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The transcalar politics of urban master planning: the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in Africa

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Abstract

This article sheds light on the growing, but understudied role of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in supporting the local production of master plans across the African continent as a tool for guiding long-term investments in urban development. To explore the multiple logics, actors and interests driving the conception, preparation and implementation of these plans, we approach urban master planning as a transcalar process, through which diverse investment, planning and governance arrangements are produced and mobilized in ways that transcend the city scale. We illuminate these dynamics by building on an analysis of the history of Japanese development cooperation and drawing on case studies of JICA master planning in Malawi, Ghana and Tanzania.

Key words: *JICA, Japan, master planning, urban Africa; transcalar politics*

Introduction

From the 2000s onwards, there has been a resurgence of large-scale infrastructure-led development and spatial planning in Africa, driven by a 'global growth coalition', that consists of 'multilateral development banks, multinational corporations, multilateral governmental institutions, consultancies and some of the most powerful governments in the world' (Schindler and Kanai, 2021: 41). Scholars have interrogated the drivers and involvement of these different transnational actors and investment circuits in the development of mega infrastructure projects, such as railways, highways, dams and ports, as well the construction of entirely new cities (Schindler et al. 2019; Koelemaij and Derudder, 2021; Moser et al. 2021). In that context, much

attention has been given to the role of China in reshaping African cities (Paller, 2021). Accounting for as much as 30% of the total value of infrastructure projects in Africa, China's contribution to Africa's urban transformation and infrastructure financing at large is undeniable (Goodfellow, 2020). Yet, a focus on such high profile infrastructure developments and actors has overshadowed scholarly debate on less visible but no less significant urban investments in the realm of urban planning, knowledge transfer and development cooperation. In this paper, we seek to address this gap by providing insight into the growing, but understudied role of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in urban Africa.

JICA is Japan's main government body responsible for Official Development Assistance (ODA) and one of the largest aid agencies in the world. A key component of Japan's ODA, in addition to the disbursement of loans and grant aid, is technical cooperation, which over the past decade has been used to support the production of master plans in a rapidly growing number of cities and regions across the continent. Between 2008 and 2019, JICA financed the development of 10 urban master plans in Africa, in cities ranging from Cairo to Abidjan and Kampala (see Table 1 below). In addition, it has supported the development of a range of other master plans, including regional corridor development plans in East and West Africa, urban transport master plans for cities including Kinshasa, and sectoral plans covering areas such as water and waste management in cities such as Maputo and Lilongwe. Numerous other plans are in progress, making JICA the 'master of master plans' in Africa (AfDB, personal communication, 21 September 2021).

In its approach to master planning, JICA builds on Japan's longstanding experience of using, promoting and exporting comprehensive city-level master planning as a tool for guiding long-term investments in urban development. In more recent years, JICA has identified three key

characteristics of its urban master plans. First, they have a regional perspective, which translates to plans that cover cities and their surrounding areas, and that have a comprehensive scope, covering socio-economic aspects of cities in addition to physical aspects like land use and infrastructure. Second, JICA plans are designed to prepare for concrete infrastructural development and therefore include proposals and feasibility studies for specific priority projects. Third, JICA plans emphasize capacity building of local counterparts for planning and plan management. Taken together, these elements are considered to be central for achieving JICA's overall goal of contributing to 'urban growth for inclusive and dynamic development' (JICA, 2013a).

In the African context, JICA's approach to master planning responds to growing calls to address rapid and sprawling urbanization, rising infrastructure deficits and weak local planning capacity, as well as a range of other local planning interests and ambitions (Harrison and Croese, 2022). In that regard, JICA's willingness to finance and build local capacity for the development of spatial urban master plans distinctly sets it apart from Western donors and multilateral development agencies, whose interventions are mostly geared to supporting project-based plans or strategic visioning exercises. Yet, JICA is no different from other donors in that Japanese developmental cooperation is strongly rooted in the country's own historical development pathways (Kothari, 2007). In Japan's case, this is manifested in a strong top-down driven belief in (the transferability of) its state-centred, developmental model of growth, which is closely tied to national trade and investment actors and interests.

To understand the ways in which these multiple logics are mobilized and translated to and beyond the city level through master planning, we locate JICA's operations within a transcalar perspective, acknowledging that actors with different ideas, interests and capacities are drawn

together in context specific projects or territorial engagements, producing different sets of outcomes (Allen and Cochrane, 2007; Halbert and Rouanet, 2014; Robinson, 2021). We explore the complex interplay of these various logics, actors and interests through three case studies of JICA master planning in urban Africa. These include the 2010 comprehensive urban master plan for Lilongwe, Malawi, the 2013 comprehensive urban development plan for the Greater Kumasi area in Ghana and the 2018 urban transport master plan for Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Taken together, these cases illustrate how JICA master plans are conceived, prepared and implemented through the production and mobilization of diverse investment, planning and governance arrangements involving different local and transnational actors, allowing JICA to shape African cityscapes in significant, albeit highly context-dependent ways. In doing so, we provide an important entry point into the study of the deeply political nature and interests that underpin practices of urban master planning in Africa, and the possibilities as well as limitations for urban transformation that urban knowledge transfer and development cooperation may engender (Doucette and Sial, 2020).

Our research was conducted as part of a broader comparative research project on the transcalar politics of large-scale urban development in the cities of Lilongwe, Dar es Salaam and Accra. Early stages of 'generative' (Robinson, 2016) comparative desktop analysis on these cities revealed parallels in terms of JICA's role in the development of master plans. This was initially explored by reviewing these plans, as well as other related (English and Japanese language) documents, reports and academic literature. In a subsequent stage of the research, a total of 32 semi-structured interviews were conducted between October 2020 and November 2021 by the authors – a South Africa based and a Japan based researcher. Interviews were conducted online, except for interviews conducted during fieldwork in Dar es Salaam. Participants included individuals who work or previously worked with JICA at its headquarters in Tokyo, local and

Japanese staff at JICA offices in each of the three African cities, as well as local planners, government officials and development consultants with direct or indirect experience of working on the development of JICA master plans in these cities (including Kumasi in the case of Ghana). Our research questions and findings were developed through an iterative process, in constant 'dialogue with the data' (Fairfield and Charman, 2019), and refined by informal conversations and correspondence with other researchers of Japan/ese ODA, as well as a series of regular online workshops and discussions with members of the wider research team.

The paper starts by providing a historical review of Japanese development cooperation in order to shed light on the principles, actors and interests that guide its focus on master planning as both a developmental and strategic tool to guide urban investments. We show how these forces have informed the growing global export of Japan's planning approach and expertise over time, while responding to the investment needs and ambitions of local planning actors. We then move on to our case studies, which illuminate the transcalar politics that emerge from the dynamics, interactions and tensions with and amongst the different actors involved in the development and implementation of master plans in urban Africa, followed by a concluding discussion.

Japanese development cooperation and master planning

Shifting national, (geo)political and economic interests have contributed to the growing professionalisation and expansion of Japanese development cooperation over the past two decades, making it an integral part of the Western global aid architecture. Yet, in its basic tenets Japanese ODA continues to be defined by homegrown principles such as request-based aid and a focus on knowledge transfer and technical cooperation as a basis for 'self-help' development (Kato, 2018), which is central to understanding its approach to master planning.

Japan first became a donor after the end of WWII. Still a major recipient of multilateral development aid itself, the main purpose of Japanese ODA during the 1950s was to serve as war reparations to countries such as the Philippines, Myanmar (Burma), Indonesia and Vietnam, former colonies and other Southeast Asian countries that had suffered Japanese occupation during the war, while setting these countries up to enable the expansion of Japan's regional export market and securing the imports of important raw materials to aid its post-war reconstruction (Sato, 2010: 11). Hence, most of Japanese ODA consisted of so-called 'yen loans', long-term ODA loans with low interest rates that were disbursed to finance the development of large-scale infrastructure projects such as roads, railways, ports and power plants. Such projects followed what became known as a 'comprehensive' or 'totally co-ordinated' (*sōgō kaihatsu*) approach to development planning, emphasizing closely coordinated state-led infrastructure and heavy industrial investment as a means to jump-start high-speed economic growth (Moore, 2020: 2).

Central to the implementation of this comprehensive approach to planning in its development cooperation in the region were the same planners, architects and engineers who had been involved in planning exercises in Japan's colonies. Compared to other colonial powers, Japan distinguished itself by not imposing any particular national form onto the colonial built environment, as it did not have a tradition of colonization or of translating political power into the built environment through monumental urban planning. Instead, urban planning was used 'as a means to ensure the most important elements for economic development', through the establishment of infrastructure and industrial sites, as well as government and business centres (Hein, 2003: 51). Some of these early experiences prepared planners for later work in the mainland and beyond. A key example is the engineering company led by Yutaka Kubota, who founded Nippon Kōei after the war. This company was responsible for the Brantas River Basin

Development in Indonesia, which started in 1959 as Japan's first war compensation project but built on previous work conducted by the company during Japan's occupation of Indonesia during WWII (Hashimoto, 2008: 31; Fujimoto, 2013). The comprehensive planning approach was also translated to the field of architectural practice by architects such as Kenzō Tange, who had designed a number of 'new city' plans for Japan's colonies (Hein, 2003: 78). After the end of the WWII, he became the key inspiration for the emergence of the Japanese Metabolist movement in the 1950s and 60s, which was based on the mega scale design of 'total city' plans and systems, with a strong focus on urban transport infrastructure and mobility (Tamari, 2014: 202-203; Cho, 2018). Although this approach to city planning eventually reached its limits in Japan, Kenzō Tange became internationally renowned and sought after in the 1970s by governments seeking to establish a new and modernist vision for urban development, leading to invitations to develop proposals for new capitals in Africa such as Abuja, Nigeria (Tobin, 2017) and Dodoma, Tanzania (Beeckmans, 2018), as well as cities in the Middle East such as Amman, Jordan (Abu-Dayyeh, 2004) Damascus, Syria (Matsubara, 2016) and Doha, Qatar (Himes, 2018).[1]

The growing global export of Japan's comprehensive planning approach and expertise throughout the 1970s and 1980s accompanied a new phase in Japanese ODA. During these years, Japan significantly expanded its ODA contributions for both economic and geopolitical reasons. This followed the outbreak of the Yom Kippur war and the oil crisis of 1973, which prompted a search for the diversification of the origin of Japan's oil imports and trading partners, resulting in the expansion of ODA to countries rich in natural resources or economic growth potential. Japan also strengthened its ties with politically influential countries, in order

[1] Not all of these proposals were successful, but they did often lead to his involvement in the design of smaller projects or buildings in these cities. See https://en.tangeweb.com/works/

to gain support for its ambition to boost its international political status by becoming a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (Sato, 2010: 13-14). Increased ODA levels also responded to external pressures, at a time that Japan's economy was fast on its way to surpassing the United States as the world's largest economy. Fellow members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), pressured Japan to step up its contributions in line with its national income and capita levels, while disputes with the United States also contributed to Japan's rising aid levels to compensate for its growing trade surplus (Shimomura, 2020: 159).

By the late 1980s, Japan had become the world's largest ODA donor, even if its aid continued to be concentrated in Asia (Manning, 2016). This rise in ODA levels meant a growing role for JICA (previously Japanese Overseas Technical Cooperation Agency, OTCA), established in 1974 as the single agency responsible for providing Japanese sponsored technical support, under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). Although some parts of technical cooperation, such as training programmes and research activities, represent stand-alone activities that were part of JICA's wider mandate of technology transfer and capacity building, a central element of technical cooperation was development planning. This activity involved the development of studies, surveys and master plans, in support of the implementation of JICA loan and grant aid projects.[2] Partly as a way to make up for a shortage of government personnel, but also as an important avenue for advancing Japan's own economic growth, most development planning, including much of its subsequent implementation, was subcontracted to Japanese companies. Such companies would also play an important role in investigating potential projects for development funding, putting them 'at the frontlines of Japanese ODA practice' (Moore, 2020: 3; also Hashimoto, 2008: 28-29). Chief among these companies was Nippon Kōei, which by

[2] See https://www.jica.go.jp/english/our_work/types_of_assistance/tech/projects/index.html

1989 ranked first among a total 20 Japanese consulting firms that benefitted from contracts awarded for the implementation of projects funded by Japanese ODA loans, with a total of 69 contracts to the value of 3.6 billion yen (Fujimura, 1992: 32). However, this business-oriented approach to development cooperation sparked increasing backlash over time, both among recipient countries, who critiqued the perceived 'commercial motives' behind Japanese aid-giving, as well as fellow DAC members (Chittiwatanapong, 1990: 16). These widespread critiques eventually led to efforts to 'untie' aid, in order to allow third or recipient country contractors to participate in Japanese loan aid projects, as well as further aid increases (Fujimura, 1992). In 1992, Japan also adopted its first ODA charter, which laid out its ODA principles in a more politicized way by stressing principles of democracy, human rights and environmental conservation, in line with dominant international development discourses and norms at the time (Söderberg, 2018: 309).

This shift to a more mainstream development rhetoric illustrated Japan's 'eagerness […] to present a more "cosmopolitan" picture of its aid programme' (Tsopanakis, 2011a: 12). To a large degree this desire was driven by MOFA, which had started to gain ground over the historically strong and commercially driven Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) in the design of Japanese ODA policy. The growing influence of MOFA contributed to the expansion and professionalisation of JICA as a more 'needs-based' aid agency in subsequent years, coupled with Japan's growing insertion in multilateral development forums such as the UN. However, part of JICA's operations remained 'traditional' (Tsopanakis, 2011a), in the sense that development assistance continued to be focused on a self-help model of development that both mirrored and served Japan's own growth and development experience. Japan's success in proposing a master plan for the new capital city of Astana in Kazakhstan, designed

by the architect Kisho Kurokawa[3], illustrates the active role of Japanese government agencies in brokering Japanese bids to international tenders, particularly after the Japanese economy started contracting in the late 1990s. This bid included an offer by JICA to finance the development of the master plan 'free of charge', as part of a 'package deal' that included the provision of a low interest loan for a feasibility study on water supply for the new city (Shelekpayev, 2020: 515-516). Yet, its success equally demonstrates the importance of local appetites for Japan's internationally renowned planning expertise and the prospect of infrastructure investments flowing from JICA-led planning exercises (ibid., see also Bissenova, 2013). As such, master planning continued to be a central component of development cooperation, serving both the developmental needs of aid recipients as well as the strategic interests of Japan itself. It is with this recognition of the ways in which Japanese master planning has been historically driven and mobilized by a set of multiple interlinked development actors and rationales that we now turn to explore the transcalar politics of Japan's development cooperation and master planning in Africa.

Japanese development cooperation and master planning in Africa

Japan's relations with Africa have been described as 'both strategic and opportunistic' (Cornelissen, 2012: 462). For decades, Japanese aid to Africa was limited to a few key countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, where Japan built close relationships with post-independence governments. But Japan's contributions to Africa accelerated in the 1980s, in line with the expansion of its ODA at this time. This turned it into a leading donor in countries such as Zambia, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria and São Tomé and Príncipe (Ampiah, 1996: 109), even if overall ODA levels to Africa continued to be relatively small compared to other DAC donors

[3] As a former student of Kenzō Tange, Kurokawa's proposal for the new city was based on essential concepts from the architectural Metabolist movement. Notably, since 2015 Kisho Kurokawa's firm has become part of the Nippon Kōei group, see https://www.kisho.co.jp/page/1.html

and to its own aid to Asia (59.3% against 11.4% to Africa of total net bilateral aid in 1990) (Fujimura, 1992: 7; see also Wild et al. 2011).

In the 1990s, Africa became an important political stage for Japan to demonstrate the more outward looking and cosmopolitan shift in its ODA policy, as outlined in its 1992 ODA charter. This coincided with a time during which most Asian countries had started taking off economically, while African countries were facing political and economic marginalization in the aftermath of Structural Adjustment and the end of the Cold War (Sato, 2010: 17-18). With the creation of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) Japan became the first country to launch a forum on African development. The first three TICAD meetings, held in 1993, 1998 and 2003 were largely shaped by aid-related concerns such as poverty reduction and the development of sectors such as health, education and agriculture, and were co-hosted by UN agencies, the World Bank and the African Union (AU) Commission. This focus reflected Japan's growing (desire to consolidate its) role in various multilateral forums. However, its purported resistance against debt relief illustrated underlying tensions between its outward commitment to Western universal principles of development and its ongoing belief in an ethics of local ownership and self-help (Cornelissen and Taylor, 2000).

From the late 1990s onwards, Japan's extended economic crisis brought these tensions to the fore, sparking a return to a more self-interested approach to development cooperation. A series of reforms were undertaken, including the adoption of a revised ODA charter in 2003 and a new White Paper on ODA in 2007, which combined a focus on international peace and development with a concern for safeguarding Japan's own security and prosperity (MOFA, 2003; 2007). Japan's inward shift was further consolidated by a number of domestic events, such as a change in government in 2009, major natural disasters, such as the earthquake and

Fukushima nuclear crisis of 2011, and the return to power by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2012. External geopolitical changes such as China's growing global influence also contributed to reinforcing this shift, as reflected in Japan's 2015 Development Cooperation Charter, which included a renewed focus on the export of Japanese infrastructure, expertise and technology (Söderberg, 2018: 311-314). This focus particularly emphasized the export promotion of Japan's expertise in urban development and planning, through the adoption of various plans and initiatives by the Prime Minister's office and ministries such as the METI and Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT), in close collaboration with private business associations (Yoshimatsu, 2017).

In the African context, these changes translated into a new positioning towards the continent, with the Japanese government on the one hand committing to double its – still relatively small – aid budget, while emphasizing investment opportunities for Japanese companies on the other (MOFA, 2007). Fortuitously, this approach responded to growing African calls for increased investment and development at a time where the continent's global strategic relevance had started rising (Cornelissen, 2012: 464). From TICAD IV (2008) onwards, then, Japan more actively encouraged trade, business investment and economic growth, while TICAD V (2013) introduced an additional emphasis on infrastructure and urban development. Notably, this included a particular emphasis on the need for urban master planning, with the Yokohama Action Plan adopted at TICAD V for the years 2013-2017 pledging support for the formulation of 10 strategic master plans, with a particular focus on urban transportation, infrastructure planning and water management. The Action Plan also included plans for corridor development in East, West and Southern Africa as a way to improve connectivity and regional economic integration through regional transport, infrastructure and power and energy development (JICA Africa Department, 2019) (see Figure 1). At TICAD 6 in 2016, the first TICAD summit to be

held in Africa, the Japanese government further pledged to support quality infrastructure investment as part of the expansion of its new Partnership for Quality Infrastructure Initiative (seen by many as a response to China's Belt and Road Initiative, see Bhagawati, 2016; van Staden, 2020), as well as to develop master plans for 5 African cities, including Mombasa, Antananarivo, Nouackchott, Kinshasa and Dar es Salaam. At TICAD 7 in 2019 Japan in turn pledged support to develop master plans for another 4 cities expected to reach a population of 10 million, while also launching the African Clean Cities Platform, which has a focus on waste management (JICA Africa Department, 2019). By this same year, JICA had already financed the development of 10 urban master plans in Africa, in cities ranging from Cairo to Abidjan and Kampala (see Table 1).

[Figure 1. JICA's initiatives in Africa]

[Table 1. JICA's urban master plans in Africa]

These pledges show how the development of master plans in Africa has been actively promoted through high level commitments, complemented with what JICA officials in interviews have termed local 'sales activities', particularly at the time of review or expiry of existing master plans (Interview JICA Urban and Regional Group official, 10 February 2021). Yet, Japanese aid protocol stipulates that procedures for the start of the development of a plan must follow the request of the host country. Following such an official request, which is generally preceded by 'daily communications' and 'ongoing dialogue' between the local JICA office and host government (Interview JICA office Dar es Salaam, 25 November 2021), while also requiring approval from the local Japanese Embassy, a tender process is launched in Japan. A limited set of well known Japanese consultancy and engineering companies generally bid together as a

consortium (also referred to as Joint Venture), each with their own specific expertise (Interview Development Consultant, 23 April 2021). Once a scope of work is agreed upon (also referred to as Record of Discussion), a study team consisting of members of the awarded consortium are flown to the host country in representation of JICA. Contracts are signed at the Ministerial level, such as the Ministry of Local Government, which serve as the project employers and core counterparts for JICA, although local authorities are generally the key implementing agencies, physically hosting the consultants, and providing in kind support for the JICA study teams. This includes important support in convening joint steering committees and sectoral working groups, as well as the facilitation of meetings and seminars that serve to generate inputs from a range of different stakeholders throughout the period of the development of each plan, which can take over a year's time (Interview local Development Consultant Assistant (DCA), 10 June 2021).

After completion, the plan is handed over to the host country which is expected to hold responsibility for implementation to ensure local ownership and encourage a self-help approach to development. In the words of JICA officials: "the implementer is not Japan, but the host country" (Interview JICA Institute researcher, 15 January 2021). Host government approval is crucial, "otherwise, [the plans] end up being a pie in the sky" (Interview JICA Urban and Regional Group official, 10 February 2021). Hence, while Japan will generally fund particular 'priority projects' identified in the master plan through grant aid or concessional loans, all plans are publicly presented and shared as they are meant to serve as a development framework to guide local as well as donor investments (JICA, 2013a: 10).

With over 30 offices across the continent, JICA's presence and close relations with a growing number of countries in Africa is crucial for mediating between between the host government

and JICA study teams (Interview JICA Ghana office, 19 January 2021). Since the creation of a 'new' JICA in 2008, the agency is now responsible for all ODA operations, including loans, grant aid and technical cooperation. While the merging of these functions has given it greater autonomy, it has to balance its own ideas about what urban master plans are meant to do with the strategic direction and urban infrastructure export targets set out by the Japanese government. Moreover, JICA has to manage the interests and expectations of recipient countries, in contexts marked by the presence of multiple other development partners and investors. What does this mean for the ways in which master plans are conceived, prepared and implemented, by whom and at which scales? In the following sections, we further explore the dynamics and outcomes of these transcalar politics through the cases of JICA-led master planning in Malawi, Ghana and Tanzania.

JICA Urban Development Master Plan for Lilongwe (2010)

Malawi is currently one of the least urbanised and poorest countries on the African continent, with a deep reliance on foreign aid funding and loans, and a fragile and rent-seeking democracy (Englund, 2002; Lwanda, 2006; Riley, 2014). Major development partners include the United States and multilateral donors such as the World Bank, as well as actors such as China, which in recent years has funded high profile construction projects, such as a new parliament building, stadium and an international conference centre in the capital of Lilongwe, as well as major nationwide infrastructural projects in the area of energy, transport and ICT.[4] Japan's relations with Malawi go back to 1964 when Japan officially recognized Malawi after it gained independence. While it was not until 2008 that Japan opened its first embassy in Lilongwe, it had a presence in Malawi since 1971 when the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) office opened in Blantyre, which became a JICA office in 1989. The first major yen loan project

[4] See for an overview and details, https://china.aiddata.org

in Malawi consisted of the construction of the Kamuzu International Airport which started in 1977, while grant aid started in 1979, supporting projects in agriculture and education. This was still the case in more recent years, with a notable shift in focus to major projects in the energy and transportation sector (Embassy of Japan in Malawi, 2016).

According to a Malawian JICA official, the development of the JICA master plan for Lilongwe originates in initial explorations by the Lilongwe City Council (LCC) for possible JICA support to move an existing bus terminal to another part of the city. JICA wanted to know whether this was in line with the city's master plan, which further probing revealed to have expired 15 years prior. It bothered JICA to support a project that had no basis in a master plan, which led to the submission of a new request through official government to government channels for support to develop Lilongwe's master plan (Interview JICA official Lilongwe, 15 April 2021). For Lilongwe's planners this was a very welcome move, in which they were "willing partners", as they had been "struggling with challenges from having an outdated master plan for a long time" (Interview LCC planner, 12 April 2021).

Work on the masterplan started in June 2009 and was completed in September 2010 with the LCC as the key implementing agency, in coordination with the Ministry of Land and Ministry of Local Government. The LCC hosted the secretariat of the JICA master planning team which consisted of consultants from KRI and Nippon Kōei and provided counterpart personnel for the consultants to work with on the spatial development aspects of the master plan, including land use, waste management and service delivery (Interview JICA official Lilongwe, 15 April 2021). In line with the objectives of the master plan, capacity building was an important component of the development of the plan, with a number of city officials being trained on the job or sent to Japan for training (JICA, KRI and Nippon Koei, 2010).

Almost in parallel, the LCC also worked on a visioning exercise through the preparation of a City Development Strategy (CDS), in close cooperation with the City of Johannesburg and with the support of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and Cities Alliance.[5] It also developed an Urban Profile of Lilongwe based on a 'rapid participatory urban profiling' methodology, as part of the UN Habitat's Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (UN-Habitat, 2011). Both processes were completed in 2010 and involved some degree of information sharing with those involved in the development of the JICA plan. Yet, after their completion all three plans initially had limited traction and it was unclear how they related to each other. The CDS received international recognition as a developmental process of strategic policy formulation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation provided some funding for the implementation of slum upgrading projects, while the Urban Profile produced detailed studies of informal settlements but little funding for implementation (Robinson, 2019:119, 121). JICA in turn anticipated that its masterplan would form a basis for LCC to attract financing and direct investments. However, the ability of the City to use the plan in this way has been historically weak, with planning administration in Malawi being highly centralized. Compounded by its structural reliance on donor funding, this has resulted in low levels of local ownership of externally funded plans. As such, from the city officials' point of view they were surprised and disappointed that JICA did not directly follow up the masterplan with further investment (Interview LCC Official, 16 April 2021).

To address concerns around the LCC's ability to implement the JICA master plan, JICA funded a technical assistance project for Urban Plan and Development Management for the City of

[5] https://www.citiesalliance.org/resources/publications/project-case-studies/johannesburg-lilongwe-partnership-leads-robust-city

Lilongwe in collaboration with the Ministry of Lands and Housing, which started in 2012 (JICA Malawi, 2013). Over time, different funders, including JICA, but also China and the World Bank, stepped in to implement some of the key priority projects identified in the plan, such as the improvement of Lilongwe's main roads, through agreements reached with the Ministry of Transport and Public Works (JICA Malawi, 2021). While most of the subsequent implementation of the plan went on to involve national ministries, the JICA plan also became a useful tool for the LCC to advocate for projects of its own interest. For instance, JICA's focus on environmental sustainability meant that the masterplan stressed the importance of public parks and green open spaces. According to a senior official, this gave the City Council leverage to push for the promotion of environmental biodiversity in Lilongwe through the development of city parks and the implementation of the Lilongwe Ecological Corridor project, which has been included in the country's National Tourism Investment Master Plan, set to be launched in 2022 (Interview LCC Official, 16 April 2021; Ziba, 2021).

As such, the case of Lilongwe shows how JICA has been successful in advancing spatial master planning as a tool for generating transnational urban investment in fragile and resource scarce contexts, involving different actors and networks at and beyond the city scale. Curiously, the relocation of the bus terminal that sparked the development of the JICA master plan in the first place was not completed, while JICA did fund projects outside of the ambit of the city master plan that could be seen as of strategic interest to Japan itself. Such projects include the upgrading and expansion of the Kamuzu Airport which it first helped building in the 1970s, as well as the development of a master plan for the rehabilitation of the Sena railway corridor, which complements other JICA funded corridor development in the region targeted under TICAD V (2013).

JICA Comprehensive Urban Development Plan for Greater Kumasi (2013)

Ghana has seen a resurgence in economic growth after a period of deep decline following political turmoil, dictatorship and the implementation of structural adjustment policies in the 1980s. With a restored democracy, discoveries of offshore oil and significant flows of foreign investment, Ghana is now one of the most economically resilient and strongly urbanising contexts in Africa, attracting a multitude of different transnational planners and private investors, including in entirely new satellite cities (Oteng-Abiabo and Grant, 2019; Fält, 2019). In recent years, the Ghanaian government has started to become more proactively involved in urban development planning, with the adoption of a National Urban policy and a range of other national development frameworks and visions, coupled with a drive to reduce its dependency on external donors in order to move the country 'beyond aid' (Kumi, 2020). However, limited capacity, a complex allocation of responsibilities across different levels of government and different systems of spatial and development planning has affected the implementation of plans, particularly in the country's rapidly growing city regions, which continue to be characterised by extensive informal settlements and related service and infrastructure needs (Acheampong and Ibrahim, 2016; Agyemang et al. 2017).

Diplomatic relations between Japan and Ghana were established upon Ghana's independence in 1957 but built on longstanding ties dating back to the early 20th century when the Japanese Dr. Hideyo Noguchi conducted research to develop a yellow fever vaccine in Ghana. Economic technical cooperation between the two countries started in the late 1950s, largely initiated by President Nkrumah who reached out to Japan and other Asian countries to promote trade as well as economic and technical cooperation (Sackeyfio-Leno, 2016). A dynamic set of mutual visits and exchanges in the field of public works, large enterprises and small industries was followed by the establishment of a Textile Training Centre by Japan's OTCA in 1963 and the

disbursement of a yen loan for a telecommunication expansion project conducted in 1983 (Tsopanakis, 2011b: 108). As of 2020, JICA is one of Ghana's many bilateral donors, supporting projects in agriculture, health and science/mathematics education, capacity building in administrative and financial management, as well as an increasing number of infrastructure projects, with a focus on bridge, roads and port development (JICA Ghana, 2020).

In 2013, JICA completed a master plan for the Greater Kumasi Area, which includes the city of Kumasi, Ghana's second largest city after the capital of Accra. According to the leader of the JICA study team responsible for the development of the plan, the idea for the plan had initially emerged through interactions with officials from the Kumasi Town and Country Planning Department (TCPD)[6], during a JICA mission to the city in 2010 (JICA Ghana, 2013: 5). A local planning official affirmed that the city of Kumasi had been experiencing rapid growth but that planning efforts had been largely *ad hoc* and disconnected from the larger city region and districts. JICA's comprehensive approach to master planning was therefore welcomed: "with JICA coming in it was like, harmonizing all of those developments to come out with a comprehensive plan. […] Because we realized that all of our developments were sort of, piecemeal" (Interview Kumasi planner, 17 June 2021).

Throughout the development of the plan, the JICA study team worked closely with local planning officials from the TCPD, which acted as the implementing agency and played an active role in the collection of data on the city's transportation, water, solid waste, electricity, health and education sectors, as well as the facilitation of local stakeholder engagement (Interview local DCA, 10 June 2021). The development of the master plan for Greater Kumasi

[6] Now Physical Planning Department of Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly and Ashanti Regional Town and Country Planning Department, part of the Ghanaian Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority or LUSPA.

also included an important capacity development component for local planning officials, through workshops in Japan and Kenya on various aspects of comprehensive planning. The result was a comprehensive plan which provided the basis for the formulation of a Sub-Regional Spatial Development Framework and Sub-Regional Structure Plans (JICA, 2013b). However, in subsequent years, little progress was made in terms of the implementation of the plan. According to local planners this was largely due to limited local funding, deriving from a wider mismatch between *de jure* and *de facto* levels of decentralization in Ghana (Anaafo, 2018). For instance, the construction of primary roads, representing an important part of the priority projects recommended in the JICA plan, is not part of the mandate of metropolitan authorities but of the national government and requires approval from the Ministry of Roads and Highways and of Finance (Interview Kumasi planner, 17 June 2021).

In its evaluation of the project, the JICA Ghana office attested to the financial and institutional constraints to project implementation, adding that budget allocations for the local planning department itself had not been sufficient since the completion of the master plan in 2013, with 'the actual budget allocated [being] only around half amount of the approved budget' (JICA Ghana, 2018: 4). It also noted the lack of sufficient local planning staff and legal backing for the plan, as well as the fact that the plan's proposed platform for coordination and information sharing between the different government agencies required for implementation had not been operational (JICA Ghana, 2018: 3-4).

In addition to these internal constraints to implementation, other barriers emerged to the funding of certain projects by JICA itself. While JICA was interested in funding the construction of the Kumasi outer ring road, which had been identified as a priority project in the early stages of the plan's development (JICA Ghana, 2013), this interest did not align with

the Japanese government's increasing prioritization of the export of high quality infrastructure over more straightforward construction works. In the words of a senior JICA official:

> we JICA have an interest in the outer ring road project but at that moment […] the Japanese government requested JICA to do more […] Japanese technology or Japanese experience utilization […].So if we see the road construction […] other countries like China and Korea also can do such kind of simple road construction itself. So that is why JICA had some difficulty to explain why Japan should do that project from the point of view of the utilization of the Japanese technology or the Japanese experience. So now unfortunately the outer ring road project has not realized yet. (Interview JICA Ghana office, 19 January 2021).

Indeed, since the completion of the Kumasi plan JICA has funded a number of complex infrastructure projects, such as the Tema (Accra) flyover interchange (first phase completed in 2017) and a new cable-stayed bridge across the Volta river (loan agreement signed in 2016). Both projects are aimed at boosting broader efforts at improving mobility and connections between Ghana's key cities and neighbouring countries through regional corridor development, a key focus of the West Africa Growth Ring (WAGRIC) master plan, completed by JICA in 2018 (JICA, 2018a). Conceived under TICAD V (2013), this Growth Ring is meant to connect Accra's national road network to Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo through a transnational network of corridors spanning over 1,000 km, echoing plans for the Trans African Highway plan, which Japan was involved in formulating in the early 1970s (Clacherty, 2017). The JICA master plan for Greater Kumasi therefore represents an important successful case of local planning capacity building and collaboration to address the challenges of rapid urban growth. However, the implementation of the plan has been limited by structural local governance

constraints, combined with an increased orientation of Japanese government investments towards more complex and regional infrastructure development where in the Ghanaian context it has a competitive edge over other investors.

JICA Urban Transport Master Plan for Dar es Salaam (2018)

Tanzania is a rapidly urbanizing country, which in recent years has experienced significant economic growth, amid persistently high levels of poverty and aid dependency. A long history of urban bias coupled with centralized planning has resulted in largely unplanned urban growth, especially in the capital of Dar es Salaam, but in recent years also fertile soil for master planning (Kasala, 2015; Peter and Yang, 2019; Todd et al. 2019). Although highly dependent on the assistance of major bilateral donors such as the US and the UK, as well as multilateral donors such as the World Bank, relations with the international donor community have at times been tense and uneven. Western countries discontinued their assistance during the socialist leadership of President Nyerere and more recently relations were strained under the Magafuli administration (2015-2021), which prioritised economic development over political and human rights, while simultaneously distancing itself from important emerging investors such as China (Kweka, 2020).

In this context, Japan has proven to be a constant and key development partner to Tanzania (Ampiah, 1996), with most of its current activities representing a product and continuation of this longstanding partnership. Diplomatic relations with the country date back to Tanzania's independence in 1961 and technical cooperation started in the 1960s through Japan's Overseas Technical Cooperation Agency and the opening of Japan's Office for Overseas Cooperation Volunteers in 1966. To date, Tanzania remains the largest Japanese ODA beneficiary among the 49 sub-Saharan countries that are recipients of Japanese ODA, making Japan one of

Tanzania's top 5 donors (MOFA, 2019). JICA's priority sectors in Tanzania include agriculture, industry and infrastructure, which has been gaining a notable urban- and transport-oriented character in recent years, accounting for about a third of JICA's development cooperation in Tanzania by 2020 (JICA Tanzania, 2019). This support includes an important component of local capacity building, through projects such as the Capacity Building Project for the Improvement of Dar es Salaam Transport (CUPID) programme, which ran in two phases, first from 2010-2012 and then from 2014-2017, including seminars, and study tours to Japan, South Africa and Indonesia (JICA, 2018b), as well as a wider Knowledge Co-Creation Project (KCCP) under which over 20,000 Tanzanians have been trained in Japan (The Citizen, 2020).

But JICA's involvement in transport planning in Dar es Salaam goes back to the early 1980s, when JICA established its Tanzania office in Dar es Salaam and supported the Selander bridge expansion project (1980-1982), followed by the Morogoro road improvement project (1984-1987), consisting of the upgrading of essential routes connecting to the Central Business District (CBD) to four lane roads and bridges (JICA Tanzania, 2019). In 1995, JICA completed a study on Dar es Salaam's road development plan for the Ministry of Works, Communication and Transport. This study involved measuring traffic density and air pollution in a context of spiralling urban growth, a decaying road network, increased vehicle ownership, congestion and resulting road accidents (Kanyama et al. 2004). An amendment to the Transport and Licensing Act in 1999 gave the hitherto weak Dar es Salaam City Council powers to manage public transport in Dar es Salaam, leading to plans to develop a new city-wide mobility plan for public transport and the announcement of a BRT system in 2003. Under the BRT programme major road works were earmarked to accommodate the initial phases of the BRT with funding to be

obtained from the World Bank as well as central and local government (Kanyama et al. 2004: 43-44).

However, the start of BRT roadworks suffered many delays and only gathered momentum in 2013, reflecting a drawn out and precarious balancing act by the Tanzanian government in trying to meet the interests of the project's external funders as well as important local political actors and constituencies representing the city's various municipalities and existing public transport operators and users (Rizzo, 2015). Amid this contested environment, a growing number of master plans started to be commissioned by different Tanzanian government agencies, illustrating a growing appetite for spatial planning as an instrument to guide future city development. Among these various plans is a World Bank funded land use master plan for the city of Dar es Salaam, commissioned by the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements, a JICA funded urban transport master plan commissioned by the President's Office for Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG) and Dar es Salaam City Council, as well as a JICA funded nationwide transport and trade system development master plan, covering road, port and railway development, following a request by the Ministry of Transport. Many of these plans took prolonged periods to develop, with the 2008 JICA urban transport master plan being outdated before it could be fully implemented, leading to its revision in 2018 (JICA, 2018b).

Despite these various contracted and seemingly parallel planning processes, most of the plans are in alignment around their focus on Transit Oriented Development (TOD). From this perspective, Dar es Salaam's spatial growth is to be deconcentrated through multiple interconnected sub centers or clusters, with the city itself seen as a node within a wider network of national industrial development corridors (Ministry of Industry and Trade, 2011; Ministry

of Finance and Planning, 2016). The alignment between national development plans and JICA's vision for Dar es Salaam as a 'transit oriented mega city' (JICA, 2018b) builds on the support of other major development actors such as the World Bank, while the Bank's investments in the city's BRT corridor network and roads infrastructure under its Dar es Salaam Metropolitan Development Project (DMDP) in turn have followed JICA's urban transport master plans. According to a senior PO-RALG official: "the JICA master plan found the DMDP in place and it was the mission of that and the vision of the JICA transportation master plan to ensure that Dar es Salaam becomes a TOD oriented city." (Interview PO-RALG, 8 May 2021). JICA itself has funded the implementation of several priority projects identified in its various plans, including the construction of a fly over and the widening of most of Dar es Salaam's main roads, with a study for the rehabilitation of the city's commuter train system being one of its latest projects (Interview JICA office Dar es Salaam, 25 November 2021).

This alignment of local and transnational development interests has made Dar es Salaam an ideal candidate for JICA-led master planning, allowing JICA to make a considerable mark on the city's development and to contribute to addressing the city's longstanding problems of traffic congestion. However, these efforts have been led by national planning actors who privilege infrastructure development and mega projects over more structural planning interventions that require effective decentralization of power to the city level. A deep seated resistance against such decentralization means that more politically sensitive proposals made by JICA, for instance for the creation of an independent and autonomous Dar es Salaam Urban Transport Authority (DUTA), have not been implemented to date, raising questions about the extent to which its plan will effectively be able to guide the city's development in line with TOD principles over time (Suzuki, 2020).

Concluding discussion

In recent years, global investments in infrastructure-led development have been on the rise in African cities. In this context, most scholarly attention has focused on the mushrooming of high profile mega infrastructure projects across the continent, rendering less visible investments in the realm of urban planning, knowledge transfer and development cooperation understudied. Studying JICA's growing support for urban master planning from a transcalar perspective sheds important light on the multiple actors, processes and politics around which urban development practices coalesce.

Firstly, we have shown how JICA's planning interventions are guided by a specific set of ideas about growth and development, that are both nationally and historically embedded as well as shaped by the changing planning and investment needs, interests and ambitions of local actors. Notably, our cases illustrate a growing local demand for Japanese planning expertise in the urban African context, resulting from a renewed interest in comprehensive long-term spatial and land use planning as a tool for co-ordinating long-term infrastructural investments across rapidly expanding city territories. It is here where strategic and developmental interests converge and where JICA's support for long-term technical planning, cooperation and capacity building at the city level distinguishes Japan from the multitude of other global players active in African cities. Despite JICA's growing influence on local urban and infrastructural development, its role is largely unknown among the general public, in contrast to the much more publicly debated presence and investments of Chinese investors or state-owned companies (Huang and Chen, 2016). Japan's focus on urban planning through knowledge transfer and development cooperation has allowed it to exercise a 'quiet' register of power (Allen, 2011), or what some have called the 'softest of soft power' (Guest, 2014), by shaping

local and transnational planning visions, decisions and investments over extended periods of time.

However, complex local territorial networks and configurations involving multiple actors with uneven levels of power mean that planning interventions 'land' or are assembled in different and highly context-dependent ways (Halbert and Rouanet, 2014). In all three of our cases, the degree to which the interests of multiple actors aligned in relation to the implementation of the plan varied, producing different governance and investment arrangements at varying scales, thereby 'diluting' the influence of externally financed infrastructure planning or development (Goodfellow and Huang, 2021). The role of national governments stands out in this regard. Despite the close collaboration with city planning actors and institutions in the preparation of master plans, in most cases the implementation of master planned infrastructure development has been controlled by national government agencies and development visions (see also Lane, 2021). While national government support is important for the coordination of development planning, a growing appetite for master planning has translated into the proliferation of planning exercises, with subsequent investments prioritizing project based infrastructural development over more structural interventions aimed at strengthening institutional planning capacity at the city level. As such, our cases illustrate the importance of understanding the locally embeddedness of transnational urban planning interventions, by identifying the context specific forces and dynamics through which transnational actors and engagements are 'plug[ged] into pre-existing patterns, replicat[ing] tendencies of urban development' (Chungu and Dittgen, 2021: 21).

Overall, there is then a stark disjuncture between JICA's historical focus on a self-help approach to comprehensive planning and implementation, which requires a strong local

government that is able to coordinate multiple transnational investment actors and flows in line with the vision set out in the plan, and the reality of highly contested African urban planning contexts (Cirolia and Berrisford, 2017). Indeed, JICA's plans have not been free from critiques, with some continuing to see Japan's self-interested approach to development aid as a form of 'strategic philanthropy' (Bathla, 2021: 15, following Barnes, 2005). Others have critiqued the excessive focus of JICA master plans on transport related infrastructure and planning in formal parts of the city over more urgent and complex investment needs in Africa's extensive urban slums (Mwang'a, 2018), thereby also drawing critical attention to the role that planning consultants play in the transfer of particular embodied types of knowledge and expertise in the development of master plans (Pow, 2018).

The internal *ex-post* project evaluations that have been conducted by JICA in recent years to assess the status and impact of implementation, as well as recommendations and lessons learned of completed master plans[7], indicate a growing acknowledgement of some of these challenges among JICA officials, illustrating wider debates in Japanese ODA circles around the tensions between the strategic and developmental interests driving Japan's support for master planning (IDJ, 2018; see also Doucette, 2020). A transcalar perspective sheds light on the ways in which and where the different actors, ideas and interests involved in urban planning, knowledge transfer and development cooperation may clash or converge, offering an important entry point into the study of the politics and potential developmental impact of urban master plans.

[7] Evaluations of the urban master plans for the cities of Kumasi, Nairobi, Abidjan and Dakar can be found on the JICA website under Africa > Development > Regional > Urban Planning,
see: https://www2.jica.go.jp/en/evaluation/

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