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L'Afrique et les défis du XXIème siècle
Africa and the Challenges of the Twenty First Century
A África e os desafios do Século XXI

إفريقيا وتحديات القرن الواحد والعشرين

**Demolition, Homelessness and Citizens' Deprivation
in African Cities: Democratising Urban Space
through Polycentric Governance**

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Abstract

Urban Environmental Poverty (UEP), an off-shoot of urban environmental degradation, is predicated upon poor governance. In spite of the rapidly growing urban population in Africa (at 3.6 growth rate, the highest among world regions), infrastructures that are incentives for entrepreneurial development and nerves of urban economy are increasingly deteriorating. As expected, cities in Africa are not serving as engines of growth and structural transformation. Instead they are part of the cause and a major symptom of the economic and social crisis that have enveloped the continent. Consequently, citizens are adopting diverse coping mechanisms, some of which are affecting urban beauty and healthy conditions. Such vectors of UEP include: degreening activities, uncollected solid waste, urban ghetto and slum, squatter settlements, etc. Since UEP reduces urban beauty, African governments tend to use force in addressing such urban problems without consulting and involving the citizens. Whereas good governance entails a common thought between the leadership (elected) and the followership (electorate) with citizens playing active role in decision making, the responses of African governments to urban ghetto usually takes unidirectional approach with exclusionary tendency – eviction and demolition. Eviction and demolition generate adverse consequences on socio-economic wellbeing of cities dwellers as citizens are killed and property destroyed. It is now generally agreed that forced eviction represents a dimension of urban violence of which African governments are culpable.

Using the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework, this paper employs empirical data to analyse the missing links between urban managers and urban residents in Angola, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. The paper found that urban governance structures in the five countries are centralized and deviate from planning norms and people-centred governance system. Consequently, citizens are repressed, killed, rendered homeless and made to suffer loss of socio-economic opportunities, while children education was greatly affected. These actions of African governments have been viewed as vectors of poverty, repression, and deprivation that invariably, breed aggression and future restiveness among youths, especially those whose parents' homes were demolished when they were young. Cases of demolition and homelessness of citizens have reached an alarming rate across Africa. It is now a norm for African governments to sacrifice citizens homes and dwelling for urban beautification and 'public' projects.

This paper provides case studies to demonstrate principles and practices needed to make polycentric governance and community initiatives resolve conflicts of interests on urban space in the continent. The paper argues that, for urban governance to benefit urban residents, it has to proceed from the people and be guided by them in decisions on all urban matters, including planning and modification of plans on competing urban landuses. Using Polycentric Governance and Poverty Reduction Strategy, this paper designs an African Urban Governance Model (AUGM) capable of mainstreaming citizens-centred institutions in urban areas into socio-economic and techno-political decision making so that citizens (including the urban poor) can participate effectively in decisions that concern their lives, thus entrenching good urban governance, citizens-centred planning and development in Africa.