

The struggle to belong
Dealing with diversity in 21st century urban settings

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Scope and dimensions of suburbanisation in African cities
[not for quotation]

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Abstract

The paper, part of a Global Suburbs project based at York University (see <http://www.yorku.ca/city/Projects/GlobalSuburbanism.html>), reports on the present state of African suburbanisation emphasizing the territory south of the Sahara, and based on an extensive review of secondary sources. The context is one of an urban population now as large as that of north America or Europe, and it is intended to bring the study of suburbanisation in this context into the same intellectual arena as that of other continents. Following Ekers, Hamel and Keil (2010), suburbanisation is here understood as 'the combination of non-central population and economic growth with urban spatial expansion'. In the immense variety of African urbanisms, the purpose of the review is to explore what forms 'suburbs' take in various African contexts, including spaces which concentrate new economic activities, zones of middle and upper income residence, the meaning of informality of building, land markets and social activity, and the various elements of what is often termed 'urban sprawl'. The key theme is rapid growth of cities into new spaces and forms, with interest in the main trends with regard to this growth, what the drivers of growth are, and how it is shaped (or not) by policy and institutional mechanisms that try to shape/direct urban growth (and the reality of what happens in practice). Within the limits of available material the paper describes key actors involved in African suburban growth, and the way they influence it (property developers, landowners, traditional authorities, administrators; households of different types; politicians). Life in the suburbs and visions of the future receive attention. The paper concludes with propositions for discussion and a modest research agenda.

This paper reports on the present state of African suburbanisation emphasizing the territory south of the Tropic of Cancer, based on a review of secondary sources. Our intention is to inform and stimulate further primary research. By whatever measure or definition Africa's urban population is now as large as that of north America or Europe. We seek to bring the study of suburbanisation in Africa into the same intellectual arena as that of other continents, and have the opportunity to do so due through a Global Suburbs research project which will continue for six years, based at York University (see <http://www.yorku.ca/city/Projects/GlobalSuburbanism.html>).

Following Ekers, Hamel and Keil (2010), suburbanisation is here understood as 'the combination of non-central population and economic growth with urban spatial expansion'. In the immense variety of African urbanisms, the purpose of the review is to explore what forms 'suburbs' in this very wide sense take in various African contexts. Whilst representations of African cities usually emphasize large amounts of informal habitat and poverty if not purely 'urban crisis', our review – while attending to those perspectives - includes spaces which concentrate new economic activities, zones of middle and upper income residence, the meaning of informality of building, land markets and social activity, and the various elements of what is often termed 'urban sprawl'. 'Spatial' expansion for us is vertical as well as horizontal. Attention is paid to how the suburbs came to be as they are and how they are named. The key theme is rapid growth of cities into new spaces and forms, with interest in the main trends with regard to this growth, what the drivers of growth are, and how it is shaped (or not) by policy and institutional mechanisms that try to shape/direct urban growth (and the reality of what happens in practice). Within the limits of available material and our own constraints, the paper describes key actors involved in African suburban growth, and the way they influence it (property developers, landowners, traditional authorities, administrators; households of different types; politicians). Life in the suburbs and visions of the future receive attention. The paper concludes with propositions for discussion and a modest research agenda.

Between the countryside and 'fully urbanized space'

Most people in Africa south of the Tropic of Cancer are in the countryside most of the time (UN Habitat 2010; Potts 2010). But in many of the diverse countrysides, no-one remains untouched by what is happening in the cities. This interaction is sometimes, now, thought to be recent; but Debby Potts (2010) shows, in line with much earlier authors, the longevity of 'rural/urban' flux. 'The urban population...is really a much less clearly defined group in tropical Africa than in many parts of the world...because so many people are involved with, and move frequently between, city and countryside... In speaking of the urban population, therefore, we refer not to a highly discrete set of people, but rather to those living within the cities and towns at a particular point in time' (O'Connor 1983 p. 18).

There are two vectors of movement and growth – rural populations spreading towards cities, which together with the extent of rural ties is why the cities must be seen first from the countryside; and cities spreading toward the rural. Movement of people appears to be ebbing and flowing all the time between multiple spaces, especially between country and city; and where cities internally reveal ebb and flow as they continue to grow – in certain cases with among the world's highest contemporary rates (like Luanda, Angola), though in others, much more slowly (as in Zambia) (Potts 2010).

Complexity of movement is illustrated at the peripheries of cities. Some residents find themselves incorporated there as cities expand horizontally. Some arrive there from parts of the countryside and seek places to stay around the weakly defined urban edges (as discussed by Harris 2010). But many coming from the country seek urban insertion more centrally (as in inner city Johannesburg, Kariakoo in Dar es Salaam, and central informal settlements like Nairobi's Kibera). The periphery is also a site of opportunity for longer-term urban residents: zooming in on a new 'planned slum', Ndogbassi, built on the outskirts of Douala in the mid-1970s, Elate (2004) explains how residents from the *city* of Douala, not the rural areas, relocated to Ndogbassi to gain ownership

of a house¹. Many spaces 'inside' the cities offer various opportunities where newer arrivals of many origins compete and collaborate with those longer established. The spaces of larger cities include growing numbers of centralities. Some are older. Some are very new. Within this flux, the words which include 'suburb', peri-urban, suburbio, township, informal settlement, and many others in many more languages than English jostle for meaning.

How the suburbs came to be as they are – and named as they are

As Richard Harris (2010) asks in his recent review of suburbs at the global scale, is 'suburb' the best term to capture the process and dynamics we are trying to get at (p.25)²? Our conclusion from uses of the term and of others in the literature we have addressed is that we will not reach wide agreement on the use of any particular terms which translate poorly from one situation to another, from one city to another, from one language to another. For our own purposes we wish to colour the term and both open and restrict what it evokes. That way, we may be clear enough to ourselves and to readers regarding what the core of the term means to us, and how it expands and shifts at times and over space. Generally and for now, we use the term 'suburb' to include considerable variety, guided by the three salient points we adopt from Ekers et al (2010) – growth of population and economy, spatial expansion, changing centralities.

Coming from English it is especially provocative to observe uses of terms *close* to suburb or given sometimes as *equivalents* in other languages. That is true in the first instance of African languages, the tongues in which cities are mostly spoken across the continent if not written. But we lack the literature to support an analysis of much along these lines and will limit reference here to the fact that in some African expression words or phrases used to denote areas for which

¹ While legality of this ownership is contested, residents have self-built and self-managed the neighbourhood for 20 years without removal (Elate 2004).

² But Harris (2010) concludes by arguing it still has value and use despite its ambiguity, particularly in the fact that it is still used by people in their everyday language, something which must be taken seriously (p.25), although he is also wary of imposing this term on those who do not use it (p.26).

'suburb' is definitely in use in English, often approach the city from outside rather than within – so the 'parts that come before the city' replace the English implications embedded in suburb of moving away from the harder core city and indeed, towards the countryside (Mabin 2005 and more).

Turning to the most widely used colonial languages other than English, French and Portuguese, one has to tangle with webs of meaning associated with common terms such as *cit * as opposed to *ville*; *banlieu* or *faubourg* amongst others. Excellent reviews of the uses of these words as well as suburb are provided by contributors to Topalov et al (2010) in *L'Aventure des Mots de la Ville*, a book which tries to cross time and societies as well as eight languages. From Portuguese, the word *sub rbio* has diverse histories and uses on at least three continents; it has had implications of periphery, the non-urban, a hierarchy of social division of space, and according to da Silva Pereira (2010 p.1203) in Brazilian usage, sometimes influential in shaping language in Angola and Mo ambique, *sub rbio* has come to be an 'imprecise expression used everywhere to indicate the quarters (*bairros*) which do not appear on maps and are usually forgotten by public authorities' (our translation). During the colonial period, the word 'sub rbios' emerges in reference not to the 'white' planned 'cement city', but the informal areas of African residence on the periphery, where land was rented from elite settler landholders (Jenkins 2009 p. 90).

Placing in question its often pejorative application, in the lusophone world *sub rbio* has also come to mean something about the *new* in the context of claiming for the periphery, the excluded and the stigmatized, the possibility that their spaces and quarters are those of the most creative in music, art, and new forms of expression and indeed of being (da Silva Pereira 2010 p. 1204). We would claim that the same is increasingly true of some uses of *banlieu*, of periphery, of suburb, in some African cities. The suburb may then come to denote the where, of where it's happening. It appears to us that such uses imply the same sense as Bloch (1994) suggested in relation to the inversion of the metropolis and the vitality and new centralities of, what else, but suburbs,

although he worked with perhaps higher investment spaces than many of those in African cases.

Yet each of these suggestions emphasizes, as Ferguson (1999) indicated and Roque (forthcoming – draft text p. 3-4) explores, the weight of dichotomy in the discussion of African urban space. For Lusophone scholars Morais and Raposo (2005) and Oppenheimer and Raposo (2007) the ‘model of the colonial town ... persists in its urban fabric and in the architectural language of the administrative, economic, cultural centre’ and in the residential areas of the elites, whilst another model of the urban is conceived ‘at its margins’, peripheral, where material conditions are precarious and spatial organisation has not followed any specific urban plan (cited in Roque 2009 in relation to Luanda and its musseques).

The term suburban has also been positive, not pejorative, for those who wanted to escape something ‘too urban’ in favour of town life in the country/country life in the town. Such is the case for millions in Africa who have moved from older, more dense areas of cities to newer, more open, ‘greener’ spaces. The term has also, and more frequently we are certain, been negatively applied. It can mean ‘less than’ rather than ‘not fully’ urban – an idea which reaches its peak elsewhere in declarations such as Jacques Lévy’s ‘pas d’urbanité sans densité’ (implicitly, not urban without high density). Statements like this would potentially denigrate most space in Africa’s cities as not-yet, not-fully, not-adequately urban. That is a view which we find unhelpful, and overwhelmingly, scholarly authors addressing the phenomena in Africa which we seek to indicate through the use of ‘suburb’, avoid creating a morality of urbanisms and suburbanisms – though there is a sense of searching for ‘the city yet to come’ (Simone 2004).

The common residue of meaning of ‘suburb’, after dispute has boiled off much of the froth around the word, appeared to have three elements for Richard Harris (2010). In one of the better reflective pieces on the matter, he names these as: peripheral location (and its relationship to access); lower density by comparison

with some parts of the city; and a physical and social newness³. The ‘effects of each of these are contingent – on standards of living, on class, ethnicity, gender, and indeed on the hopes and fears of local residents’ (Harris 2010 p.38). One area of our exploration of the literature is the adequacy of these elements in grappling with the suburban in Africa.

Our review indicates that the word suburb needs to be retained for many not-so-peripheral areas – indeed sometimes not far from being ‘central’– in many African cities. What is interesting about these quarters is that they are changing, sometimes very fast – they may have been low density residential of various building types, but are becoming high density (8 floor buildings for example where Swahili houses once stood in many Dar es Salaam areas, or office and other buildings in former bungalow areas of Durban). Paying attention to these spaces of different and changing levels of density is important in understanding where dynamics of urban change are concentrated.

Our broad sense of the literature overlapping into many other subjects is that what is most significant is that rapid change, taking place all over African cities, is perhaps especially concentrated in three kinds of places. Let us list these. First in most accounts, the peripheries where constant movement of urban frontiers is not merely extending the existing, but creating new kinds of mix and spaces for different urbanisms. Second, older areas in which are evident – in parts – very rapid changes of populations, densities of people and buildings, and activities. Third, new centralities – related to destabilisations of former centralities implicit in the first and second aspects. Thus we retain Harris’s 2010 suggestion of periphery, density and newness in our lexicon, but we find from the African literature that different ordering of things assists in building our comprehension.

³ Harris (2010) uses this notion of newness to capture the moving frontier of the city, and reflect back on how inner city neighbourhoods were also once new, and on the edge and therefore suburban. But these are being constantly overtaken by newer rings of outwards development (p.31). For him, a suburb is never always a suburb: it eventually becomes a neighbourhood, etc. But where the “tipping point” is unclear. And the term suburb may well still be applied to the old.

So the theme we choose to pursue is one focused on the point of this last sentence above – we are interested to gather knowledges about the spaces where things are changing fast and creating the new: creating new terrain[s] for urban life in Africa.

Widening historical themes

An accumulation of studies – a significant number referenced by Freund (2007) – deal with aspects of city development in the colonial period during which many outlines – some strong – of present African urban and suburban forms were drawn. [Southall and Gutkind (1957) on Kampala is an example from a time when the volume of literature on African cities was indeed small]. One particularly central historical shaper of contemporary suburban processes is that of power over land and people. In Freund's (2007) overview, he describes how in West Africa colonial suburbanization had a powerful effect in Accra (p. 72), where older central settlements were rendered increasingly irrelevant by changes in the economy and governance. In Freetown, a new suburb called Hill Station was constructed above the city for white colonials through public health arguments (although it was constantly exceeded in its own racial exclusion by the need for black labour on the premises). In East Africa, in the Kenyan capital Nairobi established at the end of the 19th century, 'massive suburban tracts were laid out with tree-lined boulevards and no expectation of public transport whatsoever. This was an English Garden City in the tropics – for the privileged. White (and to a lesser extent Indian) property speculators were able to make substantial profits from the sale of privatized land. The African quarters that emerged near the centre were an afterthought' (Freund 2007 p. 79). In apartheid South Africa, Freund describes the physical lay out of newly constructed African townships as 'pseudo-suburban[]' (p. 126) – far from the city, requiring motorized transport, built on a model of detached or semi-detached houses and yards. However, it was a *pseudo*-suburbanization in its alienating, violent, supposedly closely watched nature. Ironically this space also facilitated the rise of a home-owning African subaltern middle-class (p. 125-6). However, for those African urban residents who could not secure housing in one of these planned

settlements, 'squatting' adjacent to these was often the only option. Settlement in unplanned areas was already taking place under colonial regimes, but accelerated with the decolonization of states and their cities. For example, Kironde (2007) describes how by 1979, some 70% of Dar es Salaam's residents occupied 'unplanned areas', resulting in a 'land use mosaic' of planned and unplanned areas that continues to shape the dynamics and form of Dar, as well as many other African cities, into the present.

We are leaving history there – always inadequately addressed, but already an important source of perspectives on contemporary phenomena. A short history of just one case is contained in the text box below⁴.

<p>Bulawayo – a case of Suburbs</p> <p>Our intention thus far has been to establish the general terrain. To become more concrete, a rapid traversal of one city experience raises parallel issues in more specific form.</p> <p>Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, occupies the site of an Ndebele capital established by at least 1840. One of the three original areas of the city re-established by colonists under the aegis of Cecil Rhodes in 1893-4, bears the tantalizing name 'Suburbs'. It lies east across a stream course from the 'city', or 'town' in some usages. Both areas are based on a regular orthogonal layout of almost exactly the same area (roughly one by two kilometres). In 'town' one finds the cathedral, the City Hall, banks and other central institutions of state, religion and business. 'Suburbs' seems to have been intended for residential use of its larger blocks by the colonial settlers who steadily trickled into 'Rhodesia' through roughly 80 years, until the war between the 'settler colonial regime'</p>	<p>and the forces opposed to it took hold from 1973 onwards. The war continued rural displacement and dispossession which had begun even before Bulawayo was founded (probably fifty years before that, the arrival of an army speaking a language derived from isiZulu at least started a process of dispossession of those speaking other languages - variants of what is now called Shona for the most part). By the end of the nineteenth century and the additional impact of European-sourced colonization, a large population was already reduced to the need to sell labour power or seek other opportunities which Bulawayo provided, along with other lesser centres. Those without clear claims (by way of money or position) on the emerging colonial state had to look for places to stay outside the twin areas of 'town' and Suburbs. Partly directed by the state, they created the third element of Bulawayo's urban geography, beginning in Makokoba to the west of 'town'. Generally further away from 'town' than Suburbs, they created settlements of indigenous but hybrid forms.</p>
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⁴ This Bulawayo case is rather liberally based on Grant 2003; Potts 2007; Mutizwa-Mangiza 1991; Kaarlsholm 1995; Zaaier 1998; Musemwa 2006; Mpofu 2010; Ranger 2004, 2010.

And it did not take long for a fourth element to be added – zones in which public authorities laid out sites or built accommodation for what they imagined as the urban, working population – with the special twist that these were areas, typical of many colonialisms, intended only for an ‘indigenous’ population as opposed to European-sourced settlers: these ‘western suburbs’ of Bulawayo included names such as Mpopoma and Entumbani. Parallel in time but different in place, other zones appeared resembling single family housing areas built simultaneously in Australian or many other cities. It required both money and status (the latter often solely meaning skin colour) to accede to space in these newer places, as they crawled up some of the beautiful granite hills which surround the original city, bringing greenery, parks, and largely segregated institutions with them – and, even, a little formal commerce in small shopping areas for example – all graced by names such as Raylton (more blue collar) and Morningside (altogether more white collar and expensive).

In time and with rapid growth to a population of 200,000 in 1960, more layers were added in each zone of the city, and more areas with single or mixed uses filled in some of the existing spaces and spread out beyond them. These areas included warehouses, industries (especially those with a local ready market, such as shoes), rail yards. And over time regulation by the state in the broadest sense waxed and waned: the latter especially when particular events drove waves of people from the

country into the city. Depression in the thirties, the liberation war of the seventies, and post-independence events such as the Gukurahundi¹ in the provinces surrounding Bulawayo in the eighties did this dramatically. The limits of the city’s capacity to integrate its growing population were frequently revealed. Ways in which land was used and how possession of land could be established and defended became ever more complex. At times authorities attempted to reestablish control over people and space. The settler colony showed its teeth to residents it did not want in town at some times, but at others – indeed simultaneously – it tried to ‘modernise’ various zones by bringing piped water, electricity, paved roads, approved brick houses and various institutions to them. In short the old regime faced the unwanted problem of accommodating a rapidly growing population in cities whilst it promoted and sustained commercialisation of agriculture and other disruptions of rural life which, as ever, drove people towards the cities including Bulawayo.

Although independence in April 1980 represented a real rupture in the history of the city and the country (fifteen to twenty-five years after most present African countries reached a similar moment), it did not mean that urban geography experienced an equivalent rupture. Rather, the imbrication of people and actions across city zones accelerated over a generation from perhaps 1970. Governments continued their sometimes contradictory approaches to the development of different parts of the city (see also Rakodi on Harare, 1995). Marvellously, the new official

¹ A post-independence period of politically organized violence under the aegis of the ZANU state designed to quell any stands to power by rival liberation army ZAPU and its Ndebele constituents around Bulawayo.

terminology represented the city as consisting now of two residential types: both called 'suburbs', but one termed 'high-density' and the other 'low density' - the former black and the latter shifting from being mostly white to much more cosmopolitan. Tragically symbolic of paradoxes, apart from renewed essays at modernization in some quarters, was perhaps Operation Murambatsvina in 2005 (Potts 2007; Musemwa 2010). The Zimbabwean government roughly attacked areas, and sometimes residents, considered to be unwanted in the city, pulling down thousands of houses and shelters in Bulawayo and pushing perhaps more thousands of people towards other, smaller, sometimes rural places. Whilst many had already sought to leave the country altogether in the course of earlier upheavals, these events - coupled with deep recession, very high inflation, job losses and worse - propelled a large part of the population of Bulawayo - often potentially productive younger groups, often the more educated - found ways to move across borders, especially to South Africa, and to stay in cities such as Johannesburg. Some were able to make it as far as London and other cities around the world. Remittances flow through networks and support many in Bulawayo and the 'villages' which are its satellites - and on occasion flow in the opposite direction. Life continues, of course, in Bulawayo, but it is very far from clear what the future of the city may be. At the same time its complexity grows rather than diminishes, and much of the physical growth which takes place is either in redevelopment of older spaces (in the city and Suburbs as well

as other zones), or intractably complex ways of occupying new spaces at or beyond the always moving edge of the built city environment.

Our conclusion from the tale of Bulawayo is this: If suburbs are associated with 'the combination of non-central population and economic growth with urban spatial expansion', most of Bulawayo is suburban in two of these three aspects. The debatable third is that Bulawayo has grown through deep depression as well as periods of economic expansion. Almost all of Bulawayo exudes a non-central feeling, a sense of the proportional enormity and recence of spatial expansion, and close ties to continuous searches for new ways of surviving and prospering in the city.

The story of Bulawayo as well as its spatial forms are recognizable to everyone interested in African urban life. Its zones do not provide an exhaustive catalogue of all African urban zones but they are varied enough to express a sense of what African urbanism is, in the wake of colonialism, and a contested post-independence period. Geographical settings (port cities for example: Southall 1989), political context, the nationality of the colonisers, post-independence internal and external economic and political relationships - all are part of producing the African 'suburban experience'. Our search through the literature has been, then, for themes akin to those emerging here, and to specific differences.

Themes in the contemporary literature on African Suburbanism

What then are the contemporary spaces, processes and social groups we are particularly interested in unpacking in relation to suburbs in African cities? With what forms of government and power? The following sections map out literature on a number of physical, economic, residential themes in African suburbs. These include the moving urban frontier; spaces which concentrate new economic activities; public housing development; zones of middle and upper income residence; the meaning of informality of building, land markets and social activity; changing older suburbs; urban sprawl; drivers and actors of suburban growth; government and governance; suburban culture and life; visions of the future.

“The moving urban frontier”

The moving frontier of urban use of space creates a zone most often called ‘peri-urban’. A decade ago Mbiba and Huchzermeyer produced an important literature review which drew ‘attention to an emerging field of peri-urban studies ... in sub-Saharan Africa ... In the majority of cases, it has avoided any explicit attempts to clarify the ‘peri-urban’ concept ... Providing a spatial definition for peri-urban is difficult since the criteria to be used are numerous (from topography, demography, land use, and economic and social dynamics) ... The peri-urban should not be considered as static but as a dynamic sphere ... in Africa processes in this sphere are dominated by conflicts related to access, control and use of resources most of which are land based ... The integration of insights from Anglophone- and Francophone-African research remains a challenge on this subject’ (Mbiba and Huchzermeyer 2002 p. 127-8).

Mbiba and Huchzermeyer summarized numerous studies of African peri-urbans that we quote at length here (p. 120-122):

- In Mombasa ‘investments continue to be made in tourism facilities on the urban periphery, while the city itself deteriorates ... Apart from the

tourism facilities at scenic beaches, Mombasa's urban periphery is characterized by informal settlements ... (Rakodi et al, 2000: 154)'.

- In Zambia, 'the presence of peri-urban informal settlements as "the first sight that greets a visitor entering or leaving a city" have been "a continuous source of embarrassment to both central and local authorities", who have made efforts to evict or relocate them out of sight (Mulwanda, 1989: 260)'.
- Outside Maputo's satellite city Matola, the BHP Billiton aluminium smelter in a tax-free zone brings one example of industrial development in the peri-urban.
- In Dar es Salaam, it is claimed that 'structural adjustment sparked the transformation of peri-urban areas from "a zone of survival" to "a zone for investment", both in permanent housing and in commercial agriculture and horticulture supplying fresh produce to the city (Briggs and Mwamfupe, 2000: 804). Key to this transformation was the liberalization of public transport, with a diversification into different transport types allowing access not only from the main arterial routes. The introduction of car allowances to boost civil servant incomes and to discourage corruption had led to a substantial increase in car ownership, with the result that peri-urban areas became more accessible to state employees. Coupled with civil servant house allowances, this led to a dominance of state employees among those investing in permanent house construction in peri-urban areas'.
- Maseru (Lesotho) introduces something by no means omnipresent but certainly important around many African cities, depending on the nature and location of land in forms of customary tenure or authority. Around Maseru, traditional villages have 'accommodated urban growth, and village chiefs have encouraged arable land to be "illegally subdivided", with a plot allocation levy accruing to the chief (Leduka, 2000: 9)... State employees and legislators have significant stakes in the informal subdivision of the urban periphery'.
- By contrast, in Gaborone (Botswana), 'land is allocated free of charge and in an unplanned fashion in the tribal territories that lie beyond the

commercial farms that surround the city. Thus high residential densities develop at a distance from urban infrastructure and services (Nkambwe and Arnberg, 1996)'.

- In Kenya's capital, related processes have long allowed Nairobi 'officials and other urban elites [to] benefit[] from a process of commercialization of informal housing' (which has long accommodated a majority of Nairobi's population on a small part of the city land area). 'Through a process of commercialization, "the individual squatter has become the tenant of predominantly large-scale landlords", partly based within the professional and civil service sectors (Amis, 1984: 88). Their gains however, have been increasingly constrained by "the sheer poverty of the inhabitants" (Amis, 1996: 282). Illegal economic gains have instead been made by informal sector developers providing housing to the middle-income group (Amis, 1996: 282). Those pushed out of the informal rental market resort again to subsistence shelter on the extreme periphery of Nairobi (Amis, 1984: 94)'.
- Nigeria's 'city of Kano is surrounded by an ever-expanding belt of "squatter" settlements, with a "poor physical relationship to service and infrastructure networks and lack of public facilities such as adequate road access and drainage (Garba, 1997: 305). The problems of servicing and managing unplanned development are accentuated where large tracts of land under freehold title surround the formal urban centre, diverting informal settlement elsewhere'.
- Harare (Zimbabwe) 'is surrounded largely by freehold land, with "squattening" being deterred or diverted to the rental of rooms and back yard shacks (Rakodi, 1996). Where illegal subdivision and allocation of peri-urban land for low-income residential purposes did occur in Harare, this was endorsed by a political figure in opposition to the ruling party. Residents in this settlement fell victim to a political power struggle among the elite, with the state undertaking a contested forceful eviction process in 1993 and 1994 (Auret 1994)'.

Mbiba and Huchzermeyer (2002) concluded that peri-urban transformations entail contradictions and conflicts between those competing for entitlements to land, with inequality in the powers and resources of those competing. They called for more work into these conflicts, and their causes (p. 127).

This 2002 overview has been extended by more recent empirical work on the shifting dynamics at the urban edge. A very recent example is that of Owusu-Ansah and O'Connor's (2010) empirical work in Kumasi (Ghana) which details the rising demand and growth of single-family housing on the city's fringe, driven by 'changing values' about residential location, the Ghanaian diaspora's remission of funds to families under evolving conditions, and a 'complex institutional system' around land administration. These authors describe the emerging physical landscape as a 'mosaic of housing structures scattered [apparently] haphazardly on the fringes of Kumasi', produced by the slow process of construction that the above factors necessitate. Piot (2006) notes very similar features in and around the expanding frontiers of Lomé, Togo. Within emerging discussions around the peri-urban and sustainability (McGregor et al 2006), some African scholars have explicitly framed these moving frontiers as 'sprawl', as in Mundia & Muyarama's (2010) spatial modeling of Nairobi which reveals and predicts further 'unsustainable sprawl'. Hathaway's 1993 study of Nigerian city Ado-Ekiti, on the other hand, finds sprawl more contained than in cities with high levels of individual car-ownership, and more generally, shows how transport affects dynamics on the frontier. 'Sprawl' is also the object of intervention in Burkina Faso's two main cities of Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso, where Basilisa Sanou (1997) describes efforts to respond to sprawl and growth driven by rural in-migration through the creation of ten village-centres with various amenities built around the city (with funding from the Netherlands) to attract migrants there instead of the existing urban periphery⁵.

Finally, Trefon's (2009) recent review chapter (in a book edited by Locatelli and Nugent) on "Hinges and Fringes: Conceptualising the peri-urban in Central

⁵ We shall return to sprawl again in relation to informality.

Africa” is a useful follow up to Mbiba and Huchzermeyer’s (2002) overview, particularly for thinking through the relationship between older suburbs and the peri-urban. The latter, his focus, is described as ‘the suburbs of the suburbs’ (p. 15), the area beyond the city and its suburbs, an intersection of the rural and city. His research is based on sites in the enormous peri-urban regions of Kinshasa (80 km from the old centre), Brazzaville (20 km away in this case) and Lubumbashi, looking at how people negotiate competing land tenure and authority systems in these spaces. These sites are not within any kind of municipal or imagined urban boundary. Taken together the work summarized here provides a colourful kaleidoscope as the urban frontier moves, raising questions about actors and agency and power and consequences. Not to mention, for some at least, matters of cultural change, citizenship and urban intervention.

Spaces which concentrate new economic activities

As noted above, the peri-urban is not only residential and sometimes ‘urban agricultural’, but provides sites for concentrations of new economic activities. Most of the time these are nothing like the Matola smelter at Maputo, though indeed there are industrial peri-urbans. The road between Kampala and Entebbe in Uganda is lined with furniture manufacturers and sellers (UN Habitat 2010 p. 166-8) – a peri-urban ribbon of a kind found in many African cases, given that no authority has either power or aspiration to prevent successful roadside trade: after all these things can be taxed in a variety of ways. The local space economies thus created seem to have a tendency to enlarge with few immediate limits.

The relative importance of African city ‘modern’ CBDs has waned in recent decades, as new decentralized nodes appear in conjunction with changing global, regional and local economic processes. This process is reasonably well documented in the South African case (Goga 2003 is perhaps the best analysis) and increasingly so in other African contexts. These shifts are hardly peculiar to Africa of course. In a comparative piece on two “gateway cities”, Accra and

Mumbai, Grant and Nijman (2002) examine the effects of globalization on the economic geography of the cities. The growth of transnational corporations, and their establishment of offices and more in new nodes, which we would call suburban, has seen the rise of differently integrated, multiple central business districts. The spectacular Johannesburg case, with the massive growth of Sandton, as well as both older (Rosebank) and newer (Fourways) zones (Beavon 2004), is paralleled in Durban (Gateway). The point here is that more recent literature demonstrates how widespread, if not general, this pattern is in Africa. Also in relation to Accra, but in conversation with another colonial capital established by the British – Nairobi – Otiso and Owusu (2008) note the rise of new suburban CBDs in both cities. In Nairobi, this has been driven by high rents and the scarcity of parking in an increasingly congested downtown (Kwama 2007 in Otiso and Owusu 2008), perhaps as well as the sheer scale and congestion of the city particularly in relation to its circulation infrastructure. Similar plans for decentralization, but at an even grander scale, are being executed in Rwanda's Kigali with a proposed IT-hub 'new town' (Rwanda Development Board 2009). The role of speculative developers is also important in these decentralized developments, as Goga's (2003) innovative work on Sandton's drivers in Johannesburg details.

New spaces of commercial development and economic activity are not only important in relation to formal CBDs. In Lusaka where the traditional CBD remains relatively significant, suburban shopping centres financed largely by South African corporate capital have produced a 'complex regionalism', with new sites of work, consumption and debates about economic sovereignty and labour rights (Miller 2005). Selolwane (2006) mentions a similar development in the form of Gaborone's popular Riverway Shopping Centre which followed a decade of wider privatization, and growth in the commercial, financial and construction sectors of Botswana's economy. In South Africa, the 'mall phenomenon' has been largely visited in relation to the debate about the fortification and privatization of public space, as well as offered sites for analyzing desegregation, consumption, desire, and identity (Tomlinson & Larsen 2003; Dirisuweit & Schattauer 2004; Nuttall 2004; Houssay-Holzschuch & Teppo 2009). One could

go on to Mlimani in Dar es Salaam, ‘Tanzania’s largest shopping centre’, Accra Mall (<http://www.accramall.com/>) and many others. Partnerships between local ‘big men’ and external finance thread through these developments – the Accra Mall website tells us:

A chance encounter with Johan Zietsman, who had been commissioned by Shoprite Checkers, in South Africa [a major supermarket chain], to explore the chances of securing land in Ghana for development, led the executives of Shoprite expressing interest in the development of the mall at Mr. Owusu-Akyaw’s site [which he had ‘acquired’ in then-rather-rural space in 1972]. In May 1996, the chief executive of Shoprite ... accompanied by his top executives flew to Ghana to meet with Mr. Owusu-Akyaw and to inspect the site, after which they made a commitment to take up space at the Accra Mall development. The news of Shoprite’s presence in no time led Game stores of South Africa to also agree to participate in the venture. With these two anchor tenants, the project became more viable and more attractive for funding.

Personal observation suggests that these spaces provide, as elsewhere in the world, new stages for social performance and ways of subverting older social relationships (cf. Houssay-Holzschuch and Teppo 2009; Nuttall 2004). One way into exploration of cultural transformations in African cities will thread through the malls.

Alongside the development of these bigger, more ‘formal’ decentralized economic spaces, the suburb and peri-urban have also been sites of growing informal economies (one of the most written about being Dakar’s Pikine (cf. Simone 2004, Abdoul 2005)). In Nairobi, refugee trade networks have made the suburb of Eastleigh ‘the epicenter of the booming informal economy’ (Campbell 2007), with Somali entrepreneurs converting residential properties to multi-storey commercial spaces, displacing residents into other areas. According to Campbell, these suburban activities are largely unregulated compared to

informal trade in some other parts of the city – sometimes including older centres but especially the new formal investment sites such as malls.

In the widespread peri-urban, and at household scale, Paul Jenkins (2003) describes the everyday imbrications of rural and urban livelihood strategies on urban edges in Mozambique and Angola. 'The growth in population size of the ... urban centres is largely the result of the need for rural residents to combine non-agricultural activities, mainly in the urban informal sector, with subsistence farming for their survival, rather than the product of demand for labour in urban-based industry and services'. For our purposes 'rural' has to do with production based on cultivation (including crops and forests), pastoralism, hunting and gathering, through perhaps to ranging and protection of 'natural' spaces and species. Fishing and other ways of harvesting nature as well as some kinds of servicing the rural (road building?) apart, all other economic activities seem to be predominantly urban pursuits to us, or at least completely dependent on cities for their continuation. Of course African cities show much interpenetration of rural and urban activity in these senses. How interactions are changing and how new forms of urban activity are developing are the more interesting part of the picture for us.

Mususa's (2010) ethnographic work illustrates these changes in recently privatized suburbs (former mine housing) on the Zambian Copperbelt, where she details ex-mine workers' use of their retrenchment packages in homes and yards to facilitate a range of formal and informal, 'urban' and 'rural' activities. In their analysis of Kinshasa, De Boeck and Plissart (2004) develop the concept 'informal villagization' to make sense of these imbricated economic processes and spaces in a context of urban 'crisis'. As our work proceeds we will seek to evaluate whether it is at all useful to speak of 'villagisation' – or whether power is wielded in quite different ways in such places from the 'traditional' village; whether or not global ties including remittances from migrants to wealthier cities make the processes possible; and whether there is any real sense in conceptualizing a 'deurbanisation' or a 'reruralisation' in the circumstances. Our current view is that the notion is not terribly helpful and obscures enquiry into

the ever-increasing complexity of these spaces (as is powerfully argued by Roque 2009 for Benguela).

Public housing estates – ‘townships’ and their kin

Not all, but very many, African cities include public housing estates which range in size from small to immense, in age from early twentieth century to perhaps the 1970s and later, and in inspiration from colonial sanitation syndrome⁶ through high post-world-war two modernism to East German influenced efforts in the seventies (Zanzibar, Dar). We’ve noted the continuing importance of such ‘suburbs’ through our Bulawayo vignette (see box). Our South African origins lead us to use the term ‘township’ to denote these spaces for the present. Public housing estates or townships required state control over land. In the colonial period, townships usually reserved for a black population were built at the always-moving urban edge on cheap land, safely segregated from the white city. It was in apartheid South Africa that these segregative planning forms were most thoroughly worked out, with over a million units built between the forties and seventies, a high proportion in the major cities (and differentially segregating those indicated as African, coloured and Indian and other ‘groups’ (see Lupton 1993, Strong 1996, Chari 2006 for the latter ‘groups’). Public housing was also built for white people (Parnell 1988) – Teppo (2004) suggests for moral and racial rehabilitation rather than segregative containment but perhaps misses the political support building aspects critical to such projects – even if intent is not always rewarded. The work of Strong (1996), Hansen (1997), Schlyter⁷ (2002, 2003), Salo (2003, 2009), Oldfield & Boulton (2005), Butcher & Oldfield (2009), Lee (2009) (among others) is also revealing of dynamics neglected in some African urban literature – gender relations and gendered subjectivities in ‘formal’ suburban townships. Many of these apartheid and colonial townships

⁶ Swanson 1977 on South Africa; Home 1997 on the British Empire in general.

⁷ Who was instrumental to the GRUPHEL project (Gender Research on Urbanization, Planning, Housing and Everyday Life) partnership between University of Lesotho and Swedish institutions within which many others scholars produced empirical work on these themes across a variety of southern African cities in the 1990s and early 2000s. See GRUPHEL publications for more case studies.

continue to exhibit and produce concentrations of poverty, a poverty borne disproportionately by women (Strong 1996), exacerbated under liberalized economies and still heavily racialized in former settler colonies, but also negotiated by women residents in multiple ways.

Township life is far from stagnant: in the postcolonial period, these spaces have also diversified in form and activities. Some have become individually and privately owned neighbourhoods, such as Lusaka's did after presidential decree in the mid-1990s, with varying degrees of gendered and classed social mobility within those (Schlyter 2002). Schlyter's (2003) work within another such area, Harare's distant colonially-established township Chitungwiza, details how increasing 'multi-habitation' by lodgers has dramatically changed the physical, social and economic geography of the township. Similar practices of 'backyarding' in South African cities speak both to the chronic shortage of available and affordable housing (Crankshaw et al 2000; Oldfield & Boulton 2005; Lemanski 2009) as well as these older townships' relatively less peripheral status in relation to newer informal settlements and recently constructed state-subsidized housing.

State-based estates often have to do with attempts to replace informal settlements with family housing units on the cheaper edge of the city (as a result of civic activism in postapartheid South Africa, argues Oldfield (2000)). Given the resource scarcity situation, middle class and elite hijacking of whatever emerges in such places is common (Jenkins 2009 p. 99 in Mozambique; Nkurunziza 2006 in Kampala). And that means divergent trajectories of older townships – some becoming poorer as those with greater resources (from new economies, from global ties, from extracting rents) relocate to other new spaces; and some at least in part becoming zones of what we may loosely call middle class and upper income residence. But these are far from the only new forms of suburban space associated with these more resourced social elements.

Zones of middle and upper income residence

The literature challenges the moving urban edge as solely the preserve of the marginalized. It is a much more heterogeneous, imbricated space. In post-socialist, post-war Angolan cities, Rodrigues (2009) explores new forms of enclavisation that blur colonial forms of segregation, with its wealthy core ("town of cement") and poor periphery ('musseques') (p. 39). While the civil war produced massive urban in-migration, and perhaps a (temporary?) "rurbanisation" of the new peripheries, the recent post-war period of liberalization has seen the growth of 'new wealthy, planned and modern sites' also being built in the periphery, informed by a growing discourse on crime and violence. Pitcher's (2007) chapter on automobility in Luanda adds to this, noting the rise of the peri-urban in the 1990s largely as sites of violent, arbitrary governmentality and eviction, and more recent middle-class commuter developments (through which the road and its traffic jams have become a major marketplace).

In West African cities, there are also less enclavised middle and upper income residential projects. In Abiodun's (1997) earlier analysis of Lagos, he argued that within a context of land scarcity and much contestation over this, 'today only the very rich construct new housing units' - most everyone else rents. This period saw a hollowing out of the middle class and their residential plans through rising fuel and service provision costs particularly. However, since then, this has changed, often capitalized by diasporic networks as well as new foreign investments (sometimes from China). A large body of work on this in Ghanaian cities attests to the rapid growth of both middle and upper income housing construction on previously agricultural peripheries. Via surveys of both estate and 'individual builder' areas, and following the money trail, Grant (2007) examines Accra's current land markets in connection to explicitly global land and housing demand and supply processes. In a market defined by high land and housing prices, low domestic wages exclude most from formal home building, but has seen increased construction of homes for wealthy foreigners and locals connected with the international sector and diasporans. Gough and Yankson (2010) also focus on peri-urban spaces under private residential development, but examine a new social group of 'caretakers' and their particular forms of

tenancy that has emerged in relation to the slow, self-building of houses by Ghanaians often in the diaspora. Owusu-Ansah & O'Connor (2010) find similar processes of rapid conversion of the 'urban fringe' into single-family, residential areas in Kumasi, often financed by remittances from abroad. They also describe the 'mosaic housing structures' built over long periods of time with little regulated land planning. Similarly, Obeng-Odoom (2010) investigates how remittances from Australia are affecting real estate markets in Ghana.

This theme of slow self-built middle class housing construction and the economies, landscapes and politics it creates is not unique to the Ghanaian case: in Kinshasa, Piernay (1997) notes the less common lower density but lengthy building taking place on the edge of the city. 'This is because Kinshasa residents like to put up permanent structures that are relatively costly and take a considerable time, usually over 10 years, especially since the crisis and its associated decrease in incomes' (p. 229). Piot's (2006) chapter on post-Cold War Lomé in Togo is particularly interested in its residents' connections to elsewhere and how these connections to elsewhere materially affect space and politics in the city, in what he calls a 'virtualizing of the nation'. Most interesting to our work is his description of new neighbourhoods, 'virgin quartiers', being constructed via remittances from migrants abroad, who incrementally build over time. In the meantime, these are largely uninhabited 'ghost neighbourhoods' but are important to those abroad in making claim to space and status at home.

Many researchers have also chosen to write on the development of purpose built 'secured' residential developments and just occasionally, on secured areas intended for business or government. Such developments exist in every African country, it appears. The most prominent among them to date are in South Africa but those can readily be paralleled with Nigerian and other cases (Béni-Gbaffou et al 2009).

A large consensus exists which indicates that these areas create or entrench forms of social segregation. But there is more interest, it appears, in what these areas do *not* do rather than social forms developing within and around them: for

example Welgemoed (2009) wrote that ‘the Gated Developments [GDs] constrain progress toward reaching the post-apartheid planning goals of integration and urban sustainability by their contribution to increasing urban fragmentation and urban sprawl through their clustering close to the urban edge. The GDs also promote social segregation through their high perimeter defences with low visual permeability which effectively separate the developments from their neighbourhoods’. This segregation is managed via a growing privatized security infrastructure (Benit-Gbaffou et al 2009). In Mozambique, Sidaway and Power (1995) describe the private and commercial ‘security providers’ who have emerged ‘[t]o bridge th[e] security gap’ in state policing. ‘We describe an increased and uneven commoditisation of security. The security landscape of central Maputo thus comprises a complex patchwork of privately secured micro enclaves that relay and rework enclaving on larger scales’.

Similar examples of securitization and fortification have been reported elsewhere. In Lagos, Uduku (2010) seeks to understand residential fortification through a historical analysis, to ‘pinpoint the contemporary origins of domestic fortification in the city and to determine whether there are links between this phenomenon and the earlier, more uncertain, period of the city’s birth’. As such, gating is rendered less a contemporary fad imported from elsewhere, but one that is substantially indigenous in this case. In Ghana, the emergence of gated residential estates has increased since the liberalization of the 1990s (Grant 2005, 2007; Asiedu & Arku 2009). At one scale, these are linked into similar processes of gating across the globe, and the role of the diaspora and their “transnational houses” (Grant 2005). At a more micro scale, Asiedu and Arku’s (2009) empirical work in three new gated estates finds that residents follow global gating trends in being motivated primarily by security, but these residents also challenge the literature through more, albeit economic, interactions with residents and neighbourhoods outside the estate. Finally, Smiley (2010) brings the exclusive spaces of *expatriate* everyday life in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania into view. There is more to be written on middle class, past-segregated areas which are also zones of expatriates and diplomats in many places – the Msasani

peninsula of Dar es Salaam providing an illustration. Older patterns of bilateral, multilateral, as well as multinational corporation staff are probably changing rapidly if unevenly with newer arrivals, from Chinese, Indian, and other expanding economies as well as South African and other sources (e.g. Dittgen 2010). There is much more to be written on how these new, higher-investment forms which apparently require certainty and services, relate to the long-running saga of 'informality'.

Meanings of informality of building, land markets and social activity

Enclave developments, transnational housing constructions and middle class suburban building in general are not always unambiguously legal. As Hansen and Vaa (2004) remind us, 'the informal city is not exclusively the domain of the poor, but also provides shelter and livelihoods for better-off segments of the urban population'. Residents purchase land through a variety of channels, and make illegal extensions on their property; speculative landlords add additional floors to middle class apartment buildings; neighbourhoods engage the services of security firms with no legal mandates, etc.

Informality in general has been one of the key tropes of African urban dynamics emphasized by scholars (Roy 2011, Myers 2011). Simone's (2004) work on this offers a good place to start in understanding the informal economies, governance and service provision that run alongside and across 'formal' institutions. Useful to our focus is his narrative case study of informal economies and networks in Pikine outside Dakar, arguably one of the biggest examples of an African suburban agglomeration.

Other work that discusses informality in relation to mechanisms of land transfer and land development is particularly important for our project⁸. There is a wealth of scholarship on the subject in relation to the peri-urban: in Dar es Salaam, Kombe (2005) writes about largely unregulated land use transformation and the factors which have 'given rise to complex organic urban structures which

⁸ Hansen and Vaa's (2004) collection holds some useful case studies on this theme.

predominantly expand[] horizontally'. Also in Dar, Kironde (2000) examines land markets across a range of 'planned' and 'unplanned' neighbourhoods. He argues that despite the state's claims to control land transactions, most land is transferred between individual 'owners' and buyers. In Nkurunziza's (2006) work in Kampala, such transfers are examined in the context of one informally developed area. Here, land for housing construction is 'accessed and subdivided' by and through multiple non-state and state actors who 'constantly cross[] the formal-informal divide by performing duties that sometimes violate their legal mandate'. Social networks are crucial for enabling this, and reducing transaction costs. While Nkurunziza (2006) shows how these processes work out in a less well-off area, and to the benefit of some of those residents, Jenkins (2000) argues that in Mozambique, informal land transactions that enable *formal* ownership most often serve the elites who are best positioned to purchase large tracts of land.

Here, we can connect up informal processes of land regulation with aforementioned concerns and arguments about urban sprawl, such as in Hirabe's (2009) work in Kampala. Deborah Bryceson (2006) notes that urban sprawl in Maputo and Dar has increased through middle class development and 'confusing' land systems. Other 'informal' social practices have arisen in response to the demands of sprawl: for example in New Bell, Douala, Konings (2006) describes how neighbourhood youth have adapted motorcycles to serve as much needed public transportation within the congested streets of the 'suburb', and to other parts of the city.

While informality more often than not goes unregulated, there are moments in African city life where the state (and less often private landholders) cracks down. An example from Lusaka is the illegal compound Ngombe, settled in amongst established more affluent neighbourhoods, which has been the site of violent state demolitions linked to the municipally-run 'Keep Lusaka Clean' programme (Myers 2006). In Zimbabwean cities, we have already alluded to Operation Murambatsvina in 2005 – a large-scale campaign waged against urbanites under the rhetoric of anti-informality (see Kamete 2008, Musemwa 2010).

Another critical facet of informality is the presence in every African city of ‘non-citizens’, on this continent of colonially created boundaries and post-colonial states in which the ‘nation’ is a fragile construct. Migration especially to relatively wealthier cities is very substantial, and almost certainly massively doubtful in terms of law. Who are the *sans-papiers*, where do they reside in the city, and what happens to them? Then, of course, there are those with papers (however produced) and living in middle class and secured places; others are much less secure. Some ‘ghettoize’, as in Pellow’s (2008) ethnographic work on one such ‘stranger quarter’—a place of refuge for Hausa migrants from northern Nigeria who have relocated to the city of Accra. Other migrants are more integrated and face other challenges along with this. Xenophobia in Cote d’Ivoire or South Africa has drawn attention to suburban exclusion – Smiley and Koti (2010) include studies on exclusion in relation to Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zambia. Recently, new scholarship has begun to emerge on the hundreds of thousands (some say millions) of Zimbabwean economic migrants in South Africa, such as Matshaka’s (2009) qualitative work which focuses on Zimbabwean traders and negotiations of masculinity on the ‘affluent suburb[an]’ street corners of Cape Town. Overall, whether it’s new Chinese money and construction, shifting and exploding patterns of remittances, hidden *sans-papiers* or interpenetration of new informal and old practice, heterogeneity is the result. And that point affects the older as well as newer parts of cities.

Changing older ‘suburbs’

Informality has come most overtly to older suburbs in the form of interstitial informal settlements. Nkurunziza (2006) describes the juxtaposition of formal, low density civil servant neighbourhoods next to new, informal higher density ones in Kampala. Karen Hansen’s (1997) ethnographic site of Mtendere, a postcolonial compound suburb of Lusaka which was first a site and service scheme, then classified as an illegal compound, then finally an ‘authorized’ one, is spatially situated in amongst more affluent low density neighbourhoods like Kabulonga. Through her detailed study of Mtendere residents’ everyday life,

homes and livelihoods, the connections between these sites are made visible. In South Africa, there is also a wealth of work dealing with this juxtaposition of the formal and informal in older suburbs and townships (in Durban, Ballard 2004; in Cape Town, Oelofse & Dodson 1997, Saff 1998; and in Johannesburg's townships, Lucas 1998).

These illustrate how neighbourhoods in a sense appropriate to the small scale of African cities around the end of colonialism and apartheid have experienced significant changes in the period of huge proportional and sometimes absolute population growth as well as shifting economic integration and vagaries of politics and government or planning action/inaction.

A key change of course after colonialism withered is the changing social composition of these older neighbourhoods. In settler colonies, this has mainly been in the form of different degrees of deracialization (see Cummings 1990 on Harare; Pickard-Cambridge's 1988 comparative of Harare, Windhoek and Mafikeng; Freund 2001 on Abidjan in comparison to Durban). In Dar es Salaam, 'the inherited structure of racial segregation was retained but modified' with wealthier and higher status African officials, politicians, etc. 'ma[king] early arrangements to get into former European and Asian areas of Oyster Bay and Upanga' says Kironde (2007). In Nairobi, similar processes post-independence saw the decline of racial segregation, but the rise of socio-economic and 'legal-tenural' segregations (K'Akumu & Olima 2007).

South Africa remains presumably along with Algeria the most extreme case of racialized segregation in Africa. Whilst in Algerian cities, along with other more dramatic examples of decolonization and the abrupt departure of 'settler' populations as in Conakry (Goerg 1998), Maputo and Luanda (Jenkins 2003), and Abidjan (Freund 2001), in South Africa 'desegregation' and 'integration' became the tropes of description. Christopher (2005) demonstrates that taken as a whole, segregation persists long after the fading of legal and enforcement measures. However, multiple case studies on spaces of relative desegregation have been undertaken since the waning years of apartheid. Social and racial

change in the really higher density building-and-residence zones (cidade cimente in Maputo, Albert Park in Durban (Maharaj and Mpungose 1994) and Hillbrow (Morris 1999) in Johannesburg) are among the best known cases. Some rather less dense older areas of South Africa's cities also experienced something similar (Bertrams (Rule 1989), Muizenberg (Lemanski 2006)) and smaller cities (Polokwane, Pietersburg) which became new centres of government reveal that the expansion of a black and local middle class has led to more rapid change in the composition of neighbourhoods than in most parts of the larger cities (Donaldson 2005; Donaldson & Kotze 2006). There are of course spaces in the larger ones which have experienced more rapid change – the southern suburbs of Johannesburg (Harrison and Zack forthcoming); and a useful study of Akasia/Tshwane by Horn and Ngcobo (2003) in which 35% of home property transfers in a formerly totally white owned area, between 1993 and 2000, were to black residents. In the workplace, there are case studies such as that of Modisha's (2008) on deracialization, black managers and class consciousness. Interestingly, he also looks at the role of these managers' residential communities in negotiating identity, especially the suburban-township nexus. We are interested in thinking more about the consequences – political, economic and social – of this deracialization (cf. Hoogendoorn and Visser 2007 for one reading of this in relation to Westdene, Bloemfontein/Mangaung).

Three further changes in the older suburbs of African cities are towards a greater 'business' character (as alluded to in the previous section on new economic spaces); some densification on occasion associated with the intentions of authority, and thirdly, attempts to 'retrofit' these spaces to resemble newer 'secure' quarters, by closing off roads and related measures (in Nairobi (Kenyan media); in Lagos (Uduku 2010); and certainly South African cities).

Having discussed business densification in relation to Nairobi's Eastleigh (Campbell 2007), similar commercial densification characterizes recent changes in Dar's older suburb of Kariakoo. Originally designated as one of the few sites in the colonial city for African home construction and residential plots (Kironde

2007), many of Kariakoo's residential units have been converted into mixed commercial-residential spaces (Ombeni & Deguchi 2009). This 'urban renewal' has been accompanied by the construction of new multi-storey residential spaces of varying quality (Sawio 2008), producing a completely transformed landscape.

Huchzermeyer (2007) demonstrates some of the mechanics of this densification in her work on tenement building in low-income and middle-income areas of Nairobi. Built by a few private landlords, these tenements are multi-storied, densely populated, privately rented, and not always authorized – a set of tenure relations and housing types she feels is ignored in the African urban literature.

Government and governance – not to mention democracy

As Stren and Cameron (2005) argue, 'decentralization initiatives' devolving more power to historically weak local governments have been experimented with across various African cities in recent history. For them, this has probably led 'towards improved governance' (p. 277-8); others are more critical. We are interested in what effect this decentralization of governance is having spatially and socially on the localities around it, issues implied by Lindell (2008). The city of Lagos, the largest in sub-Saharan Africa, provides one particularly compelling case through which to examine these dynamics. A classic work of political ethnography by Sandra Barnes (1986) in Lagos' suburb Mushin describes the areas' development from a collection of 19th century villages into a 'political community' that has been shaped and interacted with colonial, civil and military states for a century. Its multiple political actors and networks draw on a 'pragmatic politics' – which Barnes describes as 'the tactics ordinary people use to meet their needs, and the ways in which political aspirants manipulate the system to acquire and wield power' – within the overarching 'mechanism' of clientalism. At a higher urban scale, Gandy (2006) examines the service provision crisis in Lagos in relation to a historically produced crisis of governance shaped by 'economic instability, petro-capitalist development and

regional internecine strife'. Transforming 'the public realm' is critical to changing Nigerian infrastructure and service delivery dynamics.

Neither can decentralisation and improved local governance be abstracted from the movement towards greater democratisation that has been sweeping the world since the 1970s (Stren and Cameron 2005 p. 278). [AM since 1789? 1776? The roundheads? The burghers of Amsterdam? 1215?]. In Lusaka, Myers (2006) examines the legacy of 'exclusionary democracy' and its continuities into the postcolonial present in relation to urban planning and participation⁹. Oldfield's (2000) work around low-income housing on the peripheries of Cape Town at the time of democratic decentralization in that context surfaces the important role of community organizing and mobilizing in interfacing with the local state and meeting their needs. In Dar es Salaam, various 'civic spaces' operate in conjunction with the governance of the city, but the processes and effects of these are 'deeply shape[d]' by social class (Lewinson 2007).

In thinking more spatially about citizen and neighbourhood relationships with the state, to what extent is suburban change being shaped (or not) by policy and institutional mechanisms that try to direct urban growth? In his continental review of African urban land management, Tanzanian scholar Fekade (2000) draws on Mabogunje (1992) among others to argue that formal institutional land administration mechanisms have limited 'reach' due to the complexity, expense, ambiguity and informality that characterizes many African urban land tenure systems and markets. Here, other powerful gate-keepers govern land transfer. For example, 'in Cameroon, it is not uncommon for the [land] registration process to take between two to seven years, which explains why out of an estimated 1,600,000 plots countrywide only 100,000 (6%) are registered' (Farvacque & McAuslan 1992, p. V cited in Fekade 2000). As such, Fekade sees formal land tenure institutions as generally irrelevant as well as ineffective. Within the literature, there is general recognition that the urban poor are often

⁹ Myers also has a 2008 article dealing with democratization around peri-urban planning and land reform in the context of liberalizing Zanzibar. Drawing on household level interviews, he finds that there has been little participation and transparency in the land reform processes.

the most vulnerable within such ambiguous systems, detrimented by their lack of access to cash, legal documents, and legal recourse to protect their claims. However, Fekade (2000) argues that parallel informal means of settling property disputes *do* operate, and manage fraud quite effectively.

Hirabe's (2009) thesis on the Ugandan case more explicitly examines the socio-spatial effects of political decentralization in relation to the pressures exerted by economic globalization. 'The study finds that while globalization has brought noticeable economic gains in Uganda, it has also created an ineffective decentralized system that compromised the effectiveness of the urban planning system of Kampala, which led to conflict and confusion over decision making responsibilities throughout all levels of governments including ministries and departments. Consequently, Kampala is growing without planning guidance'.

Key actors involved in African suburban growth and ways they influence it

At this point, it is useful to map out the multiple actors involved in African suburban growth, many of whom have already been mentioned in the previous sections. State involvement is very important, as seen in relation to both residential and commercial/industrial suburban developments. Some of the most explicit forms include interventions in public housing provision, and political decentralization. Other forms of involvement come in partnership with foreign governments (such as Ouagadougou's suburb project (Sanou 1997)) or private interests of various forms (as in the public partnership around Kigali's new town project). States are also important not just in their material production of suburban spaces and processes, but also in authorizing (or not) these developments, and responding either through force or inaction.

However, the state is not the only big actor in the land development game, as Kironde (2000) points out in reference to the multitudinous *private* land transactions of varying formality that take place across Dar es Salaam. Property developers and landowners are another influential group. We seem to know more about *commercial* property developers in the South African case (Goga

2003), but landowners in general get addressed more broadly across the continent. Huchzermeyer's (2007) story of private tenement development introduces the large-scale landowner as the main protagonist. The primacy of the suburban property value in all decisions made about developments in South African suburbs (Saff 1998) also speaks to the power of the landowner, both small and large. Here, there are many advocates for a financial system that supports private borrowing to enable home ownership across a wider swath of the population (Karley 2004) – interestingly this South African financial system and its mortgages already reach a much greater number than its more exclusive neighbours' lending policies. But in this sense, financial instruments (always impacted by other political-economic forces of course) are also actors in suburban development.

The role of traditional authorities remains important in land administration across the continent, as on the outskirts of Kumase, Ghana in Berry's (2002) work, and in our earlier discussion of 'informal' land practices. Other state administrators are also important gatekeepers for local residents to negotiate with (as discussed in reference to Nkurunziza (2006)). Alongside, and sometimes within the state, urban planners' role is more ambiguous. In colonial planning, their role in shaping African suburban growth was more strongly felt (Home 1997), and in some post-independence initiatives, especially in the construction of entire new capitals such as Lilongwe and Gaborone. However, in other more recent analyses, such as that by Kombe (2005) of Tanzanian land use planning, there is a distinct 'mismatch' between planning ideals and principles, and the 'organic' reality which planners have had little to do with (echoing Hirabe (2009) on Kampala). In a context like Maputo in which the majority of residents remain financially and politically outside the reach of official planning (Jenkins 2000), there have been some attempts at reforming and retooling urban land management with the aid of international agencies, but with ambiguous outcomes that too often only served existing elites. Jenkins (2000) argues that better land use management and planning has to go in tandem with economic changes in the lives of poor residents and the re-tooling of local government. At the other end of the spectrum, Kamete (2008) emphasises how planning

(particularly under the purview of an anxious state) becomes violent, as seen in Zimbabwe's infamous Operation Murambatsvina.

We have briefly mentioned non-state actors in the form of developers and landowners, and potentially traditional authorities, but others include non-governmental organizations (many of whom are intervening around securing land rights and micro-loans (Nkurunziza 2007)), as well as individual politicians (such as Zambia's President Chiluba's unilateral decree to privatize all public housing estates (Schylter 2002)) and households themselves (receiving and sending remittances, negotiating social networks, etc.)

Suburban cultures: what do suburbs mean to cultural difference, its reproduction, and to new forms of city living?

Suburbs in African cities offer alternative sites, outside the city centre and its imagined cultural hegemony, for thinking about how African urban residents live their lives and make meaning out of this. Suburbs are spaces of identity and community construction, like other places. While we do not exhaustively traverse the wealth of urban anthropology that exists – interested as we are in the spatial, economic and political at a slightly higher scale – the following section gestures to a slice of this valuable literature. Early work by Margaret Peil (1981) in the suburbs of first Lagos and then Accra provide some of the first insights into these suburban socio-cultural dynamics. In Accra, working with Opoku (1994), they investigate the changing shapes of religious practice. Rapid change in these also run parallel to rapid change in the environment. For example, the changing *spaces* of religious meeting can be seen in contemporary work on Congolese churches in South Africa, that set up in halls, abandoned shops, schools and restaurants in the suburbs.

In wider South African literature, *religious* identity and spaces have been less at the centre of analysis than other forms of subject formation. As mentioned earlier, colonial and apartheid townships and suburbs were designed as sites of racialization, segregation and the suppression of social differentiation. Teppo's

(2004) ethnography looks at how a public estate, and its moralizing space, played into the social construction of 'good' white identity – an identity that is increasingly being “contested and renegotiated”. Czegeldy (2003) sees less of this re-negotiation, and more continuity in the forms of white elite identities in Johannesburg's contemporary Northern suburbs. Salo and Davids (2009) surface both continuities and ruptures 'in the meanings of race, space and gender' in the practices of working and lower-middle class coloured Capetonian youth at the Matric Ball. Others chart the possibilities for new cultural practices and identifications in the suburb, as young deracialised consumers of cool in Johannesburg's malls (Nuttall 2004) or in a more subversive counterculture of rave music (Wooldridge 2003).

The latter help us think through suburban culture's connections to globalization and modernity. In other parts of the continent, work on 'virtuality' is important. For example, in Accra, internet cafes have played an important role in shaping new practices and forms of friendship amongst suburban Ghanaian youth, the diaspora and wider internet community (Ekdale et al 2009). In much earlier work on Accra, Peil (1995) examines suburban parents' ideas about education and the possibilities they hope this will offer their children, in spite of structural adjustment realities. In Tanzania, Lewinson (2006) charts similar visions and negotiations of modernity in the aspirations and practices of young professional office workers. Static notions of both modernity and urbanity are challenged by the hyperinflationary Zimbabwean economy, and urban residents' responses in Morreira's (2010) ethnographic work in low- and high-density suburbs of Harare.

Life in the suburbs and visions of the future

These notions of what it means to live a good life in the African city also get acted out in concrete and steel. Melly's (2010) account of “Inside-out houses: Urban belonging and imagined futures in Dakar, Senegal” provides a rich example of this. The author looks to the lengthy, piece-by-piece construction of houses that have dramatically altered the Dakar landscapes, and asks what it tells us about

'transnational movements of labor and capital'. The architectural forms of these 'not-yet' houses, their 'innovative layouts and architectural flourishes...echo lives lived elsewhere while drawing on local aesthetics and approaches to spatial design'.

For other African urbanites, life and the future have to be imagined and aspired to within the self and the body. Grant (2003) explores the investments in social capital made by Bulawayo's urban youth in three high-density suburbs. She argues that 'youth are taking responsibility for their social and economic identities' with assistance from household and 'to a lesser extent, the community'.

In many African contexts, the complexities of everyday lives of residents seem to elude the attempts of planners, policy makers and developers to engage their efforts with the varied speeds at which things unfold. Steven Robins (2002) demonstrates this point eloquently in a study of Joe Slovo Park, a housing development in a white middle-class suburb of Cape Town, which was designed to replace the shack settlement of Marconi Beam with an orderly working-class suburb. Robins concludes that external actors failed to anticipate the 're-informalisation' of this newly formalised suburb. He explores the disjunctures between the planners' model of 'suburban bliss' and the reality. The messy, improvised character of low-income housing development in South Africa is contrasted with utopian and technocratic visions. It is in this context that Anton Harber's (2011) observations of Diepsloot echo in so many other African spaces:

When the people of Diepsloot were first put on the side of the road running north, it was on the far edge of the city, fairly secluded. But the geography of the city has shifted, as the urban conurbation of Joburg, Pretoria and Midrand converge close to where Diepsloot is. That region is now a hive of investment and development. **So the periphery has become the centre**, and, I think, has to move to the centre of our consciousness as well.

Present conclusions -

Propositions for discussion

The literature reviewed in this paper supports the view that varied forms of land uses, principally economic (commercial, industrial and agricultural) and residential (formal and informal, sub-divisions and slums), combine to create a distinctively new terrain for urban life in Africa, with significance for the character, form, functions and governance of African cities and towns.

It will be clear that we do not accept that Africa's cities are mostly places of crisis and chaos. We take a view more akin to Fouchar (2011) than to Koolhaas (2002). Rapid economic growth, massive new investment, and rapid change under mostly peaceful circumstances is the context, despite terrible carnage in Abidjan in 2011 and uncertainties in Kinshasa or Kigali (now Kampala and Mbabane too). Even there, as Michel Agier (2002) argued, the refugee camp becomes a kind of city – indeed, in some cases, the new suburb.

Richard Harris's (2010) extremely useful 'Meaningful types in a world of suburbs' do not yet stretch far enough to accomplish two things. It seems from the literature on African suburbs that there are other or more or different ways of finding meaning in the types of suburbs developing. And the interactions and concepts which emerge are seldom being woven into ways of thinking about suburbs in other places. The same is undoubtedly true in other directions: only occasionally are Chinese, Indonesian, Indian suburban changes influencing the ways in which African suburbs are explored (Grant and Nijman 2002 as example).

In what ways do African suburbs provoke new thinking about suburbs on other continents? Probably the only way in which 'subaltern' thinking has entered 'northern' debates is via postcolonial writing, in which the imbrication of the (former) colony and the cities of the former 'metropoles' of colonialism has shifted ways of grasping the latter (Jane Jacobs II down to Roy 2011 in IJURR). That line of thought has the potential for extension and precision – but there are

also other elements implicit in the literature on African suburbs to ponder. The most apparent is in meanings of informality and especially its relationships to recompositions of class and creative webs of associational networks stretching across the globe (which Maliq Simone has made so much more familiar)¹⁰. Each is suggestive of decenterings which cry out for further thought and investigation.

African cities also tend to have been thought of as exceptional in terms of their politics, policy failures, and governance. Brigades of briefcase carriers set out regularly from northern wealthy places to correct the errant ways of African people. Seldom – though not without exception – do they carry home different ways of thinking their own cities. Relationships between state, city, nation and politics are generally held to be ‘wrong’ in Africa and needing change if Africa’s cities are ‘yet to come’ to something ‘better’ for more people. The difficulty is that the elements of the now and the possible futures are treated most generally. Questions of gender, generation, social hierarchy, memory, etc need to be mined for meaning. Indeed, noticing the lacunae in African suburbs literatures indicates – a need for more research; and actually applying existing concepts, not necessarily a perhaps pyrrhic search for new ones. It is hard to make rapid progress on all fronts simultaneously. Recent work by Freund, who brings different perspectives to Kinshasa as well as meticulously draws together sources from the oral to the archive and the literary, to the experience of the street and other spaces, shows the power of really getting down to application of available ideas – even if on some questions he is consciously unable to add (gender is a prominent example) (Freund 2010a, 2010b).

In sum our suggestions for discussion highlight three things: a moving edge in relation to political, social and economic pressures; densification/retrofitting of existing suburbs; and the emergence of new centralities in African cities away from the traditional core.

¹⁰ Harris (2010): ‘The work of Abdoumalik Simone (2010: 51-55), who makes a related argument about the importance of real and metaphoric peripheries, also strangely neglects suburbs’.

- * the moving edge is where much of the literature is focused – and where meanings of informality, conflict and power may speak to ways in which the rest of the world is increasingly working too (if we ask, What does African suburbia mean for global city representations? What meaningful types can be added or altered? this is where we may wish to begin the discussion.)
- * change in older suburbs is less closely observed – but enormously significant, we submit; new themes hinted at for Johannesburg by Mbembe and Nuttall (2008) and their contributing authors will be explored.
- * and new centralities or perhaps better, new stages for urban life are appearing, and only beginning to enter the pages of academic representation.

What types of work can advance thinking about African suburbs and what research themes appear possible and valuable? And what methods can usefully be applied – what resources do those methods require?

A modest research agenda

Reflections on the literature and other forms of representation of African suburbs will continue within the current project, at least for a couple of years. That will inform and be informed by select cases to be investigated a little more closely with a modicum of original research. The cases are more or less fixed in broad terms of which cities we plan to concentrate on although more precise ideas about cases – particular neighbourhoods and particular issues – are further from certain at this point.

The main questions, however, which we will try to ask if not answer through select cases flow from the discussion above. Our methods are yet to be more

precisely defined. Among them, given the importance we attach to the ties between African experiences and those of other continents, will if feasible be the direct involvement of some members of our small group alongside colleagues investigating the suburbs of Bangalore and Shanghai amongst others. We also stress our desire to have colleagues from Toronto, Kuala Lumpur and São Paulo working alongside ourselves in Durban, Dar es Salaam and Dakar.

Our questions will continue to be debated and perhaps refined. The sites in which divergent or convergent answers will be shaped will certainly be Accra and Dar es Salaam; as well as two or three among the largest South African cities. We also hope to add Luanda and Dakar or Bamako to our list. If we succeed in adding significantly to the existing literature, partly reviewed in this paper, no doubt it will be possible to expand the work into other places. And, we hope, to deepen the respect accorded to African cities and their people at home and in other places.

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