

LAGOS



5 Lagos

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At the end of the 18th century, Lagos became the first slavery port in West Africa. From the 19th century onwards, like many other port cities in Africa, it was increasingly involved in the circulation of people, goods, ideas and technologies. By the 20th century, Lagos had become the main port of the most populous African country and was the federal capital of Nigeria from 1914 to 1991. Today, the city of Lagos boasts a concentration of capital assets, trading companies and public investments, a large bureaucracy and a transnational political, intellectual and religious elite. Since the 19th century, in fact, Lagos has been at the forefront of new cultural and social practices in Nigeria, despite Abuja (the new federal capital since 1991) and Port Harcourt (the oil capital in the Niger Delta) having recently acquired increasing influence.

Lagos has been shaped both by its national history as the federal capital and by remaining at the centre of political opposition to colonial rule (from 1920 to 1960), to military and civilian regimes (from 1966 to 1999) and to the current ruling party (from 1999 to 2008). This history has deeply influenced the way the city is governed, in particular in an international context.

Not surprisingly, the economic and political importance of Lagos has already been stressed by several authoritative studies (Baker 1974; Barnes 1986; Mabogunje 1968; Mann 2007; Olowu 1990; Olukoju 2003a; Peil 1991). More recently, the city has attracted the attention of planners, geographers and art historians (Enwezor et al. 2002; Gandy 2005, 2006), most notably among them the architect and urban theorist Rem Koolhaas. He considers Lagos as the 'paradigm and the extreme and pathological form of the West African city' (Koolhaas et al. 2000). According to Koolhaas, the city has freed itself from the constraint of colonisation or post-independence town planning, and despite a total lack of infrastructure, systems, organisation and management, the city is 'working'. Lagos is thus at the vanguard of a globalising modernity, mainly because the government has no impact on the city and because the city's inhabitants regulate themselves. Koolhaas believes that in the near future Paris and New York will be like Lagos.

This chapter goes beyond Koolhaas's analysis and asks to what extent colonial, national and international norms have shaped town-planning policies, architecture and urban management in the capital city. It refutes the assertion proposed by some authors that Lagos was an orderly colonial city in the past, and that it is nowadays a paradigmatic African city. Instead of focusing on its 'exceptional character', the chapter considers Lagos as a place of negotiation and confrontation between international norms and between national and local politics, as well as a place where

Western and African influences mix. The chapter argues that the battle for the control of Lagos between different political factions has emerged as a central feature of the port city, rather than the city being characterised by its supposedly African nature. In essence, the chapter looks at the influence of national and world history on the making of the metropolitan port city of Lagos.

A cosmopolitan and disorderly colonial city (1861–1945)

Capturing the resources of the port

Originally, Lagos was an island located between the sea and the lagoon, which is what gave it its name in Portuguese. At the beginning of the 19th century, Lagos became the main slavery port along the Slave Coast. It was still a small town when the British annexed it in 1861 – officially to stop the slave trade, but more pragmatically to use it as an administrative and military settlement for the conquest of the hinterland regions (Law 1983). During the second half of the 19th century, its population increased gradually from 25 000 in 1866 to 38 387 in 1901.¹ The progressive substitution of the slave trade with the palm oil industry and the consolidation of the position of Lagos on the West African coast attracted European merchants, freed slaves from Brazil and Cuba, slaves freed by the British on the coast and refugees from the interior. After the conquest of the hinterland, the British colonial administration developed commercial agriculture (palm oil and cocoa in the south, cotton in the north), exploited the few mineral resources available (copper and iron) and set up the main railway of the colony (the Lagos–Ibadan–Kano line was completed in 1911). The port then became the main interface between the hinterland of the main and most populated of the African British colonies and Britain.

The port became the headquarters of the Federation of Nigeria in 1914, after the merging of three former colonial administrative entities: the colony of Lagos, the protectorate of Northern Nigeria and the protectorate of Southern Nigeria. Like many other coastal colonies of Africa, the rationale was to concentrate administrative staff and corporate companies in the best-connected site within the federation. The customs duties paid on imported goods in the port of Lagos were the main source of revenue, which was used to meet the rising administrative costs of the Lagos colony. From 1880 to 1906, customs duties (on spirits, cotton goods and tobacco) provided an average of 84% of the total annual revenue (Lawal 1987: 70). From 1862 to 1905, the value of imported goods in the Lagos colony increased by 15 times, the revenue of the colony by 53 and its expenditure by 63. However, heavy investments were subsequently required for the physical development of the port, which lacked a natural harbour, and charges were levied to compensate for government investment in the port. Therefore, throughout the colonial period, Lagos remained a very expensive port with very high port tariffs, in spite of mercantile pressure from the Lagos, Liverpool, London and Manchester Chambers of Commerce (Olukoju 1994).

The making of a cosmopolitan lifestyle

Lagos emerged during the colonial period as a heterogeneous town populated by groups of people of various origins. This gave the town its eclectic character, with increasing social stratification and contrasting lifestyles. The historical core of the town, Lagos Island, developed from the four main sub-communities who lived in relatively distinct districts (Baker 1974: 1). Firstly, the heterogeneous European community represented a small group (300 people by 1901). This community established the physical foundations of the city, which consisted of warehouses and government buildings built along the Marina and around the racecourse. Secondly, the old town of Isale Eko was the larger district and residence of the chief of the town (Oba). It rapidly became overcrowded and was considered insalubrious by the local administration. Thirdly, the town of Saro developed to settle a growing group of educated ex-slaves who came from Sierra Leone. Until the end of the 19th century, these were the main merchants in Lagos and they built storehouses along the Marina rivalling those of the European merchants (Baker 1974: 27; Mann 2007: 126). As active agents of Christian missionaries, this group also constituted the first intellectual elite cadre of Lagos (they acted as interpreters and administrative assistants). The fourth community in Lagos, the Brazilian community, descended mainly from freed Brazilian slaves² and had various Portuguese cultural attributes (e.g. names, language and Catholicism) and Yoruba worship. Most of them turned to the crafts they had learnt in captivity (masonry, carpentry, cabinet making, tailoring and smithing) and introduced what came to be known as Brazilian architecture throughout the city, along the coast and in the hinterland (Mann 2007: 127; Smith 1979: 48–50).

Despite the different cultural backgrounds of these groups and the inequitable distribution of wealth between them, some common cultural practices emerged in 19th-century Lagos among this cosmopolitan, but Victorian-style, elite. They shared religious, cultural and entertainment venues (church, racecourse, theatre) and set up new voluntary associations (Echeruo 1977). Up until the 1950s, Lagos Island remained the commercial and political core of the country, as well as its most cosmopolitan settlement (see Figure 5.1). Despite the growing emergence of settlements – Ebutte Metta, Yaba, Mushin, Agege – on the mainland around the train station of the Lagos–Ibadan railway, Lagos Island also remained the most populated area of the city (90 000 inhabitants out of a total of 120 000 in 1931).

A disorderly colonial city and the rise of nationalism

Unlike most other port cities of the Atlantic coast, in which segregation schemes were introduced between the late 19th and early 20th centuries, for decades there was no official segregation scheme in Lagos. It was only after Lagos was made the capital in 1914 that a classification of Nigerian cities was proposed in 1921. Lagos was the only city belonging to the ‘Class A township’, which combined a residential area reserved for Europeans (Ikoyi) and a commercial area in which Europeans lived, worked, traded and interacted with Africans (Lagos Island) (Olukoju 2003b).

It was impossible to relocate either the Western companies or the African traders and inhabitants beyond the historical core of the city. But in the 'next-door' island of Ikoyi, a European Reservation Area was laid out in 1928 exclusively to accommodate the increasing number of Europeans (which grew from 301 in 1901 to 4 000 in 1931).

Overcrowding and a lack of housing in the old indigenous part of Lagos Island rapidly gave rise to what became considered by the British colonial town planners as a slum. The outbreak of a severe plague in 1924, which lasted for six years, forced the administration to initiate an anti-plague campaign (including quarantining, house-to-house sanitary inspections and payment for rats brought to the city council), which was largely opposed by the residents. As in many other colonial cities of the empire, the plague led to the creation of the first town-planning institution of the federation, the Lagos Executive Development Board (LEDB), whose initial task was to implement the city's first slum-clearance scheme, that is, the demolition of 400 unhealthy shacks and houses and the resettlement of a few thousand inhabitants to the mainland (Olukoju 1993: 98–99). However, this operation did not solve the problem of overcrowding in Lagos Island, where the population density increased from 25 000 per square mile in 1901 to 53 000 per square mile in 1931 (Baker 1974: 35).

With the growth of indigenous settlements, keeping the city orderly became more complicated. The increasing monopoly of trade by European companies and Lebanese traders, the will to escape taxation on markets and the limitation of job opportunities during the 1930s depression all led to the important development of street trading and hawking. This form of work, which had been rapidly growing in the port cities of Mombasa, Dakar and Lagos, was strongly affected by the economic crises of the 1930s (Cooper 1987; Fourchard 2005; Lakroum 1983). In 1932, the administrator of the colony complained that 'there is no street in Lagos or Ebute Metta [a new settlement on the mainland] where hawking or selling outside the houses does not take place'. According to the secretary of the town council, 4 000 petty traders were congregating every day around the main markets in Lagos. However, the administrator stated that this figure was closer to 10 000, a number representing around 10% of the population of Lagos.³ Traders started to erect temporary, unauthorised structures, and an illegal evening market was even discovered in 1932.⁴ Within the context of widespread economic hardship, groups of young destitute street boys, known as Jaguda Boys and Boma Boys, were beginning to harass the public around markets and 'motor parks' (car parks) in Lagos Island. Their aim was forcefully to extort money from women traders and, during World War II, to act as illegal touts for soldiers of the empire (Fourchard 2006).

More importantly, Lagos soon became the main centre of political parties and nationalism in Nigeria. The increasing number of an educated elite, composed of journalists, barristers and professionals, were prominent in the early nationalist movements (Sklar 1963: 41). In 1923, Herbert Macaulay, a civil engineer and editor of the *Lagos Weekly*, launched the first genuine political party, the Nigerian National Democratic Party. This party remained, however, confined to the Lagos political arena and was mainly concerned with local matters, in particular with elections

(to the Legislative Council every five years and the Lagos Town Council every three years) (Sklar 1963: 46). The aims of the party were more general: to promote higher education in Nigeria, compulsory education at primary-school level and the Africanisation of the civil service. A major change occurred in August 1944, with the creation in Lagos of the National Council of Nigeria, which included 40 organisations united in their demand for independence. These included political parties, tribal unions, trade unions, literary associations, social clubs, religious groups and women's organisations. Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikiwe, a journalist and founder of the *West African Pilot* newspaper, became the main leaders.

Promoting a federal capital (1946–1976)

Nigeria's independence in October 1960 resulted in no major changes either in town-planning policy or architecture. However, as Frederick Cooper has recently demonstrated, it was World War II and its aftermath that brought about important changes in the history of the African continent, with a new set of colonial officers and experts introducing the projects of 'modernisation' and 'development' (Cooper 2005). It was within this context that architects, town planners and political leaders developed new ideas and beliefs about transforming the city of Lagos into a modern capital. Subsequently, 1976 represented a major rupture, since the federal government decided to move the capital from Lagos to Abuja that year.

Capturing the resources of the nation

More than three decades of economic growth (from 1946 to 1983) followed the economic recession of the 1930s and World War II. The discovery of oil in the Niger Delta in 1959 and its exportation at very high prices during the 1970s dramatically increased the federal state budget (it multiplied by a factor of 14 between 1970 and 1976). Colonial officers and nationalist independent leaders promoted Lagos as an industrial centre. There was the creation of a Department of Commerce and Industry in 1948, two industrial estates in 1958/59 and a growing concentration of industrial federal establishments. The value of industrial production of the port city increased from 29% of the national product in 1963 to 70% in 1980. The development of a major wage labour market, combined with the decline of agriculture in the 1970s and the demographic transition of the Nigerian population attracted many migrants, resulting in a fivefold increase in the city population during this period. At independence, Lagos was the largest city in Nigeria, having overtaken Ibadan in 1963 (665 000 and 600 000 inhabitants, respectively). By 1975, Lagos had become the largest sub-Saharan city, with an estimated population of some 3 150 000 inhabitants.

By the 1950s, Lagos was developing into a predominantly Nigerian city, with migrants from the Nigerian hinterland becoming more numerous than the initial population who had settled on Lagos Island. The very high percentage of the population born outside of Lagos (59% in 1931, 63% in 1950) indicates that since the 1920s, migrants contributed significantly to the growth of the city (Mabogunje 1968: 264; Olukoju 1993). The major regional sources of immigrants were originally

the immediate hinterland (the Yoruba areas in Abeokuta, Ijebu and Oyo states), but then, increasingly, migrants came from all over the country, including the north after the colonial period, and there was a substantial influx of Igbo refugees during the civil war of 1967–1970. Immigrants also came from neighbouring countries, such as Benin, Ghana and Ivory Coast. The most important factor stimulating immigration to Lagos was the widening gap in employment opportunities between Lagos, the main job market in Nigeria, and the rest of the country. Largely as a result of the inflow of migrants throughout the 20th century, Lagos remained a very youthful city. The age composition shows an increasing proportion in the under-30-year-old age group, which climbed from 62% in 1921 to 78% in 1972 (Baker 1974: 40; Peil 1991: 22).

While Lagos was the initial resource base of the country, the site and government of the future capital became a hotly debated issue in the 1950s during negotiations for independence between the Colonial Office and the nationalist parties. At this time, there were intense debates on the future of the Nigerian constitution and the federal character of the state, in which considerable internal power was given to three new powerful regions – the Northern, Eastern and Western Regions. There were two main issues at stake (Adebayo 1987): could Lagos remain the capital of the country? And should the federal capital be part of the Western Region – in which Lagos was situated – or should it be administered separately? The debates reveal an ongoing conflict around the sharing of the economic resources of the independent state among the elite cadres of the three regional political parties. The British administration and the northern and eastern political parties wanted Lagos to be the capital of Nigeria, but they wanted it excised from the Western Region. The reason was mainly financial: the port and the growing industrialisation of Lagos provided large resources for the state.⁵ To abandon Lagos to the Western Region ran the risk of reinforcing the financial power of its dominant political party, the Action Group. This party wanted to keep Lagos within the Western Region for the opposite reason and suggested building a new capital city in a central and neutral place. For the Colonial Office, however, the building of a capital city was too costly for a new nation and it was eventually decided to keep Lagos as the capital, but administered by the federal government. This victory for the northern and eastern delegates was perceived as a direct threat by the Western Region, whose leader, Obafemi Awolowo, predicted the fiscal and economic suicide of the Western Region and never abandoned the idea of merging the capital territory into the Western Region (Benna 1989: 253).

After 1954, the federal government controlled the federal territory of Lagos. It created a federal Ministry for Lagos Affairs in 1959, and then in 1966, the Lagos State⁶ was established, whose governor, like other governors, was nominated by the federal government until the Second Republic of 1979–1983. In other words, most of the policies implemented during this long period came from federal-government initiatives. The majority of the city's population, who favoured the Action Group party, remained unhappy with this federal-government policy.

Problems with the management and provision of services in Lagos, moreover, were growing rapidly. In 1962, a UN team of experts considered that key problems in metropolitan Lagos included traffic congestion, a shortage of housing, lack of

housing finance, the substantial size of the slum areas, the unsanitary conditions of most of the houses, lack of human resources and the absence of a metropolitan government (Abrams et al. 1980). Only one of the recommendations proposed by the expert mission was implemented by the federal government – the building of transport infrastructure in the form of new roads, bridges and highways. This policy absorbed a large amount of the capital expenditure from the federal government (between one-fifth and one-third between 1962 and 1980) and from the Lagos military state government (half of its expenditure in the 1970s) (Olowu 1990: 61)⁷. The policy was a response to the priority given to the development of cars for individuals over any other means of public transport in the context of the 1970s oil boom, and a response to federal policies designed to attract international car companies interested in the development of the growing middle classes and the emerging car market (Fourchard & Godard 2002). Whereas housing policy and public transport were totally neglected, expensive, prestigious infrastructure was built (e.g. the stadium, the National Theatre and the residential quarter for the Second Festival of Black Arts and Culture). Consequently, when the same UN team returned to Lagos in 1980, they concluded that the problems identified in 1962 were identical, but had got worse. Accordingly, it is pertinent to investigate how the policy of establishing a modern capital city came into being during this period.

Promoting nationalism and modernity

The town council and federal government alike were keen to remove what appeared to be disorderly elements in the historical core of the city of Lagos, as well as to project an image of modernity, by sponsoring international events, through modern architecture and by publishing numerous images of a modern city in the press. There was in fact a clear continuity in policy and planning between the last set of colonial town planners, architects and administrators and the first generation of political leaders in Lagos. On the other hand, disagreements were equally clear in these regards between the federal government and its political opponents in Lagos.

The urban renewal of Lagos Island which took place in the second half of the 1950s is a good indication of the ongoing struggle between a new ruling political elite and the population of Lagos, backed by the opposition party to the government, the Action Group. As mentioned above, overcrowding in Lagos Island was not solved by the 1928 Slum Clearance Scheme, and became even more pronounced in the 1940s and 1950s. In 1951, the town council and the LEDB prepared the Central Lagos Slum Clearance Scheme, intended to transfer 20 000 to 30 000 people to Surulere on the mainland, 6 km from the centre. However, unlike the 1928 operations, the main aims of this scheme were not purely sanitary. The intentions of the LEDB and the Ministry of Land, Mines and Power of the new federal government were to have an area rebuilt in a manner that befitted a capital city.⁸ The Lagos Slum Clearance Advisory Committee stated that:

Lagos is the capital of a country of growing commercial importance which is developing rapidly. It is taking an ever-increasing part in world

affairs and is on the threshold of independence. Nigeria needs a capital city of which she can feel proud, and in which her people can live, work and play under conditions which are in accord with modern town planning practice for the well-being of all members of the community.⁹

The need for a modern capital city with larger roads and without shacks in the central area was key to the ministry's decision to relocate. As mentioned by Maris (1962), the disorder and overcrowding in Lagos Island were a central challenge to the dignity of the future capital of Nigeria. Because they took place in the commercial core of the city, slum clearances stimulated the rapid rise of rents in the surrounding areas, greatly disrupting the social life of the inhabitants, and eventually causing economic hardship to residents, especially to women petty traders, who relied on doorstep selling. The scheme was, therefore, difficult to implement and was delayed by resistance from these residents. On the one hand, the federal government and the LEDB persisted in their implementation of the scheme; on the other, the Action Group persevered in their advocacy of support for the people who were to be displaced. As a result, the uses to which urban space could be put became a salient political issue. The resultant politicisation of city planning, and more generally of urban space, became a major trend in the development of Lagos during the second half of the 20th century.

The will to organise the city as a prestigious, orderly federal capital failed. The will to limit the 'invasion' of the streets by traders and hawkers became an ongoing struggle in which the city council, the federal government, market women and the opposition were the major players. In the 1930s, this 'problem' was limited to the areas around the main markets on Lagos Island. By the 1950s, it concerned all of Lagos Island, as well as the primary residential areas of the mainland. The town council tried to regain control over these spaces. It forbade street trading in several neighbourhoods¹⁰ and tried to regulate trade on Lagos Island: street vendors were forbidden to work along the commercial hub of the Marina, on the four main roads, on the seven avenues and on 56 streets.¹¹ But a few years later, the four main avenues – Victoria Street, Broad Street, Balogun Street and Ereko Street – were said to be 'out of control', and car travel became virtually impossible in many of the adjacent streets. The new Martin Street, widened by the Slum Clearance Scheme in order to become a major axis of the metropolis, was already occupied in 1962 by an army of merchants and street traders, and goods and parked cars (Abrams et al. 1980: 60).

During this period, the Nigerian political elite developed a strong interest in modern architecture. As in other places, post-war architecture was becoming a political tool used to forge national identity and unity. Most of the first generation of African architects were trained in Europe and were fascinated by modernist architecture (Elleh 2001: 237). Nigeria was no exception, and Lagos soon became endowed with international-style buildings, especially new state constructions, including the parliament, town council and ministries.¹² Interestingly, some of the main buildings erected in the 1950s, such as the US Embassy, the British Petroleum headquarters and the Bristol Hostel, were located within the former central Lagos

slum, and projected Lagos as a resolutely modern city. These early developments deeply influenced successive generations of Nigerian politicians, as well as qualified Nigerian architects, most of whom were public officers working in the Public Works Department of Lagos at independence.¹³ Ulli Beier, a renowned specialist of contemporary art in Nigeria, complained that Nigerian architects in 1960 were only interested in ‘modern architecture’, forgetting the ‘traditional’ architecture of their country.¹⁴ This trend lasted for the next 20 years. Most articles and photographs published by the *Nigeria Magazine*, an academic journal read by the European and Nigerian educated elite, clearly reveal this ongoing fascination with international-style buildings in Lagos.¹⁵

Close to the historical Lagos Island, Ikoyi, the former exclusive European colonial settlement, and Victoria Island, a new upper-class neighbourhood, became the preferred residences of the new Nigerian elite working for the government. In June 1967, the headquarters of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (see Figure 5.2) was officially opened on Victoria Island. This building, sponsored by the federal and regional governments and the UK and US governments, became a major academic institution in Nigeria and also served as a regular venue for the meetings of the Organization of African Unity. Its image was intended to promote the modernity of a country that was claiming leadership on the African continent (Vaughan-Richards 1968: 17). This concern over continental leadership is well captured by a major cultural and political event which took place in Lagos in 1977 – the Second Festival of Black Arts and Culture (FESTAC). The event illustrates successive military governments’ use of oil money to forge a new national culture, to erase the colonial legacy from memory and to display the richness of Nigerian culture to other countries on the continent (Apter 2005). To herald the festival, city authorities inaugurated the massive National Theatre (Figure 5.3) in 1976 and built a luxurious (and contested) residential quarter, known as Festac town, to welcome the various official delegations from the African continent. FESTAC was accordingly a cultural extravaganza which celebrated a global vision of black nationhood and citizenship, animated by the exuberance of the recent Nigerian oil boom (Apter 2005).

The gradual shift into a state capital 1967–2008

The last two decades of the 20th century and the first of the 21st were marked by sustained conflict between the Federal State and the Lagos State, especially during the periods of civilian regimes of 1979–1983 and after 1999. The result has been the continual politicisation of urban space, which is one of the main features shaping the contemporary Lagos urban landscape.

Conflict between the Federal State and the Lagos State

The recurrent problems associated with the growth of Lagos (i.e. shortage of land and housing, extension of slums, traffic congestion and general lack of urban space) led President Gowon to launch in 1972 a national debate on the possibility of establishing a new capital. The decision to build a new capital in Abuja, in the

centre of the country, was taken in February 1976 by President Murtala Muhammed. Although a number of reasons were given to justify this decision, it was political considerations which proved to be decisive. After the civil war of 1967–1970, the policy of national reconciliation called for a politically neutral capital. Abuja was selected because it was at the centre of the country and, accordingly, at the confluence of the three main regional political forces in Nigeria, whereas Lagos was perceived by northern politicians as being the focal point of the Action Group. The cost of building a new capital was no longer a problem because of the dramatic increase in the Federal State budget. Building a modern capital with the necessary infrastructure was seen to be less burdensome than dealing with the ongoing problems associated with the growth of Lagos. In addition, maintaining Lagos as federal territory was no longer a persuasive financial argument for the northern politicians in power, as 80% of the federal budget was now coming from Niger Delta petrodollars. The port city, once deemed central to nation building, was no longer financially essential to the new oil state. Nonetheless, it took 15 years to build Abuja (from 1976 to 1991) and another ten years to move all the ministries (from 1991 to 2000). The decline of the oil price in the 1980s and 1990s, the return of a highly corrupt military regime (during the period 1983–1999) and the implementation of Structural Adjustment Policy recommendations in 1986, drastically reduced the Federal State budget and diminished capital expenditure.

This new political and economic context radically modified the pace of public investment in Lagos, and gradually, but inevitably, changed the federal capital into a state capital.¹⁶ Since the late 1970s, the political climate had been clouded by the reluctance of the national government to make long-term commitments to Lagos in view of the political differences between the state and the federal government, particularly during the period of civil rule (from 1979 to 1983) (Olowu 1990: 151). This political constraint continues to the present: since 1999, the neglect of metropolitan Lagos by the federal government is generally believed to flow from the political struggle between Abuja and Lagos.

Since the civil war, major fiscal resources (notably duties on export and import goods) have been gradually centralised into the federal budget, thereby increasing the dependence of the states on federal government allocations. The situation in Lagos is somewhat different due to its position as a port city, as the main industrial city of Nigeria and as the main wage-labour market of the country. Consequently, its internal resources¹⁷ have over time become more important than the federal grants (47% in 1968, 29% in 1983) (Olowu 1990: 151). Significantly, this fiscal autonomy increased during the period of the civilian regime (from 1979 to 1983), when Lagos State was governed by the opposition. Despite this, there remains serious opposition to the appropriation of Lagos resources by the federal government. This is illustrated by the ongoing struggle over the exact figure of the Lagos population. Since the late 1960s, federal allocation to the states has been based on state populations. During the Fourth Republic, the 2006 federal census found that Lagos State had 9.4 million inhabitants, a figure which was considered totally incorrect the following year by the Lagos State government, which organised its own census and put the number

at 17 million inhabitants (Fourchard 2007a: 5). This battle over population figures demonstrates Lagos's ambitions as a world metropolis and its political battle against the federal government.

The capacity for infrastructural implementation of the Lagos State government also appears superior to that of the federal government operating at state level. For example, in ten years, the successive military governors of Lagos State (nominated by the federal government) were only able to complete one waterworks to serve the upper-class town of Festac (supplying 4 million gallons of water a day), whereas in four years, the Jakande civilian state government (which was in power from 1979 to 1983) managed to build ten waterworks in various poor and middle-class areas of Lagos (21 million gallons per day) (Olukoju 2003a: 69). Similarly, more primary schools were built by this civilian government in five years than all the schools built by the former military governors.

During the Fourth Republic, the Lagos State government initiated an important project aimed at the revitalisation of the historical core of Lagos Island in order to reverse the economic and environmental decline of the two last decades (Lagos State Government, 2006). This project was focused on the same area addressed by the 1950s Slum Clearance Scheme, but was radically different from its colonial ancestor, as it involved regeneration and upgrading rather than clearance and resettlement. Its intention is overtly to create an environment conducive to foreign investment and thereby to make Lagos 'comparable to other major cities in the world'. As the Lagos State governor explained, 'our vision is to make Lagos State the reference point of harmonious physical development in Nigeria through best practices and physical planning and development matters' (Lagos State Government 2006: 5). Since it is a Lagos State, rather than a federal, initiative in both financial and political terms, the challenge to the federal government goes without saying.

Politicisation of urban space

The most enduring consequence of the Federal vs. Lagos political struggle has been the sustained politicisation of urban space. This process started in the early colonial period, developed with the creation of the first political parties (after World War I) and continued after World War II to the end of the First Republic (1966), before going underground (1966–1979, 1983–1999) and emerging, often violently, during civilian periods or during elections (1979–1983, 1992 and since 1999). Intense rivalry between two opposite political parties is an often neglected, although central, factor in the changing urban landscape. Lagos has effectively been the seat of two major rival powers. On the one hand, it has been the seat of the colonial and federal government (1914–1991), which was dominated by a coalition of eastern and northern political parties during different civilian and military regimes. On the other hand, the dominant party in the Western Region, the Action Group and its leader, Obafemi Awolowo, were regularly in opposition to the federal government – during the late colonial period and the First Republic (1954–1966), during the Second Republic under a new political banner, the Unity Party of Nigeria (1979–1983),

and during the Fourth Republic (1999–2007), with the Alliance for Democracy, an offshoot of the Action Group and the Unity Party of Nigeria. Ongoing conflict between the federal government and the major political force in the Western Region was routine, and Lagos was often the site of violent confrontation between the two.

This opposition has taken various forms. Most often, it was an open confrontation between political parties, especially during civilian periods. But it also took the form of religious, ethnic and communal riots or student and union protests when political parties were banned. It is not the place here to mention all the successive political events and riots which took place in 20th- and early 21st-century Lagos. The most dramatic event was probably the chaos which followed the cancellation by the military government of the June 1993 election, in which a Yoruba candidate, Moshood Abiola, was due to be elected president of Nigeria.¹⁸ Instead, in order to illustrate the politicisation of urban space associated with conflict, three case studies of urban actors, all of whom have become politically incorporated into this political competition and all of whom have used public space as sites of confrontation, will be discussed. The actors are thugs, market women and motor-park union leaders, and the public space they use are streets, markets and motor parks.

Since the 1950s in Nigeria, journalists, intellectuals and political leaders have commonly called the foot soldiers of political parties ‘the thugs’ or ‘the political thugs’. Most of these foot soldiers have been recruited from among the so-called ‘Area Boys’, who receive a salary during election campaigns. During the four months preceding the 2007 presidential election, the *Nigerian Tribune*, a leading south-western opposition newspaper, described more than 40 street fights in which political thugs were actively involved (Fourchard 2007a). Since the return of an electoral regime, thugs are being recruited more and more by political parties. However, this phenomenon is not limited to the Fourth Republic. In the south-west, and particularly in Lagos, political parties hired thugs during the Babangida and Abacha periods, and during the First and Second Republics. Even before this, in the 1950s, the historical ancestors of the Area Boys, the Jaguda Boys, were employed (Fourchard 2007a: 10; Momoh 2003: 186). This practice may go back even further: in the first half of the 20th century, the Egungun masquerades were co-opted to serve the political objectives of its chieftaincy (Adeboye 2007).

Market women also became politicised when the first political party of the 1920s mobilised women for their own partisan politics, most notably to agitate against the imposition of the water rate. In the 1950s, the political incorporation of market women developed to the point where they formed an auxiliary wing of every major party in Lagos, establishing factions that continued to be meaningful even after the imposition of military rule (Baker 1974: 241; Mba 1987). Politicians feared the potential impact of the activities of market women and one consequence was that the town council was unsuccessful in its attempts to enforce the ban on street trading, especially in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1980s. Military regimes, especially the Buhari regime (1983–1985) and its Lagos military governor, Gbolahan Mudashiru, demolished stalls and illegal shops, and forbade street trading in the main streets of

the capital and in some specific quarters, but once the Buhari government ended, streets were once again invaded by traders. To this day, trading on the streets in Lagos remains an issue.

The politicisation of urban space is most obvious in relation to the third case study, that of public motor parks. Since the 1980s, the involvement of the Nigerian Union Road Transport Workers in the Second Republic elections gave the union enormous power to manage motor parks, first in Lagos, and then throughout south-western Nigeria (Albert 2007). This enabled the union to act almost at will, and members over time established unauthorised motor parks all over Lagos (there are probably about a thousand today), leading to an aggravation of traffic congestion in the city. The management and control of these motor parks is a highly contested political issue in Lagos, as well as in other Nigerian cities. Since the return of the Fourth Republic, the Lagos state government has attempted to gain control of the union, which was formerly perceived to be too close to the federal ruling party.

Conclusion

As the main port city of the most heavily populated country in Africa, Lagos has benefited immensely from the integration of Nigeria into the world economy. During both the colonial and immediate postcolonial periods, a large proportion of national investment accrued to the city. When Nigeria became a wealthy oil state in the 1970s, Lagos became less important to the national economy and was largely neglected by the Federal State. However, since Lagos State has remained the only financially viable state of the 36 that make up Nigeria, due in the main to its government's ability to generate a substantial amount of its own revenue, it has been able to resist the authoritarian trends of the federal government. Simultaneously, over this long period of development, the city's population has changed from a markedly cosmopolitan one in the 19th century to a significantly more Nigerian one in the 20th century, as a consequence of the permanent influx of migrants from the hinterland.

Koolhaas's perception of Lagos as the 'paradigm and the extreme and pathological form of the West African city' (Koolhaas et al. 2000) is a romanticised re-reading of the history of the city. Lagos was neither an orderly colonial or postcolonial city, nor is it today a paradigmatic African city which has escaped the constraints of the former colonial order. The presence of unlawful street traders was already a feature of the city in the 1930s and was a contentious issue for the town council in the 1950s and 1960s. Koolhaas introduces an 'aesthetic of chaos' (i.e. that the city works because of the chaos), but this vision is not shared by Lagosians themselves: it underestimates the ongoing criticism by Lagosians of their city, of the corruption of its elite and of the permanent failure of the mass public transport system (Fourchard 2007b; Fourchard 2010; Gandy 2006). In effect, Koolhaas has developed a depoliticised vision of Lagos, in which conflicts and disputes over the use of the space are absent from his analyses of the city. In his fascination with a 'city which works', he ignores the fact that this kind of city works mainly for those who are able to extract resources, in particular resources from the use of its public spaces.

The new civilian regime at the beginning of the 21st century is attempting to rehabilitate metropolitan Lagos after more than three decades of neglect and marginalisation by the federal government. There remain a number of contentious issues between the federal government and Lagos State, but since 2006, the new political generation in power in Lagos (Governor Tinubu and Fashola) have been trying to attract Nigerian and international private capital to revitalise the city, and to promote it worldwide. It is too early to say if this will improve daily life in Lagos, but these initiatives are bringing hope of change, particularly to many Lagosians.

Notes

- 1 The various censuses carried out by the British in Lagos were based on house-to-house estimations, which give only rough estimates of the population.
- 2 Large-scale emigration of ex-slaves from Brazil to Africa developed after the rebellion in Bahia in 1835. They engaged in commerce with Brazil in palm oil, locally made cloth and black soap. These trades declined in relative value during the reorientation of commerce from the South to the North Atlantic in the second half of the 19th century (Law 2004: 179; Mann, 2007).
- 3 National Archives Ibadan (NAI), Comcol 1, 1368, Memorandum from the secretary, town council, Lagos, 1 April 1932, to the administrator of the colony; Letter of 2 April 1932 from the administrator of the colony to the chief secretary to the government, Lagos.
- 4 NAI, Comcol 1, 963, Squatters on crown land, Lagos, 1930–1932.
- 5 From taxes on foreign and national corporate companies; duties on exported and imported goods; taxes paid by the minority of Europeans, Indians and Lebanese and on the salaries of African workers; and taxes on land sale.
- 6 After the 1966 coup, the military government decided to subdivide the initial three regions into 12 states. Lagos became capital of the Lagos state and included the former town council area and four other administrative districts excised from the former Western Region (Olugbemi 1987: 321–322).
- 7 One-fifth was absorbed by the first development plan (1962–1968); one-third by the second plan (1970–1974); a quarter by the third plan (1975–1980).
- 8 It should also be also added that ‘the area to be cleared includes the main roads in and out of Lagos, which at the moment are most dangerous, and which will be considerably widened and improved when the rebuilding has been effected’. (NAI, Comcol 1, 5860, Memorandum on the central Lagos Slum Clearance Scheme, March 1954.)
- 9 NAI, Comcol 1, 5860, Centre Lagos Slum Clearance Scheme. Draft, 1954.
- 10 Apapa (the port area), in Ikoyi (the former European residential area) and in Yaba (a 1930s residential area).
- 11 NAI, Comcol 1, 3502/2, Markets, parks and cemeteries committee. Minutes of 22 April 1954.
- 12 Public commissioned works left little room to escape the modern style, as noted by architect, Oluwole Olumuyiwa, in 1985: ‘The government wants modernism, which is an outward and visible sign of progress and success’ (Adeyemi 1992: 340).
- 13 The first school of architecture was not established until the early 1950s in Ibadan and was transferred in 1955 to the University of Zaria, in the north. In 1960, there were only 15 qualified Nigerian architects in Nigeria (Ayedemi 1992).

- 14 Quoted by Vaughan-Richards (1968: 110).
- 15 See: Lagos views. *Nigeria Magazine* 1959: 90–104; Architecture in Nigeria. *Nigeria Magazine* 91, 1966: 247–255; The UAC in Nigeria's economic growth. *Nigeria Magazine* 87, 1967: 2–18; Lagos art galleries. *Nigeria Magazine* 92, 1967: 2–18; Future architectural design. *Nigeria Magazine* 93, 1967: 107–114; New buildings in Lagos. *Nigeria Magazine* 96, March 1968: 17–23.
- 16 Since the creation of 12 states in 1966, 24 other states have been created, making 36 states today in total.
- 17 Mainly based on personal income tax on wage workers, transactions on state land, licences, fines, etc.
- 18 One of the most vivid accounts of these events is provided by the recent publication of Wole Soyinka's memoirs (Soyinka 2006).

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