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**Harrison, Philip; Croese, Sylvia**

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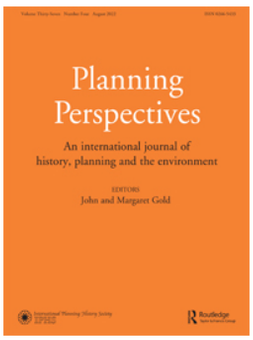

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# The persistence and rise of master planning in urban Africa: transnational circuits and local ambitions

Philip Harrison and Sylvia Croese

South African Research Chair in Spatial Analysis and City Planning School of Architecture and Planning, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

**ABSTRACT**

Master plans have long been criticized by critical planners who have argued in favour of more strategic, collaborative and relational forms of spatial planning that can more adequately respond to local needs and realities, especially in the context of the global South. Rather than critiquing master planning, this paper seeks to interrogate its recent rise in urban Africa. Building on a review of international planning trajectories, the paper seeks to challenge dominant narratives in the Western literature around the rise and decline of master planning. Planning experiences from across the African continent illustrate how master planning was a limited practice under colonialism and emerged more strongly in early post-colonial years, while persisting through a quiet period of planning and proliferating in recent times. By exploring the diversity in the influences and approaches to master planning for new and existing cities in Africa over time, the paper positions master planning as the product of a complex array of transnational circuits and multiple local actors and ambitions which intersect across different scales. The study of master planning should therefore be considered as an important entry point into understanding and rethinking the contemporary politics of urban planning, implementation, and development in Africa.

**KEYWORDS**

Master planning; urban development; African cities; urban planning history; new cities; colonial urban planning; postcolonial urban planning; strategic planning

## Introduction

Master planning is a controversial practice internationally. It has been subject to trenchant criticism and more than one observer has proclaimed the 'death of master planning'.[1] In Africa, master planning has been extensively critiqued for being a colonial imposition, modelled on modernist visions of utopian urban futures that are unable to handle existing contextual needs and realities.[2] In Europe, critiques of traditional master planning have spurred calls for more strategic, collaborative and relational forms of spatial planning.[3] Such approaches have influenced the development of alternative planning approaches in Africa, such as the UN Habitat and Cities Alliance-sponsored City Development Strategy (CDS), which emphasizes flexibility, strategy, collective visioning,

**CONTACT** Sylvia Croese sylvia.croese@wits.ac.za

[1] E.g. Verebes, *Masterplanning the Adaptive City*.

[2] E.g. Banyikwa, "Effects of Insensitivity in Planning Land"; Clarke, "Towards Appropriate Forms"; Devas, "Evolving Approaches"; Njoh, "Urban Planning as a Tool"; Watson, "Seeing from the South"; "African Urban Fantasies."

[3] Albrechts, "Shifts in Strategic Spatial Planning?"; Albrechts, Balducchi, and Hillier, *Situated Practices*; Healey, "The Treatment of Space"; "Relational Complexity."

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and incremental approaches to urban change.[4] And yet, traditional master plans have persisted and are currently being produced at an accelerating rate. In this contribution, we question dominant academic interpretations on master planning to explore this phenomenon, using experience in urban Africa to ask, analytically, why and how master planning practices have endured over time.

Rather than framing master planning as a colonial legacy, we are interested in the complex array of transnational circuits and local actors and ambitions involved in sustaining or reviving master planning practices in post-colonial years. From this perspective, urban planning represents a 'palimpsest', 'in which parts of older ideas, plans and even built forms remain, but are overwritten and never fully erased'.[5] It is an argument also informed by the literature on policy mobilities, which views 'urban plans [as] shaped and hybridized by local actors in what can be understood as a complex traffic of ideas', rather than simply policy mimicry.[6] In the process, plans may be strategically mobilized by a variety of actors, serving multiple claims in different ways.[7] Building on these insights, this paper moves beyond a critique of master planning, and instead traces its evolution as a starting point for exploring further questions. Such future research may involve in-depth case-based research regarding the role, interests and engagement of local actors in urban master planning and the transnational circuits that underpin them.

We start by reviewing the international experience of master planning, through the adoption of an *inductive* approach to researching master planning. Such an approach involves an exploration of the different understandings of master planning, both historically and geographically, incorporating, but extending beyond, the common Western narrative around the rise and decline of master planning. Moreover, we show that meanings of master planning have shifted over time and hybridized with other approaches, making a search for a singular definition problematic. However, for the purpose of developing a broad shared starting point, we understand master planning to refer to planning approaches that are oriented towards prescription and spatial comprehensiveness in their bid to shape urban space over the long term. The first section of the paper consists of a historical account of Africa's planning trajectory, in which we show how urban master planning has evolved and persisted from colonial to post-colonial times, despite some quiet periods. We illustrate its recent proliferation on the basis of an extensive desk-based review of mostly English language academic literature, policy documents and online news reports. This allows us to identify two main types of master plans that have resurfaced in the first two decades of the 2000s, which we explore in the second part of the paper on contemporary urban master planning in Africa. These are: master plans for new cities; and master plans for existing cities, which includes sectoral master plans for the delivery of infrastructure-based mega projects. We conclude by arguing that a focus on master plans provides a helpful entry into the study and understanding of the contemporary politics of urban planning, implementation and development in Africa, which often pivots on the use and management of land, and the value produced through infrastructural investments.[8]

## The rise, decline and persistence of master planning: an international perspective

The dominating narrative in Western literatures on planning is of the rise and decline of master planning, with a partial return from around the 1990s to a *strategic* form of spatial planning that

[4]Parnell and Robinson, "Development and Urban Policy."
[5]Parnell, "Africa's Urban Planning Palimpsest," 295.
[6]Harris and Moore, "Planning Histories and Practices," 1502.
[7]Lauermann, '"The City" as Developmental Justification'; "Strategic Simplification."
[8]Turok, "Getting Urbanization to Work."

avoids the deficiencies of traditional-style master planning. However, this geographically limited narrative obscures a diversity of practices and traditions of master planning, including the strong persistence of master planning traditions in East Asia and the Middle East and the influence of these regions on other parts of the world – including urban Africa.

## The rise of master planning

The narrative on the rise of master planning depends on what tradition of master planning is referred to. In continental Europe, there was a strong design-led tradition drawing on utopian themes. Master planning of this sort arguably peaked in the 1930s under totalitarian regimes with, for example, the Rome Master Plan (1931), the General Plan for the Reconstruction of Moscow (1935), and Albert Speer's Germania (1938). This association explains the reluctance of post-war Europe to extend a master planning tradition, and the orientation towards guided evolution as an alternative to a designed future.[9] However, not all pre-war master planning happened under dictatorship, and various forms of master planning continued after the war. The French, who exercised global impact through colonialism, turned to master planning in 1919, reflecting the need for post-World War I reconstruction. A master plan was famously prepared in the 1930s for Greater Paris, but overall progress was slow. The system was finally strengthened in 1958 with the requirement that all French communes, including those in the colonies, introduce a two-tier planning system: the *Schéma Directeur d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme (SDAU)* (long-range Master Plan) and the *Plan d'Occupation des Sols (POS)* (detailed regulatory plan).[10]

The Anglo-American framing of master planning followed mainly within a managerialist or procedural tradition, although with differences on either side of the Atlantic. Modern planning in the United Kingdom (UK) emerged gradually within the municipal reform movement, and in the first half of the twentieth century planning was a mild affair. The Town Planning Scheme, introduced in 1909 for voluntary use, was a reactive but prescriptive instrument, managing, rather than shaping, city growth. The system was gradually strengthened in a succession of amendments to the initial legislation, with the Town and Country Planning Act (1932) including a provision to reserve land for future purposes. The closest the UK came to a master plan in the design blueprint sense was Sir Patrick Abercrombie's Greater London Plan (1944). In 1947, the UK's planning system was overhauled, with the Town Planning Schemes abandoned, and replaced by a system of discretionary decision making by planning officials guided by loosely formulated (non-prescriptive) Local Development Plans (LDPs). However, despite the caution with spatial planning at home, British planners had a vast Empire within which to experiment.[11]

In the United States of America (USA) zoning schemes evolved in the early twentieth century as a parallel to the British Town Planning Scheme. From the 1920s, City Planning Commissions initiated 'master plans' which referred to city-wide zoning schemes which included predictive and forward-looking elements.[12] Enabling federal legislation for master planning was introduced in 1928, with master planning widely institutionalized in state-level legislation by the 1950s, influencing approaches in countries including Australia.[13] Although unsettled by McCarthyism in the 1950s, planning in the USA, with influence elsewhere,

[9]Popper, *The Open Society*.
[10]Njoh, "The Experience and Legacy."
[11]Home, *Of Planting and Planning*.
[12]Haar, "The Master Plan."
[13]Freestone, "Master Plans and Planning Commissions."

revived in the 1960s with a techno-rationalism that promised a solution to the very 'problem of planning itself'.[14] Master planning expanded from a spatial practice to a systems perspective that integrated the spatial with the economic and the social. A comprehensive planning approach was seemingly dominant, although Campbell and Fainstein challenged this golden age thesis, pointing to the persistence of other threads in planning including Popper-inspired incrementalism.[15]

Less attention has been paid to the rise of master planning traditions outside the West, which may help explain the current underrating of contemporary non-Western influence. In Japan, modern master planning as a form of blueprint design was established as an instrument of reconstruction after the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 and exported through the region in the 1930s as the Imperial Empire expanded. After the war, master planning was an instrument for restoring a fractured national identity, as in the Tokyo Master Plan of 1960.[16] In socialist countries there was a dominant national economic planning approach which eclipsed the city planning tradition, but Soviet city planners did influence city planning in China in the 1950s (e.g. Beijing Master Plan, 1958) before Mao Zedong rejected the Soviets and turned away from an urban agenda. A strong master planning tradition also evolved in Singapore.[17] In South Asia and the Middle East, urban master planning was a feature of the early post-independence years, sponsored by organizations including the Ford Foundation (such as in the case of Delhi and Tehran). The rise of oil production in the Middle East from the 1950s brought 'petro-urbanism' into play with large new master planned city developments beginning with Kuwait City (1951) and Dubai (1960). In Latin America – as we will show in relation to Africa – master planning combined different global influences, including North American and European, in a complex interaction with national and local interests.[18]

## The decline (and partial return) of master planning

Criticism of master planning mounted quickly through the 1970s from different angles – libertarian, progressive, neo-Marxist, and post-modernist – while the oil crises of 1973 and '78 ended the predictive certainty of the post-war era which had supported long-range master planning. Friedmann offered an 'internal' critique of the presumptions of master planning, criticizing its singular logic and static form in the face of multiple interests, accelerating change, and limited information.[19] The rise of 'neoliberal regimes' from the late 1970s (*à la* Thatcher and Reagan) was an external ideological threat posing an apparent existential crisis for planning, but especially for master planning.

Alexander referred to a 'paradigm breakdown' in the early 1980s, while Hague observed that the post-war ambitions had 'become a broken wave'.[20] The neoliberal assault proved, however, more drastic in rhetoric than action, and the 'Third Way' moderation of neoliberal ideology in the 1990s, restored space for forms of planning that emphasized collective goals and a longer-term orientation. Various writers have observed the rise of strategic spatial planning from the 1990s as an alternative to both traditional master planning, and project-based planning. Strategic spatial

[14]McLoughlin, *Urban and Regional Planning*, 70.
[15]Campbell and Fainstein, *Readings in Planning Theory*.
[16]Tamari, "Metabolism."
[17]Yuen, "Centenary Paper."
[18]Almandoz, "From Urban to Regional Planning."
[19]Friedmann, "The Future of Comprehensive Urban Planning."
[20]Alexander, "After Rationality, What?" 63; Hague, "A Review of Planning Theory," 300.

planning is long-term and territory-wide but goes beyond directing spatial activity to building shared spatial understanding, developing spatial imagination, co-ordinating public policy, and strengthening relational networks over the longer term.[21] The formal translation of this approach included the French replacement of the *Schéma Directeur* (master plan) with the *Le Schéma de Cohérence Territorial (ScoT)* (schemes for territorial coherence) in 2002, the UK's introduction in 2004 of the Local Development Framework (LDF), and the development of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) which mediated diverse interests in the spending of the EU's regional funds.[22] This trend notwithstanding, there are countertrends in the West towards more detailed spatial planning driven by the rise of mega projects, smart city agendas, and sustainability practice, with plans prepared by both public and private actors.[23] In the USA, the term 'master plan' is still used but has been criticized recently as an anachronism that is offensive to women and African Americans.[24]

## The persistence of master planning

In East Asia and the Middle East, the master plan as a form of prescriptive spatial direction is an enduring practice but remains largely unexplored in scholarly literature. In these regions, urban growth has been rapid and ideological constraints on state planning less present, allowing for more directive forms of planning. As these regions have increased their economic and geopolitical influence, their approaches to planning have come to circulate and be adopted more widely elsewhere. The preparation of comprehensive master plans has, for example, been a longstanding instrument in Japanese ODA in Asia, with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) expanding its support for the development of urban master plans in recent years across Africa.[25] Singapore has taken a similar approach at a smaller scale, with its ODA agency, the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise (SCE), supporting urban master plans across Asia, Latin America, and Africa, with the master planning traditions of South Korea, Taiwan, and Malaysia also having a growing influence.[26] China returned to urban master planning in the 1980s to manage unprecedented rates of urbanization, codifying its requirement for urban master plans in the City Planning Act, 1989, and having a powerful demonstration effect through the global South.[27]

Urban master planning has expanded in the Middle East with continued oil-financed mega developments.[28] Dubai, 'the instant city', holds special power in its demonstration effect but there is a new wave of master planning for new cities, most audaciously Saudi Arabia's planned Neom City State.[29] In Latin America, the language of master planning persists – the *plano director* in Portuguese-speaking Brazil and the *plan maestro* in Spanish-speaking countries. However, the meaning and content of master planning is changing in others. Brazil's celebrated City Statute (Law 10.257 of 2001) requires municipalities to prepare a master plan but despite continuity in

[21]Albrechts, "Shifts in Strategic Spatial Planning?"; Albrechts, Balducchi, and Hillier, *Situated Practices*; Healey, "The Treatment of Space"; "Relational Complexity."
[22]Faludi and Waterhout, *The Making of the European Spatial Development Perspective*.
[23]Tiesdell and McFarlane, "The Part and the Whole"; Zandbergen, '"We Are Sensemakers"'; Dierwechter, *Urban Sustainability*.
[24]E.g. Gates, "Should Words Other Than."
[25]Moore, "Interrogating "Comprehensive Development""; Shelekpayev, "Whose Master Plan?"; Croese and Miyauchi, "The Transcalar Politics."
[26]SCE, "Partnering Singapore's Public Sector"; Doucette and Sial, "Export Urbanism."
[27]Yeh and Wu, "The Transformation of"; Yeh, Jiang Xu, and Liu, "China's Post-Reform Urbanization."
[28]Rizzo, "Rapid Urban Development."
[29]Bagaeen, "Brand Dubai"; Verebes, *Masterplanning the Adaptive City*.

language, these plans are clearly intended to be strategic and participatory, reflecting their origins in a social movement for urban reform.[30]

Planning literatures have hardly engaged with this complexity, although there are notable exceptions. Beauregard and Marpillero-Colomina use the case of the *Amman 2025* master plan in Jordan, to show how master planning has hybridized with new forms of strategic planning, while Carter et al. draw on experience in Denmark in using the idea of a 'planning palimpsest' to reflect on the way in which forms of planning from different periods of the past intermingle with new approaches.[31] However, while there is an intermingling, there are regions in the world where forms of master planning are present which may be regarded as outmoded elsewhere, and this does require explanation. Lauermann offers a strong clue for an explanation of the persistence of master planning in his argument that plans can be used by urban actors as tools of 'strategic simplification' to make claims on the future city.[32] Kaza also moves beyond the conventional view that the value of plans rests in their framing of implementation, suggesting that they may be doing more than directing land use and project implementation.[33] We now turn to the literature on urban Africa, which offers a window on how a diversity of influences and approaches internationally, interacting with national and local interests, has contributed to the persistence and revival of master planning practices.

## The persistence of master planning in urban Africa

Understanding the historical trajectory of master planning in Africa is important as we need to know what purpose, and whose interests, master plans served in the past. While colonial-era urban planning has certainly left an important mark on African cities, it seldom took the form of master planning. In post-colonial years, master planning has become an important instrument for asserting national identity and development, attracting an increasingly diverse range of transnational planning expertise, actors and circuits.

### *Master planning in colonial Africa*

Under colonialism, traditional forms of settlement formation were disrupted, and European systems of planning introduced. Although there were colonial variants, the common feature was a system of planning to separate and regulate land uses to protect the amenity of areas under European occupation, layered onto measures to ensure social segregation between the colonizer and colonized.[34] Master planning, as a long-range, proactive attempt to shape space, was largely absent. But there were key exceptions, notably in the French and Italian colonies and protectorates in North Africa, which were considered future extensions of the 'mother country'. Master plans were prepared from the 1920s for Algiers, Casablanca, Tunis, Tripoli, amongst others, to transform these cities into European-style settlements.[35] The French requirement in 1958 that cities prepare a *Schema Directeur*, or Master Plan, came late in the colonial era. Most French colonies were independent by 1960 and there was no opportunity to apply the master plan provision, although the

[30]Caldeira and Holston, "Participatory Urban Planning."
[31]Beauregard and Marpillero-Colomina, "More Than a Master Plan"; Carter, Larsen, and Olesen, "A Planning Palimpsest."
[32]Lauermann, "Strategic Simplification", 26.
[33]Kaza, "Vain Foresight."
[34]King, "Exporting 'Planning'"; Silva, *Routledge Handbook*.
[35]Çelik, *Urban forms*; Silva, "Colonial and Postcolonial Urban Planning."

legal provision was carried over into post-colonial rule.[36] Although Portugal has been characterized as an 'unplanned country' where planning systems are weak or absent, the Lisbon-based Colonial Urbanisation Office worked to develop planning systems in the colonies, and made periodic attempts at master planning, including for Luanda in the 1940s and 70s.[37]

The British colonies introduced Town Planning Ordinances based on the evolving British legislation over an extended period from the 1920s to the 1950s. The Town Planning Scheme was the key instrument, with regulations applying to areas of European settlement, but there was a 'developmental turn' under late colonialism, especially after the Labour Party gained control of the Colonial Office in London after World War II. Some of the later Ordinances were influenced by legislation elsewhere in the Empire, including the Trinidad Town Planning Act, 1938, which considered the housing and living standards of the native population.[38] There were sporadic attempts at master planning for British colonial settlements from the 1940s, including for Accra (1944), Nairobi (1948), and Dar es Salaam (1949). The master planning, mainly undertaken by the British Engineering Corps, was crude, even by the standards of the time, and reflected the colonial obsessions with racial segregation, (European) public health, and urban aesthetics, but they nonetheless influenced the future growth of towns which were to grow into large post-colonial cities.[39] In sum, the colonists left a legacy of regulatory planning but, with the indicated exceptions, the colonial era ended without an embedded master planning tradition in sub-Saharan Africa.

## *Post-colonial urban master planning*

National developmentalism was the founding ideology of post-colonial Africa with the National Development Plan (NDP) 'viewed by almost all African states as one of the standard attributes of sovereignty'.[40] The NDP may be considered a post-colonial practice asserting a sense of new nationhood and reflecting a wide range of visions of development and modernity. This included state socialism and the influence of national planning expertise and approaches of other parts of the world, that were actively pursued and balanced by newly independent leaders in a Cold War context.[41]

Urban master planning in the early post-colonial era was less visible than national planning but also surfaced as a marker of independence. In 1946, after Ethiopia was liberated from Italian rule, Emperor Haile Selassie invited Sir Patrick Abercrombie to prepare a master plan for the national capital, Addis Ababa.[42] He used a colonial instrument – the Italians having prepared a master plan for the city in the 1930s – but deployed it to mark a departure from Italian rule. Similarly, in 1957, Nkrumah commissioned a master plan for independent Ghana's national capital, Accra.[43] In the decade-and-a-half that followed, master plans were prepared for Addis Ababa (1959, 1965), Abidjan (1962), Conakry (1963), Kinshasa (1966), Dar es Salaam (1968), and Nairobi (1973). Peter and Yang argue in relation to the Dar es Salaam plan that 'it aimed at breaking down the exclusive racial and income barriers of its colonial past while fulfilling the desires of a new and young independent nation'.[44]

[36]Njoh, "The Experience and Legacy"; "Urban Planning as a Tool."
[37]Silva, "Colonial Urban Planning".
[38]Home, *Of Planting and Planning*.
[39]Peter and Yang, "Urban Planning Historical Review."
[40]Green, "Four African Development Plans", 242.
[41]Sackeyfio-Lenoch, "Decolonization, Development, and Nation Building"; Stanek, *Architecture in Global Socialism*.
[42]Tufa, "Historical Development of Addis Ababa."
[43]Government of Ghana, *Accra: A Plan for the Town*.
[44]Peter and Yang, "Urban Planning Historical Review," 363.

The plans were typical of the period – they were prepared technocratically by international planning firms commissioned by national governments, with little local involvement.[45] Initially, the new states had little choice but to draw on the expertise of the colonial power – for example, the British firm, Trevallion and Hood for the Accra plan completed in 1958. However, by the 1960s, there was a deliberate shift to other transnational sources of expertise, including the influential Greek planner, Doxiadis, but also Croatian (Conakry) and Hungarian (Addis Ababa) planners.[46] Nairobi was a notable exception as the plan was prepared by the Nairobi Urban Study Group which comprised British consultants and Nairobi City Government officials.[47] While these plans all came with their own interests and visions of development, most of them shared a focus on addressing rapid urban growth and supporting industrialization through the creation of satellite cities and regional economic growth poles, in line with development thinking of the time.[48]

The second (partly overlapping) wave of urban master planning was for newly planned capital cities, an even more ambitious assertion of post-colonial identity and ambition, and a reflection of new global partnerships for development.[49] It began modestly in 1965 with the Public Works Department in newly independent Botswana preparing a master plan for the new capital, Gaborone.[50] Malawi's president Banda turned to the South Africans for funding and technical expertise for Lilongwe.[51] For the Dodoma Master Plan (1976), President Nyerere of Tanzania used a Toronto-based firm, while the Abuja Master Plan (1979) for Nigeria's new capital was led by a Philadelphia-based firm, with participation by Doxiadis and the Japanese architect Kenzo Tange.[52]

Overall, the 1980s was a quiet period for master planning in Africa. National developmentalism had run aground, with many highly indebted African countries compelled to accept IMF-World Bank designed Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), which included a scaling back on planning at all levels, amid a growing critique of master planning. Some countries, like Ghana, went decades without the preparation of any master plan, representing a 'silent period of spatial planning'.[53] In others, there were still legislative requirements for master planning, especially in the previous French colonies, and in pro-planning socialist contexts such as Ethiopia, where a newly established National Urban Planning Institute commissioned the Addis Ababa Master Plan (1986).[54] By the end of the 1980s, there was a rebalancing. Stung by criticism that the SAPs had deepened poverty across Africa, the World Bank and IMF required member countries to prepare Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in consultation with stakeholders, but this left a gap in terms of local level planning. In 1998, the CDS (now called City Strategies) was introduced through the World Bank's East Asia Programme and was actively sponsored in Africa by UN Habitat and Cities Alliance, a partnership between international development agencies.[55] The CDS diffused rapidly through cities in Africa, bringing a more strategic and participatory orientation to planning, but it offered limited spatial guidance

[45]Armstrong, "Tanzania's Expert-Led Planning."
[46]Ward, "Transnational Planners"; Bromley, "Towards Global Human Settlements"; Tufa, "Historical Development of Addis Ababa"; Smokvina, Cvitanović, and Kincl, *Influence of Croatian Urban Planners*.
[47]Owuor and Mbatia, *Post Independence Development*.
[48]Ogunleye, *Structural Transformation*.
[49]Beeckmans, "The Architecture of Nation-Building."
[50]Mosha, "The City of Gaborone."
[51]Potts, "Capital Relocation in Africa."
[52]Hayuma, "Dodoma"; Tobin, *Nationalism Can't Be Built*.
[53]Amedzro, "History and Current Politics."
[54]Alem, "Urban Plans and Conflicting Interests."
[55]Harris, *From Master Plans*.

for rapidly expanding cities where land management was a central concern, and it did not replace legally prescribed master plans.[56]

## Contemporary urban master planning in Africa

During the first two decades of the 2000s, there has been a resurgence in master planning in Africa. As in early post-colonial years, master planning has followed multiple waves, in which plans have been developed for both new and existing cities.

### *Master planning for new cities*

Strong spatial direction is a clear requirement for the development of a new city, and so the recent rise of new city development in Africa has spurred a return to master planning. The new city developments in the 2000s, tracked below in Table 1,[57] represent a conjunction of multiple factors, including: the ambitions of individual politicians; an expanding middle class with new lifestyle and housing demands; increased foreign investor interest as economic growth accelerated from the mid-1990s; as well as a continued role of new cities as instruments for nation-building.[58]

Indeed, new city development did not disappear from Africa after the planning for new capital cities in the 1960s and 70s, although there was less activity. In Egypt, a first generation of new towns in the 1970s was followed by a second generation in the 1980s and a third in the 1990s. These state-led projects were planned to reduce pressures on Cairo and Alexandria and were targeted largely at the urban working class. Although they generally failed to reach their targeted population more than 20 new towns were built.[59] The launch of New Cairo in 1997 as a new city development with a planned population of 5 million marked a different level of ambition and had a significant demonstration effect on the post-2000 resurgence of new city development elsewhere on the continent.

The first wave of new cities in the 2000s was in North Africa following on from ongoing developments in Egypt. It included President Bouteflika's ambition to build a new capital city in the desert, and the launch of *Ville Nouvelle,* an ambitious programme of new city development initiated by Morocco's modernizing King Mohammed VI that ended up mired in controversy.[60] The second wave took place in sub-Saharan Africa and came in 2008/09 as Africa's economic growth and property markets peaked before the contagion of the global financial crisis. The first of the developments was the New City of Kilamba, a new city development on the outskirts of the capital city of Luanda, Angola, which has attracted attention for its origins in a bilateral oil-for-housing deal and as an example of exported Chinese urbanism.[61] Other proposed developments followed quickly: Kigamboni New City on the outskirts of Dar es Salaam; Konza Technopolis launched by President Kibaki to develop Kenya's knowledge-based economy (the 'Silicon Savannah'); *La Cité du Fleuve* outside Kinshasa on land to be reclaimed from the Congo River by a property mogul with French and South African links and; Nigeria International Commerce City (aka Eko-Atlantic), a joint project

[56]Kasala, "A Return to Master Planning."
[57]This table is non-exhaustive and includes developments that are branded and self-described as self-contained 'new cities', even if many have a residential focus, with little other than housing being developed.
[58]Nijhuis, "Spatial Challenges"; Côté-Roy and Moser, "Does Africa Not Deserve"; Moser, Côté-Roy, and Korah, "The Uncharted Foreign Actors"; Ghalib, El-Khorazaty, and Serag, "New Capital Cities."
[59]Hegazy and Moustafa, "Toward Revitalization of New Towns."
[60]Rousseau and Harroud, "Satellite Cities Turned."
[61]Croese, "1 Million Houses?"

**Table 1.** New City Development in Africa, 2000–2021 (self-compiled from multiple sources).

| New City | Date of initiation | Location of Development | Targeted population | Sponsor | Planners | Current Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sidi Abdellah | 2004 | 25 km west of Algiers, Algeria | 450,000 | Algerian government | Jean-Jacques Deluz (Swiss architect) | 93,000 housing units |
| Boughezoul (New Capital City) | 2004 | 120 km south of Algiers, Algeria | 400,000 | Algerian government | Daewoo Engineering & Construction (E&C) (Korea) | Infrastructure installed |
| Tamesna | 2005 | South of Rabat, Morocco | 250,000 | Moroccan government | Al Omrane group (Morocco) | Current population of 56,000 |
| Madinaty | 2006 | Edge of Cairo, Egypt | 600,000 | Egyptian government | HHCP Design International (Florida, USA) | Initial occupation in 2020 |
| New City of Kilamba | 2008 | Edge of Luanda, Angola | 500,000 | Government of Angola | China International Trust and Investment Corporation (CITIC) (China) | Current population of 80,000 + (phase 1) |
| Kigamboni | 2008 | Edge of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania | 500,000 | National ministry | Korea Land and Housing Corporation (LH)/ Labs24 Projects (Italy) | Development abandoned |
| Konza Technopolis | 2008 | 64 km south of Nairobi, Kenya | 200,000 (with technology hub) | Government of Kenya through Konza Technopolis Development Authority | HR&A Advisors Inc. (New York) | Slow progress but with first buildings in 2019 |
| La Cité du Fleuve | 2008 | Islands outside Kinshasa, DRC | 80,000 | Mukwa Investments (South Africa)/ Hawkwood Properties (Lusaka) | Pantic Architects (Harare) | Minimal progress |
| Eko-Atlantic (Nigeria International Commerce City) | 2009 | Reclaimed land within Lagos, Nigeria | Mixed use with projected population of 250,000 | Lagos State Government in a partnership with the Chagoury Group (Nigeria) | Dar Al-Handasah (Beirut, Lebanon) | Land reclamation, infrastructure, and some building |
| Tatu City | 2010 | Outside Nairobi, Kenya, in a designated SEZ | 250,000 | Rendeavour | Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) | 5000 houses completed or under construction |
| *Ciudad de la Paz* New Capital (previously Oyala) | 2011 | 125 Km ('in the jungle') east of Bata, Equatorial Guinea | 160,000 | Government of Equatorial Guinea | IDF Lisbon Architects (Lisbon, Portugal) | Infrastructure and some government buildings |
| King City | 2012 | Near Takoradi Port in Ghana | 90,000 | Rendeavour | DLC Plan (South Africa)/ Jaksa Barbir (SA)/Others | Project delays; status uncertain |
| Appolonia | 2013 | Accra, Ghana | 100,000 | Rendeavour | SOM | By 2020, 500 houses completed or under construction |
| Hope City | 2013 | Ghana | A technology park with a resident population of 25,000 | Rig Communication (Ghana) | OBR – Paolo Brescia and Tommaso Principe (Milano, Italy) | Failed development |
| Kiwishi | 2015 | Outside Lubumbashi, DRC | | Rendeavour | DLC Town Planners (Pretoria, South Africa) | Bulk infrastructure installed and land sales commenced |
| New Administrative Capital | 2015 | Outside Cairo, Egypt | 5 million | Jointly owned by Egyptian Military and Ministry of Housing | Initial master plan by SOM, reviewed by Dar Al-Handasah (Beirut) | Partial construction of two residential districts and government precinct |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Zenata Eco-City | 2016 | Greater Casablanca, Morocco | 300,000 | Moroccan government through the Zenata Development Corporation | Reichen & Robert (Paris)/ Franck Boutté (Paris) | First phase of construction completed |
| Northland City | 2016 | 15 km from Nairobi on land owned by the Kenyatta family | 250,000 | Kenyatta family | Triad Architects (Nairobi)/ GAPP (Johannesburg) | Bulk infrastructure in progress |
| Enyimba Economic City | 2018 | In an SEZ, 40 km from Port Harcourt, Nigeria | 1.5 million | Abia State Government,Nigeria | Surbana Jurong (Singapore) | Planning phase |
| Alárò City | 2019 | Within the Lekki SEZ, Lagos, | 150,000 | Rendeavour in partnership with Lagos State Government | SOM | Serviced sites and apartment complex |
| Lanseria Smart City | 2020 | Outside Johannesburg | 500,000 | Provincial Government with private partners | GAPP (Johannesburg) | Planning Phase |
| Akon (Afro-Futuristic) City | 2020 | 100 km from Dakar, Senegal | -N/A | Senegalese-American R&B rapper, Akon/KE International (USA) | Bakri & Associates Development (BAD) Consultants (UAE/ Lebanon) | Design phase |
| Nkwashi New City | 2021 | 36 km from Lusaka, Zambia | 100,000 | Thebe Investment Management (Zambia) | | |

between the Lagos State and the politically connected Nigerian Chagoury Group, on land to be reclaimed from the sea off the coast of Lagos.

As indicated in Table 1, the planners for the new cities were diverse, ranging from a state-owned Chinese corporation for Kilamba to a New York-based design firm for Konza. Outcomes are similarly mixed, owing to poor timing or changing political fortunes: Kigamboni was abandoned by President Magafuli; the development of Konza lost impetus with President Uhuru Kenyatta shifting focus to the development of Northlands New City on Kenyatta family-owned property; while the *La Cité du Fleuve* development largely unravelled in a web of corruption and recrimination.[62] There was more political will behind the Eko-Atlantic development, which is gradually taking shape, while Angola's state-owned oil company secured the extension of new city development from Kilamba to elsewhere in the Luanda region and beyond.[63]

The third wave of recent new cities came around 2010 when the New Zealand-born entrepreneur, Stephen Jennings, shifted his attention from Moscow, where he had established his financial services firm, Renaissance Capital, to Africa. His property development subsidiary, Rendeavour, targeted the expanding middle-class market in developments around the edge of large cities in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and Zambia. For the master planning, Jennings has mainly used the services of the London office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) a large international planning and design firm headquartered in the USA, but South African firms are being employed for his more recent developments.[64] This example illustrates the eclectic mix of new city development that has emerged since then, representing a diverse array of actors, visions, and interests. These range from Akon New City in Senegal, launched by the flamboyant Senegalese American rap artist, Akon, to materialize the fictional City of Wakanda in the film *Black Panther*, to Nkwashi New City in Zambia initiated by a previous Minister of Finance turned property developer.[65] Master planning for many of these new cities is design-based with the lead consultants often being architects. For private sector-led initiatives, marketing is critical and so there is a strong emphasis on the visual element of master planning.[66] International consultants from Europe and North America still dominate, with Provoost pointing to an obvious contradiction: while the master planning of new cities is no longer on the curriculum of architecture and planning schools in the West, large Western planning firms are designing entire new cities in Africa.[67] Closer to the continent, the Beirut-based Dar Al-Handasah is a significant presence, often working together with Cairo- and Dubai-based firms. South African firms have also entered the broader African market, and planning capacities are emerging in cities including Nairobi, Harare, and Accra.

### *Master planning for existing cities*

In addition to the proliferation of master plans for new cities there has also been a resurgence of master planning for existing cities, but this is a far more complex topic, and the form of planning, and the actors involved, are necessarily different from those in new city planning. Here, there is no possibility for designing from scratch, and the master plan must deal with complex existing urban environments, with a myriad of interests and actors.[68] As a result, the role of local actors in

[62]Baraka, "The Failed Promise"; Le Monde Afrique, "RDC : la Cité du fleuve."
[63]Croese, "State-Led Housing Delivery."
[64]Jennings, "Building Africa's New Cities."
[65]Pires, "Singer Akon"; Douglas, "Zambian CEO."
[66]Watson, "Digital Visualisation."
[67]Provoost, "Why Build a New Town?"
[68]Cirolia and Berrisford, "Negotiated Planning."

engaging international actors, and initiating and driving contemporary master planning processes in Africa remains largely unexplored, with the attention still mainly on large international players. More detailed case study based work is needed to address this imbalance.

Table 2 below gives a non-exhaustive list of master plans prepared for the larger cities in Africa in the period between 2008 and 2021, noting that although the term 'master plan' is still common, there is some variation in, and hybridisation of, terminology.

Table 2 indicates the growing role of Japan in Africa's urban master planning since 2008, which is funded through its ODA agency JICA under technical cooperation, but is closely linked to the disbursement of Japanese loans and grants for infrastructural development, reflecting a dominating infrastructural focus in urban planning. JICA-prepared master plans are also representative of the increasing circulation of 'Asian urbanisms', with other Asian countries such as Singapore being a far more recent influence.[69] The SCE was set up in 2006 to handle ODA and like JICA it has foregrounded support for urban master planning. It uses the state-owned urban and infrastructure consulting firm, Surbana Jurong, as its primary consultant, which has become a key 'transfer agent' for the development of plans for cities such as Bujumbura and Kigali in the image of the Singapore city–state.[70] China does not have the equivalent of JICA or SCE. Instead, the influence of its planning model is felt through direct infrastructural investments, partly framed in terms of its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), or through more diffused processes of policy transfer.[71]

European agencies are also supporting planning processes in Africa – most notably the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) – but they generally avoid the terminologies of master planning. Multilateral agencies include the World Bank, UN agencies such as the Nairobi-based UN Habitat and the UNDP, and the African Development Bank (AfDB). The World Bank has an ambivalent position on master planning as it cannot directly contradict its member states which are supporting master planning processes. It launched its City Resilience Programme in 2017, which promoted rapid assessment as a method in contrast to longer-term master planning processes, although it does support spatially directive planning to guide infrastructural investment, sometimes referred to as Detailed Urban Plans (DUPs). UN Habitat has been more forthright in presenting alternatives to, if not distancing itself from, practices of master planning: 'Our City Plans support governments and urban actors through an iterative process rather than a Master Planning approach'.[72] The AfDB, too, supports local planning processes through its Urban and Municipal Development Fund although its focus is on city diagnostics, urban action planning, and project preparation, rather than on master planning.[73]

In addition to comprehensive or multi-sectoral master plans, there has also been a rapid rise in sector-based master plans, including urban transport/mobility master plans, water and sanitation master plans, energy master plans and ICT master plans, to support the delivery of infrastructure-based mega projects. These plans generally have a strong engineering component and are supported by similar international agencies, such as JICA, the World Bank, AFD and AfDB, and reflect both the demands of a global 'infrastructure turn',[74] as well as local demands for developmental infrastructure and service delivery.[75]

[69]Van Noorloos and Leung, "Circulating Asian urbanisms."
[70]Pow, "License to Travel"; Bock, *Translations of Urban Regulation*.
[71]Bénazéraf, "The Construction by Chinese."
[72]UN-Habitat, "Our City Plans," 6.
[73]AfDB, "Urban and Municipal Development Fund."
[74]Schindler and Kanai, "Getting the Territory Right."
[75]Pieterse, Parnell, and Haysom, "African Dreams."

**Table 2.** Urban Master Plans for Existing Cities in Africa, 2008–2021 (compiled from multiple sources).

| Master Plan | Year of Completion or Approval | Initiating authority | Intervening or managing agencies | Lead consultant or other drafter |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strategic Urban Development Master Plan for Greater Cairo | 2008 | National Government's General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP), Egypt | JICA | Nippon Koei (Tokyo) |
| Urban Development Master Plan for Lilongwe | 2010 | National ministry, Malawi | JICA | Nippon Koei (Tokyo) |
| Revision of the Greater Ouagadougou Urban Development Master Plan (SDAGO) | 2010 | National ministry, Burkina Faso | AFD/ World Bank | |
| Kampala Physical Development Plan (KPDP) | 2012 | National Ministry, Uganda/ Kampala Capital City Authority | | Israeli consortium led by Prof. Yigal Tzamir |
| Kigali City Master Plan 2020 | 2013 | City of Kigali, Rwanda | Singapore Cooperation Enterprise (SEC) | Surbana Jurong, Singapore |
| Greater Kumasi Master Plan | 2013 | National Ministry, Ghana | JICA | Oriental Consultants (Tokyo) |
| Strategic Urban Plan of Alexandria | 2014 | GOPP/ Governorate of Alexandria Egypt | UNDP, Egypt Office | AS&P International GmbH, Frankfurt (Germany) |
| Nairobi Integrated Urban Development Master Plan | 2014 | County Government of Nairobi | JICA | Nippon Koei (Tokyo) |
| Addis Ababa and Oromia Special Zone Integrated Development Plan (AAOSIDP) | 2014 | National Ministry, Ethiopia/ Addis Ababa City Government | | Technical staff of the Addis Ababa City Planning Office, and Oromia Urban Planning Institute |
| Strategic Master Plan for the Kinshasa Metropolitan Area (SOSAK) | 2014 | Provincial Government of Kinshasa | French Development Agency | Groupe Huit (Montrouge, France)/Arter Architects (Brussels) |
| Development Plan for Greater Casablanca | 2014 | The Wali (King's Representative) of Casablanca/ Ministry of Interior | | Paris Region Planning and Development Agency (IAU îdF) (Paris) |
| Luanda General Metropolitan Master Plan | 2015 | National Government | | Broadway Malyan (London) |
| Urban Master Plan for Greater Abidjan (SDUGA) | 2015 | National Ministry, Côte d'Ivoire | JICA | Oriental Consultants (Tokyo) |
| Urban Master Plan of Dakar and Neighbouring Areas | 2016 | National Ministry, Senegal | JICA | Oriental Consultants (Tokyo) |
| Urban Master Plan for Greater Antananarivo | 2016 | National Ministry, Madagascar | JICA | RECS International/Oriental Consultants (Tokyo) |
| Brazzaville Urban Master Plan | 2016 | National Ministry, Republic of the Congo | | Keios Development Consulting (Rome) |
| City planning for Buipe and Tamale | 2016 | National Ministry, Ghana | SCE | Surbana Jurong, Singapore |
| Dar es Salaam City Master Plan 2016–2036 | 2016 (officially approved in 2020) | National Ministry, Tanzania | World Bank | Dodi Moss-Happold Group (Italy) |
| Comprehensive Urban Development Plan for the City of Lusaka | 2017 | National Ministry, Zambia | JICA | Nippon Koei (Tokyo) |
| Mogadishu Spatial Strategic Plan | 2017 | National Ministry, Somalia | UN-Habitat | UN-Habitat |
| Innovative Master Plan for the City of Bujumbura, 2020–2045 | 2017 | Presidency, Burundi | SCE | Surbana Jurong, Singapore |
| Comprehensive Development Master Plan in the Mombasa Gate City | 2018 | County Government of Mombasa | JICA | Nippon Koei (Tokyo) |
| Nouakchott City Urban Master Plan | 2018 | National Ministry, Mauritania | JICA | RECS International (Tokyo) |
| Kigali City Master Plan, 2050 | 2020 | Kigali City Council | SCE | Surbana Jurong, SMEC (Singapore) |
| Ibadan City Master Plan | 2020 | Oyo State Government | World Bank | Dar Al-Handasah (Beirut) |

Taken together, master planning for African cities represents a crowded field with different actors operating in the same space. In the case of Greater Antananarivo, for example, the World Bank, AFD, and JICA each support different processes with project documentation hinting at this complication but emphasizing the need for mutual accommodation.[76] There is also evidence of a blending of approaches: the Kigali Master Plan, 2050, prepared in 2020 by Surbana Jurong, makes frequent reference to 'UN-Habitat principles' and has been described as participatory, combining a concern with technological 'smartness' with a focus on sustainability, inclusion and incrementalism, while a plan such as *Nairobi Metro 2030* combines 'environmentally oriented sustainable urban planning [vocabulary] alongside the standard neoliberal lingo'.[77]

## Concluding notes: rethinking urban master planning and implementation in Africa

The African master planning experience challenges Western conceptions of master planning as a declining colonial practice, with its revival and persistence in post-colonial years and its proliferation in more recent years linked to a diverse range of transnational and local planning actors and ambitions. However, it also shows that the track record of implementation of master plans for both new and existing cities is poor. Many plans are not or only partially implemented, or with unintended outcomes.[78] While this would feed into longstanding critiques of master planning as inadequate and not attuned to meeting local needs and realities, Ahmed puts the relationship between master planning in Africa and implementation in a pragmatic perspective:

> … despite these plans at most not implemented in the way they are envisioned, it does not necessarily mean they are completely abandoned, but they are negotiated, contested and in a continual process of being reconfigured. They converge and diverge with other planning visions that are made by different individual and social actors, and along the reconfiguration processes of these master plans some of the element[s] are being implement[ed] and others are omitted.[79]

Indeed, the plans reviewed in this paper indicate that planning practices and rationalities represent a complex layering of multiple international, national and particular local contexts, interests and circuits, shaping the extent to which plans are (or are not) implemented in ways that extend far beyond mere colonial legacies and path dependencies. In some cases, plans signal the return of traditional blueprint planning as a means to guide infrastructure led development. Others have incorporated some participatory elements into their preparation process, signalling a hybridisation with elements of previous strategic planning exercises. In yet other cases, such as South Africa, traditional forms of master planning and new approaches such as strategic spatial planning have come to co-exist.[80]

The motivations of international players for supporting master planning are equally diverse and may range from geopolitical competition, and downstream opportunities for projects to the development mandates of multilateral agencies (shaped of course by a complex interplay of agendas). National and local players in turn may be responding to the downstream investment opportunities that a master plan sponsored by an international agency may open up. But there are other reasons that national and local actors have for initiating or supporting a master planning process. Using the Lusaka Master Plan as a case, Lane explores its role in embracing and locally embedding globally

[76]Rouhana and Matera, "Antananarivo."
[77]Morscher and Nothdurft, "100 Hills"; Myers, "A World-Class City-Region?" 339.
[78]van Noorloos, Avianto, and Opiyo, "New Master-Planned Cities," 420.
[79]Ahmed, "City-Making in Africa", 5.
[80]Todes et al., "Beyond Masterplanning?"

circulating discourses on planning of which sustainability is currently the most significant, but also points to the role of urban plans in embedding the visions and strategies of national elites.[81] There is also a dark side to local ambitions driving master planning. In post-genocide Kigali 'master-planned urbanism forms the latest stage of the Rwandan state's authoritarian nation-building program', while the Addis Ababa and Oromia Special Zone Integrated Development Plan (2014) was prepared in the context of severe ethnic tensions and deep suspicion over (and violent protest against) the use of planning by state authorities.[82]

In most cases, just like in early post-colonial years, national actors continue to play a central role in the development of urban master plans in Africa, with many having been commissioned or controlled by a national ministry, although there are instances of partnerships between national and subnational government (e.g. Kampala, Kinshasa, Kigali, Accra), as well as cases where there is a stronger tradition of decentralization (e.g. Kenya). In every context there is transcalar politics around master planning. In Lusophone African countries such as Angola, Cape Verde, Mozambique and São Tomé and Príncipe, for example, post-colonial planning legislation local governments have gained responsibility for the preparation and implementation of municipal master plans but slow and uneven processes of decentralization mean that the effective implementation of local spatial planning systems varies between these countries, with control over most technical and financial resources for planning and the power to approve plans often continuing to lie at the ministerial level.[83] In Morocco, King Mohammed VI bypassed local government in the master planning of Casablanca, castigating local officials for their failures in city development.[84] A recent development is the upscaling of planning and investment to a transnational scale, as in the West African Growth Ring Master Plan, and the Northern Corridor Master Plan for East Africa, both prepared by JICA but initiated for regional economic blocs and emerging 'mega-city regions'.[85] There is a strong link between these transnational development plans and earlier regional and continental plans such as the Trans-African Highway, indicating continuities with early post-colonial plans, as well as traces of colonial spatial visions, and therefore the continued relevance of *longue durée* perspectives in assessing the potential of contemporary infrastructure-led development.[86]

Despite continued support for master planning, there are also departures from past approaches. For instance, the dominance of international consultants, and of a top down mode of planning, is being gradually challenged. In Accra, an attempt by the national government to appoint a Singaporean consultant to prepare a master plan was successfully resisted by local professionals.[87] This signals the emergence and increased assertiveness of African based planning expertise and local civic engagement in planning processes. For instance, the Greater Cairo plan developed in 2008 with JICA support was not popular locally and was quietly shelved at the time of the 2011 uprising.[88] This was followed by a participatory process led by UN Habitat and the UNDP which produced the urban vision, Greater Cairo 2050.[89] In the case of Kigali in Rwanda, the Singaporean firm, Surbana Jurong, was appointed to prepare the Kigali Master Plan, 2050, but local

[81]Lane, "Policy Mobility."
[82]Hudani, "The Green Masterplan," 677; Alem, "Urban Plans and Conflicting Interests."
[83]Silva, "Postcolonial Urban Planning"; Silva, "Local Government."
[84]Alaoui, "A 'Time' to Act."
[85]Choplin and Hertzog, "The West African Corridor."
[86]Cupers and Meier, "Infrastructure between Statehood"; Enns and Bersaglio, "On the Coloniality of."
[87]Amedzro, "History and Current Politics."
[88]Beier, "Towards a New Perspective."
[89]Government of Egypt and UN Habitat, *Greater Cairo Urban Development Strategy*.

participants exerted their agency by stating that: 'Kigali is not Singapore' and this had an impact on the contents of the plan.[90]

This blending of approaches, and the shifts in planning activated by changes in discourse over time, variations in the configuration of interests and power, and resistance from below, are a reminder that continuities in language – 'master planning' – do not necessarily mean neatly aligned continuities in the process and content of planning. Hence, although the idea of master planning has persisted, and even revived in recent years, contemporary master planning is part of the intricate palimpsest of planning in Africa and a hybridized practice. Having provided a synoptic view in this paper, future research should engage in the details of contemporary urban planning practice in Africa, through individual and comparative case study, exploring changing interests, politics, meaning, content, process, and outcomes, with attention to neglected areas such as the role and agency of local actors. In this way, we can move beyond broad but helpful terms such as palimpsest and hybridity to explore the substance of evolving planning practice across Africa's diversity, and how an engagement with planning in Africa may revise our understanding of planning globally.

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## Notes on contributors

***Philip Harrison*** is the South African Research Chair in Spatial Analysis and City Planning, funded by the National Research Foundation and hosted by the University of the Witwatersrand. He is a town planner and served as a member of the National Planning Commission in the Office of the President from 2010 to 2015. Previously, Prof Harrison was Executive Director in Development Planning and Urban Management at the City of Johannesburg for 4 years from 2006 to 2010. Prior to that he held academic positions at the Universities of the Witwatersrand and Natal. He has published widely in the fields of city planning and regional and urban development and is currently a lead collaborator in the Making Africa Urban research project.

***Sylvia Croese*** is a senior researcher in the South African Research Chair in Spatial Analysis and City Planning at the University of the Witwatersrand. She is an urban sociologist and previously worked as a researcher with

[90]Morscher and Nothdurft, "100 Hills."

the African Centre for Cities at the University of Cape Town where her work examined the localization of global urban policy in African cities, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals. She has published widely on urban politics and governance in Southern and Lusophone Africa through the lens of housing, land, urban infrastructure and mobility and currently works alongside Prof Harrison as a postdoctoral researcher in the Making Africa Urban research project.

## ORCID

*Philip Harrison* http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3038-858X
*Sylvia Croese* http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3197-1363

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