Towards a new community-led governance approach, integrating the global into the mundane — and why design matters

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Abstract
Contemporary Africa is undergoing a rapid evolution, with several African nations experiencing the highest global rates of urbanization. Nigeria, ‘The Giant of Africa’, is no exception and has recently surpassed South Africa as the continent’s largest economy. Along with historical challenges the country has faced, such as corruption and lack of governmental transparency, rapid urbanization brings a new set of issues to the fore. This paper explores alternative governance models in developing nations against the backdrop of rapid urbanization and the growth of informal structures. Roughly two-third of Africa’s urban population live in informal, over-crowded settlements, and two-fifths live below the poverty line. Informal employment accounts for roughly 60 percent of urban jobs. This paper examines potential models and solutions to address some of these urgent issues, stressing the importance of integrating the ‘global’ with the ‘mundane’. The paper focuses on the low-income community of Makoko in Lagos, Nigeria, as a case study. It presents alternative community-led sustainable approaches to urban governance, while drawing attention to the interface between the built environment and governance, and highlighting the role of design in shaping social infrastructure. It further suggests that formal/informal and top-down/bottom-up governance should come together to tackle urban challenges such as the lack of basic infrastructure and services, the lack of steady income and the adaption to climate change.
"We are failing in how we plan, build and manage our cities."

Joan Clos, UN Habitat

**BACKGROUND: URBANIZATION IN AFRICA**

Africa is the world’s fastest urbanizing continent, with a growing number of centres and institutes dedicated to studies and research of African cities. Sub-Saharan Africa is undergoing intense demographic growth and 37% of the population live in urban areas (Morakinyo et al., 2012: 1). That percentage is expected to rise dramatically in the coming decades, predominantly due to informal growth. By 2050, the urban population in Africa is expected to triple, with this population rise concentrated in two countries: Congo and Nigeria (Tibaijuka, 2007; Burdett et al., 2014).

When reading, thinking, and writing about Africa’s ‘urban revolution’ (Parnell and Pieterse, 2014) or Africa’s ongoing or expected urbanization process, five critical conditions can be observed. First, despite the sheer size, diversity, and history of the African continent, many scholars still speak of ‘African cities’ in a uniform sense, while simultaneously acknowledging that it is an improper generalization (Myers, 2011; Parnell and Pieterse, 2014). There is an ever-increasing flow of knowledge but relatively little familiarity with local peculiarities (Obrist et al., 2013). This may be one reason why highly important and politically charged institutions such as UN Habitat and the World Bank tend to draw ‘one-size-fits-all’ policies (Myers 2011), and why urban regions in general (but particularly in the developing world) suffer from an ‘implementation gap’—the result of a disconnect between policies, planning, implementation and feedback processes. Policy-makers and international diplomats are too often far removed from what is ‘happening on the ground’; and stakeholders, including the local population, are not identified and involved effectively enough (UN-Habitat, 2013; Satterthwaite, 2013; Berrisford, 2014; Hoelzel, 2014; Van Wezemal, 2014).

Second, there is a conceptual lack of clarity when discussing cities versus urbanized areas, or urbanization as a whole. Many publications and conferences in the fields of urban studies, urban research, urban planning, and urban design in recent years began with the observation that ‘by 2050 75% of the world’s population will live in cities’ (UN-Habitat, 1996; United Nations, 2008; Brenner and Schmid, 2014: 312; Burdett and Sujidic, 2011), a number that has recently been adjusted to be 66% by 2050 (United Nations, 2014). Today, with 54% of the world’s population living in urbanized areas (United Nations, 2014), it has become a ‘doxic common sense’ (Brenner and Schmid, 2014, p. 310) amongst scholars, professionals, politicians, and diplomats that we live in the ‘Urban Age’. This thesis has gained international prominence particularly through The Urban Age Project of the Cities Programme at the London School of Economics (LSE), (discussed in a series of international conferences in São Paulo, Mumbai and Johannesburg, amongst others), and publications such as ‘Living in the endless city’ (Burdett and Sujidic, 2011).

The term ‘city’ (and by extension, the term ‘urban age’) has captured the imagination to achieve a certain (possibly glorified) ideological status (Wachsmuth, 2014). ‘City’ and ‘urban’ have become fashionable, making it difficult for discourse to break out beyond the mainstream. There is yet another layer of difficulty in the idea of the ‘city’: it is still largely defined through Western, predominantly European, ideas. By this definition, the traditional ‘city’ possesses a clear centre, clear edges, and a classic urban civilization, finding its expression in not only the hope of its inhabitants but also in the assumption that cities and urban spaces around the world almost automatically offer a space to engage in democratic debate and practice (Pierre, 2011, p. 13; Rode and Shankar, 2014). This notion, for good or for bad, is challenged when working in an African urban context where the logic and systems of tribes and traditional ruling structures are still very present (Creutzfeldt, 2013). Furthermore, it has also become clear that the process of urbanization has fundamentally and globally changed over time (Diener et al., 2005; Schmid, 2014; Parnell and Pieterse, 2014). Former rural areas have undergone a process of urbanization where once smaller villages and towns have grown together to form ‘in-between cities’ (Sieverts, 1997), ‘desakota’ (McGee, 1990), or ‘exopolis’ (Soja, 2000). Most urban areas, whether in emerging, developing, or developed regions, are composed of multiple municipalities (Lorrain, 2011).
Third, cities are perceived as vital sources of economic development, with urbanization and prosperity in almost perfect correlation (Jacobs, 1969; Gaeser, 2011). Unlike most nation-states, the origin and growth of cities is usually not ethnic, cultural or geographic but primarily economic (Pierre, 2011). Dense and heterogeneous city regions are the driving forces of the global economy, generating enormous wealth, technological innovation and cultural creativity (Christiaanse, 2009; Barber, 2013; Soja and Kanai, 2014; Turok, 2014). When explaining the logic for the rapid urbanization observed over recent decades around the world, it has been assumed—by economists, planners, and policymakers, amongst others—that individuals decide to move from rural to urban areas primarily in the hope of getting a job and hence improving their income. However, this is only partially true for African urban regions and the urbanization process. The majority of Africa’s expanding urban population is born in cities, not in villages (Fox, 2011; Turok, 2014). Yet, many authors (especially in mainstream urban textbooks, international diplomacy, policy-making and journalism) overplay the narrative of cities as spaces for entrepreneurship and opportunity. While urban growth is undoubtedly an urgent challenge to deal with, it may nevertheless help to distinguish between the pressure created by the challenge and the recognition of opportunities arising from it—particularly when it comes to places that have a high, and growing, rate of informal settlements and jobs.

In Makoko, a low-income community in the heart of Lagos which this paper focuses on, 40% of the population live on less than USD 1.25 per day (Fabulous Urban and Heinrich Böll Foundation Nigeria, 2014). This is reflected by the figures on sub-Saharan Africa, where 43% of the urban population live below the poverty line (Turok, 2014, p. 62). Additionally, the discourse in many developing regions places too much emphasis on economic growth, resulting in a fixation on bare numbers and figures instead of economic development, which takes the distribution of wealth into account (Dugarova, 2014). The latter would benefit a wide spectrum of the population, while a single-minded focus on GDP growth and international investment may result in even larger income inequalities, benefiting an elite minority (Lagos State Government, 2012a). Even the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund agree in their latest report that job creation and poverty reduction require much more than just economic growth (World Bank et al., 2014/2015). There are an increasing number of extremely rich Africans; The Economist (2011) declared Aliko Dangote, a Nigerian businessman as the richest person of African descent. While such individual success stories are impressive, the vast majority, even in Lagos’ booming economy with a relatively low unemployment rate of 7.6% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010, p. 12), live partially in extreme poverty (Akinsete et al., 2014; Fabulous Urban, 2014). The recognition of the importance of the informal sector and a focus on its recognition, rather than exclusion, through collaboration with the formal sector, could make great contributions to the even development of urban spaces in the 21st century (Neuwirth, 2012; Brown et al., 2014; Winkelried, 2005).

Fourth, it is widely recognized that large cities can create or at least intensify inequalities, social segregation and social polarization (UN-Habitat, 2003; Davis, 2006; Koonings and Kruit, 2010; Soja 2010). This is highly visible in many African cities, where the differences between the state, public authorities, the elite and the urban poor majority are particularly stark (Myers, 2011). Rapid urbanization can further result in other challenges including congestion, growing informal settlements, informal economies, environmental pollution, and restricted access to public services (Floater et al., 2014, p. 7). However, most of these problems are the result of poorly managed urban growth (Burdett et al., 2014; Floater et al., 2014) which brings to the fore the downside of urban spaces as areas of wealth, prosperity, and innovation (Rieniets, 2009).

Fifth, scholars, mostly from a political science background, tend to espouse a narrative of ‘Africa’ as a place of grand and broad crisis (Myers, 2011, p. 3; Turok, 2014), repeatedly drowning in bloody conflicts, corruption, and favouritism (The Economist, 2000). On the contrary, international media and magazines such as TIME magazine and The Economist have recently praised Africa’s promise and rise, citing its enormous potential due to its disproportionately young population and ongoing urbanization process (The Economist, 2011; Perry, 2012; Haefliger, 2014). Legal reforms in many of these areas are geared towards accommodating the potential of this enormous population growth. This also applies to planning law, which has been used in the past to restrict social and economic opportunities for the majority of the population. Planning law provides the legal framework that
determines which urban plans are developed and essentially how urban areas are shaped: responsibilities, accountability, processes and legal status. It further determines which buildings and settlements are legal and which are not and it has frequently been used to demolish 'illegal' settlements, and evict residents (Nossiter, 2013; Berrisford, 2014). In Nigeria, the current Land Use Act of 1978 is enormously powerful; it grants the government control over the specific use of land in all parts of the country, thus determining the planning and zoning programme for all use.

De facto, the Land Use Act makes the government (or the governor, in Lagos State) the owner of all land (Aluko, 2012; Sadiq, 2011). 'Public interest' gives the governor the right to expropriate land and resettle people. Provided they can prove themselves the rightful holders of the respective land, they will be compensated. Informal settlements and 'slums' considered to be illegal (such as the case study discussed in this paper) have little legal power to claim land rights. The Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development is responsible for all physical planning, urban development, urban regeneration and building control policies of Lagos State under the framework conditions of the aforementioned Land Use Act (Urban and Regional Planning and Development Law 2010 No. C 41).

**GOVERNANCE IN LAGOS**

In 1960 Nigeria gained independence from Britain and became a federal republic in 1963, operating under a three-tier governmental system – federal, state and local government levels (Falola and Heaton, 2008, pp. xvi, 8). The nation is governed by a president, who is the head of state at federal level, while states are headed by governors and local government areas by chairmen. Lagos State was established in May 1967 and was Nigeria’s capital from 1914 to 1991 (Lagos State Government, 2012, p. 4). It is Nigeria’s largest city and regional economic hub, accounting for 90% of national foreign trade flows. Lagos is currently one of the three African megacities, along with Cairo and Kinshasa (United Nations 2014: 14). Data on the size of the population varies, depending on the source. Lagos State Government indicated the size of the population was ‘in excess of 18 million’ (Lagos State Government, 2012, p. 3), and is currently growing at a rate of 300,000 people annually (Burdett and Rode 2011, p. 8), or 3.9% per year (United Nations 2014, p. 26). Some estimates forecast population growth of more than 25 million, making it the ninth largest city in the world by 2030 (United Nations 2014, p. 26). Today 12.5% of Nigeria’s population live in Lagos, and among this population, two out of three live in informal settlements (Morakinyo et al., 2012, p. 5), based on the UN Habitat criteria on precarious settlements (UN Habitat, 2003). According to a survey by the National Bureau of Statistics (2010, p. 46) 2,307,281 persons, approximately 11.5% of the population, work in the informal sector. As of 2010, roughly 20% of Lagos’ population was either unemployed or engaged in informal employment. However, the transparency and accuracy of the data remains difficult to estimate.

As noted, many metropolitan areas are composed of several municipalities, as cities have grown beyond their historical and electoral boundaries. Consequently, contemporary city regions are often governed by multiple local governments (Moonen et al., 2014). The Lagos region has adjusted its administrative boundaries to bring the entire metropolitan population under a single jurisdiction, meaning all of the estimated 18 to 21.5 million people living in Lagos fall under the jurisdiction of the Governor of Lagos. However, it has been suggested that the closer the ‘fit’ between the number of people living within the administrative boundaries of the city and the metropolitan population, the more effectively the governance of the metropolitan region is managed (Burdett et al., 2014, p. 17). While Lagos is divided into 20 local government areas (LGAs), which are crucial for the state’s development, local government structures are weak. With a governor that wields considerable political power (Olorunmaiye, 2013), the elected heads of local government bodies are executive chairmen, comparable to district mayors but with very little policy-making influence (ELRI and CCDI, 2014, p. 10; Adeleke, 2014). Some people in Lagos call the chairmen 'mayors' and argue that the executive chairmen of Lagos should participate in international conferences such as C40, since they know what is really happening on the ground—and, hence, they are key trigger points for policy implementation, change and progress (Barber, 2013). As Lagos is growing not only in
population but in surface area as well, especially in the northeast and the southwest, it may be appropriate to seek more regional collaboration with neighbouring Ogun State (Salau et al., 2013), or even a fusion of the two states, as has been suggested by some (Datu, 2013).

In examining a city region like Lagos, categories and preconceptions of 'city', 'city life' and urbanization processes or perhaps 'urban life' are heavily challenged. Despite being one of the largest cities in the world, many places resemble a (giant) village with flat building structures and narrow streets. The micro-managed structure of what would generally be considered public services further exemplifies the 'giant village' nature of the city. Electricity provision in the state is insufficient; demand is estimated at 10,000 MW while the national grid only generates an approximate 4,500 MW annually (Lagos State Government, 2012b). While Lagos State runs a number of gas-powered independent power plants, this deficit is largely made up by privately owned diesel-powered generators.

Despite the 2007 Lagos Waste Management Authority Law, waste management remains a huge challenge. According to official data, Lagos generates 10,000 metric tonnes of waste daily (Lagos State Government, 2012a, p. 4). In addition, Lagos State has no piped wastewater system and households in upscale neighbourhoods usually use septic tanks. Lagos has only a few wastewater treatment plants, implemented in the mid-eighties. Their capacity for about 140,000 persons is grossly insufficient to serve a population the size of Lagos’ (that is constantly growing). While the World Bank recommends the implementation of policies that make it easier for vulnerable and less experienced workers to find jobs (World Bank et al., 2014/2015), the informal cart-pushers have been banned and all the waste management has to go through Lagos Waste Management Authority LAWMA; otherwise it is considered illegal.

In recent years, giant development projects, mostly financed through private and foreign capital, have been initiated. Despite this, planning processes lack transparency and it is hard to obtain official information. One such megaproject is Eko Atlantic City, built on land reclaimed from the Atlantic Ocean (Heinrich Böll Foundation Nigeria et al., 2012). Another example is the Lekki Free Trade Zone, currently under construction in the East of Lagos State. The social costs of projects like these are currently unknown but seen as critical, due to the lack of citizens’ involvement in the planning process and the complete privatization and gentrification of entire neighbourhoods (Sassen, 2014).

**Towards a New Governance**

Recent explorations on the future of cities and urban strategies evolve increasingly around ‘urban governance’, ‘the governance of cities’, or ‘urbanizing of government’ (Rode and Shankar, 2014). In order to tackle the aforementioned challenges in Lagos and against the backdrop of rapid urbanization and urban growth in Africa and Nigeria respectively, this paper postulates a governance approach that is closer to the needs and realities of everyday life— one which includes the integration of informal activities and structures, as opposed to excluding them. Governance, in this context, is understood as a shift from more formal structures of central management to processes through which the metropolitan or city region relates to their environment, not least in public service delivery. It also should be understood as processes through which public and private resources are coordinated in the pursuit of collective interests (Pierre, 2011). The argument is not that the suggested approach ought to replace the existing top-down model but rather that the two facets, state and society, should be integrated and interact better, conceptually and operationally (Pierre and Peters, 2005; Frug, 2011). Both the macro and micro levels must work together to achieve the quality of life desired by the residents of the city region, especially the disadvantaged, marginalized, vulnerable and poor (Hoelzel, 2013; Fabulous Urban, 2014; Srinivas, 2014).

Strategic planning at the metropolitan level of a large city region is complex, requiring leadership and strong coordination of policies across sectors (Floater et al., 2014). Nevertheless, despite the widespread acknowledgement that a prosperous city is more than ‘simple bricks and mortar’ (Williams 2011), too many mayors—or in Lagos, the governor—chase after the vision of ‘the beautiful city’, ‘Africa’s Model Megacity’ (Lagos State Government, 2012b; Lagos State Government, 2013). The argument is that the inclusion of the informal
workforce’s creativity and ingenuity would benefit all (Neuwirth, 2011, 2013; Satterthwaite, 2011, 2013; Hoelzel, 2013). In this sense, contemporary ‘multi-layer governance’ (Floater et al., 2014, p. 12) in Lagos needs stronger local governments and community-led governance models, which include the creation of jobs tailored to respective communities. Local governments have a key role in ensuring health, safety, and education, including building standards; land use planning and management; environmental, occupational and public health services; disaster prevention and preparedness (Satterthwaite et al., 2013). Today, governance in Lagos—what little exists of it—is too centralized to make a substantial difference, and is far too focused on the elite. This is further exacerbated by the deeply entrenched gap between government, elite, and the majority of the urban poor.

**Makoko**

The community of Makoko is a prime example of disproportionate growth amid rapid urbanisation in the developing world. Makoko is a waterfront community in the heart of the city which lies along the Lagos Lagoon. Historically a fishing community predating the establishment of Lagos State, Makoko has devolved into an urban slum over the years due to rural-urban migration and poorly governed development. It is a culturally diverse community with six main sub-communities, four main ethnic groups, three practiced religions and over five spoken languages, and despite the surrounding urbanization, traditional governance structures and rulers (baales) still exert an enormous amount of influence within the community. Its economic structure revolves around the use of water for fishing, boat making and craft. The community relies on basic traditional technology in the processing and production of its goods, contributing to slow economic growth.

With a population of approximately 50,000, Makoko is one of the largest low-income communities in Lagos. The World Bank, through the Lagos Metropolitan Development and Governance Project (LMDGP) intended to invest $40.9 million in upgrading nine selected slum neighbourhoods, including Makoko. However, the World Bank recently stopped the funding, and LMDGP was dissolved amid accusations that the project failed to properly apply the funding for its intended purposes. Additionally, the state government commenced the demolition of some of the 'illegal' structures in Makoko in 2012 and in Badia in 2013 (The World Bank, 2014) in preparation for new development. No accommodation was made for the resettlement or compensation of community members, which led to public backlash and eventually a court injunction to cease the demolitions (Akinsete et al., 2014). The resultant situation is one of deep-seated distrust, with the local citizens and informal institutions pitted firmly against the government and formal structures.

The state of governance in Makoko typifies the disconnect that exists between formal/top-down government institutions and local citizens. The case of the LMDGP’s misappropriated funds shows that international agencies and development banks need to rethink how they relate to the urban poor and organizations charged with engaging them. In most cases, official aid agencies and development banks do not implement initiatives on the ground, instead funding others to do so—and they are only as effective as the local institutions they fund. If the funded central or local governments have no relationships with, or accountability to, the local citizens, these international organizations—no matter how honest their intentions—reinforce undemocratic structures. The citizens of low-income communities are often acutely aware of what is required to improve their living conditions, generally needing relatively little funding. There is a need for local governments and institutions that listen and respond to local communities (particularly the urban poor), working in collaboration with them to develop appropriate solutions (Satterthwaite, 2011, 2013; Hoelzel, 2013; Fabulous Urban, 2014; Akinsete, et al. 2014).

**Neighbourhood Management as a Model for Community-based Governance**

In the new context of dynamic and rapidly evolving urban centres, community engagement and citizen participation are an essential component of urban governance models which are closer to the ground, more flexible and more responsive to local needs. Following the backlash resulting from the Makoko demolitions and the subsequent injunction, the state government expressed a willingness to consider alternative development plans for the area.
proposed by the community. Lagos-based NGO the Social and Economic Rights Action Centre (SERAC) brought together a multi-national and multi-disciplinary team mandated to work with the community to develop a ‘Sustainable Regeneration Plan’.

Exploring alternative governance structures was a key element of the ‘Sustainable Regeneration Plan’. The team aspired towards the integration of top-down and bottom-up community development, producing an alternative regeneration plan addressing the concerns of the community while meeting the ambitions of the state government. The results of an in-depth situational and needs analysis conducted as part of the process indicated that apart from basic infrastructure (such as sanitation, healthcare, housing, energy and education), community empowerment was identified as a priority area of concern (Makoko/Iwaya Waterfront Community, 2014). The team looked towards existing models of decentralized governance and development, exploring adaptations for the local context. Neighbourhood management was identified as a grassroots governance approach embedded within the community that could inform the development of a community-led governance model in Makoko.

Neighbourhood management aims to deliver urban governance at the local level, considering a holistic view of an area as opposed to along various strands. Originally developed in the UK as a means of delivering urban regeneration, this place-based approach seeks to ‘narrow the gap’ between deprived communities and affluent areas (CLG, 2008), an issue particularly relevant in Lagos, where the gap between the elite and the urban poor is extremely wide. The UK Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) describes the process as bringing together ‘an alliance of three forces—representatives of the local community (including councillors), representatives of local service providers and a small professional team led by the Neighbourhood Manager to facilitate change’ (CLG, 2008, p.18). Essentially, neighbourhood management seeks to utilize a grassroots method of regeneration delivery where local services are pooled and brought into alignment with local community needs, thus making them more responsive. Neighbourhood management covers a wide scope of activities: from the work of estate wardens, caretakers and housing managers, to strategic planning and local governance, addressing issues including resident satisfaction and involvement, education, health, security, housing and employment (Power and Bergin, 1999; Brown, 2002). The objective of neighbourhood management is to create efficient service delivery within a particular geographic boundary, tailored to address the unique issues faced by its local community, thereby improving citizens’ quality of life. This highlights how the neighbourhood management model lends itself to the context of most developing nations where service delivery tends to operate on a micro-management level via informal structures.

The day-to-day operational process is overseen by a neighbourhood manager, who focuses on the ‘totality of place’ working in partnership with both the community and service providers to tackle local problems from the residents’ perspective. The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) outlines a basic model (see Table 1) for neighbourhood management, which sets out five key features of neighbourhood management and four main tools for successful delivery. This model has formed the basis of the development of different place-based initiatives in the UK, such as the Pathfinder Programme and New Deal for Communities.
Table 1: Delivering Neighbourhood Management (Source: Social Exclusion Unit, 2001; CLG, 2010)

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<tr>
<th><strong>NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT</strong></th>
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<td><strong>FEATURES</strong></td>
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<td>• Someone with overall responsibility at the neighbourhood level for managing the renewal process</td>
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<td>• Community involvement and leadership</td>
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<td>• A systematic, planned approach to tackling local problems</td>
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<td>• Effective delivery mechanisms</td>
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**Translating Neighbourhood Management to Developing Nations**

The existing gap between formal governance institutions and local citizens lies at the heart of the challenges faced by most low-income communities such as Makoko. To bridge this gap, the neighbourhood management model developed by the team in Makoko seeks to provide a framework to bring together various stakeholders within the community, empowering them to play a leading role in their own governance with support from Lagos State and other non-State institutions.

The key actors within this framework are:

- **Local citizens (Makoko Community)**
- **Neighbourhood Managers:** Newly-formed ‘Makoko/Iwaya Waterfront Development Association’ (charged with oversight of the Makoko community) and individuals (charged with oversight of different sub-communities)
- **Traditional rulers (baales)**
- **Lagos State Government (and associated agencies and parastatals)**
- **Civil society groups**
- **Private investors**
- **Consultants**
- **Non-governmental agencies**

The pivotal role of ‘neighbourhood manager’ is assumed by the newly established Makoko Community Development Association, which undertakes broad oversight on governance within the community. The Association acts an interface between the formal and informal governance structures, and a point of convergence for all major stakeholders within, and without, the community (see Figure 1). The Association will have a Board of Directors comprising nine community members (sitting for a term of six years) including traditional rulers, leaders of
cooperative societies (trade associations), leader of the youth group, leader of the women’s group, and elected members of the community.

The main responsibilities of the Association include:

- Cooperating with agencies and institutions responsible for collaborative community service delivery
- Mobilizing community members to participate in sustainable development of the community
- Constituting active community members into committees for development and management of different spheres of the community
- Mobilizing groups (particularly youth and women) for relevant skills acquisition and training
- Maintaining channels for community feedback, primarily through neighbourhood managers, to monitor community needs and priorities
- Collating, retaining and updating database of development activities (physical, social and economic) within the community
- Providing a platform for community members, in collaboration with relevant government agencies, to coordinate, monitor and assess community development activities
- Mobilizing resources (community and otherwise) towards establishing an Environmental Protection Fund

Figure 1: Delivering Neighbourhood Management in Makoko (Source: Makoko/Iwaya Waterfront Community, 2014)

The Association will provide a strong institutional platform to oversee community development underpinned by the activities of various standing committees (see Figure 1). The core committees include Lands and Housing, Environment, Security and Safety, and Welfare and Community Services, with provision for the creation of additional
committees depending on community needs. Each of the committees shall comprise of no more than 5 community members, including one traditional ruler (baale) and at least one woman.

Figure 2: The Makoko Community Development Association within the Community (Source: Makoko/Iwaya Waterfront Community, 2014)

A key element of the neighbourhood management approach adopted in Makoko is about tapping into the power of self-organization to create multi-faceted solutions to address complex issues, leverage challenges as opportunities and turn the lack of infrastructure into a source of income. Emphasis is placed on sustainability and maximizing value chains within waste-to-wealth cycles to address some of the largest challenges on the planet — environmental protection, economic development and social equity. One example of this micro-management and micro-funding approach in action is the Neighbourhood Hotspot developed under the Makoko Sustainable Regeneration Plan.

The Neighbourhood Hotspot is essentially a physical manifestation of the principles of neighbourhood management — a coordinated approach to service delivery at local level, which is inclusive of residents in order to maximise benefits for the local community. Taking a holistic view of community governance and development, the Neighbourhood Hotspot offers appropriate and community-led integrated service provision, via flexible infrastructure, within a framework that accommodates existing community structures. With waste-management and energy provision constituting key community concerns, the Neighbourhood Hotspot is a piece of dynamic renewable energy infrastructure: a biogas plant generating energy from organic waste, with a structure serving as a community centre and a nucleus for local services — grassroots healthcare delivery, training and development, community cooking and urban gardening (Akinsete, et al., 2014). It is an approach to new ways of providing basic infrastructure and services for all, against the backdrop of a central government that is struggling to do so.

The Swiss Embassy in Abuja agreed to fund one pilot Neighbourhood Hotspot and on December 15 2014, an agreement was signed with the Union of Ogu Baales of Makoko. A Memorandum of Understanding covering the ownership, operation, and use of the Neighbourhood Hotspot has been signed between the urban design agency,
Fabulous Urban, and the Representatives of the Makoko/Iwaya Waterfront Communities in Yaba Mainland Local Government Council, Lagos State (notary certified by SERAC).

DESIGN MATTERS: SHAPING SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The Neighbourhood Hotspot is simultaneously a business incubator, a place for social exchange and a knowledge centre for renewable energy production, waste management, urban gardening and water harvesting—a truly public and social infrastructure that empowers the community. The construction of the structure is simple and based on sustainable, local and indigenous methods of building with wood on stilts. This not only creates the opportunity to showcase climate resilient construction techniques, but the combination of traditional construction methods and local materials engages local artisans in the process, thereby generating jobs and building on local capability. In addition to a biogas plant and kiosk, each Neighbourhood Hotspot has the potential to incorporate a range of different activities, providing space for urban gardening, workshop and cooking facilities, doctor’s offices and reading rooms (Fabulous Urban 2014; Fabulous Urban and Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2014; Akinsete et al., 2014) (see Figures 3-6).

Figure 3: The Makoko Neighbourhood Hotspot with local waste-recycling economy (Source: Fabulous Urban, 2014)
Figure 4: The Makoko Neighbourhood Hotspot: close-up (Source: Fabulous Urban, 2014)

Figure 5: The Makoko Neighbourhood Hotspot: integrated rainwater harvesting system (Source: Fabulous Urban, 2014)
As discussed, with all the dialogue and literature regarding smart cities, better cities, and future cities, there is an increasing—and absolutely justified—debate on urban governance, urban management, and policy-making that requires the collaboration of professionals from various disciplines. This last section discusses the importance of design, highlighting the role of designers in solving issues and challenges raised (MoMA, 2011; Lepik, 2011; Lepik, 2013; Hoelzel, 2013).

From the premise of a democratic society, the key to successful urban governance, management, planning and design may lie in the ability to bring together people from different backgrounds with different interests within a complex network (De Landa, 1997; Hoelzel, 2014). Architects and designers are inherently hands-on ‘troubleshooters’, harnessing the propensity to make conflicts spatially productive. Urban design and spatial planning is not ‘moderated’ or ‘managed’ but rather ‘practiced’ and ‘facilitated’ (fuelling discussion on the role of the designer as ‘moderator of social change’). This ‘need to implement’ intrinsically constitutes the major contribution of the profession to improving cities. The smartest and best-intended policies are useless without implementation. The manner in which urban spaces are designed, built and materialized contributes a great deal to the success of urban strategies and governance: good design is the structural embodiment of good urban governance.

As noted, in order to realize projects like the Neighbourhood Hotspot in low-income environments such as Makoko, it is absolutely crucial to involve the future users, local citizens, at a very early stage. Furthermore, it is necessary to think collectively about the project outcomes and how these can be achieved. Anything less will likely result in failure, as illustrated in the case of the Ashogbon market in the Ilaje and Bariga communities, opened in June 2009 by Lagos State Government. Ilaje and Bariga were two of the nine officially designated slum areas in Lagos that
received funding under the LMDGP before the programme was terminated (World Bank, 2014). Intended as a fish market, today it is used as a junkyard for car parts (see Figures 7 and 8).

It is clear that the location, the design and the requirements of the planned functions were not sufficiently discussed with the local community beforehand. The populace’s needs in pursuance of their fishing-related businesses such as trading and selling were not understood, which should be the core task of designers. Such processes may be lengthy, difficult and troublesome but they are necessary for the success and long-term sustainability of such projects.

Figure 7: Ashogbon Market in Ilaje-Bariga (Source: Fabienne Hoelzel, picture from 17th Dec. 2014)

Figure 8: Ashogbon Market in Ilaje-Bariga (Source: Fabienne Hoelzel, picture from 17th Dec. 2014)
The importance of creating jobs and steady incomes to tackle urban poverty and ensure sustainable urban regeneration has previously been highlighted. It is fundamental to developing economic measures based on the socio-spatial conditions of respective communities. Before implementing projects like the Ilaje-Bariga fish market or the Neighbourhood Hotspot, it is important to develop operation and management systems. Is the design carried out in a way that people can easily understand and integrate into their operational and business structures? Is the design responding to needs? Are questions of ownership and responsibility clarified? The task and role of designers should be to pro-actively engage and participate in these stakeholder and actor-network processes to achieve good urban design and smart solutions that will make a real difference to society. Therefore, irrespective of how small these projects may be, they will respond to global policy requirements, formulated by the World Bank, United Nations and other such agencies.

It may be a daring thesis, but the lack of 'good governance' due to overcharged central or local governments, missing instruments and weak institutions—against the backdrop of rapidly growing city regions like Lagos—may open new spaces for thinking and action for designers. To conclude, the prevailing discourse about 'good' and 'new' urban governance is ineffective if policy-makers, politicians, sociologists and urban planners do not work closely and collaboratively: 'horizontally' across disciplines and 'vertically' across hierarchies in governments and organizations. The role of the designer is particularly suited to navigate and mediate between the macro, meso and micro levels since they direct experience through their work, the impacts of the 'global' in the 'mundane' (Acuto, 2014). As argued, the integration of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches is essential to urban and slum regeneration. Carefully designed social infrastructure can be key catalysts for change. They cannot and shall not replace policies but rather complement them. This, however, requires designers interested in working at the intersections of governance, planning and design—who are willing to go beyond conventional roles (Hoelzel, 2015; Van Wezemael, 2014).

The challenges ahead—in the context of rapid urbanization, massive urban growth and urban poverty—are huge. They require change not only at national and global levels, but also at community and household level. There is growing discourse on good governance and smart policy-making, yet international organizations and central and local governments do not work closely enough with local citizens, particularly within low-income groups and informal settlements (Satterthwaite, 2011), thus leaving such groups without the capacity to adopt these policies. In conclusion, we need governance that is delivered with the people and not to the people.

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