



Precarity, Temporality and Translocality in Africa's Urban Archipelagos

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Among other things, social scientists carefully observe traditions and rituals. I'd like to observe two:

First, to thank those who have invited me and got us all here today. These are also the ones you should blame for giving me this platform:

- Claire Mercer, who I have only had the pleasure of meeting today. In a world of space time compression, apparently there are still spaces for disconnections between people with many overlapping interests.
- Romola Sanyal, who I have had the even greater pleasure of knowing and working with for almost five years now.
- The department of geography more generally, including the graduate students I had the pleasure of engaging earlier this afternoon. If I flag this evening it's thanks to their rigorous grilling.

Beyond them, there are other members of the LSE community who, perhaps inadvertently, are responsible for me being up here.

- The first is Jo Beal – who may be here. I had the pleasure of joining her course on Gender and Urban Policy back in 1995. Her concerns with inclusive urbanism continue

to shape my work. Being the only man in a class full of women may also have something to do with my interest in questions of hospitality and the outsider.

- The second is a woman who is not with us today. That is Sylvia Chant. It is hard to overstate how her intelligence, enthusiasm, generosity, subtle madness, and appreciation for tequila have shaped so many of us. I was looking forward to reconnecting with her here at LSE. Needless to say, I will miss her as I'm sure many of you do.

The second ritual of any good academic talk is to start with a story. Anthropologists are the best at this. They almost always offer an anecdote meant to evoke complex social realities about kinship or kingdoms that ultimately surprise and unsettle something we have for too long taken for granted or simply overlooked.

I too want to tell a story. But not one of person, but rather of tens of thousands of people. This is a story of a place: Diepsloot.

DIEPSLOOT SLIDE

Located just north of Johannesburg – possibly Africa's wealthiest city – Diepsloot now houses somewhere around a hundred and forty thousand people. The size of a city on its own, it is just one part of the 'Gauteng city region' of close to ten million. Combined, Gauteng accounts for more than 10% of sub-Saharan Africa's GDP.

SECOND DIEPSLOOT SLIDE

Here is a picture of part of Diepsloot in the late 1990s and early 2000s. A few years before this, it was a field. The government intended it as a temporary camp for a thousand or so people moved from shacks regularly swept away by floods.

To illustrate that there is nothing as permanent as something temporary, here is what's happened to it since then.

CLICK ON SEQUENCE

Here is what it looks like now.

CLICK ON FINAL PICTURE

Those original temporary houses are still there, somewhere under that yellow circle. So too are thousands of other structures.

This has created one of the most linguistically diverse spaces in the country. South Africa has 11 national languages. All are spoken there. But so too are the languages of Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Somalia, and occasionally South Asia. This – like many sites or communities across the continent – is a place where almost no one is from. The shopping centres moved in long ago. There's even a mall with a KFC. The police only built a station in 2015 and still rarely patrol parts of the township.

DAINFERN SLIDE.

Now let's look at a site less than a kilometre away. This is one of the wealthiest Johannesburg suburbs. It is also one of its least racially or class diverse although it has remarkably high numbers of immigrants. These places look like different worlds, but they are perhaps best seen as conjoined twins. Each depends on and in turn reproduces the other as part of an emerging and expanding network of sites connected through multiple, often antagonistic ties.

TIME COVER

Here's another scene from South Africa published in Time magazine last year which illustrates the imbrication of these seemingly separate worlds.

RIO, NAIROBI CITIES SLIDE

Every city is unique, but the story of tremendous, rapid growth and spatial inequality is not. I expect most of you in this room have seen pictures like this a hundred times before. Indeed, this particular kinship story of two sites connected through material economies is the

emerging norm in Africa and elsewhere and displaced *ad nauseam* to condemn the perils of capitalism.

Sometimes – as in the case of El Paso Texas in the US and Ciudad Juarez in Mexico, a political border divides two inseparable sites. More often it is forms of urban planning or social distinctions that maintain these dyads.

These photos starkly illustrate spatial inequality and imply the connections associated with this differentiation. The risk is that we come to see them as more or less stable systems, like a binary star orbiting each other. Yet while the relationships of these sites may be enduring, the populations of some of them are often highly unstable. Moreover, due to outlook, imagination, and obligation, the moral centre of gravity that binds them may be elsewhere.

It is these patterns of connected- disconnection; stability and churn, and highly localised translocality that will shape our urban futures. They ask us to reconsider many of the ethical and epistemological foundations at the heart of progressive urban theory and global urban policy. That is what I want to do today.

Before that, let's step back a bit and think about how Africa fits global trends and global theory. Long ago the world entered the 'urban age'. But the early cities – Paris, London, even Shanghai and Hong Kong – tend to frame how we understand urbanism. Over the next decade Africa too will cross the 'tipping point' in which the majority of its population is urban. In many countries this has already occurred. Even if, as Potts suggests, the relative weight of cities is overblown, their populations are growing.

AFRICAN CITY CHART

Scholars of human mobility often quickly assume that migration is behind this growth. However, most of this is from people living longer and relatively high fertility rates. Some is an artefact of reclassification: people being labelled as urban even though they've never moved.

AFRICA CHART TWO

By some estimates, only about one quarter of urban growth is due to migration. Most of this is due to movements of people within national borders.

But if you drill down below the city level, we see neighbourhoods filled with significant numbers of people who have recently moved, even if it's just from another part of the city or 'upcountry'. Sometimes they come from the same place. Some have been displaced by war or conflict. Often they are from multiple places. Here they converge – however temporarily – in a single site. I have taken to calling these 'urban estuaries' as a way of capturing these multiple movements and the distinctive social ecosystems they produce.

SLIDE: QUOTE FROM SALMAN RUSHDIE ABOUT MISH MASH

Some people fear these movements and the Malthusian dystopias they evoke. Others celebrate mobility and the social dynamism behind it. Talk of hybridization and mongrelisation are exciting and there is great space for exploring emerging forms of cosmopolitanism practiced at multiple socio-economic and geographic scales.

SLIDE: NAIROBI GRAFFITI; ACCRA GRAFFITI, MABONENG GIRLS

Indeed, The socially corrosive power of cities offers new possibilities for African youth culture, artistic expression and newfound freedoms.

As I'll discuss, moral economies travel, but cities almost inevitably offer women unprecedented opportunities to escape certain forms of place-based patriarchies. Three decades ago Louise White remarked on the potential for women to control and benefit from their sexual labour in colonial Nairobi, a challenge to male control of women's sexuality and autonomy.

Ananya Roy rightfully warns us to be wary of celebrating the sub-altern and precarity for its creativity and energy. But there can be few doubts that migration and urbanisation remain powerfully unsettling processes that offer moments – sometimes fleeting – to renegotiate generational and gendered hierarchies (Lubkemann); ethnic or religious affiliation; and

potentially escape from political patronage and domination. The possibilities for LGBTQ Africans, or for couples who love across ethnic, linguistic, racial or religious divides are real.

Whether you find these changes as good or bad, such reconfigurations are unsettling to those whose privilege depends on preserving the status quo. Around Africa and elsewhere in the world there are various reactionary responses in both sending and receiving communities. But urbanisation and mobility won't stop. That horse has bolted.

SLIDE OF MAYORAL FORUMS

One of the changes such rapid urbanisation has instigated is the partial rescaling of formal politics. Migration and immigration were once issues nested almost completely in national planning commissions and bodies. They retain formal control over immigration, but cities are increasingly part of the conversation. For many it is a way of signalling their arrival as global cities. In some instances they protest overtly xenophobic or racist national policies. Sometimes they call for greater restrictions. Either way, they must cope with the people on their doorsteps and analysts of immigration must rescale their works and begin better understanding intersections with domestic mobility.

SLIDE OF SDG 11

Through Habitat III and its Sustainable Development Goals, the UN has also come to the party. In its typical fashion, it offers ill-defined, utopian imperatives. In this case, to “make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”

HABITAT has long pushed for ‘Cities without Slums.’

This complements a common refrain one hears from activists that everyone – regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, profession, or class has -- ‘A Right to the City’.

SLIDE OF CITY, INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE

I suspect few of us instinctively object to such calls. But perhaps we should be wary of this too. I am not advocating exclusion. But we should consider what some of these the terms actually mean and how they may work both for and against the people that concern us:

For the next twenty-five minutes or so that is precisely what I intended to do.

SLIDE: What is a city?

Let's start with what we mean by a city. This may seem like a trick question, but really what is a city?

SLIDE: NEW YORK, PARIS, LONDON, CHICAGO

Does it look like this? These are the 'classic cities' as it were. These are almost 'ideal types': cities that are at the heart of modern urban, sociological, and political theory. These cities informed the work of Marx, Simmel, Durkheim, Weber. These cities informed the Chicago School of sociology. They've also informed the global darlings of progressive urbanism: Benjamin, Lefebvre, Davis. They are where we learned about ghettos and migrant enclaves. They were the reference points for scholars who conducted ground breaking work on urbanisation and social transformation in Africa during the colonial and early post-colonial period. They often remain reference points. More problematically, their empirical analysis and normative frameworks often go unreferenced: taken as foundational, as gospel.

These are global, world cities with distinctive pasts. These are cities forged through processes of industrialisation. They grew together with the growth of industry and states. They turned peasants into factory workers. As Eugen Weber (no relations to Max) reminds us, they also turned peasants into Frenchmen, and Englishman, and Germans. In the case of New York and Chicago, they turned people from across the world into Americans.

The tandem of state and industry disciplined people: created class, created national identities, created a modern civic citizenship. The regular call of the factory whistle helped standardize time and forged distinctive modes of living with strangers. It was from these centres that states developed the social and material resources to broadcast their power, to launch navies, to control their borders and hinterlands. To forge and embrace nations. These are the birthplace of modern capitalism, modern states, and the somewhat teleological ethics that inform our thinking about urban inclusion, visibility, and representation.

IMAGE OF DUBAI, SINGAPORE, SHANGHAI

The old industrial cities remain, although they are being transformed by competing processes of gentrification and precaritization. But let's put those aside for now. Since they are not the only kind of cities that we've got. Elsewhere in the world are cities of a different kind.

These cities often incorporate and exceed the visual vocabulary of their elders; skyscrapers, subways, and shopping malls. LOTS OF MALLS. These are wealthy cities but not aimed at elevating or empowering the domestic population or, for the most part, the domestic economy. They are entrepôts and global points of exchange formed through global circulations. They are nodes of social and cultural movement.

To varying degrees, they rely on migrants from across their respective countries and around the world. In many of the Gulf States, foreigners far outnumber citizens. Sometimes by five to one. Radical social diversity is the norm, but managed under watchful authoritarian eyes. They are central to national economies but their leaders are often only marginally concerned with the welfare of those outside the city walls or the majority of those living within them. People outside the city often matter little except as a supply of surplus labour. The cities are symbols of national pride but politically disconnected from the lives of average citizens.

IMAGE OF KIBERA and KINSHASHA

But where in sub-Saharan Africa do we find either the old industrial cities or the deeply networked globalised ones? Richard Stren has argued that Nairobi is Africa's most global city, not because of industry and trade but as a centre of United Nations and NGO activity.

Johannesburg might be a candidate, but its extraordinary population growth has been accompanied by declining industrial and entry level opportunities. Indeed, over the past decade, South Africa's economic prospects have declined more than any other country in the world that's at peace.

Perhaps Luanda? It is a city of great oil wealth and an ever growing population. By some calculations it is the most expensive city in the world. Its geography echoes that of the fragmented, contemporary urbanism that I showed you earlier: wealthy enclaves surrounded

by seas of shanties. It too remains disconnected from its hinterland and its citizenry, benefitting few.

For the most part, African cities reflect urbanism of a different kind. They are growing rapidly. Rates akin to industrial European and American cities 150 or 200 years ago or those in globalising, industrialising Asia. But they are cities with only limited industry. Limited trade. Limited possibilities for a secure life. In the words of Kihato and Muyeba, they are not productive, but consumptive. Some find fortune there, but most do not. Yet these are not simply Malthusian, chaotic sites. There are norms, of a kind. There are ways in which people live together, even if they are ideal by almost no one's standards.

For most, cities reflect possibility amidst precarity: Health. Wealth. Security. Onward movement. Profit. Protection. Passage.

SLIDE: BLACK

They offer possibility but few promises. African cities are physically, economically, and existentially risky. They may lure with liberation and transformation, but they demand people radically alter their life scripts. They must surrender predictability. Life stages and rites of passage remain important markers of success and normative guides. But the path through them is rife with meanders, round-about, and dead ends. These are cities of uncertainty where the majority of Africans will spend at least part of their lives. They rapidly change jobs and locations and often spread their lives across multiple sites simultaneously.

IMAGE OF A VILLAGE

The last urban space I wish to discuss is this one. A place most of you will never heard of it but is like many you may have seen. How, you may ask, is this a city? There are no big buildings. No Shacks. No factories. No Port. NO SHOPPING MALLS. That much is true. But I suspect those kids uniforms were paid for by relatives living in Nairobi. Others may be paid for by relatives working in the London stock market or running businesses in Atlanta and elsewhere. The land on which they live is owned by people who spend most of their time in a city.

Whereas the peasants who became Frenchman in Paris were pushed off their land, many Africans retain strong connections to the village. This has become a common trope, but one worth considering. Urban dwellers may rarely see the trees and bushes, but their families are there. Their money may go there. And ultimately they may seek respect and status in these sites. It remains central to moral and material economies. With insecure earnings on both farm and cities, individual and families spread their risk, creating household economies that rely on spatial and professional diversification. Sons and daughters are sent to be educated or earn. They may never permanently return, but the connections typically remain strong.

Does this mean bucolic Sagana is a city? That may be a stretch. But just as Diepsloot and Dainfern are conjoined twins, so too is Sagana and Nairobi. Or, rather, it is connected to particular spaces – slum and office tower – and through them to multiple others. Given the multiple scales of connections forged through the mobility of people and products, the connections are hard to quantify but central to the future shape of cities and the continent's social lives. In this we begin to see why I've come to see urban spaces as archipelagos.

PLANETARY URBANISM SLIDE

A couple of years ago, Brenner and Schmid argued that the rural ceased to exist. They speak of a 'planetary urbanism' in which every rural area had effectively become a space of production and investment for city-based people and processes. It is these connections reflected in the picture behind me.

I struggle with their universalising, materialist vision. But in an era in which translocal material and moral economies are the norm, there is a need to rethink the boundaries of a city.

Understanding contemporary and historical mobility and urbanism means rescaling in two directions: On one hand we need to 'scale up' to the translocal and global. On the other, we need to dive down into the hyper-local. Not just to take cities seriously, but to understand the neighbourhood, an enclave as small as a building or the street corner.

SLIDE OXFORD STREET PICTURE

It is by doing this that Ato Quayson offers such a powerful account of Oxford Street in Accra. Looking at Oxford Street, Diepsloot, or any number of other urban estuaries, we begin to see that what is emerging across Africa is more than the simple translocalism fostered by long-standing patterns of oscillating movement or what Potts calls ‘partial urbanisation’.¹ These patterns continue, but current African migrations and mobility are more intense and diversified. More importantly, past patterns formed around (and helped ensure) predictability. They remained primarily dyadic. These more archipelagic forms of membership reflect economies and institutions both fragile and fragmented and connections far more dispersed.

SLIDE: KAKUMA TEDX

Those who never move far from their birthplace, root themselves in urban space; even those entrapped in refugee camps become ‘inscribed’ in multiple sites and emerging translocal imaginaries.² Such inscriptions offer a global vision filled with possibilities both real and elusive. These produce longings and frustrations: an awareness of processes and possibilities elsewhere and the barriers to accessing them. Geographic movements are shaped by these orientations to what Mbembe and Nuttal term ‘multiple elsewheres’.³

IMAGE OF NIGERIANS in CHINA

Even the most seemingly materially untouched sites – the remote village I spoke of earlier – are rapidly becoming parts of continental and global archipelagos: islands of space and time interconnected through material exchange, yes. But more importantly through quests for spatialized forms of social recognition, moral discipline, and future imaginations.⁴

However distorted, images, news, moneys, goods and gadgets continually arrive. Those on the receiving end embed them in spatialized practices and perceptions. These shape perspectives of possibility and generate metrics of success and measures of failure. This leaves few people across Africa self-contained, free of dependence on money, information or status from other spaces and times.⁵ People continue to move through the archipelago – sometimes physically, sometimes virtually, sometimes merely in their imagination.

SLIDE: What is inclusion?

These movements and orientations give rise to life courses that are at once rooted in the everyday materiality of specific sites, but are decidedly multilocal. People may not travel far, but the circulation of materials and moralities keeps them connected.

This presents scholars with multiple empirical challenges. How, for one, do we make sense of or speak of economies or systems of belonging that span multiple temporalities and spaces? What does ethnography become when people's lives are so embedded in spaces that you can not visit. Or where people's lives may be implicitly shaped by sites they have never seen and may never reach. How do we come to understand urban marginalisation when self-alienation, invisibility and mobility are not signs of failure but agential strategies?

My particular interest – as a 'recovering political scientists' – are what do these trends mean for questions of political participation or representation? For the right to the city? Do these ideas that we typically elevate as goods cease to be so? Might promoting them ultimately be oppressive and counter-productive?

SLIDES: CITY VISIONS

The understanding of inclusion that informs most policy approaches –from Urban Vision plans to the SDG's – draw inspiration from industrial cities in North America and, to some extent, Latin America. Underlying these are the desirability of urban solidarity and membership that are often starkly place bound; visions that seem remarkably anachronistic for those living in estuaries or archipelagos.

Lefebvre's famous demand that workers have rights to the city is premised on their contributions to building its infrastructure and wealth which they have been denied through processes of 'implosion-explosion'. Inasmuch as I can make sense of his somewhat amorphous prose, his argument is premised on an ideal of urban ownership. For him, for the drafters of the SDGs, or the forces behind Habitat III's demand for urban inclusion are ideals of localised belonging. Of representation and visibility. Of recognition and status where you

are. They work from an ethics of inclusion that presumes people wish to remain. That their futures, whatever shape those takes, are where you find them.

SLIDE: COVER OF BAKEWELL BOOK

A couple of years ago, Oliver Bakewell and I published a very expensive book. It hasn't sold many copies, so there's still plenty available if you want them. The book tells varied and provocative stories of integration and exclusion across Africa, stories that are not really part of the global conversation and that often work against the grain of progressive urbanism.

One thing it makes clear is that models of place bound incorporation, assimilation, or integration, are no longer adequate as either an empirical or ethical guide. We increasingly see various forms of fragmented yet connected systems of moral authority centred on individuals who are nodes in networks spanning space and time.⁶

Elsewhere, people attend churches, go to community meetings or help repatriate corpses to maintain their status in villages they otherwise visit only now and then. Kankonde speaks of money from a Belgian based uncle flowing through a Congolese refugee in Johannesburg and back to a radio station in Kinshasa. Why? So that the announcer will read their names of his sponsor, an effort to remind those at home that the diaspora matters. Maintaining credibility and memory is critical should either wish to return home to live or invest. This while the Johannesburg based point in this constellation actively avoids his Congolese counterparts in Johannesburg who may report home on his carousing or deprivation or ask for help that prevents him from saving to join his uncle.

Losing status with people at 'home' not only limits the possibility of return, but can also close urban opportunities and chances of onward movement should the diasporic flow of resources dry up. In spaces where people straddle multiple, distinct yet connected social worlds, status and stigma travel, shaping what is possible and what is required.⁷

What we are beginning to see is what I've taken to calling configurations of archipelagic belonging and inclusion. Rather than seeing inclusion as something negotiated at the scale of the city alone or between city and village, people seek varied forms of recognition and

membership in multiple places. Sometimes this is simultaneous, sometime it is temporally staggered.

This creates conduits from a street corner in Nairobi to a village in Somalia and a mosque in Minnesota. It connects small shops in Johannesburg to a relative's house in Kinshasa and a wealthy uncle in Belgium. It may link a crowded shack in Accra's Old Fadama with a village on Ghana's northern border and a global trade in scrap metal. Sometimes these places are real. Sometimes they are imagined futures shaped by the circulation of global media and semi-fictionalised self-narratives.

These are small islands of membership in which people negotiate recognition and inclusion. Sometimes these negotiations are simultaneous as with the urban worker who constantly monitors the status of her cowpeas or construction project back home while building a life in the city. They may also work on multiple temporal scales where life in the city is simply about waiting, about passing time in order to reclaim status elsewhere or the possibility to move elsewhere.

SLIDE: EVANGELICALS

Pentecostalism, one of Africa's most muscular social forces, is perhaps the greatest driver of archipelagic belonging. Large numbers of the churches build on their strong connections to institutions in Nigeria, Ghana, Congo and the United States. For many of the churches' founders – themselves often migrants – their current pulpit is merely a place where they can enter a global social universe. In the words of the Nigerian pastor at the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church in Johannesburg: 'Africa is shaped like a pistol, Nigeria is the trigger and South Africa is the mouth from where you can shoot out the word of God.' Their preaching is often extraterritorial, overtly denying the legitimacy of state laws while speaking of the dangers of local connections. Both the state and the sullied are enemies of salvation.

As they pray, parishioners draw on variegated liturgical language to make demands on cities while locating themselves in an ephemeral, superior and unrooted condition in which they can escape localised social and political obligations. This is a kind of particularistic, parochial cosmopolitanism that is not necessarily grounded in normative ideas of 'openness.' Nor is it intended to promote universal values of any form. Rather, they co-opt the language and

imagery of the global cosmopolitan elite – planes, cars, mansions, endless travel – to position themselves as global players through discourses melding the individual with distinct and indistinct spaces in this world and the next.⁸ Their churches in Nairobi, Lagos or Johannesburg connect those cities with others in Alabama or the Parisian banlieues. Such an approach often leaves them – as intended – ‘betwixt and between without being liminal [...] participating in many worlds without becoming part of them’.⁹ For them, local inclusion and participation are binding, they are the enemies of success.

SLIDE OF ESTAFANOS

As I’ve noted, archipelagic imaginations include trajectories and markers of progress often closely associated with geographic mobility: a move to the city, a move across borders, a journey to Europe or America. Yet due to economic circumstances – most notably the precarity and absence of employment and restrictive immigration policies¹⁰ – people experience what Ramakrishnan terms ‘**spatiotemporal disruption**’¹¹

RAMAKRISHAN SLIDE

Under such circumstances, people may move with expectations of improvement but feel unable to reach the next milestone. Without such achievements, they cannot return ‘home’, but nor can they move forward. Others simply wait for the state or others to provide.¹² Katz characterises Sudanese Youth as being ‘marooned by modernity’.¹³ Jeffrey talks of ‘timepass’ among Indian youth. People can remain stuck in time: experiencing endless, empty days peppered with temporal panic for having not reached their geographic or material aims. Yet they resist rooting. They fear doing so will end their journeys, surrendering the possibility of success.

BAUMANN SLIDE

In summary, we are seeing cities with ill-defined boundaries with people both struggling for and actively resisting inclusion. Some seek status where they are but are stymied by economic structures that work against them. Others actively resist incorporation, seeking a kind of distanced deferral in which they seek recognition and futures elsewhere in the archipelago. For them, visibility, group membership, political participation, crosscutting social

ties – the forms of inclusion scholars and activists almost universally celebrate – become forms of entrapment. Rather than rights to the city, which is effectively a right of ownership, many want what I’ve termed ‘usufruct rights’. They are helping turn parts of cities into ‘nowherevilles’ – a place where almost no one is from and almost no one wants to belong.

It is possible, of course, that the churning we now see is simply a phase. They may ‘work themselves out’¹⁴ and settle in to the forms of solidarity and political communities we see elsewhere.

But there are few reasons to believe that will be the case and I expect that translocal or oscillating lives, diasporic imaginaries and deterritorialised sociality may become the new normal. Without muscular states or industries, what will be the force for bonding and binding populations? Where are the police in Diepsloot? As the Comaroffs remind us, even the cities where modern sociology began – Frankfurt, Paris, New York, London – are increasingly looking like the kind of fragmented precarious spaces I’ve been droning on about.

SUSTAINABLE SLIDE

Now on to our last term. As with the other terms, sustainability has almost as many meanings as there are people who use it. Whether it is ultimately about environmental protection, social cohesion, planning and service provision, it often evokes a kind of stability, a sedentariness. When we think about urban sustainability, we tend to think of strong, locally oriented communities seeking to ensure the futures of next generations *in situ*.

SLIDE: BUILDING ARCHIPELAGIC FUTURES

The goal of secure futures may be universal, but what does it mean to think about people negotiating futures at multiple geographic and temporal scales simultaneously? What does it mean to ask a person whose goal is living elsewhere to invest locally? What does urban sustainability even mean when a city is so internally divided, fluid, and its borders so ill-defined? Who sets the standards? In whose interest will sustainability serve?

SLIDE: RECONSIDERING GOVERNANCE

Whatever the vision, it will require planning. And local governments are facing multiple challenges in responding effectively to mobility. There are questions of jurisdictions and budgeting. The processes that shape the social and economic life of cities are ever more beyond urban authorities' jurisdiction. These include national policies and global supply and labour chains. And what systems of state resource distribution make sense when people forge lives in multiple locations but actively evade contributing to the sites where they spend most of their time?

Where people live such lives, intervening in particular space with the intention of reaching specific places or peoples can be like hunting in the dark. It's possible you hit the target, but you may miss entirely. It may have little impact or potentially deleterious consequences for those it is intended to assist.

For those concerned with fostering social cohesion or integration. What does it mean to forge a community when you have people living together with multiple temporal and spatial trajectories? In a place like Diepsloot, who qualifies as a local? Who are the migrants? Without this distinction, most of the philosophical and ethical tools we have for discussing integration, hospitality, or welcome make little sense.

SLIDE: MCFARLANE

Indeed, apart from what this means for policy analysis, it raises at least three questions about what rights to the city might mean for people in Africa's urban areas.

First, it asks us to rethink the Geographic scales of justice. Harvey and Lefebvre's reading of the city is rooted in Marxist understandings of labour and capital, and the belief that rights to the city belong to those who labour in it. But what if cities were built on the back of workers elsewhere? Or what if there is no labour? What if cities are effectively 'do it yourself urbanism?' The question then is can we envision a right to the city that moves beyond its geographic boundary to incorporate the places outside of it that have made it possible or that it serves? For an African city to be just, it cannot only be for those who live in the city, but for all those who need to come to it from elsewhere and all those who depend on it.

BLACK SCREEN

Second, we need to shift the metrics of urban development: how we measure success. For a city to be accessible and inclusive, we must first understand how people seek to use the city in realizing their aspirations. This is not to say that slums and informal settlements are perfect: they are not. But it is to recognize, as Huchzermeyer (2011) and others do, that these spaces work for the poor because of their low entry costs and enable people to access the opportunities they seek elsewhere. Pushing for the provision of urban amenities, and land titles, can inadvertently make the city inaccessible to the poor or fix people in place when economic precarity demands mobility. What kind of inclusion is that?

Third, we need to rethink the ethics and practices of urban participation and representation. As noted in the paragraphs above, participatory planning has become an almost universal mechanism for realizing democratic local government. Despite its inclusive and just ethos, participation can create incentives for excluding the interests of migrants coming to the city. Those participating in planning processes rarely ask municipalities to dedicate resources to future residents when they themselves face acute immediate needs. That new arrivals are often unpopular outsiders facing formal and informal obstacles to public planning mechanisms, only heightens the probability of their exclusion. More importantly, how do we assess the legitimacy of participatory planning processes when so many people's plan is to leave?

Such conditions demand we rethink the ethical and practical basis of political representation, membership and inclusion. For many residents, inclusion is not about ownership and belonging but about usufruct rights – the ability to live in and extract from the city without being bound by it.

FINAL SLIDE

In an era of DIY urbanisation, informalised work, and ongoing mobility we must understand the city as experienced simultaneously across multiple geographic and temporal scales across estuaries and archipelagos. At the very least, it requires a more substantive understanding of the multiple trajectories under which urban residents are living their lives and the spatial and temporal horizons that inform them. This means new forms of research. It means new forms

of engagement. Perhaps most importantly, it requires constant self-reflection on the societies we want versus the societies we are likely to get. And to take seriously the ones imagined by those we study. Until we reconsider what we mean by justice, by inclusion, by sustainability, we risk building cities that only exacerbate the inequality and exclusion so many of us seek to address.

¹ See L.J. Bank, *Home Spaces, Street Styles: Contesting Power and Identity in a South African City*, London: Pluto Press, 2011; D. Potts, *Circular Migration in Zimbabwe and Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa*, Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2011; A. Portes 'Migration, Development, and Segmented Assimilation: A Conceptual Review of the Evidence', *Annals, AAPSS* vol. 630 (2007), pp. 73–97; P. Gerschew, *The Perils of Belonging: Autochthony, Citizenship, and Exclusion in Africa and Europe*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009; R. Cohen, *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.

² J. Auyero, 'The Hyper-Shantytown: Neo-Liberal Violence(s) in the Argentine Slum', *Ethnography* vol. 1, no. 2 (2000), p. 111.

³ A. Mzembe and S. Nustall, 'Writing the World from an African Metropolis', *Public Culture*, vol. 16, no. 3 (2004), pp. 347–72.

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