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Re-ordering the Urban Archipelago: Kenya Vision 2030, Street Trade and the Battle for Nairobi City Centre

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Abstract

The urban morphology and social and economic topography of Nairobi is sharply distinguished, heavily fortified and distinctively regulated. This form of urban territorial organization is an outcome of the legacies of colonialism and deeply inequitable local practices which continue to enforce Nairobi's relationship to the foreign investor and the tourist rather than support the rights of the urban inhabitant. The accelerating impact of neo-liberal economic planning continues to worsen these urban inequalities. In this context, this paper explores the influence of *Kenya Vision 2030* on the restructuring of Nairobi and assesses its implication for street vendors, who have been increasingly displaced from trading in the City Centre. Their future and the attempts to re-order Nairobi city centre has emerged as a key site were debates over the global and local versions of the city and the contest between different developmental futures are acted out.

Keywords:
Kenya 2030;
Nairobi;
Neo-liberalism;
Informal sector;
Hawking;
Public space.

Resumo

A morfologia urbana e topografia social e económica de Nairobi é marcadamente singular, severamente fortificada e distintamente regulada. Esta forma de organização urbana territorial é um resultado dos legados coloniais e de práticas locais profundamente desiguais que continuam a fortalecer as relações de Nairobi com o investidor estrangeiro e com o turista, em vez de apoiar os direitos do habitante urbano. O impacto acelerado do planeamento económico neo-liberal continua a deteriorar estas desigualdades urbanas. Neste contexto, este artigo explora a influência do *Kenya Vision 2030* na reestruturação de Nairobi e avalia as suas implicações para os vendedores ambulantes, que têm sido crescentemente deslocados do centro da cidade. O seu futuro e as tentativas de reordenar o centro da cidade de Nairobi surgem como lugar crítico onde se travam debates sobre as versões globais e locais da cidade e entre futuros diferentes de desenvolvimento.

Palavras chave:
Quénia 2030;
Nairobi;
Neo-liberalismo;
Sector informal;
Vendedores ambulantes;
Espaço público.

I Introduction

In November 2007, a month before the recent highly controversial General Elections, the Kenyan government announced its intention to bid for the 2016 Olympics. If Kenya ever makes and wins this bid, it will be the first country in Africa to host the games, a prize covered in potential glory. Given the nature of the post election events – over 1100 people killed, hundreds of thousands displaced, and many of the slums areas of Nairobi coerced into deeper deprivation and insecurity, one would be forgiven for suggesting that the government's eye on the global grandeur of the Olympics was at best, ill-timed and its understanding of the needs and mood of the people out of touch. During the last two decades Kenya has been faced with several socio-economic problems which have deepened the crisis facing its cities. These include increased poverty, rising levels of unemployment; increased insecurity; endemic corruption; high rates of urbanization; the growth of slums and informal settlements and deterioration of infrastructural and social services. Many of these issues relate to inequitable distribution of resources, the ongoing impact of state-capture and unequal costs borne by the poor during the period of structural adjustment instigated by the International Monetary Fund during the 1990s. With an annual growth rate of 5 per cent, it is projected that Nairobi will grow to 5 million people by the year 2020. Already 60 per cent of the city's population live in informal settlements, and a considerable percentage of this population live on less that a dollar a day (Syagga, Mitullah & Gitau 2001). There was a clear logic however that permitted the government to be distracted from the complexity of these concerns to focus instead on its Olympic ambitions and aspirations to '...spearhead the regeneration and development of Nairobi into a competitive world-class city'. It is now well understood that the race to host events such as the Olympics is a growing trend in the neo-liberal city (Brenner & Theodore 2002). It is known in addition, that such aspirations are shaped in contexts where issues of prestige and enterprise overwrite concerns of social justice and redistribution. Inevitably, such aspirations have major implications for the urban experience and profound consequence for the future of the city.

This paper will explore recent shifts in the governance of Nairobi, and particularly the role the city has been awarded in Kenya Vision 2030, a national programme for development launched in November 2006. In the analysis of the plans that have reshaped the city since then, two key areas will be considered, both of which will address the issues associated with neo-liberal urban strategy in Kenya. In the first part of the paper, I will address Kenya Vision 2020, and explore how its ambitions have been rearticulated into schemes to clean and beautify the city in order to establish Nairobi as 'a global hub' and reclaim the city's colonial image as the 'Green City of the Sun'. In line with a range of authors, including Leys (1975) and Slaughter (2004), the paper will contextualize these recent events in the urban legacies which continue to reproduce the spatial logic of colonialism which privileged the relationship to Europe, by sustaining the urban and infrastructural geography planned to support an export economy, global tourism and foreign direct investment. The second part of the paper will consider what consequences this urban condition has for experience of street vendors

or ‘hawkers’, whose contested presence in the city centre exemplifies the unequal urban political conditions of the urban archipelago of Nairobi, a city riddled with inequalities, and which is socially fragmented and intensely segregated. Despite being deeply entrepreneurial, and highly effective in providing goods and services to an impoverish population, informal street trade represents the antithesis of neo-liberal based models of development and modernization (Lewinson 2004). As is the case throughout the Global South, these needs and rights of these informal workers often confound formal and traditional mechanisms in urban planning, are not safeguarded by legal or social protections, and face persistence erosion of their rights and expulsions from public space (Bass 2000, Yankson 2000). Their experience in the context of accelerating urban forms of neo-liberalism presents an opportunity to interrogate the key actors and processes which are currently shaping the urban geographies in contemporary Africa (Fig.1).



Figure 1: Fruit and Vegetable Street Hawkers, Nairobi, January 2007

II Kenya Vision 2030 and Neo-Liberal Nairobi

In the frameworks imagined by economic strategists caught up in the new scramble for Africa, Kenya is increasingly placed amongst five other African nations that could rival the 'Asian Tigers' by 2015. This notion is based on the premise that the so-called Asian Tigers of Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia were at the same stage of development as Kenya was 30 years ago, yet transformed themselves into modern economies within a generation. Since 2002, the Kibaki government stabilized the economy, improved administration and whilst corruption remains a core problem, the blatant kleptocracy of the Moi regime has been dissipated. The growth in tourism and the rise in the value of commodities boosted annual growth rates. This growth has encouraged the Kenyan Government to set out an ambitious development agenda, encapsulated in the publication and subsequent mobilization of Kenya Kenya Vision 2030 – a plan that proposes to restore Kenya economic potential. The Kenyan National Economic and Social Council (NESC) developed the Kenya Vision 2030, together with the international consultants, McKinsey & Company, who have also completed work on another former British colonial city – Mumbai – within a similar framework (Bombay First- McKinsey 2003). The formulation of Kenya Vision 2030 and its very specific discourse underline the degree to which a neo-liberal agenda has shaped the nature of national and regional planning, notably in terms of a new emphasis on the deregulation of markets and the new priorities awarded to private business interests in the formation of policy and the delivery of public services, at national, regional and urban level (Fig.2).

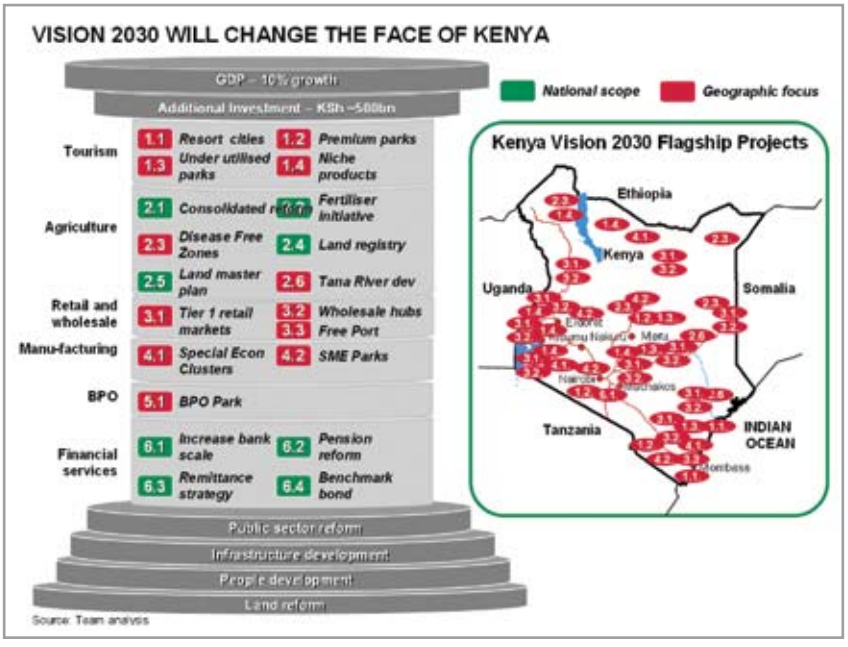


Figure 2: Vision 2030 | Source: *Wahome Gakuru, Presentation of Kenya Vision Strategy, July, 2007, Nairobi*

The three pillars of *Kenya Vision 2030* are organized around (1) economic aspirations – principally the maintenance of a economic growth of 10% per annum, (2) social aspirations that prioritizes 'a just and cohesive society enjoying equitable social development in a clean and secure environment' and (3) political aspirations which aims to create an '....issue-based, people centred results oriented and accountable democratic political system'. In framing development in this manner, *Kenya Vision 2030* mobilizes classic neo-liberal language and practices, particularly in terms of its emphasis on competition, management, performance, and accountability.

Kenya Vision 2030 has deep implications for Nairobi, as the restructuring the governance of the city has emerged a model for new forms of public management. In 2006 the Nairobi Metropolitan Growth Strategy (NMGS) was drafted – a strategy which amongst other things greatly increased the role of the private sector in devising urban policy. In the long term, under the auspices of *Kenya Vision 2030*, the state intends to establish a Nairobi Metropolitan Region Development Board to '…transform the Nairobi metropolitan region into a regional and global services hub' (NESC 2007). *Kenya Vision 2030* has also provided the context in which a new cultural and global location for Nairobi has been created. Directed by NESC, the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) – the principal public policy think-tank – was directed to produce a strategy to raise the status of Nairobi to one of the '…most attractive cities to live or do business in Africa'. NESC concluded that it '…has taken great interest in improving the status of Nairobi City with ultimate goal of transforming it into a regional services hub'. The Council has developed the view that given its heritage and its geographical location, Nairobi has the potential to become '…one of the most vibrant cities in the world'. In line with this new neo-liberal imaginary, the Director of *Kenya Vision 2030*, Wahome Gakuru has claimed that '…Nairobi is already a leading force in many sectors, and these are what we want to augment first. We intend to make Nairobi a regional services hub in tourism, hospitality, conferencing, transport, entertainment, financial and medical services.' More specifically, as we will see in the substance of the paper below, *Kenya Vision 2030* has been a key instrument which has shaped how the city has become a space in which aspirations to '…a clean and secure environment' have been re-articulated. So far, the early 'wins' claimed as part of this process have included the '…re-engineering management of the Nairobi City Council, disaster management initiative, rehabilitation of street names, road marking, street and flood lighting, landscaping and greening of the city' (NESC 2007).

This new 'location' for the city and its ambitions are shaped by a number of collaborating institutions and organizations who have mobilized market based systems into public policy. Drawing heavily upon the strategies developed in Malaysia and Singapore, Gakuru has been mandated to develop Nairobi through partnerships between public and the private sector. The role of the international donor community has also been important in framing these developments. The legitimacy for these initiatives has been shaped in the context of 'good governance' – in the case in a programme element enabled by the World Bank under its 'Local and Municipal Governance and Finance (formerly Municipal Reform) stream. Shaped in this international policy environment, and incentivized by the conditions set out by World Bank loans, the Ministry of Planning has increasingly

embraced concepts of privatization and partnership. In itself, this approach has been facilitated by the regulatory environment of the Structural Adjustment Programmes, whose rules about participatory approaches to policy formulation and implementation, together with a renewed emphasis on privatization have encouraged the Kenyan government to 'empower' stakeholders and support a participatory approach in policy development. This approach conforms closely to the notion that government should focus on 'steering' (policy setting and coordination) and leave the 'rowing' (delivery of publicly supported services) as much as possible to the private sector. (Osborne & Gaebler 1992). The provision of new roads – notably in the Nairobi Toll Road project – has already been implemented. In line with this thinking, the state intends to privatize other key infrastructure facilities, specifically Telcom Kenya, Kenya Power and Lighting, Kenya Reinsurance Company and National Bank of Kenya. It is planned in addition that the state will implement further public-private initiatives, identified for Nairobi as investments in multi-story parking garages, construction of retail markets, and low and middle income housing.

The reality in Nairobi is however that the dire failure of the local state to provide basic urban services means that privatization is deeply entrenched in the city, notably in areas such as waste disposal, the provision of street lighting and water and most obviously, security and policing. However, the relative speed, at which these more structural initiatives became prioritized under the Kibaki government, is testimony to the renewed political support given the private sector. A key actor to emerge has been the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA), formed in 2003. This lobby group brings together private sector associations in Kenya to develop guidelines for 'partnering with the public sector to provide new and existing services'. In Nairobi, KEPSA has also been instrumental in supporting the City Council of Nairobi Stakeholder Forum (CCNSF)', a partnership initiative between the City Council of Nairobi and the private sector. The legitimacy of these organizations to intervene in the provision of public services and in the formulation of urban policy has been strengthened by the failure of the local state. Within the city there is a widespread distrust and dissatisfaction with the city council. The decline of Nairobi has been widely understood in terms of corruption at 'City Hall,' too much central government interference, and the rapid informal development of the city. Nairobi's city council was abolished for almost a decade (1983-1992) by the Moi government, which placed the city under a presidential-headed commission, an act that opened the floodgates to economic liberalization and accelerated the collapse of the orderly planning and development of the city.

A key consequence of these political conditions, Katumanga (2005) argues was a 'diminished state-provisioning capacity and unwillingness to protect public interests.' This form of urban politic opened up a political space that '…spawned anomic tendencies within the regime and among social groups and individuals, with struggles in defense of economic position against each other at one level, and against the state and local councils at another. [This] regime facilitates the criminalization of urban existence in a bid to ensure its survival... The net effect is the perversion of social order and the emergence of bandit economies' (Katumanga 2005, p.219). The antagonistic geographies of the urban archipelago and the spatial imprint of the City Council's decent into officially sanctioned banditry and laissez faire strategies are everywhere. For example, in the Eastlands

area – especially in residential estates as Umoja, Dandora, Kayole and Zimmerman, six and seven story buildings stand awkwardly on small plots originally zoned for the construction of bungalows. Though thwarted by the KANU-MOI kleptocracy, throughout the 1990s various attempts were made to reform the city council. Though his activism meant his tenure was short-lived, the major of Nairobi - Steve Mwangi - suspended several key officers of council, including the town clerk and chief planner (Karuga 1993). The 'Nairobi City Convention' (July 1993) revealed publicly the problems of greed and corruption, excessive central government interference, and unsustainable budgetary situation of the city. The 'Nairobi We Want' conference that followed animated a range of actors from the public and private sector and the action plan sought to reform many aspects of the governance of the city, whilst underlining the need to root out corruption at City Hall, and ensure professionalism amongst the city's administrators (Karuga 1993). Since coming into power in 2002, the Kibaki government was more open to facilitating this reform. A key report on Nairobi City Council, prepared by the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission severely criticized the financial and administrative structure of the city council, paving the way for further reform and in many ways, legitimizing the continuing privatization of local services. These administrative issues and questions of governance have had profound impacts on urban planning and policy.

III Re-ordering the Central Business District

In this context and supported in the funding regimes sponsored by the World Bank, the activities of the Nairobi Central Business District Association (NCBDA) to streamline management of the city's affairs has been facilitated further. Following a thirty year hiatus, question of urban planning have returned to the agenda, sponsored particularly by the Architectural Association of Kenya (AAK), who have commenced the development of a Master Plan for Nairobi. Within this new framework enabled by *Kenya Vision 2030*, a number of new reforms have been proposed. NESC have proposed the following:

1	Divide the city into five boroughs, each headed by a high-level management board, providing local services.
2	Complete a consultative Nairobi metropolitan growth plan in order to harmonize current stand alone initiatives, include the city and the satellite towns around it, and prepare the relevant legislation for it.
3	Access immediate funding to resettle hawkers in smaller permanent markets citywide.
4	Improve the policing and enforcement of NCC bylaws.
5	Clean up the city and enforce health and sanitation regulations.
5	Begin a rapid results traffic management system
6	Erect street names, directions, universal address system, and repair the roads and complete city-wide street lighting.
7	Pedestrianize the CBD, reduce vehicular traffic there.
8	Construct multi-storey downtown parking garages on a Public-Private Partnership basis.
9	Privatize garbage collection.
10	Secure all public parks and rehabilitate them.
11	Begin rehabilitation of the Nairobi River Basin.
12	Establish a Nairobi Metropolitan Police.

These strategies have been presented as a set of benign urban strategies. However, if the language of flow and de-liberalization present the neo-liberal geography of *Kenya Vision 2030* at national and metropolitan level – in practice, the events at street level have proved to be exclusionary and divisive. Rather than evolving an urban policy that meets the needs of the urban inhabitant, the city has been captured by the practices of global prestige – in part sanctioned by international donors such as the World Bank and facilitated by the international consultancy group, McKinsey, who have already created comparable vision strategies for Mumbai (Bombay First-McKinsey 2003).

The new political contexts are well represented in plans to revitalize the city centre, where partnerships between the public sector and private companies have converged on policies to privatize services, space and exclude the poor to keep the city attractive to investors and tourists. In line with the 2030 aspirations, for the City Council the 'provision of an ideal urban environment' is presented as 'a new beginning for a working nation'. In terms of urban design and planning, the form that 'beautification' takes - upgrading public parks, pedestrian, urban forestation and landscaping - appears essentially progressive. In fact, the opposite is often the case. Perverse outcomes from apparently progressive initiatives are often perpetuated in the grossly inequitable landscape of Nairobi, as interest groups have evolved sophisticated strategies to hijack the progressive aspirations of developmental initiatives. In this case, under the umbrella of improved urban governance, apparently benign proposals to address urban quality of life issues and improving public safety have been turned into exclusionary practices in the city. For instance, under the guidance of the UN Habitat Safer Cities programme, the Safer Cities Nairobi Action Group was established (UN Habitat 2002). Whilst inclusive in terms of the attention it placed on crime and personal safety in slum areas, the most significant impact has been in the city centre. UN Habitat praised itself in noting that '…the key crime prevention through environmental design deliverables are expected to be realized by September 2006 and showcased as 'quick-wins' at the Africities 2006 summit to be held in Nairobi (UN Habitat 2005). However, in terms of the UN's other objectives in Kenya, principally leading people out of poverty and protecting their livelihoods, the Safer Cities Programme has arguably backfired, as the initiative has cloaked deeply exclusionary practices, involving forcing women and disabled street traders from the city centre, and supporting the deeply exclusionary 'security' discourse, which has been used widely to legitimate the city council's destruction of kiosks and shacks from the roadside and exclusion of street traders from the city centre.

In the first public-private partnership initiative facilitated by the City Council, with support from local banks and the Aga Khan Foundation, the city council pedestrianized Mama Ngina street, an area proximate to quasi-public park created to memorialize to the American Embassy bombing of 1998. With the exception of vendors selling newspapers and occasionally second hand books, the area is completely free of 'hawkers'. There is plenty of seating for office workers to take shelter from the sun during their lunch hour and the area has become popular for peripatetic Christian preachers who engage the small crowds without interference. Undoubtedly, the urban environment around Mama Naina street has improved, though at a discrete cost to liberty. The pleasant grassed elements in this area

are protected by rough cuts of barbed wire and the area is under intensive surveillance by the Askari – the City Council's special police. This piece of urban design underlines that the 'clean up' of Nairobi has a more complicated story to tell – in particular in terms of how it operates as a form of spatial and social. Bye-laws have been mobilized as a key instrument in this process. Not only are bye-laws are key way of administrating and regulating a busy city centre, but remarkably, fines from bye-laws are the third most important source of income for the City Council after rates and business licenses. Additionally, bye-laws are source of income for the Askari who widely exploit the bye-laws as a mean of extracting bribes from locals and street venders. Since colonial times, fines could be imposed for, hawking, spitting, peeing and jaywalking. Fines for these offences were modernized and additionally a range of new offences were established. In line with the city's new strategy to turn itself into a global hub, a new policy on the city's existing and new bye laws was enforced. During 2007, a new by-law was introduced to control motorists and pedestrians who fail to stop at zebra crossings in Nairobi. Those caught risk arrest and a Sh. 3,000 fine, about half a month wages for the average worker. The possession of plastic bags was also made an offence. Smoking in public was also banned and smoking zones in the Central Business District designated. People found smoking in public are liable to a fine of up to Sh. 2,000 (about a third of the monthly income for a manual labourer in Nairobi) or six months imprisonment. Since their introduction, hundreds of people have been charged in court over the two by-laws. In addition to these forms of urban regulation, an increasing number of bye-laws have been introduced to adversely impact on hawking in the city.

'Hawking' a term inherited from the colonial period is a well established survival strategy for the urban poor. Throughout the South, street vending is also directly associated with urban livelihoods. In his work on Johannesburg, Simone argued that informal activities such as hawking reproduce 'bare life' for many residents in the city, in conditions of relative poverty (Simone 2004). Street trading is however more diverse than represented by Simone, and the ease of entry make undoubtedly a major source of employment in contemporary Kenya. Throughout Kenya, employment in the trade grew from 5.1 million people in 2002 to 6.8 million in 2006, a rise of 33.4 per cent. This situation mirrors the importance of informal trading to the livelihoods and economies of cities, providing social and political stability to the most marginalized and vulnerable communities. However, despite their economic importance, hawkers have been continuously exposed to criticism which has projected them as an unruly intrusion into the orderly city. The position of these sole-traders is a matter of major contestation in most developing world cities. Rajagopal notes that in India, the 'pheriwalas' or street hawker:

> '…are a part of the economy that spurs consumption, yet they function as quintessentially vagrant figures requiring discipline. The pheriwala is thus a figure bridging consumption and destruction. The pheriwala is a real figure, working in circuits seen as illegal in relation to the formal economy, but is also metaphorical, symbolizing a kind of disorder as a struggling but nevertheless illicit entrepreneur.' (Rajagopal 2001, p.92)

A similar perspective by and large, radiates through formal and media representation of the Nairobi street hawker also and as a vagrant and urban interloper, their needs and development have traditionally been oppressed. Under the revised by-laws contained in the Kenya Gazette dated July 6 2006, anyone found buying goods from a hawker in 'non-designated' areas will also be arrested together with the seller. The penalty for both hawkers and buyers will be similar to that imposed on smokers. In addition to these new regulations, since 2002, the City Council has explicitly sought to reclaim the city centre and other sub-centres in the city – notably Westlands - from hawkers who have set up shop trading or Jua Kali operations in the lanes and thoroughfares of the city (NCBDA 2002). (Jua Kali is a Kiswahili term that literally means 'under the hot sun', and refers to outdoor workshops). This form of urban regulation essentially pushes the slum back into the slum. The 'leaky' slum - represented in shacks and kiosks - is demolished and effaced from the streetscape. When the NARC Government took office in 2002, a campaign to rid Nairobi of hawkers was commenced with great determination by both civic authorities, local business organization and the Kenyan Police. With its own income base drawn from the formal economy, the local media has rationalized these initiatives:

'While hawkers do indeed have the right to earn themselves a living, it is important that they do not trample on the rights of other Kenyans in their quest. Time and again they have declined to use the special zones set aside for their use. Their crowding the city centre creates an atmosphere of disorder that permits and promotes pick pocketing and mugging. The permission of hawking on the streets is therefore an imperilment of the tranquillity and security of the city's residents.' (Mbalo 2007)

Historically, the contest between social classes and among social groups for the control of public space has been an important aspect of urban politics. Indeed, claiming public space by excluding so called 'undesirable others' continues to be a characteristic of contemporary urban practices. But whilst in the West the implications for the inhabitants of the city are generally restricted to minority groups – such as the homeless, drug users or sex-workers - in Nairobi these policies have profoundly negative implications for the urban masses, thousands of whom rely on street trading as a way of making a living. In many ways, the privatization of the CBD, reproduces the underlying form of territorial organization which have created in the private neighbourhoods in Nairobi's suburbs over the last two decades. As elsewhere in urban Africa, hawkers in Kenya have been regarded as an affront to the modernizing city, and over time, many attempts have been made to shift them from the city centre (Lewinson 2004). This oppression has a long history. Strict rules in the colonial period ensured that street vending was carefully controlled, and has already been described, numerous bylaws from that time have sought to regulate the street trade in the city. Conflict between hawkers, council official and police have a long history in Nairobi. Traders face persistent harassment, confiscation and loss of goods. The City Council itself has confirmed that there have been cases of city council Askaris soliciting for sex from female hawkers arrested on the streets, as an inducement for their release.

As critical in undermining the rights of traders, there has been a systematic underdevelopment of new public markets in Nairobi, despite the extraordinary growth in population. In 1972, the Metropolitan Growth Strategy indicated that 55 new markets were to be developed on public lands throughout the city. Over thirty

years, funds to develop these sites never emerged. Street hawkers have also been a victim of corruption. Mainly during the Moi regime, most of the public lands the markets were intended to be built upon were stolen by political elites through the process known as 'land-grabbing' – an endemic form of state-capture whose legacy continues to distort the equitable development and distribution of services (such as schools, public housing and health clinics) across the city (Klopp 2007). Unsurprisingly, the Metropolitan Growth Strategy which was funded by the World Bank, has been described as a '…tool for state intervention and supported interests of the hegemonic class alliance of the local bourgeoisie and Multinational Corporations while neglecting the interests of the urban majority' (UN Habitat). Undermined by endemic corruption and grand theft of donor capital, the lasting legacy of this plan include the Dandora dumpsite, once designated as 'Sector 6' of a World Bank-Kenya government low-cost housing initiative, but now a sprawling slum on the edge of an environmental time-bomb.

The experience of another group of people – namely urban gardeners and farmers - also illustrates how they have faced the same steady erosion of their rights to space as hawkers. According to Freeman, by 1985 there were almost a hundred thousand people, mostly women, subsisting in urban gardens on public lands in Nairobi (Freeman 1991). But like the hawkers, these people too have been steadily disinherited from their rights to the city, as informal settlements have been cleared or grabbed by the Kenyan elite (Macharia 1992). Katumanga (2005) notes that '…the ruling elite responds to the possibility of losing power by using neo-patrimonial structures to selectively allocate public spaces to their cronies, thereby subverting social order and undermining democratisation, security and social harmony'. In this period, attempts were made to relocate hawkers from the CBD to the Mwariro Market, then Citi-stalls, then to the streets around the Nairobi River and the Kirinyage Road, then to the Burma Market next to City Stadium. In 2001, hundreds of hawkers were moved to the Ngara Market, shortly before the 2002 general elections, in what was seen as an attempt to persuade them to vote for the ruling party – Kanu. During each of these moves, street fighting between council Askaris, police and traders were frequent and violent. The result is as the informal sector has grown, an acute shortage of market space exists and hawkers consequently are forced to undertake most of their trade in the street. Other markets outside the city-centre such as those at Kariokor, Burma, Eastleigh, Jericho and Ngara are already full. The destruction by fire of the Toi market in Kibera as a consequence of post election violence in January 2008, will inevitably also push more vendors on to the streets. Additionally, the city centre remains the most profitable site for trading - offering the least-cost/highest return location for street traders.

IV The 'hawker menace'

In addition to the activities and goals of Nairobi City Council, addressing the 'hawker menace' and improving the city-centre has been encouraged by the Nairobi Central Business District Association (NCBDA). This organization was founded in 1997 by the managing director of Sarova Hotels, Sandy Vohra. From an initial group of just nine other Nairobi businesses, the organization currently has a membership of over 100 companies

from the city centre. It has initiated a range of interventions, many of which included regeneration of footpaths, and assisting the police to address crime in the city centre more effectively. However, from the beginning, the presence of street vendors was the problem identified by the organization: Mr. Philip Kisia, the chairman of this association noted:

> 'One of the problems in our city is the vast number of hawkers who are trying to make a living in one way or another. One can understand the frustration of business people who see these "competitors" sometimes hawking right in front of their shops the very items that the shopkeepers are selling. Yet the hawkers do not have to pay rent for buildings and therefore are in a position to undercut the prices charged by shopkeepers…. The hawkers should not be seen as a problem: they play an important role in society. But what we need is a better organisation of this segment of the business community. We should learn from what is done in other countries. For instance, on weekends when there is less business activity in the city, they could be allowed to operate in streets which are designated for this purpose. The main thing is to organise their activities in an orderly manner so that it does not interfere with other business or causes harm to the environment.' (Kisia 2000, p.24)

In this context, the NCBDA has successfully completed a survey of informal traders which enabled them to obtain information on the number of traders, nature, volume and income from their business. A report by the NCBDA *Street Vending in Nairobi: A Socio-Economic Survey in the Central Business District-Nairobi* concluded that '...street vending has been largely perceived as a major contributor to congestion in urban centres'. The census registered some 14,000 people trading in the city, most involved in activities that range from the sale of vegetables, and street food like roasted maize, sliced pineapple, sugar cane, chapati, githeri, and ugali. Another group focuses on magazines, toys, sunglasses, shoes and clothes and other goods of a similar nature. Its own vision document – *Nairobi the choice of Africa, Clean, Secure, Vibrant - Home for All* – sums up its approach to what is commonly represented as the 'hawker menace' very well. The NCBDA aims to '… ensure that areas within the Central Business District and its environs are sustained at levels consistent with a cosmopolitan city with investment opportunities, an enabling business environment and the necessary amenities' (NCBDA 2007).

Given its background primarily in the Asian businesses community, the NCBDA initially was very careful in developing a non-confrontational relationship with the hawker community, but nevertheless, soon found itself converging on a new cartography of exception. Through funds and technical assistance drawn in from the Ford Foundation and despite initial skepticism and significant dispute amongst the hawker community, as to which constituency would be 'anointed' by the NCBA, it encouraged briefly the development of a quasi-representative hawkers association. In this way, it has incorporated Nairobi Urban Alliance, a group that seeks to represent hawker's rights in the city, under the auspices of the Kenya National Alliance of Street Vendors and Informal Traders (KENASVIT). The NCBDA also organized a trip to South Africa for individuals drawn from the Nairobi City Council (NCC), the Ministry

of Local Government, the private sector and where they sought to import models of urban intervention. With one hand the NCBA have sought to support initiatives to incorporate street traders into the political system, whilst with the other they have encouraged hard-line initiatives to forcibly clear them off the streets. But whilst scripting its interventions as inclusive – 'Its goal is to ensure that the areas within the Nairobi's central business district and its environs are clean, secure to peoples of all classes and races' - the NCDA has clear agenda to 'restore' the city centre and have used their influence to shape this strategically. In addition to the more immediate impact on livelihoods, the battle over the city centre is fraught with colonial politics. The exclusion of hawkers, is not in fact the exclusion of unruly hawkers, thugs and criminals as it is often depicted in the local media and in common discourse amongst the elites in the city, but is in fact the exclusion of one set of entrepreneurs by another, namely of African Kenyans by Asian Kenyans. In seeking to reorder the city centre, Asian Kenyans enforce their commercial value of their colonial legacy. It was the Asians who were sanctioned by the British to operate from the earliest times in Nairobi as the shop-keepers and commercial service provider, and they remain clearly in control of the commercial property in the city centre, and all the major shopping centres in the city such as at Westlands, Hurlingham and Gigiri. The expulsion of hawkers from the city centre is as such a process riddled with racial and colonial implications, a situation often left unsaid in public debates.

Despite the rhetoric of inclusion projected by the NCBDA, the final outcome clarified that these fictions of empowerment were characterized by processes of social exclusion and marginalization. This process has been progressively exclusionary. In 2003, encouraged by the first NARC Local Government minister, Karisa Maitha, the City Council introduced a license system, which attempted to control street vending. Each hawker paid 200 shillings and was offered a permit to operate from one of 23 designated back lanes in the CBD. Following this new licensing system, later that year, the Nairobi City Council moved thousands of hawkers to quieter roads and lanes in the central business district, in a bid to reduce congestion. This strategy drew upon the experiences in South Africa, where plans have evolved to constrain street-trade to designated areas. By the beginning of 2005 however this initiative did not meet the needs of the new urban regime. A new discourse to rationalize their expulsion from the city centre was pushed into the public domain. Hawkers become re-scripted as a security risk and 'a nuisance to the environment', specifically blamed for the rising levels of street waste in the city. At this time, the city clerk John Gakuo convinced the Central Government to assist the city council by allocating a contingent of law enforcement officers to augment the City 'Inspectorate Officers' or Askari. This final decision for ultimate expulsion of the hawkers was taken at Cabinet level, as it was only at this level, that the police could be given clear instruction to support the 200 or so City Council Askari to clear the streets. According to the Local Government minister, Musikari Kombo, 'We were allowing hawking in the streets but realized that they had been infiltrated by thugs. They made Nairobi a risky place to do business in.' (Mogusu 2006). Another commentator put it 'Alive to the fact that no self-respecting city would allow itself to be overrun by unruly traders, a permanent solution had to be found'(Kago 2007).

The result was steady pressure on street vendors throughout 2006. Between June and September 2006, skirmishes between council officials and the hawkers intensified (Fig. 3 & 4). At the same time President Kibaki announced the up to a dozen new markets would be built for hawkers across Kenya, two specifically in Nairobi (Muthurwa and Westlands) and that in future the 'hawking' would be recognized as an s an integral element of the economy. Indeed through a range of initiatives, offering loans and training, an entrepreneurial discourse was mobilized to reframe the informal sector as 'the successful business people of tomorrow'. This language sought in some way of soften the blow of expulsion from the streets, but did little to mitigate the justifiable anger of the street vending community or the use of police violence used to hasten their department from the city centre. Once politically sanctioned the use of riot police in this situation has been organized, systematic and violent. Scores of hawkers and policemen as well as the Askaris sustained injuries these events. Media reports underline that that the police's use of tear gas, live ammunition and crude weapons on both sides, such as iron bars, truncheons and axes is commonplace during these disturbances. One policeman and two hawkers were killed during these confrontations and the level of sustained state-sanctioned violence against this group of urban entrepreneurs was intense enough to mean that by the middle of 2006, for the city for the first time in a generation became 'hawker free' and largely remained so for almost 18 months. The 'hawker menace' had been removed, temporarily it turned out, as just two months before the 2007 election street traders were permitted to come back into the city centre again, in a bid to ensure support for Kibaki's bid for re-election. However, the logic of claiming the city centre for 'legitimate business' and as a basis for Kenya's bid to create a new globally integrated, 'World Class' city remains in place. As I write, street hawkers again face expulsion – some to take up a limited amount of trading pitches in Muthurwa, in the only market completed in the Nairobi in over a decade, but most, once again, will be deprived of their livelihoods and will be forced to depart into those spaces of urban oblivion beyond the neo-liberal urban imaginary.



Figure 3: Police clash with Hawkers on the Streets of Nairobi, June 2006 | Source: *The Nation June 5, 2006*



Figure 4: This satirical observation on the appeal of Vision 2030, presents an oblique criticism of the new vision for Nairobi, and the consequence for security

V Conclusion

In the cities of the Global South, and notably the cities of sub-Saharan Africa – Addis Abba, Nairobi, Dar es Salem, a cartography of exception in practiced to such a degree to have transformed these cities into urban archipelagos. The urban morphology and social and economic topography of these cities are sharply distinguished, heavily fortified and distinctively regulated. These urban conditions have come to their absolute expression in Nairobi during the recent post-election violence, when the slum areas of the city were effectively sealed off by the police and the army and the population was 'locked down' like prisoners. As such, the urban archipelago is made in conditions that overturn the urban ideals once enshrined in the liberal western city-state – represented in the democratic spaces of libraries, museums and public parks. In contrast, the urban archipelago dilutes the public sphere and fragments rights and legal status. Its spatial form is reflected in the slum, the gated community and the private fortress and its geography is a patchwork system of bounded and secured neighbourhoods and highly regulated forms of movement and mobility. Nairobi is consequently a city of walls and boundaries, a city of enclaves, a fortress city – a model of urban development repeated throughout the continent and in many places throughout the Global South (see Obudho & Aduwo 1992). Underwriting this urban topography is a social and political process, which maintains the exploitative system of connections and strategic disassociations that characterize the spatial form in the city. As a city where rights are often suspended, the urban experience is one where the urban dweller never forgets the importance of edges, perimeters, borders and crossings. This form of urban territorial organization is an outcome of the legacies of colonialism and deeply inequitable local practices which continue to enforce Nairobi's relationship to the inward investor and the tourist rather than support the rights of the urban inhabitant. Hawkers play a pivotal role in this urban drama. Their future and the attempts to re-order Nairobi city centre has emerged as a key site where debates over the global and local versions of the city and the contest between different developmental futures are acted out.

Beneath the rhetoric of Kenya Vision 2030, is a labyrinthine economy of street vendors, hawkers, rubbish collectors, casual labourers, shoe-shiners, house-cleaners, hairdressers, and small retailers- emerging daily from the slums, and villages in the adjacent countryside areas. In spite of the Kibaki government's claim that it would during its first period of office create 500,000 new jobs for unemployed youth who are drawn into these occupations, instead, one of the key impacts of structural adjustments it has overseen has been the growth of the informal rather than the formal sector of the economy. As Ogola (2007) notes, 'Kenya's problem, as in most of Africa, may not be the capacity to generate wealth but the resolve to distribute this wealth evenly'. This vast population feels deeply disenfranchised – a politically sensibility that transcends tribal allegiances, and which continues to fuel the uprising of the poor in Kenya today, particularly after the disputed general election. Hence, time and time again, the question as to why there are so many hawkers in Nairobi in the first place is answered by another set of questions which draws attention to structural and institutional inequality: namely - why is there such a massive migration from rural areas to Nairobi? Where are the city's markets? Why where these markets never built? And

ultimately, in whose image is the future of the city and of Kenya being imagined?

Notwithstanding attempts to recast hawkers and the Juli Kali sector as the nation's entrepreneurs in pre-election propaganda, in practice, the spaces of neo-liberalism, which requires the spatiality of the 'hub', will ensure that these people risk being further excluded from the formal map of the city, despite their real economic potential. As it is currently configured, Kenya's competitive advantage relies not only on commodities but a cheap labour force that subsists permanently on the margins. As the gateway to one the 'last emerging markets', Nairobi is a focus for new forms of capitalist accumulation, in which the poor, once again are the losers. At issue here also, is the erosion of right-based approaches to the distribution of resources in the city. These rights were also an obstacle to colonialism and remain obstacles to the remaking of political–economic space in the image of neo-liberal globalists. There was no call in the 2007 election campaign for to offer slum dwellers right to their property as was done in Brazil during the 1980s, and no deal offered to street hawkers, except the promise of new markets and temporary reprieve from expulsion from the city centre. These problems reveal a deep structural problem in Nairobi. By suppressing these spaces of labour – Nairobi is a city that aims to be planned and managed for international investment – an economic priority that has a spatial imperative that supersedes the needs of the poor. As revealed in the expulsion of street hawkers from the streets of Nairobi, the confluence of racial and economic conditions found in the spatial structure of the residential segregation of city is remade in the control of the city centre – reflecting the entwined qualities of the spatial and ideological logic of the unequal urban archipelago. Until these issues are addressed in the vision for Kenya, and the rights of urban populace are restored, the perpetual reproduction of inequality in Nairobi will remain intact and unbroken.

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