

AFRICA NOW

POWER AND
INFORMALITY
IN URBAN
AFRICA

Ethnographic
Perspectives

EDITED BY
LAURA STARK AND
ANNIKA TEPPÖ



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Urban Africa

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Power and Informality in Urban Africa

Ethnographic Perspectives

Edited by
Laura Stark and Annika Björnsdotter Teppo



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AFRICA INSTITUTE
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ZED

LONDON • NEW YORK • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

Zed Books
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK
1385 Broadway, New York, NY 10018, USA
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland

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First published in Great Britain 2022 in association with the Nordic Africa Institute,
PO Box 1703, SE-751 47 Uppsala, Sweden

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Series design by Alice Marwick
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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Stark, Laura, editor. | Teppo, Annika Björnsdotter, editor.

Title: Power and informality in urban Africa: ethnographic perspectives /
edited by Laura Stark and Annika Björnsdotter Teppo.

Other titles: Africa now (Zed Books)

Description: London; New York: Zed Books, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022. |

Series: Africa now | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021029860 (print) | LCCN 2021029861 (ebook) | ISBN 9781786993458

(hardback) | ISBN 9781786993441 (paperback) | ISBN 9781786993472 (epub) |

ISBN 9781786993465 (pdf) | ISBN 9781350237599 (ebook other)

Subjects: LCSH: Urbanization—Africa. | Informal sector (Economics)—Africa. |

Urban policy—Africa. | Urban poor—Africa. | Sociology, Urban—Africa.

Classification: LCC HT384.A35 P69 2022 (print) | LCC HT384.A35 (ebook) |

DDC 307.76096—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2021029860>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2021029861>

ISBN: HB: 978-1-7869-9345-8
PB: 978-1-7869-9344-1
ePDF: 978-1-7869-9346-5
eBook: 978-1-7869-9347-2

Series: Africa Now

Typeset by Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd.
Printed and Bound in Great Britain

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Contributors

Dr Laura Stark is Professor of Ethnology at the Department of History and Ethnology, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. She has most recently been the principal investigator and coordinator of the multi-researcher project, *Urban Renewal and Income-Generating Spaces for Youth and Women in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*, funded by the Academy of Finland. Her research focuses on urban poverty, gender, and mobile phone use in East Africa.

Dr Annika Teppo, anthropologist and urban studies researcher, is Associate Professor at the Department of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology at Uppsala University, Sweden. Dr. Teppo has also been granted the title of docent in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Helsinki, Finland. Her areas of research specialization include South Africa and the post-apartheid city; religion, family, social inclusion and exclusion; social engineering and the urban space; race and whiteness, class, and Afrikaner ethnicity; exchange and local appropriations of neoliberalism. She is the author of the anthropological monograph *Afrikaners and the Boundaries of Faith in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (2022).

Dr Elias Yitbarek Alemayehu is Associate Professor at the Ethiopian Institute of Architecture, Building construction and City Development (EiABC) of Addis Ababa University. He is an educator, a researcher, and a practitioner in the fields of architecture and urbanism with principal areas of expertise in urban redevelopment and housing. He is co-editor and author in the book *The Transformation of Addis Ababa: A Multiform African City* (2018). He is currently engaged in a joint research project entitled, Addis Ababa Living Lab: Creating Resilient Dwelling Clusters for Urban Resettlement in Addis Ababa. He is a member of the Addis Ababa Urban Age Task Force, having an advisory role in identifying urban development pilots for strategic intervention. He has been the former President of the Association of Ethiopian Architects and the Research Director of EiABC.

Dr Sidylamine Bagayoko is an anthropologist with expertise in visual communication (ethnographic film-making). He is currently Associate

Professor at the Department of Arts and Humanities at the University of Bamako, Mali. His research focuses on visual anthropology, economic anthropology, urban poverty, and education in Mali. He has also directed several ethnographic and research films. He received his doctoral degree from the University of Nice, France.

Dr Esther Yeboah Danso-Wiredu is a senior lecturer at the Department of Geography Education, University of Education, Winneba-Ghana. She obtained her Master of Philosophy in Social change at Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), and received her PhD from the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences at Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven. Her research interests and publications address urban geography, housing and slum development, community-based associations, livelihoods, and gender and development.

Dr Cristiano Lanzano is a social anthropologist and has worked as Senior Researcher at the Nordic Africa Institute (Uppsala, Sweden) since 2014. He has conducted fieldwork in West Africa (particularly in Senegal, Burkina Faso, and Guinea Conakry), focusing his most recent research on natural resources management and artisanal gold mining. He has been a research associate at Laboratoire Citoyennetés, Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), and has published book chapters and articles in journals such as *Politique Africaine*, *Autrepart*, *The Extractive Industries and Society* and the *Journal of Agrarian Change*. His research interests include practical governance of mineral production across the urban formal/informal divide, organization of work in mining camps, and in sociotechnical change.

Dr Tiina-Riitta Lappi is an Adjunct Professor at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. She is a specialist in theory and methods regarding multi-disciplinary urban and spatial studies. Her research interests include cultural diversity and migration studies, spatial and environmental (in)justice, planning and development within multicultural cities, urban poverty and informal urbanism. In recent years she has studied women's livelihoods in Dar es Salaam, the effects of urban redevelopment on people's daily lives in *kebele* neighbourhoods in Addis Ababa, and migrants' place-making practices and ethnic encounters in the Finnish metropolitan cities.

Dr Susanna Myllylä is a Regional Studies scholar and Adjunct Professor in Environmental Policy. She is a leading slum researcher in Finland, having

published one English-language monograph and six English-language scientific articles on slums/urban sustainable development in Africa. She has conducted fieldwork in Brazil, Tanzania, India, and Egypt, and has been a consultant for the European Science Foundation, the Finnish Environment Institute, and the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities. Her research focuses on social justice and sustainable development in southern cities as well as on corporate responsibility and local communities.

Dr Adjoa Afriyie Poku is a senior lecturer at the Department of Geography Education, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana. She obtained her Master of Philosophy in Social change at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), and her PhD and postdoctoral degrees at Nottingham University, UK. Her research interests include women's livelihoods and HIV prevention.

Dr Cristina Udelsmann Rodrigues's research focuses on urban anthropology and sociology, particularly in Portuguese-speaking African countries such as Angola. Since 1998, she has participated as principal investigator, country coordinator, or researcher in the following urban-related research projects: Rapid Urbanization in Luanda and Maputo: impacts of war and socio-economic transformations (1980s and 1990s); Organisation and Representation in the Informal Economy in Africa; Dynamics of Local Urban Development in Angola and Mozambique; Sociospatial Reconfigurations in Cities of Angola and Mozambique; Urbanisation and Poverty in Mining Africa; Changing Urban-to-Rural Movements in Angola and Mozambique; The Practice and Politics of Urban Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Efforts at the Margins; Changing Urban Residency: migration, temporary settlement, and new urbanisms in Africa (Angola, the DRC, and Zambia). She is currently a Senior Researcher at the Nordic Africa Institute.

Dr Caroline Wamala-Larsson is an Associate Professor in Gender Studies and is currently working as the head of research for the Swedish Program for ICT in Developing Regions (SPIDER), an independent resource centre at Stockholm University. Wamala-Larsson's research focuses on gender and ICT4D. Recent publications include 'Mobile phones in the transformation of the informal economy: Stories from market women in Kampala, Uganda' in the *Journal of Eastern African Studies* (2018). Wamala-Larsson was co-editor of *Gendered Power and Mobile Technology: Intersections in the Global South* (2019, Routledge)

in which she authored the article, 'Rethinking financial inclusion: Social shaping of mobile money among bodaboda men in Kampala.'

Segen Yainshet Tesfamariam holds a Masters of Arts degree in Urban Development and Urban Challenges in East Africa, from Addis Ababa University, in collaboration with Norwegian University of Science and Technology. Her thesis was entitled, 'Environment protection and development in Addis Ababa: The case of revitalized neighborhood open spaces in housing cooperatives.' She has recently worked as a part-time architect and university lecturer in Ethiopia. She currently works in the social enterprise start-up she founded, and carries out research, design, planning, and development for sustainable change within communities.

Examining Power and Inequality through Informality in Urban Africa

Laura Stark and Annika Teppo

As increasing numbers of Africans live in cities, their strategies for living and surviving challenge prevailing theories and models of urban development. Scholars of poverty and development have given more attention to rural areas than to urban ones, yet urban lifeways need more study because people's material lives in the city differ significantly from those in rural areas. Urban residents are exposed to more ethnic, religious, and socio-economic diversity than rural residents (Jha et al. 2005). Urban areas are also highly monetized, and the lives of especially the poorest residents are determined almost entirely by market forces. Money thus becomes the focus of city dwellers' attention: the means by which relationships are negotiated, the measure of success, and a necessary condition for well-being. This volume defines 'urban' as residential aggregations in which the majority of residents work in non-agricultural activities, which generally means they are also settled more densely. Not all urban spaces are large cities; they can be small shantytowns appearing in otherwise rural areas. What is important in our definition of 'urban' is not its size or infrastructure but the resource base (predominantly non-agricultural) and dynamics of human interaction based on the range of interlocking occupations and levels of activity.

In the context of today's geopolitical environment, societies and economies in Sub-Saharan Africa continue to be positioned peripherally in international affairs and have apparently little bargaining power. Regardless of the measures used, the continent has by far the fewest number of cities that could be called 'global cities' or 'world cities' (Beaverstock, Taylor, and Smith 2002; van der Merwe 2004). Economic restructuring, beginning with the Structural Adjustment Programs¹ in the 1980s, has weakened the economic role of cities. It has continued as foreign-based resource extraction industries contribute to the 'hollowing out' of

many African states – institutions that resemble states in structure and form, but that have turned away from the work of governance. Instead, these neoliberal states engage in profit-seeking ventures, reinforcing the hegemonic ambitions of more powerful groups (Ferguson 2006; Bayart 2009). In the meantime, the informal economy has grown so pervasive that it now constitutes most of the economy in the Global South (Hart 2006; Meagher 2010; Schoofs 2015).

With urbanization outpacing formal planning and regulation, it is increasingly acknowledged that informality defines both economic frameworks and norms for interaction among the majority of urban residents. Or, as Iida Lindell and Mats Utas (2012: 409) explain, ‘What appears to outsiders as chaotic informal activity is usually structured by webs of relationships that lend life in highly uncertain settings a degree of predictability.’ Informality runs through all aspects of African urban life: housing, markets, income-earning, relationships to technology, infrastructure, and governance. Since the state has the prerogative to define what is ‘formal’ through institutional rules, laws, and protection, we define informality as those activities that fall outside government regulation, control, support, and taxation.

It is important to note that informality is produced by the exclusivity of the formal sector. The notion of a formal sector, and indeed the process of division into more and less privileged sectors, functions to delimit boundaries and preserve power and privilege within elite circles. In return for access to basic services and comforts, the formal sector requires connections and/or education that are costly for the poor (Portes and Haller 2005: 404; Hart 2006; Feige 1990: 990; Andreas 2004: 642, in Schoofs). This means that a globally Northern vantage point in which informality appears ‘deficient’, or African cities as dystopic, is a problematic approach to analysis (Robinson 2010). With the informal economy as the *real* economy in Sub-Saharan Africa, the role or function of the smaller ‘formal’ economy is no longer self-evident as the normative or the ideal but raises genuine questions about governance, privilege, and exclusion.

Governments in Sub-Saharan Africa seek to limit the informal sector’s growth despite the fact that it offers livelihoods for those struggling with unemployment and poverty. Informality is routinely presented by governments as a state of exception in public discourse (regardless of its infinite duration) in order to delegitimize and stigmatize certain actors, systems, and spaces. This continues even while state employees, elites, and public figures benefit from the existence of informality or actively ignore it (Schoofs 2015: 7; Banks et. al. 2020). Approaching the question of the *state’s* relationship to the informal sector thus requires bypassing reified accounts

of the state as a 'thing' or actor and asking who and what the state actually is. To understand the motives behind state-sanctioned practices that enable and promote the informal economy, *who* the 'state' consists of must be defined in terms of beneficiaries and the real sources of their revenue (Schoofs 2015). The political and economic interests of the powerful can be enhanced through rent-seeking, bribery, and patronage in spaces where formal rules and regulations are not enforced, or enforced arbitrarily (Banks et al. 2020). Brokers and intermediaries with formal power in global value chains benefit by circumventing labour regulations and utilizing labour in ways that drain value from families and communities (Meagher et al. 2016: 475; Barrientos, Gereffi, and Rossi, 2011; Lerche, 2011; Meagher and Lindell 2013). These vested interests may be an important reason why the state is unable or unwilling to extend its regulatory regimes to all parts of the informal economy, and instead engages in 'supportive neglect' (Banks et al. 2020: 231).

Non-verbalized (or at least non-codified) protections, negotiations, legitimacies, and penalties often differ from those written or publicly proclaimed by authorities (e.g. Bromley 2000). For this reason, the official stances taken in legal and policy documents may not reveal much about how actors in the city actually operate or how urban residents experience life. Multiple co-existing and interlocking levels of responses are needed by actors to meet demands from both 'above' and 'below': from international organizations, global capital, middle-class citizens, informal labourers, and the jobless poor. Thus much of the 'real' socio-economic and political organization in the city occurs through power wielded invisibly and through informal strategies employed by urban residents, unwritten decisions and negotiations made by local leaders; and predatory practices such as bribes, extortion, fraud, or theft.

Our volume focuses on *practices* as mediating mechanisms in the 'organizing logic' of urban informality (Roy 2005: 148). Informality comprises systems of its own, with actors strategizing for power, benefit, and accumulation. We approach urban informality on the African continent by seeing poverty and inequality as reproduced through particular economic structuring practices rather than as failures of markets or governance, or as a lack of 'development' to be corrected through education or micro-finance (Meagher 2005; Hickey and Du Toit 2007; Mosse 2007; Sanyal 2007). Our interdisciplinary collection of empirically grounded chapters focuses on the causes and consequences of power inequalities in urban transformation in the cities of Sub-Saharan Africa. It asks the question: *How do socially negotiated power relations produce informal and semi-formal dynamics of inequality?* The book's authors approach these

questions from the fields of urban planning, architecture, geography, ethnology, and anthropology. They use in-depth ethnographic research from Angola, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Tanzania, and Uganda – ‘research that accentuates the voices and practices of urban residents’ (Bjarnesen et al. 2018: 2). In addition, this volume draws extensively on African authors’ own research and perspectives.

Studying the grassroots level of cities in Africa can help us understand how excluded and marginalized residents use informal, experimental tactics to create and recreate ‘a new urban sociality, even under dire conditions’ (Simone 2008: 81). These tactics include negotiations with local officials in the absence of pragmatic public policy; constant (physical, mental, and affective) work to maintain social ties and make claims on the resources of others such as relatives and patrons (Ferguson 2015); time invested in making ‘friends’ in the city who can help one obtain irregular work; and constant observation and listening in order to find unexploited niches of income generation that exist only in the city. What determines whether the tactics at each level of activity can be used by individuals for survival or accumulation depends in part on how public authorities classify them as legal versus illegal, and how these public authorities act (with what level of violence) in response to different kinds of ‘illegality’ (Banks et al. 2020).

Current theory on cities and globalization emphasizes that it is difficult to understand cities in the Global South from the perspective of dominant Northern urban theory, and that precisely this makes cities in the South sources of alternate urban visions or ‘key sites for theory making’ (Ernstson et al. 2014). The African city does not merely foreshadow an emergent way of life on the African continent. As the target of stringent economic restructuring in a neoliberal global order, it carries important implications for the future dynamics of cities *around the globe* (Myers 2011; Davis 2006). In part, the challenges faced by urban African residents are due to the direct legacies of colonialization as a total social project. These legacies impact how power is accessed and channelled on the continent. Colonial imports, such as the urban ideal as planned, standardized, and aesthetically appealing still influence urban planning in Sub-Saharan Africa (Freund 2007). Such ideals exclude vast areas of informal housing in city centres and on their peripheries. These are routinely pronounced in public discourse to be chaotic, dirty, unsightly, and detracting from the image of a ‘world-class city’ that could bolster political legitimacy and attract foreign investment (Transberg Hansen 2004; Potts 2007: 17).

Ethnography as urban research method

Methodically, all the contributors of this volume lean – in varying degrees and ways – towards an ethnographic approach. The authors have carried out in-depth interviews, (participant) observation, and some have employed visual methods. They possess a deep familiarity and understanding of the urban contexts and locations under study. Their positions vary from those of a well-informed outsider (Lappi, Lanzano, Myllylä, Stark) to virtual insiders (Bagayoko, Segen, Wamala-Larsson, Udelsmann Rodrigues). Many of them have worked in the same field for years, or have live(d) in the country of their study.

Ethnography is dual in nature: the term refers both to method and a written text. Ethnography also implies more than just a form of data collection. It involves a deep commitment to the field, and a particular way of seeing how people experience their daily lives and represent their everyday experiences to themselves. The writers take a critical stance that examines these representations within their historical, political, socio-economic, cultural, and spatial contexts. Ethnography as a method uses empathy to focus on the motives, values, beliefs, and attitudes of the people studied in order to learn not just *what* people do but *why* they do it. Ethnography can thus reach to areas of life that remain uncharted, out of reach, and sometimes also misunderstood in numerical understandings of the city. Large-scale surveys are still the method favoured by development researchers and economists for studying urban poverty, but they cannot – nor are they meant to – capture the motivations and strategies in the lives of urban residents. Ethnography is more adept at this, although surveys and ethnography are not mutually exclusive methodologies.

As a textual exercise, ethnography tends toward holism. By tracing the causal connections between multiple dimensions of poverty and inequality, ethnography achieves a broader perspective. Through ethnography, we ideally enter into a dialogue with those social worlds and individual persons we study. In the chapters of this volume, we pay attention to their understandings and explanations of the cause-and-effect relations of poverty and inequality that impact their lives.

Scholars have argued that the poor are often not able to behave in the ways that city planners expect them to, and that urban planning in so-called developing countries is ill-suited to socio-economic realities (Fox 2014 8; also Hardoy and Satterthwaite 1989; Hansen and Vaa 2004; Jenkins 2013). Due to their mobility and relative invisibility, the urban poor in Sub-Saharan Africa can elude attempts to measure and study them through large-scale surveys or through methods that

take the city as the primary unit of analysis (Jha et al. 2005). Urban planners, policymakers and decision-makers require a fuller understanding of how people struggle and strategize within urban agglomerations, and how urban informality operates.

Ethnographic fieldwork and the ways it has been reflected in the texts of our authors brings to light hidden aspects of micro-power. This, in turn, reveals new links between macro- and micro-levels of analysis. Ethnography recognizes tensions and conflicts as well as the opportunities for social mediation that the informal sector holds. By going beyond familiar concepts and assumptions grounded in Western forms of knowledge, our book situates itself within broader critical discussions on Southern urbanism.

Beyond ‘rights to the city’

For many decades, the single most important determinant of urban poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa has been lack of formal employment. High unemployment has been accompanied by falling wages: between the early 1970s and the early 1990s real wages fell by over 90 per cent in much of the continent (Meagher, Mann, and Bolt 2016: 474; also Ferguson 1999; ILO 2002; Jamal and Weeks 1993; Mkandawire and Soludo 1999; Vandemoortele 1991). As a result of decreased formal employment opportunities, the urban informal sector expanded rapidly (Rakodi 1997; Hansen and Vaa 2004: 12; UN-Habitat 2010). This has meant that whole sections of the population now have incomes that are ‘unbelievably precarious and insecure’, requiring ‘a continual process of flexible improvisation’ in order to survive (Ferguson 2015: 92).

The lives of these precarious workers in cities of Sub-Saharan Africa still receive relatively little attention despite their vital role in maintaining urban economies. In many cities of the Global South, the cheap labour and goods provided by micro-traders are vital for the continued functioning of the neoliberal city (de Oliveira 1985; Roever and Skinner 2016). Throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, urban residents depend on day labourers and irregular workers to obtain goods and services not distributed through formal channels, and to keep down the costs of living in the city. Micro-traders generate demand for services provided by other informal workers, and help the poor by providing goods and services at more affordable prices closer to home. Informal producers and vendors are particularly vital for the food security of the poor, as the

majority of food insecure households in Sub-Saharan Africa obtain their food from informal food outlets (Roever and Skinner 2016).

To earn livelihoods, the poor must have access to high-traffic city areas where monetary flows are busiest. There is an increasing push within many cities to recognize that residents have a socially legitimized right to access urban public spaces due to their key role in livelihood generation (Chen et al. 2018; Lindell and Adama 2020). Yet governments aiming to curb growth in the informal sector have restricted the rights of the poor to create beneficial social networks within city spaces (Roever and Skinner 2016; Goodfellow 2010). Sub-Saharan African cities are increasingly being reconstituted to conform to the visions and interests of a small circle of political and economic elites. The main motives of city governance revolve around urban competitiveness to lure and hold on to global investors (Turok 2004; Harvey 2006, 2012; Brown, Lyons, and Dankoco 2009). This renders the poor superfluous to the formal economy and motivates their restriction from it (Huchzermeyer 2013; Roever and Skinner 2016).

Rights to city spaces and services are not enough. The poorest residents – whose labour makes cities and towns functional and affordable while benefitting intermediaries and powerful business interests – should have the right to demand that planners and decision-makers understand how their lives and needs are intertwined with the city. This includes the right to retain elements of the city that may not conform to international standards or market pressures but that provide low-cost housing, easy-entry work, affordable communication, affordable schooling and health care, and affordable expedited documentation and legal assistance (see Danso-Wiredu and Poku, this volume; Wamala-Larsson, this volume). These rights should also include the right to communicate ‘up’ to local decision-making and national policy-making levels. Mechanisms for channelling unsolicited information about the needs and experiences of the poor are often missing from governance structures. Similarly, devolution of authority to lower levels of governance – which could provide a vital link in this ‘bottom-up’ flow of information – is severely impeded by insufficient funding to local governments (Kessey and McCourt 2010; Fox 2014; Yeboah-Assiamah 2014). In order for governments to encourage, process, and incorporate feedback from all income groups into decision-making, platforms could be created through smartphones, for example. But this means that governments and planners must be committed to taking into consideration feedback from lower-income groups and to being accountable to poor urban residents (Green and Hulme 2005).

All of the chapters in this volume point to how persons struggling in informal livelihoods do not passively adapt to urban spaces and dynamics, but actively reshape how these spaces are understood and experienced by residents through their everyday activities. Taken together, these chapters highlight the need for urban residents to have the right to transform the city in ways that meet their basic needs.

The complex dynamics of urban informality: the view from the ground

Despite a globally peripheral position, many of Africa's cities play important roles as nodes in local and regional contexts, disseminating information, providing services, and facilitating economic transactions. Ruling parties and city governments, allied with foreign capital, seek to capitalize on this and attract global investment through the image of a 'world-class city' (Potts 2007: 17). This has meant that diverse agendas overlap in urban policy arenas of African cities (Pieterse 2008). In Cristina Udelsmann Rodrigues's analysis of the rise and fall of Luanda's real-estate boom, residents from all income levels sought to capitalize on high urban land values. In other chapters, the ways in which lower-income residents have understood the aims of urban life stand in sharp contrast to urban visions favoured by governments or the international firms of architects hired to create master plans for them (Wragg and Lim 2013). The effects of government-led urban renewal on residents in one city – Addis Ababa – are addressed in Chapter Eight (Susanna Myllylä) and Chapter Nine (Segen Yainshet Tesfamariam, Laura Stark, and Elias Yitbarek Alemayehu). Despite the fact that the Addis Ababa youth discussed in these chapters are from different income groups and live under different material conditions, both chapters report that the needs of the youth have tended to be overlooked in a city where over 70 per cent of residents are under the age of 30 (UNDP 2018: 45).

Creation and destruction of the lived city

Massive construction projects in housing, commercial buildings, and infrastructure have made Addis Ababa's urban renewal one of the largest-scale social experiments in Sub-Saharan Africa. Prior to this renewal, the dwellings of the majority of low-income residents were low-rent, government-owned, and informally planned *kebele* housing. *Kebeles* have been systematically demolished

and their residents moved to government-built concrete apartment blocks known as condominiums, which are built mostly on the outskirts of the city. Condominium apartments are awarded by government lottery, but residents must make a down-payment as well as monthly loan repayments for new condominiums and these are often beyond what the poor can afford. Moreover, sub-renters within kebeles are restricted from entering the lottery in the first place. Most sub-renters belong to lowest income group in the city. Susanna Myllylä examines the plight of those caught in a situation where they cannot afford to move to new housing, and thus have no choice but to remain in a settlement that is being demolished around them.

The chapter by Tesfamariam and colleagues provides a different snapshot of Addis Ababa. It examines how development of green open spaces through city-community co-production succeeded in achieving some but not all of its aims, and only for the benefit of some residents. Neighbourhood resident-owners used new construction and tree-planting within the spaces between their housing blocks to retain legal right to the land for their housing cooperative, and to raise the real-estate value of their homes. The alternative would have been for the city to appropriate the spaces as unclaimed land and auction them to private developers. The process of 'improving' the open spaces was far from smooth, however, and failed in the sense that it neglected to sufficiently address the needs of renters, children, and youth. In their chapter, the authors analyse the reasons behind these flaws in the co-production process. The chapters by both Myllylä and Tesfamariam et al. indicate a nominal devolution of authority to local levels of governance, but in reality local-level officials were left with few resources or skills to help the most vulnerable residents or to ensure that all residents could express their views regarding the transformations to their neighbourhoods.

Intricate circuits of goods and people

Most research on informal vending and micro-trading in urban Sub-Saharan Africa has focused on street or market vendors selling in fixed, public locations. The bulk of this research literature to date has focused on issues of governance, street traders' associations, and forced relocations of street traders (e.g. Skinner 2008). A far broader range of informal actors, however, are involved in the day-to-day manufacturing and transport of goods, services, and people throughout the city. Many micro-traders do not sell in streets per se but in other spaces where different logics apply (Lappi and Stark 2013), or sell by staying physically

mobile to 'find the market' in diverse locations each day (Malefakis 2015). Also, illegal forms of trade, though much less visible than street or market trading, channel goods to those who might not be able to afford them from formal shops. Caroline Wamala-Larsson examines the daily work of young men who work as motorcycle taxi drivers in Kampala, Uganda. Esther Danso-Wiredu and Adjoa Afriyie Poku focus on both young female porters and male youth who scavenge, sell, and buy recyclable scrap in Accra, Ghana, whose work keeps them moving through the city streets. Tiina-Riitta Lappi's and Laura Stark's contributions examine different perspectives on the same low-income, informal settlement in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Lappi examines neighbourhood vending as a 'hidden' and often overlooked form of informal trade, whereas Stark focuses on the cycle of theft and resale of mobile phones.

The authors of these chapters point out that urban informality, despite evident drawbacks, can nonetheless make life more liveable for the poor and enable them to obtain basic necessities. This is due to the particular characteristics of poverty. The poor need to buy staples in smaller quantities; they need affordable housing, which means that dwellings will not meet urban planners' size or quality standards; and they need to lease transport vehicles and earn money from driving them before they can own them (Rao 2002; Kironde 2006; Haregewoin 2007: 4; Lappi, this volume; Wamala-Larsson, this volume). In Danso-Wiredu's and Poku's chapter, residents in Accra were less concerned than urban administrators and policymakers about the poor conditions of their living environment because their reasons for being in the community were first and foremost to find income. As precarious and dangerous as informal livelihoods are, they provide relatively easy entrance for young persons with little education and few skills. In Accra, portering and dealing in scrap are laborious occupations, and new migrants to the city entering these occupations face eviction threats, physical dangers, and deprivation. Yet the unskilled male and female youth discussed by Danso-Wiredu and Poku can be seen as having created new income-earning niches for themselves. Young men have squeezed value out of recycling waste by scavenging for metals, and young women have made an existing job more efficient by carrying loads on headpans rather than on the handcarts used by male porters.

Lappi's chapter discusses the 'internal economy of the slum' formed by female micro-vendors in a low-income neighbourhood of Dar es Salaam. Women's businesses in this internal economy do not bring in any real profit in most cases, but are used to maintain a minimum fund of money for unexpected expenses among those suffering from extreme poverty. At the same time, neighbourhood

vending makes the neighbourhood more 'liveable' for all residents: a busy resident needing milk, eggs, or tea can quickly buy small quantities of these from neighbours rather than walking to an open-air marketplace twenty minutes away, and children can go (or be sent by mothers) to neighbours to buy breakfast snacks or chapattis for the family supper if parents are busy. Wamala-Larsson's chapter on motorcycle taxi drivers in Kampala discusses how these drivers are denigrated in public discourse at the same time that they serve a vital function in a traffic-congested city. At times, these motorcycle taxi drivers are used by the authorities themselves to gather intelligence for police or participate in political rallies. At the same time, they suffer from the inadequate transportation infrastructure that the formal city authorities are unable to improve. It appears to serve the interests of city authorities to keep informal services such as motorcycle taxis outside the formal sector and thus without full legal protection or recourse, even if this means that the motorcycle taxi sector remains largely beyond the authorities' full control.

Literature on informality tends to focus on the power exerted by city or state authorities over low-income residents. Less attention is paid to exploitation and predation *within* low-income communities. Laura Stark examines what happens when low-income residents in Dar es Salaam are compelled to buy phones that are low-priced because they have been stolen from other city residents. Mobile phones have become a vital tool in the lives of most Africans, and the poor in particular need them to call relatives for help in crises. Yet unlike the wealthier and middle classes, the poor often cannot afford the price of new phones in shops. The theft and resale of mobile phones within the neighbourhood studied by Stark creates a cycle of violence and retaliation that is dangerous for all.

Beneficiaries, the disadvantaged, and value extraction

Consequences 'on the ground' of commodity extractions and booms in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as the mechanisms that link labourers and consumers to global capitalist processes, are addressed in Cristina Udelsmann Rodrigues's chapter on the real-estate boom in Luanda, Sidylamine Bagayoko's chapter on informal gold miners in Mali, and Cristiano Lanzano's study of goldmining in Burkina Faso. Udelsmann Rodrigues's chapter examines how residents of Angola's capital, Luanda, were affected by Angola's oil crisis stemming from global economic fluctuations. All of Luanda's land is formally state-owned, but during the oil-fuelled boom (2002–2014), a lively informal real-estate market was enabled through a range of formal and informal/customary transactions

that operated in both planned and unplanned residential areas. If residents could lay claim to a land title, they could either sell the land or demand compensation when it was demolished to make way for new buildings. Those active in buying, selling, and speculating on real estate came from all socio-economic levels. Udelsmann Rodrigues's chapter shows how global economic and commodity booms and downturns – and concomitant flows of investment capital – affected urban residents through rising real estate and housing values in one African city, and how residents strategized to maximize their own interests.

The chapters by Lanzano and Bagayoko show how forms of governance and negotiation can vary across goldmining sites located in neighbouring countries. In Lanzano's fieldsite in Burkina Faso, the pseudonymous goldmining company GoldMin was a private domestic company that did not actually extract the ore themselves but instead provided a loose organizational umbrella for informal labourers. In return for securing needed alliances with local customary landowners and providing organization and security at the site where gold was mined and sold, the self-organized miners were expected to sell their gold only to GoldMin. GoldMin thus made its profit from its monopolized control over the purchase of already extracted ore. Bagayoko's chapter, by contrast, depicts the lives of informal artisanal miners in Mali. These Malian miners were not allowed on the site operated by a foreign gold mining company and therefore dug for gold outside its perimeter. The Burkinabe mining company in Lanzano's chapter absorbed self-organized informal miners into its structure of operations, whereas the South African mining company in Bagayoko's chapter strictly excluded them. These very different organizational setups account for the authors' different emphases when discussing the actual beneficiaries of informal gold mining. Although the gold extraction industry in Mali brings some benefit to Malians, it also produces adverse effects: abandonment of agriculture in rural areas, degradation of the environment, health dangers, and lack of basic services endured by artisanal miners and their children who are trapped in poverty and cannot afford to leave. These effects are also poised to contribute in the next generation to food insecurity, human suffering, and lack of employment (Bagayoko, this volume). Both authors note, however, that the competitive economy of artisanal gold mining could not exist without the vulnerable labourers who bear the physical risks, who have very little starting capital, and whose irregular earnings are diminished through rents and fees over which they have little control. In both sites studied, companies and/or gold buyers prospered from labourers' self-organization and technical experience that ensured a steady supply of gold.

Distinctive modes of self-organization

Informal economies do not lack organization. Across Sub-Saharan Africa, actors in diverse sectors have a high degree of self-governance, demonstrating the 'distinctive regulatory capacities operating within informal economic networks, associations, and communities' (Meagher and Lindell 2013: 61; also Schoofs 2015; Lanzano, this volume; Wamala-Larsson, this volume). Informal economies can be understood as alternative modes of governance to the state (MacGaffey 1991: 9; Meagher 2005: 217; Schoofs 2015: 7), ones that interface with formal production and distribution. Cristiano Lanzano's chapter examines the mechanisms that connect these levels of activity in Burkina Faso, focusing on the grey areas between national law and actual practice at the local level. In both Lanzano's and Bagayoko's chapters, the appearance of artisanal miners in a particular locality has attracted not only gold buyers but also other informal workers to the site. These include vendors offering goods and services, motorcycle taxi drivers, carpenters, welders, and cooks. The pull exerted by gold mining has very quickly created centres of urban commerce in previously agrarian settings. When urban forms suddenly emerge in rural spaces and societies, the result is hybrid patterns of governance 'on the ground' in which a wide range of actors, both human and material, are instrumental in assigning spaces to functions, sorting out rules for safety and stability, engaging in mediation, negotiating terms, fees, and rental payments, and performing rituals to reassure local inhabitants (Lanzano, this volume). Dense and multi-tiered networks of gift-giving and loans arise, creating an extensive system of 'indebtedness and informal economic arrangements that facilitated the circulation of financial resources throughout the entire value chain' (Lanzano, this volume, p. 39). In Lanzano's analysis, actors were self-organized into chains of interaction that encompassed mining companies, quasi-legal permits and authorizations, experienced miners and less-skilled labourers, local politicians, village spokespersons, customary chiefs, and spontaneous local committees. These actors facilitated the extraction, purchasing, and transportation of the smelted ore that joined formal gold production and the world's gold supply. Lanzano points out that the legal concessions and authorizations that gold companies procured from the national Ministry of Mines in the distant capital city of Ouagadougou did nothing to regularize gold mining activities or impose standards, but were instead used to negotiate with local authorities, stake claims, and manoeuvre past rival companies.

The chapters in this volume thus highlight crucial hidden processes characteristic of informal economies. As people self-arrange within the informal economy in order to subsist or maximize resources, they reshape how urban spaces are perceived, read, and used by urban residents in ways that were not foreseen by any urban planner (de Certeau 1984; Simone 2004a, 2004b; Danso-Wiredu and Poku, this volume; Lappi, this volume, Wamala-Larsson, this volume). These practices should not be seen as the simple mobilization – by informal groups or institutions – of tactics that ‘work’. Instead, they are shaped by relations of power at many levels (Cleaver et al. 2013, 67–68; Meagher and Lindell 2013). One example of this is the fact that customary authority continues to re-invent itself and exert power in new forms in Sub-Saharan Africa (van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal and van Dijk 1999; Oomen 2005). In the chapter by Danso-Wiredu and Poku we see informal urban ethnic ‘chiefs’ transplanted into the crowded urban setting of Old Fadama, and Bagayoko’s and Lanzano’s chapters both note the continued relevance of customary authorities in negotiations over land use, fees, and rituals to be performed when extracting gold. Informal and customary land titles can be useful as a basis for making compensation claims in contexts of urban renewal and rapidly fluctuating economic conditions as in the case of Luanda (Udelsmann Rodrigues, this volume). However, such claims are not always sufficient to guarantee rights in compensation and relocation processes, as has occurred in the case of some residents of state-owned informally built housing (*kebeles*) that have been demolished to make way for urban renewal in Addis Ababa (Myllylä, this volume). From the perspective of residents actively shaping the city, the practices that embody the authority of urban officials have sometimes walked a thin line between predation/corruption and arbitrarily applied law enforcement (Stark, this volume; Wamala-Larsson, this volume). It has been particularly in the gap between publicly proclaimed policy and what actually occurs in daily life that urban residents report experiencing hardship and resentment.

Notes

- 1 The Structural Adjustment Programmes aimed at neoliberal economic restructuring were implemented in Africa and Latin America by the International Monetary Fund starting in the 1980s, resulting in the rapid expansion of the urban informal sector and decreased formal employment opportunities (Rakodi 1997; Hansen and Vaa 2004; UN-Habitat 2010).
- 2 During the writing of this chapter, Annika Teppo was funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, Sweden.

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Part One

Gold fever

Hybrid Governance in an Impermanent Mining Settlement in Burkina Faso

Cristiano Lanzano

Introduction

Social anthropology, Jean Copans (2002: 67) has suggested, was ‘born ... from the mines’. Retracing the British tradition of the discipline, Copans showed that its focus on rural transformations and urban innovation was clearly linked to the development of the mining industry in Central and Southern Africa in the first half of the twentieth century and helped shape the fundamental theoretical orientations of the entire field. While insightful and thought-provoking in the context of anthropology’s historical origins, Copans’s observations also raise questions worth considering in the present political-economic context. What directions can the study of the mining sector in Africa suggest for social anthropology today? More specifically, how can research on the topic contribute to our understanding of evolving urban–rural dynamics and contemporary forms of capitalist expansion on the ground?

The commodities boom of the last two decades, from the end of the 1990s into the 2010s, provided a new impulse toward extractive industries in several African countries. These range from more established mining economies to relative newcomers such as those in Francophone West Africa, where gold production has significantly increased. While this has often brought new hopes for economic development, it has also led to increased dependence on fluctuating global prices and external demand, raising concerns about negative impacts and unequally distributed gains. Although many have spoken of ‘a new scramble for Africa’ (Southall and Melber 2009), this most recent mining boom has taken place in an historical and political context clearly distinct from the first two waves of mining development on the continent. During colonial times, mineral

discoveries triggered major processes of industrialization and urbanization and shaped the geographies of colonial penetration and labour migration in large parts of Southern Africa. In the first decades of independence, some postcolonial governments succeeded in at least partially nationalizing their natural resources and ensuring some form of economic planning and redistribution. Although we have also seen manifestations of such 'resource nationalism' in recent years as well, the current phase of mining expansion nevertheless differs significantly from its predecessors.

Following the liberalization and privatization reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, the main emphasis in the mining economies on the continent has generally been on attracting foreign investment in the extractive sector by offering a favourable normative and fiscal environment (Bryceson and MacKinnon 2012). Attempts have been made to balance the progressive disengagement of national states from mining activities through new technical standards and mechanisms of corporate social responsibility imposed on private investors, and to some extent embraced by them (Campbell 2012; Luning 2012; Rajak 2011). In many cases, this development has gone hand in hand with the tendency of foreign investments to take the form of secured enclaves with limited connections to, and impacts on, their social environments (Ferguson 2005). The different historical phases of mineral extraction on the African continent can be seen to reflect the evolution of economic and political relations from a colonial to a postcolonial or neocolonial model, and ultimately the transition to what many have described as a regime of neoliberal capitalism.

Artisanal mining: informality and hybridity

One manifestation of the recent mining boom that has attracted increasing attention from both policymakers and scholars since the early 2000s is the expansion of artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM). The term, for which different definitions have been suggested, refers to mining activities conducted using 'traditional' methods or limited use of mechanized technology. Such activities are generally labour intensive; they must cope with low availability of financial capital, and they are usually performed by individuals or small groups outside of any formal settings. They can develop as a continuation of precolonial or pre-industrial modes of production, as is typically the case for gold digging in some areas of West Africa, or they may focus on minerals and sectors that have only emerged in recent times, such as in the case of the so-called 3Ts (tin, tantalum, and tungsten) in the eastern Democratic Republic of

Congo. Explanations for the expansion of ASM range from its interpretation as a poverty-driven sector responding to the search for alternative livelihoods in rural societies under transformation (Bryceson and Jønsson 2010; Hilson 2003; see Bagayoko, this volume), to its being a demand-driven process whereby the extractive industry is informalized at different geographical scales (Verbrugge and Geenen 2019). Correspondingly, ASM practices vary greatly in terms of human mobility (de Theije 2016; Dessertine 2016; Grätz 2010), capital accumulation (Verbrugge 2014), sociotechnical innovation (Dumett 2012; Lanzano 2020; Massaro and de Theije 2018), and levels of informality (Geenen 2015). This diversity resists being reductively interpreted as nothing more than a less advanced or ‘marginal’ spillover of the recent growth of the extractive industry in the Global South. Instead, ASM should be analysed as an integral part of the contemporary evolution of the mining sector, one that reveals the contradictory trajectories of capitalist expansion and hybrid modes of governance with which it is associated.

The category of informality and the related idea of ‘formalization’ dominate the political discourse on artisanal mining. While this discourse has sometimes been deployed to denounce the unruliness and lack of effective governance in the sector, in more optimistic representations it can convey the potentialities offered by a vital and creative ‘informal economy’. In scholarship, despite recent criticism directed at the concept, informality remains an important analytical tool for understanding processes that have led to the expansion of small-scale mining economies and their integration into larger-scale networks (McQuilken and Hilson 2018; Verbrugge and Geenen 2019). It has also proven useful for those investigating the contradictory legal status and precarious working conditions at mining sites, or governance modes based on normative innovation and pluralism (Côte and Korf 2018; Geenen 2015). In this chapter, I focus on informality in relation to the dynamics of settlement, the practices of dwelling, and the associated demands for planning and service delivery occurring in artisanal mining areas – aspects that have all remained relatively under-researched. I also interrogate the notion of informality in light of, on the one hand, its contradictory manifestations on the ground and, on the other hand, the criticism the concept has received. Referring to broader scholarly reflections on authority and power in situations of conflict or the limited presence of the state, Geenen (2016) has used the concept of ‘hybrid governance’ to describe local institutional combinations around which the large-scale mining sector is organized in Ghana. Here, I employ the concept in reference to small-scale mining, using the notion of hybridity not only to describe the interaction of

powerful actors such as state agents, private companies, and customary chiefs but also to indicate the grey areas of overlap and exchange between institutions and norms considered formal and informal.

Gold settlements: the urban in the rural

This chapter draws on my ethnographic research on artisanal gold mining in western and southwestern Burkina Faso. The main initial fieldwork was conducted in 2012, when I first visited mining sites in these regions together with other colleagues. Our study was aimed at assessing environmental impacts, working conditions, and informal governance patterns in artisanal gold mining areas. Our team, composed of researchers with both local and foreign backgrounds (I was among the latter, though affiliated with a local research laboratory), documented the production chain from the extraction in the pits to the final sale to gold buyers present at the site. As in similar initiatives, research was conceived as a first step toward the possible certification of a fair, environmentally friendly mode of artisanal gold production to which jewellers, and ultimately consumers, of the global North could connect.¹ While this output did not materialize according to original plans, the project gave me and my colleagues the possibility to begin our ethnographic engagement with artisanal gold mining, and I was able to continue my research through additional fieldwork periods in the following years.

Most of the currently active artisanal gold mining sites in the area began production in the late 1990s or early 2000s. They developed as a consequence of the flow of migrant miners and traders, mostly from the Mossi and Bissa regions in northern and central Burkina Faso² to the western parts of the country where there was little previous experience of underground mining.³ This lack of past experience in underground mining was partly due to symbolic prohibitions related to gold. Among the groups living in the country's southwest, gold, especially when extracted from hard-rock deposits, is considered a living substance and associated with blood, and must undergo ritual processing to neutralize its potentially harmful power (Mégret 2008; Werthmann 2003). In the past, this had significantly limited the extent of possible mining activities with the exception of gold panning and other superficial and non-intensive exploitation. Initially, migrant miners willing to start hard-rock extraction faced reactions from local residents and chiefs ranging from open conflict and resistance to precarious agreements that allowed the establishment of camps (see also Werthmann 2006). In some cases, the consolidated modes of relations

between locals and migrant outsiders (characteristic, more broadly, of many West African agrarian societies) facilitated the seemingly temporary settlement of migrants who had come to work in the mines (Arnaldi di Balme and Lanzano 2014; Lanzano 2018).⁴

The intense degree of human mobility involved in the migration of miners has resulted in the development of an entirely new economic sector while causing considerable demographic and political pressure on local communities. In many cases, this entailed a process of intrusion of the urban into rural spaces and agrarian societies. As Werthmann (2010: 113) has noted, artisanal mining camps are spaces that ‘catalyse processes of urbanisation in non-urban places: they are characterised by size, density and heterogeneity, and accommodate individuality, even anonymity’. In some places in southwestern Burkina Faso, population density temporarily reached unprecedented levels. Special residential areas, often built with cheap non-durable materials, arose either on the margins of already existing villages or as independent entities in the vicinity of extraction areas (the case presented in this chapter represents the latter). The increased demand for commercial goods and services such as food, clothing, and tools was met through the creation of new marketplaces that brought local and itinerant traders together, rivalling the weekly or periodical markets already established in the area. At the same time, the increased pressure on public goods and services such as water and medical care at the local dispensaries was often alleviated by imposing additional fees on migrants, thereby spurring the expansion of the cash economy. Finally, the rise of leisure spaces, practices of conspicuous consumption, and lifestyles associated with affluent urban youth confirmed the widespread perception of an accelerated social transformation with uncertain outcomes.

In the site of Bantara described below, the contradictions created by the emergence of the urban in the rural produced peculiar patterns of ‘real governance’ that regulated the expanding settlement and the activities taking place in it (cf. De Herdt and Olivier de Sardan 2015; Olivier de Sardan 2008). These patterns combined the effects of both codified and emerging norms, ranging from legislative regulations and loopholes to traditional norms and customs in the making. They were shaped by the actions and strategies of both official politico-economic actors (e.g. mayors, elected politicians, village representatives, and company owners) and unofficial leaders and institutions (e.g. elders, spontaneous committees, and veteran miners). It would be tempting to label the modes of governance at work in artisanal mining ‘informal’ were it not for the fact that this term has predominantly referred to urban contexts.

In towns and cities it is often used to refer to petty trade and other forms of urban informal employment. These phenomena have inspired much reflection on the informal economy precisely because they question the assumptions of modernization theory and its related dual-sector model. Informal livelihoods show how work and life in urban spaces geographically located near the centres of formal political power and economic planning are organized and function outside these centres' direct control. With the creation of densely populated residential areas near gold mining sites, 'informal' or hybrid solutions have become necessary to fulfil the needs of thousands of workers and investors rapidly flowing into and temporarily settling in rural spaces. Studying the expansion of artisanal mining and its emergent modes of production and work organization can provide important insights into the complex and non-linear patterns of urbanization and capitalist expansion in the contemporary era.

The comptoir of Bantara: a bustling mining settlement

Bantara is located in southwestern Burkina Faso, near the municipal centre of Kampti and only a dozen kilometres north of the border between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire. The site falls under the customary jurisdiction of Sanboulanti and Niolkar, two villages whose inhabitants – estimated at no more than a few hundred in total at the time of this research – mostly belong to the Lobi and the Lorhon ethnic groups. The name Bantara attributed to this artisanal mining site has no official status or clear origin. While some informants have traced it back to the expression *bannan taré* (roughly translatable from the Mooré language as 'to not push it too far' or 'to brake,' in reference to the risks associated with gold digging), the name may be derived from the village of Bantara, situated approximately 20 kilometres away, where, apparently, some gold digging had been practised before activities in the current location began. According to most informants, while many women had practised gold panning and surface forms of mining for a longer period, the first underground mining activities in the region began in the late 1990s, mostly by seasonal Mossi migrants. Initially, the prospecting and extractive activities were met with resistance from local residents and some local chiefs. It was especially the transgression of spiritual norms and ritual procedures that fuelled fear of death and chaos – although occasionally, episodes of physical confrontation were also reported. The newcomers had to resort to mediation by local individuals, often long-term residents of the area who nevertheless did not belong to the first-comers' ethnic group, in order to

resolve potential or actual conflicts. Having been born in the region or having lived there for years, these mediators could win local residents' trust while helping migrant miners to navigate objections and demands formulated by customary authorities. Two such mediators, both men in their late 40s to early 50s, described their roles as follows:

I'm not someone from the outside; I'm from this region. That's what enabled me to act as an intermediary, because ... to be honest, it wasn't easy going in the beginning. You know, gold, for Lobi people ... it's really a very forbidden metal [according to tradition]. In the beginning ... there were victims on the first-comers' side, there were victims on the gold diggers' side [due to mysterious deaths explained through spiritual transgression], before work could be started.

(personal interview with O. D., Bantara, 23 March 2012)⁵

If we were able to keep the situation under control here in this place, as you can see we were, it's only because we [the non-Lobi residents that acted as mediators] were born here. If a Lobi person comes to me and says that a certain place is a totem [forbidden for cultural or ritual reasons], I'm gonna reply to him that no, that's not true. For I was born here, and we all know where the sacred places and things are located ... So if we were able to talk with [the locals] and start working the gold here, it's because of that.

(personal interview with M. I., Galgouli, a few kilometres south of Bantara, 27 April 2012)

In the area where the pits and shafts were located at the time of this research, the first gold had been found in 2008. At that time, the *Comptoir Burkinabè des Métaux Précieux* (CBMP), the state-owned marketing agency for precious metals, had already been dissolved and replaced by private companies owned by Burkinabe entrepreneurs as prescribed by mining legislation. These companies competed for control of the dozens, possibly hundreds, of artisanal mining sites active in the country (see Côte 2013; Luning 2008; Werthmann 2017). Two private companies, both operating nationwide and already active elsewhere in the country, competed for the Bantara site. Both of them recruited local residents active in mining to conduct informal negotiations with the municipal councillors and customary chiefs of neighbouring villages. The company that prevailed, a company I here call GoldMin,⁶ was able to set up a *comptoir* (see below) in the area, establishing headquarters and relying on local representatives to monitor the activities. GoldMin's key to winning the contest was that it mobilized gold diggers to physically occupy the area, thereby preventing the rival company from taking control. GoldMin also created strategic alliances with local chiefs

and prominent personalities, conducted meetings with municipal authorities, and applied to obtain official permits from the Ministry of Mines in the capital city Ouagadougou.

Spaces for extracting, processing, and living

At the time of my initial fieldwork, production activities in Bantara were intense, with new diggers moving into the area from other sites every day and new shafts constantly being started. Those who worked in extracting the ore from underground were almost exclusively men, whereas women were present in other stages of production and as traders of goods in the *comptoir*. The total number of miners and traders temporarily residing at the site was approximately 4,000. The spatial organization of the site was articulated around two main areas. The first of these was the extraction area, where digging operations were located. This area had relatively undefined limits, and its contours could be significantly reshaped in the space of just a few days or weeks. Extraction areas moved according to the latest results of tests conducted on surface levels of gravel and the expected direction of the gold vein. Mining was characterized by feverish rhythms. Competing teams of diggers worked at a rapid pace in the same area in order to reach deposits in the harder rock underground as quickly as possible, and to turn the significant expenses associated with shaft excavation into a profitable investment. At the same time, rumours of new gold findings and of richer locations constantly prompted entire groups of miners to relocate and start new mining operations elsewhere, rendering the contours of the extraction area extremely unstable.

The second main area defining the overall site was usually referred to as the *comptoir*. In it one found not only processing activities such as motorized mills used for crushing the ore and washing stalls in which pulverized ore was treated with water and mercury but also gold buyers with their facilities and commercial stalls. This is also where the temporary dwellings of miners were located. The *comptoir* was the more stable area of activity – even if it was constantly growing – of the Bantara site.

One could enter the *comptoir* of Bantara by leaving the tarmac road connecting the municipal centre of Kampti to the border of Côte d'Ivoire and proceeding a few kilometres westward on an unpaved path. This path led to an open central space with no buildings, through which most vehicles on their way to the extraction area would pass or stop at. The space was bordered by a small wooden hangar where O. D., the official local representative of GoldMin, based



Figure 2.1 A mining shaft in Bantara (photo by Cristiano Lanzano, 2012).

his daily activities, surrounded by a few security guards. A few dozen general commercial stalls occupied by hardware retailers, cloth sellers, butchers, mobile phone repair technicians, and other traders were clustered on the other side of this central square, so that it resembled a busy marketplace. Indeed, this section was sometimes called *yaar*, a Mooré word for ‘marketplace’, to distinguish it



Figure 2.2 A washing stall in the *comptoir* area of Bantara (photo by Cristiano Lanzano, 2012).

from another section in which operators active in gold processing and gold buyers carried out their activities. The terms *yaar* and *comptoir* could also be used to designate the area as a whole. Beyond the western end of the market, motorized mills used to pulverize rock extracted from the shafts stood in two parallel rows. On the northern end, washing stalls hosted sluice boxes and other tools necessary to treat the pulverized ore with water and capture its heaviest and most precious fragments. These washing stalls were arranged around a wide rectangular area.

Slightly further from the centre, spreading in all directions, were hundreds of dwellings intended to shelter the migrant miners and traders operating on the site. These were built with non-durable materials, and most of them looked like small straw huts or structures with canopy roofs (locally called *hangar*). On one side of the camp, a line of showers consisting of small cabins separated by partitions of wood or straw and accessible by paying a fee had been put up by a local operator who also provided buckets of water to the users. Interspersed between the dwellings were simple restaurants serving rice and other warm dishes, *cinéclubs* broadcasting football matches via satellite television, and improvised *maquis*, small bars serving alcoholic beverages. This was usually the most crowded and



Figure 2.3 Toilets and showers in the residential area of Bantara (photo by Cristiano Lanzano, 2012).



Figure 2.4 Women transporting and selling water in Bantara (photo by Cristiano Lanzano, 2012).

lively corner of the *comptoir*, particularly on Fridays when miners were prohibited from going down in the shafts, and on Sundays when young miners met before or after their work shifts to relax while pit chiefs and buyers negotiated and concluded deals over a round of beers. On the margins of the *comptoir*, there were also two areas reserved for Muslim prayers, in addition to a small building functioning as a Pentecostal church. A burial site was located further west, within walking distance but clearly separated from the populated area. In it lay the bodies of those miners whose remains could not be sent back home to their families due to financial reasons or because they could not be identified. In most cases, however, comrades of deceased miners would collect money to contribute to the expenses of sending their remains back to their home villages.

A private company at the centre

My initial contact in Bantara was O. D., the representative of GoldMin. My colleagues and I were given his name for the first time by people we interviewed at the municipal headquarters of Kampti, who had a general overview of the active mining sites in the surroundings. O. D., they said, would introduce us to other people at the site and facilitate our work: they suggested that it would be hardly possible to make any significant progress without going through GoldMin, anyway. When we first arrived in Bantara, we immediately noticed the canopy under which worked the representatives of the company and the security guards who kept an eye on people moving in and out of the area. The ostentatious centrality of GoldMin's headquarters symbolized the company's supervisory role over the activities taking place in the *comptoir*. Both the local term for the processing area of a mining site and the legislative term for the private company entrusted with the purchase and sale of gold was *comptoir*, which indicates the connection between these two meanings in the minds of those involved in artisanal mining. According to Burkinabe mining legislation, private companies owned by Burkinabe citizens and based in the country can request official permits from the Ministry of Mines, Quarries, and Energy to operate as gold traders. If they obtain one, they are registered as trading posts for the purchase, sale, and exploitation of gold: *comptoirs d'achat, de vente et d'exploitation de l'or*. Many companies like GoldMin, however, accumulated different kinds of permits such as those for artisanal and traditional mining (*autorisations d'exploitation artisanale traditionnelle*, AEATs) that granted exclusive rights of mining over a limited area for a specific period of time. The latter permits were usually obtained through subsidiaries or front men to

secure exclusive control over gold production in the most promising mining areas (see Côte and Korf 2018; Werthmann 2017).⁷

In practice, however, companies did not usually engage directly in extraction except when their mediation was solicited in conflicts between mining teams. They found it more convenient to leave the digging of shafts and the extraction of gold ore to self-employed miners informally organized in teams under pit chiefs (*bokasoba*).⁸ Miners' teams would bear the risks and costs related to mining operations. At the same time, they possessed the necessary flexibility to rapidly relocate their activities in case of failure at the current site or new discoveries and findings elsewhere. Furthermore, official artisanal mining permits such as AEATs could only be obtained for specific, clearly defined areas of one square kilometre in area, for a limited period of two years only. These rigid stipulations were not flexible enough to be useful to mining teams or mining companies. Due to the unpredictable and temporary nature of the accessible gold supply in any given area, mining teams who failed to find gold needed to relocate their activities rapidly, often to areas beyond the permitted one square kilometre. For their part, the private middle-sized companies who usually obtained AEATs tried to keep a relatively large number of mining teams under their control, and the limitations established by the law were too restrictive given the need for these mining teams to rapidly shift from place to place. As a consequence, private companies aiming to establish a *comptoir* tended to use their AEATs as evidence of their connections to the central government or as a tool for negotiations with local authorities, rather than complying with their literal stipulations.

On the other hand, private companies exerted a much tighter control over the sale of gold, and in general over the commercial activities and organization of the residential areas on the sites where they were present. In Bantara, the local representatives of GoldMin were instrumental in creating the conditions necessary for the establishment of the entire *comptoir* area by securing the necessary consensus and setting the rules for individual operators and traders to organize their activities there. Initially, for example, GoldMin had to contribute to the ritual procedures necessary to ensure that people could work and live in wild areas classified as *brousse* (the bush): such areas, in opposition to areas of permanent dwelling, are normally associated with various taboos and ritual prescriptions such as bans on sexual intercourse or interpersonal conflict. In the village of Niolkar, the earth priest, meaning the chief responsible for rituals related to land, demanded two oxen to be donated by the company, and sacrificed the oxen for this purpose. Later, on a yearly basis or for specific needs, for example in case of mortal accidents or to redress an individual violation,

new sacrifices and procedures could become necessary with new contributions solicited from the company.

In turn, the company could impose regulations on individual traders, shop owners, and operators active in ore processing who wanted to work in the *comptoir*. These had to contact the local representative of GoldMin before starting construction of their stall, and had to follow the company's instructions on where to set up their businesses. Such regulations were aimed at facilitating vehicle movement, ensuring the availability of emergency help, and minimizing the risk of fire. The company demanded no payment from traders wanting to work at the site, however, as it relied on the profit earned through the attempted monopoly over the commercialization of locally produced gold. In fact, encouraging newcomers to temporarily settle down in Bantara, contribute to the vitality of the site, and increase its production was very much in GoldMin's best interests, provided that the company could consolidate its emerging role as the central authority and planner of the agglomeration. The buyers, in most cases, were migrant operators moving from one mining area to another and who possessed an established expertise in trading gold. GoldMin allowed them to operate in the *comptoir* in exchange for their commitment to resell a certain minimum amount of gold – defined on the basis of the estimated total production at the site – to GoldMin for an agreed-upon price. This price, however, was usually lower than the price paid by external traders.⁹ Thus GoldMin made their profits by being able to buy more gold at slightly lower-than-market prices. GoldMin subsequently sold its gold to its subsidiaries or to independent smelters, after which gold bars would reach the international market.

Governance, mediation, and repression

Beyond its role in organizing the living spaces and the work in the Bantara *comptoir*, GoldMin made its presence felt there in other important ways as well. O. D., the company's local representative, centralized the way in which relations between people working in Bantara and the local population of first-comers or village customary authorities were organized. To ensure that local residents accepted the presence of a large number of in-migrating miners and traders necessary to guarantee a good level of production, and that the work could proceed under favourable conditions, GoldMin also contributed financially to sacrifices performed by ritual specialists and acted as a mediator when conflicts arose between locals, migrant miners, and traders.

This mediation concerned exclusively the collective level of relations between locals and migrant miners and traders. Within this general framework, more

individual negotiations and agreements could be made between local authorities, miners, and traders working in Bantara that did not necessarily involve direct intervention from the company. There were, for instance, certain financial demands from representatives among the first-comers – usually persons with a recognized role in either the traditional or the administrative sphere of the local community – with which all individuals in Bantara had to comply. The payments differed in magnitude depending on the category of economic actor the individual represented. At the time of this fieldwork, for example, each owner of a washing stall was requested to pay 5,000 CFA francs (in this chapter referring to the West African CFA franc (XOF), around 8 euros at the time of writing) annually at the end of every rainy season, which was also the beginning of the mining season. The payment was to be made to the municipal councillor (*conseiller*) representing the village of Sanboulanti. The money was to be used ‘to see what needs to be sacrificed in order to ensure happiness and prosperity at the site’ (personal interview with the *conseiller* of Sanboulanti, 28 March 2012).

Compensation paid by miners and pit chiefs to secure permission to work in the extraction area followed a more complex pattern. In the few years of Bantara’s existence, these payments had evolved from a simple initial lump sum to the appointment, for each pit or mining team, of a rent-seeker from the local population who could claim a fixed share of the extracted ore.¹⁰ Such developments and arrangements took place largely independently from GoldMin’s policy. While the company, as we have seen, was instrumental in negotiating the general principles regulating the establishment of mining activities and securing their acceptance by the local population, it left the fixation of rents and compensations to informal agreements between migrant miners and traders on the one hand and landowners or local chiefs on the other.

In a similar way, the company practised *de facto* centralization of relations with the formal institutional environment, including the municipal authorities, tax collectors, and local representatives of state agencies such as the forest guards (*brigade des eaux et forêts*). Most municipal councillors and civil servants recognized O. D., the local representative of GoldMin, as their main interlocutor at the mining site. O. D. played an important role in facilitating tax collection among traders, usually solicited by fiscal agents regularly visiting the *comptoir* who charged the traders on the basis of their declared or estimated income. Similarly, he mediated between miners and the forest guards who calculated the miners’ use of timber in the internal scaffolding of the shafts and charged them a fee accordingly. He would also intervene in conflicts arising between individual operators and state agents, and his presence and assistance could be requested

during occasional police interventions in the area. As an experienced gold miner and someone born and raised in the region of Kampti – although not belonging to any of its autochthonous groups – O. D. was regarded as the informal interface between the local authorities and the community of migrant miners temporarily residing in the site area (cf. Arnaldi di Balme and Lanzano 2013).

While it was quite rare that the national police showed up at the site, private security personnel hired by GoldMin accompanied the company representative O. D. as his personal security. Beyond this, and providing security for the company headquarters on the site, their main task was to combat economic crime by limiting the smuggling of gold through external channels and independent buyers not linked to the company. The main economic interest of any company organizing a *comptoir* such as the one in Bantara lay in establishing a monopoly over the commercialization of gold produced in the area. In this regard, though, GoldMin did not fully achieve its goal, if general estimates of the extent of smuggling in the country's artisanal mining sector serve as any indication.¹¹ The goal of creating a monopoly justified the security apparatus reinforcing the centrality of GoldMin in the everyday governance of the *comptoir* (cf. De Herdt and Olivier de Sardan 2015; Arnaldi di Balme and Lanzano 2013). In fact, going beyond their official functions, the company representative O. D. and his security guards often dealt with ordinary crimes and general rule violations as well. One episode recorded during my fieldwork serves as an illustration:

While we [myself, my colleagues and assistants] were sitting with O. D. under the wooden structure of his stall, a private guard from the security company, dressed in a blue uniform, came by accompanied by a young miner and, interrupting us, started talking with O. D. The latter stood up and the three walked off a bit away from us, talking for some minutes. O. D., with a grave look on his face, did the most talking, speaking in a quiet but firm voice. The young miner, probably in his mid-20s, listened intently, answering occasionally in a hesitant manner. He appeared frightened and kept his eyes down. The guard stood a few steps away from them. Then the miner and the guard left, with O. D. returning to the stall. He explained that the young miner had been caught stealing unprocessed gold ore and trying to go down a shaft left temporarily unattended by its team. O. D. said that he had given him an ultimatum and had 'found him a job' – meaning that he would probably be sent to work as an apprentice at a processing stall – and that this would be his last chance before being sent packing from the site. The overall situation and O. D.'s explanation left me with the impression that I had just witnessed a powerful display of both patronizing generosity and threatening authority.

(Field notes, 2012)

Furthermore, in seeking control over commercial transactions at the site, GoldMin injected financial resources into a network that indirectly helped boost activities in extractive areas as well. In fact, to establish a monopoly on the sale of gold, the company informally contracted several individual buyers, assigning to them their own stalls in the *comptoir* where they kept their weighing tools and received miners interested in selling their share of gold. The gold purchase by the buyers was the final link in a production chain that had started in the mining shafts where miners' teams worked collectively to dig, reach the primary deposits, and extract the gold ore. In between, each individual miner would process his share of ore at the *comptoir*, going through the different stages – of mechanical crushing, 'washing' in the sluice boxes, application of mercury and other chemicals – needed to obtain the final product. It was this final product, in the form of small spheres and particles of *doré* (impure gold, later submitted to further refining), that individual buyers then purchased from individual miners.

The individual buyers at the *comptoir* were, however, linked to GoldMin not only through their obligation to sell their gold to the company but also through the sums of money they borrowed from its representative on site. In turn, they themselves then often lent money to pit chiefs in need of capital in order to finance digging operations in their shafts, or to individual miners needing to pay for services received at the crushing and washing stalls as part of processing their ore. Miners and owners of the washing stalls also relied on individual buyers for the mercury used to extract their gold from the ore. Instead of requesting a monetary payment, many buyers preferred to give away small quantities of mercury for free, in exchange for miners' promise to sell most of their gold production to them. Throughout the Bantara site and at all levels of activity, such gifts and loans created a vast and multi-layered network of indebtedness and informal economic arrangements that facilitated the circulation of financial resources throughout the entire value chain. Barring major changes and shocks, this network guaranteed a minimum level of incentive for gold extraction and for the survival of the processing activities associated with it. As a result, although GoldMin itself did not really engage in any extractive work on the site, the actual extractive work depended on the resources that the company injected into the economy of the *comptoir*.

'Informal' mining and its hybrid governance

Artisanal mining is rightly seen as a manifestation of the growth and vitality of informal economies in the Global South and particularly on the African continent, where approximately 85 per cent of non-agricultural employment is estimated to

be in the informal sector (International Labour Office 2018). Yet the notion of informality does not do justice to the complexity of the sector and the multi-layered nature of its organization. We can, to be sure, compare an artisanal gold mining site to an informal settlement or neighbourhood in which work and life take place largely outside of the realm of state control and official legislation. At the same time, cases such as that of Bantara challenge traditional classifications in many ways, showing how governance can arise in the interstices and in the constant renegotiation of the formal/informal divide. The arrangements that governed the functioning of the Bantara site and guaranteed its relative stability offer an interesting example of how the mechanisms of this ‘real governance’ arose from convergences between the constraints and opportunities provided by evolving legislative and regulatory frameworks and the strategies of private companies, local leaders, and brokers. To highlight the hybrid character of this governance, I examine here some of the main criticisms directed at the concept of informality.

Accumulation and social differentiation in small-scale mining

A first line of criticism concerns an essentialized understanding – common in policy discourse – of the informal economy as any set of precarious and underpaid activities of the urban poor. Entrepreneurial success stories such that of the *nanas Benz*, wealthy and politically influential women traders in the Togolese textile sector, go against the grain of such postulations, since they are examples of significant capital accumulation in the informal economy (Sylvanus 2016; Toulabor 2012). Research on fraud, crime, and shadow economies also shows that informality cannot be interpreted as merely a synonym for poverty or low productivity, lest it lose its heuristic significance (see, for example, Mathews, Lins Ribeiro, and Alba Vega 2012; Whyte and Wiegatz 2016). Keith Hart (1973), credited for introducing the concept of the ‘informal economy’ into the academic literature, later attributed misunderstandings of the concept to its adoption by development actors and policymakers:

Most economists saw the idea in quantitative terms as a sector of small-scale, low-productivity, low-income activities without benefit of advanced machines; whereas I stressed the reliability of income streams, the presence or absence of bureaucratic *form* ... The association of the idea with the sprawling slums of Third World cities was strong; but the ‘commanding heights’ of the informal economy lay at the centres of political power itself ...

(Hart 2009: 16–17)

In reports by policymakers and NGOs on the mining sector, artisanal mining is often implicitly associated with marginal youth fleeing urban unemployment or escaping from marginalization in rural areas to seek alternative means of livelihood. Artisanal mining has also been linked to disempowered local communities affected by the presence of large-scale mining companies. While not entirely inaccurate, such representations obscure the significant inequalities that can be observed within the artisanal mining landscape itself, where certain actors can reach powerful positions in a highly competitive setting. Mining sites beget all sorts of ‘frontier entrepreneurs’ (Arnaldi di Balme and Lanzano 2013; Côte and Korf 2018) who try, sometimes quite successfully, to reach dominant positions and outmanoeuvre their competitors. The representatives of GoldMin in the *comptoir* of Bantara were an example of this concentration of power, including the power to organize residential areas and supervise commercial activities within their jurisdiction. Alternative trajectories were represented by former members of digging crews who managed to become pit chiefs and open a shaft on their own; traders and service providers thriving in the processing business; and customary chiefs and local authorities capitalizing on their role as mediators. On the other hand, the economy of gold mining also produces numerous losers, among them marginalized locals, unsuccessful investors, and overexploited or vulnerable labourers. In sum, Verbrugge (2014: 87) concludes his study on artisanal gold mining in the Philippines by saying, ‘there is an urgent need for a more systematic understanding of accumulation practices in the sector, and how these are embedded in a particular socio-political environment.’

The informalization of mining?

Another line of criticism directed at the concept of informality is that it may give a static picture of the economy by dehistoricizing the divide between sectors identified as formal and informal. While not questioning the usefulness of the concept, many scholars have preferred to explicitly proceed from an understanding of the formal/informal divide as something resulting from particular historical and political processes. An emphasis on ‘informalization,’ rather than informality, has thus made its way to the literature on informal economies, often inspired by Marxist or other critical approaches (see, for example, Castells and Portes 1989; Lindell 2010).

Judging from my research, it seems undeniable that the gradual liberalization of the mining sector has played a major role in shaping the contemporary informal economies of gold mining in Burkina Faso (Côte and Korf 2018; Luning 2008;

Werthmann 2017). From the late 1990s onwards, efforts were made to attract foreign capital through investor-friendly legislation and lower tax levels. As a result, the Burkinabe industrial mining sector began to grow and the country soon became the fourth major gold exporter on the continent. The reforms, however, also had an impact on small-scale artisanal gold production. The gradual demise of the state-owned marketing agency for precious metals (CBMP) as a parastatal trade and export body with a monopoly on all gold produced at small-scale sites in the country left room for private companies and entrepreneurs to emerge. While benefitting from the Ministry of Mines' new regime of concessions and authorizations, these new companies could also draw on the miners' capacity for self-organization. Miners self-managed recruitment, self-organized their work in the extraction shafts, and independently used their technical knowledge to identify profitable mining areas and successfully process the extracted ore.

Indeed, there are several elements of continuity that can be discerned in the development of the mode of production within artisanal gold mining in the country. This continuity has both diachronic (knowledge and techniques transmitted from precolonial times) and geographic (similar patterns observed across the whole West African region and beyond) dimensions. To describe the complex real governance at work in Burkinabe gold mining sites as resulting exclusively from neoliberal reforms and the deregulation of the mining sector would be to overlook the pre-existing practices of artisanal miners and their strategies to adapt to evolving normative landscapes. It would, moreover, mean downplaying the work of the numerous actors whose mediation remains essential for the reconstitution of official norms as socio-political devices affecting actors on the ground. In the case studied here, local administrators, local politicians, former CBMP agents, representatives of customary authorities, and private entrepreneurs with connections both locally and in Ouagadougou all contributed to the political economy of the informalization of artisanal gold mining. Practical norms emerged and informality was constituted in the nexus between, on the one hand, normative frameworks and the control exerted (or relinquished) by 'officially' recognized institutions and, on the other hand, the adaptive practices of individual and collective actors.

Informality as a hybrid space

Too much emphasis on the informal sector and the specifics of its functioning can lead us to overlook the fact that activities categorized as 'formal' and 'informal' do not constitute distinct and autonomous systems. Rather, they

intertwine and create conditions for each other's existence across a divide that is continually shifting. This divide is discursively constituted, mobilized, and actualized through practices and strategies. In the case of Bantara, the chain of processes allowing gold to be extracted under 'informal' conditions, sold, and thus enter the 'formal' gold market was itself formed by a combination of formal and informal agreements and procedures. Similarly to competitors in other gold mining sites, the GoldMin representatives in Bantara pursued exclusive rights to purchase all gold ore extracted from the mines and processed at the *comptoir*, in essence to establish a de facto monopsony over the area. This they did, first and foremost, through official permits obtained from the ministry in Ouagadougou. These were either artisanal mining authorizations for production, or permits for purchase and sale (*permis d'achat et de vente*) that conferred the status of an official *comptoir* (Arnaldi di Balme and Lanzano 2014). When asked about the recent history of mining in the area or the role of the GoldMin in it, many interview participants in this study were nevertheless vague or unsure about the company's actual legal status, and all of them expressed a certain scepticism about the temporal and spatial validity of the permits held by GoldMin. These permits appeared to have been intended mostly to win the support of local authorities and defeat the competition in the initial phase of production in Bantara. More generally, given the overlap between the different types of permits that individual companies and investors were able to acquire, gold entrepreneurs seemed in practice to use the official authorizations more as an instrument for affirming their exclusive rights in a poorly regulated hypercompetitive sector than as a way to regularize their activities. In addition, GoldMin representatives also sought to achieve exclusive rights and monopsony by placing their company at the centre of an informal regulatory system and fulfilling the kind of organizational functions that such a large concentration of temporary workers and dwellers necessitated. Informally produced gold moved through a hybrid chain shaped by the creative use of official permits and a set of arrangements and power relations constituting a system of practical governance with a registered company at its centre. In this way, gold could make its way out of the mining site, be smelted, and join formal gold production.

The collection of levies, taxes, and other fees and contributions provides another example of how the boundary between the formal and the informal was constantly shifting both in discourse and in practice. In the extraction areas, pit chiefs were required to pay to local authorities not only symbolic tributes (e.g. money for the initial sacrifices performed by indigenous ritual leaders), but also other financial contributions and sometimes in-kind payments as well. In my

study such expectations kept changing over time, depending on the agreements between migrant miners and representatives of the local population. These expectations reflected evolving power relations and the extent to which local customary authorities had engaged in, and attempted to control, mining activities. Also, mining teams had to cope with requests from fiscal agents and other state representatives periodically visiting the extraction area. Mining teams usually managed these requests with the intermediation of GoldMin representatives. In other words, those wishing to enter the artisanal gold business needed initial capital to pay the informal entry fees set by the indigenous community or by the company controlling the *comptoir*. To remain in business, one needed a sufficient level of profit to keep up with the additional financial contributions expected.

On the other hand, many institutional actors at the municipal level felt excluded from the national legislation on mining, complaining about the lack of decentralization in policies related to the extractive sector. Furthermore, in their view, the informal character of artisanal gold mining rendered the sector invisible to official taxation and thus prevented local communities from benefitting from its potential state revenue. This argument, in fact, was often evoked to denounce the negative impacts of artisanal mining, and even to justify bans and restrictions on it at the municipal level that, strictly speaking, were not in accordance with any written law in force. It was additionally used by municipalities to demand greater involvement in decision-making regarding the mining sector. At some levels of official discourse, the informality of artisanal mining was equated with a lack of accountability and tax evasion, or rather with the impossibility of proper taxation. According to the miners' and traders' own experiences, however, informality was instead precisely what gave others the freedom to collect a wide array of number of payments, fees, and rents from them, causing them financial hardship and leaving them dependent on factors largely beyond their control. These factors included the uncertain and changeable outcomes of their recurrent negotiations with local chiefs and the equally unpredictable outcomes of the periodic negotiations between the *comptoir* and state agents (cf. also Côte and Korf 2018).

Conclusion

In the late 1990s, the rapid development of artisanal gold mining in western and southwestern Burkina Faso began to attract migrant miners and traders to Bantara, leading in just a few years to the creation of a densely populated

settlement that necessitated solutions to regulate the feverish work and co-existence among the thousands of newcomers. Most informal solutions to the challenges in Bantara were provided through the initiative or intermediation of GoldMin, a private company operating in the area that recruited a locally well-known and well-connected person to act as its representative there. The company's organizing work engaged legislative frameworks, administrative officials, and recognized customary authorities. The system of practical governance in Bantara thus emerged as the result of institutional hybridization and creativity in which existing normative and legal mechanisms were navigated or strategically put to the service of a new socio-economic project (Arnaldi di Balme and Lanzano 2013). National legislation regulating concessions and formal authorizations for artisanal mining is one example of such a mechanism: rather than constraining prerogatives and rights or limiting action on the ground, official permits obtained from the ministry in Ouagadougou became for GoldMin a fundamental tool for conducting negotiations with local authorities and stabilizing its position vis-à-vis competitors. The complex webs of economic dependency and indebtedness created through GoldMin's investments, loans, and relations with buyers of gold constituted the social and financial infrastructure of this one-company settlement. The informality of this infrastructure did not prevent it from being highly efficient.

It is difficult to predict the fate of the Bantara mining site in the long run. While production on the site has continued even after the conclusion of this study, many other sites in the region have rapidly depopulated, having been abandoned by private concessionaires that, like GoldMin, had been up that point at the centre of their *comptoirs'* organization. Although, broadly speaking, the artisanal gold mining sector during the period of my research shows elements of continuity with previous historical phases, on closer analysis it appeared more adaptive than previously to the dynamics of commodity booms and busts and to the depletion of gold. The sector's workforce was mobile enough to be able to rapidly relocate to where the most recent gold discoveries were made, and was flexible enough to alternate or combine mining activities with other sources of revenue when the situation required it. The instability that characterized artisanal mining, at least in the form it assumed at sites like Bantara, can be seen as the result of both policy choices (or policy voids) and corporate strategies leading to the informalization of the mining sector. This instability was a factor contributing to the impermanence and uncertainty of urbanization processes.

Ferguson (2005) describes the contemporary phase of mining enclaves as a period in which foreign capital 'hops' over rather than flows into Africa. Capital

concentrates in specific places and disconnects those places from the territory surrounding them. This phase can be contrasted with the late colonial and early independence periods on the continent, when mining-led urbanization and its management embodied colonial paternalism and progressive social engineering; a time when ‘the business of mining – as exploitative as it undoubtedly was – entailed a very significant broader social project’ (Ferguson 2005: 379). Ferguson’s concerns reflect his earlier ethnographic work on urban decline in the Zambian Copperbelt and the related crisis of discourses on national development and modernity (Ferguson 1999). The modernist project had taken urbanization processes for granted and represented them as linear (see Mususa 2012). Possibly because of the specific politics associated with mineral exploitation in the country, but also owing to the dramatic depth of its copper crisis from the mid-1970s on, the Zambian case, by contrast, suggests itself as a quintessential example of the wavering and reversible character of these processes. Due to the specific features of the current neoliberal political-economic order, the post-2000s mining boom appears to have integrated and normalized this impermanence, making the temporary nature of urbanization processes and settlement dynamics both the norm and prerequisite of the boom from its very beginning.

Bryceson and MacKinnon (2012) have examined the ‘resource roller coaster’ – the alternation of boom and bust periods – and the fundamental role it has historically played in shaping the nexus between mining development and urbanization in Africa. In their view, the impermanence observed in mining sites like the one discussed in this chapter is not necessarily a new phenomenon. Both artisanal mining settlements and industrial mining towns have always been characterized by a sense of place structured around two key conditions: temporal uncertainties and the need for ‘the flexibility to adapt to minerals’ global price fluctuations as well as the inevitability of declining mineral supplies as non-renewable resources’ (Bryceson and MacKinnon 2012: 528). Following the decline of modernization theory and developmentalism as well as the dramatic redefinition of the role of the state, ephemeral mining settlements like Bantara make more visible the uncertainty of activities surrounding the extraction of a resource whose demand is characterized by economic fluctuation. My analysis of hybrid informal–formal and urban–rural reconfigurations, provoked by the uneven expansion of mining capitalism in these settlements, demonstrates their importance as creative solutions to the problems of governing such settlements.

Notes

- 1 The research project was called *Améliorer la gouvernance environnementale et sociale de l'orpaillage au Burkina Faso*. It was carried out in collaboration between the Laboratoire Citoyennetés in Ouagadougou and the Swiss association AGEDEVE and funded by the Canton of Geneva, Switzerland. Aside from participant observation, our methods included transect walks, focus group interviews, and individual in-depth interviews involving approximately twenty – mostly male – informants. These included state agents, mayors and administrative representatives, miners and pit chiefs, traders, and company representatives. Between 2015 and 2017, I conducted additional fieldwork at goldmining sites across southwestern and western Burkina Faso, this time as a researcher for the Nordic Africa Institute, in Uppsala, Sweden. Finalization of this chapter was possible thanks to my participation in the research project, 'Gold Matters. Sustainability Transformations in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining' (grant n. 462.17.201), supported by the Belmont Forum and NORFACE joint research programme on Transformations to Sustainability (co-funded by VR, DLR/BMBF, ESRC, FAPESP, ISC, NWO, and the European Commission through Horizon 2020). I am particularly indebted to Luigi Arnaldi di Balme, Alizèta Ouédraogo, Ibrahima Sanou, Gaston Kaboré, and Abdel Aziz Diallo. Results from our joint research (and its further developments) are also presented in Arnaldi di Balme and Lanzano (2013, 2014), Lanzano (2018), and Ouédraogo (2014, 2020).
- 2 The Mossi (or Moose, in an alternative spelling closer to Mooré, the language spoken by the Mossi) are the dominant ethnic group in Burkina Faso, probably accounting for about half of the country's population. The *pays Mossi* covers most of the central regions of the country, the areas surrounding the capital Ouagadougou and several other towns such as Ouahigouya, Koudougou, Kaya, and Koupela. The Bissa (alternative spelling Bisa) are a smaller group, whose *pays* is, roughly speaking, situated south of the Mossi territory, near the town of Tenkodogo (itself a historical centre of the Mossi chieftainship).
- 3 The first artisanal mining sites where underground gold digging was practised opened in Burkina Faso in the early 1980s, concentrating in the country's north, inhabited predominantly by the Mossi. Droughts in the Sahelian area, together with a short-lived peak in international gold prices (which began to go up again in the late 1990s), probably encouraged the search for alternative livelihoods. Gold mining gradually expanded, reaching the southeastern and southwestern regions of the country, with more experienced Mossi miners migrating toward the periphery of an advancing artisanal mining frontier (Jaques et al. 2006; Werthmann 2012).
- 4 In many West African agrarian societies, the status of first-comer (belonging to a lineage or group considered to be descendants of the village founders or the first

settlers in a given area) has an important role in determining rights of use and ownership of land and local natural resources. Customary norms often regulate the relations between first-comers (or 'hosts'; *autochthones* in French, *jatigi* in Mandé languages) and latecomers (or 'guests'; *étrangers* or *allochthones* in French, *duna* in Mandé languages). The latter category includes groups and individuals having migrated to the area and established themselves there at later stages, even if they have been living there for several generations. For more on this, see Amselle 1996; Chauveau 2007; Hagberg 2001; Lentz 2006.

- 5 Initials used here, as well as for other interviewees, are fictitious in order to preserve anonymity.
- 6 A fictitious name.
- 7 In September 2016, a parliamentary investigation committee issued a report concerning the abuses of mining titles and authorizations both in the small-scale and the large-scale sector (Assemblée Nationale du Burkina Faso 2016). Following the demise of Blaise Compaoré's regime in 2014 and the transitional phase in 2014–2015, the position of some entrepreneurs holding AEATs and other mining permits, entrepreneurs that had previously benefitted from their links with the ruling party, became weaker. This allowed more open criticism of mismanagement in the gold mining sector.
- 8 *Bokasoba* can be translated as 'the owner' or 'the person responsible for the hole' (in reference to the mining pit), usually rendered in French as *propriétaire de trou* or *chef de trou*, hence the 'pit chief' used in this research. As in more common terms like *tengsoba* (the 'earth priest' holding ritual control over land) or *zaksoba* (the head of a household), the suffix *-soba* expresses, in Mooré, responsibility and authority rather than any individual property *sensu stricto*. While the position of *bokasoba* cannot be discussed in detail here, it can be noted that their hierarchically superior status in the mining team, determined by their initial investment in the mining operations and remuneration through a larger share of the ore produced in the pit, is rarely contested but nonetheless subject to change according to the evolving nature of the agreements regulating the organization of the production and the distribution of profits.
- 9 The purchase price stipulated by GoldMin was related to the international price of gold and followed its fluctuations. Nevertheless, most miners considered the *comptoir* price unsatisfactory and unfairly beneficial to the company. Stories about a more remunerative black market and various attempts to smuggle gold out of Bantara abounded.
- 10 In this kind of arrangement, each mining team working in a pit or in a section of shaft was forced to collaborate with the designated local rent-seeker, and to give him periodically a share – usually one-fifth – of the rock extracted. The rent-seeker would then process his share of the ore and keep the profit. The arrangement

was called *sélection*, possibly referring to the local leaders' power to select the beneficiaries of the rent that would be associated to each mining pit. In general, the system of *sélection* can be interpreted as a sign of the growing integration of locals in the mining business, since transactions in kind (in this case, using non-processed gold ore as payment) required active involvement of the recipients in the processing phase and implied sharing the risk of an uncertain profit.

- 11 Estimations of the extent of smuggling in the artisanal mining sector vary and are far from precise, but they tend to agree on its large impact. In 2015, for example, the Swiss NGO Public Eye (formerly Berne Declaration) published a report on the illegal channels through which gold was transported from Burkina Faso to Togo (where no mining activities were reported), from which it was exported to Switzerland (Berne Declaration 2015). An OECD report published in 2018 assessing artisanal gold mining activities in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger estimated that the vast majority of artisanal gold produced in these three countries was exported illicitly. The same report observed that alternative estimations quantified the yearly production of artisanal gold in Burkina Faso at 20–25 tons, versus the 9.5 tons figure given by official national statistics. The difference would very likely go unregistered (OECD 2018).

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Artisanal Gold Mining and Rapid Urbanization in Mali

Sidylamine Bagayoko

Introduction

The arrival of mining companies in Mali in 1985 created opportunities for informal income-earning in addition to formal employment. Concomitant small-scale prospecting on the fringes of gold-rich land used by formal mining companies has become a common phenomenon attracting many poor young men and women. Some dream that their hard work will yield a lucky strike, whereas others have few other options after failing to get a job with established companies.

In Mali, the number of persons looking to find gold from small-scale gold panning or gold washing is officially estimated at about 100,000. However, the numbers have vastly increased in recent years and according to an unofficial estimate,¹ there may be more than two million persons involved in small-scale gold prospecting. Gold panning is an activity undertaken at approximately 100 different sites within Mali. Kéniéba district in south-west Mali is one of the so-called *eldorado* regions for such prospectors. Gold panning involves complex processes of extracting gold from soil or clay and from stones dug from deep boreholes. Since gold is in constant demand in this very poor country, there is a stream of prospectors towards the mining sites. Several steps are needed to locate and reach the gold, but given that the gold washing sites around Kéniéba are generally situated adjacent to industrial mining operations, gold washers quickly discover where the most promising sites are.

In 2005, before a gold mine company was established in Kéniéba, Mali, the town consisted of approximately 12,000 inhabitants, with 60,000 inhabitants in the surrounding district as a whole. Ten years after the mine was established,

the population of Kéniéba had almost quadrupled to more than 42,000, and the district had grown to 200,000 residents. In this chapter, I examine how informal gold prospectors are organized in a shantytown settlement near the city of Kéniéba, as well as why the settlement is growing and becoming semi-permanent despite residents' original intentions to live there only temporarily. To answer these questions, I discuss the causes, consequences, and responses to increasing poverty of the informal miners in this settlement.

To gather information about this recently established gold washers' town, I spent two fieldwork periods of two weeks each there, and used videography to directly capture aspects of residents' lives and realities. As a Malian anthropologist, I had relatively easy access to the field site. I began with general questions about why residents had come to informally mine gold, in response to which the issue of extreme poverty repeatedly emerged as a main motivation. Our discussions thus focused on residents' perceptions of poverty and their various strategies to combat it.



Figure 3.1 The location of the Kayes region in which Kéniéba is located (Map data: Google images, Cercles of Kayes Region, Map of the cercles of Kayes region in Mali. Created using MapInfo Professional v8.5 and various mapping resources, accessed in 2018).

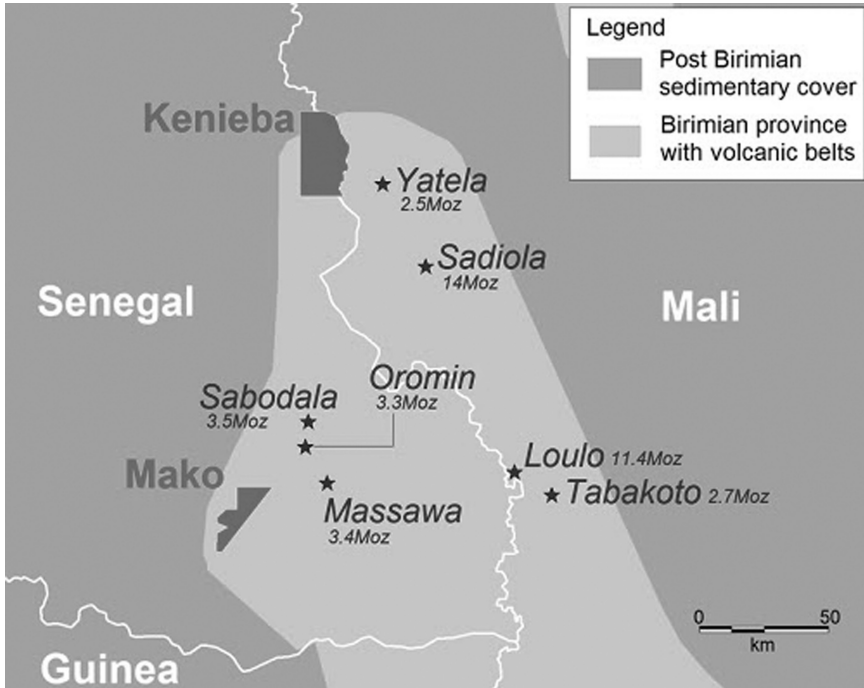


Figure 3.2 Gold mining sites including Kéniéba on the borders of Mali, Senegal, and Guinea (Map data: Google images, ARACF Or du Mali Pillage des peuples par les compagnies minières Uranium de Faléa, accessed in 2018).

Sakolabada – the neglected town of Kéniéba District

Mali is administratively organized into regions, districts, communes, and villages. Sakolabada is a shantytown that has grown up around informal gold mining operations near the small town of Sakola. Sakolabada is best characterized by economic informality. Although the informal sector is a deeply rooted aspect of life in all cities and towns on the African continent, it continues to provide only a precarious existence for its participants (Ferguson 2015: 92), and street vendors and roadside service providers of all kinds struggle to cover just the cost of their daily food.

According to the administrative census of 2014 (cf. *Annuaire statistique du Mali*, 2014), Sakola has approximately 28,000 inhabitants. Sakola is a recognized locality whereas Sakolabada, my fieldwork site, officially does not exist on administrative maps or in government documents. In reality, however, more people live in Sakolabada than in adjacent villages, even though these villages are

the ones that give residents the permission to undertake gold mining activities on their land. The town is located in one of Mali’s wealthiest communes, Sitakily, and is part of the district of Kéniéba, which receives up to half of a billion CFA francs (760,000 euros) in tax revenues² each year from several large gold mining companies in the area.

In the district of Kéniéba, the gold industry and informal prospecting provide the main sources of livelihood for residents. More than 60 per cent of community, family, and individual incomes come from informal gold mining.³ Kéniéba is located in southwestern Mali in the region of Kayes, close to the border with Senegal marked by the Falémé River. Temperatures range between

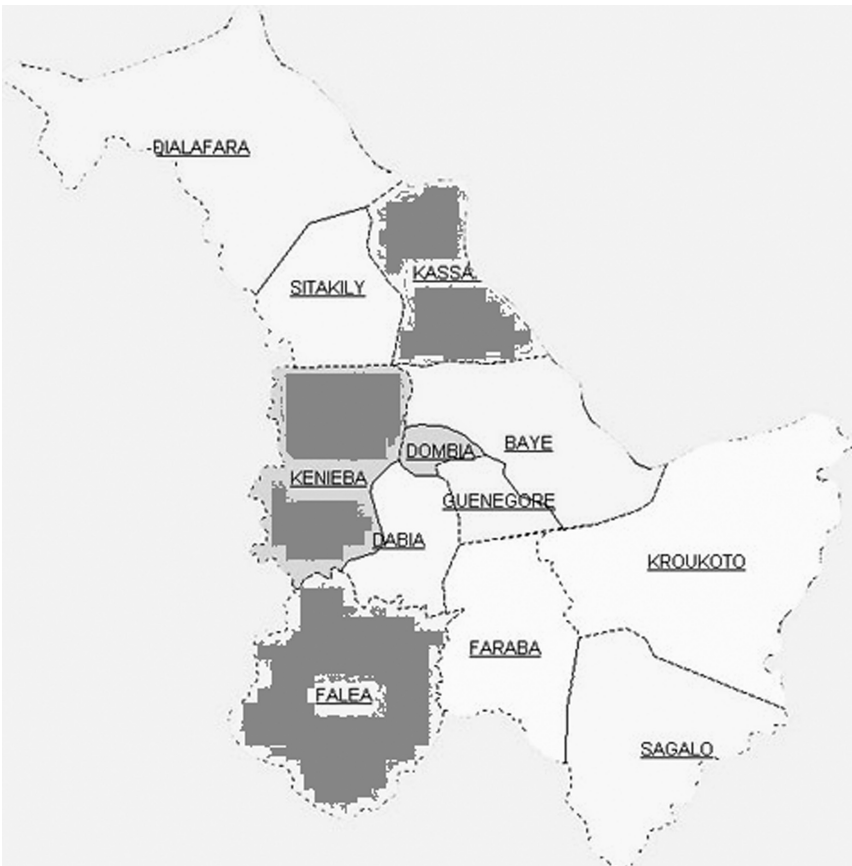


Figure 3.3 Map of all communes in the Kéniéba region. The small town of Sakola belongs to the commune of Sitakily (Map data: Google images, Cercle de Kéniéba, Caderkaf, accessed in 2018).

20°C and 48°C during the year. The physical environment is comprised of cliffs, lowlands, clay, sandy areas, and stony ground. The area can register rainfall between 800 and 1,200 millimetres per year.

According to one of the elected counsellors of the Sakola commune, the Sakolabada gold mining township was established in 2007. This was several years before Goukoto, the nearest mining company owned and operated by the South African Randgold company, began operations. However, the first gold prospecting teams had come to the area several years prior to Sakolabada's founding. The first informal gold miners were encouraged when they observed official geologists doing exploratory work. Early small-scale gold prospectors began to search for gold in Sakolabada while continuing to reside in Kéniéba city. One of my key informants among the informal gold miners told me that gold buyers do not reside on the site but spend the nights in Kéniéba city, as do some gold washers.

Those gold washers who travel back and forth from Kéniéba city to Sakolabada on a daily basis do so until they decide to establish their first prospector's shacks after having found gold. Year by year, the population of Sakolabada has gradually grown. However, it is important to note that the establishment of Sakolabada, as in the case of all informal settlements in Mali based on the gold washing activity, had to be authorized by the nearby village to which the land belonged through customary title. This permission from customary village authorities is given verbally to the *Tombolomaw*, a group of persons in charge of the security of the whole mining site who represent the landowners and gold prospectors.

The classification of this gold washing settlement as 'informal' was how the inhabitants themselves referred to it. The built environment was constructed mostly of small shacks put together by prospectors using whatever was at hand: wooden structures, often walled and roofed with nothing more than plastic sheeting, either black or blue. This kind of housing is known as *niafa*, meaning 'refuge' or 'shelter' in Mandingo, the local language. The fact that interview participants referred to their homes in this way – as a mere *shelter* – implies that they embraced no long-term plans for putting down roots there. All of those I interviewed who had their families with them on site made conceptual distinctions between *dwelling* and *home*. In the settlement, for example, they typically did not bother to make any windows in the structure; even the usual Malian concepts of *street compound* or *courtyard* had no relevance in this setting. In the case of this particular informal settlement, therefore, there was little in the way of 'a code' for the ethnographer to read beyond observing that the settlement (apart from a few bars and shops) was made entirely of plastic sheets on flimsy wood frames, which could be exchanged for straw depending on the season.

While the informal settlements built in informal gold mining areas are intended to be only temporary, the reality is that they turn into townships that last for many years. Most of the people I interviewed in Sakolabada had not originally planned to be there for long. However, the unpredictability of obtaining income – along with the hope of a lucky strike – meant that they have not been able to leave (Belem 2009: 136).

When I asked residents how long they had been there, they answered that it was rarely less than three years. For instance, three people with whom I spoke had arrived in the shanty town in 2012 and had intended to stay for one dry season (approximately six months), but they were still there five years later. One reason was a lack of travel money to return to their home localities. Another reason for staying longer than anticipated was that they felt they could not go back to their home communities empty-handed. As one research participant pointed out, ‘some of us have been here for five years but can’t go back to our villages because we still have no money. As men, we feel ashamed to go back home without money to show for our efforts.’⁴ Like many others, this small-scale miner came with no intention to remain but rather to earn and save a decent amount of money and then return home.

What stood out in many interviews was that people felt psychologically unable to return home empty-handed – and thus defeated – despite a common longing among them for the familiarity and comfort of their home localities. For many of them, homesickness was the worst hardship they experienced. Small-scale gold miners thus saw themselves in a state of transition (Thorsen 2006: 107). Alcinda Honwana (2012) writes of *waitthood*, a situation in which a growing number of young men and women in Sub-Saharan Africa must have improvised livelihoods and conduct their personal relations outside of dominant economic and familial frameworks.

Ethnic membership

Several distinct populations are native to the area; the main ethnic group is the Mandingo with a Khasonké sub-group.⁵ There are also Bambara people (as everywhere in Mali) and Fulanis and Soninkés. But with the mass internal migration associated with gold mining, one can also find members of other ethnic groups, including: Dogons, Senufos, Minyankas, Songhai, and Bobos. Besides this ethnic mix of Malians there are economic migrants from outside of Mali.

Long (2000) and Ferguson (2006) have analysed the social organization of informal gold mining sites by focusing on their links to the global economy. Long (2000: 188) notes that people use innovative social forms to cope with the low relative living standards produced through global interconnectedness, and James Ferguson (2006: 14) points out that ‘the processes that produce exclusion, marginalisation, and abjection are also producing new forms of non-national economic spaces’. At my research site, where informal miners come from as far away as Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Senegal, small-scale gold prospectors’ activities have led to new forms of social organization. These include the acceptance and incorporation of a large influx of strangers who arrive at the gold mining site not only to mine gold but also to ply small trades, establish coffee shops, and work as bar keepers. The social forms forged by these settlements differ from those in already established Malian towns and villages.⁶

According to my data, migrants from different nationalities tend to specialize in different kinds of livelihoods. Those coming from Conakry, the capital of Guinea, are generally small shopkeepers; those from Senegal commonly work as ambulant vendors selling clothes, shoes, belts, and so forth. Nigerians and Ghanaians tend to be bar keepers, sometimes acting as pimps for the sex workers connected to their bars. Migrants from Niger are likely to be engaged selling food, especially meat. Those from Burkina Faso are usually owners and operators of the crushing machines used to process the clay and stones extracted from mining wells. Criteria for ethnic boundaries and membership (Barth 1981, Amselle 2010) are renegotiated and adapted to the new context of the informal gold mine site, giving all newcomers the chance to be integrated into the social functioning of the site.

Methods

In May to June of 2016, I visited the informal mining town of Sakolabada for the first time. I was used to hearing about informal sector gold miners in the country enduring very harsh conditions, but I had no idea of just how or exactly where they lived. Before my fieldwork, I imagined that they were all based in Kéniéba city and travelled every day to tend their various prospecting sites throughout the district. Once in the field, my first impression was that they had managed to create their own ‘town’ dedicated to freelance gold mining. Residents had managed to assemble everything needed to establish a settlement, and were thus able to engage in prospecting at the place where they lived.

The general approach of this chapter is that of visual anthropology. I was interested in seeing how informal gold miners struggled to obtain gold and in what conditions they managed to survive. In order to access the visual information I needed, I had to negotiate and interact with those who agreed to be interviewed and filmed. I conducted interviews with the aid of video cameras and analysed the material after my fieldwork.

I spent two weeks living among gold washers during my first visit in May 2016 and again during my second visit in June 2016. I collected data both at their work sites – where they extracted, crushed, and washed the rocky clay – and in the compounds where they slept. This allowed me to observe their working conditions and their daily lives. Using structured interviews without a camera, I asked thirty-five people to talk about how they perceived their lives in Sakolabada.

In the past, I had used participant observation methods with and without video equipment. Given my specialization in the field of visual anthropology, however, most of the time I favoured social enquiry with a cinematic component, following Olivier de Sardan's (2008: 142) observation that *ce qui est observable est filmable* (what is observable is filmable). I have also commonly conducted interviews with a video camera, although in this study I interviewed some participants without a camera. My empirical data therefore consists of both visual and non-visual elements. With eighteen participants ranging in age from children under 10 accompanied by their parents to women and men from 18 to 50 years of age, I recorded more than four hours of discussions, interviews, and activities at the prospecting sites and at the participants' homes during rest periods and at meals. I also observed and recorded scenes of them repairing their *niafa*, the makeshift structures that serve as their homes for the duration of their stay in this prospecting community.

To broaden my perspectives on the issue of poverty in informal gold mine sites and to diversify my information, I visited government officials in Kéniéba and spoke with a community development officer and his field officers from an established mining company. I also interviewed the heads of surrounding villages and their representatives in the gold fields. These men comprised a kind of traditional militia whose job was to manage informal gold mine site issues and to collect taxes from the residents of the shantytown.

Since my data consists of both audio-visual and textual materials, I needed to differentiate between my fully anonymized data and the film material for which anonymity was not a practical option. I was very much concerned with the ethical issues raised and asked participants to give me permission to represent their lives and their realities prior to filming them.

To properly understand the issue of poverty in Sakolabada, I asked residents how they had become involved in gold mining. I also had discussions with research participants on their perceptions of poverty and their strategies to alleviate it. To do this, I observed and filmed both the concrete elements of the environment as well as the ideas and emotions of the inhabitants.

Despite the fact that as a Malian man I shared the same general cultural background as my fieldwork informants, participants still tended to classify me as representative of an urban intellectual subculture coming from the capital city. Although I told them from the beginning that I was a researcher from the University of Bamako, the informal sector gold miners with whom I spoke regarded me as a television reporter because they were used to seeing reporters from time to time. According to them, researchers and reporters fall into the same category because they have formal jobs conferring urban and intellectual status, as opposed to gold miners working under informal circumstances. Their insistence on perceiving someone coming from the city holding a camera as an outsider persisted, despite the fact that I was doing research at home. Therefore, I still needed to build bridges of understanding by eating with them and taking tea under their *niafa* in order to have a common basis in discussion (cf. Dahl Jensen, I. and Nynås 2006). I put myself inside their life worlds, followed their daily activities, and listened to their sorrows. When a researcher defends the causes of the community he/she studies at a certain level of involvement, and is more concerned about those living conditions that unite the research participants and researcher than about his/her neutrality, he/she is taking up what has been called the 'populist posture' (de Sardan 2008: 228).

To be clear, when I write of a 'visual approach' I mean employing aspects of established methods of visual anthropology. I first made *in situ* observations using video recordings. This stage was followed by a detailed analysis of this material, that is, an anthropological rethinking of the significances contained in these recorded events. During the process of writing this chapter, images I collected with a video camera allowed me to rewatch actions and activities I had observed during fieldwork. To facilitate the analytic process, I synthesized these 'real-world' insights by way of video-editing, which provided new ways of seeing, telling, and feeling about these life worlds that would have been unavailable if merely writing syntheses and conclusions. For example, the fear and concern I felt when I watched a young miner climbing back up from the dark depth of the pit, the means by which miners detected gold by seeing its traces in rock, and the destruction of the soil and river are almost indescribable in terms of emotion without the use of images. The audio, visual, and textual phases of research have each constituted vital elements in this research project.

I favoured a robust interactive strategy in the visual component of the research, maintaining an active relationship with the participants with whom I worked in order to make them feel involved in the work of filming. It turned out to be a cooperative effort, in part because the prospectors felt valued when a researcher with a camera took an interest in their lives and opinions. Rather than being disturbed by my presence, they appeared to go about their lives with a keener focus than normal. Regarding this aspect of the interaction between researcher and research participants, Lallier (2009: 23) has pointed out that during filming, the filmed person typically feels granted a kind of social recognition. The researcher-filmmaker gains access to the observed activity, thus in ideal situations the process of filming can be seen as an exchange relationship. Since small-scale gold miners are fairly well acquainted with photography in its various forms, the camera was an advantage rather than an obstacle; the process itself provided a pretext for deeper discussions with research participants.

Mine site organization and living conditions

Small-scale mines in Mali are often characterized by poor working conditions (Bindra 2014: 1). The majority of young gold washers arrive penniless to the panning sites, often with no place to sleep. While they build their improvised *niafa* shelters, someone may offer them accommodation. Typically, before joining a group of gold washers, newcomers engage in peripheral activities such as collecting firewood for sale; motor-taxi driving; carpentry; welding; selling coffee, food, or household goods along the roadside; or working as shop assistants.

Small-scale gold mining sites vary in organization according to the region, but those near Kéniéba are all based on a similar model (cf. Coulibaly and Diarra 2004). In Mali, gold mining is organized to a large extent according to local rules and customs, unlike in Burkina Faso where artisanal mining is legal without a mining title but requires a licence issued by the administrative authorities (Werthmann 2006: 124). Land in Mali is deemed to belong to traditional village authorities and ownership is established by inheritance. Customary village authorities or heads of villages have it in their power to confer authorization for small-scale gold extraction on any site under their control. This procedure is often straightforward, simply a matter of applying for a certain site and being given approval after the payment of a symbolic sum, for instance 10,000 CFA francs (15 euros). It is symbolic because this amount is far less than the real value of the leased land.

To enforce the rules and various social restrictions surrounding gold mining, there is an association for gold mine workers called *Tombolomaw*, which is set up by local customary authorities to maintain security and smooth operations at the gold mine. The role of this group is to mark out different plots for distribution and to collect symbolic fees. The *Tombolomaw* are very powerful in the gold mining settlements because they represent the landowners. They also serve as the intermediary between informal gold miners and state authorities, local courts, city councils, and the police in cases where these institutions need something or visit the gold mine site. The head of the *Tombolomaw* association of Sakolabada explained to me that the *Tombolomaw* organize and run everything on the gold mine site, stressing that it is because of their work that there aren't any quarrels between the people. They organize security measures and monitor the social relations between the people living there.

The *Tombolomaw* have also the authority to arrange short-term marriages between couples who meet in the gold mining town but who may not intend to leave the town together or otherwise continue their relationship in the outside world.

Groups of up to roughly fifteen informal miners typically shared a gold mining pit or a place set aside for gold panning. Such groups operated as a kind of cooperative. Each site, however, had an individual proprietor or person in charge. Such sites were called *daman* or *dioura* in the local language, Mandingo, and the person in charge was a *damantigui*, *diouratigui* or *bantigui*. All the gold washers from the same site – the *dioura-da* – worked under the leadership of the *damantigui*.

Lassina,⁷ his brother Issa, and his wife Mariam worked in a group with others. Under the hot sun or in the shade, at any time of day, they spent hours labouring at their assigned tasks. The men dug and brought the stones to the crushing machine. Another gang of men washed the crushed ore to retrieve whatever traces of gold might turn up. Women lifted stones from the pit or washed clay to retrieve ore.

Mariam and her husband Lassina had originally not intended to stay at the gold mine site for very long. Lassina's home town was in the region of San, 900 kilometres from Kéniéba. After two years, Mariam joined him in Sakolabada and their two children were born there. While Mariam and Lassina were busy with gold panning, the children were left on their own, and since there was no school in the township, the children were without access to formal education. All three adult members of the family explained that poverty was the reason they had joined the small-scale gold mine. They had no opportunities or material support from their kin in their home village in the central region of Mali. Farming no longer provided the living they had expected, and they could not expect to find

formal work because they did not have formal education or qualifications. For Mariam, her husband Lassina, and many others with whom I spoke, poverty is experienced as a lack of money, food, home, clothes for their children, and the necessary tools to undertake skilled work. In their perception, the quickest way to combat poverty was gold mining because a small amount of gold could mean a lot of money with which to start a small business, for instance.

When a group of gold miners obtained gold from the earth it was weighed by buyers who were permanently established at the site. Typically, a prospecting team accumulated small amounts of gold until a certain weight had been reached in order to obtain a purchase price that was practical to share among the group members. The buyers, who were always ready to purchase from the prospectors, faced the considerable risk of being attacked by robbers. The only security at the gold mine site was organized by the *Tombolomaw*, but it was limited. There were no police, so both prospectors and gold buyers had learned to live without. This lack of protection amounted to a lack of power that was another major factor in the poverty of inhabitants of Sakolabada (cf. Hårsmar 2010).

Although the settlement was established in 2007, the first decade of its existence had seen little or no improvement in overall housing conditions. As one informal gold miner described:

Look at where we sleep, it's not acceptable at all; it is because we lack money, food and even water. We are here to get money. To try to reach gold, we have to dig down as deep as 20 metres. It is very dangerous, some fall into the wells and die. Because of this gold panning activity we're prevented from doing other, normal types of work and if we don't save money, we can't go back home and face our home village.

Gold mining – whether on an industrial or smaller scale – remains one of the most dangerous kinds of work (Belem 2009: 122). When describing what factors led to their engaging in gold mining work, participants cited a lack of savings but also mentioned not having a lack of education, qualifications, or the essential tools and means to earn money from carpentry, masonry, or driving a motor-taxi. In addition to dangerous living conditions, gold panning offered few real prospects for the future:

We've done this work for several years, because we want to get money. Of course, gold washing is a matter of luck. We do gold washing hoping to get rich. On good days, we can get up to 15,000 CFA [20 euros]. We do need to spend some of that money but we try to save some in order to help the family back in our home village.⁸

Gold miners thus perceive their work to be a gamble. The chances of striking it rich do not necessarily depend on the amount of work invested. Miners face health and environmental hazards, which include the use (more than 0.04/mg) of potassium cyanide in some of the mechanical processes. When it comes to children, even if they survive the ill-effects of the chemicals associated with their parents' livelihoods, they are likely to remain illiterate and without qualifications, ready only to continue the cycle of poverty even if their parents finally escape the goldfields.

The goldfield settlement of Sakolabada lacks the formal infrastructures that might protect or help children in need: not only does it lack schools, there are few healthcare facilities even though the need for such facilities is acute. As one of the prospectors told me, 'we don't have enough food and what we have is poor quality. On top of that, the water we drink is not purified. So we all end up getting sick.' In an attempt to fill the gap in healthcare delivery, a young medical doctor named Danfaga has established his own improvised clinic in a local hall. According to Danfaga:

I founded this clinic three years ago, in an attempt to provide at least some healthcare to the people of Sackolabada, Kéniéba. We do general consultations, obstetrics and various other treatments. If I can't handle a case, we send the patient to Kéniéba Healthcare centre. We do need lots of help; we lack the necessary beds and equipment and materials that we need to carry out our basic task as doctors.⁹

Poverty and urbanization linked to informal resource extraction

In their case study of Galamsey in Ghana, Ofori and Ofori (2018: 3) argue that small-scale gold mining should not be regarded solely as an 'illegality'. Rather, it should be considered a by-product of past and present social injustices that have combined to marginalize, deprive, and push the vulnerable poor into the informal mining sector. This poverty arises from a lack of educational qualifications, agricultural droughts, and general unemployment in both the informal and formal job sectors.

In Mali as well, informal gold mining is closely and causally connected to poverty. People become involved in gold washing because they hope and expect to change their economic condition. Issa, a small-scale gold miner, explained that he had been the personal driver of a Malian official working at

the presidential palace in Bamako. After the coup d'état in 2012, he lost his job because his employer had also lost his position in the palace. Issa did not succeed in obtaining another job in Bamako. He complained that industrial mining companies in the region did not provide enough positions for non-qualified workers, and that the government of Mali was not doing anything to help the unemployed youth. Without jobs or self-owned businesses, young people had only two options according to Issa: to go overseas or to test their luck in informal gold mining. For him, informal gold mining was the less dangerous of the two when compared to a perilous sea journey to Europe.

Issa felt that the Mali government should do more to help miners by providing adequate materials and tools and by protecting them against unemployment and environmental hazards. He added that informal gold mining reduced social conflict in Bamako, because if everyone involved in informal gold mining was living in the capital city, it would lead to a crisis due to unemployment and starvation.

In keeping with neoliberalist philosophy, it has been advocated in economic policy circles that removing the state's 'distortions' of markets will create the conditions for economic growth, while rapid privatization will yield a flood of new private capital investment (Ferguson 2006: 11). However, it has become increasingly evident that gold mining in Mali brings little benefit to most African miners. This is partly explained by the fact that it is foreign companies, not local ones, that are most heavily extracting and benefitting from the nation's mineral resources. Given that the government has neither the financial means nor the necessary technologies to mine these resources, Mali as a nation has seen little benefit compared to the profits earned by foreign interests. According to Belem (2009: 126), revisions to Mali's Mining Code have led to a reduction in profits to the state and have given greater advantages to mining companies. These include less governmental participation in the capital base of the companies, lower taxes on companies and accelerated depreciation. Mining royalties paid to the state consist now of a special tax on certain products and a value-added tax.

Before they begin operations, established mining companies sign agreements in which they promise to favour local employees when recruiting for unskilled positions. However, they are rarely able to offer jobs to all young persons seeking work in the area. Moreover, it is not only unemployed Malians who compete for scarce jobs. Hopeful immigrants to Mali are also faced with the same two alternatives: obtain work as a wage earner with gold mining companies or join the informal prospecting sector.

In most cases, established companies have considered small-scale gold miners to be illegal operators, especially when their prospecting has been conducted on

land owned or controlled by these companies. Even when prospecting has occurred outside of the geographical boundaries covered by a company's official lease, companies dislike the informal miners operating anywhere nearby, and their patrol teams continuously warn informal gold miners to keep away from their facilities. In Kéniéba, all the informal gold mining sites are located close to the border villages adjacent to established mine sites. This has tended to generate disputes of various kinds, not only between the companies and artisanal gold miners but often involving local communities as well. For this reason, the Goukoto Gold Mine Company employed a field officer who permanently dealt with informal gold miners. I observed various interventions by this man as he negotiated with small-scale gold prospectors so that they would not search for gold on land owned by the company. Since the Malian government has been unable to reduce unemployment, informal gold miners told me that they wished the government would at least tell the nearby industrial company to leave them alone and not disturb them at their work.

Continuous mass migration towards gold mining areas has been a major reason for rapid and continuous urbanization in these areas. The steady increase of small-scale gold miners has become a source of overpopulation in areas around gold mining sites and has created its own local economic dynamics. Public transportation buses bringing passengers from Bamako to Kéniéba are always full. Housing rental prices have risen continuously, as have the price of food and other consumer goods. This is why small-scale gold miners tend to establish their own towns that follow no particular plan or boundaries, rather than renting houses in Kéniéba city. Gold mining attracts more human resources every day, and this workforce has generated a secondary economy based on sustaining life in this frontier community.

Thousands of small-scale gold miners live and work in Sakolabada. Many others are engaged in a constant shuttle between Sakolabada and other towns and cities of Mali in order to keep these settlements supplied. For the local population, the gold rush – on both an industrial and informal scale – has dramatically increased the price of everyday commodities. Whereas the price of a single chicken was between 2,000 CFA F and 3,000 CFA F (3 to 5 euros) in other cities of Mali, its minimum price in Kéniéba is 5,000 CFA F (7.5 euros). The population explosion has also created social disruption: a proliferation of bars, an increase in alcohol and drug consumption, and a rise in criminal activity. As some local villagers reported, the presence of the gold mine has also led to the cessation of farming activities in some places. The son of the village head of Sakola, who is an elected town counsellor in his own right, told me that gold mining brings taxes from both industrial and informal miners to local town

council authorities, but at the same time artisanal gold mining in his area has contributed to the abandonment of agricultural lands. Local youth who are unable to find a formal job with an established mine often abandon schooling in favour of joining small-scale prospectors. Gold miners themselves in Sakolabada have been forced to give up seasonal farming because they have no money to travel back to their villages during the rainy season.

The gold panning that animates the Sakolabada site has also had a devastating impact on the physical environment. The Falémé River, the customary source of water for the local population, has become extremely polluted. In these unplanned and unregulated settlements, there is little in the way of sanitary infrastructure, as there is little time or money available for it.

On the positive side, those gold washers who manage to make money achieve a sense of personal capability and independence. Even moderate success affords them some standing in their community as well as a sense of dignity in life. Most importantly for many, they gain the ability to help their families back home. In the end, however, for most small-scale prospectors in Sakolabada life in the shadow of the gold mine brings only more of the poverty that residents came to escape. From observing the daily life of inhabitants, it was clear that while the introduction of gold mines has brought urban growth and riches for some, it has created significant human misery for many.

Conclusion

My research indicates that although the mineral resource extraction industry in Mali brings some benefit to Malians, it also produces detrimental effects for many, not only through primary mining activities by foreign companies but also through the secondary spin-off activities that follow in their wake. Abandonment of agriculture, degradation of the environment, poverty traps, health dangers, and the lack of basic services experienced by miners and their children who cannot afford to leave Sakolabada all contribute to food insecurity, human suffering, and a lack of employment in the next generation.

As with many sites in Mali, the informal settlements intended as a temporary means of earning income quickly have become semi-permanent townships that have existed for years and are likely to exist for many more. The unpredictability of artisanal gold mining and the enduring hopes for striking it rich have made it difficult for residents to leave. Residents are not even able to return to their home localities for seasonal farming because they lack the necessary travel money, as

their meagre earnings are usually sufficient only for daily needs. According to research participants, another reason that artisanal mining settlements take on an unexpected permanency is that miners feel they cannot return to their home communities without money to show for their efforts and to help their families. At the same time, miners suffer psychologically from the interminable wait and the inability to return home.

Lured to the gold fields by the hope of a lucky strike, gold washers usually end up mortgaging their own lives along with the futures of their children. The lives of Sakolabada residents are characterized by coping strategies used to manage the permanent state of unpredictability. Living in houses made largely of plastic sheeting with no clean running water; living in the absence of formal educational institutions or health services; and existing without any government representation, these small-scale gold miners have organized their own and their children's lives around mere survival. The only thing keeping them at the gold mine sites is the hope of finding enough gold to improve their social position, to marry, to invest in housing or livestock or to start a business in their home region (cf. Grätz 2009). My analysis indicates that the practices of informal gold mining and gold washing and the establishment of precarious gold towns will continue as long as informal gold miners perceive there are opportunities to earn money in this way.

Recommendations

Informal small-scale gold mining should be organized through regulations and supported by law. In order to avoid the haphazard exploitation of lands and environment, gold mining zones should be established and delimited for artisanal mining. This could be done by the local town council authorities in accordance with customary village authorities. After the creation of such a gold mining zone, it would be important to conduct a census of the gold mining site population, noting the occupation of each resident on the site, to allow district or regional authorities to monitor the site in terms of security.

A regulatory system of *comptoir* (from the French *comptoir d'achat*, or special trade office) could be created in which all the gold produced at the informal gold mining site would be bought and sold in one place, with several buyers as in a marketplace. This system is not currently in place in informal gold mines in Mali, but such a system would make it forbidden to sell or buy gold in through other channels, which would be considered smuggling. Local young men could be hired as *comptoir* officers to monitor how much gold is produced. A small

share of the profits from the sale of the gold would go to pay the salaries of the *comptoir* officers. A minor tax would also be levied on the sale of gold through the *comptoir* system, which could be divided three ways: 60 per cent could go to the hosting village that would be responsible for investing in the infrastructure (school, medical facilities, clean water) of the gold mining settlement; 20 per cent could go to the commune or district (in this case Sakola, to which miners from Sakolabada perceive themselves as belonging), and the remaining 20 per cent to the region. These latter portions would be reinvested to ensure the functioning of the *comptoir* system, to regulate the activities of gold miners for their benefit, to protect the gold miners in terms of security, and to protect and restore the natural environment of the informal gold mining zone before and after it has been abandoned by miners, if the gold is depleted.

Timely investment in infrastructure and environmental rehabilitation is vital because regardless of the future accessibility of gold on this site, the settlement of Sakolabada will endure. Some of its residents have links to surrounding villages, and others do not have anywhere else to go. The Malian government could also organize the supervision of work conditions and provide basic materials to allow gold miners to make a greater profit since they are already organized into cooperatives. This would provide more security to miners and protect against massive environmental destruction. Additionally, the government could help informal gold miners to visit their home villages during the farming season by providing a means of transportation. Most gold prospectors would just need money for transportation during the raining season from July to October. This would encourage gold miners to engage in farming during that period.

Government officials in Mali have consistently ignored the reality of small-scale gold mining being a job like any other. Restricting these activities is not a solution. What small-scale gold miners need is alternative income-generating opportunities so that artisanal gold mining would become a less attractive option for the poor.

Notes

- 1 Personal communication from a member of the Chamber of Mines and Industry of Mali, 2017.
- 2 In general, the benefits from mining operations to state revenues are substantial. The benefits can also be significant for certain local communities living close to the mining sites (Belem 2009: 130).

- 3 From the report of the National Direction of Statistic and Informatics (DNSI 2014) Economic statistics of Mali, Bamako.
- 4 This interview is featured in the ethnographic film made from this research entitled: *Gold fever in Sakolabada*, Sidylamine Bagayoko, 2016. <https://youtu.be/nLCAgPBc5pw>
- 5 The majority of the local population belongs to the Khasonké ethnic group, which is a sub-group of the Mandingo population. At the mining site, they speak Bambara or Mandingo as their main lingua franca.
- 6 Katja Werthmann observed a similar phenomenon with small-scale gold mining villages in Burkina Faso (2000: 93).
- 7 All names have been changed to protect the anonymity of research participants.
- 8 Video *Gold Fever in Sakolabada*, Sidylamine Bagayoko, 2016. <https://youtu.be/nLCAgPBc5pw>
- 9 *Gold Fever in Sakolabada*, Sidylamine Bagayoko, 2016. <https://youtu.be/nLCAgPBc5pw>

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Part Two

Goods, services, needs:
actors in the market

Migratory Youth Porters and Metal Scrap Dealers in Accra

Esther Yeboah Danso-Wiredu and Adjoa Afriyie Poku

Introduction

Approximately 70 per cent of people in Sub-Saharan Africa find their jobs, livelihoods, and accommodation in the informal sector, which is characterized by a weaker infrastructure development and is occupied by people with little or no formal education or skills (Okafor 2011; Adams, de Silva, and Razmara 2013). The concentration of African youth in informal sector jobs has been widely discussed in the research literature, with various perspectives taken. Some studies propose that informal jobs should be socially accepted and gradually linked to the formal labour jobs (Meagher 2016 Tokman, 2007; Osei-Boateng and Ampratwum, 2011; Bangasser, 2000).

Scholars such as Leonard (2000) and Meagher et al, (2016), however, caution against glorifying informal sector jobs in Africa, especially in cases where Sub-Saharan African youth work in low-quality jobs just to survive. These jobs keep a large number of the youth engaged but do not provide opportunities for upward mobility, self-fulfilment, or even achieving economic security.

Ghana's urban population has increased from 7.8 per cent of the country's population in 1921 to 50.9 per cent in 2010. Since 2008, the number of people living in urban areas has exceeded the number living in rural areas (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). This growth is explained by both birth rates in the city as well as rural-urban migration. Rural-urban migration is a significant demographic feature in Ghana, especially among the youth who move to urban centres in search of 'white collar' and other jobs that are non-existent in the rural areas (Van Der Geest 2011; Cassiman 2008, 2010; Opare 2003).

Migration of large numbers of Ghanaian youth from northern to southern parts of the country has been ongoing for several decades (Hart 1973; Anarfi et al. 2003; Langevang and Gough 2009; Kwankye et al. 2009; Kwankye et al. 2007; Opare 2003). The reasons for this migration are environmental, economic, and historical. Northern parts of the country suffer from less rainfall than other parts of the country, a lack of employment and the unreliability of year-round agriculture, and a relatively large number of ethnic conflicts (Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf 2008; Abdul-Korah 2007; Songsore and Denkabe 1995; Hashim 2007). While migration of youth from northern to southern Ghana is not a recent phenomenon, what is new is the wave of unmarried young women joining this migration rather than being invited by husbands already settled in the south, as was formerly the case (Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf 2008). This new trend is not only limited to Ghana but is also found in many parts of Africa (Adepoju 2004). This is because women now see themselves as also being providers in the home and not only recipients of what men bring home.

Most migratory youth arrive in cities illiterate and unskilled, and cannot find jobs in the formal sector. They remain poor, unwanted by urban society, and have no money to rent homes, build houses, or start meaningful businesses. The only assets they bring with them are individual abilities they can use to work in the informal sector. Yet for migrant youths, the advantage of being young together with knowledge of how to manoeuvre through urban life are usually sufficient to sustain them. In their eagerness to change their circumstances and improve the living standards of their families back in the north, these young migrants also remake the spaces within Accra. Our study focuses on the resilience of these young women and men who struggle their way into arduous and difficult jobs to survive in the city.

This study uses two case studies of occupations: one female-dominated and the other male-dominated. These urban jobs are largely seen as entry-level jobs by the youth who are involved in them. The work is informal, inheres many risks and barely provides subsistence. The youth in question usually come from one of the less-developed five northern regions in the country. Women working in the first occupation studied here are head porters (*kayayei*), and in the second occupation men work as metal scrap dealers.

The name *kaya* means 'load' in the Hausa language. The term *kaya* was first coined for young men in the portaging business. *Kayayei* is a plural term used for female porters; it is a combination of the Hausa and Ga words *kaya* and *yeyi*, a Ga' word for women. The *kayayei* and the metal scrap jobs represent entry-level work in Accra and other Ghanaian cities. Although portaging has been a job

reserved for healthy young men in Ghana (Yeboah 2008), young women moving from the north to the south have feminized this otherwise masculine job (see also Yeboah 2008; Opare 2003). The only difference between the young female porters and their male counterparts is that the women only carry load on their heads whereas the men sometimes also use simple trucks to aid them in carrying the loads. It is still common to find men with pushcarts working side-by-side with the *kayayei* in most markets in Accra and Kumasi. Young women, however, have noticed that human porters on foot can easily manoeuvre through human and vehicular congestion to transport goods in the central business districts of the major cities where even simple conveyances for carrying loads have a harder time (Agarwal et al. 1997; Yeboah 2008).

Although there have been separate studies conducted on both the *kayayei* and the metal scrap dealers, this study combines the two in order to compare two typical 'starting' jobs in the city for young male and female migrants. The chapter asks: *how do migrants of both genders in the occupations studied here develop survival strategies in the city despite the structural constraints that frustrate them?* We first discuss the right to the city in relation to the concept of the gendered division of labour. In so doing, we deviate from the literature in which occupational gender segregation is portrayed as against women's interests. We use empirical data to examine both occupations as arduous ones that unskilled young men and women usually must enter before their eventual integration into the urban life. In many cases, they continue to do this work, hoping to save for their eventual return to their hometowns.

Cities are continually made and remade by the people who live in them, with different actors playing different roles in this remaking (Simone 2002; Harvey 2003). In Sub-Saharan Africa, it is recognized that cities are defined by two dimensions (Maganga 2002; Bratton 2007): the informal sector regulated by locally designed rules, and the formal sector, which is largely regulated by the formal laws of the country as well as international policy. In the view of many Ghanaians, the formal sector includes places in which infrastructure is fully developed and improved housing structures are found. Both of these dimensions have meaningful roles to play in shaping the city (Midheme 2013; Chen 2005). Actors in both sectors believe they are part of the urban space and each acknowledges the existence of the other, at times integrated, but mostly separated and parallel to each other (Overa 2007).

According to Beller (1982), there are two explanatory paradigms for why men and women enter non-traditional occupations: the discrimination perspective and the human capital perspective. From the discrimination

perspective, women are discriminated against by employers in their hiring processes in an effort to deter them from obtaining jobs (Beller 1982). The human capital approach stresses the occupational choices made by both men and women to enter certain jobs depending on their training, knowledge and what they are likely to gain from the job in question (Barron, Black, and Loewenstein 1993; Beller 1982). In the present study, the entry of the youth into menial jobs does not occur on a gender basis, but rather depends on factors such as minimal or no training in skills, no formal education for alternative jobs, and easy entrance with virtually no entry capital required. The study therefore agrees with the human capital explanation that the female youth in question struggle to obtain better jobs because of their low skills, not primarily because of gender discrimination in the labour market.

Research setting

Our chapter focuses on Old Fadama, the largest squatter settlement in Accra. It is based on a four-year study conducted by the first author in four low-income communities from 2012 to 2016. Old Fadama was selected because it is the largest squatter slum community in Ghana, following the UN-Habitat (2010) definition of 'slum'. It is also the only slum community over which there has been international and national outcry in recent times because of government attempts to demolish it. The lead author spent six intensive months in the community, interviewing a range of community leaders and residents, including the *kayayei* and metal scrap dealers. Sixty semi-structured interviews were conducted regarding the livelihoods of interview participants.

Nearly all news regarding Old Fadama in the media portrays the community as dangerous and filthy; the community is reported to be home to criminals and miscreants. To enter such a community for the study was initially problematic. The lead researcher was, however, introduced to an NGO – People's Dialogue on Human Settlements – which works within poor communities in Ghana. The community-based section of People's Dialogue (henceforth PD) is the Ghana Federation of the Urban Poor (GHAFUP). The contact person in Old Fadama was one of the GHAFUP leaders who worked with researchers in the community and therefore also professionally gave information about Old Fadama. With his assistance, many stakeholders and residents were interviewed in Old Fadama. A research assistant who lived outside the community but could speak most of the languages in the community was also employed to help in the

interview participants' selection process to reduce biases that might arise from a community leader selecting all the respondents. The community members gradually opened up to the researchers during the six months' data collection period. The people interviewed in Old Fadama included ordinary residents, ethnic chiefs, and organizational and community leaders. The lead author made numerous visits to the Agbogbloshie market where she could utilize the services of the *kayayei* who were interview participants in Old Fadama. One focus group discussion was organized among the community leaders. Since many respondents had never attended school, any of the Ghanaian languages intelligible to such participants were used. A few of the interviews in Old Fadama were done in the Akan language. The research assistant could speak some of the languages and therefore conducted some of the interviews in those languages. The lead author led most of the interviews except the ones conducted by the research assistant. We² also realized during the data collection process that our experience of Old Fadama was not the same as that reported by the media (as a community is unsafe for strangers to visit). Most parts of the community were, in fact, safe for researchers to work in. The respondents and the community leaders we met during the study gladly opened up to us. The lead author undertakes an annual field trip with her students to the community, and having been in the community from 2012 to 2020, has enriched our understanding of life among slum dwellers. Once we made our purpose known to them and stuck to it, we were safe working in the community. As researchers, we have tried as much as possible to behave like community members during our visits. We dress simply and behave in a friendly manner to them as much as possible. We did not ask questions relating to deficiencies in the physical environment and rather asked questions about coping mechanisms. The social difficulties in the community were identified through deep observations and not by asking the respondents directly about them.

All participants were selected with the help of community leaders and through the researcher's social connections. Information asked from interview participants included their reasons for moving to Accra, their strategies, and their future career plans. Of the thirty *kayayei* who participated in this research, the youngest was 13 years of age and the oldest was 65 (details shown in Table 4.1). Most respondents were relatively young and primarily from rural areas: almost two-thirds of those interviewed were under 30, and five out of six came from the then three northern regions of the country: Northern, Upper East and Upper West (Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf 2008; Rockson et al. 2013). All the *kayayei* interviewed in this study were female and all the metal scrap dealers

Table 4.1 Demographic details of interview participants

Respondents' Details	Category	Kayayei (f)	Metal Scrap Dealers (m)	Total
Age group	<20	9	3	12
	21–30	19	16	35
	31–40	1	9	10
	41+	1	2	3
Marital status	Single	9	12	21
	Married	12	16	28
	Separated	4	—	4
	Divorced	4	2	6
	Widow	1	—	1
Level of education	No education	23	8	31
	Primary	3	11	14
	Junior/Middle	2	8	10
	Secondary/vocational	2	3	5

were male. There are however, male porters found in some markets in Ghana. There are also a few women who are engaged in the metal scrap business. Some of them have secondary/vocational education and some only primary education. These levels of education did not, however, enhance their chances of getting better jobs in the city, although those with secondary education were seen as more enlightened and they were usually community leaders in Old Fadama.

Old Fadama

Old Fadama occupies 31.3 hectares of land along the Odaw River and the Korle Lagoon (Farouk and Owusu 2012). The residents of Old Fadama are mostly migrant squatters from the five northernmost regions of Ghana. The community attracts new migrants mainly because of low rents, despite threats of constant eviction by the state due to the area's unsanitary conditions and reputation as a refuge for criminals. A census of the population in 2007 by community leaders put the population at 79,684, giving a population density of 2424.18 persons per hectare (Peoples Dialogue 2010).

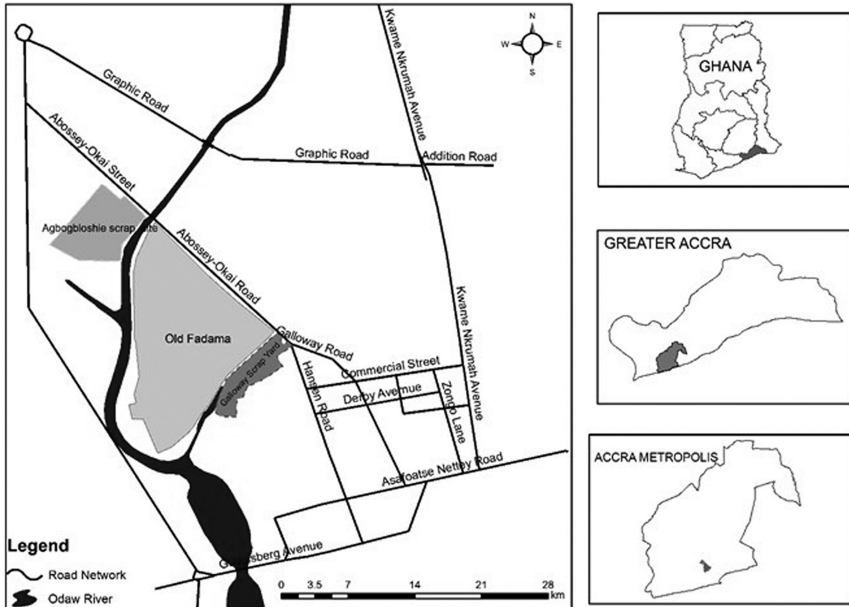


Figure 4.1 Location of Old Fadama in relation to nearby communities and Greater Accra. Map data: OpenStreetMap, sketched by authors, November, 2015.

Most *kayayei* and metal scrap dealers within the central Accra area live in Old Fadama so they can easily commute to work on foot. Old Fadama is characterized by an unsanitary environment with insufficient drainage. The lagoon that surrounds the community is filled with solid waste, mostly made up of garbage produce at the market. Most of the structures in the community are in a deplorable state, and the public spaces are congested with people (Grant 2006; Ofosu-Kusi and Danso-Wiredu 2014). In addition, there are frequent outbreaks of fire in the community, mainly due to illegal electrical connections in wooden structures. The popularity of the area is explained by its proximity to Agbogbloshie, which houses one of the largest markets in the city, where most of the *kayayei* work. This and other markets make it easy for residents of Old Fadama to find jobs.

The *Kayayei* business

A survey conducted in 2005 of young migrants in Kumasi and Accra indicated strong gender segregation in the labour market for young people, most of whom had migrated from the north (Huijsmans 2012). The survey suggested that

young women were predominantly concentrated in the *kayayei* business whereas young men were found working in diverse areas throughout the informal sector (Huijsmans 2012).

Since the 1970s, portaging has been an occupation taken up by some male migrants from northern Ghana coming to the south (Oberhauser and Yeboah 2011). The men either carry loads on their heads or use simple equipment like flat-bed carts or trolleys to carry loads over long distances (Oberhauser and Yeboah 2011). Although male porters are still found in major market places, female porters have increased in number since 1990s (Opare 2003; Agarwal et al. 1997; Yeboah 2008). There has been an organized association for *kayayei* since 1999. According to the association's director, a survey conducted in 2009 put the number of *kayayei* in Accra at 158,000. In Accra and Kumasi in particular, the *kayayei* usually migrate to areas along ethnic lines. The ages of female porters living in Old Fadama range from 7 to 65 years, according to the director.

The *kayayei* business provides an income niche for young women who can carry their trays laden with goods on their heads and thus reach their customers with relative ease. Twenty-three out of the thirty *kayayei* interviewed had no formal education; according to our interview participants, no education or formal skills are needed to enter the business. Abiba,³ 21 years of age, declared, 'I personally do not have any interest in education and my parents did not compel me to go to school either. Besides, my father said I am his only female child so I should forget about education while the boys go to school.'

Abiba mentioned that her parents gave less consideration to her education because she was female. Lack of language skills is not a barrier for the *kayayei*. Most of them cannot speak any of the languages spoken at the markets, yet they are still able to ply their trade. The only tool needed for *kayayei* work is a head pan. These pans can be obtained free from relatives and friends, or bought on credit. According to one of the *kayayei* youth leaders, girls and women can bring their head pans with them to the cities, buy them, or obtain them from friends through reciprocity.

Some *kayayei* are married, and most of these married women are in polygamous marriages. Those we interviewed were either separated from their husbands or still married but visited their husbands only occasionally. It was common to see the *kayayei* with their children on their backs while working as porters, adding to the weight of the goods they carried. Of the thirty *kayayei* interviewed, seven of them lived with their children at the time of the interviews.

To become one of the *kayayei*, women depended on friends and relatives whom they already knew, or they quickly developed friendships with other

kayayei once they moved to the city. Below, Ramatu explains her accommodation arrangements and why she lived in Old Fadama:

My mum sent me to my aunt, also a female porter in Old Fadama. I am here to work, raise money and buy cooking utensils and other stuff for women and then return to the North to marry. I have been in Old Fadama for two years. When I arrived, my aunt talked to her other roommates who allowed me to join the other *kayayei* [and live with them] in the room. I share a room with twelve other people, all *kayayei*. Each person pays GH¢2⁴ [i.e. 2 Ghanaian cedi] per week for the room.

(Ramatu, 17 years)

Ramatus's account is similar to numerous stories we heard from the *kayayei*. Her story shows that migration by young women was accepted by their birth families as a means of improving family fortunes. Young migrants used as little money as possible so they could send money home to their families regularly in addition to saving money for themselves, as described by one of them:

I spend about GH¢3.00 daily on food. I eat three times daily and spend GH¢1.00 per meal. I do not cook, but buy food from the community food vendors. I save my money with my auntie, who also saves it in our room. Usually whenever the farming season is approaching, my mum in Tolon asks for money and I send her GH¢80–100.00 to support her farm work.

(Zinabu, 19 years)

Most *kayayei* believed that their job was temporary, and would continue only until they had earned enough money to find permanent jobs considered more acceptable for women or before they could return to the north to marry or start a business (Agarwal et al. 1997). Being a female porter has been seen as a short-term sacrifice, a price to pay for the long-term gain of a better occupation and/or money accumulated before entering into marriage (ibid.). Money is usually saved to buy cooking utensils and other household items for the woman's future marital home, as seen from the quote below:

I am also buying my kitchen utensils gradually. Anytime I visit home, I buy some utensils and send them home. These are the utensils I will take to my husband's house when I marry. I am very happy here in Old Fadama despite the problem of theft. I have not finished buying the kitchen utensils yet. When I am done with them, I will buy some clothes and then return home.

(Amina, 16 years)

Like Amina, most participants stressed the temporary nature of their present occupation. Even those who did not wish to return to their hometown planned to change their work in future.

For the *kayayei*, staying in one place was not necessary for their work. They roamed the city's open markets, using public spaces to seek customers. They worked from 3 am until 6 pm or later, since open-air markets in the city remain open until late at night. All the *kayayei* interviewed were unhappy about the challenges associated with their job and the petty crimes that occurred within the community. The director of the association confirmed that the female *kayayei* had reason to fear, as there were indications that their work was not always safe. According to the director, whenever a theft occurs at the market, the *kayayei* are the first to be suspected and arrested: 'people perceive them as thieves, but most of them are not thieves, they are just here to find money to survive,' he said. The *kayayei* who had nowhere else to sleep but on the street also faced problems of rape by male strangers. Even when rapists were caught, we were told that the police later released them without making formal charges. Many rape cases of female *kayayei* also went unreported, according to the director.

The metal scrap business

The metal scrap business was another important business located close to Old Fadama, and it was highly male-dominated. A survey conducted by Rockson et al. (2013) showed that men comprised about 90 per cent of workers in the business, whereas Oteng-Ababio (2012) put the percentage of men involved in the scrap business at 86 per cent. All the participants in this study were male. The scrap metal business in Accra mainly employed young men from northern Ghana and a few from neighbouring countries such as Nigeria and Burkina Faso. Most of these men lived inside Old Fadama.

Little or no financial capital was required to participate in the scrap metal business, and neither formal education nor special skills or training were needed. Even with no prior knowledge of any of the languages spoken in Accra it was possible to work in the business. The chairman of the metal scrap dealers' association explained in an interview that anyone who had money could buy and sell scraps. Those without start-up capital could obtain help from friends or families in order to begin. Once young men found themselves in Old Fadama, they became easily acquainted with urban life just as the *kayayei* did.

The young men scavenged for recyclable elements from discarded metals and electrical gadgets from homes, shops, and landfills. They manually dismantled the electrical gadgets and discarded metals using fire to search for metals like iron, copper, and silver (see also Oteng-Ababio 2012). According to the chairman of the

scrap dealers' association, the metals were sold to large industrial steel companies in the city of Tema, Ghana. The scrap business was a profitable venture for at least the leaders who bought the scraps from the scavengers. Some of them started out as mere scavenger boys and quickly became masters who employed other boys and young men in scavenging, while others moved into other businesses in the city or returned home with their savings to start new businesses.

Despite the health hazards associated with inhaling toxic substances from burning metals, many young men found the scrap business to be the only available job when they first arrived in Old Fadama. As in the case of the *kayayei*, the scrap metal business provided easy entry for new migrants as described by an interview participant:

I got to know about Old Fadama from a brother who had come to Accra and was working in the scrap business. When I arrived in Accra, I met a fellow northerner who is also from Gusheigu. We became friends and he guided me to start life here. I used to work for him, he was my employer until he left the job and returned home to Gusheigu.

(Mamadu, 23 years)

Some young men searched for scraps, while others sold scraps on behalf of employers who bought the scraps, as explained below:

My job is to sit in front of my boss' shop weighing the scraps before they are burnt for good metals. At first, I was paid GH¢5 by my friend. I have a new employer now but I still do the same job and he pays me GH¢12 daily. I prefer working as an assistant in the shop to roaming the town to collect scraps. The boys who roam the city sometimes get no scraps and at times they get more than expected. Their money therefore fluctuates in that sense, but in my case, I am here every day, whether scraps are brought here or not, I get my GH¢12. So, I am happy with this. I have a single room here in Old Fadama. I bought it with the proceeds from my business here.

(Amin, 26 years)

Buyers of various metal scrap worked in the scrapyards; some bought computer parts, others bought refrigerator parts and others aluminium. There was an association responsible for the scrap business that had approximately 4,500 members in Accra, according to its chairman. Members paid taxes to the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) and also to the national youth authority for using the scrapyards. Metal scrap dealers needed space in the scrapyards to sort the metals and burn the unwanted materials. The association's members were concerned about threats made by the state to evict them, and the association

chairman told us that the association was contesting the state's intention to ban the scrap business. The association argued that since the state had not given them jobs, it had no right to ban them from using the scrapyards. According to the chairman, the reason for evicting the metal scrap dealers was because they were polluting the nearby lagoon. However, the chairman argued that the general public also dumped refuse and other waste into the lagoon, thus there was no justification for targeting only scrap dealers.

Strategies employed by the *kayayei* and scrap dealers to survive urban life

In the views of most policymakers and the media, Old Fadama and its people were perceived to be marginalized from urban life. However, our interview participants made it clear that once the youth arrived in the city, they developed strategies to survive and use urban spaces. These strategies integrated them efficiently into the everyday urban economy. What emerged from our discussion was that the strategies adopted by the youth represented alternatives to common practices within the city and in most cases, these adaptive strategies were gendered.

Migrating youth came to Accra largely in search of jobs that were not readily available in their places of origin. According to Amina, she travelled from Subinso⁵ to Accra because of lack of employment in Subinso. She had her child and siblings to take care of, so she could not remain unemployed. She travelled to Accra to work as a female porter in order to earn money.

Like Ramatu, Maamudu, and Amina, most *kayayei* and scrap dealers indicated that they had moved to Old Fadama in search of jobs or money. Some migrants moved there because they had heard from returnees that Old Fadama was a squatter community that embraced migrants. Others moved to the community at the invitation of their friends or relatives. Even those who arrived in Accra uninvited by relatives depended on help from friends and especially relatives from the same ethnic group once they were in Old Fadama. Job acquisition was important because migrants' foremost need was to secure jobs once they were in the cities. Interview participants of both genders told similar stories of how they initially became acquainted with the community by depending on relatives to find jobs. Friendship also played an important role in helping women especially to find jobs. On the other hand, more than a third of male metal scrap dealers said that they had managed to penetrate the job market on their own. Our data showed a gender differentiation in how the youth came to Old Fadama: more men indicated that they

came through friendship networks, whereas more women said they had ended up in the community through relatives. This follows the usual practice in Ghana where parents seek to protect their female children because women are believed to be the weaker sex, and because rape was reported to be a real threat in communities such as Old Fadama. Parents therefore tried to ensure that their daughters would be in good hands by arranging their stay with family members before they allowed them to migrate. If a girl were raped or became pregnant from consensual sexual relations, it would be difficult for her to marry. Women were thus more at risk in the city than were men, but at the same time they had much to gain by moving to the cities.

The long-term aim of most interviewed metal scrap dealers was to obtain more permanent and less harmful jobs in the city other than the metal scraps jobs. Some also believed they could easily earn a lot of money from the metal scraps within a short time period and return to their hometowns. According to Maamudu, he planned to leave Old Fadama at some point in time, because Old Fadama was not his home. As soon as he earned enough money to run a business in his hometown, he would leave Old Fadama for good. Likewise, most of the *kayayei* too saw their work as temporary. One local female food vendor told us that she had started her vending business using the proceeds of her portaging business. As a female porter in Old Fadama, she had saved money and then switched to selling *fufu*, a Ghanaian food made from cassava and plantain. Most *kayayei* have high hopes that they will be in the *kayayei* business for a short time and eventually be able to move into safer and less tiring jobs such as trading and entrepreneurship perceived as more feminine.

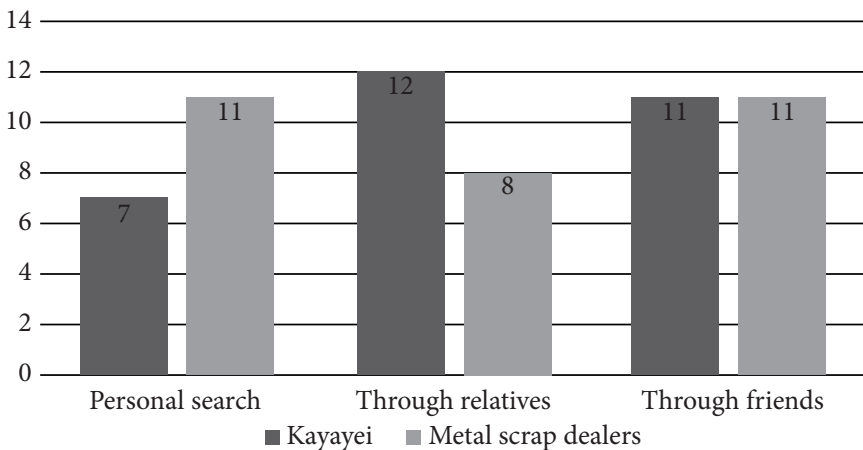


Figure 4.2 Responses to the question: *How did participants secure their jobs?*

Housing

Old Fadama offered alternative forms of rent payments to the urban poor. Unlike rent demanded one or two years in advance by landlords in other parts of the city, rent was paid on a weekly basis in Old Fadama. Group-room renting was not common in other parts of the city, but it could easily be done in Old Fadama. Houses in Old Fadama were called structures; they were mostly single rooms with sizes ranging from 10 ft × 10 ft to 14 ft × 14 ft (also Ofosu-Kusi and Danso-Wiredu 2014). Structures were built together with no spaces between them. They were mainly built using wood, a few cement blocks, and aluminium roofing. Apart from the smaller sizes of the structures, some of the roofs leaked. There was also congestion in the rooms because of the number of people living in them.

Most city dwellers spent as much as a third of their income on accommodation. The youth we interviewed, by contrast, rented rooms in groups, paying between GH¢2 and GH¢3 a week. As Sahala pointed out, 'I live in a group room, which I share with seven other people. Each person pays GH¢2.5 a week. My roommates are from different parts of the [five] northern regions.' *Kayayei* women lived in group rooms and were more likely to reside with their family members than male metal scrap dealers were, as depicted in Figure 4.3. This was because most of the scrap dealers preferred to cohabit with their girlfriends as soon as they could afford to pay the rent. Most *kayayei*, by contrast, were already married to husbands in the north, so they preferred to live in group rooms. Those who stayed in the community for some time and had families there shared structures with their families or spouses. Several newly arriving migrants obtained free temporary accommodation from friends and families. Among scrap dealers it was also common to find newly arrived migrants sleeping in the scrapyards. Most *kayayei* avoided sleeping outside and alone for fear of being raped.

Since the dwelling spaces were very small, they were only used as places to sleep. The young people therefore depended on communal household facilities such as water, bathrooms, and toilets, which were paid for every time the facility was used. Food could be bought cheaply from numerous local food vendors (see also Lappi, this volume).

Despite the advantages of Old Fadama for young migrants, the state and media have campaigned for the demolition of the community to pave way for a cleaner and more attractive city centre. In their efforts to justify evictions in Old Fadama, the state and the media do not mention the city's failure to provide housing for the poor, but instead have portrayed Old Fadama to the public as a place unfit for human habitation. Threats of eviction from the state put residents in perpetual

fear of losing their accommodation and ultimately, their livelihoods. As one of the ethnic chiefs⁶ we interviewed pointed out, most people in Old Fadama conduct micro-businesses to survive. He explained that migrants have flocked to the community because it is the only place where they can find low-cost housing:

People think we are criminals. People here are not thieves. We don't sleep on rubbish either. We do our own businesses to survive. We are responsible people like everyone else, I pay my children's and my nephew's school fees like responsible people do. Everyone is here just to find something to eat. If the *kayayei*, for instance, are forced back home, how could the market work? It is only here that people find their cheap housing, which is why people have flocked here.

(Naa-Seidu, 32 years)

Our study indicated that both the *kayayei* and metal scrap dealers earned enough income to sustain themselves and, more importantly, to send remittances to their families. Ayishatu told us that the work of a *kayayei* is difficult, but she earns enough money to look after herself and sends roughly GH¢40 per month to her mother in the north, who cares for Ayishatu's two children. Table 4.2 shows the estimated income of participants:

Table 4.2 Estimated income of participants

Finances GH¢ (Daily)	<i>Kayayei</i>	Metal Scrap Dealers
<15	6	4
20–25	18	10
26–30	5	1
31+	1	3

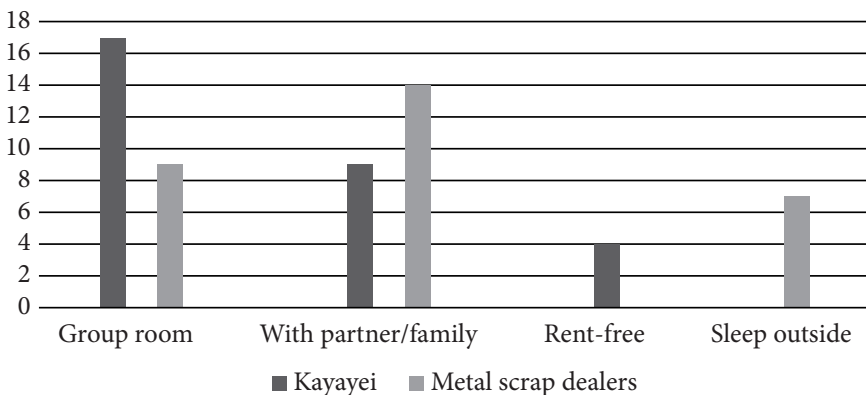


Figure 4.3 Responses to the question: *Where did you find accommodation?*

Savings and investments

Some of the interview participants gave us information on their daily expenditures, as narrated below by a participant:

My daily income is on average GH¢15. The maximum income I make in a day is about GH¢20. Roughly, my daily expenditure on food is about GH¢3.50. I spend GH¢3 daily on my child's education. In a month if I lump the cost of sending goods via the bus to my hometown it will exceed GH¢50.

(Amina, *kayayei*, 21 years)

Since their expenses are moderate, *kayayei* and metal scrap jobs enable the youth to save money. They worked at saving as much money as possible, either to return to their hometowns or to change jobs in Old Fadama. The amounts saved differed, but it was common to save with two different informal savings mechanisms. GH¢2 daily were generally saved for *susu*, an individual form of saving in which financial intermediaries collected savings deposits from participants for an agreed period of time and kept them securely for a small fee, equivalent to one day's deposit. *Susu* also provided limited access to microcredit. Between five and ten GH¢ were saved weekly for rotational savings groups (known as 'merry-go-rounds' in much of Africa), in which a group of people agreed to each contribute an amount of money into a joint saving pool, the total of which was paid out on a rotational basis to each member in turn. *Susu* and rotational savings operated on trust. The collectors/treasurers of money for both types of groups were mostly known to the residents, sometimes up to a third generation of families. In a migrant community like Old Fadama, linkage to a common place of origin was important for residents in tracing the roots of people with whom they saved money. This made it difficult to cheat the system or steal other members' money. Exceptions occurred in which people absconded with the money collected, but this carried consequences both spiritual (an invocation of curses) and social (the thief was regarded as an outcast among community members). Rotational or collective savings in common was among women's associations, especially the market women. Other structured means of saving money included room savings and saving in a bank. Men were more likely to save in banks than the women. It was common for residents to participate in multiple forms of savings as Musa, a scrap dealer, explained:

My average income per day is GH¢18, I spend GH¢3 on food in the morning and then GH¢2 for lunch, then GH¢2 for dinner. I save my money in my room [in that case, the person saves in a money box or below his/her pillow]. I also belong to a collective savings group. We are twelve people in the group, we save GH¢5 daily. Because I cannot go to the banks on daily basis, I save GH¢5 with the group and at the end of the month, I take the money to the bank.

(Musa-Scrap dealer, 25 years)

Numerous local economic, religious, and ethnic associations existed in Old Fadama. Some organizations attached saving or welfare schemes to their core mandates, which helped ease their members' financial burdens. Some residents therefore joined such associations and made welfare contributions so they could receive money in times of financial need. Although in most parts of the country, welfare associations are organized along gender lines, the associations in Old Fadama were organized more often along ethnic lines and therefore included both men and women.

Conclusions: adjusting to the city by gender

The migrant youth studied here adjusted to the city with ease despite problems of eviction threats, congestion, and deprivation. The cases examined in this chapter show that the gendered nature of occupations in society can be altered and adjusted by people to suit their circumstances when necessary. When there are no jobs, people create their own to survive, and the *kayayei* have altered the portaging business in Ghana to better adapt and survive in the city.

How did the *kayayei* and metal scrap occupations help young migrants adjust to urban life in the city? Both occupations created new income-earning niches for unskilled youth, who have squeezed value out of recycling waste by scavenging for metals or made the job of carrying goods more efficient by using headpans instead of the handcarts used by men. Once the youth moved to the city, they quickly looked for ways to navigate the complex city environment. Life was made easier by the fact that most people followed others of the same ethnic group to the city, bringing with them the reciprocal benefits inherent in intra-ethnic and intra-linguistic relationships. Their occupations also created communities of persons that transformed urban practices in directions necessary for their survival. Paying rent on a weekly basis was not possible in most parts of the city, but in Old Fadama this was possible because the *kayayei*, the scrap dealers,

and many migrants in the community had transformed the prevailing norm of paying rent two years in advance into a practice (paying rent week by week) that they could afford. Also, living in group rooms has not been common in Ghana, but was a recent practice that has been adopted, especially by the *kayayei* and some scrap dealers in order to pay as low rent as possible despite the lack of convenience and privacy. Similarly, local showers, shared toilets, and a common place for washing and drying clothes were not the norm in most parts of the city, but were used in Old Fadama by those interviewed (Danso-Wiredu 2018; Yajalin 2017; Paller 2014).

In the view of most NGOs and urban development agencies, residents' well-being in the city depends on affordable decent housing in a sanitary environment with good infrastructure and easy transportation access (De Souza 2010). As Harvey (2003) points out, however, the right to the city is not only the right to access what already exists there but also the right for residents to transform the city as they desire.

There were gendered differences in the strategies used by the youth to survive urban life. Although according to interviews, women were not discriminated against in the informal labour market on the basis of their gender; their patterns of migration and residence reflected the different risks they faced in the city. The majority of women who took part in the study had been invited by their families to the city, whereas the majority of men were invited by their friends. Similarly, more women reported having obtained their jobs through family links whereas men more frequently obtained their jobs through friends. Although all the youth participated in *susu*, more women also participated in rotational savings whereas the men preferred to also save at the bank. Women tended to live in group rooms or reside with their family members while men preferred to live alone or with their partners, and newly arrived men sometimes slept on the street. Women did not sleep on the street because of the risk of assault. It was reported that women were regularly raped within the community. Although both young men and women found ways to adapt to life in the city, women faced many more gender-based risks.

In the eyes of the Ghanaian public and the state, Old Fadama was seen as not fit for human habitation, but for the youth it was a place where they could 'get by' in a context of laborious work, local theft, environmental health hazards, crowded living conditions, and threats of evictions by the state. *Kayayei* and metal scrap jobs were manually demanding and the scrap business was additionally hazardous to workers' health because of the smoke and harmful chemicals released in the burning of scraps. Young women and men involved in these jobs were like many other young people in Ghana who were victims of the informal sector's lack of regulation (Obeng-Odoom 2011; Slavnic 2010).

Yet those interviewed expressed satisfaction with their livelihoods in the city because they received enough money to look after themselves and send remittances to their families back home. Their families and others who needed their remittances in order to survive in the villages were reported to look up to these young men and women.

In the view of policymakers and city planners, portaging and working with metal scrap were menial jobs not fit for the youth. The young people interviewed in this study acknowledged that their work was not the ideal job they would have wished for, and that their ultimate aim was to leave these occupations as soon as they could afford to do so. Yet from their perspectives, this work allowed them to be fully integrated into urban life and commerce, utilizing urban spaces in pursuit of livelihoods and goals.

Notes

- 1 A language spoken in Ghana.
- 2 The lead author gathered the data with two research assistants: Louis Nagbija and Samuel Gyan. Nagbija also sometimes acted as an interpreter for the participants who could speak neither English nor Twi languages.
- 3 All names have been changed to protect the identity of the interviewees.
- 4 The average exchange rate was GH¢1 to 0.35 USD in 2013.
- 5 A town in Wenchi Municipality in the Brong Ahafo Region with a population of over 3,400 according to the country's 2010 Population and Housing Census (Ghana Statistical Service 2012).
- 6 Ethnic chiefs are common in Old Fadama. They are informal representatives of traditional chiefs in migrant communities. They head their ethnic groups and usually perform the role of traditional chiefs in the latter's absence. There were sixteen such chiefs in Old Fadama at the time of the interviews. Those we interviewed said they were made chiefs of their respective ethnic groups because they were long-time residents of Old Fadama. They were trusted community members, respected for having lived dignified lives.

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Women's Neighbourhood Vending as a Survival Strategy in Dar es Salaam

Tiina-Riitta Lappi

Introduction

Halima, a 58-year-old woman, was sitting on a small stool near a simple concrete house frying *kitumbua*¹ on a heavy iron pan when I met her for an interview. She had risen already at three o'clock in the morning and started to make the dough for her baking. Now it was late morning and time for breakfast, so neighbours living in the vicinity came to buy the fried snacks from her. Halima² was one of many women in Kijito³ occupying themselves with vending as a way to make a living, either constituting the main source of their income or as an addition to other livelihood sources. However, it could have been difficult for an outsider to realize that Halima was actually running a business instead of merely preparing food for her own household, since there were no visible signs marking this vending operation either spatially or functionally.

When I entered the Kijito neighbourhood in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, for the first time in 2013, I remember wondering how I could conduct my study on women's livelihoods, since all I saw were women like Halima, who appeared to be going about their daily household chores. Soon it became clear that instead of just taking care of their own households, women were conducting various businesses in Kijito, where environmental conditions for making a living were quite challenging. This realization led me to turn the focus of my study to women's engagement with what I call *neighbourhood vending*, in which material circumstances, spatial practices, and livelihood activities are interrelated. Conceptually, neighbourhood vending refers to small-scale commercial activities in which the vendors and their customers resided within the same spatially limited local area. These activities are often temporally fragmented,

economically unstable, and have no permanent premises (such as a kiosk or a shop). With this definition, I follow other similar terms specifying vending practices based on the spatial context of these activities in question, such as street vending (cf. Brown, Lyons, and Dankoco 2010: 667). I understand livelihoods not just as income-earning, but as encompassing a range of other activities such as access to resources and opportunities, risk negotiation, social relationships within the household, and management of other social networks (cf. Beall and Kanji 1999).

Research literature on informality tends to be divided into two main areas, namely informal housing and the informal economy, with most studies focusing clearly on one or the other (e.g. Oviedo, Thomas, and Karakurum-Özdemir 2009; Crush, Chikanda and Skinner 2015; Heisel and Kifle 2016; Hansen and Vaa 2004; Huchzermeyer 2011). However, these two spheres of informality overlap, defining the daily lives and social practices of the urban poor. Urban dwellers' informal livelihood practices and survival strategies are rarely examined in relation to the immediate material surroundings of the informal urban spaces in which they take place (e.g. Brown 2015: 239). Since these spaces and social relations are mutually co-produced (Gotham 2003: 732), it is important to understand how livelihood practices and spatial circumstances are interrelated.

Especially during the daytime, Kijito's publicly accessible spaces, that is, open spaces between built dwelling structures, were dominated by the activities of women since they outnumbered men, who tended to look for work opportunities largely outside the neighbourhood. In this sense, there was a gendered aspect (cf. Hackenbroch, Baumgart, and Kreibich 2009: 63) to Kijito's social landscape as well as its identity as a particular place. Local gender relations are largely patriarchal, which refers to a strong male domination in family and public affairs, and female dependency on men (Sathiparsad, Taylor, and Dlamini 2008: 5). Patriarchal practices cause many disadvantages for women especially with regard to access to land, housing, and other economic resources (Bawa 2012: 98). This was clearly detectable also in Kijito, where women were subordinate to men in relation to, for example, owning property or having the right to decide the use of the property they may have legally inherited.

Based on research data⁴ gathered during four fieldwork trips of two weeks each to Dar es Salaam between 2013 and 2016, this chapter examines poor women's livelihood practices and survival strategies in the local contexts of the informal urban spaces in which they occur. During the fieldwork trips, I observed women's daily activities, took photographs, and conducted approximately 100 interviews. Numerous participants were interviewed more than once. The interviews were

conducted mainly in Swahili with an interpreter translating them into English. Some interviews were made with only one person present and others were interviewed in pairs or in groups of three or four women. All interviews were conducted in the research site close to interviewees' places of habitation and in the midst of women's daily activities. This gave me an opportunity to observe what else was going on around while interviews were conducted. Once, for example, a woman I was interviewing suddenly told me she had to leave for a funeral. Other more or less urgent calls and interruptions during interview sessions were more the norm than the exception. This increased my understanding of women's daily lives and led me to better elaborate on the topics I discussed with people.

The focus of this study was on neighbourhood vending and it did not address other kinds of economic activities operating in or out of Kijito, such as small enterprises of dyeing and selling batik cloth for sale at a larger marketplace, which employed more than one person and which had operated continuously for a longer period of time. Ethnographic approaches were applied in order to understand the social and economic dynamics of women's hidden or nearly invisible livelihood practices in an informal urban neighbourhood (Lappi and Stark 2013: 288). Participant observation, namely following and taking part in people's daily activities in the neighbourhood, was crucial for understanding the context of the study and the spatial and social construction of communal relations. This contextualization was of great significance for the analysis of the research data.

To render the spatial context of women's daily lives more visible I have applied the concept of place-making as an analytical lens. Lombard (2014; 2015) defines place-making as the construction of place through a variety of different actors and means which may be discursive and political, but also small-scale, spatial, social, and cultural (ibid.: 5). The objective of exploring urban informal settlements through place-making is to understand the socio-spatial processes of construction in a particular setting, as a response to the stereotyping of place through dominant processes of knowledge production (Lombard 2015: 100). It also serves to emphasize the creative elements of human action and interaction that are fundamental to constructing these places as locations but also as sites of meaning.

In his article on resource access and livelihood spaces in South Africa, King (2011) calls for more attention directed to the reciprocal relationships between spaces and livelihoods. He argues that spatializing livelihoods is critical for understanding a variety of issues central to livelihood studies, such as the significance of livelihood diversification, intra-community differentiation, and

the structure and agency of livelihoods. It is thus important to look for reciprocal connections between the material environment and livelihood practices in Kijito in order to understand how these relations are a part of place-making processes in this particular setting. While the effects of micro-enterprises upon private or semi-private spaces have formed the context for some studies on informal livelihood practices, they have rarely been the *focus* of research (see Gough, Tipple, and Napier 2003).

Furthermore, spaces and places, our sense of them, and degrees of mobility are gendered in myriad ways that vary across cultures and over time (Massey 1994: 186). This gendering of space and place both reflects and shapes the ways in which gender and relations are constructed and understood in the societies in which we live (Massey 1994: 2). In this chapter I examine how gendered agency and livelihood-related practices mould places, give them cultural meanings and express particular spatial characteristics, but also how these practices, in turn, are moulded by the places to which they are connected.

Material environment and habitation in Kijito

Kijito, an informal neighbourhood with approximately 16,000 inhabitants, is located about 5 kilometres from the centre of Dar es Salaam in Kinondoni district. It is one of the poorest residential areas in Dar es Salaam and for many of its inhabitants it is the only place where they can afford to live. The housing stock consists mainly of typical Swahili houses⁵ in an area where people must manage without sufficient infrastructure or even basic services. Kijito's proximity to a river that floods heavily at least once every year causes considerable damage to buildings and makes people's daily lives and their constant struggle for survival even more difficult than they would be otherwise. Over the years, the neighbourhood has become increasingly densely built as new houses, extensions to existing houses, and other additional structures have been constructed. To find Halima's house, for example, one had to follow small paths between the buildings that did not follow any particular orientation or logic. In places like Kijito, which have evolved and later expanded spontaneously, commonplace practices connected with housing and livelihoods, as well as the cultivation of plants and vegetables, are spatially overlapping.

Since all construction work in Kijito was undertaken without any overall planning, it was clear from interviews and participant observation that people living in the area faced unexpected changes that affected their daily routines

and consequently their livelihood practices as well. In previous years, there had been street-like passageways or routes in the area, but what remained were just a couple of narrow roads and passages, which were mostly uneven walking paths winding between the houses. On my first visit to Kijito, we entered from the main road to a grassy and uneven open space where we walked along a narrow path twisting between the buildings. This was the route we would take every morning and leave in the afternoon. By my last visit in 2015, we could not use the same route since it no longer existed. Someone had built a house which blocked the formerly used entrance to the route, so we had to start from a different direction and take another route. By that time, it had become almost impossible for any cars to enter the area since so many of the formerly open areas had been built up or access roads had been filled with additional construction.

Many individual dwellings appeared to be undergoing constant construction work, a fact that caught my attention as I wandered the neighbourhood. When I asked about this construction, I was often told that more space was needed but money for renovation was scarce, so setbacks in finishing the work were quite common. One woman who had lived her whole life in Kijito explained, 'Kijito doesn't change, people just build new houses and it gets more crowded here.' Her comment revealed the paradox between, on the one hand, unexpected micro-level changes taking place frequently and unexpectedly, and on the other hand, a lack of change on a larger scale such as improvements to the infrastructure or living conditions. People living in Kijito had to constantly adjust their social practices to the hardships caused by the demanding material environment. This means that people were engaged with endless place-making through their social practices and livelihood activities, since they needed to find a means to survive in a situation where leaving the area was not an option, as the rents were higher elsewhere.

In the context of urban and planning studies, urban spaces are conventionally categorized into private and public, referring to established assumptions of what is meant by these categories. However, in cities the public-private division varies widely from one city and society to another. In general, the part of the physical environment that is associated with public meaning and functions can be understood as public space (Madanipour 2003: 1). When discussing this 'public space', different disciplines use diverse but partly overlapping definitions of the concept. Houssay-Holzschuch and Teppo (2009: 353) offer three prevailing interpretations of public space. *Politically* understood public space, i.e. the public sphere originating from Habermas (1962), refers to a metaphorical space of public debate which is an arena for democracy presenting itself through civil

society and participatory citizenship. From a *juridical* point of view, public spaces are understood as comprised of land owned by public authorities, for example streets, squares, and parks. The clear distinction between private and public spaces is based on ownership and forms the ideological foundation of Western urban planning. A third interpretation of public space stems from its social aspect, indicating public spaces as sites where people can meet and interact with each other. I argue that physical accessibility is also an important factor when considering whether a particular space is public or not.

In Kijito, there were no public spaces as understood in the context of formally planned cities, i.e. juridically divided into privately and publicly owned, nor were there informal areas more formally administered and generally used by residents. The neighbourhood consisted mainly of plots of land informally used by those owning the houses. The open areas between built structures were usually part of someone's plot. In Tanzania, the majority of urban land is still occupied and transferred informally, even though customary land rights are meant to apply officially only in rural areas (Brown 2015: 242). The open areas in Kijito might be considered public spaces from a social perspective (Houssay-Holzschuch and Teppo 2009: 353), yet they were not open in the sense that just anyone could have access to the area, let alone run a business there, since people had informal rights to plots of land and no spaces remained unclaimed. The size and usage of open spaces between built structures depended on how densely the individual plots were occupied with buildings or other activities. Categorizing spaces as public or private does not capture the spatial multiplicity of cities with many informal or unplanned areas (e.g. Roy 2005; Donovan 2008; Hackenbroch and Hossain 2012; Hackenbroch 2013; Kamalipour 2016; Lindell and Ampaire 2016).

In Tanzania, land can be allocated by public authorities and can be obtained informally from acknowledged owners by way of occupation without permit; it can be allocated by local leaders or land owners; or obtained through inheritance or purchase (Kironde 1995: 80–81). Most landowners in unplanned areas have obtained land through purchase or inheritance, which is also the case in Kijito, where people coming mainly from other parts of Dar es Salaam began to buy plots of land in the 1970s to build a house of their own and practise small-scale farming on the side. Even if the majority of Dar es Salaam residents lived in such unplanned areas, it does not mean that these areas were in any way homogeneous with respect to their social, economic, material, or environmental conditions.

In recent years, river flooding and flash floods during the rainy season have caused significant damage to buildings and personal possessions. This is due to the fact that natural storm drainage channels have been narrowed considerably

due to residents dumping garbage in them (the unplanned spatial layout of the neighbourhood does not include areas for garbage collection). Dealing with flood damage requires more time and money that normally would be used for making a living. Many informants said that they had not been able to run their businesses during the floods and in a number of cases, this situation had lasted for weeks or even months. Rukiya, a 34-year-old woman living with a child in her father's house, explained that she was not happy with her place of residence, 'As you see, there's a lot of mud when it rains. Even the house isn't good, we just live here because I was born here and my father wants to keep the house in Kijito.' When I asked whether it would be possible for Rukiya to sell her house, she told me that, 'it would not be easy to sell it. Nobody wants to buy the house here because of the environment, only for a very low price and then you can't buy another house elsewhere [with the small amount of money received]'.⁶ Other interviews confirmed that it was almost impossible for residents to sell their home there in Kijito any reasonable price that would allow them to buy a home in a better part of the city.

When people were asked to describe the neighbourhood in general, almost everyone mentioned flooding and the many problems it caused. According to interviewees, the flooding had become more severe in recent years. This may be partly due to heavier rains during the rainy season, but also because Kijito was more densely populated than before. On some occasions the water level has risen so suddenly that people have not had time to escape and even some lives have been lost, as Rukiya recounted:

We were staying on the roof, all of the area was covered with water. It was for three days [in April 2014]. After the water was gone, the mud was left behind. Some people even died when the houses by the river collapsed due to water damage. We lost our stuff but not any people, our house inside was also covered with water.

Parts of houses were swept away by the fast-flowing flood waters mainly because the construction materials were of poor quality. The river running through Kijito was dredged some years prior to provide better storm drainage. Since then, people living close to the river on both sides narrowed the river channel by piling up plastic bags filled with garbage in order to have more solid ground around their houses. Floodwaters also damaged a small bridge spanning the river to another neighbourhood to which people quite frequently travelled to visit health clinics and marketplaces. Overall, flooding seemed to be a primary reason why Kijito remained one of the poorest neighbourhoods in the city.

However, some interviewees and their relatives had lived in the area for decades. Despite the harsh living conditions they felt attached to the neighbourhood and were not seeking to move. Women especially were often dependent on their male relatives for a place to live due to gender-differentiated access to housing (Chant and Datu 2015: 48). For example, Rukiya lived in her father's house with her child, which was a common gender-related practice caused mostly by poverty, but also linked to cultural norms. By listening carefully to informants, it became clear to me that most everyday activities were highly dependent on spatial possibilities and constraints linked to habitation and housing. Women with few employment opportunities often lived in dwellings owned by a male relative if they were not able to support themselves. This was especially true if they had children but no husband or a long-term boyfriend to help them.

Renting out rooms could provide a form of a livelihood for women, but male heads of the household or male relatives who might not even live in the house in question could lay claim to the rent money derived from it. This was often the case with female widows, for example, whose brothers-in-law could benefit from renting out the rooms. Women were entitled by law to inherit a house from a deceased husband, but male relatives and in-laws often took over the house through 'property grabbing' (Hughes and Wickeri 2011: 821; Chant and Datu 2015: 49). This arose from customary laws which suppressed women's rights due to patrilineal inheritance practices (Hughes and Wickeri 2011: 820). Lakeisha, a 27-year-old widow with three children, had lost her husband, and this changed her economic and social situation significantly. When asked what she would do if she had more money, she replied:

I would take my children to the best schools to continue their education. I didn't consider my life hard, but after my husband died, [his] family arranged a meeting and decided to take our house, and I returned back [to my parents'] home. I stayed three months with my parents and then went back to my husband's house. The house had been sold to some other people in the meanwhile and my husband's parents had not informed me at all. The new owner had collected my things into one room and gave me the money for a truck to get my stuff to my parents' house. The in-laws had moved away and I couldn't reach them.

From my data it did not appear common for a woman to buy a house of her own, unless she had inherited it from her parents. Married couples either bought a house together or rented out a room in an existing house or concrete row of 'rooms'. Single mothers usually either rented a room for themselves and their children or lived with their parents. Women who owned a house could have renters, therefore household dynamics could vary quite a lot. Having

ownership of a house gave women more security and offered a means of earning money if there were extra rooms in the house to be rented out. A 30-year-old housewife⁷ told me that there were nine rooms in her house and altogether eighteen inhabitants, eight family members and six renters with their children. She continued:

Our parents died and me and my sister, we own the house. We also get the rent money, for my sister 30,000 TZS [i.e. Tanzanian shilling, per month, from two rooms] and for me 45,000 [per month, for three rooms]. The money I get from the renters has helped me to buy things that I need. Our husbands came to live with us because we have a hard life.

It is culturally expected in Tanzania that a husband should provide for his wife and family. For people living in poverty, it was not always possible to follow this cultural norm.

Women's livelihood practices

In the neighbourhood I studied, women were expected to take care of their children as well as carry out all household chores such as cooking and cleaning. The predominant social role for women was that of wife or mother, and women carried the main responsibility for reproductive work (Kes and Swaminathan 2006: 15). This made it harder for them to enter the workforce (Brown 2006: 74). Women's livelihood practices were far more restricted by location and spatial factors than those of men. The most common way for the women to employ themselves close to home was to start a business selling small items or products such as prepared foods, snacks, vegetables, eggs, milk, soap or charcoal. For many of the women I spoke with, it would have been hard to work away from home. Even obtaining goods from suppliers to be sold in Kijito required special arrangements, for example having someone take care of the children, finding time to make a trip to the wholesaler or arranging transportation for the goods to be sold.

In many respects, neighbourhood vending shares similar characteristics with home-based enterprises operating in low-income settlements, when these are defined as small retail businesses operating from a residential stand or home (see e.g. Ligthelm 2005: 199). However, when compared to *spaza* shops in South African townships, that is, micro-convenience stores operating within the informal economy that provide residents with easier access to everyday goods (Charman, Petersen, and Piper 2012: 48), the practices of neighbourhood

vending in Dar es Salaam were clearly more unstable, both functionally and temporally, and often were run with a small sales volume. Neighbourhood vendors might be regarded in a similar way to hawkers or petty traders who operate with no formal shelter and often trade in undesigned spaces (Lyons and Snoxell 2005: 1304), or 'house shops' operating on a more ad hoc basis, usually on weekends (Charman, Petersen, and Piper 2012: 54).

In an article examining the role of home-based enterprises in Accra and Pretoria, Gough, Tipple, and Napier (2003: 258) point out that food processing and retailing were especially popular among people planning or starting micro-businesses because 'they cater to local demand, require a small amount of initial capital, and need only limited skills,' which was also the case in Kijito. To obtain a higher profit, many vendors bought the product in larger quantities and then processed it, usually by dividing it into smaller units to be sold further or by preparing cooked foods, for example. In Kijito, among the common items women sold are soap, eggs, *kanga* and *kitenge* (fabric for clothing), charcoal, fried chips and other fried snacks (kitumbua, samosa), fish, cassava, and maize. Some vendors sold from door to door while those who prepared food themselves often sold it in front of their houses. In this way, basic necessities circulated at more affordable prices than would have been the case in shops, giving neighbours the chance to purchase perishable goods in small quantities, as they could afford it. One woman who sold laundry soap explained how her business was run:

I started with TSh 50000 (25,50 USD), my child's father gave me that money. First I took one bucket (TZS 35,000) and I got a profit of TZS 15 000 (7,60 USD). Now I take two buckets [of soap] and sell it also for credit, so I get a profit of 30,000 every week. It's a challenge to sell on credit. Eight people over the years have never paid back and I have to fight for the money, but most people eventually pay. I start in the morning at eight o'clock and divide [the soap into smaller portions] until twelve o'clock, then I cook [for the family] and then I start to supply people. — I have permanent houses where I go to sell, I provide twice a week. Up to the end of the week I collect my money. Two times I can give on credit and if they want the third time, I want them to pay back before I give them more soap.⁸

Vending businesses run by women in Kijito were entirely dependent on customers from the immediate community, which was not the case with street or market trading or even necessarily true of many home-based enterprises. Further, when someone conducted business with a familiar female vendor, it was possible to buy on credit, even if vendors were not always keen to provide credit. Neighbourhood vendors could obtain more customers if they were

willing to sell on credit, as explained by one interview participant who realized that selling on credit was actually a way to make her business more profitable. She was one of the few persons I interviewed who had a long-term plan for expanding her business, and enough sales volume to save money for future prospects:

I have my own place and my children go to school and the only thing to do is to fight to get a better life. My sister is working here, too, and she also lives here. In this poor area, there are certain things people like and they take them if I can sell by credit. They have their own taste and I know what it is. People celebrate and they want to have new clothes and cosmetics for that, and I can sell them on credit. They cannot buy always with cash because they are poor and don't always have the money on hand.⁹

For their livelihood practices and all sorts of economic activities, the urban poor need access to public spaces and the possibility to use them for income generation (Hackenbroch, Baumgart, and Kreibich 2009: 50). Access to urban public space has been called 'a key component of physical capital needed to perform any economic activity' (Brown and Lloyd-Jones 2002: 191). If public space is defined as space accessible to the general public (cf. Houssay-Holzschuch and Teppo 2009: 353), then access to public space for many women living in Kijito was very limited in relation to livelihood practices. Neighbourhood vending was performed in close proximity to vendors' place of dwelling, usually in front of one's house or by walking around in the neighbourhood and selling from door to door. In addition to shortages of other forms of capital such as time, money, education, and skills, women living in Kijito lacked access to the more lucrative public urban spaces elsewhere in the city. This was summed up by a 48-year-old mother of six children as follows: 'it's very expensive [to sell somewhere else] because you have to pay for the frame [a stand or a stall] and everything else. People are happy when they can buy things in this area.'¹⁰

In her study of female vendors in Dar es Salaam, Elvira Tillerman (2012: 17) notes that access to non-public or semi-public space in residential areas is also a livelihood asset. Tillerman's study focused on women in a distinctly better financial situation who have better opportunities for running more viable businesses than informants in this study, but she recognized that spaces *inside* the neighbourhood are often overlooked when urban spatialities are discussed. For vendors in Kijito, however, having to stay in the neighbourhood in order to make a living was not a choice but a necessity. Many interviewees complained about not making enough profit because they do not have enough customers:

People of this area don't give sellers support, they may buy from someone else, and if they buy from you they want to get it on credit. It's hard to sell for that reason sometimes. In other places, public places, anyone can buy from you and you have more customers. Here you have to sell on credit and it's hard to get money back. In another place it would be easier to sell but we don't have enough capital to get a 'frame' [market stall] outside [of this area].¹¹

Vending in Kijito did not require a permit, and therefore differed from informal vending practices in public spaces, where a licence or a fee would need to be paid. It is important to note that even if informal practices may be considered illegal or extra-legal by governments and policymakers, they were not necessarily perceived as illegitimate by the actors concerned (Hansen and Vaa 2004: 7). Even if trading within Kijito was free from fees and municipal regulations, there were still internal rules and norms regarding where they could conduct vending. This was because most open spaces in the neighbourhood belonged to plots informally owned by residents. 'Informal' here means that the local government kept records of land titles and ownership which were not, however, recognized by the central Tanzanian government. The central government issued separate ownership deeds that most residents could not afford. Making a vending business profitable depended greatly on the location of one's dwelling.

Examining how women decided to sell the types of goods they sold reveals much about women's use of social networks, women's agency and its limits. Women strove to sell goods that were not offered by other vendors, or at least not offered in close proximity to their own vending areas. People shared information among themselves on what items were sold and where, making social networks vital to negotiations concerning the supply and demand of necessary goods and reasonable prices. While striving to make a profit, women facilitated the distribution of labour and sufficient variation of supply for meeting the everyday demands of necessary goods in Kijito. This was illustrated by one female vendor's description, 'Before, I was frying cassava and selling it. I collected capital of TSZ 20,000 (10,20 USD) and then started the milk business. I thought that too many people were selling cassava and there was too much competition, but no one was selling milk.'¹²

For many people in Kijito, it was difficult to save even a small amount of money to start a business. For this reason, social networks of relatives and friends were a crucial source for obtaining start-up capital (Gough, Tipple, and Napier 2003: 266; Ligthelm 2005: 206), making social capital central to the

livelihood strategies of the urban poor (Brown, Lyons, and Dankoco 2010: 669). Social networks were also of great importance when relatives or friends looked after the children of female neighbourhood vendors, as recalled by a 45-year-old widow with four children:

[My husband's death] affected me a lot because I depended on him. He was working on a city council. I tried to start a business of selling charcoal. I was bringing charcoal from the village and came here to sell it. The business helped me to take care of my children, to buy them clothes and food. The times when I went to the village, I just left my children with their uncle, my husband's younger brother, he took care of them, but he died also last month, so my children don't have anyone who can take care of them, because he used to help me if I had nothing. Now I'm confused, I don't know what to do.¹³

At the beginning of my fieldwork, I often had the impression that many of my interviewees had pursued the same business for years. Soon I realized, however, that there had occurred constant interruptions and breaks in women's businesses. Reasons included having to use the business capital for other expenses such as illness or deaths in the family, or the need to pay school fees. Women often asked the same relatives who had provided start-up capital in the first place to replace it, and many did. Rahma, aged 35, explained, 'I stopped my business [selling artificial hair extensions], we spent the capital on food expenses. I went back to my brother to ask for capital again. After I asked him to support my livelihood, he didn't blame me, but gave me [the money] again.'¹⁴

Since in most cases women ran their small businesses alone, they were vulnerable if they ran out of money, became ill or needed to take care of sick relatives. Frequent breaks in running a business made it difficult for the businesses to return a profit.

As fieldwork proceeded, it became clear that sometimes neighbourhood businesses did not last longer than two weeks at a time, and actually only a couple of interviewees had continued operating the same business for a longer period of time (cf. Gough, Tipple, and Napier 2003: 266). There was also seasonal variation in businesses, since preparing foods or storing items to be sold was not always possible during rainy season flooding or during Ramadan. Ramadan especially affected the demand for food items, since the majority of population in Kijito was Muslim. Temporal factors were thus important: when examined over a longer time period, women's livelihood practices appeared different than if they had been studied only synchronically, at one moment in time (cf. Tillerman 2012; also Bevan 2004).

Conclusion

Neighbourhood vending in Dar es Salaam was a gender-based practice of self-employment that had particular spatial characteristics. Women ran small businesses inside neighbourhoods either by delivering goods from door to door or by selling in a fixed place near their dwelling. Neighbourhood vending contributed strongly to mutual interdependence and communal money circulation, comprising a dynamic and hidden system of exchange. It existed primarily because women were willing to pay slightly more for goods sold in the neighbourhood so they could save time and energy when not having to travel to public markets and shops elsewhere. Women who bought these goods often ran businesses of their own as well, which meant that women residing in the same neighbourhood were mainly selling to each other.

While striving for profit, vendors facilitated the distribution of labour and sufficient variation of supply to meet the demand of neighbours' daily needs. In the same way that the 'street economy' in African cities is dependent on access to public spaces, neighbourhood vending was dependent on both suitable vending sites on land informally owned by vendors and customers from the same neighbourhood. Neighbourhood vending was a form of survival economy, since many women's businesses did not bring in significant profits but could be seen more as a means to 'keeping the money' for unexpected expenses. From a city-wide financial perspective, the amount of money circulating in neighbourhood vending might not have been very significant, but for the daily survival of individuals and neighbourhoods, it was of crucial importance.

Neighbourhood vending also had a significant role in the context of place-making. It offered structural reference points within the haphazard spaces that have developed through the process of land being divided and subdivided over the years without any planning. Vending activities and their spatial distribution created functional and visual diversity in the neighbourhood where open spaces between buildings resembled one another. Furthermore, neighbourhood vending generated spatial and social hierarchies, since some locations to which persons could lay claim to were better suited for profit-making businesses than others. Although spatial and economic conditions were crucial factors in how women organized their businesses, conversely, neighbourhood vending organized the residential spaces.

Because even unskilled male labourers had better access to informal wage labour than women, their livelihood strategies differed from men's in significant ways (Stark 2019: 21). These differences were closely linked to ideas and practices

regarding space and gendered agency. Livelihood practices were constructed not only spatially but also temporally, since the income received from the neighbourhood businesses was defined by spontaneity, fragmentation, impermanence, uncertainty, and change. Neighbourhood vending, unlike street vending, was also dependent on as well as establishing communal and social networks. Neighbourhood vending practised by women is a collective survival strategy for the urban poor and as such, cannot be analysed or understood purely as an individual livelihood practice. Although individual entrepreneurs often faced great challenges in running their businesses, together they constituted a dynamic system for provision of necessary goods and social relations promoting the survival of Kijito as a whole.

Notes

- 1 *Kitumbua* is a deep fried donut or a pancake made out of rice flour and often consumed for breakfast.
- 2 All names referring to particular persons have been changed to protect their anonymity.
- 3 Kijito is a pseudonym for the neighbourhood, where I carried out my study.
- 4 The research data referred to in this chapter was gathered during a research project, *Urban Renewal and Income-Generating Spaces for Youth and Women in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*, funded by the Finnish Academy.
- 5 Swahili houses are typically built of cement and usually have an even number of rooms located symmetrically on each side of a central corridor (e.g. Bryceson 2009: 253).
- 6 Interview, 21 October 2014.
- 7 Interview, 30 October 2014.
- 8 Interview, 11 February 2013.
- 9 Interview, 31 October 2014.
- 10 Interview, 25 October 2014.
- 11 Interview, 8 February 2013.
- 12 Interview, 9 February 2013.
- 13 Interview, 28 October, 2014.
- 14 Interview, 11 February 2013.

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‘If Only They Would See us as Honest Workers’: Motorcycle Taxi Drivers’ Rights to Livelihood in Kampala

Caroline Wamala-Larsson

Introduction

The average African city relies on informal transport to move millions of commuters and consumers into, out of, and around the metropolis on a daily basis. The informal transport sector thrives due to its flexibility in terms of schedules, rates, and routes. The sector is plagued, however, by uncertainty as public authorities wield power over this unregulated industry by using various tactics to marginalize, frustrate, and even legalize informal transport services. The process to contain the informal transport industry is politically charged. Reasons for this stem from the informal transport industry’s self-governing character, the supposed criminality associated with those located in the sector, and the fact that the chaos associated with informality does not espouse the ethos of the beautiful modern city for which developing cities are striving. In addition, the very presence of the sector continues to be a bone of contention for formal institutions because it demonstrates the incapacity of these institutions to meet the mobility demands of the urban populace.

An alternate perspective is that the informal transport sector socio-economically empowers unemployed urban residents. For the unemployed who strive to find meaning and to construct a sense of self within local social conventions of what it means to be a person, informal transport is an industry that offers opportunities (Wamala-Larsson 2019; Agbibo 2018a; Gibbs 2014).

This chapter engages with Uganda’s motorcycle taxi drivers, colloquially referred to as *bodabodas*. The term *bodaboda* can refer to the motorcycles themselves or to their drivers. Motorcycle taxis embed themselves in Kampala

as feeders of the mass transport system, offering quick, timely, and low-cost transport services. The *bodaboda*'s ubiquitous presence (they are literally on every street corner) speaks to the mobility needs of urban residents who are predominantly dependent on informal transportation.

I approach my analysis of the informal *bodaboda* sector using the sociotechnical approach, which draws on a range of analytic tools from Science and Technology Studies (STS). STS looks at the reciprocal relationship between social, political, technological, and cultural structures. My analysis utilizes particularly the social construction of technology (SCOT) within STS, which means that I conceptualize the *bodaboda* as a socially constructed artefact produced through social interaction with numerous sectors (Bijker 2010). A sociotechnical premise examines more than just the technological system, the social system, or even the social and the technical in parallel. It analyses what emerges when the social and the technical interact. Utilizing SCOT in this chapter, I highlight the undisputed role of human agency in the construction of the *bodaboda*. Hughes (1986) suggests that technology and society form a seamless web, to which Michael (2006: 5) adds that an 'appropriate context' is necessary for technology to work and integrate into a society. The point made by Kirsty Best (2009: 1034) about information and communication technologies holds equally well for transportation technologies:

As agents themselves, technologies come equipped with their own set of needs. They need to keep entropy at bay, and it is a user who must deal with related requirements for energy and for repair. They are also dependent on associated technologies and systems, which may themselves be out of range, broken, or difficult to understand.

This reasoning replaces theories of technological determinism with a causal relationship in which society and technology are mutually constituted and co-evolve, directing any analyses to their interdependency. When it comes to the organization of urban transportation, this mutual constitution exposes layers of complexity and the artefacts used to both empower and marginalize *bodabodas*. The *bodaboda* is a prominent feature of Kampala city, and a sociotechnical lens provides an understanding of how it embeds itself in the structure of Kampala.

Much has been written about the friction between public authorities and the informal transport industry (Agbibo 2018b; Evans, O'Brien and Ch Ng 2018; Rasmussen 2012; Mutongi 2006). The reasons given by authorities are usually the chaotic nature of the informal transport industry (Agbibo 2018b), the criminality associated with it (Lomme¹), and its internal forms of governance

(Wamala-Larsson 2019). Some of these analyses have relied on French sociologist Henri Lefebvre's thesis of *rights to the city*. The concept of the right to the city is embedded in a human rights-based ethos. At the centre of the *bodaboda's* struggle for rights to the city is the opportunity to earn a daily living which can only happen if the *bodaboda* are allowed to transport people and goods daily. For their part, *bodaboda* drivers perceive the rebuilding and expanding of Kampala's roads to be a means by which the city distances itself from motorcycle taxis. This is a valid allegation considering that the urban renewal plans for Kampala's future do not include the *bodaboda* as a mode of transport.² Public authorities resist informality for many reasons, the most obvious being a lack of control over it. The right to the city, as a theory for analysing informality, encompasses processes of self-management, leading to what public institutions regard as fluid laws and forms of public engagement.

Despite falling outside of official and national transport policies, the *bodaboda* sector contributes to Kampala's growth by accelerating socio-economic activities, by moving people and goods through incredibly congested traffic and poor road infrastructure (cf. Agbiboa 2018b). Driving a motorcycle taxi is an important means by which marginalized male youth in Kampala earn a living, become respectable Kampala citizens, and earn their rights to the city (Wamala-Larsson 2019; Agbiboa 2018a).

The *bodaboda* drivers I interviewed and observed during my fieldwork had been in the business for at least five years. Most of them drove their *bodabodas* six days a week and had accumulated a wealth of experience as they shared the road daily with passengers, pedestrians, law enforcement, and other vehicles. Their everyday interactions led to their perception of being deeply disenfranchised. As one informant lamented, they wished to be seen as honest working people contributing to the growth of Kampala. From my interviews with them I gained a sense of the fragility of their occupation and how tenuously they clung to their rights to the city.

This chapter is based on twenty-one in-depth interviews with *bodaboda* drivers in greater Kampala, all of whom discussed the hardship of dealing with the police and the 14-seater minibus taxis that compete for their business. Minibus taxis account for 82 per cent of daily transport needs, whereas the transport share of *bodabodas* is 42 per cent (Evans, O'Brien and Ch Ng 2018: 676). *Bodaboda* drivers spoke of their strategies to counter those who sought to thwart their continued existence. Drawing on Lefebvre's concept of the right to the city, I analyse *bodaboda* drivers' struggles, including those within their own industry where territorial attitudes over operating locations prevail. Informality shapes

cities because its struggles over space and agency challenge notions of control. Interference by public agencies undermined the *bodabodas*' daily struggles for survival and their social recognition as men (see also Agbiboa 2018a; Mayer 2012). It is within this survivalist sphere that this chapter locates its discussion of the *bodabodas*' rights to the city as informal workers. My analysis utilizes a sociotechnical lens to examine the mutual construction of the social and the technical in *bodaboda* drivers' daily experiences as described in their interviews.

Fieldwork

The choice to carry out fieldwork in Uganda has been tinged with a nostalgia and an interest to get to know the country of my birth, because I have lived most of my life elsewhere. From residing in different countries in Southern Africa to now living and working in Sweden, all of my experiences whenever I have visited Uganda have become data used in my research (Wamala 2010). I look Ugandan, and I speak one of the many languages used in Uganda thanks to growing up in a family that maintained a sense of 'home' through the practice of speaking our mother tongue. However, looking like my informants and speaking the language has not automatically granted me an insider status. Instead, my diasporic self (cf. Brah 1996) has always tested the boundaries of the insider/outsider position. I have had to adopt an outsider position numerous times during my fieldwork because of my limited knowledge of everyday life and everyday jargon. Yet the support of those family members that have chosen to return to Uganda has afforded me the clarity I have needed in everyday encounters, as well as in my acceptance of the many roles my self must perform.

The first time I rode on a *bodaboda* was in 1992 during a short visit to Uganda. Motorcycle taxis were and still are non-existent in Swaziland/Eswatini where I lived at the time, which made that first *bodaboda* ride something of an exotic experience. Being transported on a *bodaboda* for me remains a fascinatingly foreign experience every time I visit. I have observed the explosive growth of the industry and in the last decade, my curiosity has peaked to that of a scientific interest regarding what makes the sector so resilient.

The *bodaboda* industry is the fastest-growing sector and the second largest industry in Uganda (Wamala-Larsson 2019).³ More than 70 per cent of Uganda's population relies on *bodabodas* as their means of daily transport.⁴ Like thousands of other families in Kampala, my family also has *bodaboda* contacts that we rely on for urgent matters, whether to help us arrive at a location on time, or to provide

us with personal shopper services for which *bodabodas* are well known (Wamala-Larsson 2019; Evans, O'Brien and Ch Ng 2018). The detailed knowledge of their geographical areas possessed by *bodabodas* also makes them reliable 'GPS services': since *bodabodas* are everywhere and always within reach, motorists who arrive at a location of which they have little knowledge often ask directions from *bodabodas* in the area. In most instances, motorists will pay the *bodaboda* a small fee to drive ahead of them, pointing them to the sought-after destination.

To establish contact with *bodaboda* informants I relied on Michael⁵ – a *bodaboda* driver with whom my family has an established relationship – to introduce me to his colleagues. Our meetings took place at what are referred to as *bodaboda* 'stages' or hubs; that is, the assembly point for the *bodaboda* drivers who are registered with the stage in question. During my first encounter with the *bodaboda* drivers at Michael's own stage, I was introduced to a *bodaboda* chairman who doubled as a chief operating officer, ensuring that the drivers who register with him are of good repute. He also acted as an investor in new and young entrants to the *bodaboda* business by leasing out motorcycles to them. New drivers had to work for roughly two years until they had paid off the debt, at which point ownership of the motorcycle taxi was transferred to the lessee. This arrangement meant that the new *bodaboda* driver had a contractual obligation to pay the chairman an agreed amount on a daily basis. The *bodaboda* chairman first vetted every driver that was registered at his stage, and ensured an orderly work process at his hub. Each *bodaboda* chairman was also registered with the Uganda National *Bodaboda* Association (UNBA), which is a national umbrella organization that works to ensure the fair and just treatment of *bodaboda* drivers. Besides making field notes of my observations, I conducted in-depth interviews with twenty-one *bodaboda* drivers.

Between December 2015 and January 2016, I spent a total of 46 hours observing and conducting occasional interviews daily with *bodabodas* at their stages on the outskirts of Kampala city. I opted for mornings, due to the reduced amount of traffic at that time, which gave me more access to *bodaboda* drivers. In the mornings, I found drivers sitting around the stage on rudimentary wooden benches or on their *bodabodas*, having their breakfast and exchanging pleasantries with each other. I did my best to blend into the community at each *bodaboda* stage by hanging around, essentially drawing on Kusenbach's (2003) 'go-along' ethnographic approach to the data. This method provided me with access to what a day in the life of a *bodaboda* looked like, and I was able to engage with *bodaboda* drivers *in situ* as they went about their day-to-day activities. Each day would commence with Michael fetching me from my family's home on his

bodaboda. Together we would ride to the stage for the day. Riding on the back of Michael's *bodaboda* gave us the opportunity to set the agenda for the day, for him to provide me with information on the next *bodaboda* stage we were going to, and what I could expect of the men there. At the first *bodaboda* stage, I asked the men if they could recommend another stage in the area where I could continue my fieldwork. Michael, always within hearing distance, was quick to take note of their recommendations. From this first encounter, more *bodaboda* stages were recommended, and at these stages each *bodaboda* chair would suggest to me where I could go next. In effect, one stage visit snowballed into more stage visits because these chairmen were part of a network. Michael's presence helped ease me into the *bodaboda* community because he hung around in the background throughout the interviews. His presence not only provided me with access to the field, but was also buffer, since the presence of a female researcher in a predominantly male space garnered a significant amount of attention.

My initial purpose was to inquire from the *bodaboda* drivers how money transferred through mobile phones contributed to their trade (Wamala-Larsson 2019). However, before asking them how they managed their receipts and expenditures through their mobile phones, I asked them to chronicle their journey to becoming *bodaboda* drivers (cf. Labov 2003, 2006). On this topic I obtained extremely rich material that speaks to the struggles faced by *bodaboda* drivers on a daily basis as they negotiate their right to the city. The stories they shared constitute the interview material used in this chapter. Some *bodaboda* drivers provided me with their mobile phone numbers that I recorded in my field notes, which enabled additional interviews in April 2020 using WhatsApp voice-notes to ask *bodabodas* what the process of acquiring driving permits entailed, as this was a recurring theme from previous interviews. Secondary data in the form of media debates and news reports on *bodabodas* have been included to flesh out the interview material.

The *bodaboda* and the city

History has it that motorcycles were the most used transport in the late 1980s at border crossings between Uganda and Kenya. The popular terminology for crossing between the two countries was 'border-to-border', which became the term *bodaboda*. There are further historical indications that unlike the paperwork required for four-wheeled motor vehicles to cross the border, *bodabodas* were treated more leniently by officials (Walls 2012).

Like other African cities, Kampala relies on rudimentary public transport, and the traffic in the city is extremely congested because the Kampala road infrastructure is inadequate. Transport systems rely on minibus *taxis* and *bodabodas*, neither of which is regulated nor adequately meets the transport needs of the city, despite their sheer numbers. Yet both contribute to the daily traffic gridlock that has become a regular feature of Kampala.

This situation has contributed to the dramatic growth of the *bodaboda* sector. As a small motorcycle with an engine capacity of around 50–80cc, *bodabodas* are extremely adept in using any gap available in traffic. They can venture where four-wheeled vehicles cannot, due to the narrowness or bad quality of the road. *Bodabodas* navigate using every available road space, including pedestrian pavements, road islands, and median strips that separate opposing traffic lanes. *Bodaboda* drivers can at times drive towards oncoming traffic, and will use any means necessary to get their passengers and/or goods to their destinations in the shortest amount of time. Evans, O'Brien and Ch Ng (2018: 675) suggest that '*bodabodas* are uniquely suited to the physical form [of Kampala], deftly navigating the city's structure with passengers and/or cargo'. This makes them different from minibus taxis, because minibus taxis are less flexible than *bodabodas* from the customer's perspective as they are limited to driving on access roads. By contrast, a lack of roads is not a hindrance to *bodabodas*.

It is no wonder, then, that traffic violations, accidents, and congestion are routinely blamed on *bodabodas* (Wamala-Larsson 2019; Evans, O'Brien and Ch Ng 2018). While there is a degree of truth to these accusations, they are also politically charged because the mere existence of the *bodaboda* draws attention to the inadequacy of public authorities to provide much needed transport services. In the midst of Kampala's efforts at urban renewal, the traffic chaos commonly associated with the presence of *bodabodas* also mocks efforts to elevate Kampala to a modern world-class city.⁶ From their perspective, the *bodaboda* drivers with whom I spoke described the problems they encountered due to the city's insufficient transportation infrastructure as well as its lack of organization and regulation:

Kenny, aged 29: [...] the roads are terrible! KCCA [Kampala Capital City Authority]⁷ is constantly hounding us *even though the roads are narrow and not good*. If they catch you and you don't have all the permits, they detain you, or confiscate your *boda[boda]*, and to get it back you must pay a penalty fee in the range of 150 000–250 000UGx⁸ [36–60 euros].

(author's emphasis)

Alex, aged 30, explained:

In Uganda, traffic systems are not organized, one day the traffic lights are working, the next day they are not, so sometimes if you are on a *boda[boda]* going to Wandegeya, and the light says green, and then you set off, and then the traffic officers are the ones who stop you, telling you are not allowed to drive here, and yet the traffic light is green. Which means we are working in an environment that is not organized, the arrangement is difficult to follow. If we just followed the rules it would be easier, but those law enforcers are not organized at all.

Bodaboda drivers also experienced risks in traffic caused by negative attitudes toward their profession:

Ivan, aged 32: The challenges with the *boda[boda]* are the four wheel vehicles: they have a habit of knocking us [deliberately colliding in order to shove one off the road], especially as bad driving is associated with us. This is their assumption, this is what they say, now they might have had a bad experience with a *bodaboda* driver and this memory stays with them so every time they run into a *boda[boda]* they have this urge to strike first. I don't dispute that the bad [*bodaboda* drivers] are [out] there, but there are also drivers like us who drive properly.

Challenges to achieving the status of masculine urban citizen

Uganda's *bodaboda* industry is dominated by young men, and driving a *bodaboda* was closely linked to masculine attributes in Kampala's urban culture.⁹ The Ugandan definition of a 'youth' is anyone below 35 years of age, and the majority of the young men I spoke with fell into this category. I asked interview participants why *bodabodas* were driven primarily by men, and whether the *bodaboda* drivers had ever encountered women drivers. *Bodaboda* drivers told me that the risks associated with driving a motorcycle do not fit with concepts of 'fragility and safety' associated with the female body, and that the physical strength required to drive a *bodaboda* with passengers or with cargo could be found only from men. I was asked, 'would you as a passenger hop onto a *bodaboda* driven by a woman?' The men informed me that motorcycle theft is already a risk for drivers, and that if there were more women drivers, this would be an even greater problem. While women have been known to drive motorcycles, they do not do so as *bodaboda* drivers, according to my informants.

Driving a *bodaboda* enabled men not only to survive but also to embody the ideal masculine role of provider for the family (Wamala-Larsson 2019), thus

earning the status of respectable urban (male) citizen. Achieving this social position, however, was described by *bodaboda* drivers as difficult due to the physical risks posed by the urban infrastructure:

Pete, aged 25: The most challenges I can say about the *boda[boda]* are the working conditions. Take that dust (points to an untarred main road), I don't need any job from government, I just want the government to develop the roads, fix the infrastructure. Put drugs in the hospitals because this dust will make me sick. If I am healthy I am able to think innovatively, I have an enterprising mind to figure out how to earn money. And a healthy person can also pay taxes, but now, my work conditions are not healthy, I work in a very dusty environment, the roads are narrow, even the roads that are tarred have pot holes, which cause accidents most of the time.

Here Pete challenged the city of Kampala to create a better working environment so that he could fulfil the role of a good citizen who paid his taxes and contributed to the city's development. Unlike his fellow drivers, Pete had a Bachelor's degree in commerce from Makerere University Business School and was the only interview participant among the twenty-one who had been educated at university level. He told me he had left his formal job as a bookkeeper because he was unable to make a sufficient living on that salary. He informed me with a proud smile that with the *bodaboda* he has been able to afford to start building a house.

Bodabodas have become an established part of the transport culture, and efforts to institutionalize their services have been met with resistance. These have included campaigns by public authorities for *bodabodas* to respect traffic rules, apply for permits, and use designated pick-up and drop-off points. As has been observed with informality in general, the *bodaboda* sector has a complicated and tension-filled relationship with public authorities (cf. Svensson and Wamala-Larsson 2016; Wamala-Larsson, 2019; Evans et al. 2018; Nyanzi et al. 2004). The boundaries between informal and formal transport services have been increasingly blurry, and random traffic stops by police officers who demand petty bribes were frequent. Law enforcement authorities have relied on *bodaboda* factions as part of their intelligence-gathering networks. In addition, political parties have utilized *bodabodas* to 'drive' political rallies¹⁰ and amass supporters.¹¹ Informal sectors that interface with public authorities are a well-studied phenomenon, and in an effort to untangle this complicated relationship, some scholars have argued for recognizing informality as the foundation of a growing economy (de Soto 2000; Chen 2005). This is because many businesses categorized as informal are 'registered in some way and do pay taxes even

though they may not be in a position to comply with the full range of legal and administrative requirements' (Chen 2005: 8). Yet the complicated relationship that informality continues to have with formal institutions challenges any effort to legalize, contain or even widen the space between informal industries and public organizations (Agbibo 2018b). The public authorities are generally tolerant of the *bodaboda* industry, in part because *bodaboda* drivers occasionally 'assist' in delivering public services such as the intelligence-gathering work required by the police. One could therefore ask whether, in spite of the formal sector's lack of control over the *bodaboda* industry, fully formalizing *bodabodas* may not be in the formal sector's best interests.

A minimal degree of formalization, however, has been useful in facilitating communication between the two sectors. Most *bodaboda* drivers I spoke with were registered with various associations overseen by the UNBA, which strove to create safe and working conditions for *bodabodas*.¹² It is with this association that public authorities in Kampala interfaced as they declared themselves to be working towards institutionalizing the services offered by *bodabodas*. Yet their approach was contradictory: although public service providers relied on *bodabodas* and their vast networks to contribute to service delivery, they paradoxically sought to eradicate *bodabodas* from Kampala.¹³ As a step towards decongesting the city, Kampala has plans to remove *bodabodas* as a mode of transport in the inner city.

Not all *bodaboda* drivers saw their associations as beneficial to them, as noted by 30-year-old Francis:

We have been confronted by so many institutions, and yet none of them really help us. If the government would help us, and see us as people who are working honestly, instead we are frustrated by rules and regulations which we do not fully understand ourselves, yet if they could just teach us so we understand what and how they want us to do our job, it would be good. The government should put up some sort of training centres, so that those who aspire to drive [*boda*]*bodas* are fully trained, according to government regulation, of course [we] should pay something for the training but it would be approved and supported by the government. Even though we have a *bodaboda* association all it gives us is an identity, and it knows that we exist but there is no significant contribution the association gives to us who work as *bodabodas*.

Most *bodaboda* drivers experienced formal rules, regulations, and costs as prohibitive. The *bodabodas* with whom I spoke admitted that they did not have most of the required permits to drive *bodabodas* in Kampala. One mentioned that: 'out of all my colleagues, none of us have insurance, road licences, or driving permits, but if we pay, will [the KCCA] improve the roads?'

Many of the services needed to access permits were digital. One could apply for permits digitally and then proceed to collect them in person. For example, Uganda's road licensing authority issued *bodaboda* driving licences that were valid for one year at a fee of 30 000UGx (7 euros). These costs were beyond what *bodaboda* drivers could afford. The information given online was in English, and most of my informants did not finish primary school and struggled with instructions in English. It is important to reiterate that newcomers to the *bodaboda* trade entered into a contractual agreement with a *bodaboda* investor and were given a *bodaboda* to drive. A daily fee to be paid by the driver was agreed upon. Drivers earned around 30 000 UGX (7 euros) daily, and from this they bought food, paid their *bodaboda* investor, and bought fuel for the motorcycle. I was told there was very little left over to pay for permits. The demand for licensing itself was confusing for *bodabodas* in light of the fact that the informal transport services provided by *bodabodas* operate outside of governmental jurisdiction. The *bodabodas* with whom I spoke wondered, 'why are we being forced to register, or pay for insurance when we have very limited recognition from public authorities?' (Pete, aged 25).

The *bodaboda* as a sociotechnical phenomenon

The concept of the right to the city (Lefebvre 1991) is profoundly transformative and includes the right to livelihoods. In the perception of the *bodabodas*, their collective alienation from public authorities and other road users deprived them of this opportunity (Harvey 2003). Rights to the city for *bodaboda* drivers are challenged by the power exerted by public authorities over the *bodaboda* trade. Yet a sociotechnical reading of my interview data reveals a host of complexities that are not based simply on people's actions or social relations, but on the influence and constraints exerted by technological artefacts. A sociotechnical premise to the right to the city as narrated by the *bodabodas* firstly conceives of the motorcycle as an artefact, a technological element or machine deeply embedded in the physical and behavioural structure that is Kampala city. In my data, the motorcycle, the urban infrastructure, the public authorities, and daily road users all contributed to the content of what comprises and structures Kampala.

Bodaboda drivers described traffic rules as inconsistently applied, and the physical/ technological infrastructure itself as hindering the possibility for orderly compliance. The very presence of the *bodaboda*, criticized in the

media for their unruliness and inability to obey traffic rules, exposed these systemic shortcomings. These shortcomings, in turn, explain why informality is dominant in the transport sector and why, despite officials' best efforts to contain it, the *bodaboda* sector continues to thrive. To paraphrase Bijker and Law (1992: 3), Kampala city and the *bodaboda* hold a mirror to each other. Through this mirror, they reflect the interplay of the professional, technical, economic, and political factors they mutually embody.

Put differently, *bodabodas* challenge the structure of Kampala while being alienated from it. The sociotechnical perspective makes this duality visible. The city and the *bodaboda* sector feed off each other and undermine a binary view of a formal authority versus informal actors as they co-produce norms and reshape power relationships on Kampala's roads.

Bodaboda tactics for survival

In striving for their rights to the city, numerous actors compete with each other for space, agency, and recognition of their contributions to the socio-economic functioning of the city. One tactic employed within the *bodaboda* sector was to ensure ease of entrance for newcomers. As noted by Isaac, aged 34:

The *bodaboda* business is easy to enter, if one joins an association. The best part about this *boda[boda]* business is that there is no training, no one demands that you submit an application, if you know people, and you can drive, it is easy to start the *boda[boda]*. The other thing, is you do not need capital, you can start by driving some else's *boda[boda]* and paying it off slowly while you also earn some.

Richard and Vince agreed, revealing the loose legislative environment in which *bodabodas* are able to operate. This has created what many *bodaboda* drivers suggested was an easy space to enter and begin earning a living right away:

Richard, 32 years: wherever I park this *boda[boda]* no one asks me for 'rent' [parking fees], that is the reason why I am working with the *boda[boda]* ... I can leave home in the morning with just 3,000 UGX, enough for petrol, and by 1 pm I will have made money and can send 5,000 UGX home to my wife to buy food for the day.

Vince, 29 years: It is easy to learn how to ride a *boda[boda]*, you get on, and after a few tries you learn how to balance, and then you are ready to take passengers.

Isaac mentioned there was no need for training, while Vince spoke of how easy it was to learn how to ride a motorcycle taxi. Isaac also spoke of not needing capital

to start out with a *bodaboda*. The *bodaboda* sector relies on internal forms of investment in which *bodaboda* veterans assume the role of investors and lease out *bodabodas* for new entrants, the latter of which pay an agreed daily fee (Wamala-Larsson 2019). I argue that this is a strategy to achieve more rights to the city for young men who are potential *bodaboda* drivers. By saying 'if you know people', Isaac suggested that social networks are key to how new drivers find openings to start in the business. Thus having access to a *bodaboda* and learning how to drive one are *social* processes shaped by *bodaboda* drivers and their engagement with the society around them. It is also important to consider the infrastructural and legislative realities that created the perception of *bodaboda* work being 'easy entry': the fact that the burgeoning transport needs of Kampala's residents were not met through formalized means. Together with the desperate need for unemployed young men to participate socio-economically, these realities shaped the *bodabodas'* position in the urban informal transport sector.

Another tactic used by the *bodaboda* and other informal businesses in Uganda was to self-organize into structures that helped them survive in the midst of competition within the larger transport industry:

Vince, aged 29: The best way to benefit from the *bodaboda* business long term is to belong to associations. You cannot take your daily income and keep it at home, there is no long-term benefit there. But join associations that are to your standards, because it is so easy to join associations that might take possession of your property because you have failed to pay in time. So find associations that will benefit you. So for me, I am in associations that have helped me.

As part of their self-management, *bodaboda* drivers set up stages or hubs from which to operate and create their own rules concerning governance and entrance requirements. The *bodaboda* communities that assembled at their respective *bodaboda* stages interacted around shared interests and socially agreed-upon ideas, and tended to embody similar social and linguistic patterns. The social meanings constructed at each *bodaboda* stage were negotiated and evolved through interaction:

Isaac, aged 34 years. It is possible to join a *boda[boda]* stage ... you must pay a small fee to be able to join [it]. If the stage you join is a busy one, a popular one, the fee is tailored to that situation. But at this stage of ours that is slow and small, the fee is equally small. So here, for example, the fee is 30 000 UGX, after we have studied your habits and seen what kind of person you are. But further in the inner city, the *boda[boda]* stages can even demand 1million–1.5m UGX! [approx. 370 euros]. But of course by the time they ask for that amount of money, that place is busy and is good for business.

Policing within and across informal transport sectors

From a socio-political standpoint, informal transport has its own *politics of informality* that *bodaboda* drivers must navigate to earn a living. Disputes, disagreements, and resistance were common features in the informal transport system. Strategies employed by the various factions combined layers of political, economic, technological, and legal structures that speak to Kampala's lack of formal guidelines for the *bodaboda*. In the absence of such guidelines, *bodabodas* strove for internal forms of regulation and common understandings, and appeared to work hard to respect these boundaries.

Isaac's interview in the previous section reveals that there were intra-system tensions among different *bodaboda* factions that were territorial about the locations in which they were permitted to conduct business. *Bodaboda* factions monitored each other and ensured that *bodaboda* drivers from other 'stages' or hubs did not take their customers. They were therefore defensive of their 'work areas' and did not permit outside *bodabodas* to enter. An important element in this system was the 'access card', an artefact that granted permission to enter zones and also communicated the driver's legitimacy to other zone drivers and its customers. The card was thus a reliable system of verification used to negotiate access and position within the *bodaboda* fraternity:

Jack, aged 30 years: The challenge in this business is that sometimes if I have to go downtown, if for some reason I have forgotten the card [at home], and the other *boda[boda]* colleagues take money from me [...] We have fellow *bodaboda* drivers, and we are all very territorial about our driving and parking areas [at the *bodaboda* stages]. Other *bodaboda* drivers can intimidate [a driver] who is not from that area and harass [him] for not having a card that grants him permission to be in that area or [...] to drive in the area. So other *boda[boda]*s police us. And they can demand money from you for being in their area.

Minibus taxis and *bodabodas* were competing actors in the informal transport industry, and their co-existence was likewise fraught with tensions, as 37-year-old Jerry and 34-year-old Isaac complained:

Jerry: Our biggest challenge as *bodabodas* are the vehicle drivers, especially the taxi drivers. They have no respect for other road users, they do exactly as they like. For example, about 5 km from here a taxi driver just braked suddenly, without even signalling, and I ran straight into him, I ended up in the hospital, because the impact was so strong. This happened a while ago, but it affected me.

Isaac: Taxis stop everywhere, wherever a passenger tells the driver to drop them off is where he stops. These stops can come suddenly, and if you are driving along and closely behind, then your brakes refuse to work, or you do not have brakes, you hit him, and the thing is that for many of us *bodabodas* we do not have road permits, that is the first thing they grab onto and try to hold us down, taunting you in the process about what a bad driver you are, and how you do not know how to handle a *boda[boda]*.

The power struggles within the informal transport sector emerged during the interactions that took place on the road. Reading Jerry's excerpt in light of what Isaac said earlier about the ease of learning to drive a *bodaboda* raises questions about the extent to which *bodaboda* drivers had been exposed to traffic rules or where they could receive formal instruction. One might even suggest that the competition between taxis and *bodabodas* for passengers overrode respect for road rules, and that drivers were not above using any means possible to frustrate each other. *Bodabodas* are known to use pedestrian footpaths, but when the taxis have become frustrated with the congested roads, they have also taken to pedestrian footpaths, forcing both pedestrians and *bodabodas* aside (Knight 2009).

As part of its efforts toward urban renewal, the city administration of Kampala has striven to enforce a culture of legality in its dialogue with the Uganda National *Bodaboda* Association.¹⁴ Yet the actual interactions between law enforcement officers and *bodaboda* drivers appeared from my interviews to be more of a grey zone in which rules and regulations were applied somewhat arbitrarily. *Bodaboda* drivers described encounters with policemen that appeared from their perspective more as opportunities for obtaining bribes than enforcing the law:

Dan, aged 27: I was approaching Wandegeya, I was going opposite the YMCA, I had not even reached the traffic lights. I was carrying one passenger when a traffic police came and caught me and told me to get off the *boda[boda]*, and I asked him, 'What have I done wrong?', and he demanded I get off the *boda[boda]*. Since *he is the authority* I got off the *boda[boda]*, and they took my *boda[boda]*, and it was detained for 4 days after which I was asked to pay 80 000UGx [20 euros] to get it back. I took that money and I paid, and imagine, they didn't even give me a receipt, and yet I was carrying one person, I had on a helmet, I had my stage card, and ok [...] I didn't have a [driver's] licence, but I had everything else.

(author's emphasis)

Dan did not have his driver's licence, but it remained unclear to him why he had been pulled over in the first place. He also wondered why the transaction

with the police officer failed to be recorded in the form of a receipt – a social artefact that would have verified the formality of the transaction and forced the police officer to record the entire exchange. The legitimacy of the transaction was further called into question when the police did not demand that Dan show proof of a driver's licence before he retrieved his motorcycle from the police impound. Dan left the police station with his *bodaboda* and continued driving passengers without the licence until his next encounter with the police. Tom and Bob, both aged 29, also complained how the police had stopped them for undisclosed infractions or had demanded 'penalty fees' of 50,000UGX (12 euros) if the driver did not have all the required permits. If a driver was unable to hand over the cash to the police at that moment, the police confiscated their motorcycles and would only release them when paid 250,000–150,000UGX (60–36 euros). This meant that in the eyes of *bodaboda* drivers, 'law enforcement' could appear simply to be permission for officials to extort money from drivers, 'since the officials knew that *bodaboda* drivers rely on their motorcycles to survive,' grumbled Tom.

To sum up, it is clear that the city of Kampala as a social and physical/technological environment constrains, but also enables and in turn is enabled by the *bodaboda* sector, which is equally a melding of social and technological capacities (Bijker and Law 1992). Even if individual drivers come under pressure from more formalized institutions in the city, the *bodaboda* sector as a whole is thriving. Its ubiquitous presence in the city makes manifest the compromises between, on the one hand, the physical/technological infrastructure of the city and, on the other, regulatory and law enforcement systems, which have their own informal practices 'on the ground'. The practices and implementation of municipal administration are therefore co-produced along with the *bodaboda* industry, since the city's operations and efficiency depend on flows of people and goods occurring as smoothly and quickly as possible.

Conclusion: can *bodaboda* drivers achieve their rights to the city?

Drawing on the notion that technologies such as motorcycle taxis mirror their societies in important ways (Bijker and Law 1992: 3), my empirical material makes visible the environment in which the *bodaboda* industry negotiates its continued existence and right to the city. The inadequate infrastructure of Kampala encourages this continued existence at the same time that it constrains, shapes, and

reshapes the *bodaboda* industry in unpredictable ways. The social and physical/technological systems intrinsic to Kampala make *bodabodas* a vital form of transport and provide opportunities for the *bodaboda* transport sector to flourish. It is therefore crucial to acknowledge the mutual influence between the two.

The informality of *bodabodas* has been seen as a problem in public discourse in Uganda, with official institutions and the media fuelling the social stigmatization of *bodabodas* as wayward and disorderly. Yet in analysing the behaviour of the police officer reported to have interrogated Dan and confiscated his *bodaboda* for four days, one might ask where informality ends and formal institutions begin. The same police officers who relied on *bodabodas* to assist them with their intelligence-gathering work were the authorities that harassed drivers like Dan and demanded payments that were not officially recorded.

Efforts by the KCCA to engage the Uganda National Bodaboda Association were constantly fraught with tension. *Bodaboda* drivers experienced clear frustration over the limited services provided by KCCA, which seemed meagre when balanced against the KCCA's demands that *bodabodas* are required to have insurance and driving permits.¹⁵ Several *bodaboda* drivers with whom I spoke wanted the government to upgrade the road infrastructure and thereby improve their working conditions so that they could earn a living and even pay taxes. As far as they were concerned, if the KCCA wished to engage with the *bodaboda* sector, this process should start with improving the roads. If the KCCA intended to work toward integrating the *bodaboda* into a formalized transport system, the city of Kampala needed to re-examine the structures and practices that had contributed to the *bodaboda* industry's expansion, as well as the roles of the KCCA and law enforcement within this process.

A sociotechnical approach to the right to the city assesses the relationship between the city and its citizens. The social relationships among actors in a sociotechnical configuration are fundamental to harnessing what some have referred to as sociotechnical trust (Chopra, Paja, and Giorgini 2011). In the case of the *bodaboda* industry and Kampala city, the sociotechnical relationship thrives on being able to predict how the other will react. In practice, this means that for KCCA the existence of *bodabodas* is the catalyst for continued efforts towards 'modernizing' the city because the *bodabodas* are blamed for daily traffic gridlocks, chaos on the roads, and road accidents.¹⁶ Reciprocally, the *bodaboda* sector trusts that the city will be unable to provide public transport or rectify the infrastructure shortcomings anytime soon. The tentative trust premised on the presumptive behaviour of the actors involved is one of convenience. Yet despite this co-dependency, there still exists much suspicion between Kampala city and

the *bodaboda* sector. For the *bodaboda* sector to reframe its sociotechnical trust in Kampala city requires that the trust be encoded into Kampala's structural design. This means that the roads and their information systems (traffic lights, speed limits, traffic stops, and general traffic rules) must become something on which the *bodabodas* can reliably depend in their everyday road interactions.

The sociotechnical approach asserts that change in either the social or technical aspects of a system will have an impact on the mutual construction of both. In other words, improving the structure of Kampala's roads should have a transformative effect on the *bodaboda* sector. *Bodaboda* drivers are understandably concerned over what this transformation could mean for their trade. The current structure of roads and loose legislative environment support their continued existence. Improving roads and formalizing the relationship between the *bodabodas* and KCCA would likely cede more power to public authorities, leaving the *bodaboda* industry with little leeway to continue business as usual. The paradox here is that as much as the *bodaboda* industry laments the current structure of Kampala's roads and calls for improvement, this development would mean that *bodaboda* drivers would need to obtain road licences, driving permits, insurance, and roadworthy vehicles. Since all of these cost money and restrict entry into the trade, such changes would likely mean that the *bodaboda* industry would no longer be able to employ the same number of unskilled young urban men that it does currently.

Following the argument from Chen (2005) to approach the informal sector in general as the base/foundation of a growing economy, one recommendation moving forward for the *bodaboda* sector is to look at *bodabodas* as the base of the transport sector for Kampala. Through this lense the contribution the *bodaboda* sector makes to the growth and sustainability of Kampala (see also Evans, O'Brien and Ng 2018) might be unpacked. My interviews also suggest that the sector is open to negotiating their right to the city but on condition that the infrastructure is expanded to accommodate *bodabodas*, and that certain structures such as formal training centres for *bodaboda* drivers are put in place, even if this means that *bodaboda* drivers must pay taxes.

Notes

- 1 <http://www.codatu.org/wp-content/uploads/Should-south-african-minibus-taxis-be-scrapped-Formalizing-informal-urban-transport-in-a-developing-country-Roland-LOMME.pdf> (accessed 10 March 2020).

- 2 https://www.kcca.go.ug/uploads/KCCA_STRATEGI_PLAN_2015-2016.pdf (p. 49) (accessed 12 April 2020).
- 3 See also <https://www.monitor.co.ug/Business/Prosper/boda-boda-economy-defining-streets-Kampala/688616-2869756-d4bwbo/index.html> (accessed 12 March 2020).
- 4 <https://www.monitor.co.ug/Business/Prosper/boda-boda-economy-defining-streets-Kampala/688616-2869756-d4bwbo/index.html> (accessed 12 March 2020).
- 5 Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities of the *bodaboda drivers*.
- 6 https://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1306253/kcca-unveils-plan-decongest-city (accessed 3 April 2020); <https://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Kampala-problems-blamed-on-poor-planning/688334-5198716-159hcjgz/index.html> (accessed 3 April 2020).
- 7 Kampala Capital City Authority is the governing authority ensuring an organized Kampala city www.kcca.co.ug. Part of KCCA's Strategic plan 2014–2015/2018–2019 is the promotion of public transport systems by discouraging the use of informal transport services, in particular the *bodaboda*. https://www.kcca.go.ug/uploads/KCCA_STRATEGI_PLAN_2015-2016.pdf (p. 49) (accessed 12 April 2020).
- 8 One euro = 4100 Ugandan shillings.
- 9 See Nyanzi et al. 2004; Nyanzi, Nyanzi-Wakholi, and Kalina 2009; Evans, O'Brien and Ch Ng 2018; Wamala-Larsson 2019.
- 10 See also Goodfellow and Titeca (2012); Monteith: A 'Market for the People'? 2019, p. 61 https://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1446911/mp-regulations-bodaboda-operations (accessed 16 June 2019).
- 11 https://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1416866/insurers-cyclists-police-team-policy (accessed 3 October 2020).
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Mobile Phone Theft, Resale, and Violence in Dar es Salaam

Laura Stark

Introduction

In Africa's towns and cities more than those on any other continent, governments seem unable to ensure security for their citizens. The majority of urban residents find themselves 'entangled within power dynamics that position them at the city's margins, literally and figuratively' (Myers 2011). Although urban informality is defined by its 'illegality' from the perspective of regulatory elites (Potts 2007), some informal activities are viewed as predatory or harmful by the urban residents who must deal with them in their everyday lives. These include bribery by officials and service providers, dispossession of inheritance by relatives, brokerage fraud, extortion by local government officials, and the harassment carried out by security guards against street vendors. Taken together, these practices constitute both obstacles to accessing resources by the poor and impediments to residents' abilities to keep their hard-won resources.

In the city I studied – Dar es Salaam – the most feared and disapproved predatory practice was theft. In interviews recorded in 2010–2018 from two low-income neighbourhoods in Tanzania, I found that thieves often resorted to violence to obtain what they needed. Thieves were usually the poorest and most desperate of urban predators, had no socially legitimate claims to others' resources and no means of alluding to, or disguising themselves as having such claims. Neighbourhood thieves were always described as male.

Theft is just one practice employed by the poor against each other, but my point is not that the poor exploit each other and are thus responsible for their own poverty. Many lower-income persons cannot choose the resource networks

into which they are integrated because they cannot relocate to other places, or because they depend on these networks to survive. Looking closely at systemic social mechanisms of poverty is therefore one means to avoid blaming the poor for their own deprivation (Clever 2005: 894).

To understand theft, it is important to recognize that in the cities of Sub-Saharan Africa, money is needed to access everything, and the struggle to obtain money is relentless. Even 'everyday forms of sociability' (Olivier de Sardan 1999: 19) are intertwined with money to the extent that it becomes impossible to separate the economic from the socio-cultural and the forbidden from the permissible (also Potts 2007): '[In Africa] this monetarization of everyday forms of sociability is the object of much exertion of pressure [...] the over-monetarization of everyday life obliges all and sundry to engage in a permanent quest of 'means' and blurs the distinction between legally admissible and legally condemnable ones' (Olivier de Sardan 1999: 19).

In the course of my interviews, it became clear that although local theft in Sub-Saharan Africa has received scant scholarly attention,¹ it involves more than a simple predatory/victim relationship. In this chapter I therefore ask: *How does theft operate in these neighbourhoods? How precisely does it engender violence? What can be done to reduce the harm caused by theft?*

Official discourses on crime are seen by social scientists to be integral to processes of social exclusion, with the boundary between legal and illegal spheres of activity both fluid and politically defined (Wacquant 2002; Penglase, Kane, and Parnell 2009). This chapter focuses not on official discourses, but on theft from the grassroots perspectives of residents, local government, and local police. Their accounts emphasized that theft was a practice that unambiguously crossed the line of social acceptability because for the poor, every lost possession was potentially irreplaceable due to the chronic lack of money.

The most commonly stolen item in the neighbourhoods I studied were mobile phones (Han 2012: 2067–2069; Archambault 2017). To analyse why, as well as what happened to those mobile phones, I use Arjun Appadurai's (1986) reflections on the social life of things as a methodological point of departure (see also Pfaff 2010). Mobile phones occupy a 'commodity phase' (Appadurai 1986: 17) not only when they are first sold in shops, but throughout the span of their functional existence: they are bought from shops, given as gifts to relatives or girlfriends, lost, found, and passed from person to person in the various transactions described in this chapter (also Archambault 2017: 84–85). Among lower-income urban residents, they are always used by *someone* until they cease to function and cannot be repaired at a reasonable cost. I have followed the

mobile phones lost and acquired through theft to see where they lead and what this implies for the (lack of) power and agency of persons involved.

Setting and data

Urban residents of Tanzania's most populous city, Dar es Salaam (pop. 4.36 million),² live within a dense and intricate system of niche exploitation and benefit-seeking. Roughly 70 per cent of city residents lives in poor, informal settlements (World Bank 2002), and an estimated 50 per cent of the population in these settlements live on an average income of roughly 1 USD per day, well below the current international poverty line of 1.9 USD (Ndezi 2009: 77–78). Much of Tanzania's poverty today can be traced back to the world recession of the 1970s, resulting in a dramatic decline in real wages of Tanzanian workers and the subsequent economic restructuring such as the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) promoted by the International Monetary Fund in the 1980s and 1990s (Tripp 1989; UNICEF 1990: 87; Lugalla 1997).

This chapter is part of an ongoing, university-funded study begun in 2010 and related to poverty and gender in two low-income neighbourhoods of Dar es Salaam, which I have renamed Kijito (pop. 16,000) and Mahalikavu (pop. 12,000) for purposes of anonymity. The physical environments of the neighbourhoods I studied lacked sanitation, sufficient living spaces, easily available safe drinking water, durability of structures, storm drainage, and security of tenure. None of the residents I interviewed received wages from the formal sector at the time of the interview. The neighbourhoods were located within a ward that had the highest incidence of reported crime in the municipal region of Kinondoni (Imori and Pallangyo 2017), and extremely few development projects and humanitarian NGOs were operating there.

In total, I conducted over 300 interviews with residents in these neighbourhoods in order to gain a holistic and contextual understanding of their lives. My data was built from in-depth interviews and observations in which interview participants were given a broad latitude to bring up topics that were most important to them. Although I did not conceive of it as such at the time, my fieldwork took the form of 'patchwork ethnography' (Günel, Varma and Watanabe 2020): I visited the same neighbourhoods eight times, interviewing intensively in the neighbourhoods for periods of three to four weeks during each visit. A ninth round of interviews in 2018 took place through audio Skype accessed through mobile phone by an interpreter living in Dar es Salaam who travelled to one of the neighbourhoods. The patchwork approach of my data collection ensured a necessary 'slow thinking'

(Günel, Varma and Watanabe 2020) and reflection on the numerous topics and challenges encountered in my fieldwork. These challenges included the fact that some interview participants did not know what a university or research study was, and they remained convinced that I worked for an NGO, the most familiar role for a white person (*mzungu*) in Tanzania. Because I was easily identifiable as a foreigner by my skin colour and many residents assumed that any white person was extremely wealthy, everyone assumed that I possessed more money than I would ever need. Nearly every meeting with a Tanzanian local therefore became a negotiation in which I was asked for financial assistance: to buy a house for a taxi driver, help pay for children's school fees, or merely to 'help' in the form of giving cash. This quickly became exhausting, although I understood people's motives for asking (Stark 2020b).



Figure 7.1 Kijito is bordered on one side by a small river (photo: Laura Stark, 2013).

Theft was a topic brought up spontaneously by the interview participants in my very first interviews, when I asked them about the best and worst aspects of living in their neighbourhoods. In subsequent field visits from 2013 to 2017, I focused more specifically on the topics of theft and other predatory practices in ninety interviews. Of these ninety interview participants, 78 per cent ($n = 70$) were women and 22 per cent ($n = 20$) were men. More women were interviewed due to the fact that they were at home at least part of the day, unlike men who were outside the neighbourhood at work or seeking work. Interviewees self-identified with thirty-seven ethnic groups in Tanzania, reflecting the ethnically heterogeneous composition of these urban neighbourhoods. Of those interviewed, 89 per cent were Muslims, and 11 per cent were Christian, which corresponds to religious identification in the sub-wards more broadly.³ Functioning mobile phone devices were owned by 86 per cent of the men and 73 per cent of the women I interviewed between 2013 and 2017.

In order to find interview participants I approached two NGOs and they introduced me to two women who became my key informants. These key informants asked persons in their neighbourhoods if they would agree to be interviewed. For security reasons, they decided not to invite drug users or persons suspected of theft to interviews. Otherwise, participants were chosen by them at random and not excluded on the basis of gender, age, or other criteria. Interviews were conducted in Kiswahili, and female interpreters shared similar socio-economic backgrounds with the interview participants.

A limitation of my research strategy was that I did not interview any families of persons identified in the community as thieves. Theft was highly stigmatized and disapproved in this community, and it is unlikely that anyone would have spontaneously admitted to having thieves in their family.

Kijito was the first neighbourhood I visited in 2010. It was bounded on one side by a main road and on the other by a small river. Inside were houses built of cement, arranged haphazardly and connected by outdoor yards and open spaces. There were no roads on which automobiles could easily pass, only paths and corridors between houses. The only vehicles that occasionally entered these spaces were pushcarts and narrow three-wheeled taxis (*bajajis*). Corn and local vegetables were grown in the open spaces between houses, goats were tethered to trees, and chickens roamed the grass pecking at edible pieces of garbage. Despite being near the centre of a city with over 4 million people, the predominant impression inside both Kijito and Mahalikavu was that of a rural village: palm trees swayed in the quiet breeze, the sound punctuated only by roosters crowing and the occasional blare of music from a radio. Usually only a few residents could be seen walking or

carrying out daily tasks in the open spaces between houses. Although garbage and waste covered the uneven ground, the predominant smell in the dry season was that of smoke from charcoal cooking fires. In the rainy season, as I experienced for myself in March 2015, the unpaved ground became a morass of foul-smelling water and slippery mud, and the risk of flash floods was ever present.

I was told by older residents that the sub-wards had been farmland as recently as the 1970s. Many current residents had moved to the city decades ago, worked as traders in the city centre, saved enough money and bought land to build a house in this peripheral, unplanned, and unregulated area that soon became haphazardly crowded. Their quality of their life worsened over two decades as the real-estate value of their land and homes decreased, making it impossible for them to move to other parts of the city with money obtained through the sale of their home. Some homeowners have rented out rooms to tenants, but the amount of money obtained from rent is small in comparison to the cost of food in the city. In Kijito, rents have been among the lowest in the city due to the dangers and difficulties faced by residents in annual flooding during the rainy seasons. Many renters who experience one rainy season move out before the next one, keeping rents low. As a result, Kijito is one of the cheapest housing options for the poorest renters in the city. Like homeowners, the poorest renters cannot easily move to places where rental prices are higher. In both Kijito and Mahalikavu, the majority of homeowners and renters occupied the lowest income and least educated segments of the urban population, and had few options to live elsewhere in the city.

Challenges facing local governance

The municipal government of Dar es Salaam is organized into three districts that are further subdivided into wards and sub-wards (*mtaa*). In Tanzania's decentralized system of governance, even low-income sub-wards have their own local government office staffed by workers who also reside in the sub-ward. In Kijito, the physical office of the local government was located inside the neighbourhood and consisted of a single concrete room with a large table and wooden and plastic chairs. The staff and council members were all sub-ward residents. The local government was responsible for settling disputes and providing the official identification documents needed for voter registration, passports applications, opening bank accounts, and getting relatives out of jail. Another of its functions was recording informal land ownership and land transactions.

As in other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, local authorities in Tanzania face significant challenges due to rapid and uncoordinated urbanization. Tanzania's current decentralized governance model dates from the Local Government Reform Programs (LGRP) of 1997–2008 (UN-Habitat 2002; REPOA 2008). The programmes set up institutional structures aimed at greater local level democratization, as well as devolution of authority and resources to communities. However, decentralization has not solved the problems of service delivery to the poor (Kessey and McCourt 2010). While institutional structures are in place for the diffusion of power to lower levels of government, the actual processes and practices employed in governance do not facilitate this kind of power transfer (Ewald and Mhamba 2014).⁴ Sub-ward local governments have always been affiliated with one of the political parties in Tanzania's multiparty system, and according to some interview participants, affiliation or political opposition to the ruling party have been important factors in higher government decisions on whether local governments receive government funding for development projects.

My interviews with local government officers suggested that in terms of planning and executing a unified urban strategy, there were significant gaps in communication between local and central administrative levels of government. At the fiscal level, local governments had neither the resources they needed nor the means to raise funds independently of the central state administration. They were therefore dependent on what was funnelled down to them from the highest government levels (Ewald and Mhamba 2014). Local government officers responsible for day-to-day operations (the elected executive officer, his appointed secretary, and the ten elected *mtaa* council members) did not receive salaries for their work. They received only a small travel allowance that enabled them to attend official meetings elsewhere in the city. In the sub-ward I studied, this allowance was only TZS 5,000 (roughly 2 euros) per month in 2013–2015, and was suspended altogether in 2017. The lack of salary meant that in addition to their many duties for the sub-ward, all members of the local government staff had to spend time generating income through their own small businesses.

Mobile phones as moveable wealth

Thieves in the neighbourhoods I studied were reported to be local, unemployed young men aged between 15 and 25, a demographic that tallies with research conducted on crime in the Kinondoni municipal region of Dar es Salaam more broadly (Imori and Pallangyo 2017). Being unemployed, they were unable to

fulfil the Tanzanian normative ideal of a man able to provide for himself and his family (Silberschmidt 2001, 2004; Wamoyi et al. 2010; Plummer and Wight 2011). They therefore had no possibility to make socially legitimate claims on the resources of others. Instead, they obtained these resources by force or stealth, by self-organizing into informal groups and arming themselves, which gave them a physical advantage over residents. In 2010, 2014, and 2017, interview participants complained that various local gangs of thieves with names like 'Rat Road' operated in the areas I studied. Periodically such thieves were jailed or driven away, so that in other years theft was reported to be less common.

Local theft took different forms, including home break-ins at night, thieves lying in wait for lone passersby, or the snatch-and-grab of handbags. The items stolen by local thieves were nearly always money or objects that could be carried fairly easily and resold for enough money to make it worth the risk. Such items included laundry hung outside to dry and chickens foraging in open spaces between dwellings. Even worshippers at the local mosque had experienced theft while they were at prayer, and were told to hide their shoes when removing them before entering the mosque.

The most commonly stolen items, however, were mobile phones (Han 2012; Archambault 2017). Most people I interviewed in Kijito and Mahalikavu owned a mobile phone. In literature dealing with the global North, mobile phones are often discussed as consumer objects linked to status and leisure. In the neighbourhoods I studied, they were equally, if not primarily, tools of necessity and survival. In Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, the most common function of mobile phones, especially for female users, is to keep in touch with social networks of support. Especially for the poor, phones are vital for requesting help in times of crisis (Porter et al. 2012; Stark 2020a: 530). Mobile phones are routinely used by the poor to receive money from relatives through mobile money services (Stark 2019). Once a mobile phone was stolen, it was sorely missed and not easily replaced. A second-hand, pirated or stolen feature phone costing as little as TZS 8,000 to 15,000 [5–7 euros] required the equivalent of a week's worth of food in this neighbourhood in which many people lived hand-to-mouth each day. By contrast, the middle classes and wealthy in Dar es Salaam could afford to buy new mobile phones from the shop.

Smartphones are globally the most common valuable item that people usually carry with them. For thieves in Dar es Salaam, mobile devices carried in a person's pocket or handbag represented a high-value package that was easy to carry and hide. Mobiles could also be resold for a sum of money greater than the amount of cash carried by most Tanzanians in public. Worldwide, the unique portability

and value of mobile phones has given rise to a lively global underground economy in which stolen smartphones are trafficked across borders and sold in diverse countries.⁵

The people I interviewed were often dependent on the help and goodwill of relatives and friends to survive, and could not afford to leave a call unanswered, even if answering it revealed the phone to thieves. Mobile devices were easily snatched when users brought them from pockets or bras. The theft experienced by 22-year-old Rukia⁶ was a typical example of this:

In 2009, my mother gave me a bag of maize and I was carrying it to the maize-grinding machine in Mahalikavu. And I had my baby on my back. Somebody called me on my phone so I took the call, and just at that moment a young man who had been following me grabbed the phone out of my hand as he ran past. [Interviewer: Could he have stolen it if you had not been on the phone at that moment?] No, he could not have taken it from my skirt pocket.

But phones did not always need to be revealed during use in order to be stolen. Rehema, aged 22, explained that it didn't matter if the device was hidden: 'The thieves will threaten you physically and take it from you.'⁷ This was illustrated by the experience of 32-year-old Zawadi, who, when I asked her whether her phone had ever been stolen, related the following story:

It happened to me twice, once last year when I was coming home. Now the thieves know that if a woman is carrying a handbag, she is not putting her phone there, so maybe she keeps it in her bra. Three young men came from behind, one put me in a chokehold with his elbow and the others searched my bra, putting their hands down my front. They found it in my bra; I was wearing jeans and had put my money in my jeans pocket but they were so interested in finding a phone that they didn't notice the money. This happened in Kijito.⁸

One of the most common places where phones were stolen was buses. Thieves either waited for the bus to stop and grabbed the phone through the window (bus windows were open year-round in the hot climate), or posed as ordinary passengers on the bus and stole phones from handbags. The neighbourhoods I studied were said to be considered particularly risky for phone theft from buses. When city buses reached these areas, conductors announced to passengers that they should guard their phones and handbags. Aziza reported how her phone was stolen as she texted someone: the bus was moving slowly in a traffic jam and the phone was stolen through the bus window so quickly that Aziza never saw the thief. Husna described witnessing a phone theft on a bus and being too afraid to raise the alarm because the thief had glared at her menacingly: 'I

was afraid to do anything, because [the thieves] always carry weapons in their pockets, razor blades, scissors or a knife.⁹

Thieves who stole phones from city buses were often *wapiga debe*, young men who began to appear spontaneously at bus stops in the 1990s to shout out the destinations of the approaching bus for passengers unable to read the signs. In return, bus conductors gave them small sums of money at the bus stop. Zakia,¹⁰ aged 28, described how the *wapiga debe* operated:

Some conductors see the thieves in action and they themselves have once been *wapiga debe*, so they say, 'I saw you, let's share half of it.' They are not protecting the passengers. My uncle was a bus driver, he showed me and my sister how the *wapiga debe* work, I saw how they do it. When the bus comes, there are so many passengers rushing and squeezing to get on, they are concentrating on [getting in], and the *wapiga debe* come and pretend they are passengers. There are two or three of them, they push in with the others, they have a half-open bag or backpack and one [thief] grabs the phones or money, and hands it off to the other [thief] in the crowd when the other people don't notice. The conductors and drivers are afraid of the *wapiga debe*, if they warn the passengers, [the *wapiga debe*] can retaliate with weapons.

Circuits of theft and resale: the life cycle of mobile phones

Where did the stolen phones go? Most appear to have been privately resold back to city residents 'at a very low price'. Thieves could approach potential customers and show them phones hidden in their sleeves that they promised to sell cheaply (Archambault 2017: 89), but thieves also resold stolen phones to persons through fences or agents (*dalali*) who lived inside the neighbourhoods:

[Thieves] have agents, they give the phones to the agents, tell them that they can take a percentage if they sell the phone, and the thief will collect the money later. The agents walk around in their neighbourhoods and offer to sell the phone to their neighbours. The thieves only have one certain person [the agent] whom they trust to give them the money [...] That agent could be anybody.¹¹

Hadija,¹² aged 34, said how after her smartphone was stolen, she bought a basic feature phone for TZS 10,000 (5 euros) from an agent who was a motorcycle taxi driver in his early 30s living with his wife and child. According to Hadija, everyone in the neighbourhood knew that this man sold stolen phones.

The resale of mobile phones was not always supply-driven or at random. It could also be organized. In Hadija's account, the agent had told her that if she

did not see the phone she wanted among the ones he was displaying on his open palm, that she should wait and ‘he would find it for her’. According to 49-year-old Fatima, a potential customer might tell the agent: ‘Get me this phone, a Tecno for instance, that costs TZS 300,000 (115 euros) in the shop, but I’ll pay you TZS 150,000.’¹³ People seeking to buy a phone for half of what it would cost new in the shop did not only ‘order’ phones from agents but also directly from thieves. In a joint interview, 32-year-old Salma and 27-year-old Khadija told how residents ordered cheap handsets from thieves and received them the same day:

Salma¹⁴: In this place, most of the people are buying phones from thieves, we know how to go to find [the thieves] along the road and you can tell them, ‘I want a phone’ and they will get you one. They are stealing the phones from [several neighbourhoods nearby], from people passing on the road, even [from people] in cars [...] A stolen Nokia phone might cost [the buyer] TZS 10,000–15,000.

Laura: Do the guys along the road go out and steal the phone after the ‘order’ is placed or do they already have phones they have stolen?

Salma and Khadija [animated]¹⁵: The thieves will say [to the potential buyer], okay, come back in the afternoon or the evening. He is the one doing the stealing and yes, he steals it after you tell him you want a phone. He might go on the bus and put his hand secretly in passengers’ handbags and steal it that way while the passengers are not noticing.

As low-income residents sought to replace their own stolen phones by paying a relatively low price for someone else’s stolen phone, the practice of theft gave rise to more theft. Theft was thus a systematic and networked practice in which residents were involved not only as thieves and victims but also as buyers of stolen phones and agents/fences for the resale of devices within neighbourhoods. Demand was driven by desperation, as the poor needed phones for nearly all income-earning and networking activities. While some victims of theft could afford to replace their stolen phones, the poorest urban residents – who were usually women – were left without. Those residents I interviewed who could not afford to replace their phones were perilously isolated even from the help of kin and friends.

Mobile phones thus circulated *from poor owners to poor buyers via poor thieves*. When I asked female interviewees – somewhat provocatively – whether residents therefore benefitted from phone theft because they could buy cheaper phones from thieves, women explained to me that in monetary terms they ended up losing much more than they gained by neighbourhood phone theft. Moreover, the largest problem linked to theft in their opinion was the violence that accompanied it.¹⁶

Since residents resisted the theft of their property, thieves used violence or its threat to pressure victims to relinquish their possessions before the alarm could be raised. Many thieves carried with them *panga* machetes, razor blades, scissors, or knives. Interviewees reported that at least one male vendor walking through their neighbourhood had been killed in 2017 by thieves in broad daylight. The danger of violence for neighbourhood residents was illustrated in the experience of 32-year-old Salma, who in 2017 lived in the house where I conducted interviews every day. On my last day of interviews, Salma came to where I sat with the female interpreter and showed us a large welt on her arm that had not been there the previous day. She told me that on the previous night, she had gone to the main road outside the neighbourhood to meet her child's father, who lived elsewhere and was bringing money for their child's support. Because of the irregular hours he worked as a driver, he could only meet her at night:

I was walking through the neighbourhood, it was dark, I switched on the torch of my phone. I was walking through the narrow passageway between the houses, and I encountered a young man who asked, 'Where are you going?' I told him, I am going to the road, my husband called me so I will meet him there, so he said, 'Give me the phone.' I hesitated to give it to him, so he took out his *panga* [machete], trying to scare me. He slammed my arm against the wall [she shows the mark it made] and I gave him my phone [...] He was walking around looking for somebody to steal from. I didn't even go to the road to meet with my husband [afterward] because I was afraid, I was trembling ... [with gestures and hand motions she relives the moment the thief took out his *panga*].¹⁷

Jabali's account

Salma's narrative is consistent with stories told by other residents about theft. Yet I also wanted to hear the other side of the story, that of neighbourhood thieves. As a non-Tanzanian who visited these neighbourhoods only during daylight hours and was always accompanied by at least one interpreter and/or key informant, I did not observe local theft first-hand. Since research participants were pre-selected for me in advance, I was never introduced to anyone whom others suspected had committed theft. It was a general consensus among interview participants, however, that thieves (*wezi*) lived among them in their neighbourhoods and that many of them were addicted to drugs and alcohol. Sometimes when walking through the neighbourhood, my companions

quietly pointed out to me groups of young men they identified as alcoholics or drug addicts. I did not ask to interview individuals known to be thieves because I sensed that doing so would arouse the disapproval of residents who had otherwise accepted my presence in the neighbourhoods in which they lived. However, in 2012 I became acquainted with one young man who later turned to theft, whom I shall call Jabali.

I interviewed Jabali the first time when he was 16. At the time, I was not researching the topic of theft, and therefore did not ask specifically about it. Shortly after my second interview with him when he was 19, I heard from a female resident in the community that Jabali had recently been identified by the local government as a thief. Jabali had come to ask this woman for help, since as a long-time resident she was respected and trusted by the local government. Jabali had promised her that he would commit no more theft, and she had spoken on his behalf to the local government. Three years later, when Jabali was 22, I asked him if I could interview him about this phase in his life.

In his first two interviews, Jabali had already mentioned a major difficulty faced by the poorest youth in his neighbourhood: 'once children reach the age of 16, the child must be independent, look after themselves, find their own food and income' (Stark 2018). He also mentioned that he had no support from family members and had to 'depend on himself' for survival (Stark 2018), a circumstance that caused him much stress. Both of Jabali's parents had died and he had lived in his grandmother's home with his aunt and uncle until his grandmother's death when he was 12 or 13. Before her death, his grandmother had warned him that he would likely soon be in a difficult position, since she was unsure whether his aunt and uncle would take care of him. A year or two later, although he was allowed to sleep in his aunt's and uncle's house, he was not given any of the food they cooked for themselves and their daughter. Needing income, he sought day work in construction, but the number of jobs were few, and obtaining them depended on connections that Jabali did not have. Jabali felt that most of the young men in Kijito he knew were living without one or both parents and had no access to jobs. For this reason, they joined 'bad groups' (*vikundi mbaya*) and began 'smoking, drinking, using marijuana and cocaine'.

When I asked Jabali to describe to me his experiences of theft, he told me that he had begun to commit theft when he was 'convinced by friends who saw that I had nothing to eat and advised me to join them'. He had stolen mobile phones from passengers at bus stops with a group of three young men for two months. The stolen phones were sold onward to an agent or fence (*dalali*) living in the neighbourhood, who paid Jabali and his companions for the phones based on

their list prices in shops. According to Jabali, if a smartphone cost TZS 300,000 (approx. 115 euros) in the shop, Jabali and his fellow thieves would receive only TZS 50,000 from the agent to share among themselves, whereas the agent who sold it onward to a customer for TZS 150,000 made a profit of TZS 100,000.

According to Jabali, after receiving the phones from thieves, the agents threw away the SIM card in the phone and went to a phone repair technician (*fundi sim*) operating out of an open-air roadside stall. This technician would erase ('flash') the memory in the device to delete any information that could identify the previous owner. After flashing the devices, agents carried three or four phones in their pockets to display to customers.

Based on Jabali's and other interview participants' accounts, stolen mobile devices did not appear to travel any great distance within the city before being resold. The resale of stolen mobile devices could thus be risky for the agent if a victim of phone theft suspected that his/her phone had been taken to a particular agent, and then posed as a customer wanting a cheap mobile phone. As Jabali explained, if such 'customers' saw their own phone among those displayed by the agent for sale, they could alert the police. However, since other residents in need of cash also sold their used phones to the same agents, an agent could always tell the police that 'someone came to bring me this phone to sell, so I didn't know it was stolen.' In addition, the police were said to be in a 'good friendship' with thieves and agents because the constant cash flow of this criminal activity created a lucrative opportunity for extortion. Local police were said to typically visit illegal vendors once or twice per week and demand between TZS 5,000 and TZS 50,000 each time.

At the same time that the profits from stolen mobile devices went primarily to agents rather than thieves, Jabali and his fellow thieves lacked the necessary capital to set themselves up as agents. Money would have been needed to purchase an assortment of stolen devices to offer customers, to pay the *fundi sim* to 'flash' the phone, and to pay bribes to police. Jabali's location within the cycle of mobile phone theft and resale was thus determined by his economically marginal location in the neighbourhood. He was not supported by his relatives, and he lacked employable skills and education in a context of high youth unemployment.

Jabali told how he had feared that he would be beaten by passengers at the bus stop if one of his victims had noticed the theft and alerted other passengers. His theft remained unnoticed, however, until one day he and a friend stole a phone from a woman walking along the road near his neighbourhood. Unknown to Jabali, the woman had recognized him and went to report him to the local government. The same day, a large crowd of people, some of whom

were wielding wooden sticks as weapons, appeared at the house where Jabali was living with his aunt and uncle: 'I wasn't there, but there were around thirty people, local government people and residents who had their things stolen, and when they had found out I was one of the thieves, they were angry. I was told by my [relative] and other friends that they had come looking for me because I had stolen their phones.'

Upon hearing this, Jabali went straight to the long-time female resident he trusted most in order to ask her advice. She told him that 'if you remain quiet, they can come back and beat you and even kill you.' She recommended that they go together to the local government office where Jabali would ask forgiveness and she would vouch for his good behaviour in future. As Jabali described, 'So we went and did that [...] The neighbours now trust me because they didn't see me steal anything again, so they are living well with me.'

Theft relies on violence and its threat

Jabali escaped the vengeful anger of the mob of residents, but violence against thieves was mentioned frequently in narratives about theft. In 2013, an HIV-positive boy was beaten by a group of young thieves who stole his antiviral medicine as he walked home one evening. The female head of the boy's family proudly told me how she, together with twelve of the boy's relatives living in the neighbourhood, had gone to the thieves' homes, yelled at them and attacked them physically. There was no recurrence of the theft. Chicken thieves, too, had been caught and physically beaten by residents. In 2017, 55-year-old Halima had one morning seen in her neighbour's yard

... a man with a big plastic bag chasing a chicken. Some chickens were already in the bag, he was collecting them. At first, I looked at him and was wondering 'Who this is?', then I shouted [towards the house of] the family who owned the chickens, 'They are stealing your chickens!' When the family came out of their house, I showed them the direction the thief had run, and the thief was chased and beaten physically. They asked him where he usually took the chickens he stole, because other families' chickens had also gone missing [...] He told them that he had sold them to a man who lived in [the nearby settlement]. So lots of people said, 'Let's go there.'

Halima told me, 'They were beating him so badly I was afraid they would kill him, and I felt responsible since I was the one who had raised the alarm, so I went with them as a witness.' When the group of neighbours arrived at the house

where the thief sold his stolen chickens, they found a large shed containing dozens of chickens. The owner had seen the group coming and had fled, leaving each neighbour to retrieve their own chickens, and the thief was taken to jail.¹⁸

Andries Du Toit (2004) has argued that the ability to use violent resistance in the poorest neighbourhoods of Sub-Saharan Africa can be seen as a means of survival and a key form of human capital. For the poorest urban inhabitants in Kijito, the loss of even low-cost items such as clothing hanging on the clothesline or pots and pans left outside for cooking can be a severe setback when households do not have money to replace them. Stolen mobile phones represent an even greater loss of resources, as well as the loss of residents' primary form of communication with others outside their locality. Residents of Dar es Salaam told me that when thieves were caught in the act they could be beaten, old car tyres stacked on top of them so they could not move, then dowsed with gasoline and set on fire. The police were said to always arrive too late to save the thief or identify the vigilantes.

In fact violence against thieves was not necessarily discouraged by local police. In another story of chicken theft, when the thief was found with the chickens, his neighbours attacked him physically and then called the police. Amira and Zakia described how the police who arrived on the scene had encouraged residents to beat thieves without restraint:

When the police arrived, they said, 'Why didn't you beat him until he died? Because we are tired of you [people] here in [this area]: always thieves, thieves. Beat him up and then call us and we will come to take the corpse.'¹⁹

Zakia added, 'The police will pretend they don't know who killed him,'²⁰ and Amira elaborated:

The policemen said, 'We arrived late because we knew you will beat him first. If he dies, call us. [...] We are not allowed to beat them. Beat them first, because if we come and take them to jail, their parents will pay the fines and take them out of jail. That is not a good way to punish them.'

The capacity of the local police force to deal effectively with theft deserves mention here. Currently, the ratio of police officers in Tanzania to residents (1 officer per 1,050 residents) is well below the international standard of 1 to 450 (Imori and Pallangyo 2017). Police are therefore limited in their means of protecting residents.

The prevalence of vigilante justice and violent reprisals provides insights into why thieves were eager to silence their victims through threats or actual violence until they could safely escape with stolen goods. The actions of both thieves and

their victims contributed to a cycle of violence that created heightened fear for everyone living in the neighbourhood.

The Kijito local government sought to break this cycle of violence by various means. In 2014, trusted young men aged 25–30 from the neighbourhood were hired (through voting by residents) to act as security guards in the area. All residents were asked to contribute TZS 500 (0.18 euros) each month toward these security guards' salaries. Although this experiment was short-lived due to the fact that many residents did not (or could not) pay the security fee, the women with whom I spoke described how, for a short time, the security guards had made a concrete difference in their everyday lives. Rebeka, 47 years of age, explained: 'Before, I used to see the young thieves hanging around [...] But now when I wake up at 3 am, I see only the security guys.'²¹ Security guards escorted women after nightfall to visit clinics and relatives in neighbouring settlements, and the female residents with whom I spoke believed that their visible presence discouraged thieves.

During the worst waves of theft in 2010, 2014, and 2017, the local government also asked police to help residents fight back by training them to band together and arm themselves when riding buses where armed thieves had previously struck. In 2015–2017, the newest sub-ward executive officer, himself a long-time resident, was reported by interview participants to be working energetically to eradicate thieves from the area, and his zeal was widely appreciated by residents. In one example, he recruited a group of male residents to make a citizen's arrest of a family of well-known thieves. After this, other thieves stayed away from the area for months, afraid to return.

Theft in a web of social relationships

Most thieves operating in neighbourhoods were known to residents: 'They are our children', as one woman put it. In 2016, the new local government officer in Kijito had asked residents to inform him if they 'saw a room occupied by five men together',²² so that he could investigate whether they were operating as thieves. This strategy may have worked for thieves who did not have family members living in the neighbourhood. The majority of thieves, however, were said to be young men residing with relatives. This complicated efforts by the local government to eradicate theft. In addition, the agents that received stolen goods and resold them to residents were also neighbours appearing to live ordinary lives.

Although morally condemned in this community, theft could best be characterized *as a relationship* organized through a complex social web of benefit-seeking and survival. Within this web, residents had developed their own tactics for minimizing the risks of living alongside thieves. One tactic used by residents was to remain on good terms with thieves in order to avoid being targeted for robbery. Some interviewees felt that thieves would not ‘do anything to the long-time residents here, because they are the children of neighbours and are known to us.’²³ Some women I interviewed told of having obtained positive results from being polite to local thieves or giving them a little money for food or cigarettes when they crossed paths in the neighbourhood. Halima described her experiences as follows:

Yes, if you want to be in good relations, when you pass by in the afternoon and they ask you for money, say, for a cigarette and you give it to them, and then at night they come, many of them in group, and if some of them recognize you as having helped them, they may say, no, don’t bother her, she is my sister, they may even escort you home. If you refuse [to help them], they may steal from you at night.²⁴

Young women who had been in intimate relations with local thieves might receive good treatment from other thieves in the same gang. Zuhura, a woman in her 20s, said: ‘I used to be in relationship with one of them, there was a group of five of them, so they are not stealing from me because I am their “sister-in-law”’²⁵

Interview participants also remarked that if one were on good terms with an agent who sold stolen phones one could – if one acted quickly – use this relationship to retrieve stolen phones held by the agent. Zakia²⁶ said that when her stepfather had been robbed at night near his home, he knew that his stolen phone would be brought to his neighbour, a well-known agent for thieves. He asked the agent to return the phone if it came to him, and the agent agreed. The next day, Zakia’s stepfather found his phone among the stolen phones that had been delivered to the agent. Also Fatima, a long-term female resident in her neighbourhood, told of having retrieved her daughter’s stolen phone in this way.

When agents returned phones without compensation to owners with whom they were acquainted, they were calculating ‘stakes that are social and not easily quantified’ (Bourdieu 1977: 177; Appadurai 1986). The stakes in this case were neighbourly assistance and residents’ silence and acquiescence regarding agents’ activities. The alternative was the possibility that neighbours could retaliate with collective violence or rouse the local government or local police to action.

Thieves, too, were motivated to stay on good terms with neighbours. Survival in low-income settlements depends on obtaining a great deal of informal knowledge conveyed by word of mouth. Such information includes informal medical advice, where a construction job might be available, and where piped water is flowing on which day of the week. Relationships with neighbours who can provide this advice need to be constantly cultivated and maintained, not only for one's own benefit but also for one's family members. Knowing their potential victims too well presented thieves with a dilemma: how to find victims from whom to steal while maintaining ties with neighbours and avoiding the risk of being recognized by them? In Jabali's example, a neighbour's recognition led to a mob of angry neighbours gathering at his home. Thieves needed to invest in social networking like everyone else, but as 19-year-old Mwanaisha²⁷ put it, 'If everybody here gives them money [to stay on their good side] and has a relationship with them, then who are they going to steal from?'

Local thieves used two main tactics to circumvent this problem. The first was to rob homes at night while occupants slept so that victims could not know the identities of the thieves. The second, reported to be a relatively new strategy, was to trade places with thieves from other areas, cooperating with outside groups of thieves to steal from each other's neighbourhoods. Each thief gave a percentage of the value of the goods to the home gang. Interviewees explained that 'thieves cooperate and swap territories because they are known in their own area'²⁸; 'what they do is exchange places [...] they don't want people from here to know that they are stealing'.²⁹ Through this strategy, local thieves were able to manoeuvre around residents' efforts to stay on good terms with them. Khadisa, a 32-year-old mother,³⁰ concluded that 'the ones you don't know, you can't stay in good relations with'.

Concluding discussion

Mobile phones are personal technologies used near-universally, and for urban users in the low-income neighbourhoods I studied, these material objects represent a form of survival capital. Yet beyond their use as a capability-enhancing technology, mobile phones are also key commodities to be traded for cash. What enables their transformation into such commodities are the dynamics of theft and demand in informal neighbourhoods, and the role of the poor as consumers who drive the demand for stolen, low-priced devices.

For many residents in urban neighbourhoods, the affordability of mobile phones thus depended on activities viewed as predatory by residents themselves. The practice of theft gave rise to more theft, as low-income residents sought to replace their own stolen phones by paying a relatively low price for someone else's stolen phone. Theft could also be directly motivated by 'orders' placed by potential customers.

In the end, neither thieves nor their victims in these neighbourhoods were empowered by theft. Thieves earned a sparse income, but this did not increase their social status or help their income-earning chances later. In fact, thieves had to live in constant fear of incarceration and violent retaliation. They took nearly all the risk but extracted only a small share of the value obtained through the resale of the stolen phones. The remainder was distributed between agents (*dalali*), phone repair technicians (*fundi sim*), and policemen who expected bribes.

When thieves stole from neighbours, they were forced to take into account the fact that their families relied upon the same neighbours for help and goodwill. Agents served to separate the act of theft from the customers who bought resold phones, an important issue when thieves were known personally to many potential resale customers. Overall, residents manoeuvred to maintain a relatively conflict-free relationship within the neighbourhood, which was important for all parties concerned, since there was often nowhere else they could afford to live.

Yet conflicting interests between thieves and other residents meant that friction was inevitable. The centrality of mobile phones in the lives of the poor brought dangers to their users: mobile phones were attractive to the very urban predators most likely to resort to violence. The possibility of violent retribution by residents increased the incentive for thieves to threaten their victims with violence in order to force them to relinquish their possessions quietly and not raise the alarm. In turn, the violence used by thieves hardened the resolve of victims to resist collectively.

The ultimate catalyst in the cycle of theft and resale, however, was neither thieves nor their victims, but two aspects surrounding mobile phones themselves. The first was the physical characteristics of the mobile devices, which facilitated the ease with which these devices could be snatched and hidden from view by thieves. The second was the enormous socio-economic gap between the purchasing power of the middle and upper classes in Dar es Salaam and that of the poorest who nevertheless needed phones for communication. Extreme poverty, high unemployment, substance addiction, and insufficient access to

mental health care fed local cycles of violence. In my interview data, these cycles had only been broken by assistance from the local government.

A closer look at a key role of Tanzania's local government in addressing the harm caused by theft is therefore warranted. Although Tanzania's decentralized governance practices have clear gaps in communication and resource transfer between governmental levels, there is much – as yet unrealized – potential for local governments to assist poor residents against predatory practices. Elected local government officers during the period 2010–2017 helped residents protect themselves from violent theft and provided significant support mechanisms to residents. Residents, in turn, cooperated with the local government and police in anti-theft operations.

Strengthening the resource base of elected local governments could be a key intervention in breaking the cycle of violence in theft. More resources would allow local governments to deter theft among unemployed youth. Young men could be offered work as neighbourhood security guards, an experiment that proved successful for a short time in the neighbourhood area studied, but one that ultimately foundered due to the inability of residents to pay security guards' salaries themselves.

My eight-year fieldwork indicates that activity by thieves in Kijito waxes and wanes as particular groups of thieves are driven out by residents, die from violence, illness or drug addiction, or abandon this form of income generation. Future research could examine local theft as an activity with its own life-cycle dynamics, in which young unemployed men are eventually replaced by other, younger men who are equally desperate.

Acknowledgements and funding. This work was supported by the Academy of Finland under Grant number 265737.

Notes

- 1 Exceptions are Newell (2006) and Archambault (2017).
- 2 National Bureau of Statistics Tanzania (2013).
- 3 Although no official census data exists on religious affiliation in Tanzania, an administrator in Kijito's local government estimated that Sunni Muslims comprise 75–90 per cent of the residents living in Kijito, and that Mahalikavu had a similar demographic structure.
- 4 In 2002, UN-Habitat defined the institutional and legal framework regulating relations between central and local governments in Tanzania as 'complex,

- excessively and self-defeatingly control oriented', as well as 'somewhat ambiguous and fragmented'. The central government was also criticized by UN-Habitat for exercising excessive fiscal control over local governments (UN-Habitat 2002: 70).
- 5 (Garreton, Nicol, and Schodt 2015; Nicol, Garreton & Schodt 2015); <http://www.sfwkly.com/news/the-life-of-a-stolen-phone-for-the-smartphone-industry-theft-is-a-part-of-the-business-model/>; <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/09/150909-inside-global-trade-stolen-smart-phones-brazil/>; <https://www.wired.com/2014/12/where-stolen-smart-phones-go/>
 - 6 Rukia, 22-year-old married mother of four children, primary school education. All names have been changed to protect the anonymity of interview participants.
 - 7 Rehema, 22-year-old married mother of four children, primary school education.
 - 8 Zawadi, 32-year-old mother of one child, primary school education.
 - 9 Husna, 45-year-old mother of four children, primary education.
 - 10 Zakia, 28-year-old woman, unmarried, university education.
 - 11 Mariam, 24-year-old mother of one child, secondary school education.
 - 12 Hadija, 34-year-old mother of two children, primary school education.
 - 13 Fatima, 49-year-old mother of six children, primary school education.
 - 14 Salma, 32-year-old mother of one child, primary school education.
 - 15 Khadija, 27-year-old mother of three children, primary education.
 - 16 For more on the prevalence of violence in Dar es Salaam, see Moyer 2003.
 - 17 Salma, 32-year-old mother of one child, primary school education.
 - 18 Halima, 55-year-old mother of three children, one year of primary education.
 - 19 Amira, 29-year-old mother of three children, primary school education.
 - 20 Zakia, 28-year-old woman, unmarried, university education.
 - 21 Rebeka, 47-year-old mother of one surviving child, primary school education.
 - 22 Amira, 29-year-old mother of three children, primary school education.
 - 23 Rebeka, 47-year-old mother of one surviving child, primary school education.
 - 24 Halima, 55-year-old mother of three children, one year of primary education.
 - 25 Zuhura, in her 20s, no children, primary school education.
 - 26 Zakia, 28-year-old woman, unmarried, university education.
 - 27 Mwanaisha, aged 19, no children, secondary school education.
 - 28 Amira, 29-year-old mother of three children, primary school education.
 - 29 Neema, aged 30, no children, no education.
 - 30 Khadisa, 32-year-old mother of one child, primary school education.

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Part Three

Urban renewal: planning versus implementation

Youth, Shelter, and Liminal Urbanism in Addis Ababa

Susanna Myllylä

Introduction

This chapter looks at the consequences and risks facing poor youth as a result of urban renewal in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This metropolis, with an estimated 4.8 million¹ inhabitants, has been rapidly transformed following a massive urban renewal project that has included ‘slum’ clearance, population relocation, and government-built condominium housing. A large body of research literature exists on urban livelihoods, land tenure, and urban upgrading in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Ethiopia, there has been a growing research interest in low-income settlements, namely in architecture and urban planning studies (e.g. Heisel and Kifle 2016). However, the situation of the youth in poverty research and urban redevelopment schemes has gained little attention. I define ‘youth’ here following Nganwa, Assefa, and Mbaka (2015) as persons aged 15–29. In studying the situation of the youth in Africa, it is vital to pay close attention to the *topology of the social landscape* (Durham 2000; see also Akom, Cammartoa, and Ginwright 2008). Malone (2001) has observed that youth have different cultural values, understandings, and needs than older adults. These differences should be supported and valued as significant contributions to the social capital of cities.

This chapter is based on ethnographic, longitudinal research in low-income settlements in Addis Ababa’s inner-city areas. Ethnographic here includes interviews, personal observations, photographing surroundings, and the mapping of residences. The specific focus here is on informal urbanization in which poor youth live as subtenants in formal, government-owned *kebele* settlements. The main research question of my study is: *What are the effects of*

urban renewal and resettlement on youth poverty? In particular, how does slum demolition affect the youth and their personal security?

Ethiopia has a young population, with 71 per cent under the age of 30 and the median age just 18 (Megquier and Belohlav 2014; also Nganwa, Assefa, and Mbaka 2015; Sommers 2010). Addis Ababa is one of the fastest-growing cities in Africa, and its population has nearly doubled every decade. The city has managed to improve health and education services in recent years. However, there prevails a severe housing crisis and high rate of unemployment. The participation of women in the formal sector has been lower than that of men, but women have dominated in the more insecure and lower paid informal sector (see UN-Habitat 2008: 7, 14).

Currently, those living in low-income areas are paying the highest toll for rapid urban population growth. Dwelling structures in these areas known as *kebele* (from Amharic *qābāle*, 'neighbourhood') are generally single-storey constructions made of *çqa* (mud and wood; Alemayehu, 2009). *Kebele* dwellings, owned by the government, are occupied by the majority of the poor in the city. During my fieldwork, between 70 and 80 per cent of urban dwellers in Addis Ababa lived in non-planned *kebele* housing areas.² The lack of legal access to land has necessitated that even affluent citizens build without a permit on unregulated or idle land (UN-Habitat 2008: 12). Before the current phase of urban renewal, the city government had not adequately addressed the housing crisis, despite several small-scale initiatives confined to a few neighbourhoods. Furthermore, since the government owns all urban land and rents have remained unchanged since the 1970s, the residents have had little incentive to move and even less to improve the housing stock themselves (*ibid.*: 8).

The city government has largely retained the administrative structure it inherited from previous administrations and the military Derg regime, which succeeded Haile Selassie in 1974. Addis Ababa comprises six zones, ten subcities, and twenty-eight *woredas*. In addition, the city is divided into 328 *kebeles* of which 305 are urban and 23 rural (Ethiopian Government Portal 2016). *Kebeles* and *woredas* are formally independent administrative units, but face a number of challenges. For instance, physical infrastructure and construction in the *kebeles* are not well-inspected, and many development projects are not audited (UN-HABITAT 2008: 14). These circumstances also became apparent in my study. *Kebele* responsibilities have recently been shifted to the next higher administrative level, the *woreda* (district). Local government officers have tended to be representatives of the ruling political administration, rather than from the local community. Hence the *kebeles* have constituted a rigid top-down



Figure 8.1 Inner-city *kebele* from above (photo by Susanna Myllylä, 2014).

system of neighbourhood control in urban Ethiopia. When the Derg regime took power, it nationalized all land and rental houses, which were given to *kebeles* for administration. It also cut rent by as much as 70 per cent while shifting revenue to the central government. After this, local governments have not had sufficient resources for the maintenance and construction of housing (ibid.: 10–12).

Urban development schemes

Kebeles in Addis Ababa occupy the most valuable urban land. They are therefore desirable investment sites for redevelopment and under considerable pressure from the government and the private sector (Alemayehu 2009; also Alemayehu et al. 2018). As two Ethiopian architects explained to me, the land lease prices in Addis Ababa have reached the level of global metropolises such as New York. In terms of metropolization and urban renewal, the location of poor and low-level *kebele* housing in the core areas of the city is not regarded as cost-efficient (Terrefe, H., personal communication 2016, EiABC³). When the government organized a land lease auction in the Merkato area, home to a large open-air marketplace, the highest bid rose to 350,000 ETB (approx. 240–715 USD) [i.e. Ethiopian Birr, 16,000 USD] per square metre (Hassen, I., personal communication 2016, EiABC).



Figure 8.2 The bustling Merkato marketplace (photo by Susanna Myllylä, 2016).

For this reason, the Ethiopian government has undertaken a massive project to demolish inner-city *kebele* areas and relocate their residents to government-built apartment blocks, known locally as condominiums. These condominiums are now located both within the inner city and on the urban periphery, and had running water and flush toilets.

At the time of my fieldwork, a person 18 years of age or older could register for the government's regular 'housing lottery' in order to receive a chance to obtain condominium apartment in a block of multi-storey concrete housing. The condominium housing system was initially meant to resolve the problem of dilapidated and congested *kebeles*. To date, more than 160,000 housing units have been completed and transferred to beneficiaries (Alemayehu 2018). However, as inner-city *kebele* residents have been transferred to the outskirts of the city, critical questions have been raised as to whether the evictions and relocations have been carried out fairly or not. I studied the formal-informal tenure process of condominiums. My research results indicate that neither the condominium housing policy nor the *kebele* population relocation schemes have succeeded in alleviating the needs of the poorest (Myllylä 2018). Despite nearly all of the poor young adults I interviewed being registered in the government housing lottery, they had great difficulties in raising the required down-payment for the apartment. However, some managed to raise the needed funds and even



Figure 8.3 A new condominium area neighbouring the Arat Kilo settlement (photo by Susanna Myllylä, 2014).

speculate with the system, especially if they had relatives sending funds from abroad. If a family managed to win an apartment with three rooms in the housing lottery, they tended to sell it and purchase a smaller, 1–2 room apartment — a practice overlooked by the authorities. In general, however, the poor could not afford condominium apartments, which were gradually being taken over by the middle classes, contrary to the government’s stated aim.

The youth and livelihoods in Ethiopia

The youth I studied obtained income from sporadic day jobs on construction sites, or selling street food, cleaning, or working in coffee shops or car repair shops (Myllylä 2018). The Master Plan and housing schemes in Addis Ababa were aimed at guiding urban development from above, while in practice the metropolis is an organic entity in which the youth optimize their choices despite official planning. In this way, the youth have generated an alternative urban development. The Ethiopian government has supported several income-generation and credit programmes for the youth. However, there has been far too little attention to the diversity among the youth: how do the poorest



Figure 8.4 Plastic workshop section at the Merkato marketplace (photo by Susanna Myllylä, 2014).

dwellers remain mere outsiders in relation to employment, credit, and housing programmes? The youth I studied had to navigate the urban society by relying on thin social networks and self-help, and hence become exposed to a plethora of urban risks. Moreover, youth perspectives, youth agency, and the spaces in which the youth live are not necessarily considered in studies related to *kebele* upgrading schemes with predetermined designs or questionnaires dealing with the youth employment rate. The chosen urban redevelopment policy has proven to be detrimental to the livelihood of low-income people. Alemayehu (2009, 2018) suggests that one alternative to renewal is the urban upgrading of *kebeles*. Yet the task is enormous: even 50 per cent of the total estimated 527,800 *kebele* housing units should have been replaced by the year 2015 if one of the aims of the Millennium Development Goals was to be met (Alemayehu 2009). Reaching this goal has become extremely difficult in Ethiopia with the current urban policy approaches favouring development schemes that exclude the concerns of the poor (Myllylä 2018). In the absence of straightforward and viable solutions, an ethnographic approach can offer a more fruitful perspective on understanding the situation of the youth in the context of urban redevelopment.

The lived worlds of low-income youth are embedded in uncertain situations and continuous challenges that I call a state of *liminal urbanism* (Myllylä 2018).



Figure 8.5 Iron workshop section at the Merkato marketplace (photo by Susanna Myllylä, 2016).

Various hardships in metropolitan life include a lack of socio-economic safety nets, unemployment, petty jobs, lack of secure tenure, dysfunctional local administration, and continuous waiting.⁴ In Addis Ababa, liminal urbanism has become the status quo for many youth, in which personal development towards adulthood seems to be out of reach. According to Mains (2011), it is common for city residents to use the Amharic equivalent of the word ‘hopeless’ (*tesfa qoretewal*) to describe the condition of urban youth in Ethiopia.

Data and setting

In order to understand the living conditions of youth in urban renewal process in the city, two different types of *kebele* settlements were chosen for closer examination in my research. The first, Coca settlement in Lideta subcity, had mostly remained untouched by developers. However, it was part of the city-wide redevelopment plan and hence to be transformed in the near future. On the other side of the metropolis, the Arat Kilo *kebele* in Arada subcity within the inner city was undergoing a critical transformation phase. This chapter focuses on Arat Kilo case. For an analysis of the Coca settlement case, see Myllylä (2018). When I heard the fate of Arat Kilo

and suggested it as a case study, my local project partners did not encourage it since the place was considered a security risk. On the site, it was evident that the demolition process, already underway, had made the residents frustrated and angry. My research assistant and I faced suspicious responses at first, and some even assumed I represented the investment company redeveloping the area. However, we did not face any significant problems in conducting interviews. Concerning the entire research process in both case studies, my field assistants, who were students of architecture, were introduced to qualitative research methods.⁵ During four fieldwork phases lasting two to three weeks each from 2014 to 2016, interviews were carried out in the homes of the youth, and at the sites of their casual day labour as well as in public places such as streets and cafes. My study included fifty-two personal and five group interviews in all, personal observations among young *kebele* sub-renters, and the photographing and mapping of compounds and homes. In addition, *kebele* and *woreda* authorities were also interviewed. Accounts by the youth of their personal life histories and life conditions were collected, and questions were asked regarding youth housing, education, livelihoods, socio-economic networks, employment, personal safety, and views on urban redevelopment and possibilities for personal development. In all, my study focused on the youth who experienced the most vulnerable living situations.

Arat Kilo: from *kebele* to shantytown

The transformation process from a *kebele* to a shantytown offers an illustrative example of how urban renewal can exacerbate youth poverty. The government had planned to replace the Arat Kilo settlement with the Basha Wolde Chilot condominium project, which required 25 hectares of land. The total number of displaced *kebele* residents was over 1,500, among whom 520 were owners and the rest tenants (Ambaye 2015). Legal *kebele* owners and tenants were either relocated to the peripheral areas of the city such as Nafas Silk or given the choice to move to a condominium apartment or to another *kebele* house. But these options were meant only for official renters, not the illegal sub-renters who often occupied *kebele* dwellings. In general, legal renters resisted the *kebele* option, since they considered the new *kebele* dwellings too small. Because legal renters had previously paid very low rents (as little as 5 ETB) to the government, the rent for new *kebele* dwellings could be much higher and beyond their means. The *woreda* officials had told them they should be active and themselves find a suitable place to live. Officials with whom I spoke emphasized that the demolished area

attracted many newcomers who had set up shanty dwellings, thereby disturbing the clearance process. When I compared the situation between 2015 and 2016, more houses had been demolished but at the same time, there were new shacks built on the fringes of the area. The governance of Arat Kilo was transferred from the *woreda* to a subcity administration, whose officers monitored the area. To get a larger picture of the situation, it was important to compare the *woreda* officers' viewpoints to those of the residents.

According to the *woreda* officials, there were only fifteen original families left, and the rest were newcomers. The officials understood that people were reluctant to leave the area, since space and location were important factors for residents' livelihoods. Admasu (2014) argues that the local administration responsible for Arat Kilo lacked transparency and performed only nominal public participation: people were not informed about the 'slum' clearance process before it began in 2011. The author also found it difficult to interview people since governance was related to politics and people did not want to utter statements that could be interpreted as political stances. My experience was different: it was very arduous and time-consuming to find a relevant officer to discuss the redevelopment area and people's needs, while interviewing residents was easier. This might be at least partly explained through our qualitative approach as a whole.

As in other central city areas, tall opaque green and yellow metal fences hid the construction site in Arat Kilo, indicating the process of metropolization in which *kebele* settlement demolition released high-value urban land for redevelopment. One 21-year-old man told me that an 'Obama-fence' had been quickly built around their low-income homes as an urban beautification measure when US President *Barack Obama* came to visit Addis Ababa and deliver a speech at the African Union headquarters in 2015. When I started to conduct fieldwork in Arat Kilo in the same year, the *kebele* neighbourhood was mostly gone and what was left were some 200 residents (including both long-time residents and newcomers) living in the ruins of houses or shacks. A grotesque, sad sight welcomed the visitor: a few half-collapsed houses here and there, remnants of spaces that were once family homes such as a strikingly blue wall that stood out from a grassy area, or a 100-year-old, two-storey 'villa' that had gradually crumbled into a pile of bricks. The government's straightforward 'slum-clearance' involved mechanical 'house-slicing', in which *kebele* houses inhabited by two or more family units were actually torn in half. After one family managed to get a new home, a bulldozer would come and tear down their part of the house. This measure attempted to prevent squatters from settling on the cleared space; nevertheless, it did not stop them arriving.

It is well known that *kebeles* possess numerous housing and infrastructure problems and that their residents lived in squalid conditions. Arat Kilo, however, had been transformed into something worse: an unorganized, ambiguous space with hazardous potholes everywhere, where small livestock and dogs wandered, while children played in the middle of ruins and ran along paths crossing the desolate area. One had to be aware of human and animal faeces under the bushes, covered by swarms of flies. Whereas previously the houses had access to running water, electricity, and a toilet, now-collapsed house ruins formed the basis for new shanties as well as for common toilets. Wood, shrubs, scrap metal, car tyres, and plastic were used to make shelters and to repair the demolished parts of houses. A single utility pole stood askew with tangled wires, belonging to a family that shared free electricity from it with their remaining neighbours. All the other poles had been removed, as had water taps, forcing the dwellers in Arat Kilo to fetch or purchase their water from locations further away. The remaining parts of the 'sliced' houses had suffered various degrees of damage: where the rooms in the upper floors had been demolished, for instance, rain had damaged the new ceiling/roof that then had grown mouldy. Humidity posed a danger in combination with haphazard electricity wires and switches had already turned rusty. Indeed, the living environment in Arat Kilo was filled with numerous hazards, making it a dangerous place for children and the youth to live in and move about. In effect, it had already begun to resemble a shantytown, showing elevated risk levels for the poorest of its inhabitants – and all as a direct result of the actions of the authorities themselves (Figures 8.3–8.5).

Most of the remaining residents in Arat Kilo were illegal sub-renters. They had all been waiting for more than five years for an opportunity to relocate to *kebele* housing elsewhere, or to be offered another option that they could afford. None of them appeared to be able to afford a condominium apartment. While a new condominium development had just been built in the neighbourhood, it was not intended for the current inhabitants of Arat Kilo. The few remaining young people in the area and their families struggled for survival in shantytown conditions, trying to continue their daily activities as best they could. They looked for customers or day jobs, sought water vendors, washed clothes, went to school hungry and dirty, and tried to steer clear of conflicts and thieves. Street vendors selling peanuts, vegetables, and sweets, continued peddling their wares under the shade of the few remaining trees. Initially, there was even a shop producing wooden and metal doors nearby, but soon it had to close, leaving Arat Kilo with even fewer job opportunities for its youth.



Figure 8.6 A 'sliced' house in Arat Kilo (photo by Susanna Myllylä, 2014).



Figure 8.7 A house wall left standing in Arat Kilo (photo by Susanna Myllylä, 2016).

Families in the area had to make do in difficult conditions inside their homes as well. In one case, a shack measuring 2.5×3.5 metres sheltered a total of six people: the parents, their three children and the husband's teenage son from a previous marriage. The family, whose members all lacked official identification documents, had moved into the building a couple of years before from another *kebele* house that had been demolished. In their Arat Kilo residence, the family were illegal sub-renters after the legal renter of the house had managed to move into a condominium unit elsewhere. The family had been left with just two weeks to move out of their home before it was bulldozed, with the legal renter also left in uncertainty up to the last minute. Many of my interviewees complained of not having been given enough notice before their homes were demolished. This gave rise to a number of dilemmas, as described, for instance, by one young mother telling of her family's situation when receiving the final eviction notice: 'We don't have any options; this is the only place we have and know of. And even if we did move someplace else, the people there might not accept us as outsiders. The only thing we can do, therefore, is to just wait for the government to offer us something.'

Her family's case was also illustrative of the way sub-renters often were taken advantage of financially. The family's previous *kebele* residence had cost them 400–500 ETB a month, whereas the legal renter's own monthly payment to the *woreda* had been only 5 ETB. For the makeshift shack to which the family had then moved, they paid 20 ETB to their neighbour. Yet, since the parents now had to pay more for water (40–60 ETB) from a private vendor, they actually had less money to spend on their children's schooling than before (60 ETB per child annually). This meant that the children often could not attend school, since there was not enough money for the fees and the meals. Like many other men in the area, the father was a day labourer, while the mother contributed with occasional income from washing clothes for wealthier families in the neighbourhood. Since the family's new home was built of shrubs, plastic, and cardboard, all held together by a few wooden logs, water leaked into it when it rained at night. The social capital assets on which the family could rely were likewise negligible. While they enjoyed good relationships with their remaining few neighbours, these families' resources were also scarce. Since the family also had no social safety net of relatives and friends living outside the site, it had no access to even short-term emergency loans.

All those interviewed for this study stressed the significance of socio-economic relations with the neighbours in their lives before the site clearance. As one elderly woman described it:

I've lived here now for almost thirty years. Before the demolition, the houses were attached to one another, as if they were supporting each other. People had a good social life and they kept themselves busy. Even if we're poor people, we never felt poor since we always helped one another. But now all my neighbours are gone – they left five years ago.

Before the evictions, there were many opportunities for making a living in the Arat Kilo *kebele* neighbourhood. Among these were vegetable and other markets where one could sell produce and products. With the urban renewal project, all options for young people to engage in economic activities, whether in the exchange economy, the service sector, or small business, had disappeared. This forced the men among them to seek day labour opportunities from the adjacent construction site. However, even when such work could be secured, it tended to be short-term and low-paying, and the company in charge of the work preferred hiring workers from outside the surrounding area.

While there was a high risk that the youth remaining in the area would miss school, training, and work, some young men nevertheless attended a technical school outside the settlement and worked at wood processing workshops. At the same time, existing government-sponsored microcredit schemes to support youth entrepreneurship failed to benefit Arat Kilo dwellers, since a minimum of ten persons were required to apply together as a group. This condition was impossible to meet since for remaining residents, most, if not all, of their friends had moved away and it was difficult to effectively reconnect with them. Borrowing money from an institutional lender such as the government was, moreover, considered a risky proposition to begin with, since it was clear that not everyone would be able to pay back their loan; hence, it would be better to start one's own business instead using funds lent by relatives or friends. Finding a job further away from where one lived, on the other hand, was difficult, my interviewees reported. Even for those succeeding in the quest, the long and arduous commute sooner or later became a problem, making it hard for them to get to work on time. Accordingly, most of those living in Arat Kilo and other settlements like it did not want to move too far away from the city centre. As one young man summed up the situation, 'Survival depends on place.'

Environmental hazards and lack of adequate income were, moreover, not the only problems faced by young people in Arat Kilo. There were also risks to their personal safety. The weakened shelters led to more frequent accidents, theft, and insecurity. In one family's case, a grandmother lived with her four grandchildren in a tiny room in their half-demolished house, essentially a shack strengthened by car tyres. In Addis Ababa, children are often sent to live with their grandmothers

due to parenting problems, divorces, and rural–urban migration, especially in low-income areas. In the case of this particular family, however, both parents had died, leaving the 70-year-old woman as the children’s primary caretaker. The house or hut had originally consisted of a single living space separated into two spaces by a door, so as to enable the legal renters of the house – a married couple – to live in the other part of it. Although the grandmother and her family were thus sub-renters, the two families jointly paid the rent to the *woreda*. However, when the married couple managed to move to a new condominium apartment, their part of the house was bulldozed, after which the authorities categorized the grandmother and her grandchildren as illegal dwellers and did nothing to help them find a new home to which to move. Meanwhile, the surrounding neighbourhood had virtually disappeared, with most of its inhabitants having moved away. When the grandmother went to complain to the subcity administration and request a transfer to another *kebele*, the only option offered to her was a temporary shelter. This would not have meant any notable improvement in their living conditions, however, so the grandmother and grandchildren stayed where they were, trying to endure the uncertain circumstances. The family obtained help from its small informal social safety network, consisting of the late mother’s friends and the personal friends of the children. Despite many hardships, the eldest grandchild, a young woman, managed to eventually graduate from the university located nearby. Her brother also managed to be admitted to the university as well, and was in his third year at the time of the interviews. While the family’s housing situation obviously impacted all the areas of life, it also affected the children’s university studies and their personal relationships to others. One particular incident illustrates this well. One evening when the grandmother was out selling *injera* (local food) on the street, young men invaded their home, locking the door and staying inside to harass the youngest of the children. After this incident, the oldest sister no longer participated in social activities outside of the home, nor stayed at the university dormitory, as she felt obliged to remain home instead to protect her two underage sisters.

Urban renewal therefore brought fundamental insecurity and a general sense of risk in everyday life due to the loss of community and social ties. Looting and theft had become commonplace in the area, presenting the remaining inhabitants with a new social problem unknown to them from previous times when the neighbourhood had been close-knit and congenial. Young girls and women in particular, but also the elderly, were vulnerable to molestation and rape by boys and young men. Yet it was not uncommon for also boys themselves to become molested, including in their own homes. Prostitution had also increased in Arat Kilo following the transformation of the area. In addition, lack of adequate shelters

meant physical danger from wild animals such as hyenas coming to roam the neighbourhood from outside areas. Some of them even stayed there, mating and raising their offspring in the bushes. Usually, however, hyenas were encountered in the surrounding hills and in the outskirts of the condominium development areas, and only occasionally in the city centre. In Arat Kilo, the hyenas were nevertheless felt as a real threat, especially for the children still living there.

As already noted, legal renters, unlike sub-renters, were typically given the option to move to another *kebele* located far from Arat Kilo. Often, the offered destination, however, required repairs and maintenance work costing the families too much, for which reason they sometimes refused to move even when given the opportunity. Indeed, there were many who could not afford to move to another *kebele*, a private room, or a house of one's own. This especially left young people in Arat Kilo wondering aloud whether the government was serious about its stated pro-poor commitment. In the following excerpts, criticism was expressed and directed at the urban renewal and redevelopment schemes, and also at the performance of *kebele* authorities in implementing them:

It is not a poor-centred approach. Poor people don't benefit from redevelopment. (Woman, 27 years).

We are not happy about what the government is doing; they didn't talk to us before the evictions and demolitions started. They should have moved all the people at once, together (Man, 28 years).



Figure 8.8 Inside one of the remaining few *kebele* homes in Arat Kilo (photo by Susanna Myllylä, 2014).

Complaints submitted to the authorities about the performance of the local *woreda* office did not, however, lead to any improvements or even receive any serious responses – people were simply told that there were no houses available even for legal renters. Instead, the *woreda* administration for Arat Kilo intensified the pressure it was putting on the remaining families to leave the area. Among other things, it forbade them (and those wanting to help them) to improve the condition of their shacks in any way, since this would cause delays in evictions. According to reports from residents, officials harassed residents by constantly visiting them in Arat Kilo to exhort them to move.



Figure 8.9 Inside a squatter family's home in Arat Kilo (photo by Susanna Myllylä, 2015).

Voluntary and involuntary relocation options for poor urban youth in Addis Ababa

Legal renters in Arat Kilo had two main options when confronted with the need to make room for urban renewal. Either they looked for a new *kebele* dwelling on their own, or they were assigned one by the authorities who first measured the renter's current *kebele* home and then offered the family a new place of the same size. In both cases, therefore, the low-income housing problem was 'solved' by merely shuffling people between comparable or even identical alternatives. This set in motion a downward spiral in which low-income residents were merely circulated from one *kebele* district to another and tended to end up worse off than before in terms of housing and material infrastructure.

The same downward tendency could be observed on the part of sub-renters, too. When looking for a new place for themselves through the official system, they found themselves caught up in excessive bureaucracy, having to suffer very long wait times. Those less fortunate among them were relocated to temporary inner-city shelters (*meteleya*), such as Aware Begtera in the Kirkos subcity. What this meant in practice was that displaced people often got stuck in unplanned new residences. The quality and safety of both the shelter buildings and neighbourhoods in which the shelters were located tended to be no better, and were sometimes even worse than the subtenants' previous *kebele* housing in Arat Kilo before the demolition process began. Despite being rent-free, organized by the government and thus coming with some basic infrastructure, the shelters could lack toilets, which made the areas in which they were located prone to cholera and other disease outbreaks. In addition, household electricity costs were notably high, equalling several months of family income.

The pattern was the same for Arat Kilo residents who chose a different path. Several of those evicted from Arat Kilo relocated to self-built 'moonlight houses' (*chereka bet*) on the outskirts of the city. These were hastily erected dwellings or house foundations that the poorest evictees built for themselves, sometimes even overnight, in order to escape government notice. A foundation built overnight on non-tenured land was generally considered sufficient legal basis for permission to roof structures resembling a house. This strategy, too, failed to promote or conform to the government's objective of creating better-quality housing for urban residents; instead, it appeared to contradict it.

Based on my discussions with the youth and my previous research in Coca settlement (Myllylä 2018), it was clear that forced by the demolition of their homes and unstable living conditions at home, young people without the support

of social networks often simply ended up on the street – a worst-case scenario for them. On the street, they engaged in random sexual relationships, worked in petty jobs, and slept in other people's backyards, in workshops, or on the street. Many turned to begging, prostitution, violence, or drugs for survival, and faced a shortened life expectancy. A few succeeded in breaking this vicious downward spiral: one of my interviewees, for example, a young woman, survived the streets when she met her (future) husband and they managed to obtain shelter from the *kebele*. For many youth, however, the challenges they faced were too great to overcome.

Conclusions

The Arat Kilo case illustrates a situation in which a *kebele* settlement was gradually transformed into a shantytown, as a one stage in its transformation towards a modern city district. The focus of this chapter has been on what happened to the young people living there during this transformation, and what this indicates about the consequences of urban renewal for youth poverty. The examined case study indicates that the *kebele* demolitions in Addis Ababa brought about far-reaching disruption of youth livelihoods and loss of young people's livelihood security, trapping many young city residents in deeper vulnerability. In Addis Ababa, urban renewal policy and implementation has largely failed to recognize its detrimental consequences for poor urban youth. To a significant extent, the liminal urbanism of the youth can be said to be a result of dysfunctional or incomplete urban renewal processes. Poor urban youth lack civil and human rights and live in a permanent state of vulnerability and instability. This vulnerability is also less visible than that of adults.

In the area I studied, half-destroyed house structures gave rise to more frequent injuries, theft, and insecurity. The demolition of dwellings and loss of residents meant that those who remained lost their community, social trust, and social safety networks. This loss of cohesive social ties also led to loss of income, as well as a dependence on external food markets with higher prices, a reliance on more expensive private vendors, and a higher risk of thefts and harassment. Along with the destruction of dwellings came the loss of infrastructure and services: public water taps, electricity, toilets, and walking paths through the area. This, in turn, brought a higher risk of urban disease, accidents, and conflict. The demolition of communities without adequate provision for relocating low-income residents into affordable dwellings also led to environmental hazards

due to heavy rains, cold, pests, and polluted air, water, and soil. For those residents who remained in the demolished area, such conditions made it much more difficult to attend school and participate in social activities. For those who relocated to condominiums on the city periphery, loss of inner-city residential location was related to the loss of livelihoods, restricted access to labour markets, socio-economic networks, and informal microcredit.

Querying youth knowledges through a qualitative approach can reveal critical urban deficiencies not taken into account in official urban policies, planning, and management. A qualitative approach can reveal complex cause-and-effect relations and power struggles in society, thus enabling a better understanding of informal urban dynamics critically affected by city redevelopment. Studying *lived youth worlds* can help identify discriminatory aspects in the contemporary urban redevelopment of Addis Ababa. Tackling youth unemployment and housing shortages requires more in-depth understanding of the causes and consequences of liminal urbanism, rather than seeing it merely in terms of technical governance solutions such as micro-finance, employment programmes, or condominium apartment lotteries.

Acknowledgements and funding. This work was supported by the Academy of Finland under Grant number 265737.

Notes

- 1 *United Nations World Urbanization Prospects*, The 2018 Revision. <https://population.un.org/wup/Publications/Files/WUP2018-Report.pdf>; also <https://population.un.org/wup/>.
- 2 https://www.humanitarianlibrary.org/sites/default/files/2013/07/3104_alt.pdf; <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/Ethiopia%20Addis%20Ababa%20Urban%20Profile.pdf>; https://www.gfdrr.org/sites/default/files/publication/Addis_Ababa_Resilient_cities_program.pdf
- 3 EiABC = Ethiopian Institute of Architecture, Building Construction and City Development.
- 4 See Jeffrey's (2010) ethnography on young educated but unemployed Indian men, the 'timepassing' phenomenon and the politics of waiting. In Addis Ababa *kebele* areas, both university graduates and youth without education often faced long-term unemployment and lacked crucial social connections.
- 5 In the Coca case study, the homes of three different young persons (and the semi-public spaces in front of them) were mapped in two and three dimensions

by the research assistant. This mapping of *kebele* sub-renters' homes, based on interdisciplinary methods, represents a novel approach to examining poverty among African urban youth (Myllylä, 2018). Mapping offered a deeper understanding of poor residents' lived worlds; how their daily activities and possessions, and means of survival, were organized in terms of space and time. I would like to thank Architects Metadel Sileshi Belihu and Yohana Eyob (the Ethiopian Institute of Architecture, Building Construction and City Development) for their collaboration.

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Neighbourhood Open Spaces: Co-production and Spatial Transformation in Addis Ababa

Segen Yainshet Tesfamariam, Elias Yitbarek Alemayehu and Laura Stark

Introduction

The open spaces of a city are its lungs. They are places for people to exercise and carry out social activities, they influence the water cycle, and have considerable impact on air quality. In the developed world, companies are attracted to locations that offer well-designed, well-managed public spaces and these in turn attract customers, employees, and services (Byrne and Sipe 2010). The presence of green parks, squares, gardens, and other public spaces in urban areas have therefore become vital marketing tools. Well-planned areas with green open spaces offer benefits to the local economy in terms of raising real-estate prices (ibid.). Open spaces facilitate social communication, relaxation and recreation, and promote trade and tourism (Thompson 2002). Open spaces are among a city's most valuable assets that are threatened by rapid urban transformation. Protecting these open spaces and maintaining sustainable growth in cities is vital for residents' well-being in cities.

Addis Ababa is Ethiopia's capital city with an estimated 4.8 million¹ residents, growing at a yearly rate of nearly 4.4 per cent. In its construction and design, Addis Ababa has focused more on dwellings and buildings than on the spaces between them. The spaces between buildings are usually left over, sometimes appropriated by adjacent owners and sometimes utilized as trash dumps. Many open spaces have been left without proper management, becoming abused or vandalized by residents. These spaces have, at times, been used for livestock grazing (Tesfamariam 2015). Encroachment by municipalities seeking to convert them to other uses has also been common. Yet in Addis Ababa there are good reasons why open spaces are needed: owing to its mild climate year-round,

many residents carry out activities in the open. Such activities include day-to-day household chores such as manual coffee grinding and doing laundry, as well as larger communal activities such as wedding ceremonies. Thus contrary to Le Corbusier's² famous dictum that 'the house is a machine for living', in Addis Ababa it is open spaces that are machines for living.

Neighbourhood open spaces in Addis Ababa are located around and within residential areas and successfully fulfil their functions if they are designed to encourage informal and formal activities and can create a more peaceful and comfortable environment for residents (Ministry of Urban Development and Housing 2015). For example, they have become key sites for communal events and activities such as those of *iddir*³ groups as well as public meetings and various celebrations (Ministry of Urban Development and Housing 2016). Functionally, they overlap with other green networks in the city such as surrounding parks, and often also incorporate playgrounds and small formal outdoor sports facilities. Quite commonly, they are also linked to major walkways, cycling routes, and bus stops (*ibid.*). As such, successful neighbourhood open spaces play an important role in communities in that they facilitate a sense of place and belonging and improve quality of life by providing something for everyone. They also minimize the negative impacts of high density in urban environments such as isolation, exclusion, and lack of space for leisure activities.

This chapter asks two questions: *How was the co-production between community and city for open spaces development in the neighbourhood case under study initiated and how did it proceed? What were the barriers to fully successful implementation?* We answer these questions using qualitative data collected by the primary author between 2011 and 2014. In addition to the qualitative data, we use data from government agencies, community members, official documents, and observations on the physical environment of the housing, all collected by the primary author. All interviews were conducted in Amharic and were subsequently translated into English and transcribed verbatim.

Setting and data

The focus of this study is a neighbourhood in Addis Ababis that we call *Churchside*, a pseudonym. Churchside comprises twenty-five housing cooperatives (containing a total of 448 households), which together form one housing association. The neighbourhood is a residential one with single-storey attached cooperative housing. Housing cooperatives are formed by individuals

on a voluntary basis and are autonomous self-help organizations controlled by their members. The idea of self-help housing projects was formally introduced in the Addis Ababa Master Plan drawn up by C. K. Polonyi in 1978 (Tufa 2008: 47). Following the nationalization of all land and rental housing by the Marxist Derg regime in 1978, plots of land were distributed for free to those who could afford to build houses that were then organized into housing cooperatives. Thereafter, even after the change of government in 1991, cooperatives have been one of the mechanisms through which new housing is provided. This policy has targeted middle-income households. The main advantage of housing cooperatives has been to facilitate the construction of houses through mutual assistance by pooling resources, knowledge, and labour – difficult to achieve if done individually (Alemayehu 2018).

The primary author is an Ethiopian urban development studies researcher who lived in the neighbourhood under study during her childhood and youth and who continued to visit it due to family ties until 2016. The second and third authors are, respectively, an Ethiopian urbanism scholar, and a Finnish ethnologist who has conducted preliminary fieldwork in Addis Ababa. Long-term collaboration has been carried out between the first and second authors, as well as between the second and third authors. The present chapter is therefore the outcome of a sustained ethnographic approach interweaving ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ perspectives. In addition to the primary author’s qualitative data consisting of semi-structured interviews and informal group discussions with seventeen local officials and neighbourhood residents, this chapter draws on her experiences and participant observation as a former resident, as an insider who has followed and understood the context of the more subtle issues of power that are easily missed by outside researchers.

Churchside was built in the period 1987–1991. It was a cooperative housing scheme launched to house government employees of nationally owned facilities such as hydro-electric plants, shipping lines, and sugar factories, which were at the time facing serious rental housing shortages. At the time it was built, Churchside was not centrally located. It lacked major road access, and the surrounding streets were dark at night. However, as the city expanded to the south and east and a main road was built next to Churchside, its location has gradually become more central. In the past fifteen years, many homeowners have sold or rented out their homes, and the neighbourhood is now dominated by high- and middle-income residents. The household income in Churchside typically ranges from 5,000 to 15,000 ETB per month. In addition, businesses have opened within the neighbourhood, altering residential dwellings for

commercial use. Churchside is now bordered to the south by a busy street with restaurants, bars, and shops, with access to a high school and a small church, to the west by a commercial street, to the east by a residential street facing an enormous Toyota car sales lot, and to the north by a large open site containing a new stadium under construction. The four green open spaces discussed in this chapter are located *inside* the perimeter of the neighbourhood.

The legislative and policy framework for open spaces in Addis Ababa

The Ethiopian government has recognized the significant role that neighbourhood open spaces can play in sustainable development,⁴ emphasizing their importance in combatting climate change, addressing issues of social cohesion, contributing to food security, and reducing poverty through job creation (Ministry of Urban Development and Housing 2015). According to government guidelines,⁵ green spaces should be in balance with buildings and can incorporate services such as playgrounds, formal outdoor sports facilities, public arts, seating and tables, lighting, and fences. It is vital that these spaces are protected against pollution, garbage dumping, vandalism, and heavy motor traffic. In addition, diverse vegetation should be maintained throughout the spaces so as to contribute to biodiversity, ecosystem health, and a beneficial microclimate at the neighbourhood level. Significant steps taken in Addis Ababa in the past few years have included trees planted along streets, private stakeholders investing in the beautification of green areas, and the protection of open spaces by building fences around them. Despite municipal plans and policy guidelines, however, there exists a significant gap between policy planning and the implementation of developing urban open spaces in Addis Ababa. For example, more than 10,000 hectares of planned green areas have been used for purposes other than their original intended use in the development plan (Tadesse 2010). Religious institutions, especially the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, have contributed to conserving indigenous forests, but they have also indiscriminately chopped down trees for burial spaces or for building (ibid.). On the one hand, these spaces are under constant threat of land acquisition by the government, who leases the land to private developers. On the other, the Ethiopian government recognizes the threat to these spaces from high rates of urbanization and the fact that they often are either not designed properly or otherwise fail to serve their intended purpose (ibid.).

In Addis Ababa, the situation of neighbourhood open spaces is particularly visible in the city's neighbourhoods administered by *woredas*, which are the lowest administrative levels in the city. To protect the environment and open spaces, the urban administration has introduced several new policy and regulatory tools applied through different institutions. The participation of key stakeholders, particularly community members, has been a key factor in this quest for better management and protection of the environment. This reflects more generally the situation in Ethiopia following the adoption of the country's new constitution in 1995, after which participatory development has been a major pillar of development strategy. Devolution of power to regions and cities all the way to *woredas* has been carried out in order to facilitate the active role of citizens in their communities.

Mobilization in Churchside to develop open spaces through co-production

Following the participatory turn in development project planning, co-production in the urban context has become a term used to refer to community-city or community-state partnerships in service delivery, driven by the limited capacities of government agencies (Banks et al. 2020). The concept of co-production is an outgrowth of the participatory development approach. In the debate regarding participatory development, it has been noted that this approach tends to regard the 'local' as something homogenous, overly harmonious, and static, implying shared common needs regardless of people's age, sex, class, ethnicity, and religion (Cooke and Kothari 2002; Mohan and Stoker 2000). All too often, the changing identities of the community and people's differing abilities to choose whether and how to participate have been overlooked (Cleaver 2002). Interestingly, most participation-based approaches have regarded participation as a moral imperative, while non-participation is seen as a sign of irresponsibility. While the stated goals of participation as empowering people and preventing abuses of power appear noble (Rahnema 1992), in reality participation fails to address the issue of who grants or transfers power to whom, and precisely who should be empowered and to what extent (Cleaver 2002). Participatory methods can also exclude or otherwise be of no interest to participants, offering few benefits to them (Cooke and Kothari 2002). There is still insufficient empirical data on outcomes of co-production for urban citizens. This chapter therefore focuses on the interaction of stakeholders in the co-production of neighbourhood open spaces in a single case.

In Addis Ababa, the Beautification, Parks and Cemetery Agency (BPCA) was established in 2010 by the city government to ensure the city's aesthetic beauty through green development based on the participation of society and various other stakeholders (Addis Ababa City Administration 2012). Since the task is enormous and the available resources few, in recent years the agency's main strategy regarding green area development has been geared towards popular mobilization and partnerships with the private sector (Forum for Social Studies 2013). The agency has set itself up locally at *woreda* levels to accomplish more effective devolution of power and to facilitate participation by people in local development programmes while ensuring gender equality in the empowerment process (Serdar and Varsha 2008; Tegegne 1998). In order to protect and develop open spaces, the BPCA typically enters into three-year agreements with communities and other actors designated as 'developers'.

After the construction of the housing blocks was completed in Churchside in 1991, four open spaces inside the neighbourhood totalling approximately 9,000 m² in area were left to be developed by the community. A major problem experienced by residents was the lack of safety in Churchside due to burglaries. The open spaces had no streetlights and were therefore completely dark in the evenings. Householders began patrolling the areas but soon asked their fellow residents to contribute 10 ETB (0.5 USD) a month as a security fee to hire guards who worked at sentryposts. The number of guards was, however, later reduced by half due to lack of funds, and some guards conspired in thefts within the neighbourhood. Consequently, the residents who were contributing the 10 ETB per month felt they were getting nothing for their money, and hired private guards to guard either individual dwellings or whole blocks (four attached row houses made blocks of 8, 16, or 24 households). It was in this situation that the process to develop the open spaces began, with one aim being to make them safer for residents.

This occurred in practice through owner-led decision-making. All owner-residents were entitled to participate directly in the general assembly meeting of the housing cooperatives, although not everyone actually attended the meetings. In practice, tenants could represent their owners, since after the general assembly was formed, there were no rules or bye-laws clarifying who could actually attend. In the year 2000, this general assembly set up a development committee with subcommittees for security, road construction, and drainage systems.

The development committee consisted of seven members drawn from the community, six men and one woman. They had been chosen based on their trustworthiness, the respectability of their day jobs, and their social networks

within Churchside. The decision was then taken by the assembly to collect a 15 ETB monthly contribution from each household for all development work related to the community. The development committee then proposed a green area development project. Having no ownership title on file, the green areas in question were assumed to belong to the housing blocks standing adjacent to the open spaces. However, in 2009 the Land Bank Administration disputed the community's ownership of these spaces. The Land Bank Administration was part of the city government, and its function was to document and create title deeds for unidentified lands. Since in Ethiopia all land belongs to the government, the Land Bank's purpose was to record all apparently untenured and 'unused' land that could be leased by the city to private commercial developers through open auction. Since urban land prices were rising steadily throughout the period of this study (increasing more than tenfold in some places), such land parcels represented an important potential source of income for the city government. By the time the Land Bank contested the community's ownership of the open spaces inside Churchside, land prices were already high. The community, therefore, needed to mobilize in order to retain their open spaces. According to the sitting chairman of the development committee, a man in his 70s who lived in the neighbourhood,

the market demand for inner-city land led the Land Bank office in the subcity to designate these open spaces as underdeveloped and suitable for private development. Members of the community were afraid that these spaces would be taken over by wealthy developers and that new housing units such as condominiums [government-built multi-storey housing blocks] and other mixed-use complexes would be built in them.

(Conversation with male chairman in his 70s, January 2013)

According to this chairman, several women volunteer members of a local *iddir* [voluntary burial associations and emergency support groups common in Ethiopia] had raised the issue. They had approached the local development committee to discuss the neighbourhood open spaces. The chairman then suggested that a separate local women's *iddir* of roughly a dozen contributing members be established to facilitate open spaces development projects. Once that was done, the women's *iddir* took the lead, and urged the subcity BPCA to give them the right to develop the spaces while also calling for a meeting of the cooperatives' general assembly to meet and discuss the development of the open spaces.

The same women's *iddir* conducted the first negotiations with the BPCA regarding joint development of the spaces. In collaboration with the women's

iddir, the development committee then took over the talks with the *woreda* and the Bole subcity to push for further protection and development of these spaces. However, the Land Bank Administration was still eager to pursue sale and private development of the spaces, given that they were owned by the government in accordance with the FDRE Constitution. The sitting development committee chairman explained the situation and how it was resolved:

Well-endowed private developers have been a challenge for the committee, given the limited funds of our [cooperatives' residents'] association, collected as they are from small membership contributions. For this reason the [development] committee considered all the vital needs of these spaces and discussed [these needs] with the [Bole] subcities' chairman from whom we got a positive response. But the Land Bank Administration has continued to put pressure on us to develop these spaces with private developers. Therefore I took the matter personally to the mayor of Addis Ababa. He was helpful and sorted out the dispute, even putting a personal phone call to our subcity chairman about the matter. After a number of meetings between the women's *iddir* and the [Bole] subcity, the open spaces were designated as a green area for the entire neighbourhood, to be developed by the community through a three-year contract between the development committee and the *woreda*, signed by the Woreda BPCA on 23 April 2010.

(Conversation with male chairman in his 70s, January 2013)

Once the contract was signed, the development committee went on to compile a joint project proposal with volunteers from the community. The resulting green areas development project was submitted for approval to the general assembly of the housing cooperatives in June 2010. One of the stated rationales for the project was that, due to the lack of day care and safe parks in the area, many children had no option other than to remain inside their apartments, which hindered social activities and physical exercise. Particularly in summer when school was out and parents were working, children and youth had nowhere to go in terms of nearby recreation areas for a period of two months, because the undeveloped areas of the housing cooperatives were near heavily trafficked roads and contained other dangers for children. Children thus often spent excessive amounts of time watching television or playing video games indoors, given the lack of outdoor entertainment options. The proposal also described a need among parents for quality outdoor spaces and services such as tea stalls where they could socialize, particularly on the weekends.

The specific objectives of the project were to develop the four spaces by creating: 1) a sports and recreation park where residents could play

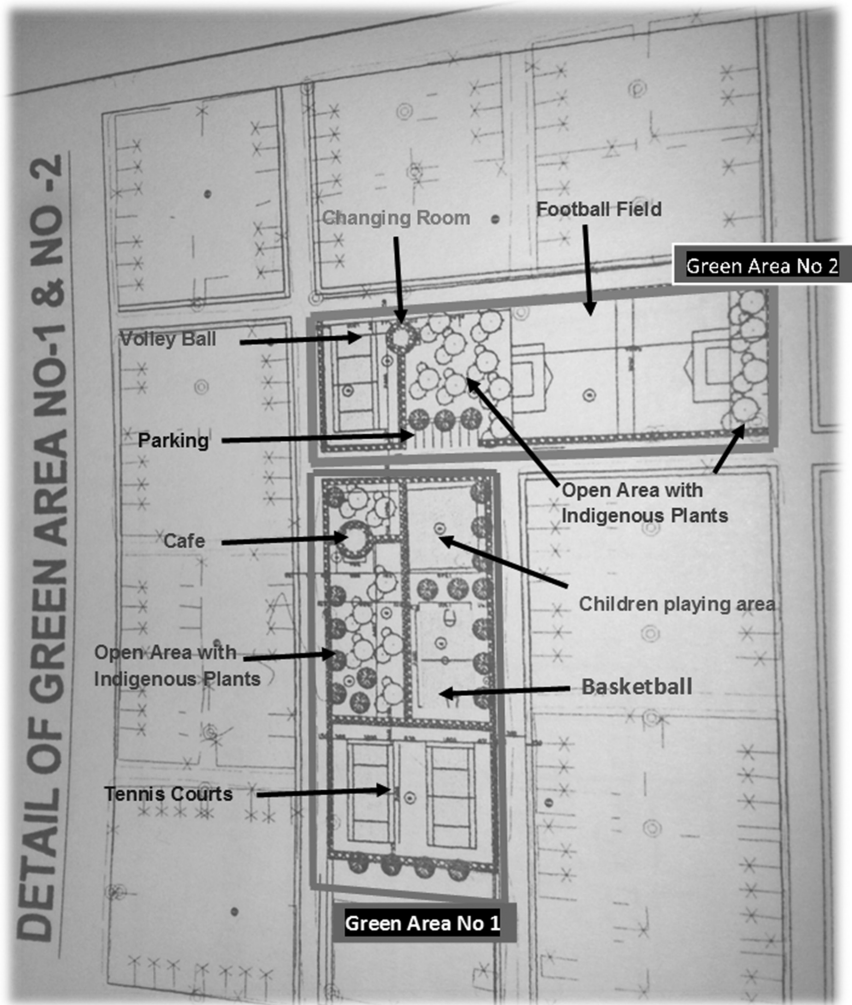


Figure 9.1 Proposed Open Spaces Development Design in original plans, by Yainshet Tesfamariam, 2012.

basketball, volleyball, and tennis; 2) a park for social and entertainment activities, offering a tea room and an internet cafe; 3) a park with a fountain and chairs for adults to relax in, and 4) a playground with a merry-go-round, a seesaw, and other equipment for children. The proposal's aim was to improve the neighbourhood open spaces so as to bring them into conformity with the regulations of the municipality of Addis Ababa and ensure their maintenance.

Financing the project and maintaining momentum: challenges and obstacles

Once the neighbourhood open spaces project was underway, the community development committee in the area attempted to increase participation by the community. Apart from the development committee, grassroots organizations such as *iddir* groups were vital in mobilizing resources for the project.

The costs of the proposed open spaces development project covering landscaping design, construction work, and supervision were estimated at 660,000 ETB (31,430 USD). According to the proposal, the needed funds were to be collected from community members through fundraising events and from local and international funding agencies. An executive committee was set up under the cooperatives' general assembly to implement the plan. There was also a technical team working under the vice-chairman of the committee, and its task was to closely monitor the execution of the project with the assistance of a consultant who would be hired to supervise the day-to-day activities. The implementation period was set to cover three years, from 2010 to 2013.

When the detailed project proposal for developing the green areas was presented to the general assembly meeting, a 1,000 ETB (48 USD) one-time contribution per person was proposed to meet the costs. The development committee had the support of the general assembly during the meetings held. However, as the sitting chairman of the committee later explained:

the assembly met with almost half of its members absent. Since most households either rent from or have been purchased from the founding members of the cooperatives, this created a problem for the concept of full participation in the general assembly. Lack of awareness and accountability to community development have been major challenges for the development committee both in the past and also in this project. However, the members present in the meetings were granted access to the proposed project along with full opportunities to communicate with the committee and collectively vote on decisions. In this way, the proposed project was then approved by the members in attendance, and sent to the development committee for implementation. Subsequently, also the local *iddir* group of the cooperatives contributed financially to the project [...] Once the project was underway, however, it turned out to be very difficult to mobilize the households expected to pay and to collect the fees from households, because sometimes the founding members were not located since they had moved out of the neighbourhood. [Also] people, not all but some, were not interested in the development.

(Conversation with male chairman in his 70s, January 2013)

The lack of participation, commitment and interest in paying the monthly fees needed to develop the spaces was mentioned by all of the men who had served as development committee chairmen as well as by a woman tasked with collecting 20 ETB (0.95 USD) from female members of her *iddir* group. The chairmen were responsible for collecting the one-time 1,000 ETB (48 USD) fee and described how they were forced to knock on doors and send reminders and warning letters to collect the missing money. The major problem in collecting fees from households and individuals was that nobody had any means of enforcing contributions.

One government official in his 60s living in Churchside who had served as a development committee member expressed his frustration at how difficult it was to create momentum among community members to participate. This lack of motivation was explained by the fact that by this time, many residents were renters rather than owners, and saw themselves as having less stake than owners in the future of the neighbourhood. Residents were not enthusiastic about attending long meetings on top of otherwise busy days, and the importance of developing the neighbourhood – in terms of raising the market value of everyone's properties – was not fully appreciated by many residents. This was reflected in the low participation in meetings (sometimes only one in nine residents attended), which was in turn exacerbated by a lack of clearly communicated goals from the assembly officials. Each household might receive one flyer announcing the meeting, but the benefits for attendees were never enumerated in such flyers, although such benefits included social networking, an important aspect of Ethiopian society. It was for these reasons difficult to inspire especially younger people to join neighbourhood committees.

The development committee's proposal nevertheless won the approval of the Bole subcity. The committee obtained permission to begin construction work once the proposal had been modified to incorporate the standards and guidelines of the municipal authorities. These modifications resulted from the contractual need to de-prioritize income-generating facilities such as a small tea-serving kiosk and internet cafe due to budget limitations: there was simply not enough money in the budget to implement them.

The open spaces and what happened to them

The proposal encompassed four open spaces in Churchside. Green Area No.1 (the largest of the four with a total area of 4,150 m²) was located in the centre of the neighbourhood. According to the proposal, it was to have two international-sized

tennis courts, one basketball court, one children's play area, and a small *tukul*, a traditional cone-shaped mud hut with a thatched roof where soft drinks and sweets could be enjoyed. The *tukul* was to be located next to the children's playground so that parents could relax while their children played. Due to the changes introduced to the original proposal by the development committee, only one sports court for both tennis and basketball was built on this space, and this court was paved with hard concrete. The rest of the space was reserved for planting trees, with outdoor seating provided as well. During field visits for this research, children and adults from the community were found to regularly use the tennis court, which was available to those paying an additional monthly membership fee. Tennis coaching was also available for anyone wishing to learn. The court was also used by local youth to play basketball and football. An entrance fee was charged to access these spaces, set at 5 ETB per day.

Green Area No. 2 was the second largest of the open spaces in the neighbourhood, encompassing 3,750 m². This space had previously contained the football field upon which neighbourhood and local children and youth had played sports. In the development committee's original proposal to the *woreda*, it was to include one small football field, a volleyball court, a changing room, and a parking space for cars. Instead, only a children's playground ended up being built. This could be accessed by children under the supervision of their parents or a nanny for a daily fee of 10 ETB. A permanent female attendant was hired to collect the fees and supervise the children using the space, but in an interview she complained that some parents who brought their children promised to pay the fee later and did not, or simply did not want to pay for a space they felt belonged to their own neighbourhood. The attendant had little means to enforce

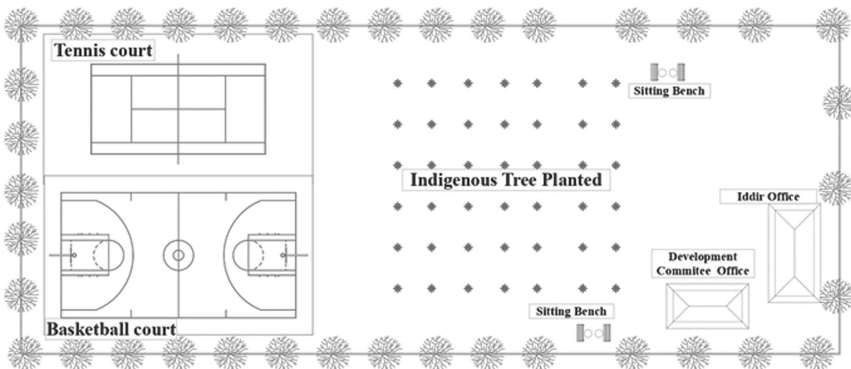


Figure 9.2 Final outcome of Green Area No. 1.

the payment of the fee, since the fee was not posted anywhere. While the area was busy during weekends and after working hours, it often remained empty during the day. As became obvious from the primary author's on-site observations, Green Area No. 2 was neither well maintained nor safe for children. The ground was uneven and covered by thick grass and the metal playground equipment was unstable and rusty.

Prior to the open spaces development, a diversity of tree species, some of them indigenous, had already been planted along the outside boundaries of the space which gave it an organic appearance. The project proposal had recommended using an even greater diversity of native plant species to help promote ecosystem resilience in the city. Inside the boundaries of both Green Area No. 1 and Green Area No. 2, however, the additional trees, although indigenous, were all the same species and were now planted in a grid pattern by local gardeners. Some of the new trees were supplied by the *woreda* BPCA, while others were bought from local markets. This mismatch between proposal and outcome was the result of a lack of prior planning and knowledge about tree species. At the time of this study, not many people used the spaces and sitting areas; those who did were either from the nearby high school (Bole High School) or other neighbouring facilities. One reason was that the grass in Green Area No. 2 had been allowed to grow tall and the space was otherwise not maintained, so nobody could sit there.

Green Areas Nos. 3 and 4 were the smallest of the open spaces in the neighbourhood and were located on its periphery. In the project proposal, both these spaces were to have trees planted in them, but by the end of the project, trees had been planted in only one of them (Green Area No. 3). The development of Green Area No. 4 was still incomplete, as someone had built a non-permanent dwelling on the site prior to the construction of the neighbourhood housing. Residents sympathized with the elderly female occupant and allowed her to

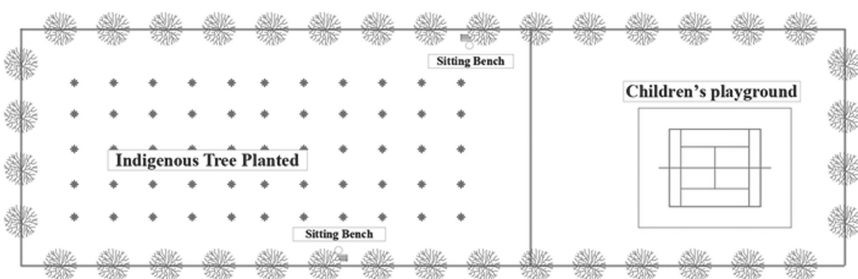


Figure 9.3 Final outcome of Green Area No. 2.

remain there. When she died, her male relative occupied the dwelling and fortified the structure with more permanent building materials. This gave him a stronger claim to the property, which has been difficult for local authorities to deny merely for the sake of preserving an open space.

During observations, Green Area No. 3 appeared deserted and had no benches. Community members used it only for walking their dogs. Since the development committee had employed only one gardener to take care of all of the four green spaces, not much had been done by way of maintaining and improving them. The sitting spaces in all the green areas were deserted for most of the day and were also untidy. This applied equally to Green Areas Nos. 3 and 4.

Why the project did not succeed as originally planned

Both the original project proposal to develop the open spaces and the agreement entered into by BPCA and the local development committee underwent significant changes during implementation. The proposed football field was omitted from the final plan. The basketball and volleyball courts in the original plan were merged into one in order to save space and costs as well as maintain the agreed-upon 20:80 ratio of built-up area versus green areas. The changes and modifications to the original proposal altered the overall functions of the spaces by leaving out certain facilities and functions meant for parents, children, and youth (the tea-drinking area and the internet cafe, the football field). Additionally, the fees to use the tennis court had not been in the project proposal, and the *woreda* administration claimed that they were not aware that fees were being charged. The diversification of plant life in the green areas still remained to be implemented at the time of writing, and landscape design was completely neglected. The seating areas within the green spaces had been deserted by the local residents.

In the end, Green Area No. 2 was converted from a space that had served children and youth into a space that was functionally useless for most residents. It was, in essence, replaced with a smaller space in Green Area No. 1 that was not safe for playing sports. Although the residents received trees, a playground, and a tennis court for which they had to pay entrance fees, they did not receive spaces adequate for team sports or those in which adults could socialize and relax. The spaces did not enhance an experience of community for all.

It is unclear what happened during the decision-making process to change the initial plans for a larger football field in Green Area No. 2, as none of the

local actors in the later decision-making processes were willing to discuss this. One reason could have been that decision-makers wanted raise the value of the neighbourhood and deter the youth from loitering inside the area. Another reason could have been to prevent the noise caused by football games, which not all residents appreciated.

The development committee's decision to serve soft drinks to visitors in the green areas to raise funds for the maintenance of the open spaces was said to have been reversed due to the illegal activities reported to occur within the spaces, and the sitting areas were then closed off to everyone. Both the sitting chairman of the development committee and a male security guard in his 60s working in the neighbourhood open spaces claimed that the people used the spaces to engage in illegal activities such as consuming illicit drugs or alcohol, or playing loud music and otherwise disturbing the residents. A man in his 20s employed in the neighbourhood expressed his frustration that the spaces in general were used mostly by outsiders who were not interacting socially with the residents but appeared to be hiding out in the spaces. A young male business owner described how he often saw the open spaces used for illegal uses such as chewing qat, smoking cigarettes, and doing drugs. Linked to this situation was the disappointment felt by residents at the lack of lighting in the neighbourhood open spaces, which meant that it was not safe to move around in them or spend time in the sitting areas during evening hours. Fifteen neighbourhood guards were not sufficient to continually patrol and monitor the whole neighbourhood and the open spaces as well. There were no guards assigned specifically to open spaces. Since the spaces were dark at night, according to one young man, they felt unsafe and no one spent time in those areas. As mentioned earlier, although security had been a major issue in the neighbourhood before the open spaces development process began, for reasons which were never made clear no streetlights or night lighting had been included in the original plans.

None of the changes introduced by the development committee were presented to the neighbourhood residents for review or discussion at the general assembly meeting. The development committee communicated the progress of the project to the general assembly only once. In its meeting towards the end of the implementation period, the project was presented by the chairman of the development committee to the general assembly in the form of an annual report which did not mention the alterations to the planned project implementation. The changes were agreed upon between the development committee and the contractor, and it appears that residents remained largely uninformed until the

changes had already been made. Even if they had been informed, many persons had not paid the monthly development fee, and therefore were not considered to have the right to express an opinion on the progress of the project.

Once the modifications had been made to the plan, the development committee hired a local contractor through open bidding to implement the plan. This contractor was a resident of the neighbourhood. According to the signed contract, the work was to be completed within one year. The aforementioned 1,000 ETB contribution per person and a monthly 15 ETB contribution per household were collected to fund the project. According to the chairman of the development committee, it nevertheless took two and a half years to complete the project, and the estimated final cost was more than double the original estimate: 1.4 million rather than 660,000 ETB. Reasons for the inflated price and delays in implementation included an inability to collect the assigned money from neighbourhood residents, delays in payment to the contractor, and the fact that the original bid or tender was too low and did not account for the rising cost of materials. The sports court, for instance, still had not been properly drained of rainwater after the first two years, and its surface was not up to standard. As late as the writing of this chapter in 2020, there were still payments outstanding to the contractor and the construction work had not been fully finished. Given the costs of the entire project, the later stages of decision-making and implementation regarding especially Green Area 2 appear to have been a failure. How did this happen?

The local development committee's initial proposal was the basis of an agreement made between the development committee and the Beautification, Parks and Cemetery Agency (BPCA). This meant that the development committee became the 'developer' in the eyes of the state, working on behalf of the city. Whereas the *woreda* administration later made little or no effort to review this process and its outcomes, the BPCA office, which had joined the project in 2010, was mandated to monitor and evaluate the agreed-upon project. According to the agreement, the expectation was that the BPCA should have gone to inspect the work on the open spaces every three years, or the contract would be revoked. But no formal monitoring or evaluation of the project was ever carried out by the BPCA. Had the BPCA conducted evaluations during the project's implementation in the neighbourhood, they would have noticed the changes that the development committee had undertaken on their own.

The BPCA had no answers for why the plans were changed, and admitted that they could not monitor the development process because their staff were not architects or urban planners. The staff lacked not only funds and skills but

also guidelines, checklists, contact information, or any way to truly enforce rules even if they had checked. The sitting chairman of the development committee, for his part, noted that

the only way the local government and especially the [BPCA] agency have been involved is by giving us trees for planting. Other than that, they have not provided any assistance in the development of these open spaces, subsequent to the signing of the agreement. The [Woreda and Bole subcity] government officials are political appointees and do not have the ability to run this kind of development programme, which require technical expertise. Therefore there is a clear gap in the way we collaborate, and there is mistrust on our side as to the role and capability of the agency.

(Conversation with male chairman in his 70s, January 2013)

On the one hand, it was clear from interviews that the development committee felt they had been left on their own to carry out a set of tasks for which they would have needed assistance from the higher-level local government administration. On the other hand, the BPCA had few means of enforcing compliance with original agreements even if it did monitor them, as happened when some open spaces in Addis Ababa designated for green area development in the city were converted instead into spaces for car washes and vending stalls. This lack of any legally enforced structure of rights and responsibilities for all actors affected every phase of the development project. People were expected to participate voluntarily and committees were expected to inform them of all relevant issues, but these were difficult to enforce due to a lack of clearly defined rules, roles or basis in solid arguments (for instance reference to existing legislation).

The exclusion of the youth in the open spaces development process

During the open spaces project, assumptions were made about whose well-being should be facilitated, namely that of adult owners and residents. This left out some groups altogether such as children, youth, and the disabled. Although the playground for children provided them with an opportunity to play in a nearby place and their parents to be in close proximity, the fees, limited opening hours, and unsafe equipment in these spaces could hinder visitors from coming often and ultimately discourage users.

The largest group ignored during the implementation was the youth, who expressed their disappointment at the lack of a football field. In Ethiopia, as in

most countries, football is an essential activity for how children and youth relate to their peers. Formerly, mini-championships during summer breaks had been held in Green Area 2, and had brought children and youth not only from the immediate neighbourhood but also from other neighbourhoods to play. By the end of the project, however, what had formerly been the football field on which youth and children played was no longer available for this purpose, since it had been planted with trees. Consequently, children and youth had moved to a small part of Green Area 1, which was paved with hard concrete and therefore was not a safe surface on which to play sports. Green Area No. 1 was busy particularly during after-school hours and weekends. In the morning hours on Saturday and Sunday, the basketball court became a football field or was used partly for basketball, partly for football. One male high school student under the age of 18 reported that he did not like playing on the new concrete surface because it was too hard, and another male high school student younger than 18 years of age said that while he played on it, he wished for a standard size football field. A male college student in his 20s used the concrete space on Saturday mornings to play football with others, but felt that the football games had lost their former atmosphere, their 'culture' when compared to previous times, when neighbourhood youth had played friendly games with youth from other neighbourhoods. At some point after the open spaces transformation the development committee forbade anyone to play football on the concrete-paved basketball court – the only remaining space for playing sports – due to the greater risk of injury from the hard surface. The development committee chairman argued that the children and youth should instead go to other neighbourhoods to play:

no one should play on the football field since it is clearly not built for such a purpose and it could be very dangerous when they fall down. The football field planned [for this space] was changed because the space is small, therefore the children can go to nearby areas to play football, and otherwise we will take strict measures against those found playing.

(Conversation with male chairman in his 70s, January 2013)

In reality, youth and children continued to play basketball and football on the hard concrete. Although the original proposal allocated spaces for a football field and volleyball court, these were never built. According to a security guard who was working in the open spaces,

the football field had been just perfect for the neighbourhood kids, since they all came from different age groups but they all played the game with passion. Even people from other neighbourhoods came here, to either play on their own or

have a match with the kids from this neighbourhood. However, now that [Green Area No. 2] has become different with the sitting area being put there instead, no one comes around anymore, and if anyone comes, it's either to smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol. No one comes just to have a rest and enjoy doing nothing, and if somebody comes, it's people from other neighbourhoods, and even they are not that many, really. But because these spaces have been abused and the development committee wants to strongly discourage activities like smoking and drinking, we have to tell even those people not to come in and do that there. However, we cannot really manage handling that task on top of our other tasks like having to patrol the housing areas.

(Conversation with male security guard in his 60s, April 2013)

A male college student in his 20s reported that he would have loved to be part of the design process of the open spaces project and wished that he could have contributed something to make the spaces more appealing. A female resident in her 50s said that it was difficult to get the youth involved in the community projects because the content of the meetings tended to be boring for them. She was worried about the future of the neighbourhood if youth were not somehow recruited to participate in the decision-making, and would have loved to see young people taking positions in committees and executing projects in the future.

Partly because of the lack of enthusiasm among the youth, by the end of the development process the members of the general assembly and some development committee members felt that the largest problem facing them was the transfer of power to future members of the development committee. By that time, the development committee members had served for seven years, when a normal term should have been two to three years. New development committee members were not elected until 2017 because of the low turnout and therefore insufficient quora at the general assembly meetings. Outgoing committee members needed to nominate new persons to take their place, but there was little interest among residents in joining neighbourhood committees.

Conclusions

In Addis Ababa, the development and protection of urban open spaces face several challenges, including lack of adequate financing, lack of coordination among different executive agencies within the city administration, and lack of awareness among the public and other actors (Forum for Social Studies 2013).

The current construction boom in and around the city centre also threatens the remaining forests and green areas within the city limits.

The open spaces development in the neighbourhood studied here was initiated by female residents who were already self-organized into voluntary *iddir* funeral savings groups. However, these women – busy with work, families, and social commitments – did not have the time to take on the management of the entire project, and therefore it was turned over to the housing cooperative's development committee for planning and implementation. The high tenant/owner ratio in the area, however, complicated the mobilizing of interest and collection of monetary contributions from residents to pay for the construction, which was finished behind schedule and over budget.

Some residents felt that overall, the development of the open spaces was beneficial in that it achieved the primary aim of the homeowners: the neighbourhood was able to retain its open spaces rather than lose them to private developers. In a congested city such as Addis, having green open spaces in a central urban area raised the property value of the whole neighbourhood. The open-space development in this neighbourhood was therefore an important achievement.

Yet there were also serious problems. The project took more than two years to complete, and ended up costing roughly twice the original estimate, yet without achieving the quality and standards originally aimed for. Both of the larger open areas in the neighbourhood were transformed into areas that were relatively useless to most residents, could not be accessed without paying a fee, and led to a situation even worse in terms of recreation possibilities than what had been offered by the pre-development open spaces. This occurred because the original plans were modified during implementation and the actual *users* of the spaces were overlooked in these modifications.

Co-production of neighbourhood open spaces in the case studied here meant an alliance between the community and the local government agency, BPCA, which prevented other branches of the city government from appropriating the land for sale to private developers. However, there were blind spots and dysfunctions within both the alliance and the community, which meant that the developed open spaces were not useful for all members of the community. First, institutionalization of the co-production process did not guarantee its success. Although the broad terms of community-city cooperation are spelled out in Ethiopian law, adapting these terms to realities on the ground proved difficult. There were clear problems of communication among the different levels from planning to final implementation. Not all members of the community had full awareness of the planning phases or the possibility to voice dissatisfaction.

Existing literature on co-production at the community level rarely traces out the complex structures necessary for participation, including clear procedural guidelines for all, a concrete means of enforcing rules, and the explicit communication of how participants will benefit. Community development committees often evolve from need, but they lack the necessary skills, professional consultants, and funds to be full co-producers with city or state governments. They rely on the work of volunteers from whom not much can be demanded, since they have full-time jobs and/or family responsibilities. In order to succeed fully, the project outlined here would have needed interaction and integration between many persons. One can speculate that stronger leadership might have been needed at the community level, but such leadership would have required strict procedures that all community participants were familiar with. Moreover, there are no legal means currently in place to hold decision-makers to account at both community and city/state levels so that actual implementation would not deviate from plans already agreed upon.

Although the BPCA's main task was to monitor and evaluate the development of neighbourhood open spaces following the signing of stakeholder agreements, the BPCA clearly needed more skilled labour, funds, and legal recourse to prevent violations. The *woreda* BPCA was the point of contact between the community and the city government, but it was unable to monitor the actual implementation or enforce conformity with approved plans. This raises the question of the role of the state in these kinds of co-production processes and how it can maintain its relevance in urban environmental development. If procedures have no actual accountancy or consequences, then implementation will be flawed and the groups with the least power at the community level will be excluded.

Another major problem was the lack of clear and well-defined ownership of the neighbourhood open spaces. The dispute between the Land Bank Administration and community representatives was a clear sign of the absence of proper coordination in the management of these spaces. Third, the project was initiated primarily to combat the possibility of the Land Bank's developing the open spaces for commercial purposes. The participation of the community was mobilized only narrowly to secure the success of this particular open spaces development project, instead of addressing more critical issues related to the interaction between local communities and local governance. These included citizens' lack of awareness about environmental protection and community development, which formed a major bottleneck to the participatory process according to the community leaders with whom the primary author spoke. There was poor coordination between the *woreda* BPCA and the higher levels

of government tasked with dealing with environmental issues. Neighbourhood open spaces failed to become part of the overall green infrastructure development programme, but were, rather, left for unprepared community developers to manage together with poorly funded *woreda* and subcity administrations. Decentralized efforts to protect the environment could thus not be fully implemented due to a shortage of both financial resources and skilled labour.

Community volunteers were indispensable assets during the project initiation and implementation periods, with female *iddir* group members in particular being critical to catalyzing project negotiations and disseminating information to local residents. However, end users of the neighbourhood open spaces such as children and youth did not take part in the planning of their own neighbourhood's open-space development. Greater efforts to make participation interesting for the youth and involve them in decision-making would be needed in the future.

The following recommendations for future open spaces projects are indicated: first, there is a need for greater clarity in both ownership of neighbourhood open spaces and the roles of various government agencies in the protection and development of these spaces. Second, trust in the institutions that plan and implement development is vital in encouraging participation in the development process. There is a need for organized neighbourhood associations to include end users such as youth and children in the processes of decision-making, not only for the project at hand but also to facilitate their later participation in such associations as adults. This requires not only willingness from parents and committees to share development responsibilities with the youth, but for the *content of communication* to be as clear and interesting for youth as possible. Youth and children should have a *clear channel of communication* to decision-makers in all projects in which they are to feature as beneficiaries. Finally, for more sustainable policy and practice, current policy processes should learn from ongoing practices and trends regarding open spaces development.

At a broader level, when planning and implementing co-production, there is a constant need to reflect on the local power structures of daily life, because no matter how important the achievement, it is much less of an achievement if the majority of the population is consequently marginalized and the transformation is robbed of its usefulness. This makes it important to examine the power relationships between various stakeholders to understand how they interact and why, and to map and understand the motivations of the various participants, which are themselves influenced by less visible factors that may be contradictory. In the present case, the existence of grassroots organizations and local women's

associations was initially helpful in allowing actors to navigate through complex relationships with the local government. It is therefore important to identify the best ways for community associations to organize, lead, and manage themselves. Legalizing their status within co-production processes would promote residents' sense of ownership in and commitment to development projects.

In conclusion, while co-production that promotes participatory development is a worthwhile goal, it can face obstacles in planning and implementation that need to be openly addressed by all stakeholders. In this case study, local governments would have fared better in their project undertakings had they tackled questions surrounding the long-term sustainability of the protection and development of neighbourhood open spaces. This would have involved ensuring equal and fair involvement of all community members, a process in which all voices were heard and everyone's rights and responsibilities were recognized in advance.

Notes

- 1 *United Nations World Urbanization Prospects*, The 2018 Revision. <https://population.un.org/wup/Publications/Files/WUP2018-Report.pdf>; also <https://population.un.org/wup/>.
- 2 A well-known Swiss-French architect, one of the pioneers of modern architecture.
- 3 *Iddir* groups are voluntary burial associations helping their members during not just bereavement but also in other emergency situations.
- 4 Especially the Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) initiative.
- 5 Found in the *Ethiopian National Urban Green Infrastructure Standard* (Ministry of Urban Development and Housing 2015) and the government manual *Development of Amenity Green Space in Residential Areas* (Ministry of Urban Development and Housing 2016).

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From *Musseques* to High-rises: Luanda's Renewal in Times of Abundance and Crisis

Cristina Udelsmann Rodrigues

Introduction

The capital of Angola, Luanda, was established by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. For centuries, it was a key commercial hub in the Atlantic that grew and expanded continuously. The independence of the country in 1975, followed by a civil war that lasted until 2002, led to large numbers of rural–urban migrants seeking refuge from the war. Luanda went from a rapidly modernizing colonial centre in the early 1970s to a chaotic wartime safe space between 1975 and 2002 to which large numbers of people throughout the country flocked. These migrants settled in all available vacant spaces, both in the inner city and on the urban peripheries. Wartime urban life was chaotic and became progressively more precarious thereafter. At the end of the war, the city underwent an astounding transformation as its oil wealth was no longer channelled to military expenses but was directed to urban reconstruction.

The post-war reconstruction of Luanda rapidly transformed the perceptions and strategies among urban residents and other urban stakeholders. Abundant wealth, while supporting notions of a ‘modern’ urban life, engendered a multiplicity of tactics across diverse social strata in response to changing social and economic reconfigurations. The economic crisis in 2014 related to the dramatic fall of oil prices – Angola’s main commodity – has again posed new challenges for urban dwellers.

Oil prices dropped dramatically from a peak value of over 110 USD per barrel in February 2014 to 60 USD in 2015 and continued to drop steadily to roughly 35 USD at the beginning of 2016. As a consequence, both the construction sector and processes of urban transformation were affected by a shrinking state budget,

which meant that foreseen projects could no longer be implemented (Abacus and JLL 2017). Between 2014 and 2016, the Angolan state budget was significantly reduced from 74 billion USD to 41 billion USD, with the construction sector's share of the state budget declining from 8 per cent to 3.1 per cent (Cain 2016).

Literature on the Angolan post-war reconstruction boom and the subsequent rapid societal, economic, and physical changes it caused in urban areas has emphasized the variety of conditions experienced and strategies employed by members of different socio-economic strata in urban Luanda (Udelmann Rodrigues 2017; Udelmann Rodrigues and Frias 2015), producing new urban spatialities (Cain 2012, 2013), highly driven by the state (Buire 2014; Pitcher and Moorman 2015). The reconstruction boom displayed and reinforced the materialization of the new, desired modern city filled with opportunities, a vision that contrasted sharply with the generally precarious living conditions borne for many years by the majority of the Luandans.

This chapter discusses the diversity of perspectives and economic strategies among different socio-economic strata of urban dwellers – the wealthy, the urban middle classes, and the poor. It covers the period from the end of a three-decades-long civil war in 2002 when the economy started to grow, through the unprecedented boom before 2014, up to 2016 when the effects of the oil crisis began to be felt in the Angolan economy. In the last half of the 2010s, Luanda as a whole underwent a variety of physical changes that shaped and conditioned the strategies of urban residents. While recent research has indicated some of the effects of post-war reconstruction on urban strategies that I discuss, the effects of the economic downturn are now raising new questions about the strategies related to urban (re)construction used by urban dwellers to improve their situations.

The perspectives of residents belonging to different socio-economic strata were relatively similar in how they spoke of the enthusiasm towards reconstruction as well as the expectations of improved infrastructure and access to the post-war 'modern' city (Udelmann Rodrigues 2017; Cain 2014; Pitcher and Moorman 2015; Croese 2016; Soares de Oliveira 2015). However, their unequal socio-economic positions led to differentiated responses as different actors could mobilize different kinds of resources. As creative urban strategies have been developed within contexts of 'shifting spaces of transaction and perspective' (Simone 2011: 122), urban residents in Africa have constructed their livelihoods in a wide variety of ways, dependent on their positions and possibilities. As mentioned by Simone (2001: 18), African cities including Luanda, 'often appear to act in an incessant state of preparedness. They keep residents in an almost permanent state of changing gears and focus, if not

location.’ During the reconstruction boom, economic strategies relying on an assumption that housing and real estate would increase in value were dominant among urban dwellers, but were no longer so in times of crisis. Evidence of a slowdown in urban reconstruction in Angola due to the economic crisis calls for attention to new improvisations in this changing environment.

The often negative outcomes of rapid massive new urbanism across the continent – expulsions and enclosures of the poor, public funding of segregation and fragmentation (van Noorloos and Kloosterboer 2017) – have also become more visible in Luanda during the reconstruction boom (Udelsmann Rodrigues 2007, 2017; Udelsmann Rodrigues and Frias 2015; Cain 2013; Croese 2015, 2016). Resettlements of residents from informal areas in the centre where new buildings have been erected and the mushrooming of private condominiums are examples of Luanda’s active spatial segregation. While urban imaginaries in Luanda were filled with ideas of progress toward a better life, the ‘most likely outcome of these fantasy plans is a steady worsening of the marginalization and inequalities’ (Watson 2014: 215). This is because access to wealth and to the ‘modern’ city is not available to all urban residents. The city’s promised transformation and capacity to deliver a better urban life has been slow and ineffective, particularly for the poorest segments of the population. Overall, these concerns have constituted an increasingly relevant field for sociological analysis and have called for new approaches to the city that account for urban transformation, processes of exclusion, inclusion, and self-exclusion, subjective forms of appropriation, and strategies mobilized by urban residents at different income levels.

Recent literature on Luanda’s post-war renovation provides a substantial foundation for discussion and analysis of its urban socio-economic and spatial transformation. In this chapter, I also use data and evidence from qualitative fieldwork conducted for over two decades in Luanda. This empirical data consists of over 100 in-depth interviews, directly or indirectly focused on Luanda’s transformation, conducted between 2000 and 2015 with both younger and older men and women.¹ In 2016 and 2017, I interviewed an additional twenty-five urban residents of similar age and gender distribution, focusing on recent urban transformations. My research in Angola began in 1998 in Luanda, in the musseques that by that time had attracted millions of people who had recently fled the civil war. I saw the same trend in other cities throughout the country, although at smaller scales. Much has, however, changed since then, not only in the musseques but in the greatly expanded area of greater Luanda. As a researcher, witnessing these rapid and at times profound changes has concomitantly transformed my approach to Luanda’s renewal over time.

Urban metamorphosis towards modernity

Following a tendency across the continent, Angola and Luanda have attracted significant foreign investments over the last decades. This fuelled an urban boom and created ‘islands of utopian luxury’ as symbols of the new modern city (Grant 20145). Idealized in policy and planning domains, the reconstruction of Luanda – including its peripheries that currently cover a radius of over 100 square kilometres² – is grounded on both enormous public and private investments and ambitious notions of a modern, future city. The Urban Growth Management Plan of 2000, which in 2011 became a legal planning document³ and substantially informed the Luanda Urban Plan of 2015 (Plano Director Geral Metropolitano de Luanda, PDGML), set the guidelines for the city’s comprehensive and high-aspiring transformations. Post-war reconstruction, fuelled by these visions and with comfortable support from both public and private capital, transformed Luanda into a ‘construction site’ (*canteiro de obras*), with new constructions and renovations taking place throughout the whole municipality and province.

Between 2003 and 2007, the Angolan state budget increased sevenfold to a peak in 2013 of about 69 billion US dollars, surpassing total Western foreign aid to the African continent that year (Soares de Oliveira 2015). As a consequence, the country witnessed a sharp rise in public investments between 2002 and 2014 estimated at about 93 billion USD (UCAN 2015). The end of the war, coupled with transformations that had taken place in global markets related to real estate, made Luanda a more attractive capital market for foreign investment. The main investments in the capital city since 2006 have occurred within cooperation agreements with China, funded by the China International Fund (CIF) for support of construction and reconstruction (Power 2012; Croese 2012; Corkin 2016). These investments aimed at building 215,500 new dwellings throughout the country. There have also been a number of major international and multinational financial investments in Luanda’s reconstruction, in addition to more modest national ventures by private businessmen. While it is difficult to assess exactly how much of state and private expenditure over the years was channelled into Luanda’s reconstruction (Croese 2015: 7), the results in terms of the city’s reconfiguration quickly became evident. A boom in construction licensing took place in 2008 according to the *Instituto de Planeamento e Gestão Urbana de Luanda* (IPGUL 2014). In that year, construction permits issued in the province of Luanda covered 1,063,678 square metres, 54 per cent of which were for housing.

Development, modernization and better living conditions repeatedly appear in official documents as the guiding principles of post-war urban reconstruction. National policy documents, such as the National Reconstruction Program of 2009, the *Long-term Development Strategy for Angola* (2025), and the National Plan for Development 2013–2017 foresaw reconstruction, housing, and infrastructure as key pieces of national development. In the 2025 *Long-term Strategy for Angola*, the capital was to be ‘reclassified and socially integrated, with an economic base (industry and services) developed’. The 2013–2017 Plan foresaw in turn the development of the Special Economic Zone of Luanda (*Bengo, Zona Económica Especial, ZEE*) as a strategy for industrial development within the city metropolitan area, the completion of a new airport and seaports, and investment in tourism and leisure on Luanda Island and Futungo de Belas. In terms of urban development, the National Urbanism and Housing Program (*Programa Nacional de Urbanismo e Habitação, PNUH*) of 2009 focused its efforts on self-built housing together with a varied set of major housing and construction endeavours. Dedicated structures, such as the National Reconstruction Office (*Gabinete de Reconstrução Nacional, GRN*) linked directly to the presidency, IPGUL, and district-level entities like the Cazenga Office have since then become the principal institutional actors of urban development in Luanda.

With an emerging middle class and rapid urbanization, the conditions for becoming a new real-estate and property development ‘last frontier’ (Watson 2014: 216) came together and this allure for both national and international investment represented a turnaround for the city (Croese 2016). ‘Turnaround cities’ are characterized by their marked improvement in economic performance, expansion of public investment, major projects, commitment to urban management, and desire for international recognition (Croese 2016: 1). This shift can be seen from major projects such as the redevelopment of the Bay of Luanda and the construction of the Kilamba centrality; new condominiums, satellite cities, and low-income housing neighbourhoods; as well as four main industrial areas (Abacus and JLL 2017). In the centre, dilapidated buildings were renovated, and an impressive number of ‘Dubai style’ high-rise towers were constructed, as were a number of shopping malls throughout the metropolitan area. The emblematic *Marginal*, or Luanda bay, was revamped, which involved major dredging. The image of Luanda was profoundly changed by brand new official buildings such as the National Assembly, the Mausoleum, and the Currency Museum (*Museu da Moeda*) in the areas adjacent to the renewed and elongated bay.

For some years, the expectations of urban life in a Luanda that emerged in times of abundance revolved around notions of a modernizing city, subject to unparalleled modern reconstruction and infrastructure building. The trend toward the construction of 'world class cities' (Roy and Ong 2011) has been particularly evident in Luanda following models of the modern metropolis with its concomitant imaginings of urban futures (Murray 2017). Luanda's urban experiences of transformation have been based on an imaginary of modernity and grandiose urbanization. These ideals and the massive physical changes taking place continued to feed migration to Luanda and to Angola's other cities, as well as to attract a substantial amount of foreign investment in real estate.

The associations between urban life, modernity and cosmopolitanism have been widely described in the research literature (Ferguson 1999; Nyamnjoh, Durham and Fokwang 2002; Mbembe and Nuttall, 2004). Modernity, grounded in lifestyles, consumption, and access to assets (Mbembe and Nuttall, 2004), defines 'social and cultural references that guide the way people steer their lives, the strategies they adopt, and their social aspirations' (Udelsmann Rodrigues 2017: 163). The processes of 'worlding' the African city involve not only new economic capacities and infrastructures but also new behaviours and positions (Simone 2001; Roy and Ong 2011). Concepts of urbanism and worldliness in the writings of Robinson (2002), Mbembe and Nuttall (2004) and Pieterse (2010) are theoretical devices that allow for understanding African urban modernity as a product of both globalized economies and subjective references. Often related to changes aimed at moving away from rural references and embracing 'global' ones, the notion of modernity in Africa distinguishes people of 'the city' from those of 'the bush' (Nyamnjoh, Durham and Fokwang 2002; Pisani 2004). When applied to individuals in Angola, this distinction can be assessed on the basis of language, gestures, greetings, clothing, or hairstyles, among other things (Brinkman 2003). While urban residents' 'ambitions of city' remained evident even throughout the war (Roque 2009: 161), post-war reconstruction of the capital city was very clearly grounded in ideas of the modern metropolis, development, and prosperity (Schubert 2015) inspired by the global North and fast modernizing places such as Dubai. Reminiscent of other cities in Africa experiencing recent renewal, Luanda has developed its own new spatial logic and configuration that has reconfigured its urban life through new building typologies and 'spaces of exception' (Murray 2017), such as gated condominiums or shopping malls (Udelsmann Rodrigues 2016, 2017).

After 2014, under the threat of the oil crisis and already affected by reduced state resources (Croese 2016), many Luanda inhabitants experienced mixed

feelings about urban life and its future. The ‘urban fantasies’ manifested in major urban projects such as Kilamba city, with 20,000 apartments built in less than three years (Cain 2014; Pitcher and Moorman 2015), started to change with the abrupt interruption of urban construction due to the oil crisis. The ambitious modernizing project is still seen as incomplete by both the government and by urban dwellers.

From beast to beauty: Luanda’s post-war renovation

Luanda’s post-war reconstruction was founded on high economic prospects and ambitious plans devised and implemented within a context of economic abundance. After the war, private condominiums, high-rise flashy buildings on the city’s skyline, satellite cities known as ‘centralities’ (*centralidades*), and planned and structured suburban neighbourhoods all began to emerge rapidly in a span of less than two decades. Through government and private investments and enterprises mobilized around this urban development, Luanda not only expanded in terms of its built area but the whole metropolitan area also began to integrate the new *centralidades* composed of buildings combining public and private investment aimed at the low- and middle-income populations. Today in Luanda the Kilamba and Sequele *centralidades* are emblematic features of the city’s striking transformation. As in other satellite cities being built around the continent – in Nairobi, Kinshasa or Accra, for instance, – Luanda’s satellite cities are conceived as mega-sized gated communities destined for the emerging middle classes who can afford properties sold there (de Boeck 2013). Simultaneously, new resettlement districts built after the end of the war across the city and in expansion zones became inhabited. These resettlement districts were integrated into government urban development plans and targeted at both low-income families and resettled populations previously living in central city risky areas. Also, private gated condominiums that began to appear in the 1990s rapidly multiplied after the war and were numerous at the time of my fieldwork (Frias and Udelsmann Rodrigues 2018).

Spatially, like other Angolan cities, the structure and dynamics of the urban colonial setting were shaped by the segregation of the peripheral and informal *musseques* from the wealthier colonial centre, the downtown *cidade baixa* port and the uptown administrative expansion area of the *cidade alta* (Amaral 1978; Messiant 1989). Luanda’s *musseques* have been one of its most salient characteristics since colonial times (Amaral 1978, 1983; Cahen 1989; Fonte 2012;

Raposo and Salvador 2007; Udelsmann Rodrigues and Salvador 2012), and they have marked socio-economic differences within the city. Musseques have historically been unplanned and lack infrastructure. They consist of houses built by poor urban – usually migrant – residents using precarious materials such as mud and straw and, more recently, cement blocks and zinc roofing. Given their haphazard growth, musseques at the time of my fieldwork were overcrowded, with houses separated by narrow, zigzagging alleyways, and no vacant public spaces. After independence and with the beginning of the civil war that spanned nearly three decades, the *musseques* expanded rapidly, penetrating the colonial centre as well and creating conditions for reduced differentiation of urban social spaces (Udelsmann Rodrigues 2017). Due to rapid urbanization and massive migration, the wartime *mussequisation* of the city (Amado et al. 1992) blurred the colonial dualistic spatial division between peripheral precarious poor areas and the colonial centre dominated by concrete and asphalt. Massive investments following the end of the civil war altered urban spatial dynamics in Luanda, transforming the chaotic rundown centre that had replaced the colonial modernist inner city into a ‘world class’ (Roy and Ong 2011) line of skyscrapers along the renewed Luanda bay. Simultaneously, wealth was channelled into new construction in the poor disordered peripheries and expansion areas, introducing new urbanism and new urban features, most of the latter built from scratch.

Active spatial reconfigurations occurred in new areas and followed two types of urban logic: expansion outward from the centre and the reconstruction and revamping of the old city centre. Recent comparative analysis of new investments in African urbanism identifies two main varieties of new city forms. They either arise ‘out of nowhere’ – as in the case of independent cities, satellite cities, and cities within existing cities (mostly enclaves); or they are the result of restructuring existing cities (van Noorloos and Kloosterboer 2017). Luanda’s renewal is based on both types of endeavours, and such transformation also takes place in other cities around the country. These comprise residential forms such as enclaved condominiums; the new neighbourhoods of the wealthiest classes; new middle-class satellite cities; new neighbourhoods of resettled *musseque* dwellers; upgraded informal neighbourhoods; and upgraded central districts of provincial capitals (Davis 2006; Jenkins et al. 2006; Jenkins 2009; Udelsmann Rodrigues 2009).

Both in the condominiums and in new neighbourhoods for the wealthy, the villa style of housing has meant luxurious houses served by infrastructure and services – water, electricity, sanitation – that are generally absent or poorly delivered in the rest of the city, as well as additions such as swimming pools, green spaces, and security services (Frias and Udelsmann Rodrigues 2018). In

the new satellite cities and apartment-type condominiums that are usually built on them, middle-class families living in newly built five-, ten-, or fifteen-storey buildings also have access to basic infrastructure, although not to other more sophisticated amenities.

Residents of *musseques* continue to generally have no access to piped water, electricity, or sanitation. Public services such as schools and health facilities are also lacking. As in other cities in Africa, the historical contrasts between the marginalized peripheries and the centre now intertwine with new middle- and upper-class enclaves on the city's outskirts with new dynamics of circulation and usufruct at the centre to produce novel urban forms (Huchzermeyer 2003; Spinks 2001; Low 2001; Hugon 2006; Davis 2006; Udelsmann Rodrigues 2009, 2017). The dualist distinction between centre and periphery are no longer applicable, since peripheries now also accommodate the middle and upper classes in buildings fully equipped with modern infrastructure. At the same time, new forms of circulation and commuting related to urban economies have emerged as jobs, markets, and the workforce have shifted to new locations. The new multiple centres of Luanda compete with the older city centre in terms of their symbolic reference to modernity and in the provision of modern infrastructure and facilities.

Housing-related strategies in times of affluence

While significant urban renewal based on major investments has been taking place in the city, issues such as the new constraints on access to and management of land in urban areas that affect the poorest sectors (Cain 2013) are relatively little studied. Also, the question of how residents' adapt their lifeways to the new *centralidades* and the new housing projects has not been sufficiently addressed by urban research. The *centralidades*, predominantly based on either multi-storeyed apartment buildings or pre-built standardized family housing, differ greatly from the *musseques* and the city centre in terms of organization of indoor and outdoor spaces (Lara 2012; Croese 2013). For example, families living in new apartment housing do not have social backyard spaces; houses have cooking spaces inside the apartments rather than in outside courtyards, and the vending spaces that were commonly located along house fronts in the *musseques* no longer exist in the new neighbourhoods. Moreover, urban transformation in this case implies relocations of urban dwellers – sometimes forced, sometimes voluntary – raising concerns over adaptation to the new residential spaces, circulation of people, and material conditions, especially among the poorest social strata

(Gastrow 2013, 2014). In general, Luanda's rapid urban transformation based on major investments has intensified feelings among urban dwellers about possible improvements in their lives. Simultaneously, however, it has called for residents to adapt themselves to new conditions, a situation that has generated diverse responses on the part of the different socio-economic groups but not always a feeling of improved living.

The strategies employed by urban dwellers during the oil boom relied on the massive (re)construction of Luanda. Strategies used by the wealthy included the move to self-exclude within expensive condominiums and gated neighbourhoods. The middle classes generally preferred the new modern neighbourhoods being built for which bank loans became available for families with regular salaries such as the civil servants. The middle classes also purchased residences in the renovated central areas where prices became accessible to this income group. The lowest income groups tended to be pushed to spaces further from the city centre, to new residential resettlement projects built by the state. But poorer income groups were also actively engaged in strategic investing by exploiting new resettlement policies and the occupation of urban land in potentially urbanizing areas (Buire 2014; Croese 2015, 2017).

The new urban projects thus became central to residents' social and economic urban strategies. For instance, Kilamba city was an emblematic new city built from scratch with all the infrastructure and orderliness that were missing from other areas of Luanda. It represented the 'suburban dream of an elusive middle class' (Buire 2017: 24) and became an aspiration for many Luandans, particularly younger urban families. However, purchasing a residence in Kilamba city was not always an affordable, straightforward, or transparent process. As a young, recently certified male accountant living in Luanda told me in 2016, 'of course everyone wants to live in Kilamba. The problem is to have access to those houses; there have been many obscure businesses around it.'

For the wealthiest segment of residents, other residential and investment possibilities have also become increasingly available through the thriving construction sector. In most cases, members of this income group have opted to live in private condominium neighbourhoods built and sold in large numbers, or have invested in buying houses there to rent or sell in the future. The presence of these closed neighbourhoods in the city is quite significant today (Cain 2012; Frias and Udelsmann Rodrigues 2018). While the number of condominiums increased, the variety and quality of the infrastructure and facilities they provide became progressively more sophisticated, aiming to satisfy the highest-income residents' aspirations of quality and a 'world class' urban life.

Desires to live a modern city life were gradually been fulfilled for a portion of upper-class residents, who have used the residential strategies of self-exclusion and socio-economic differentiation to increase and reinforce their social status. Housing became a safe and promising investment, with possibilities for market speculation and income deriving from rent. As frequently mentioned in interviews, ‘many rich families bought more than one [villa style] house in condominiums’ (52-year-old female civil servant, 2016).

Middle-income urban residents also began to dream of life in condominiums, as explained by interview participants: ‘I would love to be rich enough to live in a big house in a fine condominium. For now, I am very happy to have been able to get an apartment in Kilamba. Let us see what the future brings’ (55-year-old male professional, 2017). Real-estate-related businesses became highly sought after by more prosperous urban residents because they represented a safe and lucrative economic strategy.

Low-income city residents, too, have looked for new opportunities for land occupation opened through urban expansion. For most urban residents, Luanda’s land market has been characterized by weak tenure rights (Cain 2013), yet there exists a very active and extensive informal real-estate market. Relocation and resettlement of poor residents from informal neighbourhoods has been a main focus of government investment since the end of the war, when some residents were removed from *musseques* or environmentally risk-prone areas through various compensation schemes to make space for new buildings. This created opportunities for residents to transform and adapt urban strategies for their own benefit. Angolan law specifies compensation for evictions and relocations, and many families saw profit in claiming to reside in an area in which new construction was starting or was believed would soon take place. While in most central *musseques* the majority of claimants had indeed already been living there, in other areas when new construction was planned or when older dwellings were demolished to build new *centralidades*, condominiums, or resettlement neighbourhoods, lower-income residents quickly moved to these areas in order to claim compensation. This sometimes involved just one family member living in an improvised dwelling, or family members taking turns residing in the improvised dwelling until compensation was secured. Several families I interviewed had received such payment, although it was impossible to know the scale of this practice. As described in interviews with local authorities, ‘people just had to assemble five zinc sheets, put them up, and live and wait for some months to get compensation. And from there move to another potential site; or even come back to the same one’ (male in his 50s, *bairro* administration staff, 2016).

Although the state formally holds title to all land, formally ‘owned’ property – meaning registered and titled land and property – can be found in both the planned areas of the city and in the *musseques*. Moreover, informal land tenure, held by the majority of residents in *musseques* (75 per cent, Cain 2013) is normally backed up by a variety of titles issued by state local and provincial authorities and also by informal, local, or traditional systems. The latter are usually those activated in cases of occupation of land to seek compensation. Neighbours, traditional authorities, and/or neighbourhood leaders could attest to the residence of a claimant in a specific place, and this helped to prove that the house and/or land belonged to the claimant.

Forced resettlement stemming from the rehabilitation of low-income and/or risk-prone residential areas led in some cases to the eviction of the population. These areas included the *bairro* Sambizanga and the north stretch of the Luanda port toward the *bairro* Boavista. In some cases, residents were compensated for the demolition of their former dwellings by receiving free apartments in the resettlement projects built by the government, and these became an important asset that could be exchanged with other homeowners or used as a source of income generation (Croese 2017). However, experiences of forced eviction and

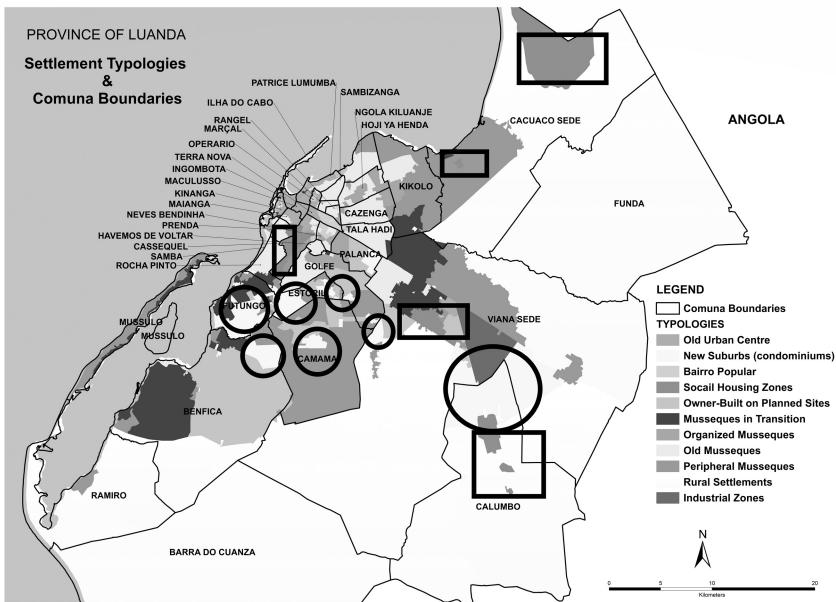


Figure 10.1 Luanda urban typologies: Based on Cain (2012); round shapes indicate condominiums, square shapes Social Housing Zones.

displacement were varied, and in some cases relocated residents felt their lives were made worse, as one 45-year-old woman explained, 'Not only did I lose my house but I also lost all the businesses I had in that area.' In most cases, resettled persons were housed in specific construction projects aimed at lower-income residents living in the targeted neighbourhoods, such as those included in the Social Housing Zones (see Figure 10.1).

Some families simply moved to more peripheral areas where land was cheaper and sold their centrally located houses for 'good money', as one young mechanic in his 30s characterized it. In some cases, reconstruction and urban expansion provided an opportunity for families formerly living in the central *musseques* to improve their living conditions. As a 56-year-old male teacher explained, selling a house that 'was too small for the whole family and had poor conditions' in the city centre 'was a more accessible opportunity to buy better housing [on the periphery], despite being far from the centre.'

From abundance to crisis: new urban strategies

When construction projects and wealth circulating in the country were abundant, urban dwellers experienced an unprecedented atmosphere of great expectations towards the future and the improvement of living conditions in general (Udelsmann Rodrigues 2016). The year 2008 was a record year for construction licences issued in Luanda and the construction work in progress in the capital continued thereafter (IPGUL 2014). The construction and/or purchase of expensive housing in condominiums neighbourhoods, the search for new apartments in the *centralidades* and for houses in new low-income neighbourhoods, as well as strategies to obtain compensation, all continued at a rapid pace until they were affected by the start of the oil crisis in 2014.

At the same time as the economic crisis began to visibly impact the state-led transformation of the city, the first effects on household budgets began to become more evident. Interviewed residents said that they experienced these impacts in terms of purchasing power, meaning more limited access to basic goods for the poor and to luxury goods for the upper and middle classes. As a young female university student described in 2017, 'For some families, it meant no longer being able to pay the maintenance and fuel for all four or five cars; but for the others, the poor, it meant seriously reducing food consumption and even taking children out from school.'

Some interview participants mentioned that there had been significant shifts in how urban residents relied on housing and settlement related schemes. As a 56-year-old male teacher mentioned, previously ‘there were entire families that did not have to work at all, just lived on profits from selling and re-selling houses’. Reduced economic opportunities related to housing and residence in times of crisis have called for renewed urban strategies across socio-economic strata, which I discuss below. The purchase of houses in the condominiums has slowed drastically, and some condominium projects have even been cancelled or halted (see Abacus and JLL 2017). Wealthy property owners who had been making a living from the rentals from multiple properties, became less able to find tenants for them. In some cases, the prices of properties fell, which meant a serious depreciation of their investments and assets. The real-estate-based profits to which some people earlier had easy access were no longer available: in the words of one 35-year-old businessman, ‘The time of fat cows is now over.’ The euphoria of house-seeking in expensive areas slowed, and self-construction with the expectation of remuneration was no longer such a profitable strategy. This led wealthier people to refrain from new investments and in some cases to sell property to cover their expenses. The resident interviewed mentioned above stated that ‘we see many who had to sell the houses they had, and if the situation does not change, will have to sell more’.

Middle-class residents of the new *centralidades* or of the resettlement neighbourhoods felt the impact of the crisis particularly in terms of consumption. Interview participants mentioned that the queues for access to houses in the new projects and for bank loans had reduced significantly.

For lower-income residents too, the importance of housing- and real-estate-related strategies had decreased significantly. To cope with diminishing opportunities related to housing they – as well as some middle-class residents – had adopted new strategies. These included renewed and frequent interactions with the countryside as well as migration, either temporary or permanent, to other regions in which new businesses were being established in mining, agriculture, fishing, or cross-border trade. Increasingly, the strategies of the middle classes and the urban poor have involved mobility rather than permanent settlement. Going ‘back’ to the countryside, even if temporarily, has become a viable alternative for some.

The number of those looking for new opportunities outside the capital city was, however, difficult to assess given the high rate of mobility of the population and the deficient means of registering such movement. It appears to have accounted

for a relatively small percentage of the city's population. Its occurrence, however, raises important questions about changing aspects of urbanization in Angola and its future trends, particularly due to the persistence of the crisis. One 30-year-old businessman who had moved south from Luanda to the area bordering Namibia told me, 'I came to Santa Clara because of the border business; Luanda was too crowded; once I have created better conditions, I might return.' Besides cross-border trade, agriculture-related trade has also been 'revived', as mentioned by a 28-year-old female market seller from Luanda, 'We [are] now again travelling to the provinces to get goods, not only for our consumption but also to sell a little.' Commuting and travelling to buy agricultural produce to sell in the city has been for many years an important form of livelihood for urban dwellers, particularly for the migrants who maintain connections to their places of origin. Now this activity has intensified. As one 41-year-old female professional explained, 'We go back to our networks in the countryside, back to consuming less imported [expensive] goods and do more small businesses.'

To sum up, for wealthier urban dwellers the economic downturn following the oil crisis led to less interest in speculation, businesses involving real-estate, and the accumulation of urban property. This urban upper class has also dealt with the crisis by cutting down on luxury consumption. The middle classes have reduced general consumption, and fewer have invested in property in new middle class neighbourhoods. The poorest classes, similarly, can no longer rely solely on occupation-compensation or on selling centrally located property in order to finance businesses on the urban periphery. Although the state still compels companies to pay compensation to residents who can prove they were living in areas where new construction will occur, and some families still sell houses and land located in the city centre, the tendency is now for fewer new ventures, and property owned by poor families in the central areas has become increasingly scarce as well.

Nevertheless, those interviewed still expected urban life to improve, and this fuelled efforts to adapt to and manage in the context of the current downturn, which was perceived as temporary by a number of urban residents. As described by a 55-year-old male professional in 2017, 'When the economy gets better, we can start thinking again of buying a better house. For now, being here [Kilamba] is already a lucky thing.' Pushed by the changing economy, Luanda residents shifted the focus of their strategies to sectors not dependent on urban reconstruction. There is now disillusionment in the sought-after modern urban life that had been materializing in 'all these flashy modern glass made buildings, sweeping the *musseques* away', as one young mechanic characterized it. Some

urban dwellers perceived the crisis as yet another setback among the many they have witnessed in recent decades. As one 56-year-old male teacher summed up, 'In Angola, you never know what comes next. From colonial times until now, we have seen and lived all sorts of realities.' The state of 'suspension' of envisaged progress of modern city in which Luandan residents currently live is not a new sentiment, and has required retrieving old and tested strategies such as migration and urban–rural connections.

Conclusions

The abundant resources that were channelled to reconstruction and real-estate sectors in Luanda after the end of the war became central to the economic and social strategies of residents, engendering new ways of living. The crisis after the 2014 fall in oil prices had a significant impact on urban reconstruction and modernization, affecting the economic strategies of urban dwellers at all socio-economic levels. The opportunities created by urban businesses, in particular those related to housing and real estate, had become lucrative during the first post-war decade but have recently lost their significance. The predominant social and economic strategies of the wealthiest residents included residence and investments in new expensive condominiums, whereas middle-class wage workers and business owners rushed into affordable new apartments in the *centralidades* and in renewed central parts of Luanda. Lower-income residents sought better lives in the new low-income resettlement neighbourhoods, and in many cases profited from the reconstruction explosion when they obtained compensation for sold or demolished properties.

Angolan urban life shares features with other rapidly globalizing and urbanizing areas of the world. Luandans – both those involved in urban policy/management and 'ordinary' city dwellers – are sensitive to the expectations and aspirations of modern city life that have steered urban strategies for decades. Yet Luandans now perceive their urban future to be suspended and threatened, and as residential and economic conditions changed with the crisis in oil prices, so have the responses of urban residents. Among the poor and middle classes, as real-estate-based activities disappeared their responses included migration to other areas where new opportunities appeared, or returning to rural–urban trading activities.

While uncertainties remain in many respects, the awaited prosperous 'modernity' of Luanda has been shifted to a more distant future in the perceptions

of its residents. The enthusiasm and euphoria of post-war reconstruction have gradually subsided, and the anticipation of modern urban life is now projected to lie further ahead, dependent on the forecasts of the oil market and less reliant on the possibilities provided by real-estate construction, purchase, and speculation.

Notes

- 1 See, for instance, Udelsmann Rodrigues 2007, 2009, 2016, 2017; Udelsmann Rodrigues and Frias 2015; or Udelsmann Rodrigues and Salvador 2012.
- 2 The municipality of Luanda (in the province of Luanda), with an area of 113 square kilometres, has six districts – Luanda, Kilamba Kiaxi, Maianga, Rangel, Sambizanga, and Samba. In 2014, 32 per cent of the province's population of nearly 7 million is concentrated in the city.
- 3 Presidential Decree 59/11 of 1 April. See A1V2 (2009).

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'This excellent edited volume continues the tradition of Zed producing work on informality in cities on the African continent. A wide variety of scholars will find much to ponder in these pages. There is a particular focus on the intersections between power inequality and informality, but across a diversity of urban contexts. The ethnographic approaches of the authors bring these diverse contexts to life.'

Garth A. Myers, Paul E. Raether Distinguished Professor of Urban International Studies, Trinity College, USA

Urban Africa is undergoing a transformation unlike anywhere else in the world, as unprecedented numbers of people migrate to rapidly expanding cities. But despite the growing body of work on urban Africa, the lives of these new city dwellers have received relatively little attention, particularly when it comes to crucial issues of power and inequality.

This interdisciplinary collection brings together contributions from anthropology, urban studies and geography to provide new insights into the social and political dynamics of African cities, as well as to uncover the causes and consequences of urban inequality. Featuring rich new ethnographic research data and case studies drawn from across the continent, the collection shows that Africa's new urbanites have adapted to their environs in ways which often defy the assumptions of urban planners. By examining the experiences of these urban residents in confronting issues of power and agency, the contributors consider how such insights can inform more effective approaches to research, city planning and development both in Africa and beyond.

This book offers fine-grained analysis of the ways in which African rural-urban migrants negotiate structural and strategic invisibilities, adding innovative approaches to our understanding of both migrant vulnerabilities and resilience.

Laura Stark is Professor of Ethnology at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. She was previously the director of the exchange network Living with Informal Settlements, Tackling Urban Poverty (LIFT UP), funded by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Annika Björnsson Teppo is Associate Professor at the Department of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology at Uppsala University, Sweden. She has previously headed the work on Urban Dynamics at the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala, Sweden. Dr Teppo has also been granted the title of docent in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Helsinki, Finland.

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Series design by Alice Marwick
Cover image © Susanna Myllylä

ISBN 978-1-7009-0344-1



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