Techno City and Ghana's Hope City both claim to be smart cities, suggesting that they are globally connected, infrastructurally wired and operate through technological innovations. Smart cities also often claim to be sustainable on the basis of these technologies. Labelling new developments as "smart" or "eco" is certainly part of the exercise of Acuto's "symbolic power" and are no doubt part of a marketing ploy to encourage local and other investors. But both terms also link to important debates in the urban and planning literature on how cities can maximize the benefits of technology and how they can become more environmentally sustainable. Both of these are good qualities that should be promoted but, increasingly, writers⁽³³⁾ have pointed to ways in which "urban entrepreneurialism" has used these terms as a smokescreen for rather different agendas.

Hollands⁽³⁴⁾ has argued that it is often difficult to separate out the extent to which proposed urban projects actually intend some kind of positive technological innovation as opposed to being high-tech variations of urban entrepreneurialism or just place-marketing. Also problematic is the assumption that smart cities simply require IT hardware and infrastructure to become "smart". This completely ignores the quite obvious human and social dimensions of "smart": the role of social capital and networks of trust and reciprocity that are pre-requisites for innovation. In the context of Africa, with its often still low levels of education, populations that have been uprooted or displaced as a result of urbanization and hence have fragile and probably non-place-based networks, and intermittent power supplies, achieving both the infrastructural and human capital pre-conditions for smart cities will be a major challenge. Hollands⁽³⁵⁾ also highlights the tendency to use smart city discourse to circumvent processes of public debate and

participation. That cities should want to be “intelligent”, “connected” and “cutting edge” is presented as incontestable and hence consultation is unnecessary, and where these projects are on greenfield sites (as the satellite cities inevitably are), the fact that such land may already be used for agricultural purposes is considered of lesser importance.

The label “eco-city” has been used less frequently in the new plans for African urban projects, although Lagos’ Eko Atlantic clearly makes this claim, and those developments that foreground their “smartness” also usually claim to be “sustainable”, as if the former ensures the latter. Writers deconstructing the eco-city label tend to echo the points raised by smart city critics. Pow and Neo⁽³⁶⁾ focus on the context of China but argue that their discussion has wider applicability. They explore the frequent attachment of the eco-city label to new city projects in China, as well as various efforts at constructing such cities, but note that it is still not possible to find an example of a successfully constructed eco-city. This in itself highlights the difficulties of executing such projects, where issues such as costs, politics and planning have proved to be major stumbling blocks, even when these initiatives have had strong state backing.

Pow and Neo,⁽³⁷⁾ like the smart city critics, argue that even in China eco-cities have been used as entrepreneurial place-making, and that international growth coalitions made up of property investors and transnational networks of professional architects and planners trading in technical knowledge and global best practice have been deployed to promote inter-urban competitiveness. Like smart city, the eco-city label has been used as a legitimization strategy for projects that may well be framed through sound sustainability goals but that are, in fact, driven by commercial objectives.

The motivations and justifications for these African urban fantasy plans thus come from a range of rather different sources, and from within the continent as well as from beyond. To some degree there is an alignment of the various discourses that underlie these ideas, although real motivations may range from political status, to commercial profit or just to securing a safe and clean living and working environment. However, the wider and longer-term potential impact of these plans, should they come to fruition, will be dramatic and could confront African cities with far more serious problems than they face at present. The next section of the paper turns to the question of impact.

IV. IMPACTS: WINNERS AND LOSERS

Africa is by no means the first continent to be on the receiving end of these kinds of urban visions, and there is a steadily growing literature that explores their impacts in other cities of the global South. In the case of African cities, some of these plans are finding their way through to implementation and are having an impact on the urban fabric, but most are still at the ideas stage. This section of the paper suggests the kinds of impacts that these urban fantasy plans could have, given the realities of African cities and the outcomes in other cities in the global South. To some degree, this section of the paper is speculative, given the very little empirical work on these new trends, but the commonalities in outcomes in other contexts suggest that the impacts in African cities can be predicted with a reasonable degree of confidence.

36. Pow, C and H Neo (2013), “Seeing red over green: contesting urban sustainabilities in China”, *Urban Studies* Vol 50, No 11, pages 2256–2274.

37. See reference 36.

38. See reference 5, page 555.

39. See also Benjamin, S (2000), "Governance, economic settings and poverty in Bangalore", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 12, No 1, pages 35–56.

40. Society for International Development (2010), "Are satellite cities the (official) future of GHEA's urbanization?", *Greater Horn of Eastern Africa (GHEA) Outlook* No 18, available at <http://www.sidint.net>.

41. <http://www.Chartercities.org>.

42. See reference 40, page 13.

43. See reference 5.

44. Narain, V (2009), "Growing city, shrinking hinterland: land acquisition, transition and conflict in peri-urban Gurgaon, India", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 21, No 2, pages 501–512.

45. See reference 44, page 506.

46. Shatkin, G (2008), "The city and the bottom line: urban megaprojects and the privatization of planning in Southeast Asia", *Environment and Planning A* Vol 40, No 2, pages 383–401.

Goldman suggests that transforming rural economies into urban real estate is "... *the principal tension running through the urban periphery of much of Asia today.*"⁽³⁸⁾ Using Bangalore in India as a case study, he explains how peri-urban communities have been at the centre of "world-city making" but also how this process of land acquisition and dispossession reshapes the local state. Reforming the older bureaucracies into "one-stop shops" for approving and facilitating foreign capital projects has supposedly contributed to, but has also undermined, India's processes of decentralization and democratization. Newly created parastatals designed to fast-track particular large projects are externally funded and have little or no local oversight, and hence local government has been carved up into the older bureaucracies left in charge of small maintenance budgets and the new autonomous agencies⁽³⁹⁾ fed by international loans but also large obligations of risky debt finance. Projects being dealt with in this way are the new Bangalore airport, an "IT corridor" and overhead freeways to connect them, as well as the familiar satellite cities: for example, Knowledge City, built on working farmland, is financed by a Dubai firm.

These shifts may still be on their way in African settings, and there is little information to date on how these new satellite cities will be governed. One worrying scenario painted by Rockefeller's Society for International Development⁽⁴⁰⁾ publication is that these satellites will adopt the Charter City⁽⁴¹⁾ model. This concept, promoted by US economist Paul Romer as "... *a radical solution to the problem of poverty*",⁽⁴²⁾ is, in effect, "city states" that are removed from national processes of fiscal and political accountability. As these satellites are most likely to be occupied by local and international business interests and middle-class residents, this scenario suggests a radical carving up of urban territories and populations according to income, but with satellite city occupants subject to a governance regime entirely driven by market principles.

A further and most obvious set of impacts relates to the removal of less powerful actors who are occupying land earmarked for urban renewal and extension. Goldman⁽⁴³⁾ refers to 200,000 rural people displaced by the Mysore–Bangalore project with minimal compensation for what was called unproductive farmland, but which was immediately turned into high-value urban land. In Bangalore, as elsewhere, many dispossessed landowners, especially women, found it very difficult to prove ownership, or were tenants with no claim to the land. Farmers in the peri-urban area surrounding Gurgaon, some 32 kilometres from Delhi, have lost extensive land as part of the real estate boom in the region.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Land has been seized by the state "for public purposes", sometimes without compensation; some farmers rendered landless have moved into alternative occupations, but others have squandered their land payments on consumer goods and alcohol.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Mass removals of populations on or beyond the urban periphery inevitably swell the ranks of those already in urban informal settlements (or, in the case of India, have greatly escalated the farmer suicide rate).

Interventions within current city boundaries set in motion similar processes. Urban developments in Metro Manila involving land clearance for new commercial developments and new elevated transport systems to link them together have been labelled as "bypass-implant urbanism" by Shatkin.⁽⁴⁶⁾ These enclaves for the "global class" are designed to avoid and supplant the "failures and decay" of the existing city, and in the process have led to large-scale evictions. In Bangalore, Goldman has argued that

the most palpable urban anxiety today is the fear of official land theft and the “speculative” nature of routine decision-making: “... *social angst over whether or not one’s domicile will be taken over to build the new metro, widen a road, construct a housing complex or a special export zone.*”⁽⁴⁷⁾ All this is justified in the name of world-city making, or “worlding”, to use Roy’s⁽⁴⁸⁾ term for the strategies and models of urban development that cities use to enter the global networks of economic exchange and profit.

In the African urban visions described above these processes are just beginning. The impact on poorer urban dwellers is felt most directly where new urban master plans and projects attempt comprehensive urban renewal to remake the city in the image of somewhere else considered “world class”. Kigali and, to a lesser extent, Addis Ababa seem to be currently subject to these kinds of make-overs, and their extensive shack populations are being systematically moved to make way for the new projects. Many other cities (such as Nairobi) are responding to the very real problem of traffic congestion by planning new systems of freeways and fly-overs that carve their way through older and poorer urban areas. These cater directly for the still small, car-owning middle class, but are of little help to the majority of people who travel on foot.

In most cities, however, governments find it easier to avoid the difficulties of removal of dense urban fabric and to seek less fiercely contested land on the urban edge (for example Dar es Salaam) or in the rural areas beyond. Around African cities, peri-urban areas have been growing very rapidly as poor urban dwellers look for a foothold in the cities and towns where land is more easily available, where they can escape the costs and threats of urban land regulations, and where there is a possibility of combining urban and rural livelihoods. These are the areas usually earmarked for development by new urban extension projects.

Writing about the Cité le Fleuve project in Kinshasa, De Boeck⁽⁴⁹⁾ describes how colonial and post-colonial planned expansions of Kinshasa have over the years been re-territorialized and reclaimed by poorer city inhabitants, redefining the colonial logics that were stamped onto this space. Large tracts of land along the Congo River have been converted into productive rice fields that supply Kinshasa’s markets, although more recently pressures of urban growth have seen some of these areas converted to shack lands. Acknowledging that this existence outside of the official frameworks of formal urban regulation and services is not an ideal way to live, De Boeck⁽⁵⁰⁾ nonetheless argues that it allows the pursuit of livelihoods with a degree of freedom and flexibility. In other terminology, this would be called “resilience”. All this stands in contrast to the recent initiatives to “modernize” Kinshasa, starting with the conversion of tree-lined boulevards to an eight-lane highway into the heart of the city and efforts to “sanitize” the city by expelling street children and small traders (a “politics of erasure”). Cité le Fleuve on reclaimed land in the Congo River is a continuation of this modernizing effort, but in the process will destroy much of the rice-producing areas and the economic networks that they support.

In the case of satellite cities, these are frequently justified as being located on “empty land”, but it is rare that land around larger cities is empty, and if such land is not within an environmentally protected area then it is very likely to be actively farmed. In all these kinds of eviction processes, landowners rarely hold land title, and full compensation for land, shelter and livelihoods is unlikely. Baraka Mwau,⁽⁵¹⁾ writing

47. See reference 5, page 575.

48. Roy, A (2011), “Urbanisms, worlding practice and the theory of planning”, *Planning Theory* Vol 10, No 1, pages 6–15.

49. See reference 22.

50. See reference 22.

51. Mwau, B (2013), Blog: “The planned hatches the unplanned”, accessed 2 August 2013 at <http://slumurbanism.wordpress.com/2013/08/02/the-planned-hatches-the-unplanned/>.

about landowners near Nairobi's satellite Konza Techno City, describes their anticipation that the new city may create construction jobs for unemployed youth and also a demand for their food products. But at the same time, their properties fall within the 10-kilometre radius of Konza and hence are marked for (or not for) demolition, and all new developments now need planning approval. In the small town of Malili, Mwau describes a mushrooming of activities and land speculation, with "... *plots changing ownership within hours.*"⁽⁵²⁾ He reports that authorities are now doing their best to contain this informality, which has sprung up in at least 10 towns near the proposed Konza site. A two-kilometre buffer (cordon sanitaire?) around Konza is designated for "wildlife", and development for eight kilometres beyond this will be controlled. Quite what happens to the land and livelihoods of farmers in this area is not clear.

Beyond these immediate impacts of the new urban developments there are a number of further outcomes that can be anticipated with a degree of confidence. State spending on large-scale infrastructure (transport, sanitation, power) is likely to be skewed in the direction of support for these new cities and projects and away from meeting the basic services and housing needs of the much larger poor urban populations. Should the middle classes and higher-end investors retreat to these new elite enclaves (and this, after all, is their target market), then their tax base and spending power will be lost to the existing city, thus exacerbating urban decline.

The spatial separation of rich and poor that these new urban fantasies will entrench opens up the prospect of urban spatial and social inequalities at an unprecedented scale. At the same time, the hope that these new cities and developments will be "self-contained" and able to insulate themselves from the "disorder" and "chaos" of the existing cities is remote. Satellite cities are frequently unable to sustain all the job and service requirements of their populations, and tend to generate large volumes of movement and traffic as their residents find themselves having to travel back to more established centres. Wealthy enclaves are also usually unable to function without low-income service providers (domestic workers, gardeners, construction workers etc.) and inevitably an informal city grows up around the edges of the formal city.⁽⁵³⁾ In a range of ways, the utopian dreams of these urban fantasies (most of which are based on concepts that have been attempted before in other parts of the world and their impacts well-documented) are unlikely to materialize, yet the efforts to achieve them will have profound effects on lives and livelihoods. While those with a degree of power and resources may well be able to benefit in various ways, given the overwhelming dominance in African cities of those with very little, a widening and deepening of inequality is inevitable.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Africa's larger cities seem to be entering a new era of change, driven by the continent's own economic growth and emerging middle class as well as an international property development and finance sector in search of new markets. The urban visions and plans that this confluence of interests has produced stand in dramatic contrast to the lived reality of most urbanites,

52. See reference 51.

53. The persistence of informality around the modernist city of Brasília is a well-known example of this.

and while their impacts are likely to be complex and contradictory, what seems most likely is that the majority of urban populations will find themselves further disadvantaged and marginalized. It is access to land by the urban poor (as well as those on the urban periphery and beyond) that is most directly threatened by all these processes, and access to land in turn determines access to urban services, to livelihoods and to citizenship. As the poor confront new alliances between international property capital, national and city politicians and emerging urban middle classes, all bent on the seizure and re-valorization of land, it is also possible (if trends in parts of South Asia are reflected on the African continent) that systems of governance will also be reconfigured in order to facilitate the speculative urbanism to which Goldman⁽⁵⁴⁾ refers. As elsewhere, the possibility exists that poorer urban dwellers in Africa's larger cities will find themselves not only dispossessed of land but also of political rights.

These visions and "master plans" may or may not materialize or may be implemented in part, and much will depend on local political factors and the extent to which economic growth in Africa's emerging economies continues. It will also depend on the extent to which the various urban groupings disadvantaged by these processes are able to collaborate and resist. There is no doubt that the scale and extent of change envisioned in these plans might be sufficient to mobilize shack dwellers, unemployed youth, local informal and formal business and the NGO sector at a citywide scale, to effectively counter these interventions.

54. See reference 5.

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