Socio-spatial transformation in Africa: a framework to map the process and guide the planning of future cities

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Abstract

Africa cities are continuously changing. Increased urbanisation, poverty, unemployment, effective service delivery and scarce natural resources are some of the challenges African cities are facing. And while people have to come to terms with these, the spatial environment is also transformed, in some cases almost overnight. Do these changes facilitate envisioned social change and what are their impacts and implications for future African cities? The purpose of this paper is to explore the relevance of a theoretical framework for spatial transformation to analyse and understand African cities and their transition at the turn of the century. The paper introduces the concepts of space and place and then explores the process of making and changing space from a generic perspective. This is then applied to discuss the socio-spatial transformation in African cities and the implications of changes in the built environment for future African cities.

Keywords: Urban transformation, African cities, planning for the future, cities of the future in Africa, space and place

Introduction

Cities are not static. A conglomeration of people, places and political and social agendas all contribute to continuous changes. In many cases, these changes are initiated politically, expressed physically and experienced socially. In other cases the link between political, physical and social changes is not so clear.

Urban transformation is a critical part of any well-functioning city. The ability to modify and improve existing infrastructure, opportunities and facilities is essential to stay competitive in a global world.[1] It is also necessary to adapt to the changing needs of the residents of cities. This is even more so in Africa. Given the past and the current challenges the continent faces, urban transformation must be a critical part of the reconstruction and development of African cities. African cities have witnessed numerous changes. Some changes received widespread support from the majority of the population, but others left many people disgruntled, annoyed and even worse off than before.

Urban transformation is shaped by a complex web of interacting factors, including the political, social, economic, environmental, technical and spatial dynamics present in cities today. This is also the case in Africa, where the problems facing these cities are multifaceted, interrelated and must therefore be dealt with holistically (Adebayo 2002). The question is therefore how to consider all the relevant aspects in an holistic way, as well as the relationships between them, while still taking into account the specific historical context in Africa. It therefore also requires a consideration of the relevance of 'place' and 'time' in Africa cities.

The aim of this paper is to explore the relevance of a conceptual framework for spatial transformation to analyse and understand African cities and their transition over time. Firstly, the paper briefly introduces the concepts of space and place to set the foundation for an exploration of the relationship of physical, social and mental space and its implication in practice. Secondly, it explores the process of making and changing space from a generic perspective. Thirdly, it applies this framework to explore socio-spatial transformation in African cities and the implications of changes in the built environment for future African cities. Finally, the paper explores relevance of the framework in assisting the planning and development of these cities.

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[1] Competitiveness can be argued to be relative, but most people would agree on its basic aspects, including economic stability and growth, social welfare, spatial diversity and functionality and political goodwill. In short, it would probably be measured by a combination of a diversity of opportunities and the quality of life experienced by residents of cities.

What is space?

The following two sections are concerned with the interpretation and transformation of space. It addresses the questions "what is space?" and "how is it made or changed?" It also explores the relationship between space and place. Norberg-Schultz states that "the place is the concrete manifestation of man's dwelling, and his identity depends on his belonging to places" (1980:6). He, therefore, maintains that the question of "place" came from philosophy, from questions concerning the relationship between life and place.

This process does not stop at the point of creating places, but goes on to create places to ensure meaningful life. Therefore, the concept of place cannot be viewed in isolation from the idea of meaning and of city-making which is meaningful to people. It also raises questions as to what is a meaningful place and whether it only refers to architecture or spaces inside buildings, or also includes everything around us, including natural and urban spaces.

The middle to late 20th century focus on place emerged as a reaction to Modernism's form of space, where emotional attachments were discarded in the urban development process. It has also been absorbed as part of postmodern approaches to design (Ellin 1997). Others have also taken the idea of place and place-making further to be applicable to areas wider than just architecture and urban design. Graham and Healey (1999) highlight the value of an emphasis on place for planning, while a recent collection of papers discusses the "Governance of Place" (Madanipour, Healey & Hull 2001). In addition, the promotion of place has also found increasing value in urban development projects and the promotion of cities, as part of a reaction against globalisation or in an attempt to be globally competitive (Pacioni 2004).

If place is finding increasing prominence in the planning and design professions, this raises the questions of what exactly is meant by "place" and how it is created or established. In order to find an answer, one needs to go back to the concept of space, since the creation of places is closely linked to the notion of space and specifically to the transformation of space.

There are many different dimensions of space. The question is which interpretation is relevant for the study of urban transformation. There are many relevant interpretations of space, broadly encompassing the distinction between social and physical space. It also involves a range of disciplines, each concerned with its own focus on space, as well as a spectrum of theoretical and personal interpretations, highlighting the complexities and inherent dilemmas surrounding the debates around space. These different interpretations of space, however, often give rise to a different focus by various disciplines. Architects and urban designers tend to focus on the physical form and its function, defined as physical/built space or real space. Sociologists, geographers and anthropologists tend to focus on social and/or mental space, for example, political or cultural influences. This dissociation between different disciplines has resulted in a widening gap in the spatial debate and responses to urban problems (Tschumi 1990, Madanipour 1996). Consequently, many studies of urban developments and neighbourhoods have considered these from either a physical or social space perspective. This can be problematic for planners, as they need to bridge the gap between physical and social space and cannot afford the luxury of a single perspective.

According to Lefebvre (1991) the only way to link physical and social space is through a focus on the production of space. This can be understood through what he defines as the three moments of social space – namely mental, physical and social. The first is *spatial practice*, which refers to the way space is organised and used. Spatial practice ensures continuity and cohesion and “embodies a close association, within perceived space, between daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality (the routes and networks which link up places set aside for work, ‘private life’ and leisure)”. The second moment is *representations of space*, which emphasise perceptions or signs and significations, allowing material objects to be spoken out. It refers to conceptualised space inhabited by those who identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived, such as by scientists, planners and engineers. This is the dominant space in any society tending “towards a system of verbal (and therefore intellectually worked out) signs”. The third moment refers to *representational space*, which is “space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols”, and hence the space of inhabitants and users, a space understood through non-verbal terms. Representational space is the dominated space that is passively experienced, overlapping physical space and making symbolic use of its object (Lefebvre 1991:38-40).

Lefebvre argues for the interconnectedness of these moments (as was the case of western towns from the Italian Renaissance to the 19th century), where each would be distinct from, yet part of, a unitary approach to space and the transformation of space. As such, he introduces the concept differential space; space that accentuates and accommodates differences and includes physical, social and mental space to reflect this dichotomy and distinguish it from abstract space. Abstract space is concerned with unlimited or undefined space, it is divorced from reality and human experience, only linked to abstract concepts or constructs. According to Lefebvre, the historical space of the city was taken over by the abstract space, “the space of bourgeoisie and capitalism” (Lefebvre 1991: 57). This calls for a better understanding of the production of space, how it is done, what and who is involved, in other words a socio-spatial approach to spatial transformation.

Following from this discussion, the spatial study of urban transformation, therefore, cannot only be concerned with physical space and form. It also needs to incorporate social and mental space as well. Spatial research needs to incorporate the idea of differential space and make use of a socio-spatial approach to understand physical form and its transformation and meaning. This, therefore, necessitates a focus on the process, incorporating the dimension of time and aspect of place. It also requires an exploration of what physical and social space encompass as part of the process of spatial transformation in cities.

How is space transformed in cities?

The overall process of place-making has to do with the “binding” (Norberg-Schultz 1988) of space to establish place. Space needs to be bounded and directed (or “defined” according to Tshumi, 1990) to play a more meaningful role in human experience. The making of these places for living, through the process of binding space in harmony with the given natural structure and character or existing man-made spaces, involves certain aspects. These aspects include space, order and form. In settlements, order is created as soon as the structure is established. As such, Norberg-

Schultz (1985) describes spatial order as the topology or “spatial organisation”. Form (morphology) represents the two and three dimensional concretisation of order and binds space through boundaries (Norberg-Schultz 1983). Form therefore expresses order. In terms of urban design, form becomes a way to give figural quality to the environment. In a city, “form” can refer to three things in particular:

- the two-dimensional form or footprint of the city on the landscape (seen on regional maps and plans);
- the two-dimensional form of the geometric pattern and of elements such as blocks and streets (as seen on urban plans/designs), and
- the three-dimensional form (volumetric form) of the buildings that act as boundaries to define spaces in the city, and thus giving form to spaces and to the city.

Space, order and form constitute the aspects of the physical process. The previous section indicated the need to consider the physical space in relation to the social space or the social processes that form an integral part of the production of the built environment. This necessitates the inclusion of the following aspects in the process: need/demand, idea, production and management, as well as meaning and response. Need refers to human needs and requirements. According to Dewar and Uytenbogaardt (1991) there are four sets of needs that are particularly important and that fundamentally inform the management of settlement growth, and therefore, also spatial transformation, namely urban generation, access, social contact and interaction, and individual needs. Idea refers to a specific thought, concept or practise guiding the establishment of order and form, for example the Indian *mandala* used in the design of Jaipur. In this way it translates the need and requirements into a specific physical relationship (Dewar and Uytenbogaardt 1991).

Place-making is, however, not only limited to one person. Many people influence the modification of space. In this sense, it is also necessary to understand the production and management of space in a wider context, as well as the meaning it embodies for different actors and stakeholders. Cities are produced and reproduced, constantly changing and transforming to address emerging needs and accommodate new ideas. As discussed earlier, Lefebvre (1991) distinguishes between perceived, conceived and lived spaces. Short (1996:371) takes this further and distinguishes between the city as investment, the city as text and city images. He explains the production of the city in terms of these three themes: the production of the city through capital flows and consequent resistances; the production and reproduction of social and political power as embodied in the form of the city, and the production and consumption of the symbolic representation of the city in myth, ideologies and images. Although the last two issues form an integral part of the production of the city, they are also closely related to the meaning of space.

The form of the city embodies meaning and relates something of the wider society. According to Rapoport (1990) there are three levels of meaning: the high-level meaning relating to cosmologies and worldviews; the middle-level meaning reflecting status and wealth; and the low-level meaning relating to the everyday use of space. Any building, group of buildings or other significant physical intervention will condense the different levels of meaning. The meaning of the built environment is neither fixed nor constant. The meaning of particular parts of the built environment is not anchored permanently but floats in a sea of competing ideas, differing values, and antagonistic political and economic forces (Short 1996:394).

Urban form provides the setting for human behaviour and social interaction, which in turn provides the basis for meaning. For example, Tiananmen Square in Beijing, was constructed as a symbol for socialist China. However, due to the mass killings in 1989, the Square became associated with brutal repression and out-of-touch, aging, political leadership. In this way, the Square, built to commemorate Chinese communism, had become a symbol of its tarnished reputation (Short 1996:40). This indicates that meaning can also change over time through behaviour or specific use of space, or due to specific historical realities. Meaning is not only conveyed through urban form (physical space), but also through images or perceptions of space, place or physical interventions (Levebre 1991; Short 1996). This reflects the intricate relationships between different types of space and between socio-spatial relationships. It also points towards a framework to link space, place and time (for a detailed description of the process see Landman 2006).

Towards a framework to understand the production and transformation of space

This paper argues that in order to understand the transformation of urban space, one has to understand urban space and the aspects influencing its changes. The best way to understand the urban development process is to concentrate on development agencies, the structures they interact with in the form of resources, rules and ideas, and the social and spatial contexts in which they operate (Madanipour 1996a:154). This emphasises the close relationship between space and society: social drivers influence spatial change, leading to specific social interpretation and response, as discussed so far in this paper. This process can be summarised through the following diagram.

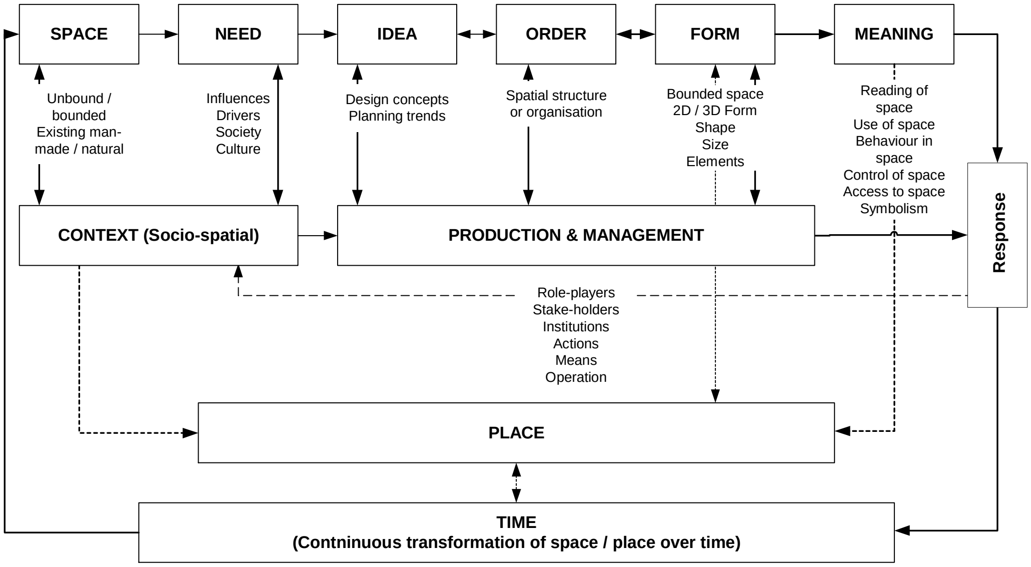
SPACE
NEED
IDEA
ORDER
FORM
MEANING
Unbound / bounded Existing man-made / natural
Influences Drivers Society Culture
Design concepts Planning trends
Spatial structure or organisation
Bounded space 2D / 3D Form Shape Size Elements
Reading of space Use of space Behaviour in space Control of space Access to space Symbolism
CONTEXT (Socio-spatial)
PRODUCTION & MANAGEMENT
Response
Role-players Stake-holders Institutions Actions Means Operation
PLACE
TIME
(Contninuous transformation of space / place over time)

Figure 1: A conceptual framework to explain the making and changing of urban space

This framework offers a way to understand spatial transformation as a socio-spatial (multidimensional) process. This happens through a process of space, need, idea, order, form and meaning, and parallel with these, the production and management of the spatial intervention in a specific context. Space refers to the unbound natural or existing man-made space. This does not happen randomly. It is usually informed by particular needs at a specific time (related to the context). The need/demand gives rise to an idea on how to address this need. This is the beginning of order, of structural organisation to order the idea and guide form. Form is the physical manifestation of the need and idea and takes on a particular shape, texture and size, which is measurable. It reflects the character of a space (immeasurable) and contributes to the creation of a particular place, which in turn can be modified over time.

Space and place are not arbitrary. They encompass meaning. Spaces or places can therefore be ‘read’ and ‘experienced’ and can appeal to people’s feelings or emotions, for example, feeling comfortable in a place, feeling safe or feeling at home. In such a way it can also influence the use of space and thus people’s behavioural patterns. It is therefore not strange to accept that people can react differently to different spaces and places. Their reaction may depend on a number of predispositions, current feelings and experiences. Places can elicit a number of responses, which in turn can add to the transformation of specific spaces if deemed appropriate by a sufficient number of supporters. This returns the cycle to the beginning, where a need arises to change existing man-made space. This process is influenced by a range of actors involved in the production and management of space, which constantly influences the need/demand, idea, form, order and meaning in settlements.

Although this framework illustrates a highly simplified version of a complex process, it offers a way to conceptualise space and place in the urban design process and understand some of the aspects involved in the process of urban transformation; although in a generic way. It can also be argued that this is a design process that is based on an individual designer’s process and may therefore prove difficult to apply to a complex social process where many actors are involved and no one designs the outcome. While this is true, a broader interpretation will allow for a wider application, where this framework becomes a representation of multiple processes where need/demand represent a multiple range of needs, and production and management a wide range of players involved in many actions that occur simultaneously and on a constant basis. If one takes such a viewpoint, the framework starts to offer a way to interpret spatial transformation in urban areas as part of a much broader socio-spatial process.

Urban transformation in Africa: applying the framework

Existing urban space: desperate and dysfunctional cities

The 1980s and 1990s were a period of urban crisis across the African continent (Mosha 2001). Consequently, the context within African cities are currently characterised by seven aspects, which will be discussed briefly:

- *Population explosion and urban expansion*

There are two patterns of urban growth in Africa. The largest cities continue to expand and it is estimated that by 2020 the urban areas of Nairobi, Johannesburg and Abidjan will surpass the 10 million mark. Secondly, in many countries, medium sized cities are now growing just as fast as the large cities and expectations are that by 2020, 77 of these cities will have more than one million people (Mosha 2001; Pacioni 2004).

- *Deteriorating infrastructure and services*

As a result of the mismatch between economic and urban growth, there have been a deterioration of services and infrastructure in the majority of African cities, putting unprecedented pressure on these cities. The resources needed for roads, sewers, water systems, schools, housing and hospitals cannot keep up with growing demand (Mosha 2001; Adebayo 2002; Pacioni 2002).

- *Economic stagnation and poverty*

African cities are the victims of their poor economic status. Most countries suffers from economic stagnation, high inflation, poor terms of trade, severe debt problems, civil strife, draught, rising unemployment , or falling incomes for a large proportion of the population ((Mosha 2001; Adebayo 2002). The contraction and privatisation of the public sector have also contributed to a loss of opportunities for graduates, while the informal economy is growing in most cities as a direct response to the needs of the poor (Pacioni 2004; Jenkins and Wilkinson 2002).

- *Inadequate shelter and inappropriate city form*

Housing is one of the key problems resulting from the rapid urban growth and it is estimated that about half of the urban population in Africa lives in very poor and/or informal housing, with up to 70% in some cities (Mosha 2001). Many informal settlements are located in the peri-urban zone, not only increasing the pressure on the natural resources, but also attenuating the delivery of infrastructure such as piped water, electricity, sewerage and roads beyond the system capacity and add significantly to the costs of education, health and other social services (Pacioni 2004).

- *Environmental stress*

As more of the urban population is forced into unplanned settlements with inappropriate services, the levels of water and air pollution increase. Several factors contribute to water pollution, including lack of water, health services and sewer systems; improper solid waste disposal and inadequate systems to dispose of wastewater; lack of flood control; disposal of untreated industrial liquid wastes into water bodies or on land slides. Air pollution is caused by factories, open fires and poorly maintained vehicles (Mosha 2002).

- *War, conflict and struggles*

Political conflict and a wide range of power struggles in African cities have undermined their sustainability to a large degree, either by their total destruction of the city, including the physical and social capital, or their impact on the resources of another country’s cities. It is also common practice for democratic states to favour some cities over other due to power/party differences and this has a significant impact on development in certain cities in Africa (Adebayo 2002).

- *Changing institutional setting*

In many African cities there is a growing “informal” institutional order that is starting to co-exists and sometimes challenge the “formal” institutional order and governance system. These two orders co-exist as mental constructs, cultural values, social and economic customs and political structures (Jenkins and Wilkinson 2002). In addition, there is a growing awareness in Africa that the adoption of transplanted institutions from the West, emanating from colonialisation, has only been marginally successful, in part because these institutions fail to recognise and integrate the rich historical, cultural and social context of the indigenous peoples (Mabogunje cited in Bassett and Jacobs 1997).

These seven aspects are further exacerbated by huge global pressures, of which the two major issues are *climate change* and *globalisation* (Mosha 2001; Adebayo 2002; Jenkins and Wilkinson 2002; Pacioni 2004; e-Africa 2005). Recent studies have started to point out that climate change threatens Africa's livelihood (Adams 2005). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), an intergovernmental body set up by the UN and the World Meteorological Organisation to consider climate change, identified six effects in which climate change could severely increase the vulnerability of Africa:

- Water scarcity and consequent conflict around water resources, especially in international shared water basins;
- Food security at risk from declines in agricultural production and uncertain climate;
- Natural resources productivity at risk and biodiversity that may be irreversibly lost;
- Vector-and water-borne diseases, especially in areas with inadequate health infrastructure;
- Coastal zones vulnerable to sea-level rise, particularly roads, bridges, buildings, and other infrastructure that is exposed to flooding and other extreme events; and
- Exacerbation of desertification by changes in rainfall and intensified land use (e-Africa 2005).

As a result of globalisation, governments across the world have also been increasingly obliged to turn their attention to the management of urban development processes in their more important cities. It is widely accepted that cities in both developed and developing countries now have to compete globally to develop their local economies if they wish to maintain or improve their position. Consequently, the city government has tended to become more "entrepreneurial" in matters of urban development, including the promotion of local economic growth and the initiation of "public-private partnerships” for the delivery of basic and other services (Jenkins and Wilkinson 2002:33). This often has a negative impact on developmental planning and a more people centred approach within municipalities.

Searching for equity, efficiency and balance

As pointed out previously, spatial transformation is usually informed by particular needs at a specific time within a particular society or culture, reflecting the social context. The changes in African cities are based on two over-aching sets of needs: namely the need for efficiency and equity. In response to underdevelopment in rural areas, large numbers of people flock to the cities in search for an improved quality of life and basic human needs, including paid employment, as well as access to basic services and to social opportunities. This leads to huge economic needs – for housing, infrastructure and services, as well as facilities such as schools and public health, in order to address the individual needs of the poor and provide acceptable levels of social equity (Mosha 2001). At the same time there is a need for economic growth to enable effective urban development and maintenance. This often translates into a prioritisation of the needs of large multi-national corporations and business owners who demand great efficiency in terms of global accessibility through modern telecommunication systems, local accessibility through upgraded transport infrastructure, safe locations for their investments and reliable services for production purposes (Jenkins and Wilkinson 2002). In addition to balancing the individual/group needs of equity and efficiency, local governments face the challenge of ensuring that the broader urban needs of urban generation to provide opportunities to all, access and social contact and interaction are also met. This is often severely challenged by the emerging tensions between the need for social equity and economic efficiency within the context of natural threats such as climate change and resource scarcity, which will require a sustainable balance between human development and nature conservation.

Emptying the international basket of concepts towards an African eclecticism

These needs and desires give rise to a plethora of ideas on how to address them. These ideas are based on specific design concepts or planning trends that are often imported from abroad, combined by local variations or adaptations. In order to address these diverse needs, African cities have adopted a wide range of planning trends and design concepts from the international basket of concepts and approaches, including the concepts of the Compact City, New Urbanism, Pragmatism, Decentralisation and Priority Zones. These are incorporated within a combination of two competing approaches, namely a people-centred approach focussed on developmental planning and a market-driven approach, focussing of global competitiveness (Adebayo 2002; Farvacque-Vitkovic and Godin 1998). The result has been the rise and fall of a wide range of ad-hoc developments and the emergence of a new African eclecticism, including anything that may be deemed appropriate at a particular time in a specific city.

Creating cities of contrasts: shining neighbourhoods and shadowlands

Form is the physical manifestation of the need and idea, and takes on a specific shape, texture and size, which is measurable. In this way the form of a development starts to reflect the character and image of the space, which is immeasurable and contributes to the creation of a particular place, which in turn can be modified over time. This has been the case within African cities. Consequently, African cities have been transformed into dual worlds: represented by shining neighbourhoods and shadowlands or what Jenkins and Wilkinson (2002) calls “spaces of opportunity and disadvantage”.

The shining neighbourhoods are characterised by well-developed spaces for the elite, often as the result of privately developed infrastructure and service delivery within protective enclaves. These enclaves are protected by a range of electronic surveillance systems, as well as a selection of gates, fences and walls and often constitute the previously advantaged neighbourhoods developed during the periods of colonialization or other forms of authoritarian rule. In addition, there is an alternative tendency for formal and often private development to “leap-frog” over the extensive informal settlements on the existing periphery through expansion outside the metropolitan limits, for example in Maputo in Mozambique (Jenkins and Wilkinson 2002). This is facilitated by new private infrastructure investment such as toll roads and the development of lifestyle estates. Similar trends have been observed in South Africa in the metropolitan municipalities of Johannesburg, Tshwane (including

Pretoria), e'Thekweni (including Durban) and Cape Town (Landman 2006). The result is often the development of a city form characterised by "higher density inner city enclaves and lower density peripheral, or satellite, urban outposts" (Jenkins and Wilkinson 2002:45).

The shadowlands are the places where people live a shadowed life. These are the growing numbers and size of informal settlements throughout Africa cities and especially on the urban periphery, as well as degraded formal housing estates or low-income neighbourhoods. These areas are characterised by very poor and often informal housing or shacks, overcrowding, rundown or no infrastructure, deterioration or no services and decay of the environment, where people are dependent on informal mechanisms and a growing informal economy for survival (Adebayo 2002; Jenkins and Wilkinson 2002). Spatially, these areas often grow incrementally without any formal plan, resulting in the development an informal spatial order to guide an often very organic form. These fragmented spatial patterns also provide the foundation for disjointed urban management.

Fragmented and disjointed management: who controls what?

Most African local governments have not played their role satisfactory towards housing delivery, infrastructure maintenance and general effective local governance. This can be attributed to lethargy, ineffective institutions and staff, constrained budgets, huge needs/demands, a lack of accountability, ineffective management and corruption (Farvacque-Vitkovic and Godin 1998; Mosha 2001; Adebayo 2002; Jenkins and Wilkinson 2002). This situation is often exacerbated by political conflict and power struggles (Adebayo 2002).

Decentralisation and urban management policies for the equitable redistribution of resources and the development of rural areas have not really materialised in Africa. This can be attributed to a lack of management resources, financing and capabilities to cope with these objectives. Furthermore, the policies and programmes of most African city planning are not realistic in design and implementation and fail to capture and predict the economies that they are dealing with (Adebayo 2002), as well as the rising informal institutional order within these cities. Many of the urban poor are increasingly dependant on informal solutions at the urban fringes for survival, leading to the emergence of an informal institutional order outside the state, presenting informal alternatives to the formal system (Jenkins and Wilkinson 2002). What is significant of these parallel institutions is that they provide a crucially important, even if officially unacknowledged, counterpoint to the formal institutional order, enabling people whose needs who are not adequately served, if at all, by the formal institution, to sustain their social existence (Simone cited in Jenkins and Wilkinson 2002). In this way it becomes evident that the disarticulation of urban spaces and the increased inability of key state and municipal institutions to engender frameworks of governance applicable and effective to cities as a whole, generates a vast array of economies cantered around repair, the illicit or unconvential use of built and institutional environments. Although they remain largely within the realms of local survivalists strategies, these economies can attain significant transnational reach on the African continent (Simone 2004). In this way it becomes a question of which group controls which territories and to the benefit of whom?

Divided African cities

The impact of the adverse living conditions in African cities is distributed differentially between the small elite of upper-level managers, foreign diplomats, senior politicians and successful business men on the one hand, and the growing number of poor urban dwellers (Pacioni 2004). The result has been the emergence of a dualistic society based on divided zones. To this extent the many African cities reflect similar patterns to that of Johannesburg, Cape Town and Maputo – cities that are divided effectively into two zones: one of relative wealth and formal economic opportunity, and one of relative poverty and socio-economic disadvantage where the informal societal order dominates. In many cases the emphasis is on attracting inward foreign investment at all costs, giving rise to the domination of elite interests often exacerbated but weak local governments. Ironically, as new local governments compete for investment on whatever terms are possible, metropolitan inefficiencies and greater social equity are impeded (Jenkins and Wilkinson 2002; Simone 2004). Given this, there is a growing differentiation between a smaller or larger minority of “haves, who find a niche in the changing local economy, and the “have nots”, who slip further away from any participation in the formal system (Jenkins and Wilkinson

2002). This could also lead to greater tensions and conflict between these groups and growing levels of insecurity, followed by temporary security as various groups respond in different ways to the wide range of contested places in the city to which they lay claim or desire to lay claim.

An African Renaissance or Resistance

As the dynamics of global reintegration intensify, the capacity and resilience of the African city's formal and institutional orders, as well as space, to cope adequately with the tensions implicit in the juxtapositioning are undoubtedly going to be severely tested (Jenkins and Wilkinson 2002). Local people may be overwhelmed and exploited by the forces of globalisation or they may seek to resist. Resistance is a common response in which global forces are mediated at lower spatial scales. For example, during the 1980s mass protests were held in a number of Third World cities in an effort to resists the imposition of economic austerity measures by the IMF as a response to the growing debt crisis (Pacioni 2004). As pointed out by Adebayo (2002), African countries continue to depend heavily on foreign capital to finance the development and investment programmes. Despite major reforms, some at too great a cost in human suffering, the average inhabitant in most African countries has had no additional income (Adebayo 2002). The question is how long they will be patient. In this way it may change the dream of an African Renaissance to the nightmare of a new African Resistance.

History provides many examples, of which one of the most famous are the resistance of the French masses to the exploitation and horrible conditions prevalent in Paris in the 1700s. The result was the French Revolution in which the poor responded to formal system through destruction which eventually led to a complete systems collapse and the emergence of a new system over time in which substantial parts of the city had to be reconstructed. Changing spaces and places can therefore elicit a number of responses form different actors based on contested meanings, which in turn can add to the transformation of specific spaces if deemed appropriate by a sufficient number of supporters. This returns the cycle to the beginning where a need arises to change the existing man-made space in African cities. A discussion of urban transformation therefore also needs to consider the role of time as related to the nature of change. Cities are dynamic and constantly changing to accommodate emerging needs and ideas. Yet, these changes are not always exclusive or distinctive, while the tempo of change can also vary. Therefore Simone (2004) remarks that in South African cities, similar to so many other African cities, “spaces can change very quickly and also not at all”, depending on the intensions and experiences of different urban users.

This process of change in African cities are summarised through the following diagram.

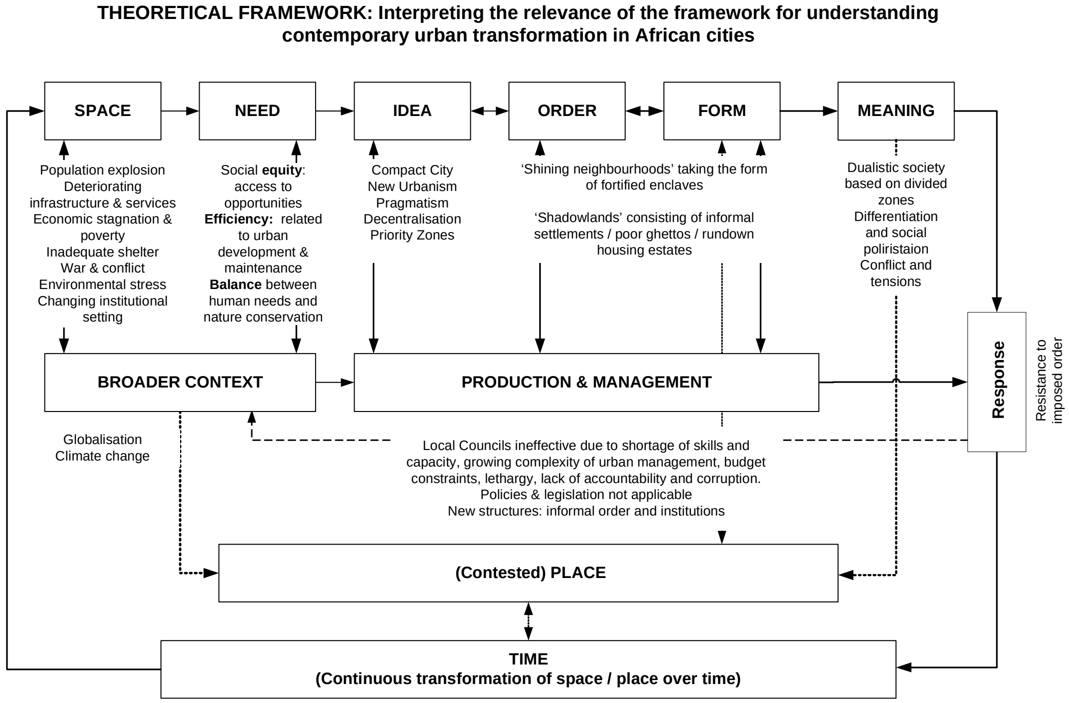
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: Interpreting the relevance of the framework for understanding contemporary urban transformation in African cities
SPACE
NEED
IDEA
ORDER
FORM
MEANING
Population explosion
Deteriorating infrastructure & services
Economic stagnation & poverty
Inadequate shelter
War & conflict
Environmental stress
Changing institutional setting
Social **equity**: access to opportunities
Efficiency: related to urban development & maintenance
Balance between human needs and nature conservation
Compact City
New Urbanism
Pragmatism
Decentralisation
Priority Zones
‘Shining neighbourhoods’ taking the form of fortified enclaves
‘Shadowlands’ consisting of informal settlements / poor ghettos / rundown housing estates
Dualistic society based on divided zones
Differentiation and social poliristaion
Conflict and tensions
BROADER CONTEXT
PRODUCTION & MANAGEMENT
Response
Resistance to imposed order
Globalisation
Climate change
Local Councils ineffective due to shortage of skills and capacity, growing complexity of urban management, budget constraints, lethargy, lack of accountability and corruption.
Policies & legislation not applicable
New structures: informal order and institutions
(Contested) PLACE
TIME
(Continuous transformation of space / place over time)

Figure 2: A conceptual framework to explain the making and changing of space in contemporary Africa cities

Conclusion: The relevance of the framework for the planning and development of African cities to ensure high quality spaces and places for all

> *Most of Africa’s urban problems arise from a failure of government institutions to manage rapid change and to the knowledge, resources and capacities among the population within each city* (Mosha 2002:32)

The inability to work with the complexities of urban dynamics and the challenges associated with rapid urban change, especially change that occurs within an emerging informal institutional order, can be partly contributed to an inability to understand the process of socio-spatial change within cities and their various development zones or neighbourhoods. It therefore begs a simple way to start analysing and understanding urban transformation as well as the different aspects involved in the process. Only in this way will decision-makers and officials at a local level be able to determine whether changes in the physical environment will facilitate envisioned social change and what their impacts and implications are for future African cities.

This paper has introduced a conceptual framework that offers a way to map urban transformation and has used it to map urban transformation in contemporary African cities. This started to point out the close relationship between society and space in African cities and indicated how specific social drivers (needs and ideas) influence spatial change in both formal and informal ways. It therefore started to point towards the wide range of actors intervening in the built environment, often without any formal guidance, regulation, assistance or permission. In this way the production of space within African cities are open and flexible, reflecting an uncontained fluidity within an often very undefined or rather informally expressed system. It also starts to illuminate many different ways of making liveable ‘places’ within these cities, which in turn starts to condense different levels of meaning within the built environment as related to either status and wealth or the use of space or place. Many spaces therefore become severely contested places and this is where the volatility and fluidity of these urban systems start to raise concerns. It is in the divided zones of the dualistic society within African cities that the tensions and conflict of the suppressed may rise into a destructive resistance that may finally lead to an implosion of the entire urban system; therefore threatening not only the survival of the poor but of all that are dependent on the city. In this way, the framework starts to offer a way to interpret spatial transformation in urban areas as part of a much broader socio-spatial process.

In addition to the relevance of the conceptual framework to understand urban transformation in general, it also allows for a more applied understanding of space and place with regards to urban transformation and planning for future cities in Africa. It started to show the intricate relationship between perceived, conceived and lived space and how the perception of space are often concretised in ways that create contested places, which in turn impede the liveability of many urban spaces for a large majority of the inhabitants of African cities. The challenge is therefore to search for ways to start combining the three moments of social space as promoted by Levebre (1991) and find appropriate mechanisms within the ambit of city planning to do this. Only in this way will planners be able to engage with the concept of differential space that accommodates differences and includes all the dimensions of space as part of the production of space in cities.

There are, however, also limits to the use of such a framework and these should be noted. It may be that it will be proved to be more suitable to understand neighbourhood transformation as opposed to urban transformation and this should be tested in practice. In addition, it is also difficult to generalise for Africa as a whole. This paper therefore only highlighted very broad development trends and patterns, which at best can be used to guide planning, development choices and policy formulation, and at worst, to show the dynamic nature of African cities and difficulties planners in Africa are confronted with. One thing is for certain though: African cities are changing and planners will need to start findings ways to engage and work with these complex urban dynamics if there is a path to be found to ensure sustainable transformation to accommodate future dreams and challenges.

> *"African cities must be transformed if the continent is to keep pace with the rest of the developing world" (Mosha 2002:28).*

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