

11 Conclusion

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Cities are living geology, shaped by and functioning through historical layers of ambitions, efforts and constructions of meaning, set in natural environments of topography and climate, and subject to change. This volume concerns itself with African capital cities south of the Sahara, which means a particular geological focus. This book, and much less this conclusion, cannot claim to cover the rich and varied African urban experience in any full and systematic way. What the authors offer is a systematic perspective, a set of thorough case studies and some illustrative examples. Within the tight confines of space at our disposal in this volume, the authors have brought together a set of multifocal studies of sub-Saharan African capital cities. The contributions deal with the historical development of the capitals from their origins up until today, with the political dramas staged in them since independence, with the urban symbolic legitimation of power and with its contestation, with housing conditions, land allocation, urban services (or, mostly, the lack of them) and with the location of the capitals in the ethnic, economic and demographic fabric of their nations.

Our perspective of urban geology in this chapter entails a historical focus – not in the sense of a chronological narrative, but an attention to crucial city-making epochs, their manifestations and their enduring urban sediment. We begin by revealing the traces of colonial power found in a number of capital cities, before turning to the varied relationships that the states of African independence and their capitals in particular have forged with these preceding colonial powers. Subsequently, we focus on the explosive surge of urbanisation experienced by African cities and the series of crises associated with urbanisation, before shifting our attention to a number of potentially beneficial urban projects dating from the 1990s. The chapter closes with reflections on capital cities within their national fabrics by assessing different levels of living within the capital city and comparing these experiences with the rest of the country. Throughout this chapter, we use our knowledge of other African capitals, as well as drawing from the monographic studies of capitals found within this publication.

What emerges from these compact monographic studies is a sense of the power of African capitals – and a sense of their powerlessness. Power, because almost all current capitals of Africa are political creations – pre-colonial in the case of Addis Ababa; colonial in most cases; postcolonial in the cases of Gaborone, Kigali and Nouakchott – urban creations that have grown because they are the location of national political power. Proximity to the centre of patronage and of redistribution, rather than of economic development, has driven the explosive growth of African capitals since independence, actually starting in the last, more inclusive decade

of colonialism. Between 1950 and 1990 the population of African capital cities increased more than tenfold (UN-HABITAT 2002: 4). Apart from the special history of South Africa and Johannesburg, few African countries have a major economic centre outside the political capital. Pointe-Noire in Congo-Brazzaville, Douala in Cameroon and Lagos in Nigeria after the recent establishment of Abuja, are exceptions. Nairobi, for example, generates 45% of Kenya's GDP, that is, it has a national economic role of about the same proportion as Lima and Bangkok.

But 'power over' is not the same thing as 'power to'. In terms of 'power to', our studies show a great amount of powerlessness. Powerlessness to implement one's own plans; powerlessness in front of massive immigration; in terms of pervasive informality and the basic service demands of exploding populations; powerlessness in front of ethnopolitical violence. Africa is the continent of slum cities.

According to the latest UN-HABITAT (2008a: 90) definition and estimates, 62% of sub-Saharan African urban residents live in slums, or rather in deprived housing.¹ The overall African slum rate is by far the highest in the world, followed by South Asia at 43%, although Bangladesh and Haiti, with about seven out of ten people living in slum conditions, can match several African countries. The North African situation, on the other hand, is much better, at only 15%. Within sub-Saharan Africa, urban slumming ranges from 18% in Zimbabwe and 29% in South Africa, to 97% in Sierra Leone and 94% in the Central African Republic. Among the larger states, slum living is the fate of 82% of the Ethiopian urban population, 76% of the DRC's and 66% of the Nigerian urban population. In Kenya, the home country of UN-HABITAT (2008a: 248), the prevalence is 55%. Among the southern capitals, Harare (6% slum habitation) stands out at the upper end, with Lilongwe (78%) and Luanda (75%) at the lower. Maputo had 66% living in slum conditions, Pretoria/Tshwane 56%. In Cape Town, more than one in four households lived in slum conditions in 2006 (Small 2006). In East Africa, the range is between Addis Ababa and Dar es Salaam at the bottom, with two-thirds of their households in slum conditions, and Nairobi – in spite of its huge slum areas – at the top with two-fifths. In between are Kampala and Kigali, at 50% (UN-HABITAT 2008b: 148, 106, respectively). The overall slum figures refer to 2005, and, except for Zimbabwe, there has been a significant improvement since the mid-1990s.

Nevertheless, the lack of urban services remains a striking feature of African cities, including the capitals. In 2008, less than a tenth of households in Lagos had access to piped water on the premises. The figure is 25% in Luanda, about a third in Addis Ababa and Kinshasa and 40% in Abuja. 90% of Luandans and 80% of people in Maputo had no waterborne sewerage. Only about half of the people in Lagos and Kinshasa had access to sewerage or latrines, and in Addis less than one household in ten. Among sub-Saharan African capitals, only Abuja provides every household with electricity (UN-HABITAT 2008b: Tables 5.3.1 and 6). Public transport is typically scarce or virtually non-existent (as in Kinshasa) and the street systems are rarely able to accommodate private traffic adequately.

Traces of colonial power

Although some modern nation states of sub-Saharan Africa, like Ghana, Mali and Zimbabwe, have adopted names of pre-colonial realms, the only non-colonial capital of sub-Saharan Africa is Addis Ababa, which, though founded just before the late 19th-century European scramble for Africa, was actually built as a reactive modernisation after the Italian invaders had been repelled in 1896. Any modern account of African capitals has to start with the colonial layer. Each of the colonial powers left its urban remnants or heritage – the British, the French, the Portuguese, the Belgians, the short-lived powers of Germany and Italy, and the marginal Spanish influence in today's oil-rich Equatorial Guinea.

There were commonalities of colonial power: most importantly, the segregation between the colonial city proper, primarily for the colonisers, with its modern layout and stone buildings serviced with water, sewerage and refuse collection, and the unserviced and informally built and laid out surroundings. The latter, for example, are the 'medina' in Dakar, the *cités* in Léopoldville/Kinshasa and the 'locations' and 'townships' around Pretoria, Cape Town and Johannesburg. Between the two was an open divide. In Belgian Congo this was defined as somewhat greater than the distance a mosquito could fly. The colonial capitals were located on the basis of their convenience for the export of commodities, which usually meant ports, occasionally river ports or, as in the case of Nairobi, high-level railway stations. Gold in Johannesburg, on the other hand, represented the commodity itself. Colonial power was expressed in dominant public buildings, often city halls, as in Lourenço Marques, Luanda and Abidjan. Governors' palaces were often in reclusive off-centres, as in Nairobi, Salisbury and Accra. Although in Lusaka, for instance, the colonial rulers held it essential for Africans to be able to see the Governor's Village frequently (Myers 2003: 65). The governors' buildings were usually relatively modest by European standards. The Union Buildings of Pretoria – by Herbert Baker, who later built Government House in Nairobi – is an exception, although dwarfed by the somewhat later vice-regal palace in New Delhi (as Mabin points out in Chapter 10). The British journalist Michaela Wrong has given a devastating summary of the British colonial legacy of housing power. She describes the governors' palaces – now state buildings – of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia: 'Behind the white-pillared porticoes...these buildings are resolutely dowdy...The overall impression is of a dusty members' club crossed with a gloomy British country pub' Wrong (2009: 33).

The colonial order created its own urban system and hierarchy of colonial cities. Dakar was developed into the centre of French power in sub-Saharan Africa. Dakar was backed up by equatorial Brazzaville, which was then superseded after World War II by Belgian Léopoldville across the river (described in a Brazzavillean song as *poto moyindo*, 'the Europe of Blacks' [Lelo Nzuzi 2008: 17]). Brazzaville was subsequently challenged in urban significance from the 1950s by economically prospering Abidjan. The British colonial centres were Lagos in the west, Nairobi in the east and Salisbury/Harare in central Africa. In Portuguese Africa, Luanda was the prime city, located inside the scenic *Avenida Marginal* (an echo of the

Avenida Atlantica in Rio on the other side of the ocean), but was not functionally superordinate to Lourenço Marques/Maputo. The latter was instead something of a seaside resort for Johannesburg. Under Belgian rule, Bujumbura governed both Ruanda and Burundi, but was an outpost to Léopoldville.

There were also important inter-colonial differences, deriving both from different metropole administrative traditions deployed in the various colonies and from different conceptions of urbanism and architecture. There was, for instance, the British garden city concept, with its spread out villas, which influenced the layouts of Nairobi, Harare and Lusaka, and was also applied in Cape Town. Then there were the compact continental European cities of Dakar and Abidjan, both on their high plateaux; Léopoldville on two hills along the left banks of the Congo; and Maputo and Luanda with their ‘high’ and ‘low’ cities, separate from the African suburbs, as is also the case with Dar es Salaam. In architecture, the brief German rule of Tanganyika left solid, enduring government buildings, still used, and prominent churches in the city centre. The French in Dakar created in the interwar period a ‘neo-Sudanese’ style, inspired by the famous mosque of Djenné, resulting, among others, in a Catholic cathedral with a mosque-and-minarets style (Shaw 2006). The Italians turned Asmara into a showpiece of interwar international modernism (Denison et al. 2003), but left much less of an impact on Addis, although there is the Italian-named *mercato*, which is still used. Malabo and Bata, the political and economic capitals of current Equatorial Guinea, were built as Andalusian-style towns centred on the *ayuntamiento* (city hall) surrounded by houses with wrought-iron balconies and patios. Addis Ababa retains its coeval non-colonial legacy, although Emperor Menelik relied on modern contributions by European engineers and Indian craftsmen in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This is revealed in the imperial, now presidential, palace, the Saint George Cathedral and the pattern of servants’ and poor retainers’ quarters (originally circular huts with thatched conical roofs) next to the hill palaces of the wealthy and powerful.

The colonial powers also left very different state-municipality relations, with more local autonomy and resources provided in the British Empire colonies than those of the Latin Europeans, with their Napoleonic administrative centralism. Thus in the 2000s, total local public expenditure in ex-French colonies Ivory Coast, Mali, Senegal and Togo amounts to less than 1% of national GDP, and in Mali only 0.25%. In ex-British Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe, by contrast, local public expenditure makes up 3 to 5% of those countries’ GDP (Kersting et al 2009: 131).

Colonialism is obviously central to any urban focus on power and politics. However, a broader view of African urban history would have to take a much wider cultural perspective, including the Arab-Islamic influences in East Africa and along the savannah belt; the Indian influx into East Africa (Indians made up a third of Nairobi’s population in 1962); Levantine traders in West Africa; and contributions of non-colonial Europeans, like Greek café owners in Addis and shopkeepers in Léopoldville. There are also the strong indigenous urban traditions in West Africa, with big modern cities, such as Ibadan and Kano. A significant layer of

such traditions are also found in largely colonial cities like Lagos and Lomé. In his excellent comparison of Lomé and Harare, Gervais-Lambony (1994) notices the huge lingering differences between the successor of white-settler Salisbury (Harare) and Lomé, where the German and then French colonial powers recognised existing African property rights, leaving the city of Lomé with a central African market and relatively little spatial segregation. Furthermore, there is the influence of former slave returnees to Africa and their descendants not only in Liberia and in Sierra Leone, but also in other West African cities, including Lomé and Lagos, with its Saro (Sierra Leonian) town and Brazilian quarter.

Aside from colonial power, there is a rich cosmopolitan urban tradition in Africa, generating new languages of inter-ethnic communication, like Swahili in the east, Lingala in the lower Congo and the pidginised Fanagalo of the mining communities of Johannesburg. And there are long chains of musical influence and inspiration (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1991; Freund 2007). One example of modern extra-colonial African urbanism is the cultural intertwining of Brazzaville and Kinshasa, on opposite banks of the Congo River – expressed in Afro-Latin rumba, a common obsession with fashion and communication in Lingala – which was sustained by varying streams of economic exchanges during those countries' series of postcolonial disasters (Balandier 1985; Gondola 1996; Martin 1995; Tati, Chapter 7, this volume). A second example is found in urban South Africa where *marabi* music, the Cape Minstrels and South African jazz have been important elements in forging non-colonial urban identities (Martin 2008).

African nationalism and its relation to colonialism

The states of African independence have had a very varied relationship with their preceding colonial powers. This has ranged from amicable relations with the coloniser on a formal level in francophone Africa from 1960 (Guinea excluded) – two years after the elites of those countries had opted to remain in a French 'union' – to the break out of protracted armed struggle in the Portuguese colonies and Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia), and the long combat against the settler colonialism of South Africa. In between are several variants: complex configurations of militancy, including armed struggle in Kenya, negotiations in British Africa, and the abrupt surrender of the Belgians in Congo, Ruanda and Burundi. African nationalism usually developed in the colonial capitals, like Lagos and Accra. Several of the first African presidents were city mayors: Sékou Touré of Conakry, Félix Houphouët-Boigny of Abidjan, Sylvanus Olympo of Lomé and Joseph Kasa-Vubu of one of the communes of Léopoldville.

The new capitals of independent Africa dealt with their colonial legacy in different ways, as did the capitals of ex-colonial Asia before them, with the cities on both continents reflecting different paths to independence. Brazzaville in the 1960s, still named after its colonial founder, was perhaps the epitome of continuity, as indicated by Tati in Chapter 7, later reflected by the country's policy of post-socialist liberalism. In 2006, a year after the centenary of his birth, the Congolese government brought

the bones of Pierre Savorgan de Brazza back from Senegal to a new mausoleum.² There was no rupture from the colonial past in French West Africa either, as the example of Dakar shows in Chapter 3, to which the monument to the Senegalese riflemen who served in France in World War I still testifies (although there has been debate about how and when they should be remembered). Critics have recently argued that the French massacre of war veterans protesting against non-payment in December 1944 should be remembered, but the current president of Senegal, Wade, decided otherwise. The riflemen are officially remembered for their contribution to the ‘free world’.

Maputo and Harare, on the other hand, shed their colonial names, Lourenço Marques and Salisbury, respectively, and embarked on a new monumentality and toponymy – Marxist-Leninist in Maputo, pan-Africanist in Harare. In independent Harare, Cecil Rhodes was immediately removed, and the Mugabe regime took help from the most monumentalist regime in the world, North Korea, to build an enormous shrine and cemetery in memory of the anti-colonial war, the Heroes Acre. Léopoldville became Kinshasa in 1966, after the Mobutu coup, and *Place du Trône* became *Place de la Nation*, as in Paris. Occasionally, the new country needed to build a capital, as was the case in Bechuanaland (later Botswana), which had been administered from Mafikeng, South Africa; in Mauritania, administered from Saint Louis, French Senegal; and in Belgian Ruanda, administered from Bujumbura, Burundi. Hastings Banda of Malawi built a new government centre closer to his main ethnic base in Lilongwe, with help from apartheid South Africa, as a kind of campus outside the native city and with the presidential palace in protected isolation far from the city.

Apart from a general celebration of national independence, in monumental forms and in the naming of important streets and squares, African capitals have few features in common in terms of their national iconography. Their toponymy has a continental flavour – most frequently referring to political leaders of other African countries – which can also be found in the Americas, but is rare in Asia and Europe. Summits of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) have typically provided occasions for major monumental buildings, from Addis Ababa to Conakry. In the new capitals of Abuja and Dodoma, parliament is the impressive building, in Lilongwe it is the complex of ministries. The ex-imperial presidential palace in Addis is centrally located and clearly visible in its vast hilltop compound. New, is an imposing modernist city hall. The parade ground of the Mengistu regime remains, de-sloganised, as well as the ‘struggle’ obelisk (Hancock 1995; Zewde 2002).

The first two leaders of black African independence, Kwame Nkrumah and Sékou Touré, had very different symbolic visions. Nkrumah had a huge bronze statue of himself made by the state artist of Liberia, as early as 1956, when he was prime minister of the still British Gold Coast. Independent Ghana was provided with a major parade ground in Accra, Black Star Square, complete with a presidential stand and a Roman-style Independence Arch. A new State House was built, but in the old colonial compound of Christiansborg Castle – of Danish origin, as the name indicates (the same name as the palace that today houses the Danish parliament).

Following Nkrumah's increasingly authoritarian tendencies, the construction of a new parliament was postponed and the site used for an OAU building. Although there was a nationalist promotion of traditionalist culture, in architecture, international-style modernism became the idiom of Accra's National Museum and of the state and party buildings (Hess 2000, 2006). Sékou Touré, by contrast, built and erected very little and resided in the old governor's palace in Conakry, as Odile Goerg describes in Chapter 2. A sober stela to the martyrs of the nation replaced the colonial war memorial. The Chinese built a huge assembly hall, the People's Palace, and the Soviets a stadium with a name referring to the referendum of independence.

Lomé and Nairobi also represent two different national trajectories. Gervais-Lambony in Chapter 4 distinguishes three periods of postcolonial monumentality in Lomé: the First Republic with its Independence Square and its monument and parliament; second, the personal cult of General Eyadéma and his party regime; and third, the semi-democracy after his death, with the removal of his and his mother's statues and the conversion of the party building into a convention centre. Nairobi, on the other hand, is a rare example of change with symbolic continuity (Owuor & Mbatia in Chapter 8; Wrong 2009). The colonial government district is reinvented as establishing the institutions of the nation and of the national capital, with a paternal statue of the first president, Kenyatta, in the middle, and with the Kenyatta Conference Centre added on. Elsewhere in the central city, the second president, Arap Moi, and his slogans are amply commemorated. Central Park has become Uhuru ('Freedom') Park, and harbours a modest official parade stand and Freedom's Corner. Several nationalist African regimes took initially, and for some time, a ruralist, anti-urban stand, devoting little interest to the capital. This was also the case with the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo) and the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) in Mozambique and Angola, and in Nyerere's Tanzania. The relative monumental restraint of Mugabe, who has always had primarily a rural base, is also noteworthy, with the exceptions of the Heroes Acre and the naming of the commercial main street, Mugabe Road. There is no central monument to the ruler, and the ruling-party headquarters, for instance, is a mediocre, medium-sized office building with nothing of the flair of Eyadéma's party building in Lomé. Mobutu took the Belgian monuments and main street names out of his capital, renamed Kinshasa. But he had as little a symbolic programme as a political one. He did start a big monumental complex south of the city centre. First, it was announced as a homage to Patrice Lumumba, Congo's murdered first prime minister, but Mobutu changed his mind, and sometimes it was referred to as a monument of independence. However, it was never finished. What remains is a tall, slender concrete landmark tower with a set of big copper cups and a golden spire on top, now known as *l'Échangeur* ('the switch'), and a long, bridge-like ramp of concrete (Fumunzanza 2008: 163 ff.).

The democratic movement in South Africa has followed two major symbolic tracks. One is a major toponymical change, replacing a large number of European city names with African ones, including the government capital, which changed from Pretoria to Tshwane. The other is more conciliatory, with the retention of virtually all the apartheid monuments, but adding on new democratic ones. The imposing

Voortrekker monumental complex outside Pretoria/Tshwane, commemorating the Boer exodus from the British Cape Colony and the defeat of the Zulus in the Battle of Blood River – a celebration of Afrikaner ascendancy after World War II – is to be balanced by Freedom Park on a hill nearby. The latter, inaugurated in December 2006, but not quite completed in December 2009, has nothing of the heroic bombast of the former. It features a Wall of Names that commemorates the victims of colonial and apartheid wars and violence, from the Dutch 17th-century conquest onwards, and a Resting Place of Spirits, with a symbolism referring to, inter alia, the nine provinces of the South African Union and, as a tenth participant, ‘the international community’. The day of the Boer Blood River massacre victory, December 16, has been renamed as the Day of Reconciliation and Nation Building.

Inside the city, the historical African Chief Tshwane now stands as a statue outside City Hall, a stone’s throw from the first president of the Boer Transvaal, the son of the Pretorius who gave the city its first name. The clumsy, expensive system of a government capital and a parliamentary one, Cape Town, originally a day-and-half’s train journey from each other, which was part of the white Union of South Africa, of the British and the Afrikaners, has been retained by democratic South Africa, perhaps for other geopolitical reasons, as Mabin indicates in Chapter 10.

Capital city toponymy, or street nomenclature, is an interesting ideological indicator. Africa is a receptacle of many different external political and ideological influences, which is often expressed in remarkable juxtapositions of street and place names. In Dakar, for instance, the *Avenue Fedayin* continues into *Avenue G. Pompidou*, which leads on to that of Hassan II, and *Avenue Faidherbe* (the French conquistador) gives onto *Place Cabral*. The colonial and the anticolonial interconnect. In Abuja, Winston Churchill, Tito Broz, Mao Zedong, Charles de Gaulle and Jimmy Carter all share the same neighbourhood. In another, a street named after Lenin runs between J.F. Kennedy and Queen Elizabeth II. And all the Nigerian presidents have their central streets there, even those military thieves from whose heirs the Nigerian government has tried to retrieve stolen funds stacked away in Swiss banks. In Dar es Salaam, it is Africa’s political leaders who share pride of street-name place: Nkrumah, Samora Machel and, latterly, Nelson Mandela.

Architecturally, independence sometimes heralded, like in India, the arrival of modernism, as in Nkrumahist Accra, as we have just noticed, and later in Tanzania (ArchAfrika Projekt 2004), for example. In Nigeria, it was successfully translated into what was known as tropical modernism, deployed in central Lagos (when it still was the capital), and reaching its iconic peak in the university library of Ibadan (Elleh 2001; Immerwahr 2007).

Urban growth explosion and crises

Like Latin America about 150 years earlier, the independent nations of sub-Saharan Africa did not have a happy childhood. One disaster after another rolled over the continent in the last third of the 20th century – collapsing commodity prices,

colonial wars, Cold War interference, local political megalomania, ruthless imports or impositions of ill-adapted dogmas of political economy from Marxism-Leninism to neo-liberalism, massive violence, even genocide, kleptocracy, AIDS, and so on. There is no need to repeat the horror story here, nor is there any space to try to explain it. What may be underlined in this context is that it was under these dark clouds that the African capitals saw their populations swelling and their national primacy further enhanced. This is a configuration opposite to the economic growth and employment-fuelled expansion of Latin American capitals a century ago.

The post-independence growth of African capitals has no historical equivalent. A couple of illustrations suffice: between 1960 and 1978, Abidjan grew from 180 000 inhabitants to 1.27 million (Dubresson 1997: 264); Kinshasa, between 1960 and 1980, grew from 476 000 to 2.41 million (Fumunzanza 2008: 61), a sevenfold and fivefold increase in 18 and 20 years, respectively. The annual growth rate in Abidjan was 11–12%; Lusaka achieved 14% in the 1960s; and Dar es Salaam 10% (Potts 1997: 468–469).

By comparison, Buenos Aires grew by around 5% a year from 1869 to 1914, from 813 000 in 1895 to 2.33 million in 1914 (Gutman & Hardoy 2007: 346). Berlin, the then fastest-growing European capital, had a growth rate little more than 3%, and took 60 years to increase its population fivefold (1850–1910) (Lees & Lees 2007: 287); Chicago took 30 years (1870–1900) (D'Eramo 2002: 44). In Asia, Jakarta grew from 1.78 million in 1952 to 6.48 million in 1980 (Abeyasekere 1987: 171), with an annual rate in the 1960s of about one-third of Lusaka's (Forbes 2004: 273); and Seoul grew from 1.57 million in 1955 to 9.64 million 30 years later (Kim 2004: 62).

This unprecedented urban growth was primarily politically driven: public-employment opportunities in the new states (Rogerson 1997: 344), financial gain from commodity rents, growth in urban education and increasing urban-rural differentials in standards of living. 'Everybody goes to where the state is', as the mayor of Noukchott, the post-independence capital of Mauritania, recently put it.³ There was little industrialisation or any other labour-demanding urban economy. When the current economic crisis hit hard, the urban immigration rates did go down, but continued massively. Kinshasa went from 2.4 million in 1980 to 6 million in 2000, and Abidjan added another million between 1978 and 1991, reaching a population of 2.28 million.

Politics, moreover, was not only pulling Africans to their capitals, it was also pushing them there, as a refuge from civil wars, from rural banditry and from an economically collapsing countryside. Escaping from war was a major reason for urbanisation, raising Luanda's population from 475 000 in 1970 to about 2 million in 1990, as Paul Jenkins points out in Chapter 9. Kinshasa and Abidjan have had the same experience. However, sometimes the civil wars reached the capital itself (Freetown in 1999, Monrovia in 2002/3, for instance). Brazzaville was actually the centre of conflict in its country in 1993/94, in 1997 and again in 2000. Kinshasa was violently looted in 1991 and in 1993, and became a battlefield in August 1998.

The economic crises of the 1970s and 1980s drastically diminished the formal economy. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, cities like Léopoldville and Lagos were cities of workers and employees. In 1958, a good 70% of the male population of Léopoldville aged 15 and over were wage earners (La Fontaine 1970: 48), and in 1963, 40% of the Lagos labour force were production or transport workers (Baker 1974: 41; cf. O'Connor 1983: chapter 5). During this period, African cities became leaders in the global trend of informalisation of urban labour markets into self-employment and precarious employment (National Research Council 2003: 331–340). While Léopoldville in 1958 had 86 000 wage and salary earners out of 380 000 inhabitants, Kinshasa in 2002 had somewhat less than 120 000 (in the formal economy) with a population of 6.5 million (Fumunzanza 2008: 61–66). Another example is provided by indices of the minimum wage. If the index was 100 in 1974 in Ghana, it was 12 in 1984; if 100 in Tanzania in 1972, it was 18 in 1989; and if 100 in 1981 in Nigeria, it was 10 in 1990 (Potts 1997: 452). As a consequence, urban labour forces in capital cities in Africa include substantially more self-employed, rather than wage-employed, adults than was the case earlier. This is due both to the casualisation and informalisation of labour and to changes in the nature of urbanisation. These labour forces also include more women than earlier.

The cities were powerless in the face of problems posed by this avalanche of fleeing immigrants and of informally employed residents. Their resources were collapsing as the formal economy diminished and IMF demands to cut public employment increased. State bankruptcies became common. Service delivery – water, sewerage, waste removal, housing delivery and, critically, public transport – was taken over by informal groups. As the monographic chapters in this publication demonstrate, even before the crisis, urban plans were sparsely implemented in post-World War II Africa, and the current crisis swept them away. It was now that Africa became the continent of slums. But the crisis and its effects were nevertheless managed by the state – the central state – not the city. African capitals and other big cities did not collapse into general misery. They polarised, between the large, impoverished majority and a tiny political clique around the president and around business protégés of the president, with sumptuous, well-guarded villas, ample private services, a fleet of awe-inspiring SUVs and luxury cars, and shopping sprees and bank accounts abroad. Political power has in this way become the crucial agency of social polarisation. The ruthlessness with which political posts are fought for, even under electoral auspices, is rational, given how much wealth and privilege is at stake.

Most African states degenerated into kleptocracies and systems of corruption – Mobutu of Zaire/DRC and Abacha of Nigeria were probably the fattest of the fat cats. 'Eating' is the term used in Kenya for this type of political pillage (Wrong 2009), and one of the classic analyses of the African state in the 1970s and 1980s called it 'the politics of the stomach' (Bayart 1989). There was no bureaucratic tradition in sub-Saharan Africa, neither pre-colonial nor, with a few exceptions – such as the four communes of French Senegal – colonial, as very little of an African civil service or professional officer corps was developed. Nor had there been much, if any, urban planning in the neighbourhoods of the colonised countries. The chieftaincy survived

the colonial regime, strengthened by the ‘indirect rule’ of the latter, but could not sustain any national aristocracy, even less one with any sense of noblesse oblige. The colonial example was that wealth could be acquired mainly from political power and its connections – exceptions were some foreign minorities of Levantine merchants in the west, South Asians in the east, and some small commercial African groups of West African traders and Ivory Coast cocoa farmers. In brief, the independent African states and their capitals had precious little constructive experience and precious few positive or adequate models to go by in the dark decades of the 1970s and 1980s. South Africa, the apartheid and racist white regime, stood out during this time as the antithesis of the way forward. Accordingly, the field was opened to power-grabbers of various kinds, convinced that now it was their ‘turn to eat’. The socialist attempts ran aground with leaders’ disconnect from the native peasantry – rigidified by an uncritical import of Soviet or Maoist orthodoxy – and the lack of cadres capable of running a socialist state. Independent Africa became a field of failed ideological experiments, of ill-adapted and ill-understood ideological and institutional imports from abroad, of ‘scientific socialism’ and Marxist-Leninist workers’ parties in the 1960s and 1970s, of neo-liberal ‘structural adjustment’ in the 1980s and 1990s.

However, the pervasive mismanagement, corruption, incompetence and uncontrolled violence are also making these regimes precarious and vulnerable, and their international economic and political weakness subject to external pressures and susceptible to international ideological currents. The breakdown of urban infrastructure and services has not meant a disappearance of urbanism, in spite of city agriculture and a rustic lack of sanitation. Fashion awareness and nightlife entertainment are present, as well as street children. ‘Kinshasa is a big bar’, says one of its local cognoscenti (Nlandu 2002: 189). The city is the home of what one of its leading musicians has called the ‘*société des ambianceurs et des personnes élégantes*’ (or SAPE) – a ‘society of fun lovers and elegant persons’ (De Boeck 2002). Francis Nyamnjoh has also captured both the cultural awareness and disenchantment of urban youth in West and southern Africa (Nyamnjoh 2004). Under more democratic conditions and some relief from economic crises, a more organised urbanism may begin to redevelop rapidly.

African urban renaissance

Africa was hit badly both by a global crisis of plummeting commodity prices, and by bad neo-liberal advice of structural adjustment, including devastating admonitions to charge for primary education and basic healthcare. And, thirdly, by domestic kleptocracy, of which the Cold War US – and, therefore, World Bank – hero, Mobutu, was the unrivalled master, and which the Nigerian military rulers successfully emulated. Enormous sums of money were wasted, and ended up in European outlets. In spite of all this, Africa continued to develop, and from 1990 a number of capital city projects have actually materialised and moved forward. One of the most significant is the new capital of the largest country of sub-Saharan

Africa, the new capital of Nigeria, Abuja, although it may not, as Adebaniwi argues in Chapter 6, have achieved its official national goal of a 'centre of unity'. The languishing, even if intentionally much more modest, new Tanzanian capital project of Dodoma got a push from Chinese assistance in the mid-2000s, and managed to complete a new parliament building on schedule. It has become a real town with some public functions, in contrast to Houphouët-Boigny's megalomaniac project for his native village, Yamoussoukro, of which little more is left than the gigantic basilica (Elleh 2002). Burkina Faso is building a new political capital, a second Ougadougou outside the old one.

There is also a roster of recent, more modest capital-city developments of note. Accra has improved in many respects under democratic rule, and its once famous university is reviving. Mali's democratically elected archaeologist president, Alpha Konaré, adorned Bamako – until then a large village with a few imposing donor buildings from a bygone era of Soviet, Yugoslavian and Maoist Chinese influence – by paying homage to martyrs of democracy (during the 1991 demonstrations), as well as to national independence. New artefacts include a pedagogic historical mural, beginning with the French conqueror General Faidherbe and ending with Mali's first, and subsequently very unpopular, President Modibo Keita (Arnoldi 2003). A similar historical mural has been painted in Kampala, celebrating the National Resistance Movement of current President Museveni and the constitution, depicting prosperity and joy following upon his victory. Nairobi still has some of the largest slums of the continent, sites of recent post-electoral ethnic violence, but it never broke down like many other African cities, and in recent years, at least, its centre has been upgraded significantly, with good bus transport, functioning public telephones and even a couple of clean public toilets. In 2008, as Owuor and Mbatia describe in Chapter 8, the city announced a grand vision for 2030, for it to become a 'world-class metropolis'. On the other side of the continent, Lagos and Abuja have also presented high-flying long-term visions: Lagos, for example, attempting to position itself as a major tourist destination. Brazzaville, in turn, has announced its ambition to become a financial centre, a distant hope also of Rwanda's Kigali. Until the global financial crisis hit around the turn of 2008/9, the 2000s had been an improved decade for Africa, with substantial economic growth in many countries. In the cities, this has translated into a notable de-slumming, and into waves of new office and (mainly) upper-class residential construction, and tourism. The construction boom has been remarkable, not only in places like Nairobi, Abuja and Accra, but also in generally less resourceful cities, from Brazzaville to Conakry and Dakar. Awash with oil money, Luanda – where immediately after independence in 1974, according to Jean Daniel, then editor of *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 'nothing, absolutely nothing, functions' – is being presented by an Angolan public relations publication, put out by the national oil company, as a 'West African Dubai' under construction (Redvers 2008). Another publicity endeavour touts it as an African Miami, where trees have been imported to the *Avenida Marginal* along the ocean.

It is too early to tell to what extent these ambitions will be achieved. So far, it is clear that African cities have not yet escaped their cycle of postcolonial crises. Commodity

prices keep swinging up and down. The Wall Street-generated crisis of 2008/9 did hurt African exports and investments. However, it seems that most African economies were hit much less than the rich economies or than eastern Europe, still courted as they are by Chinese and Indian import interests. The new flourish of Nairobi was damaged by the ethnopolitical riots after the fraudulent presidential election of 2007. The promise of a free South Africa pioneering new regional economic and political initiatives was dealt a severe blow by extensive xenophobic violence aimed at foreign African migrants in the capital and large cities of the country in mid-2008 (Bekker 2010). The grandiose plans for Abuja, laid out in 2008 by the federal minister for the capital territory, are running into doubt, as he has recently been replaced.

Capital cities in their national and regional contexts

In terms of living standards, African capitals are usually very different from the rest of the nation. Abuja is known by its admirers as the most developed part of Nigeria. Although the evidence is mixed, the main picture, in this book and elsewhere, is that urban dwellers are better off than rural, and capital and big-city residents best off on average. They have lower mortality rates, their children are less stunted and wasted by malnutrition, they have more children at school, better housing and less poverty. The urban poor tend to be less disadvantaged than the rural poor (National Research Council 2003: 272 ff.; UN-HABITAT 2008a: 85). The capital attraction is thus quite rational, in spite of the lack of services and steady employment.

These are average figures, however, and inequality is considerably higher in African cities than in the African countryside. South African cities are among the most unequal in the world, Johannesburg with a Gini coefficient of 75 and Pretoria/Tshwane of 72 (UN-HABITAT 2008a: 72). The inhabitants of Johannesburg and Tshwane are thereby more unequal than the households of the whole planet, having an estimated Gini coefficient of 70 (Milanovic 2008: 427). Staggering urban inequality is not only a legacy of apartheid. It can also follow from an expanded reproduction of colonial dualism. In Abidjan, for instance, district investment per capita in the richest, already well-provided-for neighbourhood, the Plateau, was 43 times higher than in poor, unserviced Attécoubé in 1990 (Dubresson 1997: 287). Lagos state, which is less than the whole Lagos agglomeration, has a higher incidence of poverty than Nigeria, but Abuja is much below the national rate (National Bureau of Statistics 2006: Table 5). The Nairobi slums have higher infant and child mortality rates than the Kenyan countryside (National Research Council 2003: 286).

In political terms, the African capitals are national cities, run either directly by, or closely supervised by, the national government – Abuja, for example, by a federal ministry. But because of the ethnic diversity of the African nations, the capital usually had a particular ethnic mark or location. Lagos and Nairobi, for instance, may have been cosmopolitan, but primarily they were Yoruba and Kikuyu cities, respectively. Lomé was Ewe-Mina. In Kinshasa, the lingua franca is Lingala, a language which Presidents Kabila Sr and Jr did and do not speak. With huge urban immigration, populations have become much more ethnically mixed, which, in turn, may create

its own problems, as in the vicious ethnic riots in the Nairobi slums of Kibera and Mathare in 2007/8 or in the civil war in Brazzaville in the 1990s. Kampala is ethnically dominated by the Baganda, who have kept their own pre-colonial royal traditions, whereas the Museveni government has its main support among more peripheral peoples of Uganda. The core of Baganda traditional institutions are located in the Mengo district, which has municipal autonomy from the rest of Kampala. The centre of the Zimbabwean opposition, for instance, is in Ndebele Bulawayo, whereas Harare is situated in Shonaland, a region that is Mugabe's power base – although the capital itself has developed into another oppositional stronghold. That the capital may be a national centre of the opposition – as well as, by definition, of the government – is well known from modern European history – social democratic-cum-Wilhelmine Berlin being a case in point. In Africa, it is also the case of Lusaka, of Lagos during its capital period, of Nairobi in the 1990s, of Addis Ababa in the 2000s and in the very bitter, high-stake struggle for power between the mayor of Antananarivo and the president of Madagascar in 2008/9. Where there is a certain duality of power between an entrenched regime and a persistent opposition, the capital may be de facto a divided political space, as in Lomé, or earlier in Brazzaville.

African capitals are all deeply embedded in the layers of their national history. None of them is a 'global' or 'world' city in the manner of currently predominant urbanist discourse. However, they are not cut off, and never have been, from the rest of world. In their own way, they are 'worlded', in the felicitous term of Abdou Maliq Simone (2001), or hooked into various networks of transport, migration and communication. Nor are their locations static, but changing economically and culturally. Dakar is currently reasserting its colonial status as the regional capital of francophone West Africa, benefiting from the continuous strife of Abidjan, which after independence, became the economic capital of the region. The federal minister of Abuja, as well as the elected governor of Lagos, both harbour plans for new landmarks. Similarly, Nairobi is bouncing back as the capital of anglophone East Africa with a new, much better urban management. UN-HABITAT (2008b: 127) is lavishing praise on the appointed governor of Addis Ababa. In southern Africa, Harare is rapidly losing out, inter alia, to Luanda. In West Africa, the so-called Greater Ibadan-Lagos-Accra Urban Corridor, connecting Lomé and Cotonou within the network, is already becoming a regional metropolitan reality.

Mainstream *miserabiliste* views of African cities pay no attention to political symbolism and urban iconography, and in the context of abject misery and jarring inequalities it may even appear frivolous to take notice of them. However, as our studies, and specialised art and architecture studies, show, the symbolic investments of urban space constitute significant aspects of African capital-city life. In 2002, Kinshasa finally got a monument to the first prime minister of independent Congo, the murdered Patrice Lumumba, 36 years after his official rehabilitation by Mobutu. Eight years later, Lumumba's enemy, Kasa-Vubu, the first president, also got a monument, in a smart gesture by the Katanga-based Kabila regime towards the Bakongo people, whose leader Kasa-Vubu had been. By unofficial initiative, the colonial memorial to the veterans of World War II has been refurbished into a

commemoration that includes the postcolonial combatants of the wars of the 1990s (Fumunzanza 2008: 136–137). Kinshasa's main sports and political rally ground is known as the *Stade des Martyrs*. Not only do rulers take them very seriously, pleading with foreign donors and spending a lot of money on such iconography, but they are also often the focus of popular contestation, rallying centres of protest as well as government celebration. Statues are fought about, for or against, and, as shown by Gervais-Lambony in the case of Lomé, names and name changes are hot politics, most recently exemplified by the case of Pretoria/Tshwane. More than 30 years after its construction, the national meaning of Abuja remains controversial. And iconography can take many forms. The current construction of two luxury mixed-use residential towers in one of the main public squares of Dakar, the Place Soweto, dwarfing both the famous, now sparse IFAN Museum of colonial pseudo-Sudanese style, the National Assembly, and even the presidential palace nearby, tells us something important about current power in Senegal.

The importance of such symbolism in poor countries and cities is actually what political theory and political history should lead us to expect. Colonial powers asserted their conquerors' legitimacy by building separate, 'modern' cities and through monumental buildings of imperial power, religion and modern transport, as we have noted above. Colonialism made nationalism into the central political force of modern Africa. Nationalism is intrinsically a symbolic movement. National independence everywhere in Africa involved major symbolic changes, although initially less so in parts of francophone Africa, including pioneering Guinea-Conakry, than in the rest. In many countries of independent Africa, politics soon became heavily ideologised, high on imported ready-made ideologies. These ideologies strongly influenced the cityscapes of Lomé, Brazzaville, Addis Ababa, among others, and shaped the toponymy of central Maputo. The ensuing move to capitalism entailed hauling down the red flags and removing local dictator homages, as in Addis Ababa – although Marxism-Leninism still appears on the major street names of capitalist Maputo, and Mao Zedong and Kim Il-Sung still meet on one street corner, signalling the continuation of the political elite. However, it also meant a new urban look, of corporate towers, closed condominiums and international business hotels. The politics of market economies is also in need of public symbols, as manifested in Bamako, Dakar and Accra, no less than in post-apartheid South Africa. The capital of Ghana, for instance, mutated from rejection to historicising the personality cult of Kwame Nkrumah, by erecting a mausoleum in 1992 and moving his 1956 statue there. In 2008, the city was ready to inaugurate a new State House, as a modernist version of a traditional Asante royal stool. While the Millennium Gate in Dakar, opening out to the ocean, already had a somewhat abandoned look in September 2008, an anonymous footballer on the city's Corniche is an interesting addition to African symbolism, in which sports stadiums also often function as important political meeting grounds, an established convention in post-apartheid South Africa.

African cities on the world map

The ambition of this book has been to put on a world map the capital cities of sub-Saharan Africa, their national politics and representation, as well as their urban history, urban growth and urban services (or lack of them). The monographic studies and the concluding overview have covered West, Central, East and southern Africa, and British, French, Portuguese and Boer colonialisms, with some mention of German, Italian and Spanish legacies, as well as of the unique non-colonial Ethiopian heritage. African capitals add a new experience to the global geology of cities, to postcolonial and post-imperial urban history and to the political economy and culture of continental connections and competition.

These capital cities reflect both the attraction of power, as the designated centres of national government and administrative authority, with their patronage of education and access to jobs, and the powerlessness of cities in the face of explosive urbanisation, economic precariousness-cum-informality, soaring service needs and frustrated individual and collective violent behaviour.

African cities are also outstanding examples of urban resilience during devastating crises and against incredible odds. Kinshasa, for instance, arguably the urban heart of African darkness, has kept up its cultural vibrancy through music, religion, fashion – and simply daredevil entertainment. Its university managed to survive the abyss of the Mobutu regime and its long agony, and is now reviving (cf. Trefon 2004). Urban renaissance projects are thriving, from Dakar to Nairobi, from Addis to Luanda. Spectacular new urban designs are developing, from Nigerian Abuja to the transformation of apartheid Pretoria into multicultural African Tshwane. This urban resilience is another remarkable African contribution to urban studies of the world.

Notes

- 1 UN-HABITAT (2008a: 106) defines ‘slum condition’ as deprivation of improved water, improved sanitation, sufficient living area, durable housing, and/or secure tenure, and a slum area in which half or more of all households live under such conditions. (‘Improved’ may be rather modest by international urban standards, and refers to access to water from a bored well or a standpipe and sanitation by latrine.)
- 2 Reported in the *International Herald Tribune*, 30 November 2006.
- 3 Mandraud I, *Nouakchott, première capitale née africaine*, *Le Monde*, 23 December 2010.

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