

GOETHE-INSTITUT NAIROBI

The Goethe-Institut is the cultural institute of the Federal Republic of Germany with a presence currently in some 92 countries, often in multiple cities in the same country. The Goethe-Institut Kenya, founded in 1963 and located in Nairobi's city centre, covers the entire scope of functions of the Goethe-Institut. The cultural program holds close to 150 events annually in all genres of art, cultural education, library cooperation and discourse. The spectrum ranges from high culture to pop culture, from specialist, expert events to events for the general public. The often multilateral projects emanate from the Kenyan cultural scene and are often oriented towards the international academic scene and the global art circuit.

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KÖLN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF DESIGN

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THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, KENYA

The University of Nairobi, which admitted its first students in 1956, started as the Royal Technical College, Nairobi. Later renamed University College it offered University of London degrees until 1966.

Its growth over time has been phenomenal, with six (6) campus colleges spread across the city of Nairobi. The aspirations of the university are not only being met through provision of quality education and training, its innovative parallel degree programmes continually strive to create an unparalleled environment of research and academic excellence.

<http://www.uonbi.ac.ke/>



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LEARNING FROM NAIROBI MOBILITY

cultural library

GOETHE-INSTITUT NAIROBI / KÖLN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF DESIGN / UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI



Cultural Library is a series of projects, a collaboration of international research partners investigating everyday habits and rituals and the use of products and spaces associated with them. The current Cultural Library project MOBILITY is a collaboration between 20 students from Cologne and Nairobi, three international research partners and experts from various disciplines (design, architecture, city planning). The results, and the manner in which they are presented in this book, show, yet again, the problem-solving potential that design has, due to its interdisciplinary approach.

By asking the relevant questions (»what are the decisive factors that shape the urban space in the centre of Nairobi?« or »what opportunities does current information technology offer to improve the situation of the jobseekers who gather every day at certain spots in the city?«) and also through details that enable us to get a handle on complex interdependencies (»what can sukuma-wiki, a staple Kenyan vegetable, tell us about mobility structures?«), those taking part in the project and the project authors have sketched out both the relevant issues and opportunities for intervention with regards to the theme of mobility at the micro- as well as at the macro level.

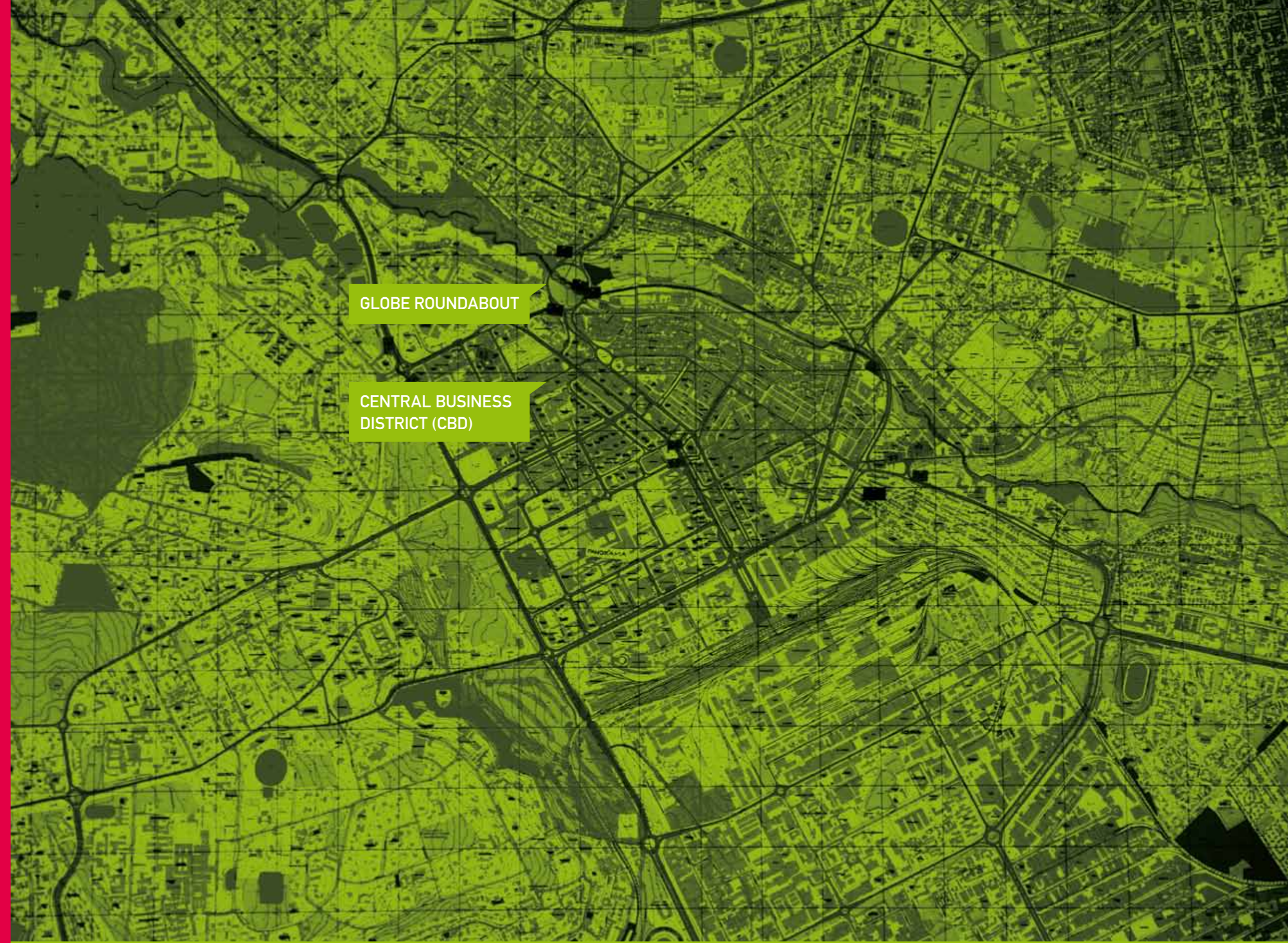
Developing finished product solutions is not the main thrust of this project; rather it is about the aspects of transformation and interaction: how can the collaboratively gained knowledge be reworked to make it useful, to start a discourse and, above all, to put intercultural differences to good use. The title Learning from Nairobi clearly reflects this. This book presents both the results and the nature of this German-Kenyan collaboration, which was based on reconsidering existing solutions and developing new ideas. »Moments of interaction« – not only intercultural, but also interdisciplinary – are visualised in this book in a lively and engaging manner.

We hope that we can pique the readers' interest in understanding the interdependencies and in finding out about the different ways of looking at the issues. Readers will be invited to join the discussion and ask questions. By providing links to the project's website culturallibrary.com with further information on themes, places and cultural dimensions, we will show the wider context regarding the questions and the snapshots illustrated in the book.

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GLOBE ROUNDABOUT

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT (CBD)



LEARNING FROM NAIROBI MOBILITY

LEARNING FROM NAIROBI MOBILITY

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CULTURAL LIBRARY – A GLOBAL DESIGN RESEARCH PROJECT

by Philipp Heidkamp

The Cultural Library is a unique, global design project – continuously developing and open to various participants, cultures and topics. Founded in 2006 by Prof. Tadanori Nagasawa and Prof. Hiroshi Imaizumi of the Musashino Art University in Tokyo, the project aims to investigate, analyse and communicate the phenomena, habits and processes of everyday life, as well as the use of products and spaces that are related to it.

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cf. 01.6 RESEARCH
DESIGN

From participatory design, user research, usability studies, cultural enquiries, interviews and observations of various forms of co-creation, design is involving people more and more (in most cases the end users). For the Cultural Library, we are looking closely at products and processes in the context of their use. So the research takes place in projects directly on the ground (field research), in different cultural areas and includes the respective spatial, structural and social conditions. Research results and also tangible design approaches are integrated into this intercultural aggregation.

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cf. 04.2 LEARNING
FROM NAIROBI –
REFINING THE
RESEARCH DESIGN

Perhaps the most striking feature of human beings is their diversity. If we are to understand this diversity, we must begin by carefully describing it. Most of the diversity in the human species results from the cultures each human group has created and passed on from one generation to the next¹. Looking at this diversity in a globalised world lacking in differentiation means, as a first step, appreciating diversities as diversities. In the Cultural Library project, we are looking from ›the outside‹ at certain phenomena of a different culture. James Spradley (American ethnographer and anthropologist, 1934-1982) describes the challenge of a person participating in a culture that is not their own: »First, and perhaps most difficult, she would have to set aside her belief in naive realism, the almost universal belief that all people define the real world of objects, events and living creatures in pretty much the same way« (emphasis by the author)². Spradley defines three fundamental aspects of human experience as the core issues of studying a culture: cultural behaviour, cultural knowledge and cultural artefacts³. The Cultural Library aims to gain an understanding of all levels, but the primary focus is on artefacts and behaviour.

In the ethnographic discourse, there is the paradox of the »cultureless ethnographer«⁴. Apriorism is impossible to eradicate. So the process of our ethnographic work needs a meta-level of reflection, a discourse accompanying the on-site research: this discourse should be set up by the mixed teams of ›librarians‹, mostly students from two universities, or students from one university researching with professors from a university coming from a different cultural context. This discourse is not (yet) implemented in the Cultural Library, but it is our goal to extend the work to the degree

where this discourse becomes visible to external people, visitors and guests. According to Foucault, a ›discourse‹ is a body of thought and writing that is united by having a common object of study, a common methodology, and/or a set of common terms and ideas. This notion helps to understand the approach of the Cultural Library in investigating and analysing the cultural manifestations of a phenomenon – such as mobility – across disciplines and cultures. The visibility of a discourse – not only in its very literal sense – was brought up by Karin Knorr-Cetina as the ›viscourse‹⁵.

Knorr-Cetina defined viscourse as follows: »The concept of ›viscourse‹ is the interplay of visual images and their integration into an ongoing communicative discourse«(247). So this not only means working with images, it can be understood as a visual access to (specific issues of) a discourse. Bearing this in mind, the Cultural Library aims also at making its processes – including its results – continuously available in a way that is open for further discussion, reflection and editing.

The idea of a library differs in many aspects from the idea of an archive: a library is published and it contains discrete items (whereas archives often have groups of related items). The items have an independent significance, whereas archives (additionally) build on relationships between items. A library has many different individuals or organisations creating its content: an archive has a parent organisation or institution. The items of a library are created separately by more-or-less independent processes. Libraries are public, archives are often unpublished. A library is continually used, an archive is connoted rather with storage than with use.

What should be created for our Cultural Library? As mentioned, the Cultural Library is a global design research project. Research in design goes along increasingly with observations of use, of habits, of workarounds and of cultural characteristics, on a macro- as well as on a micro-level. In the complexity of our world, it becomes more and more important to understand precisely – beyond cultural preoccupations and stereotypes – why people behave and interact in a certain way. This helps us »...to devise courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones«⁶, a definition of design by social scientist Herbert Simon (who won the Nobel Prize in economics 1978).

To make the various observations comparable and the results accessible, it is necessary to define project topics like ›Street Stalls‹ as a quite narrow and precise phenomenon or ›Mobility‹ as a more open topic, a meta-topic with the need for further concretisation, allowing the participants to go in various directions from social to physical mobility.



DISCUSSION OF THE PROJECT RESULTS IN TAIPEI

We do not primarily aim to come up with solutions to problems; rather, we aim at understanding cultural phenomena in their variety, we are looking for everyday practices, we aim at a contextual understanding of products, of processes. We want to understand the people and their behaviour, to learn from their everyday practices and workarounds, from routine as well as from more elaborate efforts. Therefore, some of the projects – such as Street Stalls – have been repeated several times. This has led to a unique database of a huge variety of temporary stalls in Tokyo, Taipei, Cologne and London. Furthermore, new ideas for future possibilities for temporary stalls were developed. This is accessible not only to all our partners, but also to interested designers, urban planners and universities all over the world. While we were in Nairobi, we had many discussions about methods for coping with that city's traffic problems. A significant number of people came up with the idea of motorcycles as a good solution: they are fast, consume less fuel, take up less space and are easier and cheaper to maintain. Obviously, there is a need for further precision. Mobility is omnipresent and endless research is connected with this topic, especially for fast-growing urban structures in China. But for this project in Nairobi, we were especially aiming at an open topic, as we wanted to narrow it down in a joint process between two viewpoints, two cultures and two disciplines.

At the end of the day, the Cultural Library allows a critical and open observation of strategies and needs related to the topic of ›Mobility‹ in a certain culture. The Cultural Library is a growing archive of those observations, a living library of analyses and reflections, results of research projects and questions and suggestions. Those results can be of value for other cultures and nations: looking at mobility in Taipei might deal with the phenomenon of motorcycles as a solution for traffic problems, personal freedom and self-expression, social and spatial mobility, pollution and fashion. Starting a project like this is much easier with a Cultural Library that has already dealt with this topic. The concept is social and sustainable, as the results will be part of a growing database of knowledge: a living library.



MOTORCYCLES IN TAIPEI

Our main interest is observing, collecting, describing, analysing, reflecting on – and maybe understanding – specific phenomena in different cultures. The topics are discussed in groups from different cultures and they are made available to other groups from other cultures. It is our interest to find an appropriate structure and methodology for this process that is evaluated and improved continuously by a discussion between all the partners. How can we make our findings socially and societally negotiable, how can we improve the structure of the discourse and connect to other discourses, how can we interact with other people from different cultures (the informants, or cultural representatives, as we called them during the process)?

So our interest has been twofold: all these questions were on our agenda when we set up the topic for this Cultural Library project: looking at mobility in Nairobi. On the other hand, we used this project, with this topic, and its framework to redefine and improve the Cultural Library, seeking to establish a blueprint for upcoming Cultural Library projects.

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cf. 04.4 FUTURE
PERSPECTIVES FOR
THE CULTURAL
LIBRARY

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cf. 04.2 LEARNING
FROM NAIROBI –
ADJUSTING THE
RESEARCH DESIGN

1 J. P. Spradley, *Participant Observation* Wadsworth (Belmont, 1980), 13. **2** *ibid.*, 4. **3** *ibid.*. **4** G. Appell »The distinction between ethnography and ethnology and other issues in cognitive structuralism« (1973), 10. **5** K. Knorr-Cetina in: J. Huber & M. Heller (ed) *Konstruktionen Sichtbarkeiten*, (Zurich 1999). **6** H. A. Simon, *The Sciences of the Artificial – 3rd Edition* The MIT Press (Massachusetts, 1996), 111.

PARTICIPATING IN THE CULTURAL LIBRARY – INTENTIONS AND MOTIVATIONS

by Philipp Heidkamp, Wan-Ru Chou, Johannes Hossfeld, Paul Mpungu, Hiroshi Imaizumi

The idea of the Cultural Library is to have a steadily growing number of active, but different partners. Each partner has a different understanding on a level of detail and has different expectations. But since there is a continual discussion, based on the growing expertise of the single partners, there is a potential for continual development and improvement. The following four points of view underline this – especially if one takes into consideration the different organisational backgrounds of the authors (and partners):

JOHANNES HOSSFELD

Director of the Goethe Institut Nairobi, Kenya

The Cultural Library is, from my perspective, an open framework for a series of projects that read cultural phenomena via the analysis and proposal of everyday phenomena. At the core are five features. First, the tension of specific local analysis and an intercultural comparative perspective.

This way of interculturality is laid out in different ways: the project creates a series of analyses in different cultures; it integrates different cultural perspectives (as the research is done by groups of students of different cultures, here Germany/Kenya); it puts into practice the core issue of interculturality; it rejects essentialisms and insists on the specificity of all cultural expressions leading towards an intercultural exchange and cooperation with respect and mutuality. The second feature is the focus on detailed research that can be fed into more general questions. This is why CL is of use for answers to a wide spectrum of questions. The third is the relation between past and present, already invoked by the notion of the library: as an open and growing library, CL is an archive of cultural memory.

The fourth feature is the relation between analysis and practice or between present and future, as the CL is not only an archive but is, also, sometimes very practical and tangible, a proposition for different designs and, in a very detailed way, it attempts to open up a reality for other perspectives, possibilities, differences and futures. The fifth feature is formulated from the perspective of Africa (since I strongly believe in the precise location of a project). Here, I believe, CL forms an important counter discourse to the clichés, trivialisations and exoticist images of Africa that still (or maybe more and more) form the basis of most exchanges and transactions between Africa and the West (for instance, in the common development rhetoric). Not just by proclamation but by a very specific exemplary analysis and design proposals, it destabilises and confuses the binaries and helps us to shift our vistas on what we think is so easily understood and categorised.

PROF. HIROSHI IMAIZUMI

Head of Department Design Informatics, Musashino Art University
Tokyo / Japan:

Informatics is a hybrid of design and informatics, where design adds value to the world and informatics observes it. It starts redefining the world with different points of view so that we could collect useful parts and applicable structures, and is aiming for the realisation of designing a whole, which is more than a sum of its parts, by integrating them. Design informatics represents the experience of creating new value through the ›back and forth‹ movement between disintegration and integration.

First, we detach an entity from its environment. We focus our attention on the artificial entities such as designed objects and systems as forms of relations that are all the results of our predecessors' invention. Though most of the designed objects around us are made using scientific knowledge, we can see numerous attempts that have been carried with implicit knowledge. Now, we don't expect that everybody will be able to use an artefact the first time they lay their hands on it. Usually, one has to learn how to handle it for the first time. Then we train ourselves to handle the object, or we go to rearrange its form/interface/function so that the combination of us and the object can carry out its intended function. Since time shapes the artificial entities as mentioned above, we should investigate the series of contrivances embedded in its transformation. This type of attitude to the artificial environment will develop the power of seeing the world from various aspects. Then, we may go further into analysing different lifestyles by abstracting similar types of activities around the world, such as dining and tea time. Conceptualising and redefining the form of relations found in daily life through observing such routine and ceremonial activities will be the second stage of The Cultural Library investigation. The Cultural Library is where you can experience the basic discipline of design informatics by collecting, investigating, and representing artefacts around us. It is a storehouse of design resources harvested from the rich spectrum of cultural activities around the world.

As with many libraries, it is useless without a proper index to the items. However, we don't have any specific classification system for it presently. Or rather I should say we welcome a free-form approach to describing the characteristics described in the collector's observation. The findings on the item should vary depending on the frame of the problem set by the investigator. It may sound that the Cultural Library is based on the folksonomy. Really, I am expecting that every user of the Cultural Library would feel a sense of incongruity when comparing the visual materials and index. This linguistic uneasiness will induce drafting the issue and shall guide an answer by using it, hopefully. The Cultural Library will clarify how we make the most of our time by juxtaposing fragments of beauty, which are embedded into daily life by our culture. We notice that the Cultural Library was started as a joint research project without detailed regulations, but we also are confident that it has the most elegant charm of the new media, because we will be able to experience making sense of the place. I am hoping The Cultural Library will be used as one of the early adaptors to such innovation.

PROF. WAN-RU CHOU

Chairperson SCID, Shih-Chien University Taipei, Taiwan

The Cultural Library project is a joint collaborative project for teaching exchange program founded firstly by three institutions: Köln International School of Design, Germany, Central Saint Martin College of Art and Design of the University of the Arts, London, U.K. and Musashino Art University, Tokyo, Japan. In 2007, Shih-Chien University, Taipei was invited to join this project.

The unprecedented ideology of globalisation not only makes the world a borderless global village and changes people's concepts toward time and space, it also poses the challenges to all well-defined, well-perceived and already-existing ideas about ourselves. Under this global situation, the observations of the development in design (human behaviours, inner conscience, local manners, regional habits, etc.) in different countries can tell us many things. Living in this modern world, we are always labelling ourselves as a member of a different culture, but since the fact that we see nationalities, racial identities and cultural differences in diverse understandings under globalisation, we may be able to create a platform that is based on the exchange teaching programs of design survey workshops carried out by visiting teachers to share our design viewpoints, and to try to expand the meaning of design to a broader horizon.

Based on the global picture, we can still keep cultural diversity. Hopefully, through, The Cultural Library project can stimulate our thoughts about design attitudes, design understanding, design thinking, design methods and design strategies from a cross-cultural vision and lead us to a new dimension.

PAUL MPUNGU

Director of the vertical studio III programme, University of Nairobi

Within its basic definition, the concept of a Cultural Library identifies easily with aspects of in-novation, creativity and research – strong tenets of any visionary institution that teaches design. The School of Architecture and the Built Environment at the University of Nairobi easily identified with this new challenge and readily accepted an invitation from Prof. Philipp Heidkamp of the Köln International School of Design (KISD) to collaborate on a discourse that explores Ur-ban Mobility in the rapidly growing city of Nairobi.

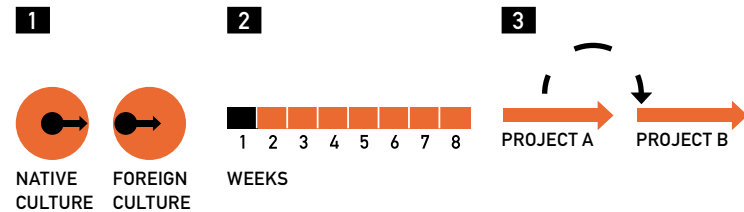
The motivation was further inspired by the acknowledgement that phenomenology is quite often a subjective field that requires multiple readings to gain authenticity. The ›fresh pair of eyes‹ approach enables participants from disparate backgrounds to ›remove the scales from their eyes‹ and through a negotiated and consensus-enhanced standpoint jointly establish truth in phenomena. The Cultural Library, as the name implies, is mandated to collect cultural phenomena across a varied global community, to understand it and to preserve it for posterity. Due to its strategic location in the Central Business District of Nairobi, the School of Architecture not only deals with the problematics of mobility in its day-to-day activities, it also finds its strategic position ostensibly ideal for research and as a consultative center for various agencies of government and the civic society.

In collaborating with KISD, the Nairobi School of Architecture stands to reap in reciprocal measure the potential gains that this very important and timely project will make, through the processes that it has identified and is engaged in developing: advancement in knowledge through an appropriate research methodology specific to intercultural library; an archival system created for easy sharing and retrieval; and a student and faculty exchange program geared towards a research world that recognizes and celebrates diversity in our strongly fragmented cultural world.

PREVIOUS CULTURAL LIBRARY PROJECTS

by Philipp Heidkamp

This chapter gives an overview of all the Cultural Library projects completed to date, and shows the scope and range of the various projects. Research was carried out from differing perspectives: first in the native culture, then in the foreign one (1). The projects are also differentiated one from the other in terms of their length: from four-day workshops through to a two-month research project and then onto the six-month long Nairobi project (2). It also became evident that the results from previous projects had varying levels of influence upon the current processes employed. (3)

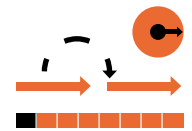


01 STREET STALLS I

SEPTEMBER 2006, TOKYO

MUSASHINO ART UNIVERSITY
PROF. TADANORI NAGASAWA
WORKSHOP

28.9.2006 - 19.10.2006



②

● 店員数：二名
商品：はくだん焼き
レギュラー（¥315）
チーズミックス（¥367）
ピリ辛キムチ（¥367）
店舗所在地：井の頭公園へ続く道、丸井ビルの側面
利用客：公園を利用する人
営業歴：？年

- ・チェーン店、店員は社員
- ・登録商標された「はくだん焼き」という名を会社が借りて営業
- ・昼から午後、休日はとくに販売数が多い
- ・調理は全て車内。販売は外に設置したレジ場で行なう。
- ・ガスと電気は両方使用。

RESEARCH, TOKIO 2006

This was the first survey by our students on the topic of street stalls for the Cultural Library Project. The subject of this study had to be a common, everyday object that is seen in many of the cities around the world where we expected to hold a workshop. It must also exhibit significant differences in form, function, location, contents and service and so on, in the varying cultural environments and contexts. As we understand it, the street stall is an interface between city space and city life. The Japanese word for street stall is Yatai and these include temporary units for servicing their customers' products in the public realm, and in many cases they are mobile. The first survey in Tokyo was carried out by 17 students selected from Prof. Nagasawa's Cultural Engineering course. Each student took pictures, interviewed shop keepers and analysed the results in order to reveal structures and systems. From this initial study, we were able to lay a good foundation for our first workshop series at KISD and CSM this autumn.

02 STREET STALLS II

OCTOBER 2006, COLOGNE

KÖLN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF DESIGN
PROF. TADANORI NAGASAWA, PROF. HIROSHI IMAIZUMI, PROF. PHILIPP HEIDKAMP
WORKSHOP

23.10.2006 - 27.10.2006

Street stalls are analysed as an interface between city life and city space. There are many different kinds of street stall in the city. As temporary structures, these street stalls might serve up many different kinds of goods and services in the public space that must be based on the cultural context of city life. The aim of this workshop is to explore the meanings of the relationship between design and public by surveying street stalls in the city and finding new interface functions as new aspects of design.



03 STREET STALLS III

OCTOBER 2006, LONDON
CENTRAL ST. MARTINS
PROF. TADANORI NAGASAWA, PROF. HIROSHI
IMAIZUMI, DR JAMIE BRASSETT FRSA (SENIOR
LECTURER, PROGRAMME LEADER, CSM)
WORKSHOP
30.10.2006 - 02.11.2006

Constituent parts of street stalls are affected directly by the surrounding urban cultures. Meanwhile, street stalls immediately construct the community culture. The aim of this workshop is to gather elements of London culture from the observation and survey of street stalls.



WORKSHOP SITUATION WITH PROF. NAGASAWA, LONDON 2006

04 STREET STALLS IV

OCTOBER 2007, LONDON
CENTRAL ST. MARTINS
PROF. TADANORI NAGASAWA
WORKSHOP
08.10.2007 - 11.10.2007

Constituent parts of street stalls are affected directly by the surrounding urban cultures. The workshop survey on street stalls became a part of the London project as an introduction to the study of the built environment for the first-year product-design students at Central Saint Martins. Mr. Cris Lafteri, the first year tutor, and Prof. Tadanori Nagasawa conducted the workshop together, based on our four-day schedule. The process of analysing the modalities of street stalls in London, based on observations made by

the students was especially creative. Although we did not ask for it, the students represented new ideas for street stalls in the presentation of their surveys, including all significant findings, something we could hardly fault them for. They seemed to believe that research and development went hand-in-hand. They found interesting modalities of street stalls and their services in each of the differing cultural neighbourhoods in the city. Students identified the varying characteristics of the area and lifestyles at specific locations. (There is no visual documentation for this workshop because the class was interrupted due to a fire alarm at CSM going off by accident).

05 STREET STALLS V

OCTOBER 2007, COLOGNE
KÖLN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF DESIGN
PROF. TADANORI NAGASAWA, PROF. HIROSHI IMAI-
ZUMI, PROF. PHILIPP HEIDKAMP
WORKSHOP
22.10.2007 - 26.10.2007

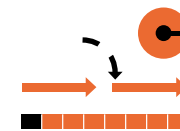
As the EU expands its borders, different ethnic communities with different cultural backgrounds may come to live in an area. The workshop began to explore how they face their new environment with a variety of traditions and lifestyles. After the explanation of the characteristics of ethnic communities throughout Cologne, we were shown unique proposals using multi-sensory/multimedia presentations, responding to the various needs of the people.



RESEARCH, COLOGNE 2007

06 SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

DECEMBER 2007, TAIPEI
SHIH-CHIEN UNIVERSITY
PROF. PHILIPP HEIDKAMP, PROF. CHENG-NENG
KUAN, PROF. WAN-RU CHOU
WORKSHOP
December 2007



For this workshop, the students considered the subject of mobility (in Taiwan) in its widest sense. Mobility is the state of being in motion. Mobility is about making connections in time and space possible. It is about bringing things and people closer together. It is about the transportation of people, information, news, food and materials. It is about connecting people, products and goods. It is about speed and reducing distance.

07 STREET STALLS VI

JANUARY 2008, TAIPEI

SHIH-CHIEN UNIVERSITY

PROF. TADANORI NAGASAWA,

PROF. HIROSHI IMAIZUMI, PROF. CHENG-NENG

KUAN, PROF. WAN-RU CHOU

WORKSHOP

14.01.2008 - 17.01.2008

Historically, Taiwan has deep ties with Japan. Though both countries are located in East Asia, the street-stall culture in Taipei is rather aggressive compared to that in Tokyo. After the concise analysis of the relationship between Taiwanese culture and a variety of mobile commercial entities including street stalls, we were presented with many fruitful ideas. One of the most interesting proposals was supporting the mass of commuters by groups of street stalls equipped with GPS and networked so that they could move around the town more efficiently, following changes in population density throughout the day.



WORKSHOP SITUATION WITH PROF. NAGASAWA, LONDON 2008

08 SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

JUNE 2008, COLOGNE

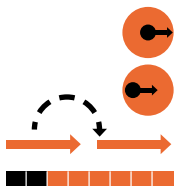
KÖLN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF DESIGN

PROF. CHENG-NENG KUAN, PROF. WAN-RU CHOU,

PROF. PHILIPP HEIDKAMP

WORKSHOP

09.06.2008 - 20.06.2008



This project took place in Cologne and was held in cooperation with the Shih-Chien University in Taipei. The project members, students from KISD and SCID, had the chance to exchange and exhibit their work at the end of the project. Based on the two previous workshops in Taipei



EXHIBITION SPACE, COLOGNE 2008

FEEDBACK + INTERACTION, COLOGNE 2008

(by Prof. Imaizumi / Prof. Nagasawa and by Prof. Heidkamp) the students prepared an exhibition on the subject of Sustainable Mobility. The exhibition was composed of various elements:

1. The results from the previous Taiwanese Sustainable Mobility project were displayed, or rather those that resulted from the discussion about the subject.
2. The approach and the discussion and reflections of the German team on the subject were presented.
3. The jointly determined cultural differences were discussed and the central themes identified. These touched on the basic approaches to design processes and the tangible results that arise therefrom.
4. Finally, the results of the research on sustainable mobility that were displayed in the exhibition were put up for discussion, and the visitors to the exhibition were invited to give their own reactions to them.

09 MOBILE EATING

AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 2008, TAIPEI

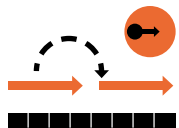
SHIH-CHIEN UNIVERSITY

5 STUDENTS FROM KISD (SVENJA BRÜGGEMANN,

JUDITH DÖRRENBÄCHER, JOHANNES SCHOTT, JESSICA STIHL,

RAFAEL SWINIARSKI) LED BY PROF. PHILIPP HEIDKAMP

RESEARCH / WORKSHOP / EXHIBITION



During their research, the students' aim was to understand the effects of an increasingly mobile lifestyle on the subject of eating. While getting to know modern Taiwanese eating habits, they observed problems and identified potential solutions. They not only examined Taiwanese phenomena, but also linked the observations to findings and insights that are culturally independent and that respond to global developments. Concentrating on the correlation between eating and mobility, they identified four main topics: diversity and mobility, sociality and mobility, ecology and mobility and awareness and mobility.



The students finished off the project with a public presentation and exhibition at SCID. The research process, as well as the data and solutions that resulted from it, were made accessible to the general public. The entire project was documented from the point of view of process, and re-evaluated. The Taiwanese feedback on their results was also evaluated in the same manner. In this project, alongside the discussion of the contents, the concept of The Cultural Library was systematically thought through, and the process refined so that the results of the various phases would be usable in the Cultural Library.



EXHIBITION SPACE, TAIPEI 2008



EXHIBITION SPACE, TAIPEI 2008

EXHIBIT, TAIPEI 2008

10 STREET STALLS VII

OCTOBER 2008, COLOGNE

KÖLN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF DESIGN

PROF. TADANORI NAGASAWA, PROF. HIROSHI

IMAIZUMI, PROF. PHILIPP HEIDKAMP

WORKSHOP

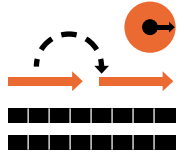
28.10.2008 – 31.10.2008

One of the most remarkable reports in the workshop was one that considered the question of how we should deal with the current situation with street stalls, where there seems to be an ever-growing gap between the perception of the street stall as a domestic, ›homey‹ business unit, and the increasing sophistication of a society brought about by economic growth. As crude and simple as they may be, the fact that street stalls are not tied down to any one place in the city means that they can contribute to the process of ›filling in the gaps‹, contributing at the same time to a city's overall charm. As the city matures, government regulation of economic activity increases, and the street stalls are assigned the role of tourist attraction. Some of the reports pointed out the importance of the city ordinances for dynamic economic activities.

11

MOBILITY IN NAIROBI

MAI 2009, NAIROBI
 SEPTEMBER 2009, COLOGNE
 UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
 GOETHE-INSTITUT NAIROBI
 KÖLN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF DESIGN
 PROF. PHILIPP HEIDKAMP, JOHANNES HOSSFELD
 PROF. PAUL MPUNGU,



DISCUSSION, NAIROBI 2009

12

STREET STALLS VIII

OCTOBER 2009, LONDON
 CENTRAL ST. MARTINS
 PROF. HIROSHI IMAIZUMI, RYO YAMASHITA
 (RESEARCH ASSOCIATE, MAU), JANE PENTY
 (LECTURER, PROGRAMME LEADER, CSM)
 WORKSHOP
 29.10.2009 - 04.11.2009

Especially in urban areas, street stalls directly reflect the surrounding culture. By observing common aspects shared between street stalls and analysing the current context of London, this workshop looks at the unique examples that will be installed during the coming London Olympics in 2012.

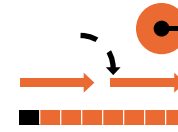


PRESENTATION, LONDON 2009

13

MOBILITY: CYCLING TOKYO

NOVEMBER 2009, TOKYO
 MUSASHINO ART UNIVERSITY
 PROF. PHILIPP HEIDKAMP
 WORKSHOP
 12.11.2009 - 17.11.2009



Mobility has been a paradigm of innovation since the industrial revolution (cars, trains, vehicles, communication, including all infrastructure and services) and is one of the reasons for today's economic wealth. Mobility is the state of being in motion. Mobility is about making connections possible in both time and space. It is about bringing things and people closer together. It is about the transportation of people, information, news, food and materials. It is about connecting people, products and goods. It is about speed and reducing distance. In this workshop, the students examined mobility closely, as regards bicycles in Tokyo. They looked for improvements and potential innovations in the usage of bicycles – and also other modes of transportation – in Tokyo.



PRESENTATION AND FEEDBACK, TOKYO 2009

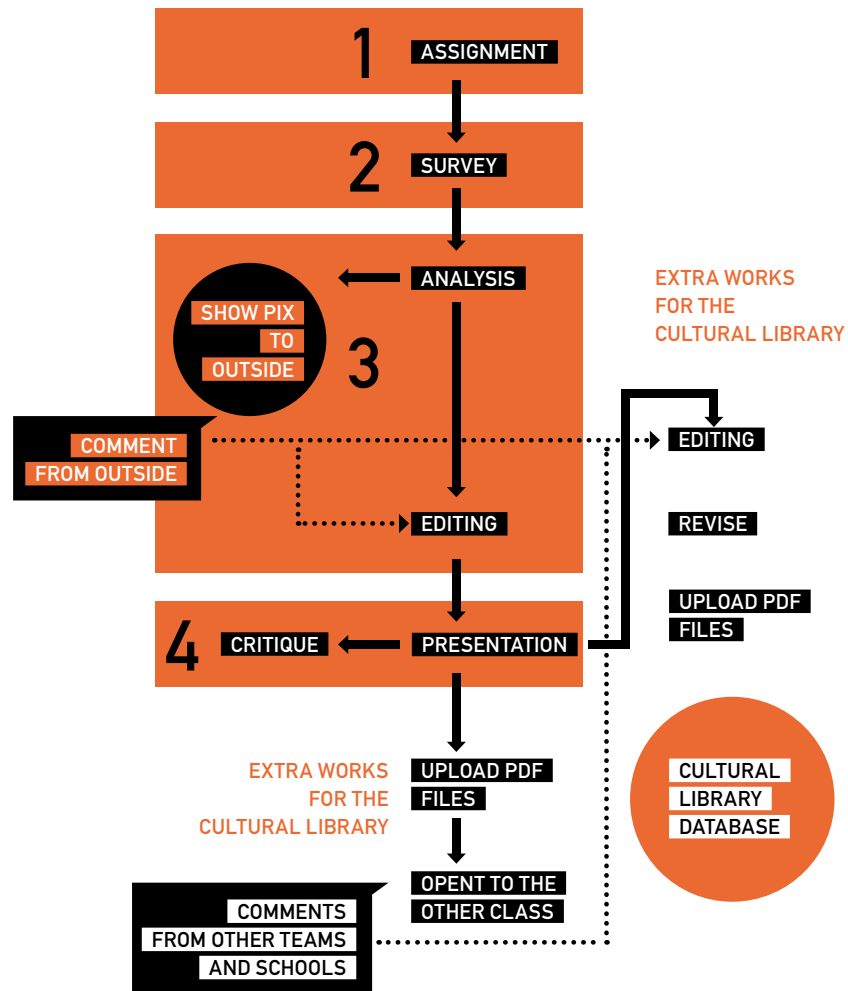
PROJECT AND TIME STRUCTURES

by Philipp Heidkamp, Jessica Stihl

Now that the previous CL projects and their differing dimensions have been presented, it is now time to look at how the projects have developed structurally, in relation to the processes and methods used.

4-DAY-WORKSHOP

The initial concept of a four-day workshop was designed by Prof. Imaizumi and Prof. Nagasawa from the Musashino Art University. The structure was clearly laid out: starting with the assignment, the workshop moved on to a one-day survey of a topic that was followed by an analysis of the observed situations and snapshots (or ›Moments in Time‹). These were then edited and discussed – often with people from outside the workshop group – and condensed to a brief concept. Survey, analysis and concept were presented and discussed (in order to get feedback and critique) on the fourth day. The results were stored in a database that was used for following projects to show sample work and possible approaches and results.



OPEN TOPIC AND WEBLOG

The first workshop on the theme of 'Sustainable Mobility' (06) that was led by Prof. Philipp Heidkamp in December 2007 in Taipei, differentiated itself from the workshops given by Profs. Tadanori Nagasawa and Hiroshi Imaizumi in three aspects:

1. The subject was not simply changed, it was expanded upon. This meant that every participant had a chance to put forward her or his own views within the broad and many-faceted subject area of sustainable mobility.
2. The structure of this workshop took on a somewhat different character. It was divided into the following phases: Phase 1: Observe, survey and analyse, Phase 2: Conceptualize, create and design, Phase 3: Communicate and argue
3. Additionally, a weblog was set up through which the participants could communicate and discuss their results. This was done in such a way that it would be useful for further Cultural Library teams, not just the current workgroup. By doing this, the contents of Cultural Library will be accessible well into the future and any feedback or comments are also archived in context and can be further discussed.

EXHIBITION AND OPEN DISCOURSE

The contributions from the 2008 'Cultural Library: Sustainable Mobility' (08) project that took place in Cologne differentiated themselves from previous entries to Cultural Library: for the first time, teams from two different cultural backgrounds worked together for two weeks. First, the results of previous workshops were presented and experiences exchanged. This was followed by joint research, analysis and discussion. The focus of this project lay with interactive accessibility. An exhibition was also presented. The contributions, therefore, took on a different form and were made accessible to the wider public in a completely new manner. The different perspectives of the two teams were then discussed and became part of the exhibition. Exhibition visitors were actively encouraged to comment and their feedback was documented.

RESEARCH PROJECT

The first two-months research project took place in Taipei in August of 2008: five KISD students investigated further the subject of mobility, building on the research and findings of the previous project in Cologne. The timeframe allowed the researchers to not only engage deeper with the subject of mobility, but also, in addition, to carry out this research within the framework of a foreign culture. The Cologne students were researching from a German, European perspective in Taipei, and were discussing their point of view with Taiwanese students, receiving feedback and refining their work in light of it. They carried out field research into cultural phenomena that are connected to mobility, and also looked into eating habits in the context of an increasingly mobile society. Both the thematic focus and the definition of research methods are decided upon on site and in a processual manner, enabling students to adjust to the conditions on-site.

COLLABORATION FROM THE VERY BEGINNING / AS SUBSTANTIAL

For the project with Nairobi, the time frame was completely different, and more than ever before, the teams dealt with the procedure of the Cultural Library as a meta topic. Due to the progress and experiences of the previous projects, the methodology of Cultural Library is developed further and the different phases are defined in the figure below. The most substantial part of this project is the collaboration: from the very beginning (defining the topic) the Kenyan and the German teams worked together. This co-operation was very much facilitated by digital communication media and the use of a weblog. The teams developed a set of research tools and used a systematic form for analyzing, storing and sharing their processes and results. The open studios and public discussions complemented the other media in order to exchange ideas and start an open discourse

The experience gained from the project should then enable us to refine processes, workshop structure and methods, see 04.2, p. 234 JS

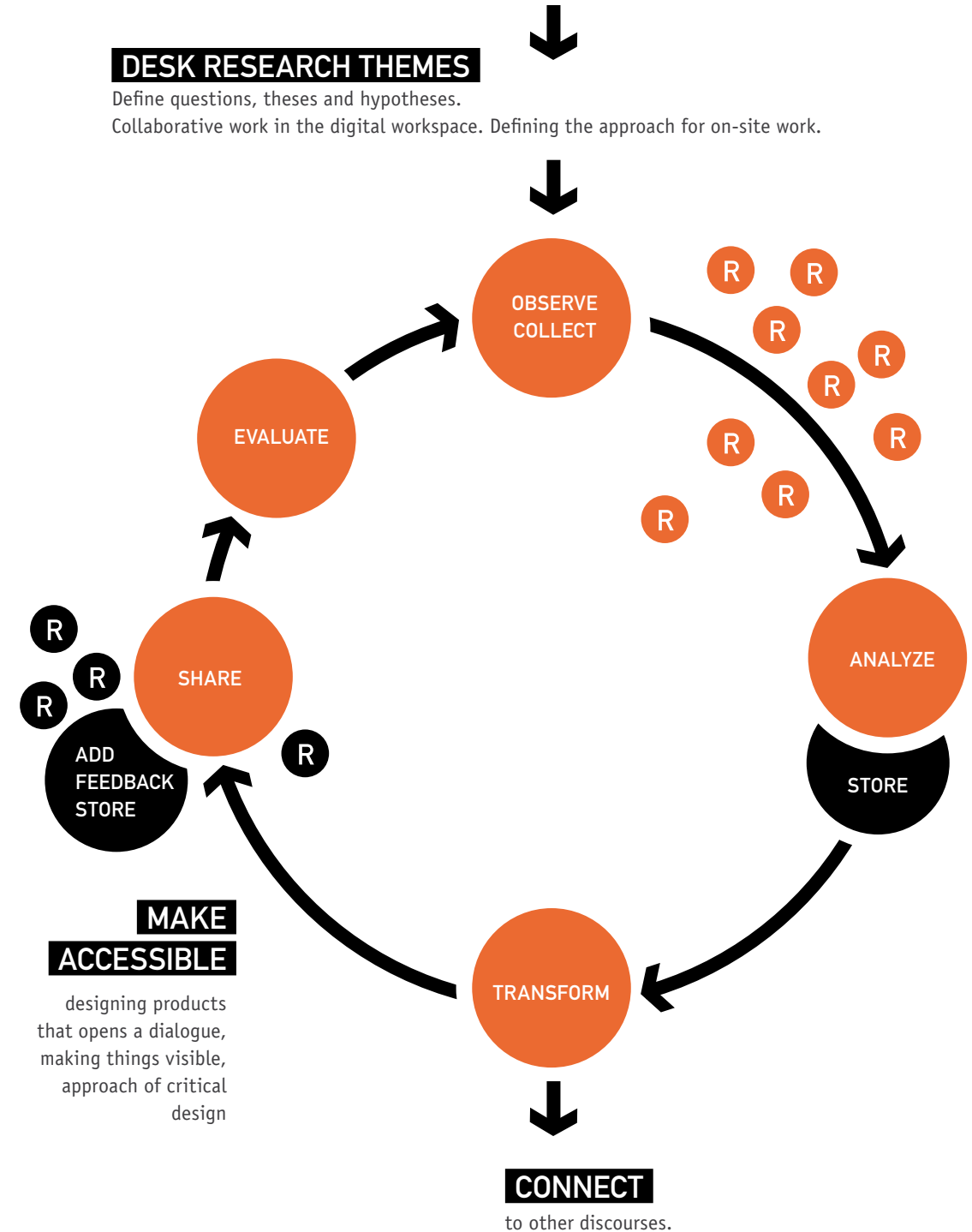
PROCESS AND PHASES

DISCUSS TOPICS / THEMES

Collaborative definition between both countries / cultures / groups.
Setting up a web communication platform (digital workspace).

DESK RESEARCH THEMES

Define questions, theses and hypotheses.
Collaborative work in the digital workspace. Defining the approach for on-site work.



RESEARCHING CULTURE A DESIGN APPROACH

by Jessica Stihl

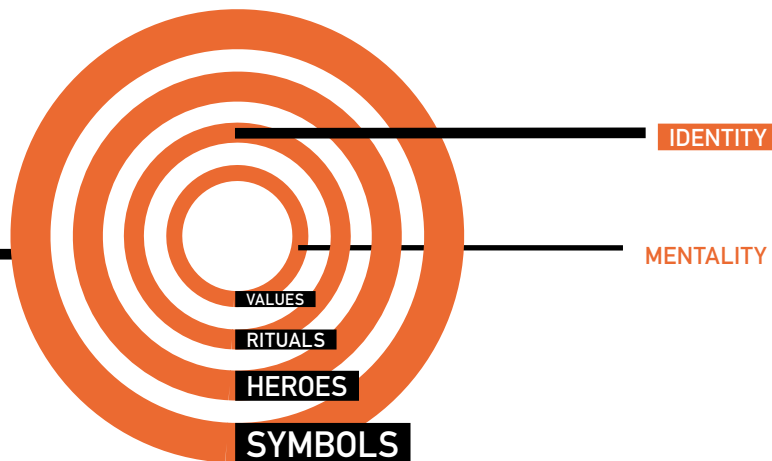
This chapter deals with basic issues concerning research approaches in cultural studies regarding the comprehension of culture in conjunction with the Cultural Library. It depicts the way in which the Cultural Library deals with cultural identities, and points out the necessity of understanding culture as a process, of carrying out research in an integrated-phenomenological-qualitative way, that ›foreign‹ is a matter of opinion and that objectivity in cultural studies does not exist.

CULTURAL IDENTITIES

When talking about culture and cultural differences, it is useful to distinguish between culture as a ›mentality‹ and culture as ›identity‹. Mentality relates to the ›unconscious cultural influences‹¹. These can be compared using Hofstede's classification of the different manifestations of culture that represent the core of culture in his model.²

Identity, on the other hand, relates to the ›conscious acquisition of cultural elements‹. In Hofstede's model of the manifestation of culture, such consciously acquired cultural elements are the visible practices – even for observers who may be unfamiliar with a particular culture – such as symbols, heroes and rituals. It is exactly these identity-creating manifestations of culture which are researched within the framework of the Cultural Library.

MANIFESTATIONS OF CULTURE



Our focus is the investigation of cultural identities – identities that find their expression in systems of symbols and symbolic practice. However, it is difficult to unambiguously define cultural identities, since – independently of how one tries to outwardly define them – cultural entities and their identities are in a constant internal state of change, meaning that culture must be understood as a process.

The Dutch cultural sociologist Geert Hofstede spent many decades researching the differences between various cultures. His research focused on the systematic investigation of cultural differences at a national level, as well as on the development of intercultural communication and interaction skills. JS

SECTION 01.5 CULTURAL LIBRARY RESEARCHING CULTURE: A DESIGN APPROACH

CULTURE AS A PROCESS

One could criticise Hofstede's insights into cultural differences – gleaned from the results of analyses in several different countries – on the grounds that he treats nations as culturally homogeneous entities. Hofstede's ideas about culture (in the same way as Hall's and Trompenaer's) are dominated by a static view of culture as a clearly defined whole. This view is now considered to be outmoded, and culture is today understood as a hazy, blurry, constantly changing entity.³

Culture is not a condition, and is therefore never static, but instead is in a permanent state of redefinition. The sources of this constant development can be found at three levels:

WITHIN

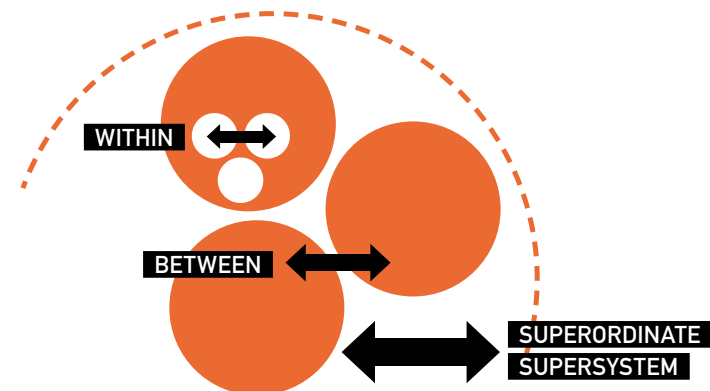
Within a cultural ›entity‹ – irrespective of which level of culture (Hofstede) we are discussing, whether society, social grouping or company – there will be heterogeneities, contradictions and conflicts. These can change the culture from within – the culture has an effect on itself, as it were.

BETWEEN

When they come into contact, different societies and groups interact, promoting reciprocal influence and cultural exchange that, in various ways, affect the respective cultures, changing them in the process.

SUPERORDINATE SUPERSYSTEM

Additionally, cultures are always also part of a superordinate supersystem, whether it be cultural or political in nature. There is an exchange between cultures and the supersystem, it shapes them and influences them. »Since even such a superordinate system is never static, but is always in a state of flux, the process often becomes extremely complicated and is not always amenable to analysis. Examples of this are the relationship of the development of ›national European cultures‹ with their embedding in the system of ›the Christian West‹, or the development of Kurdish society within Turkey. Today, the main question is whether, and how, individual so-



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cf. 01.4
PROJECT AND TIME
STRUCTURES

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cf. 04.3 ONLINE
KNOWLEDGE BASE:
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It is exactly this process-oriented nature of culture that the Cultural Library deals with, by focusing on, and attempting to capture, processes of redefinition on various levels. Single ›moments in time‹ – ›snapshots‹ – are collected and analysed, particular themes are derived from these collections, and related issues are made more tangible. By considering them from different perspectives, through collaboration, interaction and through a many-party discourse – in individual projects, in public exhibitions and over the Internet – these processes, interdependencies and interfaces become visible. The Cultural Library considers and treats culture dynamically. But it does even more: it allows for a process-oriented view of culture, refusing to present it as something static.

THE QUESTION ABOUT THE PLACE OF CULTURE

We can dismiss the view of culture as a definable system: »Cultures are a product of relationships and transitions, and they only develop through contact with the ›alien‹. Culture always means ›between cultures‹.«⁵

A large part of the current cultural-theoretical approaches even assume that culture cannot be allocated to a certain region or to a certain group. They criticise that the emphasis on the borders between cultures is often misused for ›culture-fundamentalist purposes‹. It is therefore important to be aware of this danger – while simultaneously acknowledging the existence of cultural groupings as a fact in the practice of cultural studies.⁶

In the consideration of culture – independent of the drawing up of spatial boundaries – another question emerges: the question about the ›place‹ of culture.

ALL IN THE MIND, OR ALL IN THE RAW MATERIALS?

Is culture to be found as a type of social sense in the ideas and the consciousness of people – culture in the mind, as it were – or do we find culture and everything associated with it in the materials and the social environment, in the artefacts, in the creations: in the ›raw materials‹ out of which we construct our mental images that we then call culture?⁷



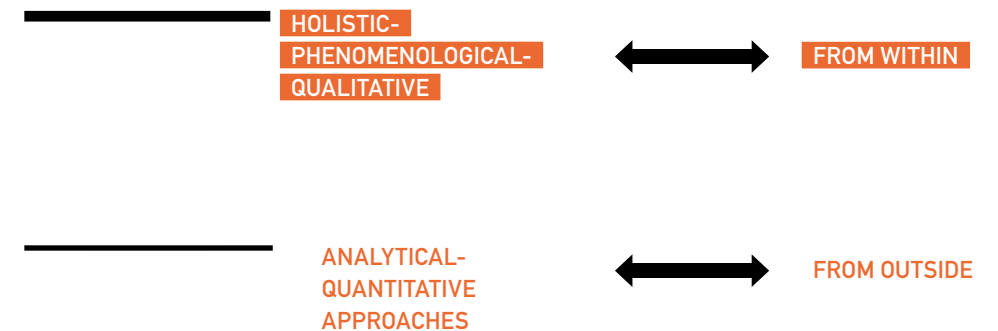
This question cannot be answered with a simple ›either/or‹, rather we have to point again to the distinction between mentality and identity: mentality is comprised of those aspects of our culture that are located in the mind and that are shaped by the values and the attitudes of the people. Mentality governs action by either explicitly or implicitly controlling social interaction without determining it.

What is created by this type of action, the visible manifestations of mentality, i.e. the symbols, rituals and heroes, the things that make up a cultural identity, is, in turn, also culture. It is the culture that can be found in the material and social environment and it is this culture that is the research focus of the Cultural Library.

APPROACHES TO RESEARCH

When analysing culture, the type of approach chosen is crucial. In order to develop an approach for the Cultural Library, it is necessary to investigate different definitions of culture and research approaches in cultural studies, also with those that stand in contrast to Hofstede's approach of surveying apparently unchanging, monolithic cultural systems. The ethnographer Clifford Geertz, for example, does not deliver facts, but rather collects fleeting impressions: »The cultural idea that I represent is essentially semiotic in nature. I agree with Max Weber that people are beings caught up in self-woven webs of meaning, where I see culture as the web itself. The investigation of culture is, therefore, not an experimental science constantly looking for rules and order, but rather a process of interpretation looking for meanings.«⁸

This is exactly why the Cultural Library differs from Hofstede's approach: we are not looking for rules but for meanings. This is comparable to the distinction made by the American anthropologist Kenneth Lee Pike who defines an ›emic‹ and an ›etic‹ approach: using the ›etic‹ approach, a culture is viewed from outside and so can be compared to various other cultures. The ›emic‹ approach, on the other hand, examines a culture from within, so the aim is to understand the culture from its own perspective, and from this perspective comparisons with other cultures are not possible. This differentiation corresponds to the academic/theoretical apposition of the analytical-quantitative approaches on the one side, and the holistic-phenomenological-qualitative approaches on the other.⁹



ANALYTICAL-QUANTITATIVE

Analytical-quantitative approaches correspond to the 'etic' method: elements, factors or variables are drawn out from the object of study in order to investigate their relationship to one another and to find rules that can allow us to make prognoses. This is precisely the same as Hofstede's approach.

HOLISTIC-PHENOMENOLOGICAL-QUALITATIVE

These correspond to ›emic‹ approaches: the object of study is looked at from the inside in attempt to understand it in its phenomenological entirety. This corresponds to the approach of Geertz. »This is basically the approach of ethnographic anthropology: we're trying to reconstruct fleeting, rather aethereal elephants that may have already completely disappeared, by looking at the tracks that they have left behind in our memories.«¹⁰

For the Cultural Library, it is exactly about keeping sight of these tracks, about recording them and making them accessible. The holistic-phenomenological-qualitative approach is, therefore, decisive: culture is studied from the inside out and phenomena holistically considered. Whether one finds oneself in one's own culture – as in the ›street stalls‹ workshops – or in a foreign culture, like the two-month project in Taipei, phenomena are tracked and collected and considered in their context, as well as being interpreted according to the perspectives of the researchers. Feedback is then brought to bear on the matter, either from within one's own culture or from a foreign one. The results are therefore not presented as objective observations upon the culture.

The difference between the data collection within one's own culture and within a 'foreign' one does not stem from the basic approach, since the phenomenological research takes place on site and from within the culture. In the first case, the difference stems from the fact that a researcher is far more familiar with the deep-lying manifestations of their own culture, their values and ideas. They are the starting point and basis for the comprehension of identity and the extrapolation of meanings of external manifestations.

In a foreign culture, the researchers are approaching the manifestations of that culture by starting with external manifestations and moving towards the internal ones: symbols are the easiest manifestations to record. Depending on how deeply the researchers have examined a culture beforehand and on how much time they have spent in the field, they are able to understand the meanings and find heroes, rituals and finally the values that lie at the centre of a culture. During the short-term Cultural Library projects, the students mainly investigated ›external‹ manifestations: the ›raw material‹ – the symbols that were researched as separate phenomena in the shape of ›snapshots‹ – and that in their entirety and through reflection and analysis from various perspectives, serve as the starting point for the consideration of ›interior‹ manifestations.

<http://culturallibrary.com/projects>

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cf. 01.5 *grafic*
MANIFESTATIONS
OF CULTURE

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cf. 01.4 PROJECT AND
TIME STRUCTURES

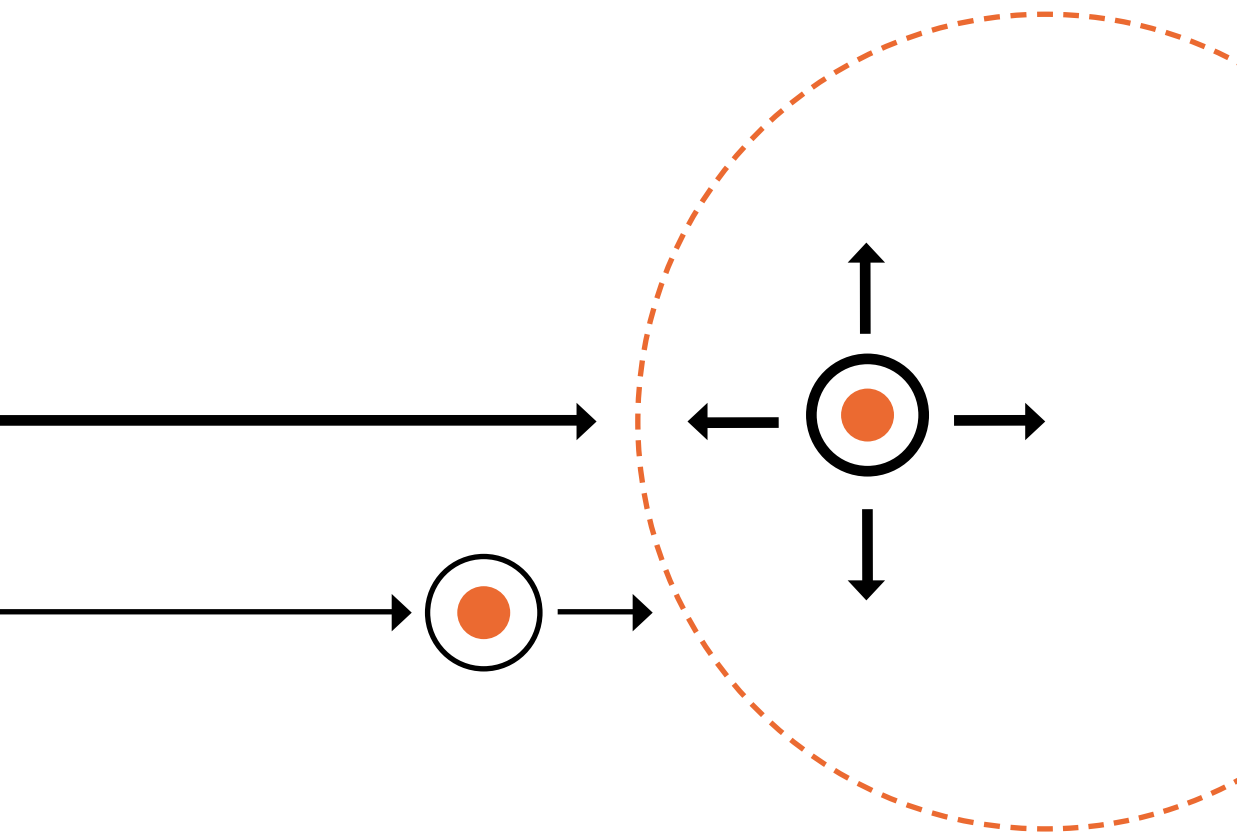
The phenomenological-holistic-qualitative approach to understanding culture is not only the one that makes the most sense, but the Cultural Library is characterised by the very fact that these are the methods used to generate its content. This method of research is also rooted in the design process and is one of the most important design skills. It is also a precondition for generating material that will be relevant in a design context. It ensures that this material can be used to track identity, something that is not possible with purely quantitative data and rules. It is also compatible with the view that culture is a process: It is not a matter of looking for statistical rules but rather of collecting ›snapshots‹. Furthermore, it makes clear how invalid the pursuit of objectivity is when dealing with the research and presentation of culture.

FOREIGN IS A MATTER OF OPINION

We have shown that there are deep-lying differences in the study of cultures. Whether one investigates a culture phenomenologically from within or whether one is viewing the culture from outside in a comparative fashion, in both cases it is imperative to keep in mind that one is perceiving these cultures from a particular perspective. We always record, recognise and interpret against the background of our own personal mental programming. »Cultural differences are never found where we think they should be: they are, instead, already inscribed upon the place from where we look at them.«¹²

Cultural identities cannot be unambiguously or generally stated by analysing surface manifestations of culture and interpreting these ›signs‹. The subjectivity of the analysis must always be alluded to. The founder of the ›Institute for Visual Culture‹, Mark Terkessidis has declared that, if Cultural Studies are to be properly understood, then the position of the speaker must be made explicit and must be included in any considerations. He puts this rather succinctly, by saying »There is no such thing as objectivity in Cultural Studies.«¹³

The thoughts of the German communications researcher and psychologist Gerhard Maletzkes are also enlightening on this point of understanding foreign cultures: »Simply put, understanding means that people always fit new things they come across in the world into already known, available structures in a way that makes sense to them. It goes without saying, that this incorporation will change the structures themselves.«¹⁴



This can be seen at the micro level of intercultural exchange – for example in conversations between people from different cultures – as well as at the macro level already described: analysing a culture as an object seen from the outside and creating a description of it, or trying to understand it in and of itself. Therefore we cannot talk about an objective ›other‹, and when we speak about ›foreign‹ cultures we do not necessarily refer to other national cultures: ›otherness‹ can also be found at home in all its many and varied forms.

For the Cultural Library and for practical research, this means that in all phases of a project, whether in the primary phases, during field research or when analysing results and transforming them into solutions, we should always be aware of our own ›culture-specific‹ thinking. We should ask ourselves why something may appear ›strange‹ to us or whether we might have adopted a tourist viewpoint instead of being led by scientific or academic interests.

CONCLUSION

Concluding this basic outline of culture research for and by the Cultural Library, and alongside the various goals of the project partners we would like to present a further aim of the Cultural Library: by using ›snapshots‹ culture can be treated and made accessible, cultural characteristics can be made known and discussed. These ›snapshots‹ will not simply be taken and exhibited: rather the relationships between them will be made clear. In this way, the Cultural Library will respond to a decisive characteristic of culture: its process-oriented nature. The Cultural Library considers and treats culture dynamically, it allows culture to be seen as a process without presenting it as something static. Precisely because the research and accessibility of culture will be approached phenomenologically, interactively and in a processual manner, cultural characteristics will not only be highlighted, but will be preserved in a forward-looking manner. Project participants and users of our Internet platform can interact and leave feedback, thereby influencing what will actually be displayed. Everyone who uses and co-designs the Cultural Library can become their own curator. It represents a way of dealing with cultural variety, of making it useable for designers and it allows people to learn from each other.

So how do we actually generate these ›snapshots‹, what do we, as researchers and project participants actually do and what effect will the holistic-phenomenological-qualitative approach described above have on the research design?

cf. 04.3 ONLINE
KNOWLEDGE BASE:
SHARED EXPERIENCE

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- 1** cf. H.G. Vester, cited in R. Alsheimer, K. Roth, A. Moosmüller (ed), *Lokale Kulturen in einer globalisierten Welt – Perspektiven auf interkulturelle Spannungsfelder* (Münster, New York, 2000), 29.
- 2** G. Hofstede, *Lokales Denken, globales Handeln – Interkulturelle Zusammenarbeit und globales Management* (Munich, 2001), 8-9.
- 3** R. Alsheimer, K. Roth, A. Moosmüller, op. cit., 20.
- 4** J. Hippler, ›Wissen, Kultur und Identitäten – Trends und Interdependenzen‹, in I. Hauchler, D. Messner, F. Nuscheler (ed), *Stiftung Entwicklung und Frieden, Globale Trends 2002 – Fakten, Analysen, Prognosen* (Frankfurt, 2001), 141.
- 5** B. Wagner (ed), *Kulturelle Globalisierung – Zwischen Weltkultur und kultureller Fragmentierung* (Essen, 2001), 11.
- 6** cf. R. Alsheimer, K. Roth, A. Moosmüller, op. cit., 21.
- 7** cf. M. Otten, ›Internationalisierung und kulturelle Pluralität‹, uni-landau. n.d. Retrieved 10 Jan. 2009 from www.uni-landau.de/instbild/IKU/Lehre/2_Leittext_Kultur_und_Kulturbegriff.pdf
- 8** C. Geertz, *Dichte Beschreibung – Beiträge zum Verstehen kultureller Systeme* (Frankfurt am Main, 1983), 9.
- 9** G. Maletzke, *Interkulturelle Kommunikation – Zur Interaktion zwischen Menschen verschiedener Kulturen* (Obladen, 1996), 36.
- 10** C. Geertz, cited in R. Alsheimer, K. Roth, A. Moosmüller, op. cit., 20.
- 11** cf. Hofstede, op.cit., 3-4.
- 12** M. Terkessidis, ›Globale Kultur in Deutschland – oder: Der lange Abschied von der Fremdheit‹, A. Hepp, R. Winter (ed), *Kultur – Medien – Macht. Cultural Studies und Medienanalyse* (Wiesbaden, 2006), 12.
- 13** M. Terkessidis, ›Distanzierte Forscher und selbstreflexive Gegenstände. Zur Kritik der Cultural Studies in Deutschland‹, C. Jacke, E. Kimminich, S.J. Schmidt (ed), *Kulturschutt – Über das Recycling von Theorien und Kulturen* (Bielefeld, 2006) 4-5.
- 14** Maletzke, op.cit., 35.

RESEARCH DESIGN

by Philipp Heidkamp, Josef Kril, Jessica Stihl

After describing the basic approaches, we now lay out the necessity for and the limits of a strategic research plan. We assess criteria that determine the research design. In this context, we get to know basic research methods that are the starting point for approaching a specific methodology for the Cultural Library.

Each research process must be planned carefully and precisely. The researchers' perspectives are shaped by the research plan and the decision as to which methods to use and how to structure them. Each choice of method and their sequencing during the project results in a particular research dialectic. »The researcher's relationship to the subject being researched, the environment under research«¹ must be properly assessed because through a potential proximity to or distance from the subject, certain methods will already be predetermined.

For the Cultural Library, in which a holistic-phenomenological-qualitative approach was used, the acquisition of prior cultural knowledge is fundamentally dependent on the research context that may be either a foreign culture or one's own. Based on the specific cultural context, it is also important to consider that a researcher also acts as a social entity. Cultural differences, customs, rituals and everyday routines have to be considered. Having prior knowledge about the subject and the place under research, including the related cultural idiosyncrasies and rules, is a fundamental precondition for an appropriate choice of methods. The success or failure of a research project is determined by these early, fundamental considerations. In order to obtain answers to the research questions and to gather the desired research data, researchers try to identify both the possibilities and limits of available methods. What is important when designing the research process is not just a proper understanding of the different methods, but also an understanding of each method within the specific research context.

The Cultural Library understands culture as a process. Hence its research methods are also subject to processuality and to an analysis as to whether these methods need to be revised and optimized with regard to the research context. Central methods in anthropology, sociology and ethnology – such as participatory observation for example – do not have to be a standard part of the research process. A certain flexibility and awareness of the methods available can contribute to the overall quality of the research results. Before deciding on a particular method – for example the unstructured interview – the researchers have to ask themselves whether they can do the role of interviewer justice in the field. Also, in the case of structured interviews, the researchers have to make sure that the questions are easy to understand for the participants and what kind of questions are acceptable or unacceptable. A team that includes an intercultural interface is in a position to discuss and review these issues. Qualitative research



methods in a foreign cultural context are linked to an interactive process between researchers from the culture under examination, those from a different one and the subject under research. Through their mere presence, researchers influence the situation under investigation. As Malinowski has described², even in hidden observation, researchers are still participants in the process.

The role that the researcher chooses or is able to adopt has a crucial influence on which information becomes accessible. Carrying out research in intercultural teams, such as the Cultural Library, allows for dividing roles between those who are from the culture being studied and those who are from different ones. This results in the negotiation of proximity and distance, and thus trust and transparency, becoming part of the research plan. The decision as to which methodological approaches to implement defines what kind of knowledge will be either accessible or remain inaccessible in the field.

Cultural probes, for example, represents another approach for gaining access to the area under research. Participants are asked to take a certain number of photographs during a defined period of time on a theme given by the researchers. This method aims at being able to view the world from the perspective of the participants thus gaining an internal view onto the subject under research.

In order to develop a research methodology for the Cultural Library projects, it is necessary to analyze various research models such as the traditional model creation from the quantitative approaches in social sciences where, based on qualitative research, a plan of the assumed networks of

Especially during unstructured interviews in Nairobi, it became evident that researchers from the same culture as the interviewees were able to elicit a greater openness in interviewees' responses. As researchers from a foreign culture, we often first had to establish the fact that ours was a not-for-profit research project. If we were not able to convey this in a credible manner, we would not receive any information at all. JK

relationships and conditions in the field is drawn up. With the help of theoretical knowledge and through discussions in the project team and with the cooperation partner at the place of research, these assumed relationships are then formulated as the guiding epistemological questions. But, as described by Glaser and Strauss in their Grounded Theory³, the data gathered in the field will have priority over any theoretical assumptions. Our approach of theory formation based on field research does not, however, include the mandatory separation of theoretical knowledge from the subject under research, as suggested by Glaser and Strauss.⁴ Instead, during the whole research period, the research questions are revised, further elaborated and added to, which is part of the processual character of the Cultural Library.

Despite using an open approach, we nonetheless had to develop a structuring method for the collected and processed data that in particular focused on the various methods of photographic observation and on semi-structured interviews and cultural probes.

Interpreting pictures on the basis of, for instance, Erwin Panofsky's three iconographic strata of subject matter or meaning allowed us to access the contents of photographs in terms of meaning and cultural references despite various levels of prior knowledge about the culture under research. The contents of the photographs is approached by starting with the primary or natural subject matter and continuing with the cultural and, finally, historical context. This method successively highlights the limits of understanding another culture, thus promoting intercultural exchange. The image becomes the basis for the development of further questions. These questions regarding the views and ideas embedded in the foreign culture again promote intercultural communication and a semiotic level of understanding, or intercultural interface, is created.

One aim of this project is to develop a repertoire of research methods based on the above-described analysis of various possible approaches. On the one hand, this repertoire is meant to allow researchers to respond to a given research context in a flexible way and on the other hand a specific collection of methods and their adaptation for the Cultural Library should provide some orientation, guidance and support.

Based on experience gathered in the fields of ethnography and social sciences⁵, we can formulate a number of guiding principles:

- People's behavior is predominantly investigated when they go about their everyday lives rather than in situations or contexts defined by the researchers.
- The collected data derive from various sources, the most important of which are observation and largely informal or semi-structured conversations or interviews.
- The data collection is unstructured in the sense that there is no predefined plan that is meticulously adhered to. This does not mean that the research is carried out in an aimless fashion, rather it means the data are collected first while their interpretation and the further process are subject to a certain level of openness.
- Typically, research is focused on one single place, situation, setting or small group.
- Data analysis includes interpreting the meanings and functions of human activities, people's relationships amongst each other, and people's relationships to objects. These interpretations are done methodically and represented in language.

The selection of appropriate methods is aimed at supporting a focus on the relevant questions related to a particular theme in further projects to come. This is especially crucial when researching a foreign cultural context within a very limited timeframe.

In order to make the collected data and results accessible to others, methods of analysis and interpretation are needed that are used and reflected upon in an intercultural dialogue. Based on this, a process of transformation is developed to first of all make the analyzed results accessible to the local public by using presentations, exhibitions or an ›open studio‹ approach. The results are also meant to become part of a broader discourse where the transformations help to uncover and establish interfaces. Here, we have to point to the ›translation processes‹ used in ethnography: »A translation discovers the meanings in one culture and communicates them in such a way that people with another cultural tradition can understand them.«⁶ This is exactly where design, with its specific transformative skills that go beyond language, comes in to solve a typical (not solely) ethnographical problem: »The ethnographic literature is plagued by half-translations that cannot be used as guides to another way of life.«⁷ This is another reason for the necessity for and potential of a ›viscourse‹.

¹ U. Flick, E. von Kardoff, H. Keupp, L. von Rosenstiel, St. Wolff (ed), *Handbuch Qualitative Sozialforschung*, 2. Auflage, Beltz Psychologie Verlags Union (Weinheim, 1995), 148. ² Malinowski quoted in: W. A. Haviland et al, *Cultural Anthropology: The Human Challenge*. ³ B.G. Glaser & A.L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory. Strategies for Qualitative Research*. (Aldine, 1967) ⁴ see B.G. Glaser & A.L. Strauss, 37. ⁵ M. Hammersley *Reading Ethnographic Research: A Critical Guide*. Longman (London, 1990) ⁶ J.P. Spradley, *Participant Observation*, Wadsworth (Belmont, 1980), 161.

02

EXPECTATIONS – A DISCOURSE

by Philipp Heidkamp, Johannes Hossfeld and Paul Mpungu

PHILIPP HEIDKAMP (PH) With this project, the Cultural Library set up the first cooperation with two institutions in Africa: on the one hand with the Goethe Institute in Nairobi, which has (from my perspective), a new understanding of ›Cultural work‹ and the support of cooperative processes, and on the other hand the University of Nairobi, Faculty of Architecture. Our expectations were twofold: we understood that we would visit a place where we would be confronted with a lot of expectations and ›needs‹, where German (or rather European) experience and knowledge are highly appreciated. But we were interested in understanding the different culture - and, by doing so, in reflecting our own culture. We decided to work on mobility, since mobility has been a paradigm of innovation since the industrial revolution (cars, trains, vehicles and communication – including all infrastructure and services) and is one of the reasons for today's economic wealth. Mobility is about making connections in time and space possible. It is about bringing things and people closer together. It is about the transportation of people, information, news, food and materials. It is about connecting people, products and goods. It is about speed and reducing distance.

So there is an interesting paradox: can mobility bring economic wealth to a country like Kenya? Will we have companies from the industrialised countries that will try to sell the solutions that have been installed in the ›Western World‹ in the past 30 years (and which, as we know, brought new problems instead of solving existing ones). We know that more roads will bring more traffic. But at the same time, we face new possibilities with upcoming IT applications that might reduce physical mobility - and we see grassroots and well-implemented solutions (like *M-pesa*) in Kenya that the industrialised countries can learn from. As all those topics are quite broad, we were interested in defining them in collaboration with our African partner - and then, in a first step, in making momentary 'snapshots' of everyday life and culture in Nairobi.

JOHANNES HOSSFELD (JH) Let me begin with one of the many points you have raised, and develop it a little further. From our perspective in Nairobi, mobility was obviously interesting from a global perspective, but even more so due to its local resonance – especially in its contrast to the Western paradigms. As a megacity born out of the spirit of mobility, Nairobi consists of enclave-like residential areas and urban wastelands, shopping malls and slums, anachronistic tableaux', contradictions and disparity. Mobility binds these antagonistic textures together. When considering mobility, a lot of the complex structure of Nairobi becomes apparent. Different themes like the formal/informal dichotomy, island urbanisation, the unique structure of public space or phenomena like the *matatu* culture crystallise out when we pose these questions. The theme of mobility, therefore, enables us to describe the specificity (and otherness) of this space in contrast to the urban structures of Europe, and to connect it with other urban phenomenon of the Global South, like India or Mexico. Whether these phenomena are a prediction of how urban structures will also develop in the West, there are implicit pending questions that the title of our publication also hints at.

Certainly, this complex urban structure has never really been appropriately described. We have always tended to imagine the African city with its clichéd images: as a safari postcard with giraffes, images from a disaster zone with starvation, war and AIDS or the image of children gratefully receiving development aid. Also, scientifically, we cannot maintain the usual perspectives and notions, but rather we are compelled to verify and reformulate them (for example the so-easily used dichotomy of formality/informality). This is of course a formidable challenge, and it requires candour to switch and shift our vistas.

And this was exactly our expectation for the project: the CL represents an approach that can do this. The openness of the project, the processual character of it, the team research with culturally different perspectives, the specific local analysis, as well as the interdisciplinary approach (architects and designers forming the core research teams) are important aspects of the project.

From our perspective at the Goethe Institute, it is also interesting to see how the CL functions as an international network that works in each case in different partner constellations. It is certainly not new in the context of the Goethe Institute, but we programmatically implement that art and science projects no longer work according to national boundaries and therefore strictly bilateral activities – and hence Goethe Institute activities – cannot also be constrained within these boundaries, if we want to implement excellent aesthetic projects and provide profound answers to transnational questions. The typical CL combination of international perspectives, multiplicity of approaches and precise local interrogation fulfils this demand very well.

PAUL MPUNGU (PM) The perspectives you present corroborate and validate the theme of our ›Learning from Nairobi‹ joint project. As expected, the choice of theme for the Plan 09 exhibition elicited interest from the public, as was seen in the evening discussions that followed topical issues surrounding the question of mobility. In what ways can the European urban paradigm develop its agenda through a Third World urban experience? Is the North/South, us/ them dichotomy plausible from a different perspective? In order to find lasting solutions to the conundrum that urbanization processes present, it is becoming more and more evident that our over-reliance on technology and the ›scientific approach‹ blinds us to the existence and potential benefits of cheaper and more sustainable solutions that appear not only to work relatively well in less formal settings but also seem to engender social openness and trust.

The idea of the CL comes at a time when the space-time compression phenomenon seems to have gained a momentum that will allow it to obliterate boundaries and ultimately see the 'triumph of space over place'. Although ›place‹ is what defines our notions of where we derive familiarity, and hence comfort, the speed of communication privileges ›space‹ over place – a concept that undesirable in cultural anthropology discourse.

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cf. 03.2 NAIROBI
IS GREEN *M-pesa*

With that, comes the danger of traditional societies losing their cultural identities. Based on such realities, there is a certain »urgency of the now« to capture those moments, in sound, light and voice. I personally see the CL as a profound archival innovation that will ensure the proper documentation and retrieval of our past unique mobility systems.

But having said that, I also think that in archiving these systems a new impetus will be born and these systems may well become ›depositories‹ to be raided in the future when other means fail to meet propriety and adequacy – if for nothing else for their innovation and naïve promise.

I also think that the CL's current strategy appears to be one that is careful not to exceed its immediate agenda, so that other systems and agencies can develop the concept beyond this nascent stage. From the standpoint of the School of Architecture and Built Environment at the University of Nairobi, the idea places us squarely where we've always wanted to be, among equals, and eager to be part of the global body of researchers committed to realising a common urban development agenda.

PH The ›urgency of the now‹ is a motivation for reflection. In this project, it is not only a reflection in time (looking backwards), it is also a reflection about our current understanding, perception, values – and maybe identity. The CL helps in dealing with manifestations of processes or artefacts, and after presenting the outcomes of our project in Tokyo in November 2009, I understood once more how important our project is. It should not be fragmented into dualisms, instead it should be a rhizomatic platform (Deleuze) for dealing with cultural manifestations - as a global design project. ›Mobility‹ seems to be the right issue to work on - but in the next steps we have to narrow down the projects to smaller manifestations, allowing a more detailed view.

JH CL as snapshot of the momentary, as a projection and prognosis (not forgetting the proposal of exemplary solutions, which is also part of the CL approach) but also an archive for locally specific phenomena, aka traditional cultural identities: maybe parts of this book can be seen in the tradition of a Bilderatlas, an atlas of images. Paul's mention of the archive catches up again with the relation between localisation and globalisation, which is an important subtext to the whole project. It confirms what has been discussed since the late 90s: that it is, in fact, not about whether we apply the patterns of modernity or not. Influences do not just flow from the centres to the peripheries, from the exogenous to the indigenous, from modernity to localised identities that are overruled (and already the notions are questionable); the picture is rather more complicated than that. The localised cultures actively decode, receive and localise influences, in the form of appropriations, creolisations (Hannerz) or syncretisms, even to the extent of a mimetic rebound (Bruce Knauft) where these forms of adaptation create influences on their own.

PM Absolutely, syncretism as a symbiotic process tends to facilitate co-existence and constructive interaction between differing cultures. It also enriches its own culture, but rejects those influences that impoverish it. CL has adopted that ›liminal‹ position in the way it demonstrates openness

and tolerance. In so doing, I think CL exceeds the limitations of context to allow for sustainable proposals in sync with the ›contemporaneity‹ in which we all participate. I also see CL as neither stuck in the glorified past nor the awe-inspiring future; it seems to emphasise and propagate a possible mix of selection and appropriation. I would, perhaps, draw a distinction between syncretic relations with creolisation, hybridisation and even bricolage because these all really just ›potter about‹ and, in common view, stand to ›erase the differences‹ and ›smooth out the discrepancies between cultures‹ thus possibly ending up with global uniformity. Johannes' broader idea, which I fully endorse, is that ›Learning from Nairobi‹, as a reaction, cleverly privileged the local while retaining its contemporaneity; neither becoming anachronistic nor folkloric; giving the notion that the result is, has and always had been ›theirs‹!

PH We always have both sides – when we learn, we might literally learn or we learn by difference. This aspect seems to be important as the category of difference helps us (all of us, whether we are in Cologne, Taipei, Tokyo, Nairobi or elsewhere) to better understand our current situation by using a different perception of the situation. This became quite clear in the evening dialogues in the Cologne exhibition. This ›social dialogue‹ helped us in the process of gathering information. Not everything can be captured by structured interviews, forms or feedback sheets - so the process became richer.

JH With the aspect of sociality, Paul mentioned another dimension that is crucial: CL goes beyond a narrow definition of design and urbanism. It shows a broad concept of design that KISD stands for, a very reflective and inclusive approach that contributes to other adjacent discourses, like urbanism, architecture and social sciences, for instance. Similarly, the concept of studying architecture at the faculty of the University of Nairobi is open towards indigenous architectural identities like that of the Swahili, a strong observation of the city the faculty is in, as well as to a commitment to engage with the communities of Nairobi (and in many of these projects in which we cooperate). These open concepts bring the project strongly towards questions that are at the core of what GI Nairobi is engaging in: questions of society and crucial topics of the humanities that are prominent in international intellectual debate. In this way, reading the texture of the city, a design project can be connected to, and can contribute to, bigger topics: from the history and make-up of Kenyan society, through to some of its most prominent issues (like societal segregation, the structure of a class-based society, the question of public space in Kenya, etc.) and finally to general questions like the notion of modernity and post-modernity, of development, of society.

PH Going deeper and expanding the topics further is something I'm really looking forward to. I would be happy if the process of the CL (it has always been meant to be an open process) could contribute to further - and bigger - issues. But there is still a need to focus and concentrate on some of the issues - this is something we might do with the questions and the web platform. We know that people expect answers. It is good that we exhibited questions. But it would help the process if we went into more detail with those questions, if we really dealt with them. Many questions

point to big issues: just take question #38, for example: »What effect does it have on human relationships when money is sent via mobile phone instead of handing it over in person?« - this could be the beginning of a project for designers, architects, social scientists...

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cf. 04.4 FUTURE
PERSPECTIVES
FOR THE CULTURAL
LIBRARY

JH I agree with you Philipp, I think it is exactly this detailed focus that is so characteristic for CL, and you rightly point out that in the next steps, the projects might have to be narrowed down. But from there (and only from there, even more in times of the ›end of theory‹ trap) immediately the broader questions come up that are all implicit in the issues we're focusing on, whether we explicate them or not. And what I like so much about CL as a design project, is that giving answers is not so embarrassing as in the humanities (where one tries so hard to get at least the questions right, let alone the answers): in CL the answers can be non-discursive, visual, material. This means that it is also a design project in the narrow sense of design.

Paul is certainly right about the smoothing out of differences implicit in many concepts of hybridity and, just to mention, also in the notion of multiculturalism (as opposed to interculturality). This is something CL certainly tries to get away from. By the way, these are all current issues in the discussions about the art scene in Nairobi. Take for example pop music and the discussion about Kenyan Hip-Hop (which we at GI Kenya are totally into). Are Genge, Bumba, Kapuka etc. just an adaptation of an American template that betray Kenyan musical traditions, or are they a creative appropriation and localisation (just think of the very Kenyan practice of playing and listening to music in *matatus*)?

PM Johannes, you introduce an interesting dimension of emerging trends in modernisation through appropriation. The arts scene is part of a wider struggle of a generational type that is in almost every aspect of social and economic development of Nairobi. The *matatu* culture is an ongoing process that privileges the poor majority as they hunt for space to get their share of the economic spoils. In adopting a less formal approach to business, they gain much-needed mileage ahead of the ubiquitous Western-style structured system. *M-Pesa* has grown out of the same concept. 'Exhibitions' literally drove out the Asian *dukawallahs* from the city centre and took over the retail market not only in Nairobi, but across the land. Which then conceptually brings us to the music scene - in the early 70s Mobutu popularised the concept of Authenticité and the Sapeur cult in Congo. The result was such a powerful and phenomenal cultural export, that it saw all of Eastern and Central Africa reeling under the effect of the Congolese and Zairean Seben music - an effect that continues to the present day. Spurred on by the clamour to ›have our own‹ the new Kenyan generation is keen to shake of that stultifying influence by bridging the gap between the Benga and Cavacha styles of their parents with a modern Kenyan music style. It seems - and you are absolutely right - the inspiration seems largely to come from the ubiquitous coca-colonial sources. That said, Philipp's concerns within CL on modernity and post modernity brings relevance to the question - what tools can CL, as a neutral observer, adopt to correctly read these conflicting realities whose segue, in my view, is a non sequitur and hence reified?

PH I don't think the CL has the role of a neutral observer (as I don't believe in neutrality of observation), especially when we take into consideration that the students will act and react in a quite new and quite unfamiliar context. As Johannes mentioned the issue of the visual aspect of the CL, I expect the CL even there to go beyond the use of visuals in the narrow sense of design. We can talk about a ›viscourse‹¹ when we are analysing formats and configurations of images, visualisations and metaphors. Knorr-Cetina defined viscourse as follows: »The concept of ›viscourse‹ is the interplay of visual images and their integration into an ongoing communicative discourse«. So we need to work on this issue, understanding that viscourses determine the qualitative bandwidth of the visible. But his will lead to perspectives (see this chapter), so my expectations are just to get a possible foundation (in terms of materials, both visual and text) as well as further insights in order to extend this in a next step to a viscourse on cultural issues.

JH Observers rather than observer maybe: as an atlas of images and with viscourse I have to come back to this older and powerful Aby Warburg tradition: the focus might not be on mono-semantics but, with different exhibitions and projects, on the adding and rearranging of images that are produced from a multiplicity of perspectives (an ongoing semiosis that runs somewhat counter to this book form). And, when we speak about images being integrated into a discourse, I believe it is important to take discourse in the sense that Foucault gave it, and pay attention to the power relations that the visual shows (and from a metaperspective also in the act of taking these images). Again, we can read themes in this visual discourse as, for instance, the face of capitalism in Africa, inequality in society, civic participation, the role of public space, etc.

PM You are quite right, of course. The neutrality implied was in the interpretive action 'avoiding the biased trap of ethnocentric reading', and rather in taking phenomena at their face value, and thence applying it within a subjective discourse. I think CL's next steps as you aptly posed is destined to an interesting but equally challenging time ahead. The question "What do we do with this?" within the ambit of a transformation will quite obviously feature most prominently in the days to come. With glowing optimism, I anticipate a visionary future for the Cultural Library project.

PH I am looking forward to continuing the debate and dialogue in the final section on Perspectives, understanding that this project provides a lot of insights that enable us to create and define improved and better conditions for the next CL projects. From my point of view, this is one of the goals of this cooperative project - to benefit from different perspectives, experiences and expectations in order to continuously improve the CL...

¹ K. Knorr-Cetina in: J. Huber & M. Heller (ed) *Konstruktionen Sichtbarkeiten*, (Zurich 1999).

Nairobi is the 4th largest city in Africa. It is also the capital, and the largest city in Kenya. The land on which Nairobi sits was originally grazing land for livestock and a watering point for the indigenous Maasai people. The name Nairobi comes from a Maasai phrase Enkare Nyoirobi that means ›the place of cool waters‹.

Nairobi is situated near the equator at an elevation of 1661 m (5450ft) above sea level and sits halfway between Kampala in Uganda and the port of Mombasa on the East African coast. It is the most populous city in East Africa, with an estimated urban population of about 3.5 million. According to the 1999 Census, 2,143,254 inhabitants lived within its approximate area of 684 km².

Nairobi started as a railway depot in 1890. It grew up around a railway line constructed by the British colonial officials from Mombasa on the Indian Ocean coast to Uganda. The present site of Nairobi was selected as a stores depot, shunting yard (place where trains are shifted from one track to another) and camping ground for the thousands of Indian labourers (also British colonials, who came to Kenya seeking work) employed by the British to work on the line. **PM**



HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

For more than 20 years after its establishment, Nairobi's development was slow, but like the British population who became ardent big game hunters, its popularity as a tourist destination appealed to many Europeans travelling to Africa. It became an administrative post and capital of the British East African colony in 1905.

In 1973, under the Nairobi Urban Study Group (NUSG), a Nairobi Metropolitan Growth Strategy was formulated, and gave development directions for land use and transport systems for Nairobi City (NCC). Unfortunately, the recommendations of the NUSG were not implemented over the intervening years, and as the city rapidly grew, its development agenda was almost entirely needs-based. Of the several commissions appointed over subsequent years to look into ways of streamlining the growth agenda, none has been formally adopted to date.

THE TRAFFIC SITUATION IN NAIROBI

According to the 1999 Census and data collected by the UN, there are approximately 7,500,000 person-trips per day, translating to some 2.5 trips per person. Classified according to destination, trips to and from home account for 46.5%, while trips to work contributes 25% and trips to school 9.8%. Other trips, e.g to hospital, account for the remaining 18.7%.

Within the larger scheme, the ubiquitous minibus is the dominant passenger transport model in almost all cities in sub-Saharan Africa. *Matatus* are the informal paratransit industry in Kenya that provide a service to millions of people every day, and are essentially the backbone of the transportation system in Nairobi. *wws* consist of 29% of the total transport sector of the paratransit travel model in Kenya.

The *matatu* derives its name from the standard fare charged per single one-way local trip, which was 30 cents. The 10-cent coin was known by the dominant community in Nairobi - the populous Kikuyu tribe - as *King'otore*. Three of those were *Mang'otore Matatu* - 3 coins! The shortened form *Matatu* has been used ever since.

Before that, the British Overseas Transport Company had started both local as well as regional transport services to Uganda and Tanzania. Their Leyland Albion 60 passenger buses plied the *murrum* tracks across the vast East African territory, delivering both passengers and goods. The region was then part of the East African Community, which permitted border crossing without any customs or tax requirements.



Overseas Trading Company double-decker buses seen here parked at the Main Terminus at the Sclaters Road (Kimathi Street) Government Road (Moi Avenue) junction - Off present day Hilton Hotel. These were the transit buses that were commonly referred to as (Muthubaari) municipal buses. **PM**

Currently the formal Translink system in Nairobi is shared between the KBS (Kenya Bus Service) which took over from OTC in the early 70s and other private minibus service providers. Their share of the bus urban transport market is 3.7%. Travel by private car, taxi and truck accounts for 15.3%, while railways account for 0.4%. One very new development is the upsurge of private car, taxi and motor-cycle transportation. When the process is completed, the 2009 census will clearly show a huge upsurge in the market for these three modes of transportation. The availability of cheaper cars from the Middle East coupled with an equivalent motorcycle import market from China has, in the last two years, completely overwhelmed both the vehicle registration service and the traffic flow in Nairobi.

Although 47% percent¹ of the population in Nairobi used to walk regularly, the 2009 Census may very well indicate a smaller percentage, due largely to new developments in other modes of transport. Public school transportation also accounts for at least 3.1% according to the 1999 census. In the last ten years, however, the proliferation of private schools that also use branded school buses to advertise their institutions will most definitely change that statistic.



KENYATTA AVENUE, NAIROBI

A very large proportion of vehicles (93%),² start and finish their journeys within the boundaries of the city of Nairobi. Of these, passenger cars account for about 36% of all vehicles in Nairobi, while 23% are pickups and four-wheel vehicles, 3% are buses and 27% *matatus*. Only 7% is through traffic.

The area east of the city centre has the highest density, both in daytime activities and in its residential distribution. During colonial times this area was designated for the African population. In order to gain access to their places of employ-

ment this population was required to carry special identification cards in metal containers slung around their necks on string. It was illegal then to cross Victoria Street and to venture into the western enclaves of the city dominated by the white community.

Today, a more integrated city has at its centre an approximate density of 10,966 persons per km². In contrast, the least developed area, the Kibera slum supports over 49,228 persons per km² in makeshift houses.³

RESIDENTIAL DISTRIBUTION

Although Kibera is described as the largest slum in Africa, it is not the only one of its type and size in Nairobi. Over 60% of Nairobi's population lives in makeshift accommodation, in Mathare, Korogocho, Mukuru and places such as Kibagare and Kuwinda. The rapid growth of slums is a result of Nairobi having been overwhelmed by rapid population growth coupled with weak frameworks for environmental regulation and implementation. With the environment deteriorating over many years, the repercussions are increasingly felt, including traffic congestion, pollution, poor waste management and water shortages.⁴

URBANISATION IN KENYA

The 1999 census indicates that the total population in Kenya is 31 m, of which 34% live in urban areas. Ironically, 71% of this relatively modest urban population is described as dwelling in sub-standard housing. The annual population growth rates are on par, with urban growth being at the same level as the slum growth of 6%.⁵ The UN habitat uses an index and indicators to determine the percentage of urban population in the makeshift accommodation category. Eighty-seven percent of the urban population in Nairobi do not have safe water source. A further 53% do not have adequate sanitation infrastructure.

The Kibera slum, for example, does not have a sewer infrastructure. The few pit latrines that have been provided by landlords are not adequate for the large population. It is therefore not unusual to find that most households have to devise unhealthy ways of waste disposal including the infamous 'flying toilet syndrome'. The rooms are usually crowded and made of non-permanent material that has to be constantly repaired to keep the integrity of the interior living spaces. Eighty percent of Nairobi's urban population is described as living in housing that does not meet UN habitat definition of durable dwellings. A further 78% also live in inadequate or substandard living spaces.⁶

¹ UN-HABITAT Transport and Energy Unit, WSIB, Global Division (2006). **UN-HABITAT Urban Public Transport Strategic Activities – UIC – UITP – UNIFE - Keep Kyoto on track**. Nairobi: Sara Candiracci. Retrieved from: www.railway-mobility.org/docs/cop12_nairobi/unfccc_sara.pdf. ² King'ori Zacharia Irungu **Decongesting Nairobi City - Urban Transportation Challenges**. www.scribd.com/ 17 November 2007. Web. 26 Nov. 2009. www.scribd.com/doc/2382775/Decongesting-Nairobi-City-Kenya The author is a Senior Economist at the Ministry of Regional Planning and Works, Republic of Kenya. ³ UN-HABITAT, **United Nations Human Settlements Programme**, Regional Office for Africa and the Arab States (2006). **Rapid Urban Sector Profiling for Sustainability (RUSPS): Nairobi Urban Sector Profile**. Nairobi: Fernando Da Cruz, Kerstin Summer and Ombretta Tempra. Page 6. Retrieved from: www.unhabitat.org/pmss/getElectronicVersion.aspx?nr=2791&alt=1. ⁴ *ibid.* 10. ⁵ Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. 2001 Estimates. Web. 30 Nov. 2009 www.cbs.go.ke. ⁶ UN-HABITAT. Web. 20 October 2009 www.unhabitat.org.



From the very beginning of this project, we have recognised the central importance of mobility as a meta-topic for the Cultural Library.

Nairobi, being an African metropolis and one of the fastest growing cities in the world, has to deal with many questions concerning mobility that are of great relevance, not only for architects and urban planners, but also for designers. From transportation of goods to the use of mobile phones as cash machines, from home-made wheelchairs to an underground railway system planned for 2030 and from mobile workers to traffic in Nairobi, issues of mobility are central to everyday life in Kenya. For the cooperation between Cologne and Nairobi, we started to define mobility in a joint discussion, both in Cologne and with the team from Nairobi by using our KISDspaces online platform. Within the discussion we came up with different means of mobility and possible research topics. To narrow these huge topics down we decided to approach the issues of mobility by observing people, processes and places and to search for typical symbols and rituals of mobility within the Kenyan culture. Mobility was discussed as spatial mobility: the mobility of people and goods in the geographical space. This is probably the first topic that comes to mind while talking about mobility in general: to learn how goods are physically transported, to find out about existing traffic layers or possible interference between and with-

in these layers, to understand the flow of traffic and ascertain how people living or working in a certain area cope with these traffic patterns. While considering spatial mobility, the use of vehicles as transportation or mobility tools was brought into our remit. What does the public transport system in Nairobi look like? How do people usually move around in the city? Since there is no underground railway system, other kinds of transportation must be used. At this point we had to leave behind the accepted German methods of a state-run system of urban transport or regular bus stops and timetables, and so we decided to concentrate our research and our observation on vehicles typically found in Nairobi and their use, and also to choose one special foodstuff, *sukuma-wiki*, for study in order to analyse how it moves through the marketplace and its supply chains. One further aspect of spatial mobility which had been chosen as a research topic is mobility as a pattern for providing work: who works on the street or has a mobile workplace to make their living? What kind of products or services do these mobile workers offer? This topic is related to former Cultural Library projects and recalls the ›Street Stalls‹ project of Prof. Tadanori Nagasawa and Hiroshi Imaizumi (Musashino Art University, Tokyo). Furthermore, we decided to have a closer look at urban gathering points and area classification and residential segregation, neither of which appear to demonstrate mobility at first glance. But by studying both topics more intensively, they reveal a strong relationship and connections regarding different kinds of spatial mobility. By choosing one of the most popular gathering places in Nairobi, we tried to analyse and understand the place itself and also the movements of different people to and from this special communal place. Of course, mobility in our discussion was not limited to physical mobility or traffic and transportation. The British sociologist and pioneer of mobility studies, John Urry, suggests twelve different forms of mobility: asylum, refugee and homeless travel and migration, business and professional travel, discovery travel by students, au pairs and other young people on their ›gap years‹, medical travel to spas, hospitals, dentists etc., military mobility of armies, tanks etc. which has many spinoffs for civilian use, post-employment travel and the forming of transnational lifestyles during retirement, ›trailing travel‹ of children, partners and other relatives and domestic servants, travel and migration across the key nodes within a given diaspora (such as that of overseas Chinese), tourist travel to visit places and events, visiting friends and relatives and work-related travel and commuting. The interplay between these twelve different ›Flows‹ produces an enormously complex structuring and restructuring of places.

Gathering Places – In the absolute centre of Nairobi a multi used intersection of different mobilities is located. It is a highly frequented platform for job seekers and employers. This place, known as »The Round Table«, marks the historical and present heart of the city and one of its main uses became a gathering place for jobless people. The chronology of this place includes an interesting change of its original purpose, from a place planned for tourists in front of an upper class hotel to a place for locals and their needs. A broad range of different motivations and prospects come together at this gathering place. Some try to get a profit out of this place by presenting themselves for a new job, some just gather with friends to be up to date, most combine both. More insights about this jobless corner are available on the Cultural Library website, where the 7th research team presents their topic »Jobless Corner: The Open Source Job Table« <http://culturallibrary.kisd.de/projects/mobility-in-nairobi-2009/jobless-corner-the-open-source-job-table/> US

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cf. 03.4 NON-MOTORIZED VEHICLES IN NAIROBI

180
cf. 03.5 MOVEMENT OF GOOD sukuma-wiki

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cf. 03.3 MOBILE WORKPLACES

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cf. 03.6 DYNAMIC URBAN PATTERNS

Those new paradigms – as they affected Nairobi and the European perception of it – were of great interest for this project.

Even though we were focusing on the issue of work-related travel and commuting, mobility was also defined in our discussions as virtual mobility or ›informational mobility‹: the exchange of information irrespective of spatial mobility (mobile phones, communication). What influence do mobile communications media have on people's life in Kenya? How do new technologies enhance mobility? Do people ultimately have to be mobile, or is it services and products that have to become more flexible? The survey focused especially on the use of mobile phones in Kenya. These cover a wider range of uses than in Europe, since, for example, mobile phones can be used to carry out money transfers.

The aspect of social mobility led to the discussion of mobility within a social sciences framework: the ability to move between rungs on the social ladder and social status (vertical and horizontal social mobility). This somewhat abstract discussion was interwoven with clichéd images and pictures, illustrating the German perspective on mobility in Kenya: a variety of home-made vehicles, makeshift solutions, traffic jams and a lack of infrastructure. Mobility was also understood to be mental mobility: the ability to think about alternatives and lateral thinking. And certainly, learning how to think laterally was supported by the intercultural experiences that everyone underwent in each other's countries, discovering the African/Kenyan or European/German way of thinking and, maybe, searching for a common, third way. The respective journeys to Nairobi and Cologne certainly encouraged and deepened our own ›mental mobility‹ and contributed to a better mutual understanding of our shared concerns on the issues of mobility and the cultural differences between both countries. During our discussions on the topic of mobility, and while doing the observation work on the ground in Nairobi, we noticed that most of the research topics are strongly related to each other, and it is often difficult to demarcate them exactly. As the reader will have already noticed, mobility itself is such a complex topic that concerns itself not only with spatial or physical movements, but also has strong links to questions about social mobility (and our own ›mental mobility‹ in dealing with the cultural differences) and virtual aspects like the flow of information. When talking about and observing mobility, it is also important to keep in mind the historical changes and to think about future developments in mobility. By working together in Kenyan-German groups, the students observed everyday habits, rituals and symbols and managed to analyse the outcome and stored and collated the findings that are now collected here in this publication. This project, however, is far from being over. The topic of meta-mobility is still current and micro-mobilities and their complex, interwoven structures in global cities like Nairobi need to be researched, more questions need to be asked and more observations and interpretations need to be made, in order to take the Cultural Library further.

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cf. 03.2 DIGITAL
DECENTRALIZATION

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cf. 03.1 COMMUTING



COOPERATIVE WORK – APPROACHING A METHODOLOGY

by Philipp Heidkamp

SETTING UP THE TOPIC

The cooperation started long before the, real work on-site with a face-to-face meeting of the two teams. The use of digital media (like the KISD-spaces communication platform, unstructured eMail conversations, Facebook profiling and Skype conferences) has been very important for working out the topics, for negotiating research approaches, collating the findings of the desk research, synchronising expectations and concepts as well as the whole organisational planning.

Digital communication media had a big impact on the set up and the progress of the project. The first tool we had was one of our KISDspaces, which gave us the possibility of discussing the topic of mobility and the respective subtopics with the whole team between Cologne and Nairobi. In this process, we expected a balanced input and feedback from both sides - the last thing we wanted was one party setting the agenda and the other party just reacting to it. But this issue needs to be handled subtly and with consideration when communicating in intercultural cooperations. The help of the Goethe Institute was very important for ›translating‹ and for pushing both sides in the right direction. In the KISDspaces, we had about 300 postings plus comments in total, but of Paul Mpungu's first posting was quite important for the German team to understand the way that the Kenyans see the topic and perceive the aspects of mobility. Besides this, it fostered a sense of community with the unseen ›others‹ and helped a lot in the process.

see: <http://spaces.kisd.de/nairobi PH>

He needs to pick up his rhythm a notch higher – his work mate lives only a few blocks down the trail and he hates it when »Oti father« hits the road before him and he has to end up doing ›catch up‹. Other workers join the trail in what resembles the blood network, where smaller vessels feed the arteries with re-oxygenated blood. From a single individual, a gradual build-up forms a human train of cyclists, walkers and cart-pushers. Chirping birds, shuffling feet, the sound of straining bicycle chains, steam emanating from noses and mouths like cigarette smoke!
Soon he spots Oti not too far off ahead. Odhis overtakes the human train, ›on the jog‹, off the beaten path to join him just before they cut through the sprawling Nyayo High Rise Apartments.
Although there's now a pedestrian overpass on Mbagathi Road no-one is quite keen to evade the potential danger of fast traffic - to do the seemingly unnecessary extra workout – 30-odd 200mm high steps to the top and a similar descent on the opposite side! They've gotten used to dodging cars doing 120 Kph on the guardless highway. Quite often they've witnessed chilling accidents here but... work! Work – they need to reach the factory before 7.00a.m!



3 Responses to "Socially equitable mobility"

Philipp Heidkamp am 09 Apr 2009 um 07:36 |
Thank you for this post – and so interesting to see the approach. I added some links in order to understand the mentioned novel/movie. Due to the style of the text, pictures came to my mind immediately when reading it. So additional pictures would be of great interest. After reading today's approaches of the Cologne students, I am sure that there are some strong connections. On the one hand, there is the big (and important) "GETTING TO WORK" topic that we should and will address. On the other hand there are pictures of, as you call them, human streams and human trains. So I am sure we will pick this topic and I am looking forward to see/read more and to discuss this point!

nzilani am 09 Apr 2009 um 08:10 |
Good observation. This is because every morning as I come to campus I meet them going to industrial area. I walk in the opposite direction past them. It is quite interesting a phenomenon, hundreds of people in synchrony walking towards industrial area. There is a juxtaposition, in the sense that next to them are people waiting for public transport otherwise known as 'matatus' going in the opposite direction towards town through mbagathi way. I guess in a city with lots of disparities in the issue of mobility, this is something that should be addressed, because it is the same trend in most of the unplanned settlements, rather the slums around nairobi.

mpungu am 09 Apr 2009 um 19:46 |
Phillip,
Thank you for your good comments – I will add some pictures Tuesday and hopefully get some few more comments. The opening scene in the film "Blood diamonds" almost captures the Kibera early morning mood to a "T". I'll try and get someone to help me "U-tube" that scene and provide the link.
"The Constant Gardener" was partly filmed in this infamous slum. It also is a great eye-opener to our students on – how the other part of the world (in nairobi) operates. I agree picture-speak will be the way out on this one.
Thanks too Nzilani – I am also told that you had a great session today with your colleagues and charted out a work plan. Phillip is very keen to see us establish a true and real "Getting to Work" Topic going and I think we can develop several congruent typologies and share them with our Koin students.
Your comments are very well considered (through a lived experience). I have a camcorder and hopefully I can get say Okullo our technician to invite me to do a Day-with-a-Casual-Worker-from-Kibera with him. That would be a perfect item (to show and discuss with) our Koin friends in May as we together finalize on the theme. Meanwhile I suggest that we all take photos and collect more relevant material to share as we take the long Easter weekend. We then post them early next week.

At Nairobi West, at the traffic lights, traffic is forced to slow down by the surging pedestrians, enough to let the human train create a gap – a break that lets them through. Dawn is slowly breaking towards the East. The first wisps of smoke from industry are now clearly visible over the cityscape. Nairobi is slowly waking up to yet another day! Another 2 km and the big gates that secure the aluminum processing factory, will emerge round the corner. Odhis doesnt like the work environment at the Aluminum factory, but...! Oti is a mechanic not too far from here...! They will meet at 1.00 p.m - under the big tree. Just to lie in the shade and try to catch a nap... before the afternoon bell (siren). How does that sound? Interesting enough for a film documentary designed to capture a critical aspect of Mobility and Culture, and that depicts, in visual terms, obscured lifestyles of the majority of people living on the edge of the heavily (socially-and-economically) stratified workforce that is Nairobi? If it does, let me have your comments – I could post some pictures of the story and perhaps develop this beyond the »lunch? hour« phase. The idea occurred to me way back in 2002 as I sought to develop a proposal for our city to consider the adoption of a cycle (dedicated) lane with attendant services - to encourage the use of this more affordable and green mode of commuting! How's that for my entry behaviour into the blog?

The first entry in KISDspaces by Paul Mpungu on April 9, 2009

THE RESEARCH TOOLBOX

For the research design, we developed a set of methods: our ›research toolbox‹. All students in the teams were using the Cultural Library Diary in order to take the most important notes during the whole research phase: observations, reflections, ideas and fragments of discussions. For the research methodology, we decided to start the observations for the six topics with photos and videos. We prepared semi-structured interviews and we started to work with the item sheets. Every group had to pick the five most important photos every evening (there was always a lot of discussion on this topic), and then go into a detailed analysis and intercultural reflection: the item sheets called for a detailed description of the scene/the snapshot (mainly a iconographic description) and it asked both for a further interpretive description by the German and the Kenyan students. Finally, the item sheets led to emerging questions (that ended up being the most important element for the exhibition and the website of Cultural Library). New item sheets were developed for interviews, appropriate representations for the cultural probes taken by the informants or local representatives had to be developed for the exhibition.

THE NAIROBI WORKSHOP AND EXHIBITION

After 3 months of preparation and web-based discussions, the students from Cologne arrived in Nairobi. They spent one week at the University of Nairobi in open discussions and in preliminary investigations of the topics. Teams were put together, and the German students were rather interested in seeing as much as possible of Nairobi and the urban surroundings.

The Kenyan students were still involved in a lot of day-to-day academic obligations. Even in the second week, when Prof. Mpungu and Prof. Heidkamp were involved on-site, it was hard for the teams to set up workable schedules. Time – its perception and the understanding of commitment – were issues being discussed every day. Stereotypes of German punctuality and reliability were confronted with Kenyan flexibility and ad-hoc situational skills. This was a continuous topic of discussion during the week, and it was important to discuss and clarify this issue. In everyday practice, the teams went to the places in urban Nairobi and interviewed people, handed out toolkits for cultural probes, did interviews and observations, and discussed the findings and new assumptions in the mixed teams everyday. Again, it became obvious that defining your own project brief is one of the hardest things in student life – but we are very much aware that it is a crucial skill and absolutely necessary for present and future problems. This has long been a something commonly understood in design and architectural education, and has led to numerous fruitful discussions. For the German students, one of the most important things was to get rid of their ›tourist glasses‹. The German teams were aware that there is nothing like objectivity – but by reflecting what we saw and experienced everyday, and connecting this to our own cultural understanding, we aimed also at learning about our culture, about our way of observing and about our way of understanding. In anthropology, there has been a shift from ›there‹ (far-off indigenous cultures) to ›here‹ – but ›otherness‹ is part of the research. We needed an openness in the research; especially because the

As this project was also about reflecting upon and improving the research design, the methods and the toolbox are described in their current status on page 234. PH

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cf. 04.2 LEARNING FROM NAIROBI – REFINING THE RESEARCH DESIGN



teams were mixed and so different in background, expectations and experience. So the ›distance‹ to the research topics has been a crucial issue during the project work on-site in Nairobi.

For an overall project time of more than 6 months, two weeks time on-site is very short, so there was always great time pressure, especially as one of the tasks was to refine the methodology for further Cultural Library projects. Additionally, the teams were working with the extra pressure of the exhibition at the Goethe Institute venue that was supposed to open at the end of the second week, and which would be followed by an open workshop with discussions and presentations. Working with no clear idea for a concrete and tangible outcome was quite difficult, but the project needed this openness in order to look behind the surface of the phenomena. »Although we can easily see behaviour and artefacts, they represent only the surface of a deep lake. Beneath the surface, hidden from view, lies a vast reservoir of cultural knowledge«.¹ At this point in the project schedule, we focussed on deeper questions, not on superficial suggestions or solutions.

The proximity of the assumption, observation, analysis and reflection phases, and the need for transformations to create an exhibition led to a certain pressure, but the final set up for the exhibition was an experience that the team would never forget: everything was set up at the very last minute – but the exhibition is part of the process, and the real successes of the evening were the presentations and the discussions. The exhibition dealt with the openness of questions and showed many of the ›snapshots‹, waiting to be commented on (and thus enriched) by the visitors. Comments were appreciated as cultural interpretations: aiming at iconological interpretations, transporting intrinsic meaning or interpretation of content.

For many people, the visit to the exhibition was the first of their lives. The notion of ›exhibition‹ changed – as everybody had been invited to comment, to discuss and to share their very different experiences. The local representatives (as we called the local contributors to our project, – a little friendlier than the proper ethnographic or sociological term ›informant‹), were a crucial part of the success of the project and the exhibition itself.

The results of the exhibition were analysed and discussed in an iterative process. In the following chapter, the results of the project are presented, and they are again elements in a process, since they are open for comments, feedback and further investigations. Each of the following topics could easily be the beginning of a new Cultural Library project.

The group ›Dynamic Urban Patterns‹, for example, dealt explicitly with the issue of questioning and discussing research results: as their transformation they created an editorial system, that confronted the visitor of the exhibition with media reports and triggered feedback. JS

¹ J.P. Spradley, *Participant Observation*, Wadsworth (Belmont, 1980), 6.



WAY OF BEING AND NOT BEING IN NAIROBI

Tom Odhiambo

There is a way in which almost every modern city imposes its own rules of engagement on its inhabitants. The fact of having a map of a city when one is new to a city is actually not much different from the fact that even old dwellers of cities have to continue to rely on urban planners and cartographers' designation of space and place for their use of the city. Of course the chance of ›getting lost‹ in the city is even more serious when it is one that is rapidly expanding, but in a somewhat haphazard manner like Nairobi.

From the beginning Nairobi was a divided place. The river Nairobi was some kind of mutually agreed divide between the Maasai and Kikuyu, providing both a place from which to exchange goods as well as socialize; thus creating some kind of temporary coexistence whilst maintaining the distance between the two different ethnic groups. Modern Nairobi, as the headquarters of the colonial administration as well as the industrial and commercial centre of the country was spatially demarcated by racial profiles of its inhabitants. Racial differentiation then produced social class differences, with Europeans enjoying prime income and lifestyle, followed by those of Asian origin and then black Africans. Nairobi is still very much socio-economically separated along racial lines although black Kenyans are in the majority of those who enjoy a better life.

Although many parts of Nairobi are obviously segregated, in a very open manner, such as the gates to private homes and offices with signs warning of umbwa kali (fierce dogs), exclusive ›members‹ only clubs, reserved admission, all manners of signs designating who and who cannot access where and what, Nairobi is actually a very divided city. Of course the lived spaces are the most overtly designated. Thus if you say you live in the Westland area of Nairobi or Eastland, you would be signaling your socio-economic place. You would be saying, I am rich, or economically able or of those who have made money, should you name Kileleshwa, Runda or Muthaiga. Saying that you come from Buruburu or South C or South B is to say, I am of the middle class (in Kenyan terms of a middleclass). And to talk of Dandora, for instance, is to suggest diminished means but still within the range of those who are able to care for their needs. Of course these categories are often false, hiding immense disparities in income, wealth and welfare of the occupants of these places. How?

For instance, one could be living in Kileleshwa and presenting an image of wellbeing such as driving a car, dressing well or eating out in fancy restaurants, yet one lives in a bedsitter servants' quarters with one's move-

ments into and out of the compound determined by the whims of whoever lives in the main house. So, often the wish to belong to a certain social class, to be seen as enjoying a particular lifestyle or to live like the successful can be at the cost of certain freedoms. It is these hidden or not-so-conspicuous practices of exclusion and inclusion that often make life in Nairobi appear like an everlasting drama, without a sign of resolution. These practices can be traced to all types of places: eateries, public vehicle stations, schools and colleges, pubs/bars, entertainment places and such others.

Consider youth cultures in Nairobi, which revolve around pop music, especially hiphop. Genge, as the music is known, is not just another cultural commodity like many others on the market. It is a mark of who the artist and the consumer are, where they come from socio-economically, and what they aspire to. So, genge by those from Eastlands is what the majority of the youth listens and dances to. Those from Westlands will also enjoy the music, thus signaling their membership of the youth community, but they are in some senses excluded; and often it is them and their social class who are derided and criticized in the songs. Nevertheless the dancehall brings the two disparate groups together, even if it is but for a moment. This state of sharing-separating is also encountered in *matatus* (see Mbugua wa Mugnai's essay in this book) where loudly played genge and hiphop and rap from America and elsewhere collapse the barriers between the travelers. The confined space of the matatu, which constitutes and enforces closeness and often intimacy between those on board, acts like some kind of democratic stage in motion.

But the democracy of the matatu space is fairly fleeting and relative. For instance, the volume of music in the matatu naturally keeps away some travelers whilst welcoming others. Thus, though the youth may enjoy the music, not all on board will appreciate it; yet one may have no other option but to board.

Nairobi's spatial (dis-)organization incredibly limits the choices one has when looking for somewhere to eat. Many places that advertise themselves as restaurants or hotels are nothing but 'chips and chicken', eat-whilst-standing or take-away affairs. Others serve a standard fare menu of the national staple food ugali na nyama/kuku (corn cake with meat or chicken). But this limited choice of what to eat helps to bring together those who may not afford better quality food and those who may be able

to buy good food but are unable either because of demanding work schedules or are followers of global trends that promote fast-foods. Eating ugali na nyama is some kind of ritual, especially if the beef is nyama choma (roast).

Perhaps the one social activity that best illustrates the idea of inclusion and inclusion in social and spatial terms in Nairobi is entertainment. The weekend, which begins in the afternoon hours of Friday till Sunday, signals the beginning of a ritual of beer-drinking, meat-eating and dancing. It is a time for partying and being out, with family, friends and others. The places where the drinking, eating and dancing happens, although apparently accessible and open to many or all, are fairly segregated or segregating. For instance, despite the bad name that the word ›tribe‹ has been given in public discourse in Kenya, many Friday or Saturday nights are characterised as Luhya, Kalenjin or Meru night – with food and dance from the regions where these ethnic groups come from – thus taking on a typical ethnic colour.

Or some club will advertise a special weekend of Luo, Kamba or Kikuyu music. By this act, some are included whilst others are denied the chance to associate. Still some individuals ›gatecrash‹ these parties seeking to ›know more‹ about the other ›tribe's‹ culture or lifestyle. Yet in some cases many individuals who are supposed to be from a particular ethnic community only attend these ›tribal parties‹ as a way of re-immersing themselves in their people's ways of life but would not wish to be associated with their supposed tribe in everyday life. These parties often reflect the alienation experienced by those who live in Nairobi but still retain roots, through family connections, in the countryside where communal cultural identities are still firm.

Where one parties or finds entertainment is also a mark of distinction, separating one from some whilst including the same individual within a given social group. For those who have money, going to the Coast of Kenya during the weekend – travelling to Malindi, Lamu or Mombasa – is a statement of status. But should the Coast be too far and expensive then driving out to Naivasha or Ole Polos, Kiserian or should one feel not to go too far out of town, the Carnivore, says as much about adoption of a lifestyle – eating out. Kenyans are not reknown for eating out during the week; in fact many restaurants in Nairobi close as early as nine o'clock in the evening.



Generally Nairobians are amiable people and quite welcoming to visitors. Strangers sharing a cigarette, someone dropping her activities to walk a visitor who is lost to his destination often happens in Nairobi and people freely share bottles of beer in pubs. But the same Nairobians can shift into different languages – hence ethnic communities – when a slight disagreement arises over an issue such as difference in political opinion. This tendency to belong to and detach oneself from a group, at times so quickly, makes relationships so fluid and temporary and therefore undermining chances for a having a more cosmopolitan Nairobi. But this is not necessarily a condition peculiar to Nairobi; it is, to some extent, a factor of modernity further amplified by globalization – two forces that constantly unsettle individuals and communities by subtracting and adding to their identities in ways that are mostly incomprehensible to those individuals.



03

03.1 COMMUTING

LOU SMITH / DANCAN OMONDI ODHIAMBO

#51 JANE SPENDS 4 HOURS CLEANING AND PREPARING HER WORK - FAMILY CONSUMING A GREAT DEAL OF TIME - HOW MIGHT THIS AFFECT HER WALK AND FROM WORK?

#53 HOW COULD THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE AREA BE ADJUSTED TO INCORPORATE THE HUNDREDS OF PEDESTRIANS FROM THE KIBERA SLUM TO THE INDUSTRIAL OF NAIROBI. THAT EVERY MORNING MAKE A TRIP TO TRAFFIC JAM ON THE STREETS?

#61 HOW CAN COMPETITION SLOW A DRIVER DOWN OR SPEED A DRIVER UP?

#54 WHAT CRITERIA GO INTO THE DECISION OF WHEN AND WHERE TO CROSS THE STREET?

#57 WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU CONNECT WITH THE WAY TO WORK?

#57 WHAT PART OF A DAYS ACTIVITIES DOES YOUR PATH TO WORK ASSUME?

#58 IT IS NOT UNCOMMON FOR NAIROBIANS TO WALK BETWEEN 1 AND 3 HOURS EACH WAY TO AND FROM WORK - WHAT COULD BE THE EFFECTS OF SUCH TIME ALLOTMENT?

#61 WHAT COULD BE THE EFFECTS IF INDIVIDUALS INTERPRET EVERY DAY DIFFICULTIES AS BARRIERS, AND NOT JUST ANG LIES AS BARRIERS?

#58 BESIDES THE STARTING AND END POINTS, WHAT FACTORS INTO DECIDING THE PATH TO TAKE?

#59 WHAT SITUATIONS MIGHT INFLUENCE A PERSON TO CHANGE THE PATH THEY ARE TAKING?

#51 HOW DO PEOPLE WALKING TO WORK REACT TO FINDING AS ONE POTENTIAL AND TEMPORARY BARRIER TO MOBILITY?

#52 ASIDE FROM TRAVELING, WHAT ACTIVITIES DO YOU UNDERTAKE ON YOUR WAY TO AND FROM WORK?

#56 IN WHAT WAYS DO TRAFFIC JAMS HINDER AND ENHANCE CO-NOMIC ACTIVITY?

#53 AT WHAT POINT DOES MOBILITY BECOME A PRIORITY OVER SAFETY AND HOW DO WALKING PEOPLE PUT THEMSELVES IN DANGER?

#62 WHAT FACTORS ARE WEIGHED IN THE DECISION TO TAKE A MATU TO WORK, OR TO WALK?



A LOOK AT BOTTLENECKS IN THE AESTHETICS OF MOVEMENT

by Dancan Odhiambo Omondi

TRAVELLING TO AND FROM WORK – THE CASE OF THE KIBERA SLUM, NAIROBI

INTRODUCTION

Free movement is not only a fundamental human right, it is also an important concomitant for our very existence. Movement for most people in Nairobi is not only restricted to travelling to places of work but is also limited in many other aspects of their daily lives. This limitation ranges from difficulties in manoeuvring through garbage-filled pavements to conflicting road usage by other users such as cyclists and *matatus*, which often use the pavements. What is, however, quite common to most of the people living in the Kibera slum is the resilience with which they have adapted to the situation, hopeful of a better tomorrow.

THE KIBERA SLUM IN NAIROBI

Kibera is a multi-ethnic slum. The government granted use of the Kibera area to the mainly Nubian soldiers who had fought alongside the British and had returned from Burma and elsewhere could not be repatriated to Southern Sudan. The proxemics of Kibera's location gave its new inhabitants an opportunity to gain access to the city. However, over time, the inhabitants became victims of the inner and outer city conflicts, which led to their being victims of poverty, industrialization and mechanization, hunger, violence and disease. Today, the residents of Kibera are victims of social, political and economic injustices, and are victims of the challenges of rapid urbanization. With a population of over one million people, Kibera exhibits an urban characteristic of extreme poverty that presents constant challenges.

SOCIAL TENSION

Kibera is home to a largely ethnically diversified informal community whose growth has been spurred primarily by the huge rural-urban migration that has resulted from a poorly performing economy. Interestingly, instead of this diversity stirring trade and interaction, it is one of the major sources of conflict in the slum, especially when national elections are being held. As a result, militia-type social groupings, purely tribal in nature, have emerged over the years. This limits the travel options available to different members of the diversified groups in their daily commutes to and from work. During our excursion into the slum, one of our cultural representatives taking part in the research told us of territorial power structures and control over the use of certain neighbourhoods. These militia groups extort money from people passing through their territories, ostensibly by offering them security. For their security and safety, people in Kibera live in clusters consisting of the ethnic group they come from. The scarce





job opportunities within the slum are disbursed according to tribal affiliations, thus further widening the tribal exclusion gap.

SOCIAL AMENITIES

The social and physical infrastructure in Kibera is poor. Most people spend a considerable amount of their available time trying to meet their social needs. Housewives spend most of their mornings fetching water, cleaning the house, gathering fuel for their daily energy needs, sweeping their small compounds and making arrangements for the care of the children who are not of school-going age. This may seem normal to most households in Nairobi but it leaves residents of the Kibera slum with little time to prepare for formal work. This has had far-reaching implications for most households in slums because, in the absence of a culture of shift work in Kenya, people tend leave for work at approximately the same time across the whole city, thereby creating congestion at bus termini, and hence the ubiquitous scramble for any and all available means of transportation.

INSECURITY

Inadequate job opportunities and the existence of casual workers in Kibera, coupled with the high birth rate, has resulted in high levels of criminal activity. This in turn limits movement, as people use specific routes perceived to be safe, therefore resulting in high traffic on these routes. This very high crime rate also results in people leaving for work at later hours in the morning, resulting in a scramble for the few public means of transport, which in turn results in higher bus fares. There has been an

attempt to incorporate community policing to augment the security forces, but this has been sabotaged by illegal militia groups whose sole objective is to break the law.

POOR HEALTH CARE

The Kibera slum has one of the highest rates of respiratory diseases, thanks to the poor environmental conditions. This problem is made worse by the total absence of any form of medical facility. Even worse is the fact that the slum has one of the highest levels of HIV and AIDS infection, which has crippled the productive age group in this settlement. The level of this pandemic has led to difficulty in carrying out daily chores, especially in the case of breastfeeding mothers who are most affected by this plague. Young, unproductive children who are either affected or infected often present a great hindrance to pedestrians in the form of pickpockets or beggars.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

The environmental deterioration in Kibera is largely man-made. This deterioration is manifest in the poor state of the pedestrian pavements that Kibera residents use on their daily commute. Conflicting public space usage and poor solid waste management and disposal limit the routes people take to and from work. Dedicated pedestrian paths are frequently taken over by motorised traffic, thus resulting in traffic jams. Both motorised and pedestrian methods of commuting end up encroaching onto and causing further deterioration of green areas, a situation that becomes exacerbated during the rainy season.

CONCLUSION

Walking through Kibera, one can't help but appreciate the level of simplicity that exists. One may think of simple solutions that seemed to have worked elsewhere in the world. Amid this simplicity lies a certain level of complexity that can neither be comprehended easily nor solved at the flick of a switch. Kibera is an example of a riddle that goes beyond funding and governmental intervention. It is a complex whole that is easily documented but seldom solved. The diverse informalities that define Kibera form strata that have accumulated as a result of years of neglect. What is striking in this area is an unpalatable level of social, economic and environmental deterioration, which has a far reaching implication on mobility in general, be it the physical movement of people or the intangible ease of exchanging ideas and sharing experiences within the slum. The quality of social amenities dictate the aesthetics of movement, since people don't actually enjoy moving around, interacting and participating in different activities. Aesthetic experience is intertwined with various social, economic, environmental and cultural insecurities, resulting in the environment in turn posing serious barriers to the way to, and from, work.

RESILIENCE: INTERACTION WITH BARRIERS TO MOBILITY

by Lou Smith

INTRODUCTION

Horns blare as a *matatu* vies for the space to turn across gridlocked traffic, pushing its nose through a frozen stream of taxis, buses, trucks and cars. Voices compete for the attention of crowds of passers-by, their products are well priced they say, their *matatu* to Eastleigh has two seats available, their corn is hot, ready to be devoured. Pairs of people haggle over the price of second-hand clothes, a slice of pineapple, pirated DVDs. Groups of loiterers sit together, chatting about politics, and waiting for *matatu* fares to drop to a reasonable price. Pedestrians sidestep a deep unmarked hole in the sidewalk, stream around barricades, and pour into the spaces between vehicles, step over the legs and merchandise of the hawkers, and loiterers.

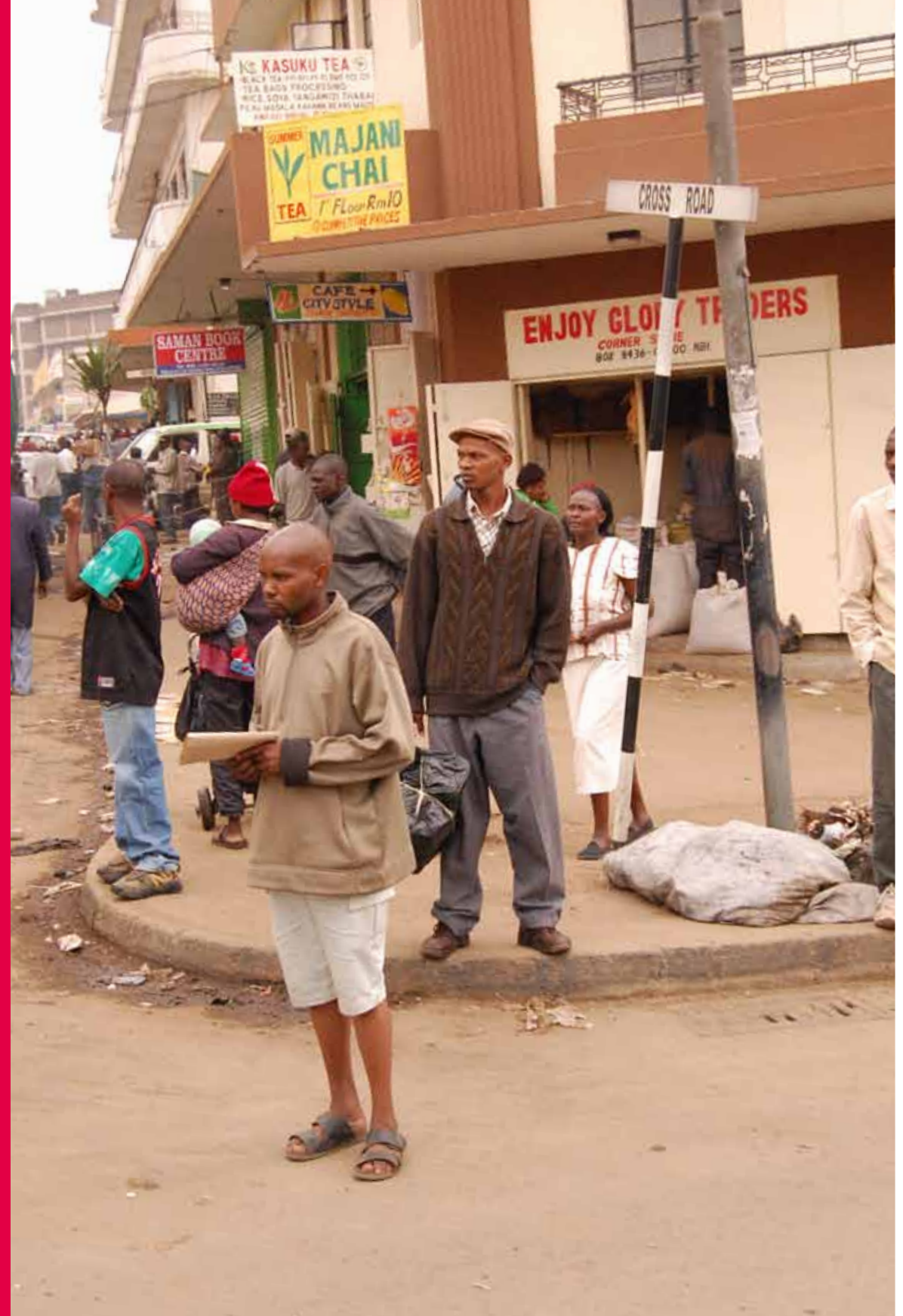
A short walk through downtown Nairobi presents a wide array of activity where people on their way to and from work are getting around all different kinds of tangible, and non-tangible barriers. Barriers have become a part of the culture of mobility here, fading into the hectic bustle of the streets, while at the same time governing the way that residents move within and interact with their surroundings.

However, the culture of barriers in Nairobi also includes a corresponding culture of resilience. In which individual people resolve to find and create their own solutions to the problems they face, rather than expecting others to help them through it.

This essay aims to explain the phenomenon of barriers to mobility in Nairobi, and the show how the culture of resilience has arisen from these conditions. This teaches us that despite the natural tendency to continually optimize infrastructures and living conditions, to a certain degree, such barriers can be effective in strengthening individuals, helping them to empower themselves.

APPROACH

This essay stemmed from research conducted within the framework of the Cultural Library, with the overarching theme of Mobility in Nairobi. The intention of our research was to gain a deeper understanding of the culture of Mobility on the way to and from work in Nairobi through the inspection and interpretation of barriers. Taking the special working and living situations in Nairobi into account, our work took on a holistic approach. We not only inspected the journey to work, but also the context in which the journey takes place.



PEDESTRIANS IN DOWNTOWN NAIROBI



PROFILE	PROFILE	PROFILE	PROFILE
Name Jemimah Niemi	Name Amos Ileri	Name Jane Onyango	Name George Ouma
Age 28	Age 23	Age 35	Age 23
Gender Female	Gender Male	Gender Female	Gender Male
Profession Saloonist	Profession Field Officer for an NGO	Profession Independant Business Owner	Profession Mechanic
Wakes Up 6:00 A.M.	Wakes Up 6:00 A.M.	Wakes Up 5:00 A.M.	Wakes Up 5:30 A.M./6:00 A.M.
Preparation Time 2.5 hours	Preparation Time 2.5 hours	Preparation Time 5 hours	Preparation Time 1.5 hours
Mode of Transportation Walking	Mode of Transportation Bus	Mode of Transportation n/a	Mode of Transportation Bus/Walk
Travel Time to Work 1 hour	Travel Time to Work 1 hour	Travel Time to Work n/a	Travel Time to Work 5 hours/1 hour

RESEARCH METHODS

The main part of this study was conducted through interaction with seven cultural representatives living on the same corridor in Kibera. With an estimated population of between 300,000 and 1 million people, Kibera is the largest slum in Africa. Despite its prominence, Kibera is one of the direst slums in the world, with incredibly flimsy housing, and mounds of trash and sewage comprising a prominent part of its visual impact. We chose to work within this area, because we expected it to reveal the widest range of barriers. The people living here are subjected to a high number of contextual barriers, yet also encounter the same barriers during their trip as do most of the residents of the city.

The cultural representatives were first asked to answer two introductory questions about their morning rituals and the difficulties they face during travel to work. They were then given single-use cameras, and asked to photographically document their typical day. Following the collection of the cameras and photo processing, we returned to their homes to interview them again. They explained their photographs to us, and answered questions from a questionnaire that we developed to gather information about the specific activities and barriers during travel to and from work. The focus on this part of the research was to gain a complete overview of the barriers and rituals in the lives of these individuals.



PROFILE	PROFILE	PROFILE
Name Kenneth Odoyo	Name Denis Odhiambo	Name Washington Wachie
Age 24	Age 23	Age 27
Gender Male	Gender Male	Gender Male
Profession Travel/Tour Operator	Profession Waiter	Profession Mechanic
Wakes Up 5:00 A.M.	Wakes Up 10:00 A.M. (works evenings)	Wakes Up 5:30 A.M.
Preparation Time 1 hours	Preparation Time n/a	Preparation Time 2.5 hours
Mode of Transportation Bus, Walking	Mode of Transportation Bus	Mode of Transportation Walk
Travel Time to Work 1 hour	Travel Time to Work 1 hour	Travel Time to Work 1 hour
	Working Hours 13 hours	

Subsidiary research was conducted through our observations and experiences in Nairobi. We personally participated in many of the rituals and encountered many of the barriers that are common to residents of the city during our regular daily activities. Furthermore, the input from, and inside knowledge of, our colleagues at the University of Nairobi, gave us insight into various residents' perceptions of mobility within the city and greatly helped the process of our research.

The cultural representatives' input, combined with our experiences and observations in the city, composed a holistic view of the typical situations that Nairobians encounter.

THE WAY TO WORK

Every morning, a large portion of the population gets up sets off for work. The trip to can be long or short, can be travelled by foot, bicycle, bus or car, it can take hours or minutes, and can take infinite routes. In all its shapes and forms, getting to work is arguably one of the biggest motives in human mobility.

As with any journey, the trip to and from work exists within a context, and is composed of three parts: preparation, travel, and the goal. The context for travel is defined by start and end points that correspond on the one hand to the metaphorical departure and arrival points at different levels in the society, and on the other hand to the actual physical departure and arrival points of the journey. This context defines and influences all parts of the trip. Preparation for the way to work includes the morning rituals and the assembling of all necessary factors to undertake and fulfil the goal of the trip. The goal of trip in this case is always work, but the conditions at the workplace – such as expectations for attire and punctuality – feed into the preparation phase, making work simultaneously part of the context of the trip.

The trip itself has two main variables: the path and the mode of transportation. The choice of these two variables is greatly influenced by the context, preparation and goal of the trip. If you only have 30 minutes to arrive at your workplace, you might choose to take a matatu rather than walk. If you have ample time, you might choose a different path that is cleaner or more secure, whereas insufficient funds to pay for a matatu fare might force you to walk.

The understanding that the way to and from work is only part of a larger set of actions calls for a holistic approach when assessing the topic. It necessitates the inspection of the societal context and the lives of individuals getting to and from work, and opens the spectrum of possible barriers to include almost everything in individuals' lives and contexts. In fact, this knowledge takes the focus away from the journey itself. Full comprehension of the barriers to a journey also requires an understanding of the barriers faced in the individual's life, and in a mobile society.

NEEDS AND SATISFIERS

Needs are what drive humans to action. The goal of any journey it to satisfy a need, and the need fulfilled by a journey is an important part of the context in which it takes place. This essay utilises the theory of Fundamental Human Needs from Manfred Max-Neef,¹ which approaches the topic of fundamental human needs as an intersecting and interacting network, none of which is more or less important or prioritized than the other, and which was specially developed for application within developing societies.

Although many scientists have written and theorized about the most fundamental human needs, Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs stands out as the most famous, simplified and widely utilized theory on needs. However, his premise that the needs are hierarchical and can only be fulfilled successively does not stand up to testing in other societies, especially not developing ones. For this reason, the integrative approach of Max-Neef was chosen. LS

NEED	BEING QUALITIES	HAVING THINGS	DOING ACTIONS	INTERACTING SETTINGS
SUBSISTENCE	physical and mental health	food, shelter, work	feed, clothe, rest, work	living environment, social setting
PROTECTION	care, adaptability, autonomy	social security, health systems, work	cooperate, plan, take care of, help	social environment, dwelling
AFFECTION	respect, sense of humour, generosity, sensuality	friendships, family, relationships with nature	share, take care of, make love, express emotions	privacy, intimate spaces of togetherness
UNDERSTANDING	critical capacity, curiosity, intuition	literature, teachers, policies, educational	analyse, study, meditate, investigate	schools, families, universities, communities
PARTICIPATION	receptiveness, dedication, sense of humour	responsibilities, duties, work, rights	cooperate, dissent, express opinions	associations, parties, churches, neighbourhoods
LEISURE	imagination, tranquillity, spontaneity	games, parties, peace of mind	day-dream, remember, relax, have fun	landscapes, intimate spaces, places to be alone
CREATION	imagination, boldness, inventiveness, curiosity	abilities, skills, work, technique	invent, build, design, work, compose, interpret	spaces for expression, workshops, audiences
IDENTITY	sense of belonging, self-esteem, consistency	language, religions, work, customs, values, norms	get to know oneself, grow, commit oneself	places one belongs to, everyday settings
FREEDOM	autonomy, passion, self-esteem, open-mindedness	equal rights	dissent, choose, run risks, develop awareness	anywhere

SOURCE: M. Max-Neef, A. Elizalde, M.Hopenhayn, >Development and Human Needs<

According to Neef, fundamental human needs have two axes: existential and axiological. Axiological needs are subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, idleness, creation, identity and freedom. Existential needs are being (qualities), having (things), doing (actions) and interacting (settings). These two categories are arranged in a matrix making 36 total needs: being subsistent, having subsistence, doing subsistence, interacting (or settings for) subsistence, being protected, having protection, and so forth.

According to Max-Neef's theory, satisfiers are »everything which... contributes to the actualization of human needs.« Satisfiers differ, based on individual preferences and societal factors, while needs remain constant and unchanged across cultures and time. Neef proposes that we do not strive to fulfil one need, then the next, but that we strive to fulfil all needs simultaneously. With the exception of subsistence, a deficit in satisfying one need makes it a priority at that moment, but does not indicate a consecutive overall structure.



CARS AS BARRIERS TO PEDESTRIANS. AND VICE-VERSA.

#53

Satisfiers are not confined to fulfilling one need, just as a single need can have many various satisfiers. Satisfiers however, also have different qualities that complicate the process of overall needs satisfaction: pseudo satisfiers generate a »false sense of satisfaction of a given need.«; inhibiting satisfiers over-satisfy some needs, while inherently hindering the fulfilment of other needs; singular satisfiers cater to only one need, and are neutral in the fulfilment of other needs; synergetic satisfiers fulfil multiple needs simultaneously; exogenous satisfiers are those imposed upon a society from the outside and endogenous satisfiers grow from within the community at a grass roots level.

Needs – and satisfiers of needs –compose the main motivation for any activity, especially getting to and from work, and define the way in which the activity is carried out. The action of needs satisfaction presents the framework in which barriers grow and exist. Needs, and the individual prioritization of needs, also present interesting and complicated interactions in the way that barriers are dealt with.

THE NEED TO GET TO WORK

Work is a satisfier for multiple needs including, first and foremost, subsistence. However, almost all needs can be satisfied in a workplace. Identity might be built through pride in accomplishments at work; creation could be part of the work itself; participation could come from interaction with co-workers toward a common goal. The way to work can then also be seen as a satisfier for this multitude of needs.

BARRIERS

Simply stated, a barrier is an obstacle to progress. In the context of getting to work, anything that hinders or affects the ability of an individual to get work is a barrier. Within the laid-out definition and understanding of needs, it is then easy to tell the difference between a barrier and a satisfier. Barriers occur during the process of satisfaction, or of attaining a satisfier. Within the topic of this paper, getting to work is part of the process of satisfying a multitude of needs, and not a barrier to it. However, the proximity to work, the available paths and modes of transport are barriers.

Barriers in the way to work can be sorted according to the aspect of travel in which they occur, be it in the context of the travel, the preparation for travel or the travel itself. Context barriers can include the societal aspects such as debilitating social structures and government cultural expectations or personal aspects such as poverty, family structures and the type and location of the dwelling. Barriers during preparation could include time constraints or difficulties fulfilling morning routines. During the journey, barriers such as road conditions, presence of other vehicles or people and the weather. Although the areas in which these barriers occur are each distinct, their effects flow into each other, affecting each other, ultimately becoming inseparable.

TYPES OF BARRIERS

Although barriers are not satisfiers, they are closely related and can be looked at in a similar way to Max-Neef's approach to satisfiers. Just as a synergetic satisfier can fulfil multiple needs, single barriers can stand in the way of fulfilling multiple needs. A barrier can seem to be standing in the way of progress, but overcoming the barrier does not bring the person any closer to fulfilment, similar to a pseudo-satisfier. Barriers can also be exogenous and endogenous, whereas the interpretation of what is endogenous and exogenous is slightly different when referring to barriers. Rather than being imposed from within or outside of a culture, it would be imposed from within or outside of a situation. In this way, barricades posted on the street could perhaps be seen as exogenous and a traffic jam could be interpreted as endogenous, since it has grown from within the situation itself.

Expected barriers are those that are predictable, and occur each time a routine is undertaken. For example, a traffic jam that occurs every morning at a specific intersection would be a predictable barrier. Unexpected barriers are those that do not occur every time a routine is carried out, or that are not predictable: a traffic jam caused by a car accident, for example. A simple barrier could be likened to a wall standing between you and your goal, and complex barriers to a wall, plus a moat, plus an alligator and a dragon, plus all of the other things that can get in the way of reaching the goal.

INDEPENDENT RESILIENCE IN KIBERA

A typical day in Kibera begins like every typical day throughout the world, only earlier. Residents awake at 5:30 am (or earlier) and begin brushing their teeth, washing their faces, and taking tea. If they have children, they prepare them for school. If they are religious (as many are) they include a prayer and spend a moment reading the bible. They go to work and spend the day fulfilling their duties. When they return they prepare supper, visit neighbours or family and prepare themselves for bed. Their morning rituals often take 3–4 hours before they are expected at work. Work often takes place in badly equipped conditions, where customers are few and long hours doing manual labour is expected. They take their lunch hour at small, makeshift restaurants that offer the cheapest meals in town. And after work, they are exhausted simply from fulfilling their most basic needs.²

BARRIER PERCEPTION

The barriers that the cultural representatives spoke about differed greatly from the barriers that we observed from an outsider's perspective. Overarching barriers were omitted or mentioned only in passing, but subsidiary barriers composed the main portion of our discussions. The representatives mentioned mud puddles or needing a stool to wash the laundry. While our interpretation of their photographs, and overall impression about their living situation included barriers such as extreme poverty, lack of access to water, and poor sanitation conditions. This disconnect between insider and outsider interpretations of barriers raised the question about whose interpretation was more valid and why the interpretation differed so much from different perspectives.

Interacting with the cultural representatives revealed patterns of speaking about different types of barriers. The way that representatives spoke about simple versus complex barriers, and frequent versus infrequent barriers, revealed an important understanding about how barriers are understood and discussed.

To get access to water, the cultural representatives walk 10 minutes to the nearest community standpipe, where they sometimes wait up to 30 minutes to fill their large plastic jugs (jerry cans). The water would then be carried home despite the distance, and weight. This water would suffice for little more than one day of sparing use. It is used to wash dishes, and clothing by hand in shallow plastic basins. They brush their teeth in the alleyway out of small water bottles, spitting directly into the concrete trench that runs right down the middle of the 1–1.5 meter wide space between the homes. Bathing takes place out of the same plastic basins as washing, which are filled inside the home and carried through the corridor into a small, shared wet room. The quality of the water they have access to is likely decent, as it is illegally tapped from the municipal water line, and the standpipe is located near the edge of the slum. Unlike many residents of Kibera, they avoid possible contamination from broken water pipes that run straight through muddy piles of refuse and human excrement.



KIBERA SLUM

It is clear that their water-related barriers are quite extensive: lack of running water in close proximity, lack of more usable transportation and inadequate sanitation facilities, to name just a few. But water was mentioned only in passing by the cultural representatives, and almost never as a barrier. Only one respondent talked about fetching water every day as a barrier. Overall, the group talked about the barrier of water only in terms of the way they deal with the barrier: the way they brush their teeth, the way they carry the water to the wash room, the way they conserve water and the way they wash their clothes and dishes.

Although there was no real difference in the frequency that simple versus complex barriers were mentioned, all barriers were almost always explained as simple barriers, and then not in their entirety. Poverty, an example that has a great prominence in our research, was mentioned in places as erecting small barriers, rather than a single big one. They most frequently mentioned their poverty in terms of what they cannot afford. *Matatu* fares, usually 20 shillings per trip (about 20 cents), were the most commonly mentioned unattainable luxury. Sometimes food was mentioned, in terms

of inability to afford something nicer. A couple of the representatives mentioned a lack of money to buy adequate tools in the workplace. By looking at, and speaking about, their barriers as simple rather than complex, they broke down their overall barrier of poverty into smaller, more achievable pieces. It seems to be generally believed that barriers must, in their nature as barriers, be anomalies.

Overall we found that representatives were more likely to talk about unpredictable barriers concretely as barriers: blackouts that give way to criminal rampages, water shortages where water suddenly had a price, bad weather that severely deteriorated the conditions of the walking paths, tripping in the mud, bumping into other people. Predictable barriers, such as the process to obtain water, were framed more like routines than barriers. The fact that a barrier needed to be conquered on a daily basis made it less of a problem. They knew the solution, and only needed to go through the motions.

TALKING AND THINKING

The way that representatives talk about their barriers, gives us some (although not necessarily a comprehensive) insight into the way that they think about their barriers. The fact that water was hardly mentioned as a barrier shows that it might not be interpreted as a barrier at all. Speaking about the way they deal with water, rather than speaking about it as a barrier, shows that they think about their solutions to barriers, rather than worrying about the barrier itself, taking a proactive approach.

Speaking about poverty in pieces also shows a tendency to work towards conquering large barriers in ›bite-sized‹ pieces. It gives them a mental advantage: they are not overwhelmed by their barriers as a whole, but work at them piece by piece, which is often recommended as the best way to accomplish a task. This piecemeal approach is visible throughout the informal society where houses are built, and improved, in pieces, sometimes wall by wall, and has been an effective approach to improving the living conditions in slums in places like Rio de Janeiro and Istanbul (Shadow Cities)³.

The tendency to talk mostly about unpredictable barriers shows that barriers are generally interpreted to be irregular, and infrequent. However, it also shows a human tendency to think about improvement and difficulties within the context of one's own surroundings. This may in fact be the greatest reason why our interpretation of their barriers differed from their own. Coming from a developed society and (in terms of their society) upper-class lifestyles, every aspect of life that was more difficult to do there than it was at home was seen as a difficulty or barrier. But when living in that context, the difficulties just mix into the reality of everyday life. This is not to discount the fact that water scarcity and poverty are not barriers, but rather to show why they are not as frequently interpreted as barriers. Every person in Kibera knows that there is a better life – and that other people are living it – but they do not see their poverty as a difficulty in itself.

We realize that talking is only one expression of individuals' thoughts and does not necessarily reflect their complete thinking on a subject. However, we feel that it is safe to assume that the way these individuals spoke about their barriers reveals at least some of the picture of how they interpret them. LS



RAIN AS A BARRIER TO MOBILITY

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INTERACTION WITH BARRIERS

In order to be productive, barriers must be reacted to with action. This action could be to avoid the barrier altogether, to take on the barrier and do what it takes to get through it, or to take preventative measures against barriers, removing them so they cannot occur again. Of course, there is always the option to stay stuck behind a barrier, but when speaking about barriers to needs, this also means that one's needs will not then, nor ever, be fulfilled, which, especially in the case of sustenance, is hardly an option at all.

AVOIDING BARRIERS

Holes in the sidewalks are frequent occurrences in Nairobi, usually the result of construction work in progress. They are deep and unmarked, and frequently appear in the middle of regular pedestrian pathways. Crowds simply stream around them without notice. Railings have been put up on the edges of sidewalks at big intersections to prevent crossing, but *matatus* stop directly in front of them, dropping off passengers on the traffic side of the barriers. The passengers carefully edge single file along the barriers and spread into the big pedestrian areas on the other side. In another location, a similar railing has been built to promote using a pedestrian bridge, but the bridge remains empty, as the barrier is jumped over or walked around. Streams of people flow around these barriers, just like a river would flow around a rock. After dark, people walk on the tarmac – the danger created through proximity to fast moving cars is preferred to the potential danger of the loiterers who gather on the darkened sidewalks, and who could easily turn into criminals if the situation is right. Generally, the path taken after dark is completely changed to avoid dangerous or unpopulated areas. Jane, one of the project's cultural representatives, explained that she frequently changes her path to avoid customers and neighbours who have been rude to her in the past, securing her need for affection, and identity. Changing your path is one of the most common yet overlooked ways to avoid a barrier.

TAKING ON BARRIERS

Taking on a barrier can be compared to climbing over a wall. One of the barriers most commonly mentioned by our cultural representatives is not having money for a matatu. The barrier cannot be avoided, so the best so-

With the example of built barriers between the roads and sidewalks of Nairobi it becomes clear that design, in its attempt to improve and manage quality of life, can also create its own barriers. This attempt to ›design‹ the way that people cross the street through built barriers proves to be based on a false understanding of the attitudes of the pedestrians of Nairobi: where speed is a higher priority than safety, or rule-following. Proper design for this situation would need to include these attitudes and priorities in its most fundamental concept. If it, like this example, ignores individuals wishes and priorities it is bound to simply become a barrier to them instead of an opportunity. LS

lution to this is to walk to work. Walking to work is extremely common among the slum dwellers of Nairobi, so common that there is a steady stream of human traffic between the hours of 5 and 7 am on the path from Kibera to the Industrial sector of Nairobi. Representatives said that their journey took between 1 and 2 hours to complete.

NEEDS TRADE-OFF

Washington, another of the project's cultural representatives, explained that he sometimes has to wait at the water spigot between 15 and 45 minutes in the mornings. Often, his only choice is to wait in the line and be late for work, or to skip fetching water (meaning he is forced to skip some of his morning rituals such as washing up his dishes and apartment) and leave for work on time. He has encountered a needs trade-off: he must choose one need or the other, but cannot fulfil both. Washington always chooses to be at work on time, as it is his main source of income, and being late might mean that he encounters the long-term difficulty of losing his job, compared to the short-term difficulty of not being able to do his washing. In the case of other individuals, this situation leads unpredictable results, in which the daily prioritization of needs is made clear.

COMPETING BARRIERS

Competing barriers is a situation in which two parties are competing to have their personal priorities fulfilled, and where only one person will have their need fulfilled, while the other will get a barrier. A great example of this is the interaction between pedestrian and vehicular traffic. As a person or group of people crossing the street is always moving perpendicularly to traffic, he frequently becomes a barrier to the oncoming vehicular traffic, and vice versa. This can be observed almost everywhere in Nairobi, but is most obvious to pedestrians who, with their natural vulnerability to cars, frequently weight their choices as to whether they can safely step in front of a car, forcing it to stop, or if they should wait until traffic is clear to cross the road.

PREVENTING BARRIERS

The *matatu* system has grown out of the lack of affordable transportation for the lower classes of Nairobi. *Matatus* are run by private owners (small and middle scale), who took advantage of the unfulfilled need for cheap mobility. *Matatus* provide relatively cheap transportation for the lower classes of the city and are widely used. And although *matatus* are still weak in some aspects of their service, the system as whole functions to fulfil the needs of the owners, drivers and conductors, as well as the mobility-hungry, but poor section of society. The *matatu* system is a great example of preventing or removing the barrier to mobility for the poorer classes of Nairobi.

CULTURAL BARRIERS AS DRIVERS OF INDEPENDENT RESILIENCE

Kibera presents one of the best examples of resilience overall. As an informal settlement, it has been built out of the need for sustenance, shelter being just one satisfier of that. The recent and growing drive of migration from rural to urban areas has given rise to the need for inexpensive housing that has not been fulfilled by the government or the formal economy. With almost no belongings and no leverage, these individuals are forced to find their own solution to the housing problem, which has taken the form of slums such as Kibera. Despite the social ills that thrive there, the slum is also buzzing with growth, proactivity and resilient needs-fulfilment. Under some of the most difficult of circumstances, these individuals are resiliently carving a place for themselves in society.⁴ The array of activities taking place in the slum amount to a complete and active society that is, however, dependent on the city and area around it for sustenance. This setting has given rise to a class of creative, solution-oriented people.

The independent resilience demonstrated by our cultural representatives and the residents that were observed has many likely historical and cultural roots. Government, class structures, and poverty all play important roles here. Poverty, of course, is the main driving factor for this form of independent resilience. More than 50% of the residents of Nairobi are living below the poverty level (Nairobi Urban Sector)⁵. With around 6000 shillings a month, (based on input received from various sources) they must fight to protect every shilling that lands in their wallet. Extra expenditure for speedy solutions to avoid their barriers, or to remove their barriers overall, just don't fit in. They must find options to spend as little money as possible, while still fulfilling all their needs and avoiding their barriers. They have to get creative!

The historical track record of the government of Nairobi in solving problems of infrastructure is less than ideal. The latest master plan was developed in 1973 and is no longer sufficient to fulfil the basic infrastructural needs of the city (Nairobi Urban Sector). Rumours within Nairobi even say that infrastructure improvement plans were completely abandoned halfway through implementation. Corruption within the federal (and likely in municipal) government has drained money from development funds, and tax revenue.⁶

The informal economy is frequently stamped down by the government and the upper classes. Laws (unsuccessfully) restrict people's rights and abilities to undertake many forms of informal labour: for example, hawking on the streets is still illegal. The middle and upper classes have treated the informal economy as »threats to city development« (Nairobi Urban Sector). Squatter settlements have grown out of the need to participate in the urban economy, and have filled a gap that the government could not. But they are also completely ignored by the government and often portrayed as big empty gaps in maps of the city. Not enough has been done to improve the situation of these settlers, and al-

most nothing by the municipal or federal government. Of the few programs that are started, many are abandoned, or never grow enough to gain a foothold.⁷

It is obvious that these circumstances would give rise to individual solutions. If they are not helping themselves, then it seems that no one really will. The government has failed, the upper classes have rejected them and they are likely quite tired of waiting for someone to come and fill the gaps.

COMPETITION AND INDEPENDENT RESILIENCE

The image of traffic in Nairobi is a competitive one. Matatus stop wherever necessary to pick up and drop off their passengers, and then jolt back into the traffic, cutting across multiple lanes with no worry about the rest of the cars on the road, often passing through stoplights, with hardly a glance if traffic is coming in the opposite direction. The speed at which their passengers arrive at their destination is equal to the speed at which they can earn more money. Taxis, who earn a price that is fixed before the trip even begins, blare their horns loudly, and push uncomfortably close to the cars in front of them. They use every spare square meter of tarmac as an opportunity to get ahead, even if it is inside the lane of oncoming traffic. Like the matatus, the sooner a passenger arrives, the more opportunity they have to earn more money. Trucks and lorries ignore pedestrians, barrelling along without dropping speed. Their goods need to arrive in time as well. Private cars dodge out of the path of matatus, taxis, and lorries, they have the most incentive to protect their own property (as private vehicles are generally in much better repair than commercial ones), but still vie for the same speed as all others, even if it is just to get home a little earlier. Cars, taxis, matatus, and trucks are all vying for their space on the tarmac. Most often their actions hinder, rather than help the overall flow of traffic. Yet, the motivations of all of the drivers are understandable.

But the competition in Nairobi is not just for space on the roads. Competition for business among different classes of informal workers and businesses is very common; hawkers, kiosk owners, taxi-drivers all fight for a small group of customers. Competition for subsistence among the poverty stricken is also quite aggressive. This is visible in the example of haggling: both the seller and customer need to make their funds stretch to cover all of their subsistence needs, meaning the customer is fighting to spend less, and the seller is fighting to earn more.

Competition in Nairobi has given rise to a self-centred immediacy, where the instantaneous needs and wishes of single individuals come before any conglomerate needs, even if the altruistic approach would have more positive effects on the individual over the long run.

Although it has grown out of the resilience of individuals, the competitive spirit in Nairobi has become a barrier in and of itself. It feeds into criminality and very aggressive begging. Whether pushing for some change, or scamming a large sum of money out of a more wealthy person's pockets,

it is all driven by the competition to make ends meet. Traffic would likely flow more smoothly if each single car wasn't deliberately obstructing the other cars, just to have their priorities met.

But competition also gives rise to better services, better products and better people. The competition for a job might drive an individual to better their personal portfolio of skills and interests. The struggle for sustenance in Kibera means that the products made there are frequently better than the things you can buy in the city, despite the lack of means of production. The mandazi, chapati, and samosa in Kibera taste infinitely better than what you can buy in some of the nicest restaurants in the city. The peanut butter that Jane (one of our cultural representatives) makes is some of the best you will ever taste, creamy, sticky, and smooth. She grinds it two times with a hand-operated machine to ensure that the quality of her product is better than that of her competitors.

COOPERATIVE RESILIENCE

As a direct result of their cooperation with each other, the group of cultural representatives we worked with represent one of the success stories of Kibera. We had the opportunity to work with one of the success stories of Kibera, a single corridor just off Kibera road. The conditions that these neighbours have created for themselves are head and shoulders above the rest of the shanty town. They work together to ensure that their homes and their alleyway remain clean, and orderly. They share their resources with each other, cooking meals together and keeping each other company to emotionally strengthen each other. They have bonded with the shopkeepers that surround the entrance to their alleyway, ensuring that their homes remain protected, and that the shopkeepers continue getting business. They have great pride in their homes, and in their corridor, and have created a safe little neighbourhood for themselves. It was a real surprise to us that we found such a neighbourhood in Kibera. Each individual had a plan and a future, and they were working together and helping each other to realize them. The cooperation that we encountered, although it sometimes required small personal sacrifices, was greatly improving the individual lives of the people living there. This cooperation can be seen as a resilience technique of its own. Needs such as participation, protection, affection, understanding, and identity are fulfilled through one simple act of coming together. In addition, this collaboration helped them to share and improve their ideas for fulfilling other needs such as subsistence.

RESILIENCE TECHNIQUES: COMPETITION VS. COOPERATION

When looking at the competition in Nairobi in comparison to the cooperative lifestyle we found in our cultural representatives, it is clear that cooperation is a better and more fulfilling resilience technique. Although it is impossible to remove competition altogether, a new balance between competition and cooperation would greatly improve the living conditions, and would be much more successful in fulfilling the wide array of needs that individuals have.



OUTLOOK

As this essay has shown, Nairobians, especially the lower economic classes, have responded to their difficult living situations with resilience. Their capacity to think creatively and to change their behaviour to improve their lives is unquestionable. Be it through cooperation or competition, waiting, walking, carrying, or building a home or a business, they have found a way to get by.

As was shown in the way that the cultural representatives talked about their barriers, these barriers are looked at as individual occurrences, and not as trends or complex systems. However, this approach could greatly improve their ability to conquer—and potentially remove—their barriers completely. The representatives have found a good system to deal with the lack of proximity to water, but finding a way to better carry water, or to reduce waiting times is only a small part of a larger barrier. Working towards getting running water in their homes, or at least in their shared wet room, would greatly cut down on the time, and effort that is spent dealing with this everyday barrier. Putting more energy into long-term solutions to improve their overall living situation could have tremendous effects and their overall living situation could have tremendous effects in the long run.

The culture of Nairobi is a breeding ground for lower-class creativity, productivity and solutions. It has grown out of the need for sustenance, a need, which is being devalued, and downtrodden by the government and the ignorance, and greed of the upper classes. None of the drivers of independent resilience are pretty: poverty, corruption, and class struggles. But the outcome has become something wonderful and powerful, something basic, and fundamentally human, the willingness to work, as hard as is necessary to live.

However, the type of resilience most frequently found in Nairobi, especially in Kibera, is individualistic and competitive. Barriers are reacted to as individual situations, individuals find the best way out of that moment, without having the resources or options to prevent these barriers for the future. Individuals rightfully see themselves as the highest priority, worrying only about their needs, and not about the whole system. Although individualism is logical, and functions to a certain degree, it is not the best option.

The cooperation demonstrated by our cultural representatives presents a social system with a great potential for successful needs fulfilment. They have created a small and well-functioning safe haven, and this system could be shared and spread throughout the rest of Kibera to make it into a large community, one that works well despite the social ills that are continually conspiring to bring them down.

Self-centred immediacy, a coping mechanism for most of the residents of Nairobi, could be exchanged for group approaches to common problems. Individuals pushing for their own individual priority cause the extreme problem with traffic. Coming together to work on the causes of traffic congestion could improve productivity and effectiveness of mobility for everyone. In addition, effective individual coping mechanisms, such as getting water in the mornings, could be made collective, where the duties are shared between neighbours. Successful prevention of barriers on the grass-roots level, could then further be shared, becoming a successful system, such as the matatus have already become. Matatus have grown out of real needs being fulfilled by private individuals, but have grown together to become a functioning system that serves the whole of society.

The people of Nairobi and Kibera are holding themselves back by working only for themselves. They have proven their ability to deal with these barriers, but they need to share their strategies, to work together for short-term community coping strategies and to bring these group strategies together to create functional systems. With such systems in place they will be able to devote their time and energy to finding strategies to remove their barriers completely.

Sometimes these simple examples of fighting against barriers seem depressing – they are tiresome and drudging, but they display a human will for improvement. A human will, which can be harvested toward some wonderful results: permanent and effective improvement.

¹ see: M. Max-Neef, with A. Elizalde, M. Hopenhayn, »Development and Human Needs«, In: Human scale development: conception, application and further reflections (New York, 1991), 17-37. ² To view further information about these daily rituals please see the Cultural Representatives interviews on the Cultural Library Nairobi website: [http://culturallibrary.kisd.de/projects/project/topic/?tx_mwclitems_pi_topic\[topic\]=6](http://culturallibrary.kisd.de/projects/project/topic/?tx_mwclitems_pi_topic[topic]=6) ³ see: R. Neuwirth, *Shadow Cities: A billion squatters, a new urban world* (New York, 2006). ⁴ see: Neuwirth, op.cit. ⁵ UN-HABITAT, Nairobi Urban Sector Profile (Nairobi, 2006), 8. ⁶ R. Dowden, *Africa: Altered states, ordinary miracles* (London, 2008), 415-438. ⁷ see: Neuwirth, op.cit, 67-99.

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THE INFLUENCE OF IT ON MOBILITY

by Juma Eric Ologi

WHY FOCUS ON IT?

In order to understand the dynamics of any given city, especially with regard to the aspect of mobility, it is important first to understand its ethos and culture. This becomes a good starting point to begin proposing solutions and adaptations particular to that city. But having established that critical point, our next concern is: why do people move around?

There are four main driving forces that necessitate movement in Nairobi:

- 1 To get to work/a place of business/where you earn money.
- 2 To get to school (students or youth, the largest population group in Nairobi).
- 3 To get to the bank or to sort out financial matters: depositing money, withdrawing money, paying bills, paying standing fees and so on.
- 4 To go shopping.

Most of these driving forces are focused on the city centre, which, in turn, creates congestion, traffic jams and human and vehicular conflicts. From a planning point of view there are three ways to deal with these problems:

- 1 Create more efficient infrastructure (roads, bridges, overpasses, tunnels etc.)
- 2 Decentralise the institutions
- 3 Use information technology (IT) to reduce the need to move around.

HOW DOES IT AFFECT MOBILITY?

Looking at a hypothetical case of a person working from the comfort of their own home (everybody's dream), it becomes possible to shop, receive deliveries, access e-education using the internet and to handle all monetary transactions from home. The only drawback to this is the negative social implications of the creation of an alienated society. However, with careful planning, some of these aspects can be adapted without necessarily changing the social fabric of Nairobi.

IT can be used to decentralise institutions such as schools, banks, working places and shopping malls.

WHAT IT SOLUTIONS HAVE BEEN ADOPTED IN NAIROBI?

- 1 The use of Intranets (organisations or companies using a centralised digital system that can be used at different locations, thus enabling these companies to open branches away from the city centre and closer to their employees and customers, subsequently reducing the distance travelled.)
- 2 Most companies have created websites that create a virtual interactive environment. In tandem with these innovations, the Kenyan government initiated e-government, a scheme that made all its departments operate digitally, and which, in effect, has increased public accessibility to its ser-

vices. For example, recently the author of this article downloaded an online form to apply for a passport. Although the completed form must still be delivered in person, ease of tracking the status of an application only requires access to the internet and a 4-digit pin number. However, in order to work as efficiently as envisaged a commensurate level of infrastructural support is required. At present, few people own computers. Others travel long distances to access the internet at cybercafés. It is, however, worthwhile mentioning that the government is aware of this particular issue and has waived duty and taxes on computers and accessories, giving more people the opportunity to own personal computers. Also, a marked expansion of cybercafé services has been noticed.

Unlike the issue highlighted about the low rate of internet use (less than 10% of people living in Nairobi own a PC or a laptop), approximately 60% of the population own mobile phones and over 80% of all households have at least one mobile phone. New and innovative communication products have been launched as a result: these include text messaging to access critical information and services, the most recent a service allowing students to get their national examination results by texting their registration numbers to a 4 digit number, whereupon they receive an instant text notification of their results. Other sectors of the government have since adopted this method.

Because of the rapid spread of mobile phone products, the advertising industry is exploiting this potential with spectacular results. In a country with no formal register for contacting people (the mail is delivered and collected at the post office) and where very few people own a landline, let alone a computer, the mobile phone has become a form of personal identification. SIM card registration is now required for many of the services provided by mobile phone companies to thwart the security problems that come with such innovations. The M-Pesa service, for example, requires that new members register their National Identification number to subscribe to the service.

Out of the many IT solutions now in use, none has stood out or changed the landscape of Nairobi more visibly than M-Pesa. It is a service that affects almost all aspect of Kenyan cities from the point of view of mobility.

HOW DO PEOPLE REACT TO IT?

It is important to note that whereas people willingly embrace new IT solutions, they are not as keen to change their normal routines. Many of the people we interviewed seemed reluctant to change their daily habits as a result of their interaction with IT. For example, at the Hilton job corner, where people gather in search for work and employers go to find employees, we learned that even after registering with the e-Kazi 560 service, job-seekers will still travel tens of kilometres, using up to 150 shillings, to go and while away the time, for days on end, at the so-called 'jobless corner' as they await the results of their job application. Apparently employers also prefer to go physically to these venues to search for a prospective employee. Which leads us to the next question:

HOW IMPORTANT ARE FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS?

There is a sense of distrust when it comes to the virtual world. We attributed this to the culture of people in Nairobi and, by extension, to our local culture. In our cultures it is evident that face-to-face meetings are very important. It is through these meetings that one engenders trust, through the manner of dress, and through deportment and bearing. This is a phenomenon that cannot be simply wished away in our push for virtual solutions. It makes us realise that, as we look for technological solutions, we should as much as possible incorporate the existing system and try to understand the needs and culture of the people. Does the embracing of new technology bring with it new needs? Yes, of course. There is the need to create the space that will house these new innovations. The emergence of cyber cafes has led to the need to design appropriate architectural spaces. Louis Sullivan's dictum ›form follows function‹ is perhaps relevant to this argument. As a building's function changes, then the way in which we design our buildings must also change. The architectural needs of ATMs must be taken into account. The most challenging aspect is how to design spaces that allow for the use of new technology without neglecting the need to meet and socialise. In order to highlight this we will focus on *M-Pesa*.

WHAT IS M-PESA?

M-Pesa is an electronic system invented by a local company that provides a money transfer service through mobile phones. It was introduced by Safaricom, the largest mobile phone service provider in Eastern and Central Africa. The company has a subscriber base of over 15 million people. Initially meant only to transfer money to subscribers in remote regions of the country, it has since evolved into a banking system in its own right. Its implementation exposed the critical need of providing safe money-handling services to the more than 90% of the population who are not eligible for conventional banking services.

WHY HAS M-PESA BECOME SO SUCCESSFUL?

Safaricom targeted its subscribers who already had the basic hardware – a mobile phone. More importantly, it provided an inclusive service that was both easy to understand and use.

HOW DOES M-PESA AFFECT MOBILITY?

M-Pesa has an intra- and inter-city agencies network that reaches out to all classes of people in the country. Registration of new *M-Pesa* subscribers, withdrawals and deposits are made through the shops of Safaricom authorised agents. All a subscriber need do after registration is to access their *M-Pesa* menu on the phone, select deposit, give the nearest agent the money and type in the agent's number. To withdraw money, a similar operation is needed along with a form of identification for the agent. Other services offered through *M-Pesa* are buying ›airtime‹ and paying electricity and water bills. Given its versatility, every new day seems to bring an *M-Pesa* product that finds a ready user base among its subscribers.



WHAT OTHER INNOVATIONS DERIVE FROM M-PESA?

With *M-Pesa*, monetary transactions have been brought closer to the places of residence and work. This, in turn, has hastened decentralisation in the city centre. The materials used in creating *M-Pesa* shops range from timber to more stable materials like concrete. *M-Pesa* shops are designed to suit every pocket and every situation. Entrepreneurs either take up unused locations in an existing building, or build semi-permanent structures annexed to existing formal structures. The *M-Pesa* shops take on different designs, but have similar themes. This raises the question: is it the use of materials or the logo/branding that promotes the *M-Pesa* space? The criteria that inform the shape and design are: functionality, the number of potential customers and the requisite operational equipment. *M-Pesa* shops are designed to accommodate at least one service person, whose basic equipment is a standard mobile phone and a branded cash register book.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF LOCAL SERVICES

by Jochen Edling

If public transport in a metropolitan area is insufficient and residents cannot easily travel long distances, a city with a single centre represents a problematic situation. Nairobi and especially its semi-urban areas are centralized. It is questionable whether decentralization can only be considered when planning an area. Is it also possible to intervene by digital media? Companies like the Kenyan network provider Safaricom and the social franchise service provider Mobile for Good already provide services that help to shorten the physical distance: services that support people in sharing information and that make travelling unnecessary. By researching these services we intend to specify to which extent information technology ›shortens‹ the physical distance, whether digital decentralization supports mobility and whether it can compensate for urban centralization.

MOBILE LEVERAGE: ›IT'S THE FUTURE‹

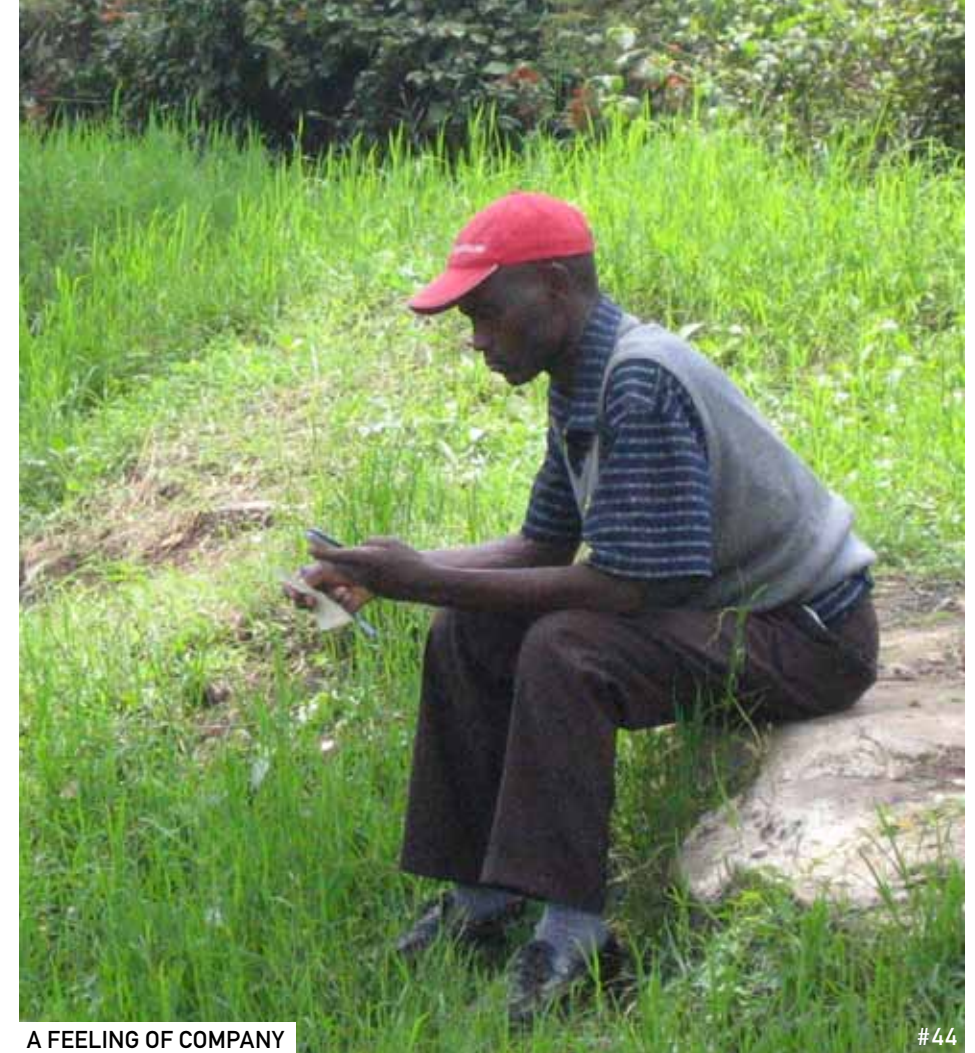
Mobile telephones are the most widespread information and communication technology medium in Kenya. The availability of handsets and the spread of network providers as well as the resulting growth of the market have been profitable and successful both on a macroeconomic and an individual level. The increasing network density has attracted the interest of global mobile communications firms and of local service providers. Mobile telephones are thus becoming increasingly more interesting as a platform for innovative services, which are offered to end users independently of their actual location. During our investigations the focus was placed on the various services on offer, rather than the hardware needed to run them. The comparatively affordable infrastructure, and the concomitant hope of being able to make the leap from an industrial to an information society, make the study of this field in Kenya a fascinating subject.

How will this existing infrastructure be used? What unforeseen systems and social as well as professional contacts are hiding just behind the screens and keypads? Which services will become digitally decentralised? #44

TRANSFORMATION OF SERVICES

Through the digital transformation of services the material infrastructure is mirrored by affordable virtual formats. Information technology has not only repositioned the access to usually locally anchored services, but has also made virtual services available independent of time or location. It makes no difference if we are talking about circles of friends, meeting places, the movement of money or local and international business relations. Therefore, our hypothesis is the following:

if the virtual analogue of a locally anchored service offers the same qualities in terms of range, functionality, availability and affordability it must, as a consequence, influence the mobility of the users in such a way that physical pathways can be transformed into virtual ones so that the user profits from a digital decentralisation.



A FEELING OF COMPANY

#44

APPROACH (OBSERVATIONS OF THE JOB MARKET)

The question then arises which services have already been transformed into their virtual analogues? Which usage situations and requirements form the basis of these services, and what services do the providers offer in response? The goal is, on the one hand, the verification of our hypothesis and, on the other, the identification of design drivers that can be considered in the future translation of physical into virtual services.

As a starting point for our research, we chose two differing scenarios, both of which touch on the introduction of an innovative virtual offering. The first deals with a virtual access point to the jobs market, the second with a service that permits money transfer via mobile telephones. What interested us in Nairobi was the comparison between analogue and virtual services, and whether the one offered any mobility advantages over the other.

How would established communications technology systems be affected?

Can they be unconditionally translated into the virtual realm? #37

What additional aspects influence mobility and communication? How do users make best use of their sudden accessibility? How can both

groups and individuals profit from this? #48

THE DIGITAL JOB MARKET

As far as the influence of mobile telephones on the job market goes, the opinions that we received from our qualitative survey during the exhibition in Nairobi vary greatly: from the undeniable importance of communications technology to pragmatic statements like: »who am I supposed to talk to then, when I don't know anybody and I'm just starting out in my career?« These questions gain even more resonance when one considers that the unemployment rate in Kenya stands at around 40%¹ and that there is no state-run job centre.

Mobile for Good is a social franchise designed to use mobile phone technology to improve the lives of people in the developing world.
www.mobile4good.biz

kazi560
www.kazi560.co.ke
JE

Mobile4good, a socially aware and financially independent company, has taken this situation as an opportunity to employ the increasing use of mobile phones in social and political development terms. Their kazi560 project focuses on the job market and on the real-time provision of job offers. Job profiles are easily activated by the user via an SMS, and the service provider then sends these offers to the subscribers for a small charge. The range of jobs on offer covers 78 different areas of employment from casual labour through to skilled manual labour to high-responsibility management posts. The job offers consist of a job description and requirements, as well as further contact details such as email, telephone number or the company's address. Some companies first of all require a written application form, whereas others allow the jobseekers to apply in person. Further information about job interviews and the required documents can be found on kazi560's website, a service which helps the applicants to put together the necessary details for each job. Thus the job applicant does not need to travel to a job centre, has up-to-date information and can act immediately.

kazi560 has meanwhile gathered some considerable experience with this innovative job-procurement service – press releases and strategic national and international partnerships have additionally raised the firm's profile. Since its commercial launch in 2005, the kazi560 job service now has over 80,000 subscribers and has been able to fill 60,000 positions.² The socially aware mobile4good company is, in the meantime, financially independent and franchises out its service to other African countries. For this innovative service, the company was also honoured with the Kenya's President's Award for Entrepreneurship.³

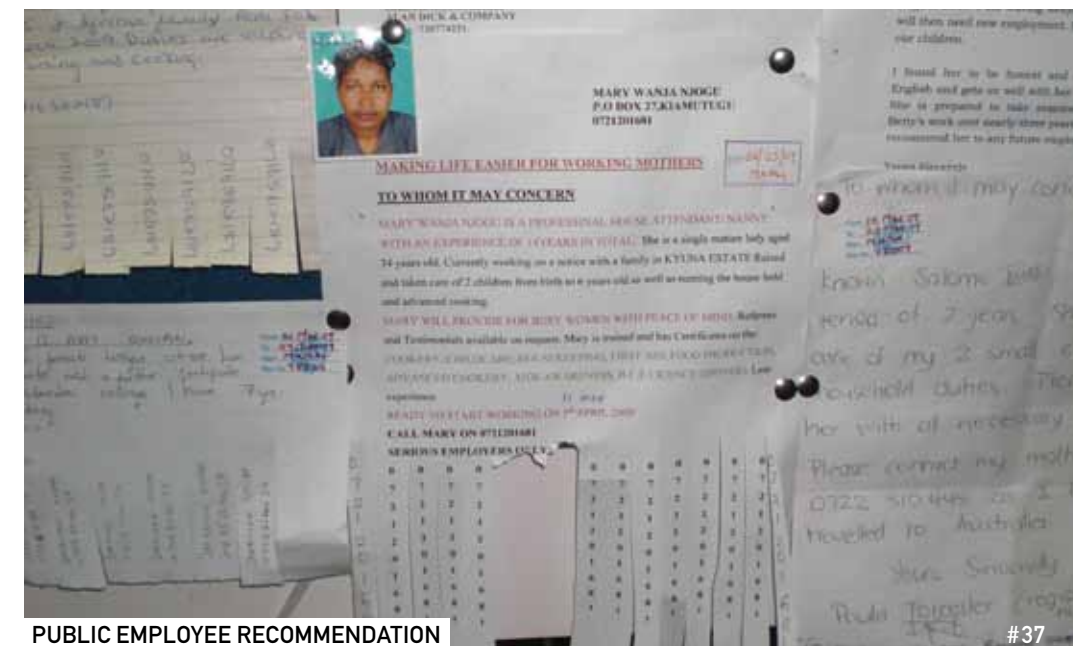
However, in spite of the ease of use of the service, the up-to-date nature of the information and the corresponding flexibility, in comparison to the high rate of unemployment in Kenya, the number of jobs on offer remains low. Of course, those already subscribed will notice any relevant job offers almost immediately, but it is difficult to imagine that jobseekers would rely upon this method alone when looking for work.

What do jobseekers do when their mobile phone doesn't ring? Do they spend the rest of their time waiting at home? Or do they go about finding alternative inroads to the job market? #46

THE ANALOGUE JOB MARKET

JOB BOARDS

The job boards that we investigated can be seen as the real-world analogue of kazi560's virtual service. They are mainly to be found at places where the number of passers-by is high such as traffic junctions or shopping centres. These inner-city boards showed little innovation when compared to kazi560's service. They simply cannot compete in terms of currency of information, ease of information access, quality of information and variety of jobs on offer. Rather, the job boards tend to offer employment in the low-income sector, or more shady offers promising quick money for minimal effort. However, the job boards do possess a quality that is completely neglected by their virtual counterparts: they give jobseekers the opportunity to advertise themselves and their skills to third parties. They can post their own »situations wanted« notices, reversing their role from receiver to sender – a decisive difference that references both the role allocation while job hunting and the precarious situation of the jobseekers.



PUBLIC EMPLOYEE RECOMMENDATION

#37

In terms of mobility, the job boards are interesting since the jobseekers have a temporary presence in a particular place, represented by their telephone numbers. Another point worth noting about the job applications is the form that they take: a majority of the notices are testimonials, verifying that the jobseeker already has experience in the requested skills, and that they have carried them out to the satisfaction of their previous employer – something that is intended to engender trust.



PAINTERS CORNER

JOB CORNERS

Painter's corner, in the middle of Nairobi, is a local meeting point where those seeking work assemble to offer all kinds of skilled manual labour. At first it is impossible to tell apart the labourers assembled there from the ordinary passers-by. They group together in front of a disused electrical goods showroom. A small number of them find purchase on improvised benches, the rest simply mill around on the pavement, waiting for potential clients. Only the used paintbrushes in their hands – which gives this place its name and also serves as a symbol for their profession – differentiate them from other passers-by. Otherwise, there are no formal notices, no office or company sign, no uniforms, workshop, machines or vehicles. But behind what, at first, seems to be an informal meeting place there is a definite system: in contrast to appearances, the workers assembled here are actually well organised. They pay a fee to the city council to be here, which means that theirs is no simple purposeless loitering. Before you are allowed to gather here, in this semi-public meeting place, your documents and your qualifications must first be thoroughly checked, or you need to be proposed by someone who is already an established member. The job-seekers choose a chairman and there are hierarchies within this community that, for example, oversee disputes between employers and employees. In spite of its informal appearance – this meeting place has been here since 1969 – it is an established system, and its members vouch for, and are intensely proud of, the quality of their work and the versatility of their commissions.



PAINTERS CORNER

As to the question of whether mobile telephones have made employment opportunities more plentiful or the coordination of their jobs easier, the workers themselves are more circumspect. For employers, the situation has definitely improved: when the need arises, they can turn to a labourer who is already known to them, and can count on him to find and organise the necessary workers. The individual or company offering employment no longer needs to come to the meeting place to agree details, but can instead arrange a meeting at the relevant building site. This presupposes, however, an existing relationship with at least one of the labourers. If this is not the case, the prospective employer has no other choice but to turn up at Painter's Corner himself. The commuting time of the jobseekers can be as much as two hours each day. In opposition to our thesis of digital decentralisation, they are prepared to make this journey since their physical presence at the meeting point increases their chances of making a first contact.

CONCLUSION: JOB MARKET SCENARIO DIGITAL DECENTRALISATION – WHO SAVES JOURNEY TIME BY USING MOBILE TELEPHONES?

In our opening premise we stated that mobile telephones have had a lasting influence on patterns of mobility, representing a digital shortcut to routes in the real world. Reality turned out to be somewhat different: although communication technology does, indeed, enable the prior co-ordination of meeting points, the clearest decentralising effect, however, can be seen on the side of the prospective employers, who can save on travelling time. The jobseekers cannot reduce the number of journeys that they make if there is no message that informs them about new openings. They have to stay active and mobile in order to increase their chances of finding a job.

DIGITAL VERSUS ANALOGUE: MULTIPLE INROADS TO A BURGEONING MARKET

This comparative analysis of the individual access points to the job market is based on the exclusivity of each particular service. However, we can assume that jobseekers profit from any access to the job market. They cannot rely exclusively on a single medium, but must advertise their skills as widely as possible. The technological information advantage and the constant availability of the jobseeker must never be underestimated and represent a beneficial synchronicity. Both through the postings of job-seekers and through the kazi560 service, the search for work can be made more flexible, and those seeking work can react to various job offers while they are travelling. Thus, a reciprocal extension of the individual access points would be possible in this case.

The difficulties of such a reciprocal extension, however, become clear when considering the aspect of quality management. ›Jobs wanted‹ notices in the form of letters of recommendation represent a first step in the direction of decentralisation, in terms of quality, however, they are far less reliable than the actual sample of work that is required when wanting to join Painters Corner. With kazi560's service, questions regarding the quality of the workforce are completely delegated to the prospective employer. The question raised here is that a flexible system like Painters Corner, where the members all have individual responsibility, will, of necessity, be more difficult to bring into the virtual realm than simple offers of work or job searches.

The flexibility of a system determines its success from the user perspective. This raises the question why users should go through the trouble of learning a new system, when the one they are already using offers sufficient advantages. Innovative services will fail when traditional patterns of use are working well and thus there is neither a need for, nor a willingness to use, a new service. In the euphoria of digital development, the advantages of established analogue systems might sometimes be overlooked. It is not always possible to translate these smoothly into a virtual context. If anything, new systems must provide additional benefits or uses, or must represent further developments of existing systems.

TRUST – AN UNEXPECTED QUALITY

The scenario described here introduces various access points to the job-market network. The mobile telephone presents itself as a useful tool, decentralising this access and representing an address in virtual space. On its own, however, it is no guarantee of success. The considerations concerning the implementation of our hypothesis of digital decentralisation are solely based on the technical feasibility of the range of services offered, but do not take into account concerns regarding communal values. The building of trust is a deciding factor that had, for us, previously played only a subsidiary role, but that during our investigations in the field showed itself to be a dominating factor. We discovered that a single telephone number as means of communication makes only a minimal difference. Behavioral pattern like trust, however, and the concomitant establishing of business contacts, emerged as one of the decisive factors for future employment. Trust possesses an experiential quality. If it is to be anchored within a system, it needs the co-operation of all those who are part of the system, and it also needs, for outsiders, to have a contact person in order to be introduced and become part of the system. Communication will break down – or will fail to materialise altogether – when a minimum of reciprocal trust does not exist between those engaged in dialogue. Trust can be viewed as a key that makes entry points accessible and communication technologies usable. It is, then, one of the minimum requirements, just as the telephone or the various job market networks are.

TRANSFORMATIONS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS: DIGITAL CERTIFICATION

In the future, it will be in the interest of the jobseekers to document the trust placed in them and to digitally decentralise this documentation. Similar to the way that the jobseekers are trying to engender trust with their notices placed on the job boards. With the digitalisation of the proof of their own skills via independent third parties, the individual profiles could be made permanently visible for any prospective employers. A type of recommendation system that provides them with a trust advantage from the employer's perspective, a transformation from receiver to trusted sender. It is, however, important to stress the active inclusion of the jobseekers – how can they use mobile telephones to represent themselves virtually and to change their situation? What opportunities do they have for communicating their skills? How can the correct fulfilment of job contracts be controlled within such a system? Are there any, and if so which, advantages to be gained from existing trust relationships when going digital? # 49

The goal of this field study was to examine the phenomena of digital decentralisation by means of the scenarios outlined. Therefore we were conducting a range of face to face interviews with both jobseekers and services providers to gain immediate insights on the nairobi jobmarket. The results of this research show the potential and point out the difficulties, and are then summarised as ›design drivers‹. Although the results do not always accord with our hypotheses, the mobile phone is still an affordable medium that can handle a wide range of content. Its potentials lie, undoubtedly, in the possibility of the simultaneous use of different information channels and in their corresponding expansion. The affordable infrastructure and the implementation of virtual services makes it an attractive medium for firms who are able to bring together the advantages of technology with the needs of their clients. The difficulties that arise with virtual access points to the job market are due to the market's complexity, the constant demand and the high-value local systems. The above-mentioned local meeting places create and control communal values, which cannot be easily decentralised in a digital system. This demands more than just the simple transmission of information: it needs communal trust along with the active involvement of all participants in order to make such a system usable – in the sense of an active use, from which both employers as well as the multitude of jobseekers can profit.

¹ The World Factbook – Kenya Economy'. Central Intelligence Agency. Web. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ke.html> ² Shashank.Kansal; Radwan.Siddiq **The Mobile for Good (M4G) Social Franchise Model – An investment opportunity**. Retrieved from: . Web 26. April 2009. <http://uk.oneworld.net/article/view/127805>, 3. ³ ibid. 3.

NAIROBI IS GREEN

by Kristina Kelava

WHY EVERY SECOND HOUSE IN NAIROBI IS GREEN AND HOW, BY USING A MOBILE APPLICATION, THE WEAKEST MEMBERS OF SOCIETY CAN BECOME INVOLVED

This research report deals with the question of how information technologies influence everyday life in Nairobi. It focuses specifically on the aspect of how mobile phones might shorten travel routes and how users might benefit from this.

If we assume that a decentralised system creates short routes, is it then possible to decentralise Nairobi by using information technologies? # 49

If we replace physical travel with digital interactions, how will that affect human interaction? # 44

To understand the possibilities and the significance of digital decentralisation for Nairobi and Kenya, one must first understand the overall conditions. Half of Kenya's population lives below the poverty line, with unemployment at around 40%.¹ Nairobi is the youngest city in east Africa, and at the same time it also has the greatest population density. Within the last 10 years, the number of Nairobi's inhabitants has doubled to some 3 million, and it is also one of the fastest-growing cities on the planet.² It is also worth noting that 60 to 80% of the city's population lives in informal settlements – the shanty towns.³

This population growth can be explained in large part by the fact that people have to leave the countryside and come to the city in order to find work. This means that ties to families and relations persist and express themselves in terms of financial support. The further from the city centre one travels, the more obvious becomes the breakdown of the city's infrastructure, as witnessed by the poor condition of its streets and roads. Poor roads mean longer journey times, leading to journeys being expressed in hours, not in kilometres. To be mobile, you need time. Mobility costs money. Time is money. Money is tight.

A decentralised system that would require shorter journeys would offer obvious advantages. The question is, could such a system be provided by information technology?⁴ According to a FinAccess survey, 72.5% of Kenyans would be prepared to learn how to use the new technology. Theoretically, there is a potential here, but what about actual access? In fact, the situation looks good. The number of mobile telephones is growing rapidly, and at present around 80% of the population have access to one – even if it is not their own.⁵ In contrast to Germany, in Kenya it is possible to buy a SIM card without being required to register it. You do not need to provide an official home address, a crucial factor in a country with so many shanty towns. In fact, the mobile telephone – despite the country's parlous infrastructure – is the only communication medium that is accessible to every-one, regardless of income. [See info Access to IT](#)

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cf. 03.2 DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF LOCAL SERVICES hypothesis

ACCESS TO IT

FIXED TELEPHONE LINES

2003

1%

2008

0.65%

INTERNET

2008

subscriber

0.53%

user

8.71%

broadband

subscriber

0.05%

SOURCE:

International Communication Union



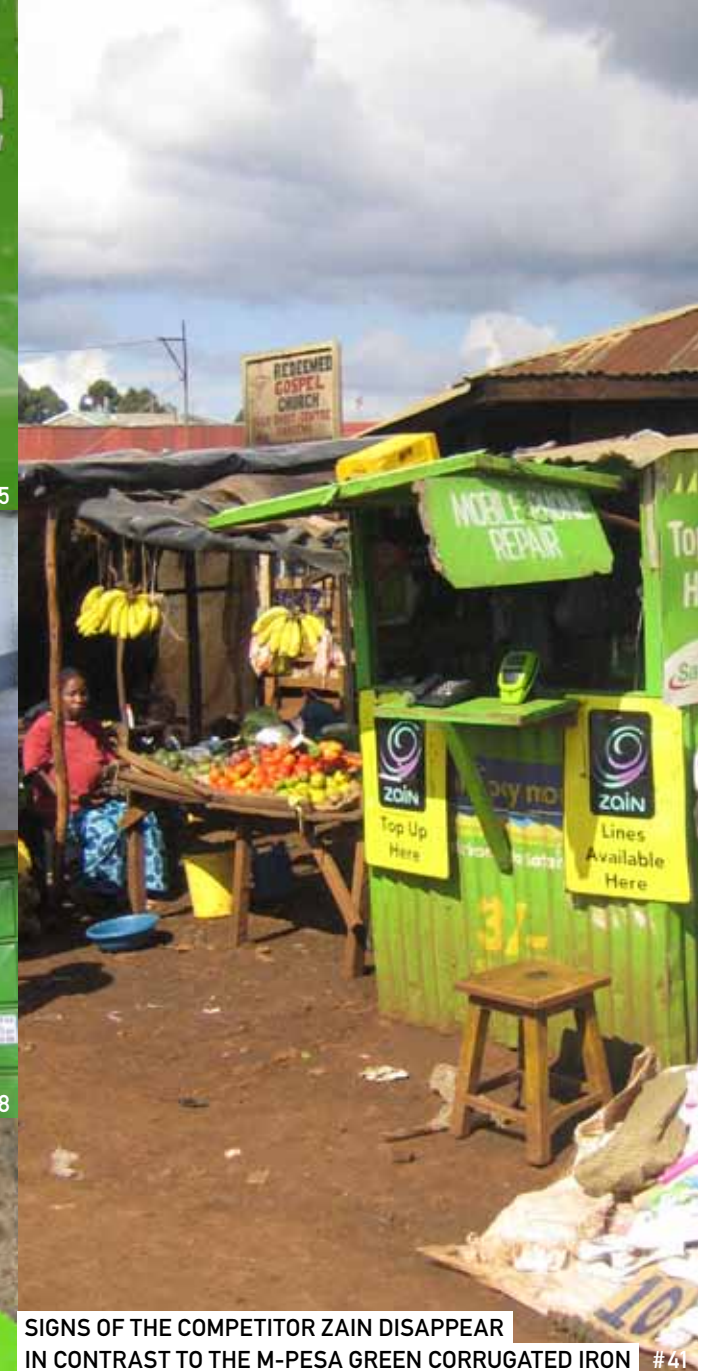
SIGNS IDENTIFY A RETAILER AS M-PESA AGENT # 45



BRANDED M-PESA CUBICLE ON THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI CAMPUS



PAINTED SHUTTER COMMUNICATE THAT M-PESA SERVICES ARE OFFERED # 38



SIGNS OF THE COMPETITOR ZAIN DISAPPEAR IN CONTRAST TO THE M-PESA GREEN CORRUGATED IRON # 41

When you have lived in Nairobi for a while, it is evident that decentralisation via the mobile phone has already taken place and the effects this has had on everyday life are obvious. You can gain a first impression by simply walking a few steps: you notice that Nairobi is green. Known as >The Green City in the Sun<, Nairobi has its many green spaces to thank for this name. Unofficially, however, the omnipresence of Safaricom, also has something to do with this. In every city district, whether rich or poor, in the city centre or in the outlying areas, your eye alights on a green facade, poster, roller blind or a slip of paper in the hands of a >mobile workplace<.

cf. 03.3 MOBILE WORKPLACES Jobs on the Go



DEPOSIT AT THE M-PESA AGENT

#38

With 77.2% of all subscribers, Safaricom has the market cornered, leaving all its competitors in its wake.⁶ With the introduction of the new *M-Pesa* payment system that allows cashless money transfers over mobile telephones without the need for a regular bank account, daily life for most of the population, and especially for those on low incomes, has been made considerably easier. Nairobi has been digitally decentralised in a sector that, at first glance, has nothing to do with communication, namely the financial sector.

At the moment, the functions of money transfer via mobile telephone are being tailored and extended according to the needs of the clients. *M-Pesa* was rolled out at the beginning of 2007 to facilitate unbanked money transfers. Since then, other user groups have sprung up that have found further application opportunities for the technology. For instance, it is being used as a ›virtual wallet‹ whilst travelling.⁷ Even if there is no interest on it, the money is safer in a virtual bank account than it is under one's mattress. In the event of a break-in or a mugging, cash is as good as gone. But even if your mobile phone is stolen, the money remains untouched. Particularly interesting is the fact that even people who have a bank account still use the service. In 12 qualitative interviews, middle class respondents – e.g. an owner of an advertisement agency, an event manager, a university lecturer – admitted that it is far more convenient to pay with *M-Pesa* in a restaurant or in a taxi. People no longer need to carry larger amounts of cash on their person, which constitutes a lower risk. An *M-Pesa* agent is someone who offers the service. They accept payments that can either be sent by mobile phone or later withdrawn, and the respondents admitted that they went to these more often than to bank tellers or to ATM machines since they were, as a rule, quicker to get to and there were no long queues. This sounds plausible, since there are four times as many agents as ATM machines. According to a national survey conducted by FinAccess, using an *M-Pesa* agent was considered the most secure (26.2 %), most convenient (31.7 %), quickest (64.3 %) and most easily accessible (47.8 %) method of money transfer.⁸ In Kenya, in nearly all walks of life, from stock market reports for farmers, through community health to the job market, there are countless uses for mobile phones, where useful information can be transmitted by text message. In what follows, we will only consider Safaricom's *M-Pesa* system, because it is, at the moment, the most popular service that could also be most quickly adapted. Thus the effects of this development can be best seen using this example.



HIGHLY DECORATED M-PESA AGENT

#41

At first, this payment system seems to be a simple add-on for the mobile telephone, but it takes on a whole new significance when one considers that 81% of Kenyans do not have access to a traditional bank account and are, therefore, excluded from the official financial market.⁹ The banks are not interested in those on low incomes, since they cannot afford to pay bank charges. If one thinks for a moment about how much in Germany depends on having a bank account, it's difficult to imagine how one could manage one's day-to-day life without one. Instead of transferring money, people meet face-to-face, handing out wages, paying the rent or giving the family its keep. Payments are usually made in cash. However, carrying it around is definitely not recommended due to the high incidence of theft in Nairobi.

Lecturers at the University of Nairobi were delighted to show us how easy *M-Pesa* makes everything. Before, in order to get money from relatives, these had to be invited over. It took time to send out invitations, decorate the house and cook a meal. The money would be handed over during the course of the evening. Now it's simply a matter of sending an SMS, and a few minutes later the credit appears on your account. This has obvious practical advantages. Valuable time is saved in preparing the meeting and travelling to it – something that also doesn't come free.

It has certainly got easier, but the question needs to be asked if it has actually got better. Doesn't a get-together bring families closer? #38

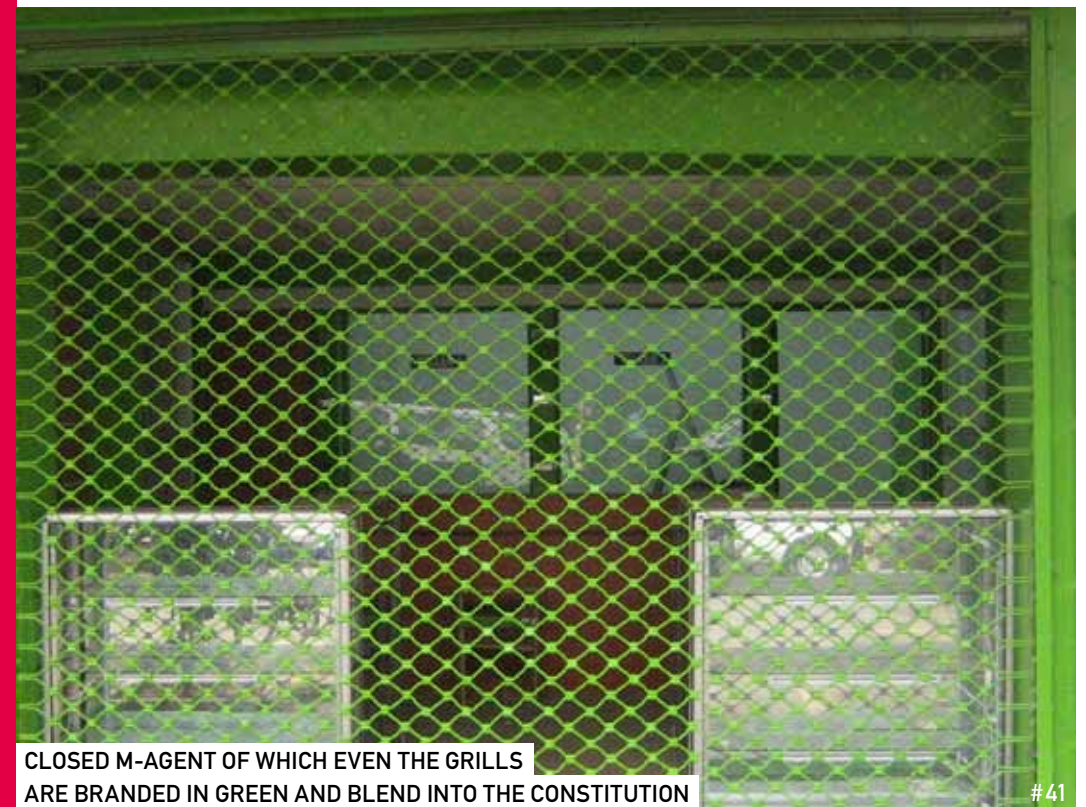
There is a pressing need to transfer money out of the city to relatives in countryside areas. Taking it in person entails a journey that is both time- and cost-intensive, and is made no easier by travelling over unfinished roads. Out of all the other alternatives for money transfer, friends and relatives are considered the highest risk.¹⁰ And if you don't trust your friends and family, then who can you trust? You can trust Safaricom, that's who. These are the findings of Olga Morawczynski, a Ph.D. student at the University of Edinburgh Centre for Social Sciences. Indeed, no problems have been reported yet. If a wrong telephone number is tapped in, the entire transaction can be immediately stopped, and the money cannot be withdrawn without ID. If there is a delay in transferring the money due to a service overload, the owner of the point of service will be accused of fraud. But there is no doubt about Safaricom's innocence: according to one of Morawczynski's respondents, the company's president, Michael Joseph, does not belong to any tribe, and, being neutral, is therefore immune to corrup-



THE CORRUPTION FREEZONE

tion.¹¹ The 14-month study was carried out in Kibera and in an area in the Kenyan countryside. It is therefore not clear how the people who live in formal settlements and within urban areas view the situation. But since a quarter of the residents of Nairobi live in Kibera, this finding should not be underestimated.

Still scarred by the unrest during the 2007/2008 elections, the ›Corruption Free Zone‹ signs on the University of Nairobi campus are a reminder of the insecurity and lack of transparency that dominate everyday life. All the more astounding that in the midst of all this mistrust, Safaricom has actually managed to build trust. Thanks to its omnipresence and stability, Safaricom has secured the basis that M-Pesa now represents: access for anyone, whether they are a ›have‹ or a ›have-not‹, any time, any place. All you need is a mobile phone, and it need not even be your own. A virtual account is all you need to be a part of society. No one is excluded, which, in the end, is the real measure of its success. Informality is the order of the day: shanty towns that house 60% of Nairobians on 5% of its land,¹² off-limits zones that nonetheless get used as *matatu* stops, street vendors who aren't allowed to sell anything but who turn over a good amount nonetheless. There is so little formality, something which explains why trust plays such an enormous role. When you can't rely one hundred per cent on the rule of law, you have to look at your fellow human beings and decide whether they can be trusted. And where does trust come from? From direct human contact: gestures, mimicry, the tone of voice, a firm handshake, an upright bearing, a friendly, resolute demeanour. The mobile telephone is as much a necessity as it is an opportunity, but, regarding these trust-building issues, it is approaching its limits. With the *M-Pesa* system, however, Safaricom has managed to overcome those limits, but we will have to wait and see how much of an influence this mobile money transfer will have on direct human contact. Will the visits from relatives become less frequent when they don't need to bring money any more? Or will the lack of obligation create more opportunities for spontaneous visits and spending quality time together? Will money be sent more often, since it's now so easy? Or, more to the point, because you can now save on the travelling costs?



CLOSED M-AGENT OF WHICH EVEN THE GRILLS ARE BRANDED IN GREEN AND BLEND INTO THE CONSTITUTION #41

Will the mistrust in people around you decline because they no longer have an opportunity to steal your money? #38

What effects this development will have on people's direct dealings with one another remains to be seen. M-Pesa can, indeed, render unnecessary the journeys associated with transferring money, but this is no substitute for those other things that also get transferred during face-to-face contact. But of course that's the way it always is with new technological achievements.

¹ Author unknown, **Africa :: Kenya: The World Factbook**. Central Intelligence Agency, 12 August 2009. Web. 20 August 2009. www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ke.html Population below poverty line: 50% (2000 est.) Unemployment rate: 40% (2008 est.) ² **Nairobi**. Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation Inc.. 04 November 2009. Web. 05 November 2009. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nairobi#cite_note-currentpop-0 ³ R. Syrjänen, **UN-Habitat and the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme - Strategy Document** (Nairobi, 2008), 10. UN-HABITAT. UN-HABITAT. n.d.. Web. 05 November 2009. www.unhabitat.org/pmss/getPage.asp?page=bookView&book=2602 ⁴ FinAccess: **Financial Access in Kenya – Results of the 2006 National Survey** (Nairobi, 2007), 39. finaccess. FSD Kenya (Financial Sector Deepening). n.d.. Web. 20 August 2009 www.fsdkenya.org/finaccess/documents/FinaccessReportFINALMain.pdf ⁵ FinAccess: **National Survey 2009 – Dynamics of Kenya's Changing Financial Landscape** (Nairobi, 2009), 19. finaccess. FSD Kenya (Financial Sector Deepening). n.d.. Web. 20 August 2009 www.fsdkenya.org/finaccess/documents/09-06-10_FinAccess_FA09_Report.pdf ⁶ ›Safaricom Industry Update‹ Safaricom. Safaricom Ltd.. 12 March 2009. Web. 09 July 2009. www.safaricom.co.ke/fileadmin/template/main/downloads/investor_relations_pdf/Industry%20Update%20120309.pdf ⁷ FSD Kenya (2009), op. cit., 16. ⁸ *ibid.* 16 ⁹ FSD Kenya (2007), op. cit., 15. ¹⁰ FSD Kenya (2009), op. cit., 16. ¹¹ O. Morawczynski & G. Miscione, **Examining Trust in Mobile Banking Transactions: The Case of M-Pesa in Kenya** (2007), 10. OpenRevolution. OpenRevolution Inc.. n.d.. Web. 2009. www.openrev.com/M-PESA-trust.pdf ¹² R. Syrjänen, **UN-Habitat and the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme - Strategy Document** (Nairobi, 2008), 10.

CULTURAL FLOWS AND THE NEW FORMS OF SOCIABILITY IN NAIROBI

by Peter Wafula Wekesa

ABSTRACT

Throughout the world, cities are increasingly providing the space through which cultural transactions between various social groups are negotiated, constructed and reconstructed. Although such cultural transactions were in the past generally restricted, few people will now deny that through globalization the notion of space is being subverted and transcended as avenues of social interaction continue to create new patterns of sociability. Sociability, which in this context refers to a desire by a person or group to interact or affiliate with others through the establishment of social relationships has therefore been greatly enhanced through global networks and trends. Nowhere can an examination of such networks be more revealing than in the cities, which are increasingly becoming the centers of politics, culture, complex service provision systems, enterprise development and innovation (DFID, 2000:3). Like other cities, Nairobi the capital city of Kenya, remains a key location where intense communication systems shape and transform the day to day work, private life, cultural life and political activities of millions of people. Nairobi should thus be seen as a location of social interaction and meaning operating on the basis of the appropriation of space by sociability. This process, which benefits from a combination of new technological innovations and face-to-face communications, is reconstructing urban life in interesting ways. This contribution seeks to address the broader issues of cultural flows, space and the emergence of new identities, new forms of sociability and their impact on mobility and space within the urban context of Nairobi.

CULTURAL FLOWS, TECHNOLOGY AND NAIROBI CITY

A common truism in the contemporary world is that technology is increasingly creating and extending the frontiers of communication and thus enhancing social interactions across the globe. As this process continues to alter the world in which we live, so also it changes our perceptions, thoughts and thus occasions shifts in the viability of our previous realities, experiences and orderings of the world. As Manuel Castells (1996) has aptly observed, we are indeed living in a period of historical transformation that is characterized by interactions of three features which, though distinct, are related to one another. The first is the revolution in information technology that started in the 1970s but which has also expanded all over the world. The second is the process of globalization, which incidentally is not only economic since it also includes cultural as well as political dimensions. The third feature according to Castells is the emergence of a new form networking organization that works through information technology.

While it is therefore true that the foregoing historical process is drastically changing the way people perceive, organize, manage, produce, consume and embrace practically all dimensions of social life, the intersections between the global and local realities especially as they are reflected in African cities like Nairobi has hardly been contextualized. Consequently, the ways in which global and local interactions have come to define new forms of sociability and create new ways of redefining space within such cities has become more subtle in emerging discourses. Yet, the city as Castells (1983:xv) has characteristically pointed out is merely a living system, made, transformed and experienced by people. It is practically feasible therefore to see urban forms and functions in cities like Nairobi as being produced and managed by the interactions between space and society, that is, by the historical relationship between human consciousness, matter, energy and information (ibid).

If we regard cultural as those transformations that either express or set the groundwork for the mobilization of group identities, then it is possible to see, within the context of Nairobi, social relationships that are framed within five dimensions that according to Appadurai (1996:33) are ethnoscaples, mediascaples, technoscaples, financescaples and ideoscaples. Yet, an interesting aspect of these dimensions is underlain in the way in which these associated processes have come to reconstruct Nairobi life as an important location for sociability. Perhaps, a more critical issue in regard to the location of Nairobi as a business hub, place of work, a residential area, location for leisure, learning and so forth is the question as to why people choose this location as opposed to other places. Also significant is whether such occupants of the Nairobi city space moved or were born in their present locations. For instance, if a family, the classical loci of sociability, chooses to move to Nairobi from Kiambu, Bungoma, Mwatate or from any other location in Kenya or outside, there are bound to be new relationships and new patterns of sociability that are negotiated between the points of their origin and the new areas of aboard. Maybe because of the new demands of city life, new forms of individuation arising from the changed spatial structures and dynamics may arise. These new forms may pose a serious challenge to traditional forms of sociability coalescing around the community that were characteristic of the original locations before immigration to Nairobi. Thus, whether it is a family from wherever location in Kenya or beyond the new city experiences and the critical life choices will inform and define their new levels of sociability.

Arising from the above is that although Nairobi is by habitation represented by all nationalities and ethnicities, one key noticeable trend is that the city is increasingly becoming multi-ethnic and multi-cultural in a sense. In spite of class, gender, generational and other diversities one just needs to take a walk on the streets, relax in popular entertainment joints like Simmers on Kenyatta Avenue and others to notice how multi-ethnic Nairobi residents are increasingly becoming. In such places, the food, the music and sometimes even the dress code represents this emerging multi-ethnic reality. It is important however to highlight that the changing nature of social relations in Nairobi continues to impact on the day to day work, private life, cultural identity and even political participation of millions of residents. Maybe because of the new communication lines enhanced through the internet and through the mobile phones, various peoples especially the youth have converted Nairobi into a hub of opportunity. Through cyber cafes or on mobile phones it has become easy for the young people for instance to connect, plan and redefine their common aspirations, frustrations, desires and prospects. The inherent strengths in these new modes of communication is what Holmes (2005:8) has called their anarchy compared to established modes of ownership and control of traditional media. In these new modes, according to Holmes, there are no direct equivalents to the 'gatekeepers' of content and form which characterize the major media of the past few decades. Every one therefore who has access to the Net or mobile phone can become their own authors, expressing their own sense of identity to other users scattered not only in Kenya but throughout the world.

It is worth noting that the mobile phone revolution is perhaps one of the fastest in Kenya. While in 2000, there were only 15,000 subscribers, today there are over 12 million, an average increase of over 1700,000 subscribers per year since (Trailer at www.a24media.com/downloads/pdf/scripts/english/en_kenya_mobiles.pdf). While Safaricom and Zain remain the two major mobile service providers in Kenya, it is important to highlight the fact that the celebrated democratizing character of the internet and the mobile phone is creating new forms of sociability among Nairobians both physically and virtually. Virtually, one can talk about virtual communities created through internet locations such as face book and others that bring together people who share common interests. These locations have enabled people to engage in sociability on the internet and also have access to more friends, activities, networks and so forth. Physically, the new communication lines have become the most important aspects in providing information to large numbers of people. Whether it is invitation to meetings, parties or to other social spaces, the internet and the mobile



phone has formed an important uniting ground. On the other hand these communication lines are increasingly providing opportunities for work especially for people who don't have established offices. For the taxi, *Matatu* and other informal workers in Nairobi these communication lines provide the lifeblood to their various businesses. A casual look at the activities that take place at the 'jobless corner' near Hilton hotel, on the seating pavements on Aga Khan Walk or at the smoking zone near General post office on Koinange Street reveals the intricate nature and possibilities created by these new communication lines. Far from seeing the occupants of these spaces as idlers, job seekers or unemployables these locations provide a rich social network in which various businesses thrive. The locations are for instance points for fixing connections for various business ventures such as tour operations, taxis, money changing and so forth. In a way therefore, they have emerged as important forms of sociability through which various categories of people come together and share the space in the city. By providing a connection with their friends, clients and so forth the mobile phones have been able to transcend the boundaries of space. The other consequence of the new forms of sociability as has come to be reflected in Nairobi is the criminal networks associated with the new global and local communication lines. The possibilities opened up especially through the cyber world and through the mobile phone have created local dimensions through which criminality has thrived. Two examples from the cyber and mobile phone worlds are quite prevalent and deserve highlighting. In the cyber, the common practice among fraudsters has been to hack into other peoples email systems, impersonate and send out distress calls to friends, colleagues and family whose contacts are stored in the inbox. In this regard the fraudster poses as one stranded in a city outside Kenya where he or she had gone to attend a meeting or conference and thus requires friends to send out specified amounts of money to bail them out. Given the constant inquiries between friends and colleagues, it is obvious that this practice has become quite prevalent. Although no clear records and statistics exist to show how many people finally fall trap to these tricks, the widespread nature of the practice can only show how this criminality has penetrated the public discourse and debate. To be grouped with these are the other forms of cyber crimes including tricks that one has won a lottery or an American green card, various proposals for money transfer or joint business ventures, several offers for employment for which one is to pay some mandatory fee before work commences and so on.

In the mobile phone category, there continue to emerge within Nairobi a trend that could clearly be referred to as the 'ransomization' of criminality. Several criminal gangs now use mobile phones to link up and hijack several

people in Nairobi and in other major towns in Kenya and through this seek large sums of money from family, friends and relatives as ransom before they are released. The list of those who have been hijacked within Nairobi in the recent times include bank managers, businessmen, students and even ordinary citizens. Apart from hijacking individuals, the gangs also hijack groups especially travelers in buses and matatus. The hijacked groups are robbed, usually violently of money, mobile phones and other valuables. The swiftness at which such operations are planned and executed goes a long way to demonstrate how improved technologies have become an asset in the hands of such criminal elements.

The culture of ransom seeking by hijackers could also be linked to the now emerging practice of sending out threatening messages. Although the origin of such messages, usually sent out through short texts (sms) or calls is always anonymous, such senders claim to have been sent by the victim's perceived enemies to >finish< (read kill) them unless they pay some specified amounts of money. Initial police crackdown on this malpractice linked it to criminal elements within Kenya's leading prisons including Kamiti who in collaboration with prison warders manage to access mobile phones to use for their purposes. However, after the initial crackdown the trend is persisting perhaps suggesting that the extortionist ring could not solely be linked to the prisons. Although the government has lately instituted several measures including the requirement that all mobile phone users be registered, penalizing those found sending threatening or hate messages and restricting the access of mobile phones to prisoners the practice still remains a challenge. Thus, it is important to state that whereas the new communication networks and the resultant forms of sociability provide potentials for the positive transformation of society, they also contain within them serious challenges to the human population.



THE M-PESA CONCEPT

by Peter Ouma

... AND ITS EMERGENT ROLE IN THE KE-NYAN URBAN ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

The *M-Pesa* branding concept integrates well into the existing informal architecture and economy. The introduction of *M-Pesa* has brought a new brand of competition into the banking environment. The long queues previously experienced in banks have been reduced as a result. Many people in Nairobi therefore prefer this new mobile-phone banking alternative due to its promise of quicker services and time-saving features. *M-Pesa* brings the bank home, removing the need to travel long distances to either withdraw money or send it on to someone else. The physical infrastructure needed to run an *M-Pesa* shop facilitates better and widespread distribution and integration of the service to places far away from central Nairobi.

WILL DIGITAL DECENTRALISATION DETERMINE THE FUTURE OF ARCHITECTURAL SPACES?

We can begin by looking at digital decentralisation as a threat to both mobility and to architectural spaces. Then we can compare physical networks to virtual ones: in our case face-to-face meetings vs. mobile phones and the human-computer interface, looking at ATMs vs. counter services. Human beings interact with one another through movement that occurs in a physical space in a deliberate or natural way. Spaces act as platforms and interfaces in the exchange of emotions, information and services. From shopping malls to lecture rooms, banks to hospitals, all these require face-to-face interactions. Digital technology takes this interaction to another, virtual, level. For every physical space designed, there can be a virtual analogue. One might pose the question ›of what relevance is the physical location of a bank?‹ We need to make use of computer technology to interface with humans. This is a case of digital technology rapidly replacing the need for architectural spaces. Architectural spaces are gradually reducing in size, from cashier counters to ATM machines to mobile phones. This begs the question, what is the physical meaning of a thing, if its virtual representation can be an alternative? Who needs paper money when it can be interpreted as numbers and sent via mobile phones? Human communication and social interaction is rapidly transitioning from physical to virtual interfaces. Even though face to face contact is still commonplace, our digital counterparts enable us to extend our will to unimaginable distances. People are represented by numbers which can be called from a distance, and voice extended over the digital network. Transfer of images is done in split seconds, and as if that were not enough, real time video conferencing is slowly gaining traction. The time may also have come for the use of holography.



LONG QUEUES. TIME VS. MONEY.
MOVEMENT FROM ONE PLACE TO ANOTHER.
UNI-DIRECTIONAL MOVEMENT IS OBSERVED AT PEAK HOURS.
PRECONDITIONS. CONDITIONING. SPATIAL EXPERIENCE. SEASONS RAIN/SUN.
TIME WASTED IN TRAFFIC JAMS.
TIME MANAGEMENT. THE DIALOGUE OF TIME AND MOBILITY. 24HR SERVICES.
MEETING POINTS AND APPOINTMENTS. RUSH HOUR.
TRACING USE OF TIME FROM HOME TO WORK.
IS MOBILITY IN NAIROBI TIME-FACTORED?
WAITING FOR MATATUS. UNPREDICTABLE.
NIGHT FALLS AND THE CITY SLEEPS. THE FACTOR OF TIME.
SYSTEMS THAT ARE TIME-BOUND.
SOME SYSTEMS ARE NOT SYNCHRONIZED. MOBILITY IN NAIROBI IS TIME BASED.
MATATU TIMES- UNRELIABLE, RANDOM, CHANCE.



WHILE RUNNING AWAY SEEMS TO BE # 11
THE USUAL DEFENCE AGAINST POLICEMEN
DISTURBING THE STREET TRADERS' WORK.
ARE THEY DOING IN CASE OF THEFT OR THREAT
BY OTHER STREET TRADERS OR PEDESTRIANS?

WHICH ASPECTS OF THE KENYAN ECONOMY # 20
WOULD CHANGE IF THE STREET TRADERS' ACTIVITIES
WERE LEGALISED?

WHAT KIND OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN MOBILE # 19
WORKERS COULD SHORTEN THEIR ROUTES TO WORK
OR THEIR TRAVELLING TIME WHILE WORKING?

HOW DOES THE MOBILITY OF A WORKER? # 12
AFFECT THE PRODUCTIVITY OF A WORKER?

WHAT REASONS MIGHT CAUSE A MOBILE WORKER # 15
TO CHANGE THEIR USUAL PITCH?

HOW FAR AND THROUGH HOW MANY # 18
PAIRS OF HANDS DO THE USED GOODS SOLD BY
MOBILE WORKERS TRAVEL?

WHAT IS THE INFLUENCE OF TRADITIONS ON SPECIFIC # 21
MOBILE WORKPLACES?

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF MOBILE WORK- # 14
PLACES THAT ARE ORGANISED BY THE GOVERNMENT?

HOW ARE MOBILE WORKERS WITH STREET STALLS # 16
PERCEIVED BY PEDESTRIANS?

ARE THERE SPECIFIC TYPES OF MOBILE WORKPLACES # 13
IN WHICH DISABLED PEOPLE WORK?

WHICH CONSTRUCTIONS TYPICAL OF CERTAIN MOBILE # 17
WORKPLACES WOULD ALSO BE USEFUL FOR
COMPARABLE STATIC JOBS?

JOBS ON THE GO

by Ellen Sturm, Gurmukh Panesar

INTRODUCTION

The catchphrase ›mobile workplace‹ is most commonly encountered today in the use of mobile communications media such as mobile phones and laptops, used in the service of international companies, providing location-independent availability for their on-the-road managers. But there is another way of looking at it: an ice cream salesman, a taxi driver or home-based care services can also be considered as mobile workplaces.

Researching the theme of mobility in Nairobi, one constantly encounters these types of mobile workplaces although they are, of course, of a different nature to their German counterparts. Mobile workplaces are a fundamental global phenomenon that could be researched in many cities around the world. With over four million inhabitants, and with its present state of development, Nairobi is an interesting place to conduct this research, not least because its unemployment rate of around 40% is one of the highest in Kenya¹. Many questions worthy of investigation cropped up in the run-up to the fieldwork. However, in the first few days in the field, four main questions took shape: what defines an ›on-the-go‹ workplace? Into which categories do we place mobile workplaces? What is the informal job market and what connections does it have with a legal system that appears to be arbitrarily applied? What are the everyday and exceptional problems that the people working in this field face?

We, a group of Kenyan and German students, chose observation and informal interviews as the methods to be used in the field. The former helped us to familiarise ourselves a little with the wide spectrum of mobile workplaces in Nairobi. The interviews provided an insight into the life of the people who earn their money in this manner, and gave information on the related advantages, problems and risks. Since the interviewees were extremely varied and it was difficult to know in advance which questions could reasonably be answered, we identified a few questions beforehand that could be dropped into the informal interviews whenever the opportunity presented itself. This also enabled us, according to the situation, to direct our questions in a more specific direction – something that ultimately proved to be very useful. The information gathered was, as a result, extremely varied.

JOBS ON THE GO

What defines a workplace in Nairobi as mobile? Which occupations and activities would be of interest in the context of this subject? More generally: are only those occupations that require formal training of interest, or should we consider any activity that can be used to make a shilling? These types of questions had to be answered before the actual fieldwork in Nairobi could begin. During our research into the different types of occupations, we came across jobs that are unknown in Germany, or at least



SELLING SECOND HAND GOODS FROM EUROPE

15



A DANGEROUS JOB

16



TRAFFIC JAMS BRING REVENUE

20



SELLING CHAPATI IN KIBERA

21



AT THE GLOBE CINEMA ROUNDABOUT

11

very rarely encountered. For example, the *boda-boda drivers*, who operate a sort of bicycle-taxi service carrying their passengers on their luggage racks. Or the so-called ›hawkers‹, street vendors who either stand at the edge of the road, providing pedestrians with cigarettes or sweets, or who stand by the traffic lights or make their way between the stationary cars in the evening rush-hour traffic jams. The drivers' immobility makes them an easy target for the sale of every conceivable type of article – from fresh fish to icon-like pictures of the President.

cf. 03.4 NON-MOTORIZED VEHICLES

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Both of these are examples of occupations that people turn to due to the lack of any alternatives: they generate little income and the work is frequently physically demanding. At the same time little prior knowledge is needed and the required goods or tools are relatively cheap. We wanted to focus our research on the low-income sector. This largely casual labour market exhibits the most opportunities for change on the one hand, and on the other hand presents the best opportunities for our studies. Typical criteria for designation as ›casual labour‹ are the lack of social security cover, as well as the lack of agreed written employment contracts. »Most workers in all of these categories of work are informally employed, without secure contracts, worker benefits or social protection. [...] But most workers in the informal economy share one thing in common – the lack of formal recognition and protection«, writes Martha Alter Chen in ›Re-thinking the Informal economy‹. She adds: »The informal economy is growing and is not a short-term but a permanent phenomenon; and not just a traditional or residual phenomenon but a feature of modern capitalist development, associated with both growth and global integration. [...] While production or employment arrangements in the informal economy are often semi-legal or illegal, most informal workers and enterprises produce and/or distribute legal goods and services.«²

The deeper one looks into this theme, one can find many articles that look favourably on the casual labour sector, and on the opportunities that it can offer the Kenyan economy. In ›11. Women entrepreneurs in Nairobi‹ Alice Wanjira Munyua writes about the category of Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs): »In recent years the MSEs part of the informal sector has played an increasingly important role in Kenya. According to Ikiara (2001), and a World Bank report (2001), MSEs are regarded as offering an alternative route to economic growth, especially in the context of increased poverty and unemployment, as well as the advent of economic reforms that have led to the liberalization of the economy.«³

During our research in Nairobi, we came to the conclusion that the borders between ›on-the-go‹ jobs and ›fixed‹ jobs are fluid. We decided, for example, to include in our research those women who lay out their wares on the same pitch every day. It could be argued that they are not mobile workers, since they are always to be found in the same place. However, for us the overriding consideration was that they have no market stall in the classical sense: the defining characteristic of their pitch is that it is simple and improvised – usually in the open air, on the bare earth at the side of the road. Potentially, they could always spread their stand out by a few more metres, or to sit in a different spot every day. Their potential flexibility means that we can consider them as being ›on the go‹. Similarly, we arrived at the categories into which we divided the mobile workplaces. The first difference that we found was between goods and services, which can again be differentiated into those where the client seeks out the trader in a particular location, those where the service provider comes to the client's home or workplace and those where clients and workers meet somewhere whilst travelling, for example on their way to work or school.



- GO TO CUSTOMERS**
KNIFE SHARPENERS
BEAUTICIANS
PHOTOGRAPHERS
...
- MEET CUSTOMERS HALFWAY**
MATATU
BODA BODA
TAXI
MKOKOTENI
TROLLEY
VENDORS IN VEHICLES
(Entertainers, Preachers etc.)
...
- CUSTOMERS GO TO THEM**
SHOE SHINERS
WATCH REPAIRERS
TAILORS
PROSTITUTES
SIMU YA JAMII
...
- MEET CUSTOMERS HALFWAY**
CUSTOMERS GO TO THEM
STREET VENDORS
ICE CREAM VENDORS
WATER VENDORS
GAS SUPPLIERS
HAWKERS
SWEET VENDORS
...
- GO TO CUSTOMERS**
MALI MALI
MAMA MBOGA
FLOWER VENDORS
MILKMEN
OUTSIDE CARTERERS
PROMOTIONAL ITEMS
NEWSPAPER COLLECTORS
SECOND HAND CLOTH VENDORS
...

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GLOSSARY
Simu Ya Jamii, Mali Mali

In the following section we would like to look more closely at four in-depth interviews, in order to better illuminate some central aspects of ›Jobs on the Go‹.



PROFILE	
Name	Nuria Bariare Aden
Age	40+
Education	a few years of school
Family	husband and seven children

NETWORKS / SOCIAL STRUCTURES

An interesting aspect that arose during the research is the question as to whether mobile workers form networks either within their respective groups or between different groups. Do they interact much with one another? Do they help one another, or do they simply go about their own business? Is there a lot of competition?

In an informal interview with Nuria Bariare Aden, a cloth seller in a market in Kangem, I learned that the women who share the space there do not view each other as competition. They all sell the same types of goods, namely fabrics for clothing use, and perfume. They source both from a wholesaler whenever they need new goods – normally two to four times a month.

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cf. 03.2 NAIROBI IS
GREEN *M-pesa*

Nuria is over 40; she is herself not sure exactly how old, and she has seven children. Her husband lives with the rest of the family in the countryside. He is too old to work. She sends him money regularly, either with *M-pesa* or she entrusts it to a bus driver. Nuria herself visits him roughly every six months. Any leftover money she spends on herself and her children; if she earns enough to pay her outgoings, she can afford to send them to school. Like so many other women who have set up their own small business, Nuria belongs to the casual labour sector. She has – apart from her children – no provision for care in her old age, but she has managed to avoid unemployment by setting up her own business. She is, therefore, able to provide for a relatively large number of children, as well as her husband.

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cf. 03.1 COMMUTING
The Way to Work

Every morning she and the other women walk for an hour to reach the place, where they have been selling cloth for many years. In Kenya, this method of getting to work is nothing out of the ordinary. »Among working adults, almost one-third (32%) live and work in the same settlement, so it makes sense that these individuals chose to walk. However, the majority (68%) of working adults leave their home settlement for work and more than half (55%) of them also walk to their destination.«⁴

They chose this place because of the constant stream of traffic, which while it generates lots of passing trade, can also provoke dangerous situations, with the cars passing by so closely that they occasionally run over the goods. The women are willing to accept this since the overall turnover makes up for these losses. The sale of a *kanga*, or one of the other types of fabric, earns Nuria around 40 shillings. The day's takings can vary from anything between 0 to 600 shillings. Twice a week she has to pay 25 shillings to the city council for her trader's license.

What we found surprising was the solidarity amongst the women, which Nuria had told us about and which was confirmed by further conversations with her fellow stand owners. Instead of competing among themselves, they actually form small networks that allow them to offer each other mutual support. If it should happen that one day, one of the women has done very well to the detriment of the others, the lucky trader will then buy additional cloths from her colleagues. In this way, the income gets regularly redistributed amongst them, greatly reducing the chances that any of them will return home empty-handed.

Generally, this social cohesion is important for the casual workers, alleviating the ever-increasing problems caused by the arbitrary checks and demands carried out by the police and the authorities.

Overall the mobile workers have a kind of a code amongst themselves on how things get done. This involves which area one can sell their goods, watching out for the authorities and so on. Since the hawkers' situation differs for different parts of the city, we will take the Central Business District (CBD) to illustrate how they have come up with ways to evade the authorities, who are one of the numerous sources for problems they face, as hawking is illegal in the CBD. On every street there is usually a person

cf. NAIROBI MAP
CBD

on both ends acting as spotters. These people sound the alarm through a private mode of communication, either through whistling or other sounds. They are paid to do this kind of job by the illegal workers in the street. The hawkers also usually work in pairs to quickly grab up their wares and displays and run into the closest shop. This is another example of the widespread networking, as we found out from talking to other hawkers and as it is generally known: some hawkers have relations with storekeepers that allow them to store their goods in the store and to use it as an escape from the authorities. Others commute to a common store usually run by some organized groups such as the *mungiki*. These stores are used to hold the goods and as points to which the cheap goods are transported. The distribution of these goods is done by the hawkers.



PROFILE

Name	David Ombongi Mogikoyo
Age	23
Education	student
Family	parents and siblings

REPUTATION AND CLIENT CONTACT

David Ombongi Mogikoyo was a little different to the other interviewees: he is studying, and only was doing the job as a *matatu* conductor for six months.

After school, many prospective students in Nairobi take on a job for a two-year period while they wait for a place in a higher education establishment. This situation has arisen because of a comprehensive restructuring in the school- and university system a few years ago. During this two-year period, David was working at a petrol station on matatu line 58 that was a stopping point for the *matatu* drivers. His conscientious approach to work was noticed by one of the *matatu* owners, who offered him a job as a conductor. The work paid 400 to 500 shillings a shift better than that of a pump attendant, and with eight hours instead of 12, the working hours were shorter and more flexible, so David could decide whether he wanted to work mornings or afternoons.

Two of the main themes touched on in this informal interview were the social standing of the conductor and the client contact.

The position of conductor in a *matatu* is a nerve-wracking one: one of David's responsibilities is collecting the money, something which often leads to disagreements with the passengers. There are always clients who claim that they have already paid or have not yet received their change. Because of this, the conductors are generally held in very low regard. They are even accused of cheating the passengers out of their money, by, for example, not giving them their change back or claiming that someone has not paid yet. There is also trouble from female passengers, who claim that they have been molested: conductors are nearly always men, since the whole private minibuss business is in male hands. David knows of only one case of a female *matatu* conductor.

Small wonder then, that the job is not without its dangers. It entails handling a lot of money, which makes the conductor a target for thieves. You need to be physically tough to be able to manhandle certain passengers off the bus.

It was because of the public's poor perception of the conductors that David decided to give up this job – which is actually quite secure and pays well – in order to embark upon his studies, even though he had in the meantime made the position of manager, and was responsible for the day-to-day running of two *matatus*. As someone who wants to train as an architect, he doesn't feel that he could go back to such a conflicting occupation. Every so often he will climb on board again at the weekends, just to earn a little bit of money, but mainly he lives on his savings and the income from various other temporary jobs.

With the help of a further survey conducted during the one weeklong project exhibition in Nairobi (Open Studio at the Goethe Institute, Nairobi, May 2009) we tried to ascertain what perception people had of the mobile vendors in general. Did they find that they get in the way, or are they grateful that they are there? Is what they sell of any use? Are there ever any shortages? I was also interested in the question of whether the people actually knew those who were offering them goods on the street or cleaning their shoes or driving them around in a *matatu*.

We received around 30 answers that confirmed both our initial suppositions and the research carried out so far. It was no surprise to find out that personal transport was the most widely-used service: in Nairobi, *matatus* are one of the main forms of transport, and nearly everyone who visited the exhibition used this inexpensive transportation at least sometimes. But also around 90% of the respondents purchased goods such as cigarettes and chewing gum from street vendors more or less regularly. Less often, the respondents said that they used shoe shiners, knife sharpeners and other such services. However, those that did, rated the services highly, and would not like to see them disappear. Many admitted that they did not pay much attention to the people offering the services, but there was also the feeling that maybe they should.



PROFILE

Name

Evans Myaroro

Age

42

Education

skilled cabinetmaker

Family

wife and five children

LEGALITY AND ANARCHY

The advantage of a mobile workplace is that you are not tied down to any particular spot. If the conditions change, so does your location. There are myriad factors that influence what goods and services are offered, in what weather and at what time. This flexibility has come about due to a need to make the most of opportune conditions to earn some money.

For instance, *matatu* fares will increase by up to 500% during a sudden burst of rain. The *matatu* operators know that people are in a hurry to get home and take advantage of the situation. The shoe shiners also benefit from the rainy season as there are a lot of dirty shoes to clean. This, however, is only during the morning hours when people are on their way to work. In the afternoons, they may decide to start hawking sweets or clothing items and at night this may change to selling condoms. This flexibility corresponds to the needs of the people at specific times of the day. Location also plays a vital role, as can be seen in the relation of goods or a service to a certain area. A good example is the way florists usually congregate near funeral homes. Also knife sharpeners target butcheries and housing estates, thus having a certain target location.

Evans Myaoro is a street vendor who mainly sells sweets and cigarettes. His stand consists of a wooden box, filled with his wares and resting on top of a bollard. He explained that he had chosen this place because this was a safe spot, with a lot of students passing by who make up his main clientele. His pitch lies midway between the university and the Central Business District (CBD), right by a large, busy roundabout. Furthermore, the sidewalk that he is standing on runs past the church. He stands here even on Sundays, because business is good after mass. On Saturday evenings he goes to the church, so that he can be standing here on Sunday.

Evans is 42 and is actually a qualified cabinetmaker. However, due to the widespread incidence of polio in Africa, his one foot is so badly deformed that he can no longer find a position in his chosen profession. In order to be able to support his wife and five children he stands here at the side of

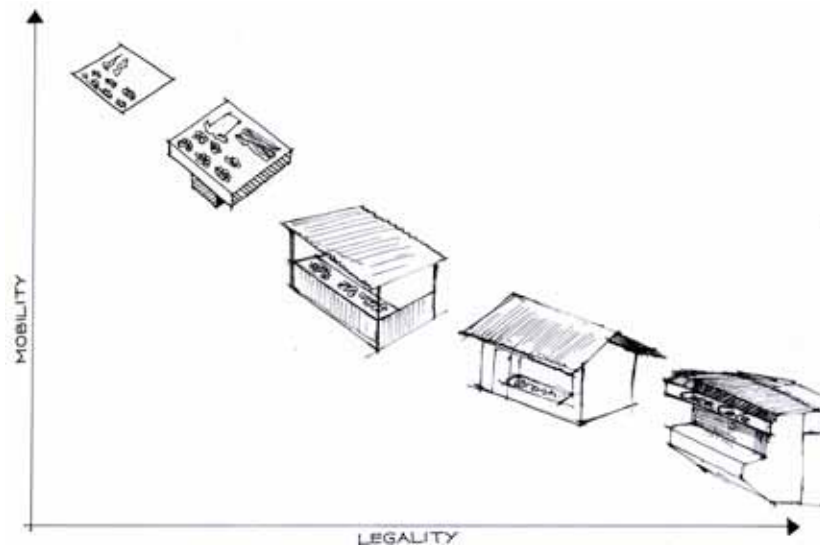
60

cf. 02.4 THE NAIROBI
WORKSHOP AND
EXHIBITION

the street, selling his sweets, and making around 400 to 500 shillings a day. He actually shouldn't be selling anything here at all, since street vendors are forbidden in the inner city. He could always get himself a wheelchair – as a wheelchair user he could legally practice as a street vendor, and wouldn't even have to pay the city council for a trader's license.

But he won't do it: it would not offer him the desired flexibility. He needs an hour's journey every day by *matatu* to reach the spot and the public transport in Nairobi is not accessible to disabled people. Many street vendors use the fact that being in a wheelchair allows you to sell goods in the CBD and they borrow wheelchairs so that they can conduct their business ›legally‹.

The mobile workplaces present in Nairobi constitute a broad spectrum of illegal-to-legal operations. In one way this legality influences the way in which the mobile worker operates and adapts. The observations made showed that for the majority of cases, the more illegal a job was, the more mobile it becomes and vice-versa. The display systems in this case are quickly collapsible and allow for quick flight from the authorities. On the other hand, as vendors start to become ›less‹ illegal, they are not disturbed by the authorities as often, thus their structures start becoming semi-permanent and less mobile. These shacks incorporate readily available (often recycled), affordable materials for construction, which include iron sheets, timber poles and old plastic sacks. The more-legal kiosks are a partnership between commercial entities and the local authorities, such as the Coca-Cola Kiosks. These are more permanent and when the local authorities are demolishing other structures, these are left standing. They offer convenient places to buy goods and are a working example of how to harmonise an informal situation. This leaves a question, namely what is legality and what is considered legal in Kenya and Nairobi? As already stated, it is illegal to hawk goods within the CBD (Central Business District) and hawkers are usually chased away by the authorities. During



the elections, the political elite allow the hawkers to sell their wares within the CBD, ultimately clogging the pedestrian path-ways. This is usually in a move to win votes or gain favour, and is just one example of the myriad ways in which legality is twisted to suit particular ends. The other question of legality involves the secret sale of illegal substances under the cover of selling other wares.

The *matatu* operators work in a similar fashion. Since the routes are looped, once a *matatu* spots a *karao* or police officer, they will inform the *matatus* going in that direction to help them avoid it or prepare for it. A verbal communication or a display of wrists together would be used. These crackdowns on *matatus* are called ›operations‹. If a mobile worker is caught committing an offence, the resulting action is usually a fine or a bribe. If the money cannot be paid, they are taken to the nearest police station. Of late, the sophistication of extorting cash, especially from *matatu* operators, has risen. The transactions are now also made via the *M-Pesa* service, offered by mobile service operator Safaricom.

Authorities take on a different meaning as the case with the outlawed *mungiki sect* shows. This group of individuals run a sort of smaller parallel government that controls the services like *matatus* and hawkers at the grass roots level. They require mandatory protection money and are run through funding collected in this manner. As you will see later, they have a large role in transport and distribution of the wares that the hawkers sell. This is a problem that Evans knows well: several times he has spent two to four weeks in prison for plying his trade from his usual spot. But he always comes back here, since the advantages outweigh the dangers of being arrested. As well as the above-mentioned daily stream of students shuttling between university, home and the CBD, he has also found an opportunity close to his pitch for storing his goods. In a synagogue on the other side of the junction, he is allowed to store his stock overnight, and they will even look after it for him. This means that he doesn't have to lug his wares back home.

Since the police confiscate everything whenever he is arrested, Evans mainly sells sweets, cigarettes and telephone cards: all these things can be replaced relatively inexpensively. Sometimes he can even do a ›deal‹ with a police officer when the officer first arrests him, paying a small ›fine‹ to secure his release. This form of corruption is extremely widespread, and affects many of the mobile workplaces. At the same time, this chicanery is simply shrugged off and factored into the calculations. It is part of a system that ensures that many of the illegal jobs will continue: as long as the price is right, the police – poorly paid as they are – will look the other way.



SELLING SWEETS IN A WHEELCHAIR #13

110
cf. 03.2 NAIROBI IS GREEN *M-Pesa*

The public usually appreciates the services of the mobile workers depending on the place they are transacting their business. In the CBD, where the hawkers are confined to their dedicated streets, it is convenient to buy from them even though it is illegal. This relationship turns sour when the hawkers are given liberty as is the case during elections. The wide pedestrian streets become so crowded that the pedestrians are forced to use the roads. This also puts the pedestrians in harm's way and will, in turn, increase the crime around the area as the chaotic, slow-moving human traffic is ideal for this. In areas such as housing estates, hawkers are a welcome addition as they provide employment to the youth, thus reducing crime rates, allow cheap goods to reach the consumer due to the competition and are conveniently placed close to the homes. The problem experienced in the CBD does not crop up here due to the low human traffic and the presence of fewer spontaneous customers around the residential areas. There are instances where the mobile workers will not disrupt the mobility of an area. This is, however, different for example in the CBD. The sprawling plastic sacks consume the pavement leaving the pedestrians in a slow moving trail, picking their way through them and then onto the roads. This in turn has an effect on the vehicular traffic since the pedestrians on the road block the cars. The traffic jam creates an effect where the adjoining streets slow down as well. This effect is only felt in the CBD and in other city centres where there is a lot of human traffic e.g. Mombasa.

WAYS TO WORK

A further aspect of the demography of the mobile workers is the long distances that they usually have to travel to work. Many live in shanty towns or on the edge of the city and make their way to the city centre (CBD) or to the centre of their area of the city every day. For this they mostly use *matatus*; those who can't afford them have to go by foot.

Samson, 34, is a knife sharpener. He lives in a small hut in the South Business District shanty town with his twin brother. His wife and child live outside the city – the usual arrangement for mobile workers. He likes his job, explains Samson, while we accompany him for a while on his walk to work. His knife-sharpening machine is not kept at home – the risk of theft would be too great in the shanty town. Instead, he stores it with various trusted clients: today it is being kept at the shop of a butcher whom he has befriended, and who happens to be the first customer of the day. The route that he covers during his work depends upon the clientele that he visits each day. He usually covers between 4 and 6 km. He can't tell us how many customers he actually has on his books, since it changes according to the customer's needs and how many knives and scissors need to be sharpened. At a very rough estimate, it would be around 8 to 15.



#17



#17

PROFILE

Name

Samson

Age

34

Education

7 years of school

Family

wife and one child,
lives together with his twin brother

Unable to find a better alternative at the time, he got the job through a friend and he has been doing it for a few years now. Clients are found mainly through word-of-mouth, and he can't complain about any shortage of them. Samson works a certain area of the South Business District. He has no problems with other knife sharpeners taking business from him: they even help each other out when one of them is ill, keeping the sick man's clients covered.

His main tool, the sharpening wheel, was bought second-hand. The whole thing is very stable, and the only parts that can wear out are the belt that drives the wheel that rotates the grinding stone, and the grinding stone itself. This must be replaced every three to four months, costing around 400 shillings each time. Like many other mobile workers, Samson would have nothing against finding another, qualified job, even though he is glad to have this one at all. He is happy being a knife sharpener, the pay is relatively regular, the work presents no dangers and he has a regular clientele. But the ideal situation for Samson would still be to find a >fixed< workplace that offered more security, continuity and standing in the community such as a small shop, for instance.

SUMMARY

Outside of agriculture, 72% of all Kenyans are in one of these casual jobs⁵. The jobs described here form a considerable part of this sector, although it comprises a very wide range of different jobs: mobile workplaces stretch from knife sharpeners to taxi drivers, from street vendors to *mkokotenis* drivers. A challenge facing many of these mobile workers is transport and storage of their goods and tools. Most have found a solution in networking, either leaving something with a shop owner or paying someone to look after their goods and equipment. They expressed the unanimous desire to own a kiosk or a shop, which would mean that they would no longer have to work in the open air. This is inextricably linked with the phenomenon of mobility versus legality, something which we have only attempted to cover here (it would be interesting to pursue this more deeply in a further project). It can be seen that this is, basically, not an unrealistic aspiration – the main obstacles are the financial framework conditions, which are difficult to calculate. Along with the rent and the subsidiary costs of such a shop, the license fees have to be taken into account, and these are often set in a somewhat arbitrary manner by the authorities. Another question that will be relevant for further investigations is whether the evidently successful informal sector can be further promoted in a way that benefits both the economy of Nairobi and also the individual workers involved in it.

Due to a lack of clarity from the legal system and the somewhat lackadaisical approach by the police and administration, many of these casual jobs are skirting the limits of legality. At the same time they are also evidence for a great willingness towards self-organisation and towards autonomous businesses and jobs – something that has to be looked at against the background of deep-seated economic hardship. On the one hand the people who practice these trades and offer all manner of goods and services have given themselves a financial leg to stand on. They organise themselves into small networks and develop creative solutions for problems such as storage of goods and equipment or transport, and in so doing have created their own solutions to the ever-present problem of unemployment. They sustainably support the economy of the city by their self-reliance and their provision of services for which there is obviously a great demand. On the other hand, the situation shows us that the state takes on no responsibility for these citizens, a fact that has to be considered in combination with the traditionally strong links within families, circles of friends and tribes. Even today, these interrelationships represent a sort of social security system, without which these casual jobs would, perhaps, not be possible.

¹ Author unknown, **Africa: Kenya: The World Factbook**. Central Intelligence Agency, 28 Oct. 2009. Web. 13 Sept. 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ke.html> ² Martha Alter Chen **›Rethinking the informal economy Seminar** ◀ Seminar Publications, Nov. 2003. Web. 13. Sept. 2009. <http://www.india-seminar.com/2003/531/531%20martha%20alter%20chen.htm> ³ Alice Wanjira Munyua, **›AFRICAN WOMEN AND ICTs - Investigating Technology, Gender and Empowerment** ◀ The international development research center, 2009. Web. 13. Sept. 2009 http://www.idrc.ca/fr/ev-137010-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html ⁴ www.its.ucdavis.edu/people/faculty/Salon/Salon-Gulyani_Slum_2008.pdf ⁵ Author unknown, **›WOMEN AND MEN IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY: A statistical picture** International Labour Organization, 2002. Web. 13. Sept. 2009 http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2002/102B09_139_engl.pdf



ALWAYS ON THE GO #11



SELLING PEANUTS #15



A SHOE SHINER #12



CLEAN WATER IS ESSENTIAL

#14

HAWKING IN NAIROBI

by Bob Muhia Njoroge

Hawking is the act of selling goods for a living - the exchange of goods for an agreed sum of money. It is synonymous with peddling, vending, marketing, merchandising, selling or coster-mongering. Whether stationary or mobile, hawkers usually advertise their business by loud street cries or chants, to attract attention and announce their wares.

Hawking as a thriving business goes back to the 1920s, when a railway depot became a bustling administrative and tourist centre for the British colony. The earliest forms of street trading included delivering milk in large containers from carts drawn by draught animals through the city streets in the early morning. The farms that supplied the milk were in places as far away as Thika, Limuru and Kalimoni. Soon thereafter, peddlers of empty bottles, closely followed by motorcycle clothes vendors – known then as *pikiwallahs* – took up residence in the city and in the suburbs. As the town grew, transportation by hand-drawn carts brought in from India became a common sight in the city centre. Today, modern merchandise vending has become synonymous with Nairobi, bringing together people of diverse cultures, ethnicity and religious affiliations.

Hawking takes place on sidewalks, at street junctions, in designated places, on less busy alleys and finally by the traditional method of vending from handcarts. Over time, hawking has mutated into various other forms that bring business closer to its customers. For example, contraptions made out of broken bicycle parts serve as knife-sharpening machines on wheels.

HOW MANY FORMS OF HAWKING CAN YOU IDENTIFY IN THE FOLLOWING LINK?

The laws governing street hawking are explicit as to what form of hawking is acceptable by the civic authorities. Those practices that fall within the legal description of hawking apply for and are permitted to operate within certain districts and city zones. However, as more and more formal business appeared threatened by the introduction of politically induced legalisation of hawking in the 1980s, the more aggressive they became in marketing, and in warding off hawkers from the environs of their licensed businesses. As ever-more pressure was used to twist the legislators' arms to accede to the demand by informal vendors for a share of the market, the more it became apparent that a new level of competition was gaining a foothold. Politicians and city councillors are finding it hard to come to terms with the avalanche of hawking that the hitherto quite-innocent practice has become. Mileage thus gained has opened up new frontiers for demand for the allocation of private property to organised groups of hawkers who cite legal provisos that allow such allocation of land occupied continuously for periods of more than 12 years. The government views the turning of the tables on its laws as a direct threat to public order and consistently uses maximum force to evict hawkers from illegally occupied plots.



Hawking as a social and economic enterprise is therefore threatened by the very definition that controls its practice. Hawking spaces have occasionally been turned into battlegrounds to settle scores between what is perceived to be the haves and the have-nots. Hawkers, who are often people driven into the practice out of the sheer need for survival, are largely blamed for antisocial activities during these confrontations. They too are forced to fight back and to force the system to see their point of view, which is that they are not themselves the criminals but those that take advantage of chaos to cause destruction, theft and pilfering. In the central business district, hawkers are in perpetual danger of being harassed and arrested by a wide range of law enforcement groups: city council *askaris*, administration police and regular police forces. They face possible imprisonment and confiscation of their goods. All too often, trumped-up criminal charges such as theft and assault are brought against hawkers as a deterrent and as a means of intimidation. Even though licenses are issued to operate a business within the central business district, whenever there are running battles with any or all of the police units, there is little regard for legitimately licensed hawkers. Licensed hawkers may still be chased away without notice, and structures and goods worth millions of shillings may be destroyed and stolen by mobs and even by the *askaris* themselves.

Until the government is able to disentangle itself from the politics of hawking it seems that the only way forward for this otherwise ancient and noble way of life is threatened with going the way of other socially and culturally enhancing activities that have been outlawed as Kenyan society looks to the West for ideas on maintaining social order in urban areas. The city's planners and councillors seem too preoccupied by the current focus on party battles to care much about alternative solutions to the hawkers' problems. Indeed, prime properties in the city centre are targeted to tourist- and multi-storey developments that would serve the current the government agenda – attracting foreign capital and business. It goes without saying that although the hawker's champion, The Nairobi Hawkers Alliance (NAHA), has held many workshops with representatives from the Ministry of Planning, local authorities, university researchers, NGOs, hawkers' organisations and other groups, little has been achieved. The only time when the hawkers are permitted to run roughshod all over town is during periods just prior to national elections when every organised group becomes acknowledged as a potential voting block and becomes affiliated to a particular party (usually to the party in power) to heckle and even scare off rival parties during the campaign period. Many visitors and locals who witness some of these very violent confrontations are left bewildered by the cruelty of it all. Mothers with babies clutched on their backs fleeing trained soldiers who do seem not have any qualms about using their wooden batons to hit a helpless, crying and fleeing mother. Some of the common questions are:

Why doesn't the government create a sort of ›hawker park‹ – set aside a piece of land in Nairobi and ask the hawkers to sell from these location?
If you want to prevent filth and congestion, why not just install toilets, water, etc, and charge the hawkers a maintenance fee that will go towards the upkeep of this park (and not just put up a park in the middle of nowhere)?

Indeed, such proposals have been put forward, and indeed implemented. The Muthurwa Market is one such example that deals with all sorts of goods and merchandise that would otherwise be difficult to freely peddle from door to door. These include used electronic equipment such as electric irons, water heaters, shavers, water pumps, cookers, refrigerators, fans, etc. Other wares include used shoes, clothes, books and furniture. What casual observers fail to note, however, is that the type of goods sold ›on-the-go‹ are perishables and easy to carry as well as ready-to-use items such as fruit, soda, ice cream, candy or sweets and chocolates. Items such as hand-made leather belts, hats and socks are the province of the Maasai hawkers who always seem to get their way with the authorities. Being warrior-like and hard to intimidate, they always stand their ground, spoiling for a battle.

Driving into town, a wide variety of products can be bought – without leaving the car. The hawkers – mostly young men – take advantage of the slow-moving traffic to sell their wares. »We have to find money to buy food. The best we can do is hawk. You know very well that there is no employment in this country. How do you expect our families to survive? We had to find a way to sell our wares and this is what we came up with.«

said Kimani Mbugua, a hawker on the Mombasa Road near Nyayo National Stadium. The authorities do not seem to have much success in getting these hawkers off the streets. »It is illegal to hawk anywhere in the city whether on the roads or in the city centre unless the area is designated. Let [hawkers] be warned, we will catch up with them. So far we have been ineffective because they are so many and operating on different roads but, believe me, we will catch up with them.« warned John Katana, an inspector at the Nairobi City Council. Many motorists in Nairobi argue that despite the hawkers bringing services closer to them in the traffic jams, the practice is a security risk. »I don't buy products from these young men because I have been robbed twice. Once, I was driving down Valley Road and a young man approached me in my car, pretending to be a hawker. When I rolled down my window to check out his merchandise, the guy pulled off my wristwatch and took to his heels.« said Anthony Ochieng'. Katana agrees with Ochieng' that the hawkers are a security threat to motorists, and warn them to be careful. »We have had many cases of drivers who have been mugged by young men masquerading as hawkers. Female drivers are especially targeted. Let all motorists in Nairobi discourage this practice by not buying from the hawkers. That will solve this problem once and for all.« said Katana.

IS HAWKING A PROBLEM, AND WHAT EXACTLY IS ITS PROBLEMATIC NATURE?

Many people argue that hawkers are a nuisance in the Central Business District of Nairobi, but others feel quite differently about them. This could be due to several issues; for instance, we all know that during the afternoon rush hour (4:00 – 7:00 PM) the public transport minibuses (*matatus*) hike up their fares. This causes many people to idle around town till the fares go back to normal and so they find themselves visiting streets dominated by hawkers, keeping themselves busy by walking around and seeing what products they have without necessarily buying. Hawkers have admirable instinctive traits in their work. Theirs is work that is inversely proportional to operations on the stock markets. When everything is dipping at the Stock Exchange, they rise to the occasion and move their business onto the streets. They seem to understand people's needs on every occasion. At least they seem to have an eye for what people want to eat and wear. They call you »brotheee« or »sisteee« (brother, sister) as a show of brotherhood: they will always have something that suits you.

IS HAWKING A LEGITIMATE BUSINESS?

Numbering around 16,000, hawkers form one of the largest groups of people doing business in the city of Nairobi. Considered collectively, their turnover is well beyond . 5 million shillings a day. Therefore hawking is definitely an important employment option that has thrived under very difficult conditions, but which provides livelihoods for many marginalised Kenyans in an under-performing economy.

Consider the following: if every registered hawker employed just three people, 48,000 jobless would immediately leave the job search market, thereby substantially reducing the rising unemployment level in the country.

03.4 NON-MOTORIZED VEHICLES

ANDRÉ SHEYDIN

- # 80 THE DECISION TO USE A SPECIFIC TYPE OF VEHICLE DEPENDS ON THE NEEDS OF THE USER – WHAT VEHICLE PROPERTIES INFORM THIS DECISION?
- # 68 WHAT POSSIBILITIES OF SPATIAL ORGANISATION, REGULATION OR CONSTRUCTION ARE AVAILABLE TO EASE THE INTERFERENCE WITH MOTORIZED VEHICLES?
- # 74 IN WHICH SITUATIONS DO NON-MOTORIZED VEHICLES SERVE NON-INTENTIONAL FUNCTIONS?
- # 79 WHAT ARE THE INFORMAL AGREEMENTS ON TRAFFIC BEHAVIOUR BETWEEN PEDESTRIANS, NON-MOTORIZED- AND MOTORIZED VEHICLES IN NAIROBI'S TRAFFIC?
- # 69 WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF THE NON-MOTORIZED MODE COMPARED TO OTHER MODES OF URBAN TRANSPORTATION?
- # 76 WHAT STRUCTURES AND SITUATIONS ENDANGER NMVS, AND WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF COUNTERACTING THIS BY ROAD CONSTRUCTION, LAWS OR VEHICLE DESIGN?
- # 77 WHAT DIFFERENT ROLES DO NMVS PLAY IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY IN DIFFERENT DISTRICTS OF NAIROBI?
- # 75 WHICH BUSINESSES CAN ONLY BE CONDUCTED USING NON-MOTORIZED VEHICLES?
- # 70 WHERE ARE MKOKOTENIS CONSTRUCTED, AND HOW DOES THE SUPPLY CHAIN WORK?
- # 75 WHICH PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES LEAD MKOKOTENI DRIVERS INTO THIS JOB?
- # 78 HOW HAS THE NON-MOTORIZED VEHICLE INDUSTRY CHANGED OVER THE DECADES?
- # 73 WHICH INFLUENCES OF GLOBALIZATION ARE VISIBLE ON NMVS IN NAIROBI, IN TERMS OF GROWTH AND CONCENTRATION OF MANUFACTURERS?
- # 72 HOW CAN BICYCLES BE A COMPLEMENTARY PART OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND MAKE IT MORE EFFECTIVE?
- # 72 WHY DO NAIROBIAN PEOPLE USE BICYCLES ONLY RARELY?
- # 81 IN WHICH TYPES OF SITUATIONS OR OVER WHICH TRANSPORTATION DISTANCES ARE NMVS MOST EFFECTIVE?
- # 82 WHICH EXAMPLES OF RELIEVING MOTORIZED TRAFFIC EXIST IN OTHER CITIES WITH A SIMILAR GROWTH PATTERN?
- # 79 WHICH CRITERIA FOR THE DESIGN OF FACILITIES ENCOURAGE THE USE OF NMVS?
- # 80 WHICH ASPECTS OF NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORT ARE RELEVANT AND FORWARD-LOOKING FOR URBAN TRANSPORT?
- # 76 HOW SHOULD NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORT STRATEGIES MESH WITH URBAN PLANNING?
- # 69 HOW CAN MOTORIZED VEHICLES LEARN FROM THE EFFICIENCY OF NMVS?
- # 67 HOW CAN THE USE OF HANDCARTS BE FACILITATED BY TECHNOLOGY?
- # 76 HOW CAN THE SECURITY AND USABILITY OF MKOKOTENIS BE IMPROVED?

SMALL-SCALE MOBILITY SOLUTIONS

by André Sheydin

Today, we are surrounded by modes of transport that move people and goods and products of all descriptions from place to place. Motorisation plays an important role here, saving the energy of both humans and animals and promising quicker movement and travel. But in certain contexts, non-motorised vehicles (NMVs) can offer more advantages. On the grounds of cost and efficiency, population groups the world over have fallen back on this type of transport, whose independence from fuel costs and emission-free running has become an increasingly apparent advantage over time. Including pedestrians, in the year 2000 non-motorised transport represented 45% of journeys in Kenya's city centres.¹ In Nairobi, many people cannot afford to own a car, causing them to rely on non-motorised transport that needs neither fuel nor complex maintenance. However, it is still unclear which other aspects make the use of this type of vehicle efficient in its broadest sense. Due to the high number of *mkokotenis* (large handcarts) in Nairobi, many commuters often find themselves in dangerous situations, which are caused by a raft of other factors. The greatest threat to non-motorised vehicles comes from the rising number of motorised vehicles that eat up road space and the related dangers caused by the ever-increasing population density. In terms of road planning, the needs of non-motorised vehicles have always been a secondary consideration in comparison to those of motorised vehicles. The streets of Nairobi have lanes for cars, pedestrians or both, but not for bicycles or non-motorised vehicles. It is also unclear at first why, in spite of this, so many Nairobians still use NMVs and what infrastructures exist to serve NMVs.

How are we to explain the fact that Nairobi's infrastructure is set up exclusively for motorised vehicles and pedestrians, while NMVs have represented a valued and much-used means of transport throughout the city's history? Do NMVs, by their very nature, not need such dedicated infrastructure, or is that simply a misapprehension? #79

In Europe as well as in Africa, road users – and even traffic researchers – claim that NMVs cause traffic jams, promote the exploitation of manual labour or simply have no place in modern society. In times of rampant motorisation and the attendant consequences for mobility, this attitude needs to be reconsidered.



RICH VARIETY OF TRANSPORTATION MODES

#78

CARTS ARE VERY FREQUENT

#98

There are a variety of conditions that make urban transport with NMVs attractive. The most important are:

- conservation of resources
- emissions-free operation
- especially suited for short distances
- sometimes the only means of transport for low-income groups
- complements public transport
- mechanically simple, NMVs offer greater reliability

The use of NMVs for transport is declining. Hand in hand with the rapid growth of the city of Nairobi more and more cars are being licensed, which further curbs the use of NMVs as a mode of transport. In the coming decade, these conditions could lead to a further decline in NMV transport. Above all, in the shanty towns NMVs are an indispensable means of transport, which creates and supports many of the characteristics of the informal economy. An exemplary source for this debate – much cited in the following research – is the study by Michael Replogle, who investigated NMVs in Asia, and who has thoroughly underscored their relevance for urban traffic. He and I are of the same opinion, and in what follows I will put forward several lines of his argument that support the use of NMVs in urban spaces.

The argumentation goes hand in hand with the observations and interviews that I have made in Nairobi according to the Cultural Library methodology. Before the 3 weeks in Nairobi I made researching at the topic of non-motorized vehicles via the internet analysing photos which have been made by visitors in Nairobi to find phenomena that are worthwhile to pursue at face. On site I observed interesting habits and processes of the Nairobians everyday life which I documented via photography and developed to »item sheets« which opened a sophisticated view on certain situations which I have been discussing with local students and inhabitants. Also I have involved discussions with all kinds of people from whom I could get inside views on the NMV issues.

NMV DIVERSITY

There is a wide variety of NMVs in Nairobi, and these formed an integral part of the transport culture well before the advent of the automobile. In the streets of Nairobi one encounters mostly NMVs that are used to transport loads. In city districts, personal transport with NMVs is hardly ever seen.

Today, however, all these vehicles use transport infrastructure that is primarily based on the interaction of motorised vehicles and pedestrians. NMVs appear to be able to go anywhere they please. Sometimes, however, it is absolutely necessary to use NMVs in areas where the risk of danger to their operators and other road users is great. The following table illustrates the variety of non-motorised vehicles in Nairobi that have filled niches where motorised transport would be impossible.



LARGE HANDCART MKOKOTENI

- Axle width same as car
- Small turning circle
- Locally made from metal
- Large load-carrying surface
- When heavily laden, needs to be pulled by more than one person
- Can be stopped simply by tipping the tail backwards

#75



SMALL HANDCART (DOLLY) MKOKOTENI MDOGO

- Compact *mkokoteni*
- Shorter axle width enables navigation through traffic jams
- Suited to one person
- Can be used in areas with high pedestrian density

#91



TROLLEY GARI NDOGO

- Lower load-lifting height thanks to low-slung carrying surface on small wheels
- Load always in operator's sight
- Highly manoeuvrable
- Used for transporting goods between market stores

#73



#72

BICYCLE BAISKELI

- in-line wheels for minimum gauge
- Balance needed whilst riding
- Personal- and load transport possible
- Drive transmission via pedals and chain
- Steering via handlebars
- Moves in one direction
- Two drive methods: pushing or pedalling



#80

BICYCLE FOR TRANSPORTATION BAISKELI YA MIZIGO

- Works on the principle of a bicycle
- Smaller front wheel provides more storage space
- Load always in sight



#96

BICYCLE FOR PASSENGERS BODA BODA

- Cheap alternatives to taxis
- Quickly move through traffic jams
- Capacity limited to one passenger



#16

THREE-WHEELED BICYCLE (TRICYCLE) BAISKELI YA MIGUU MITATU

- Also used by street vendors
- Simple journey to point of sale
- Three wheels for balance and stability
- Integrated storage in front
- Mobile workplace & storage



#86

WHEELCHAIRS GARI YA WALEMAVU

- Legalises street vending in Central Business District (CBD)
- Made for disabled people
- Driven via hand-operated pedals
- Three wheels for balance and stability



#16

MOBILE WORKPLACE WITH STORAGE GARI LA KUTANGATANGA

- Operated by a single person
- Small wheels, can be easily parked
- Mobile workplace & storage



#90

CART PULLED BY ANIMALS

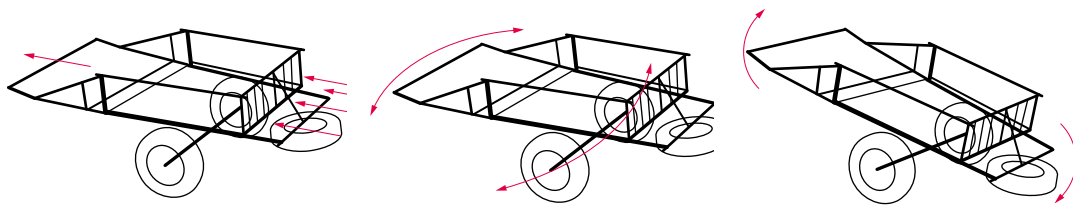
GARI LA KUVURUTWA NA PUNDA

- Pulled mostly by donkeys
- Common means on the outskirts of the city
- Loading capacity is larger than human-powered NMVs

MKOKOTENIS

The *mkokoteni* is a two-wheeled vehicle with the same width as a car. In Nairobi, you will only find *mkokotenis* constructed from metal. They are made from welded metal members, which give the frame stability. Earlier, they were made from wood, and such carts are still to be found in Mombasa. This type of vehicle construction was found in many parts of the world before motorisation and was used as a wagon for the transport of heavy loads, pulled by draft animals.

A *mkokoteni* functions according to the 3 simple principles of acceleration, steering and braking:



VELOCITY

STEERING

BRAKES

A home-made welding machine made from basic materials. This welding machine saves on costs and does the same job as a commercial version (but without the built-in safety feature). AS



A MAN USING A HOME-MADE WELDER FOR THE JUA KALI SECTOR

One of the largest manufacturers is the Kamunkunji Jua Kali Association, which is situated on the sheet steel market (between Pumwani and Landhies Road, around 500 m from Nairobi's Central Business District). A corridor of cacophony, the like of which you rarely encounter, shows the way: a symphony of hundreds of hammers striking metal. A gigantic, open-air workshop under the *Jua Kali* (hot sun), as the Kenyans say. *Jua Kali* is, at the same time, a term for the proactive sourcing of workplaces, for the small businesses set up by resourceful >entrepreneurs<. From used sheets of steel are being fashioned new cooking pots, storage cases, safari chests, canisters, bed frames, armbands – and *mkokotenis*.

Kamakunji Juakali was started by Jacinta Wanjiru back in 1986 in a small shed, selling scrap metal. Since then it has grown to be a large manufacturing and fabricating firm that supplies wholesale stores and retail shops with >Jua Kali< goods.²



KIRINYAGA ROAD

#78

The carts are used to transport goods from larger warehouses to smaller warehouses. MK



RACE-COURSE ROAD

#93

With the current water rationing the hand-pulled carts are instrumental in the supply of water to some homes and restaurants. MK



WAKULIMA MARKET

#97

Around noon there is not much business at the market. The carts are stored by stacking them together. MK



#74

PROFILE

Name

Njuguna James Kariuki

Age

23

Education

0-level (secondary/ordinary level)

Tribe

Kikuyu

Religion

Roman catholic

District

Nairobi

INTERVIEW

JOB & INDUSTRY

How would you describe your job? What exactly are the tasks you do daily/weekly/monthly? My job entails carrying food stuffs from Gikomba market to the bus terminus. Sometimes, depending on the proximity, I take things up to the estates that are for small scale vegetable traders, this happens in the early hours of the morning. At different times of the day or evening I sell some fruits at the road side from my *mkokoteni*. I am also a broker in the selling of *mkokotenis*, and I am also involved in the supply of materials used in the manufacture of *mkokotenis*. What did you do before this job and how did you get into this business? I was employed as a mechanic in a workshop that was burnt down during the post election violence of the disputed 2007 general elections. I was living in Kibera. Have you noticed any changes in the industry of non-motorized vehicles since the beginning of your job until now? Not much, but a notable change has been seen in the ownership. Most of the operators of these NMVs are not the owners, they are leased to them at a fee per day depending on the efficiency and size. Another change is the size, number and position of the wheels. When I first joined the business in early 2008 some of them were single-wheeled and operated by one person. Nowadays they are double-wheeled and can be operated by up to four persons depending on the size of the load.

MANUFACTURE, SALE AND REPAIR

Where are *mkokotenis* built and who builds them? One of the major manufacturers of the NMVs is the Kamukunji Jua Kali association located along Landhies Road less than 500m from the CBD. Who buys this kind of vehicle and to what purpose? (e.g. self-use, rent, service, ...) There are those who buy them for lease (they don't operate them) but the main customers are the operators who may wish to expand their business by employing others or repairing old ones.

Thanks to the simplicity of these vehicles, they can be turned to many different uses. PH

Mkokotenis play a large role in the Kenyan micro-economy. PH

When they need to be pulled by more than one person, *mkokotenis* provide job opportunities. PH

cf. NAIROBI MAP CBD



#75



#81



#101

Where and how are *mkokoteni* (and other NMVs) repaired? The moving parts can be repaired in motor vehicle garages but they are mainly repaired by their manufacturers at the Kamukunji Jua Kali association workshops. How much would you pay for a new/old *mkokoteni* if you needed one? The price is dependent on the price of the raw materials, scrap metal, wheels but the price ranges from 8000-20000 ksh (80-200 euros). What are the parts that most need replacing on *mkokotenis*? The wheels.

COLLECTION POINTS & ROUTES

Where are the vehicles parked when not in use? Most of them are chained up at roadsides on electricity posts along bus termini. How are they secured when being parked? The wheels are chained (bicycle style). What functions beside transportation do *mkokotenis* take on whilst stationary? (e.g. sitting, sleeping, selling goods) They can be used to sell vegetables (in order to evade paying taxes or being harassed by city council officers or paying rent). Do you think the restriction zones for *mkokoteni* movement are legitimate? Would you extend or remove those restrictions? Why? I think they are not legitimate. *Mkokotenis* are a cheap and flexible means of transport in Nairobi and the road-planning authorities should reserve certain lanes for *mkokotenis* to avoid the MV-NMV conflict. What are the routes that *mkokotenis* use most? The routes leading into and out of the market areas; mainly Landhies Road, from muthurwa/gikomba markets.

TRANSPORTATION SERVICE

How do transportation prices measure up and where do you see the differences compared to transportation via motorized vehicles? Transportation by NMV is rather cheaper than MV, not only because it targets micro-businesses, but unlike MV it doesn't require much capital input, fuel, insurance... Goods transported via NMV are not scrutinized by security agents, hence are more efficient over small distances. What does it cost to rent a *mkokoteni* for a day/week/month? Depending on its efficiency, it may cost from 200-500 (Ksh) for leasing on a trip basis and up to 3 or 4 successive trips can be made over a distance of 10 – 15 km.

Having a reserved lane for *mkokotenis* would require additional lanes for other vehicles – as the goal is a modal mix... PH



NMV'S ADVANTAGE: ESCAPING TRAFFIC JAMS # 69

EXPERIENCE

What are the advantages of non-motorized vehicles compared to motorized vehicles? They are easily accessible and cheap. They can also access the poorly planned shanty towns. They do not require a licence, insurance cover or training. Above all, they do not pollute the environment. What would you say are the main advantages of non-motorized vehicles? During traffic jams I am able to manoeuvre through the traffic, which gives me an edge over the MV. What are the disadvantages of non-motorized vehicles compared to motorized vehicles? NMVs are not efficient over long distances. I am prone to fatigue. I cannot use it as collateral to secure a loan in a financial institution. Vulnerability to accidents. What is the worst situation you have ever experienced with non-motorized vehicles (*mkokotenis*)? I once transported electronic goods and was cut up by an MV hence, it overturned and the goods got damaged.

PERSPECTIVE

If you could improve or change something about non-motorized vehicles (independent of the costs) what would it be? The carrying capacity... Sometimes I overload the NMV, which puts me at risk of accidents. If you had a choice, would you replace each non-motorized vehicle with a motorized vehicle? No. NMV are a necessity brought about by poverty and poor roads in the shanty towns. Do people try to install engines on *mkokotenis* or other kinds of non-motorized vehicles? What do you think about this development? Absolutely they do! I have seen a lot of people improvising the NMV by attaching them to motor cycles and they use them as taxis to carry people... but it is not very common in Nairobi. Do you think the city would lose something if people in Nairobi stopped using *mkokotenis* for any reason? Quite a lot. The NMVs are the main source of transport as far as the movement of vegetables – *sukuma wiki* – to the most populous areas of Nairobi Eastlands, hence the people would miss their favourite delicacies. NMVs connect the non-accessible interior of most markets – Gikomba – to the bus termini that carry some of these goods. It would also lead to loss of jobs for the youths who depend on it.

XX

cf. 03.5 MOVEMENT OF GOODS
Sukuma wiki

INCOME & EMPLOYMENT

The majority of people in Nairobi live below the poverty line³. Nairobi has such extremes of affluence and poverty that it is reasonable to talk about a two-tier economy. The one tier services the needs of the well-off, makes use of modern technologies and official markets and looks the same as in any developed country. The other tier services disadvantaged groups and is characterised by more traditional technologies, unofficial markets and medium to high levels of economic and political disadvantage.

Many of the financially disadvantaged people in Nairobi would not be able to afford public transport if the affordable, privately organised transport network of *matatus* (minibuses) did not exist. For the citizens of Nairobi, many of their journeys can mean travelling more than 20km on foot. Walking represents the main means of transport for people on low incomes. The value attributed to travel time decreases in relation to income. Although (or maybe because?), at the other lower end of the scale, walking costs nothing, it demands a great investment of time. Short distances represent an exception to this rule as does walking during times of high traffic volume.

Unemployment, dependence on the informal economy, low wages and job insecurity (many workers are hired on a day-to-day basis) have a direct influence on the travelling and transport needs of a great portion of the urban population. Access to the jobs market requires transport, which thus becomes a means of survival. Even the private *matatu* transport network is not an affordable means of transport for everybody. A large part of the unofficial economy consists of the provision of goods or services on the street, or of transporting people or goods on a pay-per-journey basis.

XX
cf. 03.1 COMMUTING
Matatus

A relevant and clearly defined topic for further research/observation. PH

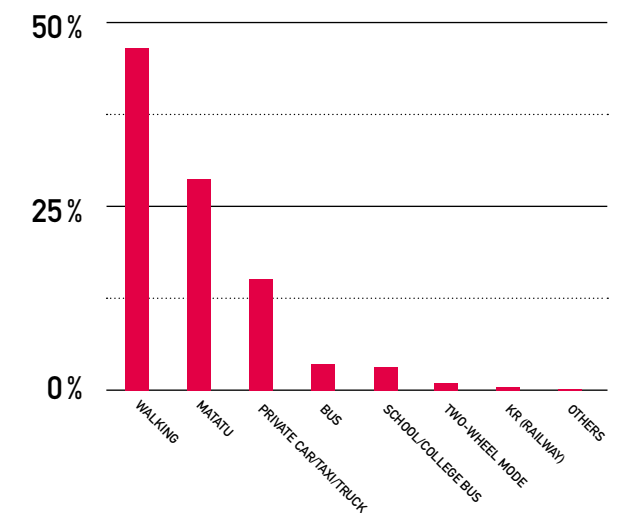


TRANSPORTATION SERVICE HOTLINE #99



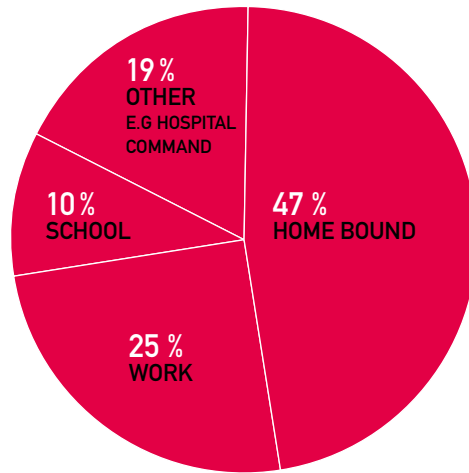
TRANSPORTATION MODE CHANGE AT WAKULIMA MARKET #100

TRIP COMPOSITION BY TRAVEL MODE IN NAIROBI



SOURCE: >Decongesting Nairobi – Urban Transportation Challenges<

TRIP COMPOSITION BY PURPOSE IN NAIROBI



SOURCE: »Decongesting Nairobi – Urban Transportation Challenges«

NMVs offer the chance of work, especially to those with little work experience and on low incomes. Small, informal businesses and private, official firms play a large role in non-motorised transport systems. However, they are beset with restrictive rules, taxes, compulsory licences, prohibitions and even confiscations of the vehicles. NMVs make sense for shorter trips; over longer distances they become extremely tiring for the person pulling them. Journey times can actually be improved thanks to some of the advantages of NMVs, such as their tight turning circle or their ability to cut through traffic jams thanks to their reduced width. Bicycles and small hand-carts fit into this category.

Even in the future, people from these low income groups will be dependent upon NMVs as a mode of transport since their choices in the mobility market are narrow. In areas of high poverty it is important to safeguard the modes of transport of the people who live there.

TRAFFIC FACILITIES

NMVs use the existing infrastructure, and so, at first glance, there would seem to be little need to adapt it to the benefit of these vehicles. If motorisation increases, along with the traffic density, it will become increasingly more important to set up separate lanes. In the daily struggle on the streets, NMVs are constantly being edged out by motorised vehicles, which ultimately reduces their participation in mixed traffic. Motorised vehicles are heavier and faster than NMVs or pedestrians and often convey a higher social status, whereas in the very poorest sectors of the population possession of an NMV, – or even of more than one – is regarded as a status symbol. On roads with mixed traffic and little room, NMVs find themselves at a particular disadvantage. Observation of everyday traffic situations showed that the drivers of motorised vehicles often think nothing of cutting up an NMV, and most of the drivers show little or no consideration for other road users.

Only a continuous stream of NMVs on the road makes it possible for them to claim a part of the carriageway for themselves; such a situation is, however, the exception rather than the rule. The thought of using bicycles in central Nairobi can scarcely be entertained, since motorised vehicles tend not to give way to other road users – especially on roundabouts – and therefore accidents are an everyday occurrence. Most of the accidents in which NMVs were involved take place because of human error and the condition of the vehicles and of the roads⁴:



MIXED TRANSPORTATION MODES AT THE GLOBE CINEMA ROUNDABOUT

#76



BODA BODA AS HUMAN TRANSPORT ALTERNATIVE

#96

- speeding and dangerous overtaking
- alcohol and drug consumption
- driver negligence and poor driving standards
- overloaded vehicles
- poorly maintained vehicles
- bad roads and hilly terrain
- lack of awareness of pedestrians
- driver distractions (e.g. talking on mobile phones)

Nevertheless, bicycles are the predominant form of transport in many peripheral areas of the city, and represent for many people a link from the commuter zone to the central business district (CBD). Even *boda bodas* are used for this purpose as an alternative to taxis and *matatus*.



SELF-ORGANISING TRAFFIC SYSTEM AT NIGHT

#105

There is no unanimous answer to the question of which facilities would contribute to the safer use of NMVs: depending upon the conditions, it could be anything from a normal street with mixed traffic to a carriageway with completely separate lanes for each type of vehicle. Still, even the lack of planning and predictability in terms of infrastructure produces its own qualities, since it spawns self-organising systems that flexibly adapt to the prevailing conditions, instead of slavishly following rigid rules. The transport connections arise through flexible, self-determined agreements of an autogenous self-organised system, and are usually defined by four characteristics⁵:

COMPLEXITY: Its parts are connected to each other through reciprocal and constantly changing relationships, while those parts can, at any time, themselves change. This makes it difficult to describe or to predict the behaviour within such systems. **SELF-REFERENCE:** Every behaviour of the system also acts upon itself, becoming the starting point for further behaviours. **REDUNDANCY:** There is no fundamental separation between organising, form-active or impelling participants. **AUTONOMY:** Relationships and interactions that are defined as a unit by the system can only themselves be defined by the system.



CYCLE PATH IN DELFT, NETHERLANDS

#72

The positive effects of self organisation with regards to traffic has, on the one hand, a knock-on effect on motivation, since one's own interests take on more relevance. But this can also be a disadvantage in that it promotes egotism. Traffic is experienced in a more intensive and more varied manner. On the other hand, in the longer run, the required flexibility brings with it the ability to adapt to various conditions and to act in the best possible way given the circumstances. Should the conditions spontaneously change, road users will adapt more quickly to those changes. The negative effects of self organisation in traffic systems are excessive pressure or conflicts that must, in the absence of rules, be settled between the road users themselves.

This can also lead to bending of the official rules, and to other rules spontaneously coming into existence, which brings with it uncertainty as to which traffic ordinances are actually in force. Infrastructure changes are, therefore, more difficult within such systems and require more time than in systems with clearly defined guidelines.

There are many different types of NMVs, each placing differing demands on the traffic facilities, for which solutions already exist. These solutions must be looked at more closely, investigated and evaluated. The concept of 'networked hierarchies', which serves to classify and evaluate motorways and the distances between them, can also be useful for the planning and design of NMV routes. This concept has been successfully employed in many European cities to combat the decline in the use of non-motorised vehicles during times of sharp increases in motorised traffic. Many cities, for example in the Netherlands (Delft), Denmark (Copenhagen), Sweden (Malmö) and Germany (Hanover), have developed effective and successful bicycle networks⁶. Some cities in developing countries also have noteworthy bicycle networks, developed over many years, such as Curitiba (Brazil), Tianjin (China), Pune (India) and Bogotá (Colombia).



MOI AVENUE

#72

In many cities that depend upon NMVs, these bicycle networks ensure that cars and motorbikes are kept out of many streets and neighbourhoods. The provision of traffic-free zones, in which motorised transport is forbidden, and also the provision of traffic-calming areas can be the most effective strategies supporting the use of NMVs, foot traffic and public transport. Such areas are becoming more prevalent in the traffic-clogged cities of Europe and Japan. Motorised and non-motorised vehicles compete with each other due to their differing manoeuvrability characteristics, especially in mixed traffic. High numbers of non-motorised vehicles demand better traffic management and design, including signalling systems that explicitly take explicit account the needs of slow-moving vehicles into account. In the Netherlands, for example, a system of separate lanes has been introduced in areas where an increase in the number of NMVs has been anticipated.⁷

In a new code of practice for street traffic in China, five types of facility for bicycles were differentiated⁸. In the following, the first two are recommended for large and medium-sized cities:

SPECIAL BICYCLE PATHS, independent of the road network and dedicated to bicycle use only. A network of such roads is being created in the CBD of Shen Zhen City. **SEMI-INDEPENDENT BICYCLE LANES**, positioned on one or both sides of motor vehicle lanes with physical separation.

NON-INDEPENDENT BICYCLE LANES, positioned on one or both sides of motor vehicle lanes but without physical separation. **MIXED TRAFFIC ROADS**, where motor vehicles and bicycles share the same right-of-way.

PEDESTRIAN-BICYCLE PATHS, where bicycles and pedestrians share the same right-of-way.

It can be seen that in Nairobi very few people actually use the bicycle as a means of transport. By drawing upon the recommendations from China, a possible reason for this may be that there are no dedicated routes for bicycle traffic. This gives people good grounds to favour motorised vehicles, especially when considering their own personal safety. Furthermore, other factors play a role, such as the perception of the means of transport (it reflects upon the user's social status), and the infrastructure that exists for vehicle maintenance.

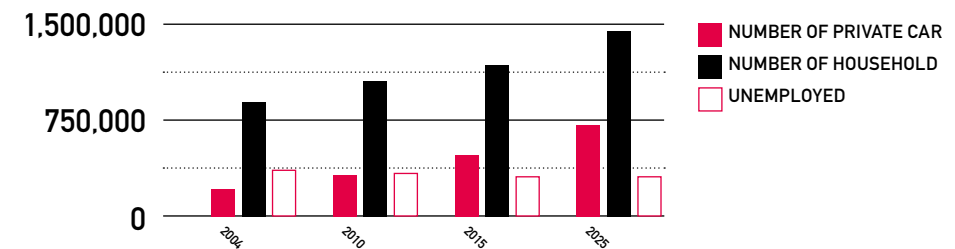


TRAFFIC JAM

#88

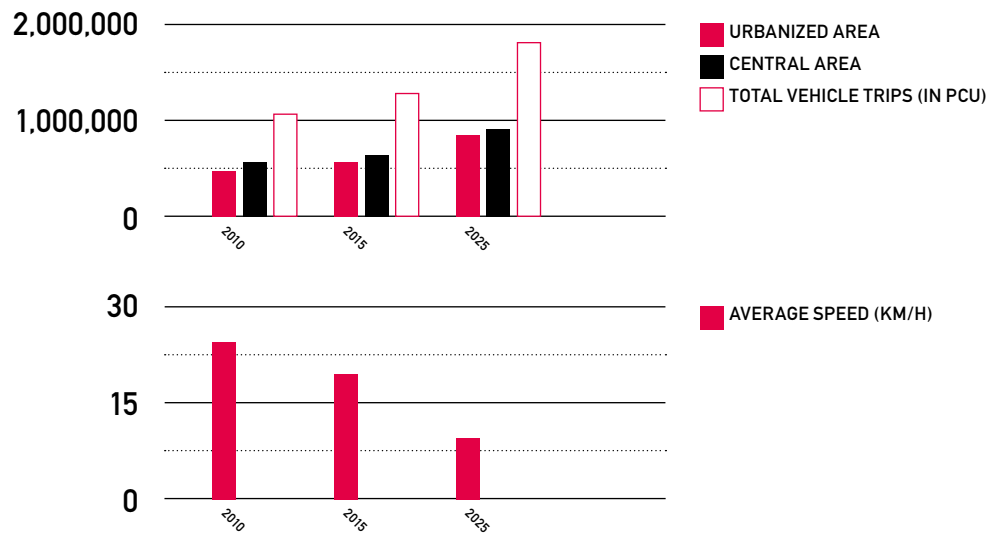
EFFICIENT ROAD PARTITIONING

Nairobi has a concentric road layout with radial traffic arteries. In metropolitan areas, such a configuration – in conjunction with the high concentration of workplaces – presents a challenge for traffic planning. The battle for road space and parking places is waged most fiercely in the city centre. Most space in the city centre gets used as car parking, so that the streets lose their original function. Most of the parking places are occupied by the cars of commuters. Long traffic jams are to be found mostly on the radial arteries, such as Thika Road, Uhuru Highway and Mombasa Road because of poor road conditions. These are responsible for raised running costs for motorised vehicles, large traffic jams during peak hours and road traffic accidents. During rush hour, drivers can find themselves spending more than half of their total journey time at a standstill. The average automobile speed has been estimated at around 30 kph, and – if the situation does not change – is further predicted to fall to 11.2 kph by the year 2025.



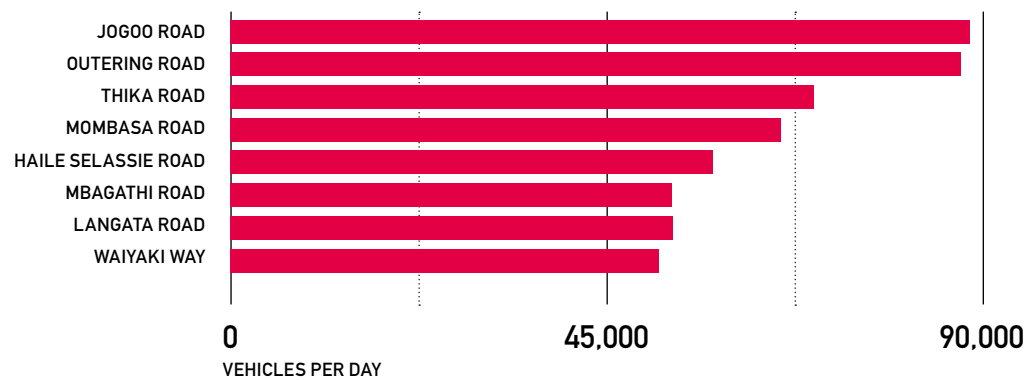
SOURCE: »The Study on Master Plan for Urban Transport in the Nairobi Metropolitan Area

ASSESSMENT OF PRESENT TRANSPORT NETWORK CONDITIONS



SOURCE: >Decongesting Nairobi – Urban Transportation Challenges<

DAILY TRAFFIC VOLUMES IN THE NAIROBI ROADS



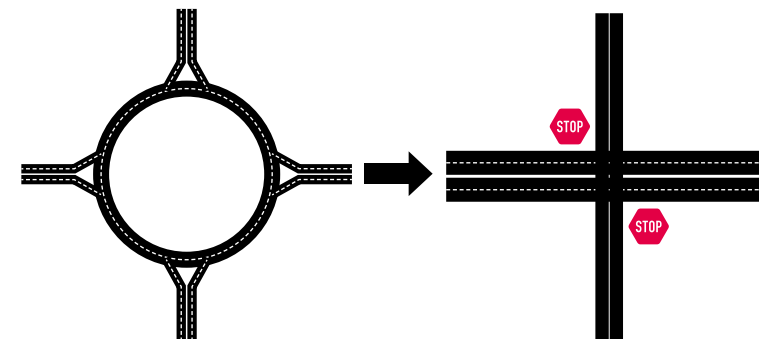
SOURCE: >Decongesting Nairobi – Urban Transportation Challenges<

The throughput of passengers using various forms of transport is often calculated in the analysis of traffic efficiency. This theoretical analysis has been misused in order to categorise certain modes of transport as inefficient, failing to take their complementary interaction into account. Any analysis of traffic efficiency must differentiate between the route, the costs and the function.⁹

Judgements about the efficiency of road space must take into account the variations present in the real world and the dependence on occupancy, degree of congestion, topography, the frequency of public transport stops, other operational details of public transport and road-surface quality amongst other things.¹⁰

In order to optimise the traffic throughput in Nairobi, cities with similar traffic patterns should be analysed regarding their capacity models and taking into account different modes of transport and traffic conditions. For short distances, rail transport would neither be sufficiently cost effective nor practical. In the case of long distances, travelling on foot or by bicycle would represent an equally inefficient and impractical option. For any single mode of transport it is not possible to operate at maximum efficiency over different routes. Transport efficiency results from a series of long and short routes following one on from another, negotiated using different modes of transport.

A complementary development of different travel markets with regard to the limitations of the road space, the affordability of the means of transport and the necessary speed and distance of the routes, will increase transport efficiency.¹¹ Since road space is becoming so tight in Nairobi, traffic management should be the first step to take to get around traffic jams. This can take the form of, for example, turn restrictions at junctions, the introduction of one-way streets, the upgrading of traffic lights and the provision for the various types of vehicle under traffic law.¹² In Europe, roundabouts have been introduced to reduce the speed of vehicles in areas with traffic calming. The senior economist of the Roads Department of the Republic of Kenya (MoRPW), King'ori Zacharia Irungu, pleaded in his proposals to Nairobi for the conversion of roundabouts to arterial roads with junctions, in order to counter congestions.¹³



The separation of different modes of transport can greatly increase the efficiency of the system. Many cities, like Curitiba (Brazil), have demonstrated this by assigning bus traffic to dedicated bus routes, separating it from other motorised or non-motorised vehicles, thereby increasing the speed, reliability and capacity of the public transport system in the process. When there is not enough road space to satisfy demand, it often makes more sense to dedicate certain roads and streets to different types of transport. This makes particular sense in cases of low-occupancy car journeys. Even in cities, where the streets in general are overcrowded, it is often possible to identify unused road space. The World Bank Project in Shanghai, for example, has turned the city's alley systems over to the bicycle network, thus freeing up main roads and traffic intersections. Where no suitable alternative space can be found, NMVs and public transport should

However, there are thousands of people (the >Human Trail<), who regularly travel one or two hours a day on foot from Kibera to the city centre, because of a lack of any alternative. PH



COMMON ROAD PARTITIONING IN NAIROBI

#102

use the space allocated to each of these types of traffic. Within Nairobi it is evident that the motorised traffic is gaining the upper hand, and there are many routes that are given over to motorised traffic where it would make much more sense to use NMVs. It will become increasingly harder to find unused road space in the centre of Nairobi without the introduction of some form of restriction on motorised traffic.

The design of transport routes has a direct influence on traffic safety. The separation of fast moving from slow-moving traffic, the design of intersections to ensure good visibility, reduction of conflicts when turning and the channelling of traffic based on the predictability of traffic flow patterns can increase road safety as well as traffic throughput.

The traffic discipline in Nairobi has reached breaking point, both for motorised as well as non-motorised vehicles. Traffic jams, traffic law violations and inadequate facilities worsen the conditions and intensify the problem. The provision of off-street facilities to combat these problems could increase the efficiency of the transport system. Many countries have applied design standards meant for highly motorised societies with little regard to the local traffic conditions and economic reality. This has led to solutions of little merit that provided no advantages when the non-motorised vehicles were separated from the faster moving, heavy traffic, and that actually created safety problems.

Further research is needed to develop appropriate design standards for different types of traffic based on the prevailing conditions in Nairobi.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND BICYCLES

One of the long-term measures within the framework of the Vision 2030 document for the relief of traffic congestion in Nairobi is, according to King'ori Zacharia Urungu, a Light Rail Transit system. Based on the Japanese example, it will run alongside trunk roads. In combination with public transport, the bicycle can be a serious alternative to motorised individual transport in large cities. In order to make commuting over long distances easier with a bicycle and to reduce traffic congestion, China has introduced a system of bicycle underpasses and a series of ›Park-And-Ride‹ interchanges for bus and bicycle that have been a great success in Beijing and other cities.¹⁴

From the perspective of city planners, the potential for quick public transport with correspondingly low outlay on infrastructure can be extended considerably when using bicycles. The great potential of NMVs in this regard lies in widely spread-out cities like Nairobi, where, according to the 1999 census, 2,143,254 inhabitants live over an area of 684 km². The Nairobi Metropolitan Growth Strategy was formulated in 1973, and since then neither a detailed plan has been proposed nor a revision of the old strategy undertaken.¹⁵

In cities like Nairobi, where the number of motorised vehicles is increasing rapidly, the integration of bicycles into public transport is a sensible option for a sustainable mix of non-motorised vehicles and public transport. The *matatus* are largely responsible for the chaotic traffic situation, driven as they are by inexperienced individuals with little organisation amongst themselves. Additionally, the *matatus* have a relatively small carrying capacity and can take up to only 14 people at a time. A problem when considering the public transport situation in Nairobi is that the city government has turned a blind eye to the privately organised network of minibuses, which means that not only does the city miss out on a potential source of income and thus on money that could be invested in the further development of the transport system – but also that this situation also leads to reduced use of bicycles. As a short-term solution, Irungu recommended the introduction of a BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) system known as the ›above-ground subway‹ that could accommodate up to 150 passengers.¹⁶ These buses are supposed to be assigned to exclusive routes, radiating out in all directions from the city centre. If, in the future, public transport in Nairobi will be regulated by the city government, it will, for the sake of efficiency, be worthwhile factoring bicycles into the public transport system. By expanding the catchment areas of bus stops, the distance between the stops can be larger, with a concomitant increase in speed for the regular public transport services.¹⁷ In the longer term, a larger distance between bus stops and public transport routes will allow the authorities to focus on the most popular routes, to reduce the average waiting time and to increase the efficiency of application of the traffic laws.

This is important for large cities like Nairobi, where the average journey time is long and where the resources for rapid public transport are not adequate to meet the demands.

THE INTERACTION OF THE VARIOUS MODES OF TRANSPORT

An important goal of the municipal development of transport systems and traffic management should be the safeguarding of the variety of modes of transport, so that passengers have the choice between many competing services. Based on their budget, they can then choose the service that offers the greatest efficiency in terms of use of resources, speed and comfort.

When the variety of transport modes decreases, people often have no other choice than to fall back on an inefficient means of transport like the private car. Market forces can only function with regard to transport choices when there are many competing options at people's disposal. This often means protecting less powerful, but more preferable modes of transport against the more powerful, but less-efficient, motorised transport. To this end, economic regulation is sometimes necessary in order to maintain competition and to suppress the development of monopolies.¹⁸ In this context, it should be verified whether there are government regulations in place that suppress the use of NMVs.

Non-motorised vehicles are the most efficient form of transport over short distances, whereas motorised transport offers greater efficiency for long journeys. The crossover point where motorised forms of transport become more efficient than non-motorised ones depends upon people's income, the value that they place on their time and on the costs and the speed of the various different types of transport. To arrive at the most efficient mix of transport modes for a city we must consider restrictions on road space, the way that road surface is used and the existing investment in vehicles and infrastructure as well as the available budget for new investment.

82 Additionally, we have to consider the current and future problems associated with overland transport: traffic jams, pollution, the economic effects of an increasing use of oil, routes to and from work, an increased trend towards motorisation and the targets in fighting poverty. In the light of the great differences between these factors, strategies for urban non-motorised transport must be tailored to the individual types of city. The integration of urban development, traffic planning and politics are of prime importance in increasing the possibilities for non-motorised transport.¹⁹ This is also true for Nairobi, since the promotion of non-motorised vehicles may, in many ways, be beneficial in relation to the aforementioned problems.

Independent of the user's income, NMVs must be promoted as the most efficient means of transport over short distances in Nairobi. This is especially true for journeys that are too long to walk and too short for public transport like *matatus*. This strategy is pivotal, especially in Nairobi, since the high demand for mobility will not be satisfied in the medium term by public transport.

cf. 03.2 COMMUTING
The Way to Work



BICYCLES ARE OFTEN USED AS CARRIERS

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DIFFICULT TOPOGRAPHY FOR BICYCLES

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Bicycles are mostly used for personal transport, but can also be used for transporting goods loads from 100 to 180 kg. In Nairobi, bicycles are a major means of transporting charcoal to restaurants in the town. The material is usually sourced from the outlying suburbs of Nairobi.

Bicycles are most efficient over distances from around 600 to 800 m and up to 5 to 7 km.²⁰ Other non-motorised vehicles – those that are more heavily laden and slower moving – have far lower efficiency. The use of non-motorised vehicles falls off in cities with many hills or with a steep topography. In Nairobi, this is probably one of the reasons that mitigates against bicycles being used for longer distances or for journeys that require a lot of energy input. Bicycles should play a key role in connecting to public transport since this will increase the use of public transport by a factor of 20 to 40. In large cities, like Nairobi, where the average income is low and where the demand for public transport cannot be met, the bicycle should be promoted as the most efficient form of transport for distances of up to 10 km.

The integration of bicycles with public transport can create poly-centric patterns of development in the city. This would probably alleviate the current situation, where workplaces and residential areas often densely populated resulting in an extreme shortage of space. By linking together

multiple urban centres using public transport, by providing nodes where travellers can change from bicycles to public transport and by other similar strategies, it might be possible to transform the development of mega-cities into the creation of a manageable constellation of smaller cities.²¹

Mkokoteni are not as efficient as bicycles, but their use as a complimentary alternative to motorised transport should be encouraged, especially in a city like Nairobi where the majority of the population lives on low incomes. These vehicles also provide a variety of job opportunities and offer a variety of useful services for city dwellers who are not best served by motorised vehicles like small-parcel- or delivery services or by the non-motorised taxis. NMVs do not produce much noise, do not pollute the environment, need no fuel and can navigate the narrowest of streets. Improvements should be encouraged in the design of these vehicles and in their operation. Other particular considerations that should be focused upon are security, performance and working conditions.

Where these vehicles are already in use, they should continue to form a useful element of the mixed transport system that plugs gaps in the market, instead of being seen as an obstacle holding back the modernisation of the transport system. Even in cities with higher incomes and dependence on motorised transport there are still possibilities for NMVs and even for vehicles similar to *mkokotenis*: the transport of goods and people could serve as the basis for small businesses offering goods and services in distributed areas. These vehicles find the greatest use in places where the slow-moving modes of transport are separated from the motorised variety, in places where there are many pedestrians or in central areas with slow-moving traffic, in large factories and shopping centres and in places where private motorised transport is forbidden.

BARRIERS

The following factors represent the greatest obstacles to a greater use of NMVs in Nairobi: roads and streets that are NMV-unfriendly, the ever-increasing vehicle theft, the negative social and municipal attitude towards NMVs and the inappropriate regulation.

Overcoming these obstacles might need changes in the funding policy for the transport sector, in the design standards of the infrastructure, the allocation of road space, regulatory policy, the education of the public, marketing, etc. An approach here would be Irungu's Public Transport Plan with its short and long-term measures for promoting a more prominent role for Non-Motorised Transport Strategy (NMTS). These changes must form a part of an overarching more far-reaching effort to increase the mix of transport modes in order to improve the efficiency and use of resources within Nairobi's transport system and also to increase its accessibility. The already existing mix of transport modes acts in Nairobi's favour, but it must be more-heavily promoted through government action.

Only a few official bodies are tackling the question of non-motorised vehicles, and little data has been collected about their capabilities and their problems. Indeed, many local and national traffic-planning organisations are apathetic or even hostile to NMVs and concentrate exclusively on traffic problems pertaining to motorised vehicles. An example of this is the already mentioned Nairobi Metropolitan Growth Strategy document from 1973, a document that has never been revised.

Many of these factors can only be changed over the course of time, and many are difficult to control. Organisations for development funding, the government at many levels as well as non-governmental organisations can influence many of these factors.²² The respective measures should be carried out by these organisations through the development and implementation of a Non-Motorised Transport Strategy (NMTS).

DESIGN APPROACHES

MODAL MIX VEHICLES

Locomotion in urban environments will, in the future, require vehicles that represent a mix of motorised and non-motorised types. NMVs are efficient over shorter distances, the combustion engine over longer ones. We can, therefore, develop a brief for vehicle design that takes into account the known strengths of these different transport modes. The goal of the challenge would be, as far as possible, to combine together in one vehicle an optimal mix of transport modes. This could be achieved through the principle of a modular configuration, where, for example, *mkokotenis* and bicycles could have on-board motors fitted that could be used when necessary to supplement human power.

LOAD-CARRYING VEHICLES

In Kisumu in Kenya, the ›Big Boda‹ project is looking at extending the capabilities of the most affordable bicycle, the ›Black Mamba‹, which is produced in India and China. These bicycles do not take into account the locally prevailing transport demands in Kenya. In Kisumu, the operators modify the *Boda Boda* taxis, adapting the ride geometry with locally produced seats in order to provide more room for passengers. These modifications to the frame add about 15 to 20% to the cost of the bicycle. The bicycle operators suffer from the poor ergonomics and performance: the knees of tall riders bang against the handlebars, and some even suffer from impotence caused by the hard plastic saddles. In the ›Big Boda‹ project, 50 modified load-carrying ›Big Boda‹ were built and sold locally. Additionally, complete ›Big Boda‹ were donated to various causes.



This project has made the transport of goods more efficient and has made the transport of schoolchildren and the targeted delivery of medical services considerably easier.³⁷

There are other examples where available bicycles are converted to serve as load carriers, such as the Chop'n Drop WorldBike, the Extra Bike and the FreeRadical.

A further option would be to establish in Nairobi a patent (Martin Meyer's, for example) for a multifunctional load carrier, suitable for any bicycle, thus disseminating the know-how to the local producers and manufacturers. This would have two effects: it would secure jobs and probably create new ones; and it would promote cooperation between transport operators, thanks to the option of quickly adapting the vehicles. Using this system, a normal bicycle can be converted into a load-carrying vehicle in a few seconds. Renting out such carriers would also be an option, would support micro-economies and would represent a successful and simple example of a mix of transport modes.

MKOKOTENI IMPROVEMENT

Through observations and interviews with students and road users in Nairobi it became clear that the *mkokoteni* operators regularly run great risks. Partly these risks can be traced back to problems in vehicle technology that could be solved by the users. The goal of the modifications is threefold: a reduction in the injury and death rates of the operators of this type of vehicle, improvement of comfort in its broadest sense and a reduction in the disruption that the *mkokoteni* presents to other road users by improving its steering and manoeuvrability. It also needs to be investigated which types of customisations were carried out on a case-by-case basis.

The disadvantages of this type of vehicle were reduced in part through technological changes and adaptations. It might be possible, for instance, to establish contact with German patent holders and to either bring their knowledge to Nairobi or to allow the Nairobians to develop their own solutions. It is conceivable that car replacement parts could be used, since these can easily be obtained from junkyards and on scrap heaps. Improvements that could be considered are listed below in order of priority:

- braking efficiency through the use of alternative braking systems
- seating facilities for the operator with injury protection
- the fitting of acoustic and visual warning systems
- the ability to attach trailers using adaptive coupling systems
- implementation and storage of drive power in order to minimise physical input by using dynamo systems or similar
- steering handles

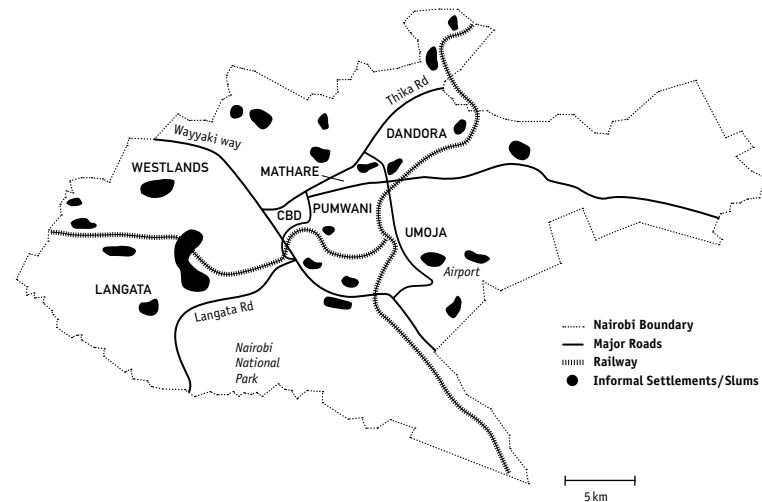
Additionally, any modifications must be reviewed and made safe from the point of view of vandalism and theft, something which obviously will present a great challenge, since any modifications should not raise the value of the vehicle significantly, thus making it more attractive to thieves.

¹ G. Tiwari (2000). **Towards a sustainable urban transport system: Planning for non-motorized vehicles in cities**. Delhi, Indian Institute of Technology, Transportation Research and Injury Prevention Programme. Retrieved from: <http://web.iitd.ac.in/~tripp/publications/paper/planning/planning%20for%20nmv%20unesap.pdf>, 2. ² Kamikunji Juakali <. MYC4.com. Web. 28 November 2009. <https://www.myc4.com/Invest/Loans/View/797> ³ with less than 1.25 PPP (purchasing power parity) US Dollar per day and person ⁴ K. Z. Irungu (2007). **Decongesting Nairobi — Urban Transportation Challenges**. Republic of Kenya: Roads Department (MoRPW). Retrieved from: www.scribd.com/doc/2382775/Decongesting-Nairobi-City-Kenya. ⁵ G. J .B. Probst (1987). **Selbstorganisation - Ordnungsprozesse in sozialen Systemen aus ganzheitlicher Sicht**. Verlag Paul Parey, Berlin, Hamburg. ⁶ M. Replogle (1991). **Non-Motorized Vehicles in Asia: Lessons for Sustainable Transport Planning and Policy**. Environmental Defense Fund, Washington, DC USA. Retrieved from: www.edf.org/documents/2293_Non-motorizedVehiclesAsia.pdf, 7. ⁷ Replogle, op. cit., 7f. ⁸ Replogle, op. cit., 8. ⁹ Replogle, op. cit., 9. ¹⁰ Replogle, op. cit., 9. ¹¹ Replogle, op. cit., 9ff. ¹² Replogle, op. cit., 10. ¹³ Irungu, op. cit., 14. ¹⁴ Replogle, op. cit., 11. ¹⁵ Irungu, op. cit., 3. ¹⁶ Irungu, op. cit., 21. ¹⁷ Replogle, op. cit., 11. ¹⁸ Replogle, op. cit., 13.. ¹⁹ Replogle, op. cit., 17. ²⁰ Replogle, op. cit., 17. ²¹ Replogle, op. cit., 17. ²² Replogle, op. cit., 19. ²³ >Multifunktionaler Lastenträger<. MDR. DE. Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk (MDR). 31 March 2009. Web. 12 September 2009. www.mdr.de/einfach-genial/6248182.html

NAIROBI: EVOLVING URBANISM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MOBILITY

by Dr. Alfred Omenya

RAILWAY TRANSPORTATION SHAPING EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF NAIROBI



Map of major means of transport and key silos of informality in Nairobi: from Omenya and Huchzermeyer, 2006: 291

Although Nairobi was a trading centre between the Maasai and Kikuyu communities of Kenya, it only evolved as an urban settlement when the colonial authorities designated it as the stopping point in the construction of Kenya-Uganda Railway; in 1896, before embarking on the climb into the Great Rift Valley. The railway itself reached Nairobi in 1898. The railway had been born out of the imperialist appetite for the vast natural resources from Eastern and Central Africa, after the Berlin Conference of 1885 resolved to share Africa's natural resources amongst the imperialist powers of the day.

The first plan of Nairobi as a railway town was drawn in 1899, a year after the railways reached the town. It took into consideration only European employees of the railway; and European and Asian traders. The African was not meant to live in the city. The Nubian porters were designated a village outside of the city, in a place they called ›kibra‹ meaning ›forest‹. This is the precursor of current day informal settlement of Kibera. The railway immediately became the most significant ›landlord‹ in the city.

The railway origin of the city had a strong footprint on urban land use and any meaningful restructuring of the city had to take cognisance of railway land and land leased from the Railways. The re-zoning of the Upper Hill area into a commercial area was only possible with the railway being able to release part of its real estate portfolio for private developers, since the railway still owned most of that land by the early 1990s when the re-zoning was done.

Nairobi became the colonial capital of Kenya in 1907, making it the country's primary city, in spite of the fact that coastal towns had had thousands of years of development. By 1909 much of Nairobi's internal structure, including the road network in the Central Business District (CBD) was already established. The road widths were then based on the turning radius of horse drawn carriages.

THE CAR IN POST-WORLD WAR FUNCTIONAL CITY (THE CASE OF NAIROBI)

In 1927, two planners, Walton Jameson and Eric Dutton, came up with the master plan for the settler capital. There was already a very strong community of settlers who were engaged in commercial farming in the ›white highlands‹. Nairobi then covered an area of 77 km². This plan was known for rather elaborate traffic planning, planning for infrastructure and drainage, building and development control and density regulations.

The Nairobi City Council produced the Plan for a Colonial Capital in 1948. This led to the extension of the city's administrative boundaries. The plan was developed by three experts, namely L.W.T. White (Architect Planner, University of Cape Town); P.R. Anderson (Civil Engineer); and L. Silberman (Socialist, University of the Witwatersrand). The master plan for a colonial capital was conceived as a key plan for the general physical, economic and social development of Nairobi over the next 25 years. It was modelled on Eurocentric, post-war ›functional city model‹, which advocated for the separation of living, working and recreational areas, linked through road transport.

The 1948 plan set the physical basis of the city as we know it. In both plans of 1927 and 1948, the motor vehicle played a central role in determining the resultant urban form. There were further considerations of the need of the railway as a mass transit for majority of the workers who needed to commute into town. The railway line was moved from the South of the city to the official housing areas of Eastlands to minimise distance to work by Africans and also to limit the fragmentation of railway land.

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT; LOFTY, UNIMPLEMENTED. MOBILITY PLANS

When Kenya became independent in 1963, the boundaries of the city were extended further. In spite of expansion of the city boundary and the unprecedented numbers of people who came into the city, there was no corresponding master plan. The city still relied on the 1948 plan, which had largely been overtaken by events and whose legal mandate had expired.

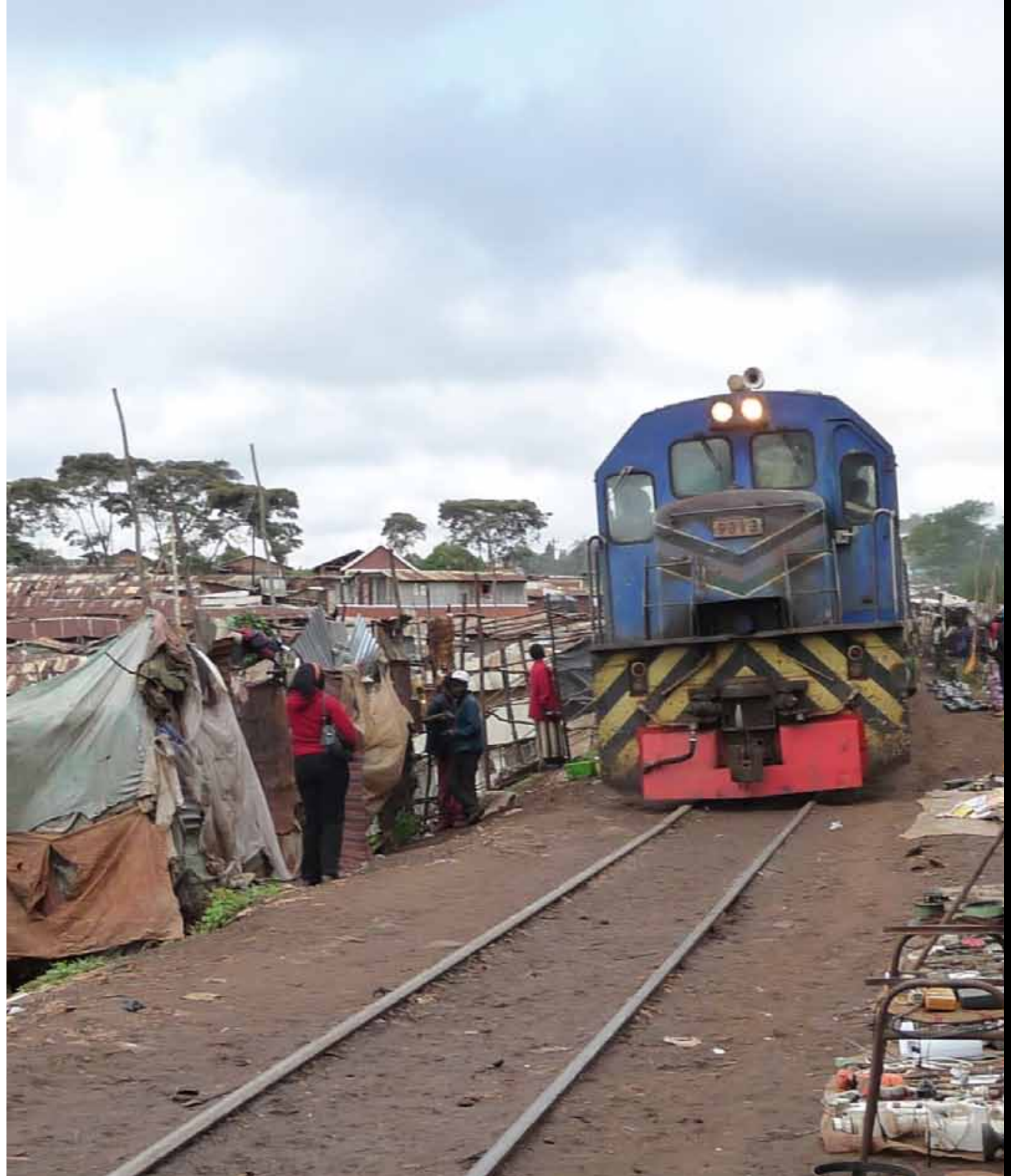
After independence, Nairobi was not able to cope with the myriad of problems it faced. In order to address these challenges, a study group was set up to prepare the Metropolitan Growth Strategy (1973) which was to guide the city until around the year 2000. The strategy was modelled alongside Central European and North American cities. It had neither spatial nor urban design elements.

Movement of people and goods was a central part of this strategy. It envisaged a corridor approach to urban development based on road infrastructure. It had a regional growth strategy expecting population growth along the Thika Road corridor and the Mombasa Road corridor. It was envisaged that these areas would be planned as part of the Nairobi metropolitan area. This was to reduce the need to commute by developing local, self-contained neighbourhoods that would limit the need to go to the CBD. Industrial development and housing was to be concentrated along these corridors. Transportation development was to be accompanied by development of three main traffic bypasses. In terms of management a City Transport Authority was to be established. Additional car parking and pedestrianisation programmes were to be executed. The plan was unimplemented.

IGNORED MEANS OF MOVEMENT

Of course the city is not planned for the cyclist, the *mukokoteni* pusher, the pedestrian or other non-motorised transport. These, as shown in various examples in this volume struggle to coexist with the formal, motorised, planned transport, compounding ›movement of people and stuff‹ around the city.

Meanwhile, future plans remain centred on the ›private car‹. There really is no country on earth that has solved their transport problem with the ›private car‹ and more road surfaces. The solutions that have existed tend to be public-transport-based. This is a discourse that is yet to be appreciated by the Kenyan ruling elite.



03.5 MOVEMENT OF GOODS

MARIE HELEN SCHEID / TABITHA NZILANI / NINA WERNER

- #33 WHICH ASPECTS OF THE DESIGN OF MEANS OF TRANSPORT ARE BASED ON THE IDENTITY OF SPECIFIC ETHNIC GROUPS?
- #25 IF A CRUCIAL NUMBER OF PERSONS ENGAGE IN AN ACTIVITY (EG TRADING) THAT IS CLAIMED TO BE ILLEGAL, HOW CAN ILLEGALITY BE (RE)DEFINED?
- #25 WHICH PRECONDITIONS ARE NECESSARY TO SUCCESSFULLY TRADE ON A MARKET FOR THE VARIOUS PEOPLE ENGAGED IN THE TRADE?
- #27 WHICH FACTORS, SUCH AS BEHAVIOUR, CLOTHING AND APPEARANCE ENGENDER TRUST IN A TRADING SITUATION ON A MARKET?
- #30 WHAT OPPORTUNITIES DOES A CARRIER HAVE AFTER QUITTING HIS JOB BECAUSE OF BACK PAIN?
- #28 WHAT COULD A LANDOWNER DO TO COOPERATE WITH INFORMAL FARMERS AND WHAT WOULD BE THE BENEFITS TO HIM?
- #29 HOW WOULD THE ECONOMY BE AFFECTED BY ALSO ENABLING WOMEN TO TRADE IN MORE VALUABLE PRODUCTS AND WHAT WOULD BE THE CONSEQUENCES FOR MALE TRADERS?
- #32 WHAT WOULD A STREET VENDOR NEED TO PREPARE SUKUMA-WIKI-PRODUCTS TO GO DIRECTLY ON THE MARKET AND WHICH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS COULD BE INVOLVED?
- #32 WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO THE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE DISTRIBUTION PROCESS OF SUKUMA-WIKI IF THESE ACTIVITIES WERE AUTOMATED – AND HOW FAR COULD THIS BE AUTOMATED?
- #32 WHAT WOULD BE THE CONSEQUENCES FOR PEOPLE WHO TAKE PART IN THE DISTRIBUTION PROCESS OF SUKUMA-WIKI, IF THIS DISTRIBUTING ACTIVITY WAS CARRIED OUT BY LARGE BUSINESSES?
- #31 WHY DO SO MANY PEOPLE NOT ONLY TAKE PART IN SUKUMA-WIKI, BUT ARE ALSO INVOLVED IN GROWING, DISTRIBUTING AND SELLING IT? WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO PEOPLE WORKING IN THE SERVICE SECTOR RELATED TO THE DISTRIBUTION AND SELLING OF SUKUMA-WIKI, IF THE SUPERMARKETS IN NAIROBI USED THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY, LIKE SELF-SCANNING CHECKOUTS?
- #33 WHICH PRECONDITIONS IN A CITY LIKE NAIROBI FAVOUR URBAN FARMING?
- #33 HOW DOES INFORMAL FARMING AFFECT THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE CITY?
- #33 WHY DOES MICHELLE OBAMA PLANT SUKUMA-WIKI?



Sukuma wiki is the ubiquitous food item found on all dinner tables, not only in Kenya but in the entire East African region. The direct translation of the Kiswahili word *sukuma wiki* is ›push-the-week‹. But, why push the week? The intended meaning was derived from the fact that in the 70s most Kenyans relied on traditional greens to supplement their vegetable needs. These included: terere or mchicha (amaranth) leaves), thabai (stinging nettle) leaves, malenge or marengi (pumpkin) leaves, runguru (arrowroot) leaves, kunde (cow pea) leaves (local name: manavu or managu), saka (spider plant) leaves, crotolaria and jute¹ and an assortment of other wild-growing leaves provided an abundant supply of carbohydrates for most households in the region prior to European contact. This amazing leafy vegetable – similar to collard greens – was the result of a search for a foodstuff that was cheap and readily available, and that would literally ›stretch (the family food budget) through the week‹.

The introduction of imported vegetable varieties, brought with it new methods of propagation and cultivation through formal agriculture. Few Kenyans could either grow or afford these new vegetables, which included cabbage, carrots, spinach amongst others. However, a fast-growing type of kale that sprouted new leaves off the stalk week after week was soon introduced onto the market as well. It ensured the constant provision of people's vegetable requirements and quickly became popular with the poorer population. Although it was an excellent replacement for the less-affordable cabbage and spinach side dishes that go well with the traditional ugali and githeri or muthokoi and nyoyo² dishes, it also quickly became stigmatised. The stigma was that affluent Kenyans did not want to be associated with it, simply because it was so affordable.

As long as there was maize flour, maize or beans in any household, this new and versatile bundle of leaves would readily complement the family lunch or dinner. Its popularity and commercial value has, over the years, exceeded that of many vegetables supplies in its category, and it has gradually lost its stigma, as nutritionists have striven to promote its efficacy and value as an excellent source of vitamins, as well as iron, protein, minerals and fibre. *Sukuma wiki* is today grown and marketed throughout East Africa. Through small scale production, *sukuma wiki* flows into major towns and cities within the region of Nairobi from over 45 districts in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

In Nairobi alone, five wholesale markets receive the produce and distribute it to retail market stalls and kiosk owners, with a small amount going to hawkers, dukas and green grocers through a network of middlemen.³ Acting as the main dropoff points, the wholesale markets serve as the first points of the commodity's distribution hubs and hence our point of reference on the subject of mobility the way goods are moved from production to the dinner table.

MOBILITY

As the food moves from source to destination it generates channels or paths as ordered by the supply process. Movement of stuff was our chosen method of analyzing the complex issues attached to the processes attached to this single agricultural commodity. Do the channels of mobility of *sukuma wiki* affect a particular social order, multiple structures or is it in reverse affected by existing structures. What are the principal connectors, players and infrastructural systems that generate these channels and paths?

THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Small scale farmers are organized through cooperative movements that not only monitor and hence determine requirements levels for the commodity they also ensure that good management systems are adopted to maintain proper supply and demand levels. This ensures that the availability and pricing of *sukuma wiki* is maintained and regulated through even the driest months of the year. Middlemen act as the connectors of farmers to the markets. They purchase the leaves straight from the farms and ferry them through the night in heavily laden trucks to reach the wholesale market in the early hours of the morning. Transportation from the wholesale market is usually a very vibrant activity as eager retailers try to get the best bargains and get the stock to their shops, kiosks and roadside sheds before sunrise. A bevy of strong men carry the 90 kgs sacks across the city to waiting matatus which also perform goods transportation duties at the dawn of the day. A quick clean up after delivery ensures any traces of the daybreaks activity will pass unnoticed by the passenger service that soon follows. The lucrative business has helped many small-scale shop owners to invest in pickups that haul the vegetables to their shops.



MOBILITY TO INSTITUTIONS

Both boarding and day-schools at primary and secondary levels as well as colleges and other institutions that offer meals at their premises require a constant supply of *sukuma wiki*. Supply to these institutions is mainly by standard pick-up vehicles. In quite a number of cases however non-motorized vehicles such as *mkokotenis* are used. The mode of transportation adopted at each stage is determined on the basis of quantity, availability and distance from source to destination. Who are the players in these scenarios? In the case of a large institution a single supplier is usually awarded the contract through a standard tendering process, however where smaller quantities are required a bigger group of players comes into play. These are the brokers. Their work is to constantly find new markets, new production centers sources and even act as market regulators keeping the goods moving and the cities well supplied.

MOBILITY TO HOUSEHOLDS

Households in Nairobi buy their food from shops, supermarkets, kiosks, side-road vendors, open retail markets or grow it themselves in the open public spaces or in their own gardens. This provides channels or paths of movement, thus affecting mobility in different ways. The path of a *sukuma wiki* bunch is therefore quite diverse depending on whether one is growing the stuff themselves or purchasing it from one of the vendors mentioned above. Let's look at one example: The Gikomba market, a medium size wholesale and retail market in Nairobi, total volume of *sukuma wiki* in a given day is about 16 metric tons. This is the space of commercial contestation between both delivery personnel as well as retail suppliers. It is also the place where grower - broker relations play out. The odd farmer supplier will either be delivering his personal produce or bringing to the market the combined produce of several of his farming neighbours. The broker on the other hand could be bearing the collection of produce from several locations, farms, markets and people. This introduces opportunities for the aspects of mobility outlined above to play a pivotal role in the distribution of *sukuma wiki*.

Furthermore, as the produce reaches this particular market, a secondary-order of mobility is introduced. Nearly a fifth of all produce coming from farms flows directly to retail traders, an example being women who sell outside estates who use public transport to deliver their stock to the retail outlets. These women (known as *mama mboga*) form the final link in the chain of distribution. Many of the people who live in estates buy their *sukuma wiki* portion from these women. An insignificant number go directly to the market to purchase their weekly supply at wholesale prices. The use of motorized vehicles is also evident in the retail sector. Trucks with carrying capacities of between half a ton - four tons are used to ferry *sukuma wiki* to supermarkets and other retail stores where mobility can be appreciated in two ways: One, in the moving *sukuma wiki* to the shop and two, in the manner that customers access the supermarket or the shop.

MOBILITY TO RESTAURANTS AND EATING PLACES

Restaurants are yet another destination for *sukuma wiki*. Restaurants either contract a food supplier who among other vegetables and foodstuffs is expected to ensure a constant supply of the commodity to the restaurant or in the case of small restaurants have an employee make the early trip every day to the wholesale market to purchase the vegetable requirements for the day. This modus operandi can increase the aspect of mobility depending on whether they go directly to the market or deal with brokers who bypass the wholesale markets and bring the produce directly to the restaurant.

The mobility of *sukuma wiki* can be summarized as follows:

- Produce to consumption chain of event
- Transportation (motorized & non-motorized)
- Timelines
- Ease of transition from one mode of transport to another
- Transition points
- Effectuation

OPEN QUESTIONS REGARDING MOBILITY

How does spatial arrangement affect the movement and distribution of the product to customers?

What effect does *sukuma wiki* have on social relationship that seems to encourage open market and retail market concepts?

How do informal locations affect mobility in display and storage?

How do complementary products affect the mobility of the goods?

1 Forum for Organic Resource Management and Agricultural Technologies, 2008 **2** Ugali which goes by different names such as sima, zima, nkima, ngima etc in most countries of South Sahara is a stiff mix of boiled cornmeal usually eaten with a vegetable side dish and stew of meat or fish, when available. Githeri and Nyoyo are a boiled maize and beans mix while Muthokoï which is popular with the Kamba of Kenya is a mix of hulled corn and cow peas. **3** D. Tschirley, M. Ayeiko, *Assessment of Kenya's domestic horticultural production and marketing systems and lessons for the future*, Nairobi Kenya 2008

FOLLOWING THE PATH OF SUKUMA WIKI

by Marie-Helen Scheid



TRAFFIC JAM

»In cities in the developing world the provision of urban public transport is often a complex amalgam that links formal and informal transport in a context of extremely rapid urbanisation. Nairobi is typical in this regard.«¹

»Its infrastructure has not been able to cope with this increase, resulting in the current conditions in transportation and housing. The city roads also experience traffic jams at peak hours leading to passengers wasting a lot of time. This is exacerbated by the neoliberal attitude towards the market, a lack of governmental support and over-reliance on road networks for both public and private transport.«²

The planning of metropolitan traffic is a vicious circle to which several factors contribute: bureaucratic, political and economic interests (or lack thereof) are tightly entangled, despite many international research projects, a number of detailed master plans and the participants' awareness of the needs of the people.



SUKUMA WIKI

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SUKUMA WIKI AS A RESEARCH TOPIC

Sukuma wiki is a nutritious vegetable rich in vitamins. This foodstuff (kale) came to Kenya in the 1960s. The word *sukuma wiki* is a mix of English and regional Swahili (*sukuma*: ›push‹, *wiki*: ›week‹). So it literally means: ›pushes you through the week‹. The leafy vegetable *sukuma wiki* is a suitable subject that allows us to investigate, take part in and demonstrate a distribution process.

The aim of this study is to follow a product along the supply chain from the farmer, through the middlemen and on to the final consumer, by recording observations and conducting interviews. I see the purpose of the Cultural Library project in focussed observations in the field in order to arrive at an understanding of a complex, larger picture. As in a collage, snapshots eventually lead to a larger picture. But a selective focus carries with itself the danger of seeing things out of perspective. It may happen that we investigate irrelevant subjects, which do not form part of the bigger picture. That is why an essential part of this project has been the co-operation of the German group with the Kenyan students, who, from their point of view, interpreted and commented on signs, gestures etc. of their culture that would otherwise have passed unnoticed by us. Here the necessity for a truly inter-cultural exchange becomes evident. Only through the experience of both cultures and both habitats, can seemingly incomprehensible phenomena be understood, so that ›normal‹ everyday life becomes legible, in the knowledge of ›otherness‹ and a reflection of ›oneself‹.

Rachel's story Part I

The patchwork at Wakulima Market

It is 4:30 am, on the way to the market. Wakulima, one of the largest market for vegetables and fruit in Nairobi. Through a fairly lifeless, sleepy inner city, one walks five kilometres to the market, passing the mosque, high-rise buildings, banks, a few newspaper sellers. One of the first merchants is opening his rented space in the wall, like a kiosk, crammed with chains. At a closer inspection, it is no deeper than 20 cm, and can hardly be called a ›room‹. While he lays out his wares he is chatting with a sweet vendor in a wheelchair. A few minibuses, called Matatus, are beginning their day. Otherwise the streets are empty. At this hour of the day there is no smog; the air is remarkably fresh.

It is still dark. In the distance one can see the outlines of the warehouses of the Coffee Board of Kenya, Kawaha House and the National Cereals and Produce Board building. People appear to be drawn in one direction. It is getting busier the closer one gets to the market on the broad, paved street. Most of the plastic bags, pouches, buckets and sacks, cars and carts, are still empty. At this hour, only a few people are coming from the market, packed with merchandise. Men are running along the street; a group of four is pushing an overloaded cart. Their work looks extremely demanding.

Cars are parked where one would expect a pedestrian walkway. Instead, the middle of the road serves as the footpath. Pedestrians and cars share the street, men running with their pushcarts, merging with the motorised traffic.

From the high bridge passing over the street, directly at the entrance to the market, one has a view of the skyline of the city: on one side the downtown part with high-rise buildings, the city centre, the minarets of Jaimee Mosque; on the other side the market. The extent of the place is overwhelming. Countless lamps are spilling their yellow light onto the vast space, illuminating the patchwork of tent roofs, tiles and corrugated steel. It is difficult to distinguish between the makeshift timber or metal stalls and the permanent architecture of the market hall. Trails meander through this space, partly unpaved, crossing each other with no apparent plan. People are moving through this space like ants.



A SHOP IN THE WALL



LIVELY ATMOSPHERE

#27

WAKULIMA MARKET – ONE OF NAIROBI'S VIBRANT FOCAL POINTS

Markets play a major role in this consumption: about 70% of rural households sell some amount of fresh produce, and over 90% buy an average of about Ksh 400 of additional produce every month at markets. In urban areas, nearly 100% of households spend an average of over Ksh 1,000 each per month on market purchases of fresh produce. Total market sales of fresh produce in urban and rural areas of Kenya likely average Ksh 50 billion, or nearly US\$ 700 million per year.³

Wakulima Market, also called Marikiti in Swahili, is one of the largest wholesale markets in Nairobi; others are Gikomba, Nyamakima, Kangemi, Kawangware and Toi Market. On these markets agricultural products such as fruits, leaves, roots, tubers and edible gum and tree bark are traded. On most of these markets the breakdown of traditional African products is as beside.

Wakulima Market is the key distribution point for fruit and vegetables in Nairobi, and is thus important for Nairobi's economy. Most of the traders are farmers; others are intermediaries who go from farm to farm and also meet small-scale farmers to collect produce and to bring it to the market in bales. The fresh produce arrives in Nairobi from 47 Kenyan districts as well as Tanzania and Uganda. The majority of this passes through the bottlenecks of wholesale markets such as Wakulima before the produce moves on, in small quantities, to retail markets, kiosks, street vendors, and green-grocers.

AFRICAN PRODUCTS ON NAIROBI'S FOOD MARKETS

- 17%** AFRICAN LEAFY VEGETABLES (most dominant)
- 12%** OTHER VEGETABLES
- 10%** CEREALS
- 7%** PULSES
- 6%** ROOTS AND TUBERS
- 5%** FRUIT
- 2%** SPICES
- 1%** NUTS
- 1%** GUMS AND RESINS



HUSTLE AND BUSTLE AT THE MARKET

#27

Rachel's story Part II

Business Woman at Wakulima Market

Rachel Wambui, a lady in her mid-thirties, is on her way to the market, as usual, at 6:30am. She is one of hundreds of intermediaries at this location. Every morning she buys fresh vegetables, such as sukuma wiki (kale), for a high-class Indian restaurant in the well-to-do Westlands of Nairobi. Rachel specialises in sukuma wiki, since others deliver meat, eggs, fruit and beverages to the Indian owner. With determination and dexterity she blazes her trail through the maze of the stalls. With her yellow earrings, pink headband and her fluffy pullover it is easy for me to follow her, trying not to get lost in the crowd.

In this hustle-and-bustle there is no apparent distinction between stalls and alleyways. Everywhere the ground is covered with cloths on which produce is neatly piled, alternating with trampled, squashed vegetable waste. Where there are no awnings keeping the rain off, the ground is muddy. Tomatoes are piled up in wooden crates next to sacks of onions. Corn is sold directly from the pick-up trucks parked in the cramped space, pyramids of cabbages, two metres high, are suddenly blocking the way. Mainly women sit behind their goods, haggling loudly, trying to get the best price. Others rip leaves off corn cobs, cut off stalks, and stuff sukuma wiki into bales. Along a low wall, many elderly women are lined up, washing potatoes and yams, exchanging the latest gossip while keeping an eye on potential customers. We are trying to pick our way between a pile of aubergines and bundles of carrots as every last square inch of the ground appears to be used for the display of merchandise. One wrong move and you step into a pile of cabbage. »Be careful, it's food!« cries a vendor angrily. Will all the vegetables be sold within a day?



#27

AGRICULTURE IN KENYA: ACQUIRED CULTURAL HERITAGE OR SPRINGBOARD FOR WOMEN?

»Men dominate in marketing high-valued and commercialised exotic crops including fruits and spices. Women dominate in low-value, usually traditional, crops such as leafy vegetables, tubers.«⁴

The majority of the dealers and vendors on the market are female. It is obvious that they are dealing with staple foods and everyday produce. According to a lecture at a symposium for under-utilised food (ICUC)⁵ men concentrate on trade in high-value produce. Why is that so? I asked two Kenyan ladies the question: »Would enabling women to trade in more valuable products change the economy, and what would be the consequences for male traders?« They replied that it is better to leave the farming and trading of basic foodstuffs to women. Women in Kenya, they said, take care of the daily feeding of their families, and they are responsible for the food supplies. With their expertise in managing a family in a reliable and resourceful way, they are predestined to carry that expertise over to trading. Men, on the other hand, have different characteristics: they can be seen as risk-takers, unpredictable, even reckless, in search of »high-risk« business with higher returns. This is the gist of a brief conversation, which could not be verified but represents certain perception of gender roles.

On Wakulima Market, for instance, women peel the maize cobs, and one will find men involved in activities such as accountancy or demanding physical labour. Rachel is happy with her job as an intermediary, but she has no family, is flexible and she can afford to finish her day's work at noontime. For her this job is expandable, a potential springboard to extend the trade with agricultural merchandise, for instance either by farming or by reaching a new clientele.

Another advantage women have in dealing with vegetables is their opportunities for networking and making social contacts. These characteristics give them access to other jobs and services in problem-solving and the founding of co-operations.



#27

Rachel's story Part III

» Don't Give Space! «

Porters, their backs bent double, glide through the melee of Wakulima market. Despite the constant buzz of the place, an audible amalgam of people moving and chatting, after a while one gets to learn the signals of the porters. They produce a sharp hiss, which indicates to those around them that others have to give way to these men with sacks weighing up to 100 kgs. How long can you carry on with such a backbreaking job? A porter comes up the narrow alleyway, hissing, with a strained look on his face. He carries on his shoulders a tall pile of more than 15 empty water bottle crates, altogether over three metres wide. Everything works out fine, and no-one gets hurt. In a split second I have lost track of Rachel. My mistake: I gave way to the man, but here courtesy is not expedient. Courtesy is out of place in this anthill, it produces a tailback behind you leading to a standstill. Bob, my companion behind me, continues to urge me: »Don't give space!« (sic) This is necessary to keep Rachel in sight. On the other hand, it is also a matter of security: if I was not seen as part of Rachel's party we would not get very far. Suspicious looks quickly turn to smiles when they realise I am not a tourist. It is about trust. Interestingly, Rachel mentions that she has been delivering to the Indian restaurant for eight years, and at the end of the week she gets back twice the amount that she has spent. »They know me. I'm a good person. I have lots of friends. You can trust me.« She says proudly. She is reliable, punctual, and anticipates what is missing on the shopping list. »Then I buy this anyway because I know what is needed in the kitchen and what I have delivered the day before.« A minute later she is standing amidst a crowd at a lorry full of cabbage, haggling and gesticulating.



A SHORT CHAT

#25

ATOMISED CAPITALISM, SELF-REGULATING SYSTEMS AND TRUST

»Even before the political liberalisation the Moi government, under pressure from donor countries, implemented de-regulation in Kenya's economy. The majority of the state's trade and distribution organisations – stemming from the British colonial economy – were closed and the Kenyan domestic market was opened up to international merchandise. After the people's initial enthusiasm about the new range of consumer products, and after the closing down of corrupt state companies, it became evident that many people had become »economic losers«. Despite remarkable growth rates, the social gap between the poor and the rich continued to widen.«⁶ Nothing would work anymore if the people who live and go about their business on the market changed their behaviour, putting themselves first and being constantly on the move. Time is money. Time is about more customers per day, more trade, more sales. Without movement: no job, no money, no profit. But, conversely, this does not imply that one is surrounded by people looking out only for themselves. Rather, this phenomenon can be regarded as an implicit mutual agreement on patterns of behaviour. What in Germany is clearly defined through rules and regulations works on Wakulima Market in self-regulating systems with unwritten laws, predominantly through commonly known, learned and accepted signs, gestures and habits such as the hissing of the carriers or the seemingly inconsiderate and forceful claiming of space. Compared with growing bureaucracy and questionable over-regulation in Germany, this is a totally different modus operandi, a social agreement and not a confrontation between people and a structured system.

Like in an anthill, everyone stays active within a certain timeframe. The best time for business is the morning. At that time, large-scale and small-scale farmers are putting their goods on the market, produce

which comes from the periphery of Nairobi, from Kiambu, Kikuyu and other regions, all at a distance of approximately 30 km from Nairobi's Central Business District. Agricultural products such as *sukuma wiki* are supplied by wholesalers, bought by intermediaries, collected by carriers, and then delivered to retailers: supermarkets, grocers, kiosks, and street vendors.

WHICH PRECONDITIONS ARE NECESSARY TO GET ACCESS TO SUCCESSFUL TRADING ON THE MARKET FOR THE DIFFERENT PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS?

The deregulation of the Kenyan economy led to free access to trade and the markets. Despite the presence of numerous ministries such as the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Trade and Industry and others with decision-making powers, their responsibilities are not clearly defined. This has led to the situation where small, unofficial cooperative units spring up. Rachel states that she does not need a licence for her trade. You simply get started and do what you want to do. Everyone is their own boss, each a micro-capitalist on the open market. This leads to the development of informal cooperation between small units.

She works with a certain group who assist one another to do business, assist each other even in legal matters, more of a ›SACCO‹ (see below), because in Nairobi, most people have to work in groups. BM

Savings and credit cooperatives (abr.: SACCO) are legal micro-finance institutions that serve lower-income clients who require financial services such as loans, but are not capable of handling the high transaction costs that the banks charge. The movement started in Kenya in the 1970s to assist farmers with credit and savings facilities, and to help in marketing their produce. Eventually it caught on with other sectors such as teachers, government employees and, recently, small-scale retailers and street vendors. TN

These cooperatives (see marginal column), often based on families, neighbourhoods, or even ethnic groups (tribes), are fundamentally dependent on contacts and networks. Here trust plays a crucial role. This can be seen in Rachel's statement how proud she is to have a long-lasting working relationship with the Indian restaurant. The basis of mutual trust secures her job. And it is not only this connection, which is based on trust but also her relationship with the suppliers from whom she buys her wares. They are always the same ones. Because as a customer she can rely on the quality of their products, by the same token the supplier can count on her daily visits. She can also buy on credit when she is short of money; as she is only getting paid at the end of a week. Another reason why she has constructed a solid network around her business is the help in case of need. She can rely on others to do the purchasing for her if she had another job or in times of sickness. »She tries as hard as possible to have as much oneness as possible« the Kenyan student mentioned during my research.



RACHEL'S MOST IMPORTANT TOOLS

#27

Rachel's story Part IV

A Carrier's Job

In her hand she hold her most important tools: a mobile phone, money and a shopping list. In the middle of this haggling process her fingers fly over the keys of her phone which she uses as a calculator in order to fix prices. Here she has bought a few kilos of vegetables for the Indian restaurant owner. Payment, a last check on the shopping list, and on she goes through the maze of the market. Not always in sight is the man who collects the merchandise for Rachel in a big burlap sack: Macharia, her ›carrier‹. It is his job to offer his service as a porter to the intermediaries on their rounds through the market, since other suitable means of transportation, – like shopping carts – are simply not available. The Indian restaurant has a large clientele and the sack, half-filled, weighs around. 20 or 30 kilos after the 90-minute journey. Macharia heaves the load up onto his shoulders and hisses his way through the crowd. Eventually he finds Rachel in the crowd, between produce and people, but he cannot follow her pace. He shows up at the herb stall with the sack already open for the next products.

MOBILITY ISSUES IN A NUTSHELL

The carriers offer a necessary service in order to meet the challenges of transport on Wakulima market. This is because the narrowness of the place and its pathways cannot be negotiated with wheeled vehicles. The carriers do not take breaks during the day, as any break means money not earned. They take over 15 journeys in a day. Carriers have to be fit; when they develop backaches they must find other sources of income.

Rachel's story Part V**Splitting costs, car sharing**

A last bunch of herbs and Rachel's checklist is finished. The sack is full to bursting. On the way to the market's exit we pass by a small, well-kept stall that is situated in one of the roofed niches of the market halls. In the middle of this stall with its terraced crates on which colourful piles of nuts, tomatoes, beans and herbs are laid out with great care, we find a small old lady, whom Rachel proudly introduces as her mother. She also trades at the market, but as a retailer. At the exit, the carrier is waiting. He will receive between 50 and 100 ksh for his work in the two hours. The price depends on the weight, Rachel explains. Today it was not much, but this small amount will have to do.

After a 20-minute wait and numerous phone calls later, a car stops in front of us. Another intermediary has arrived, an acquaintance of Rachel's, with whom she agrees to share the car. This will be less of an effort than taking a minibus. Otherwise, they would have to get the heavy sack from the minibus on to a mkokoteni (pushcart) for the remaining journey to the restaurant, which would cost more money. Macharia heaves the sack into the boot of the car, nodding a brief goodbye, and going off to seek new clients. Two men get out of a white station wagon, the driver and a man, apparently very busy, making phone calls, gesticulating wildly. He is a ›contacter‹ (facilitator), Rachel explains, giving notice of his imminent arrival to the next customer. Two journeys are economically combined: Rachel needs to go to the Westlands, the contacter needs to go to a supermarket on the same route. Both sacks are hauled into the boot and what follows is another object lesson in how to accommodate two sacks and 6 people in this space – driver, contacter, Rachel, the other intermediary, Bob and me. For this 30-minute ride Rachel pays 100 ksh (the equivalent of 1 Euro). A minibus would have cost 30 ksh for herself and 50 ksh for her cargo; additional costs would have accrued for the pushcart. But in this rush-hour traffic, both types of vehicle would easily get stuck in a traffic jam. With this in mind, we dive into the chaos of the street, fully aware of the upcoming jam. We have to be in the Westlands by 11 o'clock.

URBAN GROWTH AND SPRAWL

»It is... estimated that the city of Nairobi accommodates about 30% of the car vehicle ownership in Kenya. The large car population is an indicator for urban sprawl in the City.«⁷

Around noontime, the traffic coming from the market can be characterised by two things: congestion and air pollution. The Earth Institute of New York's Columbia University has determined that air pollution in Nairobi is 550% above the US legal limit.⁸ Part of the traffic picture is also a strange mix of high-horsepower, fuel-guzzling all-terrain vehicles next to people trying to manoeuvre human-powered pushcarts. There is an imbalance mirroring the contrast between rich and poor. A third phenomenon of Nairobi's inner city traffic is the lack of infrastructure: the picture of pedestrians dodging and weaving between cars is inescapable. Zebra crossings, traffic lights and walkways are all under construction to some degree.

A positive side effect of the slow-moving traffic is the lively trading going on amongst the cars: newspaper vendors, car washers etc. Merchandise of all kinds is on offer. In their immobility, the car drivers are potential customers and business is booming.

»The city and the traffic, mobility and immobility, are not opposites but they are connected, developing a particular, mutually dependent dynamic. Accordingly, the history of cities is also, and above all, the history of transport systems. They are the blood vessels and nerve fibres of the city's body, of fundamental importance for any further growth.«⁹

In the past one hundred years, Nairobi's city limits have moved farther away from the centre. They now encompass outlying areas such as Kiambu, Kajajido, and the Machakos district, including valuable agricultural zones, and even incorporate Nairobi National Park. From an extent of 77 km² in 1927, the city grew to an area of 686 km² in 1963. The newly founded (2008) Ministry of Nairobi Metropolitan Development predicts an area of 3000 km² for the near future.¹⁰

In the paper ›Urban Growth and Sprawl – Case Study of Nairobi‹, Kenya (2008) Martin Omwenga states: »The 2006 Nairobi Metropolitan Transport Master Plan is focused on addressing transport problems/challenges in the City. This plan document is however not effective as it is not related to any comprehensive and overall development plan for the City.«¹¹ Nairobi's growing population is in need of a planned, structured, and expanding traffic network. But the aimless, plan-less metropolitan development authorities need to create these systems in the first place, and to keep them functioning. In this situation, ecological problems and energy policy issues are both cause and effect.

OBSERVATIONS IN A TRAFFIC JAM

The contacter, again glued to the phone, appears to be unimpressed by the traffic jam. Alongside the Globe roundabout, where we are at this moment, we see a group of giggling ladies, colourfully clad in traditional clothing. In their large bags they carry sukuma wiki. En route from door to door, they try to sell as much as possible. The bags, called kiondos, have long carrying straps which could be mistaken for shoulder straps. But instead, they are carrying their bags, slightly leaning forward, with the strap wrapped around the forehead. How do they sell their goods and to whom? How much do they earn? And what happens to the unsold vegetables?



These are women, working in the informal economy, who take vegetables to the many residential areas in the city of Nairobi. You find them with simple mats laid on the ground displaying their goods, one of them being sukuma wiki and other vegetables such as tomatoes and carrots accompanied by some fruits. Acting as intermediaries, these women go to the main markets to acquire the vegetables – not in bulk – but in sizeable portions that are enough for them to carry. With these amounts, they can make enough for the day, considering that they do not earn a lot as they are at the lower end of small scale traders. TN

#33

SUKUMA-WIKI CARRIED IN TRADITIONAL TRANSPORTATION MEAN

THE KIONDO – A SHORT INTERVIEW ABOUT A CARRYING DEVICE

by Marie-Helen Scheid and Tabitha Nzilani

What is a *kiondo* and where is its origin? A *kiondo* is a traditional bag found among the Kamba and Kikuyu communities in Kenya. It is mainly carried by older women, and depending on the community, the woman will carry it on her back with a strap across her head or the strap across her neck. Sometimes it is hung on one shoulder, depending on its weight. If it's light, hanging it over one shoulder is fine. Do the colours have a special meaning? These days, the colours have lost their significance. The colours are also affected by the availability of materials and the dye for the sisal. And what about its significance as a means of moving goods? The influence of traditional values and culture in Kenyan society can be seen in the role of a woman when dealing with the issues of food security within the home. She might not be the breadwinner, but she is responsible for what the household eats. As she is influenced by culture, by extension, she will use traditional methods of carrying items, hence the use of the *kiondo* to carry the groceries.

Rachel's story Part VI

Sukuma wiki—Staff Only

... At last we are moving on. Four people squeezed into the car's back seat in a traffic jam. With temperatures rising and exhaust fumes becoming

more noticeable, traffic is flowing again. Rachel had no doubt she would arrive at the Indian restaurant on time – at 11 o'clock – after we dropped the other intermediary off at a nearby supermarket. The owner is surprised at our visit; he proudly presents the guest rooms, kitchen and storerooms. We are a bit irritated not to find ›our product‹, sukuma wiki on the menu. Asking whether they are using an Indian name for it, we are told that sukuma wiki is African. It is for the staff. In a high-class restaurant it has no place on the menu as it is ›poor people's‹ food.

SUKUMA WIKI AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

For farmers sukuma-wiki is relatively easy to grow and in Kenya's nutrient-rich red soil the plant grows fast given enough water and sunlight. Farmers find it relatively easy to produce. It has become a staple food especially for people on low-incomes. Therefore many Kenyans regard it as ›poor people's food‹ and well-off people steer away from it, finding it not appropriate to their social status. But among the general population it enjoys growing acceptance, as consumers have lost confidence in animal products owing to numerous pests in the recent past.

Rachel's Story Part VII

Rachel as a Part-Time Farmer

On the way back from the Indian restaurant, a young woman approaches us at a narrow intersection. She introduces herself as Rachel's friend and neighbour. They meet here every day at this hour since Rachel's friend is a

tomato seller, and she also finishes her work at noontime. Rachel invites both of us to her home. »There, in Kikuyu, I have a small farm and you can see sukuma wiki growing there. I grow it for my friends and myself. If I have more than I need I sell it on the local market.«

URBAN FARMING – A GROWING PHENOMENON

WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR GROWING SUKUMA WIKI IN THE CITY?

In the previous chapters we followed the supply chain of sukuma wiki and the distribution patterns in the context of Nairobi's ongoing urban development. We turn now to the social implications. Because of inadequate economic infrastructure and a lack of social services, mechanisms of self-regulation have developed. Access to food is a case in point. As a growing population has an increasing demand for food supplies. »Urban farming« (>urban agriculture<) is on the rise in Nairobi. Here is a definition: »Urban agriculture is an industry located within, or on the fringes of a town, a city or a metropolis, which grows and raises, processes and distributes a diversity of food and non-food products, (re)using largely human and material resources, products and services found in and around that urban area, and in turn supplying human and material resources, products and services largely to that urban area.«¹²

PROSPECTS FOR THE URBAN ECONOMY

An alternative to long-distance transport is the growing of vegetables in the city. This can save time, money, and road space, and this is likely to lower the volume of metropolitan traffic. Rachel uses her own garden to farm for her own needs, then sells the surplus. According to Marc Redwood, urban farming can lead to new trading opportunities creating »economic spin-off industries and employment«.¹³

THE NECESSITY OF A SUBSISTENCE ECONOMY

A strong argument in support of urban farming is the problems that the poor have with their subsistence. Marc Redwood estimates that the money spent on food in low-income families accounts for 40 to 60% of the overall budget.¹⁴ This means: that with rising food prices¹⁵, other elementary needs cannot be met anymore. Almost the entire budget goes into eating and drinking. Therefore, more and more people try to escape from this economic bind and try to become more independent, by growing vegetables for their own subsistence, ideally in the vicinity of their home. There is a problem when people do not have access to plots for farming.

»Most urban farmers are men and women on low-incomes who grow food largely for their own consumption, on small plots they do not own, with little if any support or protection. (...) Market changes associated with bio-fuels, high oil prices and inflation are raising the costs of basic goods, which leads people to seek alternative ways of securing their food.«¹⁶

These people are forced to use the public space or unused property of estate owners for informal farming. They have a choice to either travel long distances to farming plots or, with limited mobility, to farm along roads, railway lines or the banks of (polluted) rivers.



SELLING SUKUMAWIKI AT TOM-MBOYA-STREET

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STREET VENDOR AT TOM-MBOYA-STREET

LEGAL IN THE MORNING. ILLEGAL IN THE EVENING

A frail woman sits on the kerb in hectic Tom-Mboya-Street at night, selling vegetables and fruit. She is part of a long line of street vendors who display their wares on the pedestrian walkway. It is the time when many people leave the Central Business District on their way home. Heading for the bus station, they buy things for dinner in passing. It is very crowded and noisy as minibuses and cars are locked in a traffic jam, with pedestrians jumping between the blocked vehicles and squeezing past the street vendors who occupy most of the pavement. One of the street vendors tells me about her daily routines: **9 am** Picking up sukuma wiki at Kiambu Farm (costs: large bunch 5 ksh) **10 am** Transport to Muthurwa market (cost for minibus: 60 ksh) **11 am** Preparing sukuma wiki at the market (making smaller bunches) **12 to 5 pm** Selling sukuma wiki at the market. (Smaller bunches: 15 ksh) **5 to 5:30 pm** Walking to Tom-Mboya-Street with sukuma wiki in kiondo bag **6 to 10 pm** Selling sukuma wiki on Tom-Mboya-Street. (Smaller bunches: 10 ksh) ...when suddenly the whole street becomes agitated. Police are in sight. In a rush, the vendors gather up their skirts which are an intriguing combination of apron and product display. With one quick move, vegetables, fruits and potatoes disappear in the garment, and the walkway – only seconds ago overflowing with merchandise – becomes a wasp's nest, with everyone swarming off in all directions. We run along. You have to avoid being run over. We wait a while in a side road with other women and men. A few minutes later the police are gone. The street vendors return from the side roads and the merchandise is fancifully displayed again as if nothing happened.

Buying and selling on the market is legal but selling on the street is not...

#28



KANGEMI MARKET –
ANOTHER RETAIL AND WHOLESALE MARKET IN NAIROBI

THE INFORMAL ECONOMY

Kenians and Germans appear to have different views of the informal economy. A Kenyan student estimated that up to 80% of the business in Nairobi is informal. He also stated that informal business is beneficial for those who take part in it, so long as it does not disadvantage others, and it is probably the only way to sustain the economy.

»Street vendors and informal traders play a central role in the everyday lives of people around the world. KENASVIT is a national network of informal workers organised in seven regions in Kenya (Nairobi, Migori, Nakuru, Eldoret, Mombasa, Machakos and Kisumu), working to improve the rights and working conditions of street vendors and to affect policy on the local and national level in Kenya.«¹⁷

In the recent past, the Kenyan government has not managed to make provisions to give the informal businesses the same opportunities that the formal ones have, and to create an organisational structure that would represent their members and their rights. That is all the more surprising as »street vendors are a sub-sector of the micro- and small enterprises that dominate the Kenyan economy. (...) The majority of them are micro-enterprises with fewer than 10 employees, while 70% of them are independent

workers. This means that a majority are operating on the bottom rung of the economy, and that a majority lives below the poverty line of one US-dollar a day.«¹⁸

These micro-finance institutions appear to be a promising method to get a foothold on the economic ladder. Marcel Gounot's paper says that efficiency can be improved »by optimising the connection between grass-roots autonomy, central control and external monitoring.«¹⁹ This would be an opportunity for the informal street vendors to become officially accepted.

Originally this sub-project started as a study of a distribution process. It has, in its course, touched on various other subject areas such as traffic safety, gender roles, ecological issues (air and water pollution), self-regulating systems, the lack of political will to implement master plans, the informal economy and the growth of urban farming. Some of the issues will be pursued in other essays in this book, and all of them deserve further study.

The co-operation between the Nairobi and the Cologne students has turned out to be very fruitful. Initial observations were verified (or not), underneath external appearances hidden truths were discovered and misapprehensions were corrected. This has turned out to be a true cultural dialogue.

¹ E. Sclar, J. Touber, C. Alexander, **Rethinking Privatization: The case of Urban Transportation in Nairobi**, Kenya (Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA 2007), 2. ² See K. Ojaamong, **Housing and Transportation Alternatives for a Decaying City - Case Study of Nairobi**, Kenya. Abstract of Master Thesis 2003, Web. 20 Aug. 2009. www.uni-stuttgart.de/iev/index.htm?vwi/lehre/studierendenarbeiten/mt-casestudynairobi.htm ³ D. Tschirley, M. Ayieko **Fresh fruit and vegetable consumption patterns and supply chain systems in urban Kenya**. (Egerton University.Nairobi, 2003), 5. ⁴ R. Adeka, P. Maundu, M. Imbumi, **Significance of African Traditional foods in Nairobi City Markets**, Kenya, International Centre for Underutilised Crops ICUC, Presentation at the International Symposium for Underutilized Plant Species for food, nutrition, income and sustainable development. Web. 6 July 2009. www.icuc-iwmi.org/Symposium2008/Theme%203/T3-9-Adeka.pdf, 20. ⁵ *ibid.* ⁶ Inwent GmbH – Internationale Weiterbildung und Entwicklung GmbH, LIPortal / Kenia / Wirtschaft & Entwicklung / Wirtschaftssystem und Wirtschaftssektoren. Web. 22 Aug. 2009. <http://liportal.inwent.org/kenia/wirtschaft-entwicklung.html> ⁷ M. Omwenga, **Urban growth and Sprawl – Case Study of Nairobi**, Kenya. Network Events on World Urban Forum 4, 3 - 9 November 2008 (Nanjing, China, 2008), 3. ⁸ E. Sclar, J. Touber, »Urban Sustainability from Theory to Practice«. The Institute of Transportation Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. Conference Presentation of The Center of Sustainable Urban Development, The Earth Institute, Columbia University New York, 20 May 2008. Web. 7 July 2009, www.its.berkeley.edu/volvo-center/VREF/N6_Elliot_2.pdf ⁹ O. Schöller-Schwedes, S. Rammler, **Mobile Cities: Dynamiken weltweiter Stadt- und Verkehrsentwicklung**. Lit Verlag. (Münster, Germany 2008), 4. ¹⁰ M. Omwenga, **Urban growth and Sprawl – Case Study of Nairobi**, Kenya. Network Events on World Urban Forum 4, 3 - 9 November 2008 (Nanjing, China, 2008), 2-3. ¹¹ M. Omwenga, **Urban growth and Sprawl – Case Study of Nairobi**, Kenya. Network Events on World Urban Forum 4, 3- 9 November 2008 (Nanjing, China, 2008), 5. ¹² M. Redwood, **Agriculture in Urban Planning**. Generating Livelihoods and Food Security. International Development Research Center IDRC, USA and Earthscan UK, e-book at www.idrc.ca/openebooks/427-7/, Canada 2009 (Web. 8 Aug. 2009) 13. ¹³ *Ibid.* ¹⁴ *Ibid.* ¹⁵ D. Foeken, M. Mwangi, **Farming in the city of Nairobi**, working paper 30/1998, African Studies Centre. Open book at: www.idrc.ca/cfp/ev-7521-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html Web. 9 Aug. 2009 (Leiden, Netherlands, 1998) 2. ¹⁶ L.J.A. Mougeot, **Growing better Cities: Urban Agriculture for sustainable Development**, International Development Research Centre. e-book at www.idrc.ca/in_focus_cities/ev-95297-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html, Canada 2006 (Web. 8 Aug. 2009), 14. ¹⁷ Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. Web. 7 July 2009, www.uusc.org/program_partners/KENASVIT ¹⁸ *Ibid.* ¹⁹ M. Gounot, »Introduction«, The efficiency of multi-tier savings and credit cooperatives in developing countries (Frankfurt, 2001)

03.6 DYNAMIC URBAN PATTERNS

MELANIE GIZAH / JOSEF KRIL / JAMES KANYI NJORGE

HOW DOES TRASH OF CAR DRIVERS CREATE NEW JOBS?

#10 WHICH LAYERS OF MOBILITY DO EXIST ON THE STREETS OF NAIROBI?

HOW DO PASSENGERS KNOW WHICH ROUTE A MAIATU GOES BEFORE ENTERING IT?

IN WHAT WAY DO STREET FIGHTS HAVE AN IMPACT ON MOBILITY IN NAIROBI?

#3 WHAT OTHER STRATEGIES BESIDES LEGAL STATIONS MAY EMERGE IF BUSSES TOOK OVER CONTROL?

HOW CAN PEOPLE'S ACTIVITY PATTERNS AT A CERTAIN SPOT BE RESEARCHED?

#2 HOW MUCH SPACE DOES A PERSON OR A GROUP HAVE AT THE GLOBE ROUNDABOUT AND WHAT DOES THIS TELL ABOUT THEIR SOCIAL STATUS?

HOW DO STRUCTURES OF MOBILITY CHANGE WHEN THE URBAN STRUCTURE OF THE GLOBE CHANGES?

#7 WHAT EXACT DIFFERENCES ARE BETWEEN INFORMAL AND FORMAL MOBILITY AT THE GLOBE ROUNDABOUT?

#2 WHAT KIND OF SOLIDARITY EXISTS AT A CERTAIN SPOT BETWEEN PEOPLE WITH VERY DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS AND WHAT EFFECTS DOES THAT SOLIDARITY CAUSE CONCRETELY?

#3 WHICH CONDITIONS SUPPORT THE REFORMATION OF AN ILLEGAL MAIATU STATION?

HOW CAN MOBILITY AND PERMANENT TRANSFORMATION CREATE A CERTAIN CHARACTERIZATION OF A SPOT? WHICH ASPECTS OF MOBILITY AND TRANSFORMATION DO HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE CHARACTERIZATION?



THE CASE OF THE GLOBE CINEMA ROUNDABOUT

by Melanie Giza, Josef Kril

FOREWORD

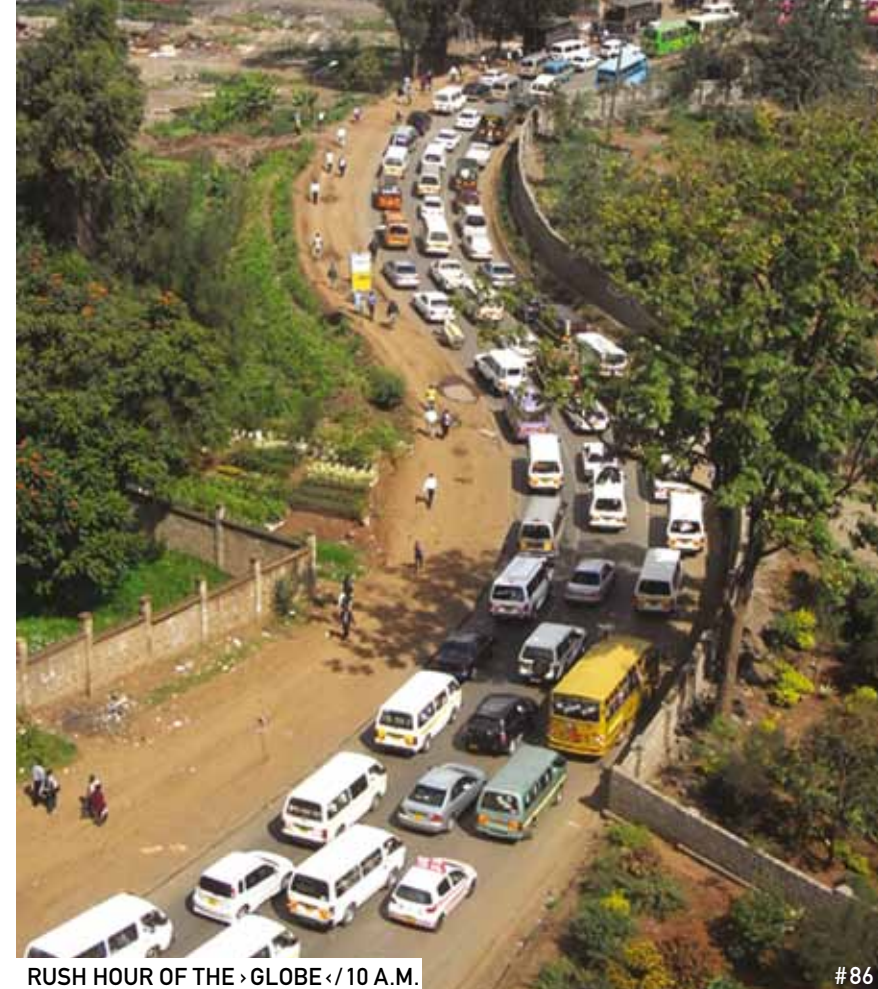
The following chapter documents and analyzes different patterns of actions and motions at a certain spot in the city centre of Nairobi that is strongly affected by mobility. Those patterns, including their interdependencies, give information about the different layers of mobility which initially constitute space and reveal the terms of relations within these categories. The focus lies especially on the informal layer of mobility, where in this context ›informal‹ refers to the non-institutionally defined, that is to say, infrastructure put in place by the city council. This infrastructure is incomplete, with areas that are only partially developed and some that are not developed at all, which leads to a nonspecific type of use. The result is a space, open to interpretation and improvisation that provokes a ›hidden‹ or ›invisible economy‹. Unofficial businesses emerge that flexibly adapt to the constant flow of mobility at this spot. The fragmentary static components such as architecture and infrastructure support the flexible and informal sector of this invisible economy. In the context of mobility, we will especially look at the interaction of this invisible economy with the traffic volume. We are focusing on interdependencies, terms and structures within this microcosm. The research methods used by the authors at this very complex location will be explained by way of examples provided in this chapter.

INTRODUCTION

Before we start researching mobility at a certain urban intersection in the city centre of Nairobi, we would like to give an overview about how space has been discussed before and which theories of space exist. Of course, we cannot introduce every single concept and idea about space because they only have secondary meanings for our topic.

However, looking at the etymology of the German term *Raum* (space) provides us with various meanings. It goes back to the verb *räumen* (to make space, to empty, to make way for, to leave), and shows that most of the meanings are always linked to a certain emptiness. But within this context, emptiness is not used in terms of physical absence of people or objects in a space, rather it points to non-existent attributes that usually specify or characterize space.¹ At the same time, missing attributes offer to every person or object the possibility of having an effect on the space, and of acting freely without any barriers. Further definitions are: an inexactly defined dimension; space that can be ruled over, as well as definitions that have been created in special categories such as geographical, political, or social space. But no matter how broad the spectrum of definitions is, every theory can be attached to one of two superior ideologies of ›absolute‹ or ›relative‹ space.

See ›absolute‹ or ›relative space‹ theories in the next paragraph. MG, JK



RUSH HOUR OF THE ›GLOBE‹ / 10 A.M.

#86

It is therefore not a question of what space is in general, it is more about how space has been reflected at a particular time and how ideologies were changed, and under which influences.²

RESEARCHING THE CITY

The city itself has become an object of interdisciplinary research. Besides architects and city planners, even other disciplines have started focusing on the city and its structures, which should come as no surprise due to the fact that, as of 2008, more than half of the world's population lives in cities, according to the world population report of the UNO.³ There is a new demand for creating an understanding of the city and its population consisting of heterogeneous, social individuals, and of achieving a transparency and therefore an understanding of the processes that initially allow urbanity to emerge. In doing so, it is common to include theories of space in the analysis of urban phenomena. Since the 19th century, perceptions of space that interpreted it as a container, as a three-dimensional box independent from social contexts and thus absolute and static, have become outmoded. Nowadays, perceptions of space that consider it relatively and as the result of infinite social networking are more common. The category of interrelations between the world of objects and actions gains even more attention.⁴



PEDESTRIAN TUNNEL TO THE INSIDE OF ›GLOBE‹

#87

It is not parameters like size, population or topographical location that give information about the living reality in a city, but rather noticeable social spaces that are accessible via experiences. A relevant theory for urban research has been set out by German sociologist Martina Löw who, in her book *Raumsoziologie (Sociology of Space)*, describes space as a result not only of objects, but also of social actions and structures.⁵ But sociologies of the urban realm and space are not only used for researching social processes, they may also support questions of how architectural styles and construction methods can have an effect on patterns of actions or mechanisms of cognition. Therefore urban research uses different sciences and resources of which empiricism is the most significant attribute. Even Walter Benjamin describes himself as a Flaneur who, in his book *Berliner Kindheit um neunzehnhundert (A Berlin Childhood around 1900)*, raises his perception by the repetitive use of the same routes in order to make new discoveries. In contrast, Jürgen Krusche characterizes the Japanese architect Kurokawa Kisho as a modern Flaneur, who considers the amount of traces that everybody leaves within 24 hours as their space of living. Out of this, Krusche developed his ›method walking‹⁶ that reveals the every-day-life of an unknown place or supports spotting of adequate places for defined research ambitions.

RESEARCH SCOPE

According to our first working title ›Urban Areas‹ we used the method of walking and went around the streets of Nairobi in order to find interesting hot spots that are strongly influenced by mobility. By observing and analysing the dynamics of these hot spots, it was our aim to draw conclusions about the needs and the developments of their structures as well as future options for these places. For example, some of our criteria were a) the possibility of time-independent observations (in the context of safety), b) a certain mobility routine and c) unique features that clearly differentiate a particular spot from any other in Nairobi. The location should include different social layers and lead through different areas like residential or industrial zones, to get a strong basis to work with.

First we concentrated on the main traffic arteries of the city. These, however, did not fulfil our criteria. Our attention then turned to the roundabouts that were supposed to support the self-regulation of the traffic and to bring a better structure into the traffic flow.

With a diameter of 250 m, the Globe Cinema Roundabout is the biggest in Africa, and seemed to fit the needs of our study perfectly. However, during our working period we were confronted with problems that we could not anticipate and that we will introduce later. Primarily, our interest was focused on the different layers of mobility, which we hoped to find at ›the Globe‹, and to analyze the relations between them, because they should reveal information about how mobility generates space and »how one can interpret the mechanisms of this reproduction.«⁷ Central questions leading us to our thesis were: how does a high traffic volume at a single spot influence the behaviour and actions of its users? Do we find behaviour patterns or actions specifically for mobility? For that reason our thesis is: a constant mobility flow at a certain spot also activates the informal mobility of its users. With this ambition we established a research plan for a working period of 5 days.

Check the foreword to find out more about ›informal‹. MG. JK

MOBILITY IN NAIROBI

In Nairobi, transport in general and passenger transportation in particular are limited to the streets; the very few railways are irrelevant and play only a subsidiary role. There is no underground system. Most of the people cannot afford a private motorized vehicle, so *matatus* (vans with 14 seats) mainly take over private passenger transportation and fulfil the need for mobility for 20 cents a ride. Because of this, the city's already lacking road network is always overloaded. Especially during the early-morning and afternoon rush hour, main roads like Uhuru Highway are jammed, and often the tense traffic situation has to be self-regulating, because the traffic lights, etc. are just randomly installed, so nobody pays them any heed. Sometimes, the police take over responsibility and try to manage the traffic jams at the roundabouts in person. The roundabouts themselves are an architectural approach to bring more structure into the road system, to reduce waiting periods and to achieve a better traffic flow. But since, as the capital city of Kenya and the centre of the economy, Nairobi's significance has strongly increased during the last few years, even more people who want to profit from these latest developments move into the city. The figure of registered *matatus* grows daily but also non-motorized vehicles such as *mokokotenis* or goods bicycles – which are at a disadvantage due to their lower speed – interfere with the traffic flow and block the streets. As a consequence, the road system, originally designed for a smaller volume of traffic, regularly locks up and the whole city is stuck in traffic.

THE GLOBE – INFRASTRUCTURE

›The Globe‹ as it is called for short by Nairobians, was built in 1960, and is one of the major traffic intersections in the city. Its central position controls traffic flowing from inside and outside the city, which makes it a hot spot for mobility. Furthermore, its constant transformation means that the roundabout itself is ›mobile‹. This constant state of change and

the lack of regulation create a fragmented infrastructure that can be evidenced by the missing pedestrian crossings and traffic lights and the partially finished sidewalks. Crossing this three-lane motorway is extremely dangerous for pedestrians, so the city built two underpasses to get to the centre of the roundabout safely. This environment also leads us to the question of whether these shortcomings themselves may be responsible for any pattern of action, rather than the mobility of the traffic. But those general conditions only support this informal mobility that we consider as a phenomenon in the context of general mobility. The protagonists do not rent shop units (and cannot afford them), and not every part of ›The Globe‹ is covered with buildings, so street traders set up their improvised stalls near the streets, close to where all the action takes place. Traffic determines where the traders locate their stalls, namely at strategic smart spots where most of the pedestrians pass by – on their way to work, for example. The traffic is a guarantee that potential customers actually find their way to the spot and drives the daily income. The deficient environment and the street traders' limited possibilities create new spaces for individual business ideas. Indeed, the open structure and flexibility at the Globe offers a broad spectrum of mobility at different levels, but in combination with different cultures and social divisions, it also provides a high potential for conflicts.

SEGMENTING SPACE: A LITTLE BIT OF GLOBE FOR EVERYONE

»To avoid (inter-societal) clashes, every group within society needs a clearly defined space. In other words, the totality of space must be divided and differentiated.«⁸ But Nairobi's city planning, which is usually implemented without consideration for users and residents of the Globe, provokes social tensions among the different sections of the population. The latest example of a group of mechanics who occupied an area that had recently been sold to someone else, gives proof of how the atmosphere can quickly change.



RIOTS BLOCKING THE STREET #1

Most of the times, these social tensions end up in violent set-to's with the police who are in charge of implementing the decisions of the city council. In this instance, the police had to forcibly remove the mechanics in order to make room for another group, because the former did not want to give up on a piece of land that served all their needs, namely work and living space. Racked by these fights, the Globe was also temporarily losing its main function as major traffic intersection because nobody would use it in case violence broke out. The fear of attacks was making the population avoid this spot, and forcing them to choose alternative routes, disrupting the established traffic flow.



REFUSE SCAVANGERS #4



ILLEGAL MATATUSTATION #3

The Globe was transforming from a major traffic intersection into a political hot spot in the city. Another earlier example is a settlement in the inner circle of the Globe, which was cleared in 2006 to build a matatu station. Residents were relocated to the outer circle, close to the Nairobi River, where they have been subsequently driven away by the water pollution. In contrast, the old centre of the Globe has been paved and prepared as an official matatu station with a public toilet and shop units selling food. According to Lucius Burckhardt's *Design ist unsichtbar* (Design is Invisible), a new infrastructure has emerged where different types of business fit together and build new strategies in order to profit not only from each other but also to adapt to the rhythm of mobility and to profit from one another symbiotically. Street traders offer their wares to pedestrians passing by, affording them the possibility of a quick spot of shopping that fits in perfectly with the fast pace of both the place and its visitors. Normally, business is flourishing, but because of the clashes between the mechanics and the police, the matatu station is as good as empty.

Exceptional circumstances in particular reveal the potential of the action-space and the flexibility of the Globe: due to the fact that the ongoing

Burckhardt vermisst in Gestaltungsprozessen die Berücksichtigung des Gesamtkontextes. Er kritisiert die Behandlung von Einzelproblematiken und fordert einen Eingriff in das System dahinter. MG, JK



MOKOKOTENI DRIVERS

#10

STREET TRADERS

CHARCOAL TRANSPORTERS

street clashes were making people avoid the place, the *matatu* drivers reacted quickly by erecting an illegal station further into the centre. A street trader is setting up her stall close to the new station, offering her goods to workers and passengers alike. The new strategy is successful, as people adopt the new stop, ensuring the daily income of the *matatus*. The trader, as yet, does not have any competition. A few steps along, two young men have started their car washing business in an unused space, while their neighbours are selling charcoal.

On the other side, British buildings from the 1960's give the place a Western atmosphere, even if their empty floors or broken windows betray their rather poor condition. In the eight-story Paramount Building, which is the highest building at the Globe, there are some private schools and offices, protected by private security companies. In front of the Paramount, women are selling fruit or vegetables and shoe shiners are waiting for customers. A bicycle is transporting a load of charcoal in the middle of the street between huge trucks and cars.

The rubbish strewn all over the place gives information about the relationship between the people and their environment, but it is also collected by some teenagers who sell the garbage to recycling companies. Even if the constant state of change at the Globe forces residents and users to come up with new business ideas regularly, at least mobility itself is a constant that can be relied on: only the strategies need to change.

METHODOLOGY

DAYS 1.2: COVERT OBSERVATION

We decided to use the rooftop of the Paramount Building for observations as it gave us an overview of the whole area. Using this general method, we could decide on the next research steps in detail. It was easy to document the development of traffic during the whole day, and even to check on the behaviour and patterns of movement of the people at the Globe. We were able to identify a certain daily rhythm, as well as different areas used by specific groups.

We defined these specific groups according to their informal activities, and planned on conducting some interviews with them:

MOKOKOTENI DRIVERS
STREET TRADERS / **INTERVIEW**
CHARCOAL TRANSPORTERS



MATATU CONDUCTOR

#3

RECYCLING MATERIAL COLLECTORS

VEGETABLE OR FRUIT SALESMEN

SHOE SHINERS

#2

CAR WASHERS

KIOSK OWNERS

CHARCOAL SELLERS

MATATU DRIVER / **INTERVIEW**
RECYCLING MATERIAL COLLECTORS
VEGETABLE OR FRUIT SALESMEN
SHOE SHINERS
CAR WASHERS / **INTERVIEW**
KIOSK OWNERS
CHARCOAL SELLERS / **INTERVIEW**

DAYS 3, 4, 5: INTERVIEWS

To gain more information about intentions, motivation and interests of the protagonists and their activities at this place, we decided to do some unstructured interviews in order to generate questions relevant to the person and their situation.

INTERVIEW SUMMARIES

STREET TRADER

Victoria is 34 years old; she lives in a small street next to the Globe and sells cigarettes, bananas, chewing gum or the daily newspaper from her easy-to-set-up street stall. She has been conducting her business here over the past few years, she says. She moves her pitch according to the numbers of pedestrians. Recently, she has moved closer to a new, unofficial *matatu* station where she can conduct her business without any competition. Every day, *matatus* choose this place in preference to the official station in the middle of the roundabout, and wait for customers to arrive. The business is developing quite well. Waiting periods are shorter, and the *matatus* travel to all destinations. Passengers quickly buy chewing gum or a banana before they get in. »*Matatu* drivers usually stick to cigarettes. I need to take this opportunity«, she says. »Who knows when the situation will change again.« In addition, we find out that the reason for this new station and the general lack of passengers is the ongoing clashes between the mechanics and the police over the ownership of the land right next to the Globe. The city council has torn down most of the infrastructure built by the mechanics, something which has led to huge conflicts

since the mechanics decided to fight for their land. This struggle is detailed in an article that Victoria shows to us. When we ask her about her personal opinion of the Globe she answers: »The Globe has a bad image, it is not a safe place, violence is taking over control. But I have no choice, I belong to this place, here I work and live.«

CAR WASHERS

Located right next to the street on muddy ground, Brian and Patrick have established their car-washing business. Two big tanks of water, some old cloths and a little piece of soap are their tools. On busy days they clean up to 12 cars on a rate of 50 Ksh, which does not sound like very much, but it is enough to survive on. The constant flow of vehicles is their guarantee of customers. The business has been running over the past three months, but how long they will continue with it, is out of their hands: they depend on the situation at the Globe. »You never know what will happen the next day. Sometimes, police comes and forbids us to work since we do not have an official permission. But what else shall we do, we get here anyway.«

MATATU DRIVER

Inside the official *matatu* station, the vans are stuck in traffic jams and there are few passengers today. When we ask one of the drivers, he tells us that passengers avoid the place for fear of being attacked. The Globe is too unsafe these days. Then he talks about the clashes and admits that safety is one of the biggest problems here. When we ask him for suggestions for improving the situation he says: »Yes, I got some advice. I would like to have a police station right in the middle of this roundabout. They will provide a better atmosphere and if people feel safe again, they will come back to us as well.«

CHARCOAL SALESMAN

The charcoal depot at the side of the street at the Globe is illegal. Close to Nairobi River, the salesmen burn huge amounts of wood, transforming it into charcoal. All day long, the fires burn and plumes of smoke can be seen from great distances. The transportation of the charcoal is divided between *mokotenis* and bicycles or is simply delivered by hand. To save time and to cut down on the number of journeys, most of the vehicles are heavily overloaded, and so slow that they interfere with the traffic flow. When we ask one of the salesmen he tells us that there is a supply chain. »Most of the times, it's distributors we sell our product to instead of single private peoplecustomers. But we need to be very careful because police wants to tear close down our business because of pollution worries. Up to now, nothing has happened but we expect them to come every day.«

QUESTIONS THAT EMERGED FROM OUR RESEARCH

What keeps people of very different backgrounds together in one place? #44

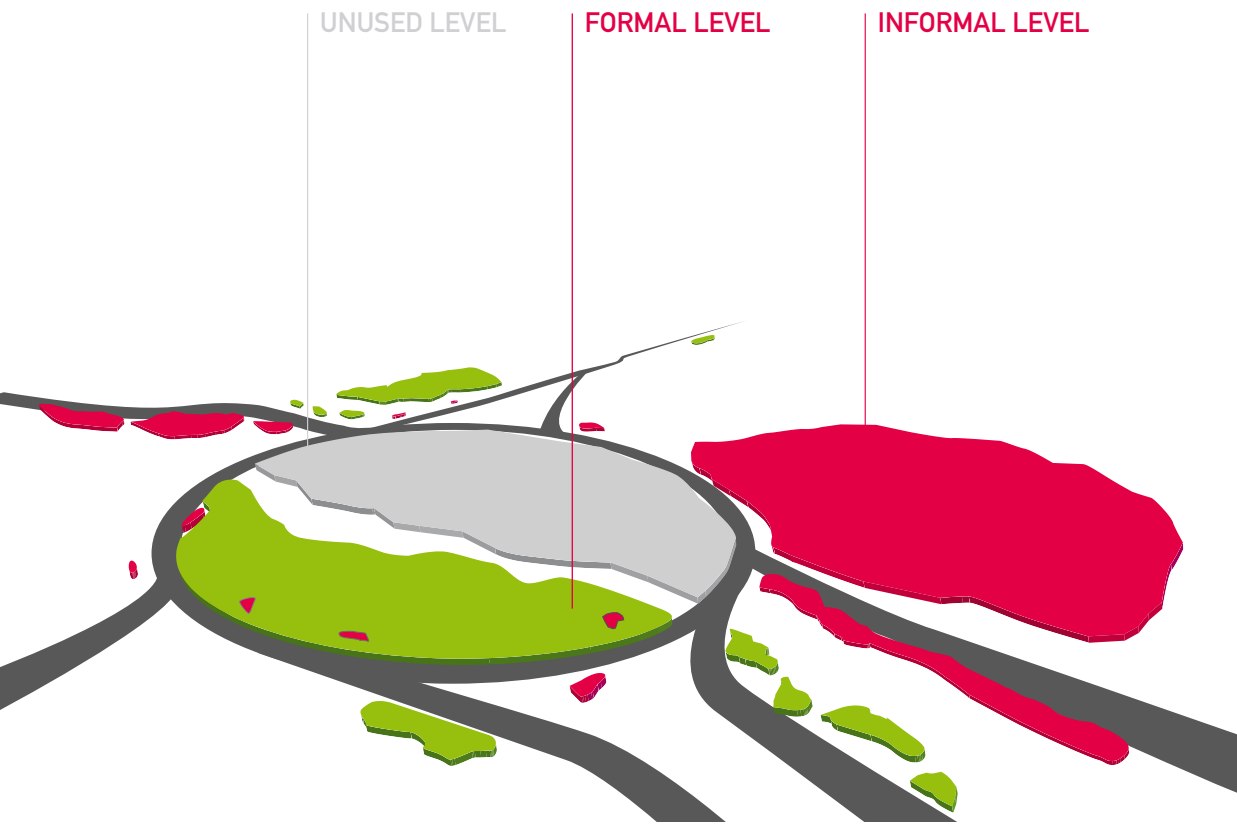
Faced with Nairobi's economic boom and the constant rise in its population, residents are forced to find specific strategies to survive. A larger population increases competition, which in turn leads to a greater variety of economic niches springing up in order to increase differentiation between competitors. In consequence, this variety ends up in a pretty vulnerable division of labour among the population, which is easy to interfere with. Every single part is dependent on the other: if one of them collapses, the whole system is threatened. Therefore, every participant has a strong interest in keeping things together, something which is known as ›organic solidarity‹ and which describes this overarching collective interest.⁹

Buildings and road systems are the material basis of a city, and constructional arrangements constitute spaces and provide or limit their use.¹⁰ The way buildings are arranged is a significant factor in the type of image that a city develops, and how that city affects people. The effect on a single person, again, is dependent on other aspects such as cultural group, social class, milieu, age, gender or religion.

What kind of image does the Globe have and how has it emerged?

Because of its function and its constructional arrangement as a roundabout, the Globe can be divided into three parts: the inner ring, the outer ring and the street. There is no unity in its design: the inner ring is formally structured with a paved floor, fixed waiting stations, kiosks and a public toilet. The outer ring, on the other hand, is characterized by ›dead‹, unclaimed patches of land. Sporadic stretches of sidewalk alternate with rough tracks that can barely be used during rainy periods. Western buildings are in a bad state of repair. Business is in the hands of street traders who can relocate their stalls at any time. The street forms a realm between these two rings because its clear function and daily routine is formal, whereas its use by people makes it an informal area for business when they sell their goods and services to the passing car drivers. This disjointed structure paints a disunited picture of the Globe with a consequent rough and negative image. The place seems disorganized and therefore confusing, so users must first analyze it, before they are able to understand its processes and the way it functions.

In addition, there are socio-cultural aspects like social injustice among the residential groups that is evidenced by the amount of space the groups occupy. Depending on their status, a person gets more or less space, or a different space, something that can also be clearly demonstrated at the Globe.¹¹ The average street trader does not have a clearly defined spot, and even if they do, they occupy only the smallest patch of ground. Shop owners, on the other hand, do have a fixed plot for their shops.



So the physical space occupied by a person reflects their status in the social space, and even takes on a symbolic character.¹² While the car washers make money on a muddy patch of land on the outer circle that is not allocated to anyone, *matatu* drivers stay in an official paved and clearly defined space right in the middle of the Globe. The city council's attitude towards different social groups is clearly underlined by their provision of this purpose-built environment. Other businesses are barely tolerated on the periphery of the Globe, where the council is not investing any money at all. This selection is critical because open space leads to fights for land among those groups who get no support from the city council, which makes the Globe a dangerous and unsafe place to be.

Are people aware of all the problems? In what way do residential areas affect people's behaviours and attitudes?

›Home-turf solidarity‹ is the loyalty of a person towards a specific place.¹³ This solidarity is not connected to the spatial or physical surroundings of a place, rather it points to the social connectivity of residents. The name of a place is the symbol for a territorially linked social system.¹⁴

An interesting example are settlements with buildings that are made from precast concrete slabs, or just ›slabs‹ for short. The term itself causes a range of negative associations: it is not a synonym for a space-saving, low priced type of construction; ›slab settlements‹ are a symbol for social flashpoints; any kind of conflict, poverty and social neglect, along with low educational attainment of their residents. Those symbolic features are a result of social processes and their perception was learned during social upheavals and stored in the collective memory.¹⁵ ›Slab settlements‹ have a bad image and are stigmatized by most people.

According to Albrecht, the consciousness of the affected people – the residents of ›slab settlements‹, for example – is dependent on a) the visibility of unrest to other people and b) the interaction among the affected people. To sum up, if others react to the problems of such a settlement, even residents of these settlements start to think about their surroundings and make each other aware of the related problems.

However, the connection to ›bad‹ places still develops the longer a person stays in such a place, no matter how bad the physical quality of the living space might be. ›To settle down‹, in the German language can also be expressed – as in English – by ›putting down roots‹, and this describes rather well social networking, including a strong emotional aspect, rather than just a change of locations. Emotional connectivity develops if a partner for interaction can be found, if making friends is possible or the family is closely-knit. In consequence, that does not necessarily mean that developing a sense of ›home‹ is just a matter of time, it also seems to be a question of social structures, of the ability to integrate into new surroundings and of becoming part of new and different social networks.



EXHIBITION GOETHE INSTITUT NAIROBI

TRANSFORMATION

The interviews have revealed interesting relations and interdependencies, but they also demonstrate how unstable the situation and the activities at the Globe are.

Our research is a snapshot of the Globe's current situation, and is the basis for the next, design-related step. After gathering all this information, we created an installation for the exhibition ›Mobility in Nairobi‹. The exhibition took place in the Goethe Institute in Nairobi and acted as a research interface, since we wanted to establish a dialogue between the visitors and ourselves. We created an editorial system that presented the roundabout and the related information as an illustration to the visitors, and also offered possibilities to participate as an author and to add personal information regarding the Globe. We confronted the visitor with media, such as newspaper articles describing the past and the current situation of the Globe. The articles were linked to the actual places of our protagonists on a topographical map of the Globe.

PERSPECTIVES

On the one hand, the delicate social network of the very different protagonists at the Globe Cinema Roundabout is rather unstable, but, on the other hand, every single intervention, either from the outside or within, offers the possibility of renewal. We may be able to learn from the structures and processes if we create a general understanding of it. Therefore, we need to gather information about the socio-cultural relations of this place and generate relevant questions in order to find out more about the needs of the people.

The example of the Globe shows the dependencies between the quality of a place and the qualification of the responsible planner. The scope and the consequences of new projects have to be thought through theoretically and subjected to scrutiny before they are implemented. Therefore, interdisciplinary methods have to be used that enable a restructuring of urban systems.

However, this snapshot of the Globe does not allow any approaches or solutions. This research is more about focusing on the problems and transforming our perspective into an intercultural dialogue. Gathering our experiences – and therefore creating the Cultural Library – establishes a platform that presents new approaches to well-known topics and problems.

1 J. Krusche (ed), *Der Raum der Stadt – Raumtheorien zwischen Architektur, Soziologie, Kunst und Philosophie in Japan und im Westen* (Marburg, 2008), 11. **2** M. Schroer, *Räume, Orte, Grenzen – Auf dem Weg zu einer Soziologie des Raums* (Frankfurt/M. 2006), 29. **3** *ibid.* 29 **4** *ibid.* 46 **5** Krusche op. cit., 13. **6** Krusche op. cit. 11, 105. **7** Schroer op. cit., 83. **8** »...Um jeden (intragessellschaftlichen) Zusammenstoß zu vermeiden, braucht jede einzelne Gruppe einen bestimmten Raumanteil. Mit anderen Worten, der Gesamttraum muss aufgeteilt und unterschieden werden...« E. Durkheim/M. Maus, *Schriften zur Soziologie der Erkenntnis*, (Frankfurt/M., 1993), 171. **9** E. Durkheim, *Über die Teilung der sozialen Arbeit*, (Frankfurt/M., 1999 orig.1893), 293. **10** »Gebäude und Straßen bilden die materielle Basis einer Stadt, bauliche (An)Ordnungen gliedern Räume und ermöglichen bzw. limitieren deren Nutzung.« M. Löw, *Raumsoziologie*, (Frankfurt/M., 2001), 131. **11** »So bekommen Personen je nach Status mehr oder weniger bzw. andere Räume zugesprochen.« *ibid.*, 213. **12** »So spiegelt der eingenommene physische Ort einer Person gleichsam die Stellung im sozialen Raum wider und wird auch symbolisch aufgeladen.« P. Bourdieu, ›Die männliche Herrschaft‹ in: I. Döllig/B. Kraus (eds): *Ein alltägliches Spiel. Geschlechter Konstruktion in der sozialen Praxis* (Frankfurt/M., 1997), 166. **13** »Ortsbezogenheit von Menschen ist die Anhänglichkeit von Personen an einen bestimmten Ort.« A. Flade, *Wohnen psychologisch betrachtet* (Bern: Huber, 2006), 30. **14** »Diese Ortsbezogenheit bezieht sich aber nicht auf räumliche oder physische Gegebenheiten eines Ortes, sondern auf die Sozialzusammenhänge der Bewohner. Der Name ist das Symbol für ein territorial gebundenes Sozialsystem.« H. Treinen, ›Symbolische Ortsbezogenheit. Eine soziologische Untersuchung zum Heimatproblem‹ in: J. Friedrichs, W. Schluchter, H. Solga (eds): *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* (Wiesbaden, 1965), vol. 17, issue 1, 73-97. **15** »Diese symbolischen Eigenschaften geben wir dem Raum, weil er in sozialen Abläufen produziert und seine Wahrnehmung in sozialen Prozessen erlernt worden ist, sowie im kollektiv Gedächtnis verankert wird.« B. Hamm, *Einführung in die Siedlungssoziologie* (München: Beck, 1982), 24ff.

ISLAND URBANISM: SPATIAL SEGREGATION IN NAIROBI

by Dr. Alfred Omenya

FOUNDATIONS OF SPATIALLY SEGREGATED URBANISM

When the colonial authorities took over the small trading centre of the Maasai and the Kikuyu ethnic groups and turned it into a camp for the railway and later into their capital, control of entry of persons into Nairobi was one of the key strategies that they used to exclude unwanted groups from the city. The use of the city reflected a strong desire by the colonial authorities to separate various races for purposes of social engineering and demographic control.

Development followed zoned, racial segregation. Europeans lived to the West, Indians to the North and Africans to the relatively dry, flood prone, Eastern peripheries. In the African quarters, space was further organised on the basis of ethnicity, to prevent the Africans from causing trouble for their colonial masters. Thus Nairobi was re-founded as a segregated city for the European settlers, Asians traders and African workers.

RACIALLY DETERMINED ZONING

Nairobi's town plan of 1927 was based on zoning as a means of regulating land use. Zoning was enforced in conjunction with pass laws that limited movement and residence of people of various races, ethnic groups and sexes. Segregation was strengthened through racial access to tenure. By 1927 the Europeans owned 90% of the city; Asians 10% and Africans 0%. African males were allowed to live in squatter settlements on the periphery of the city. Women were banned from the city and its periphery altogether. Incidentally, Command Paper of 1923 purportedly abolished racial segregation between Asians and Europeans. This command paper had inflated land prices in the Asian and African areas preventing these two races from effective access to land, while facilitating ownership of land, even in designated Asian and African territories to Europeans.

The 1948 master plan developed strong spatial zones that did not only separate people but also separated functions of the city. Neighbourhoods were not integrated and people did not live where they worked. Living, working and recreational spaces were totally separate, demanding for substantial commuting within the city.

The Colonial Government never enacted legislation on segregation; but through planning instruments like the 1948 master plan and pass laws enforced it. The colonialists firmly believed in segregation arguing that natural affinity would keep different races together in separate quarters (a case of ecological/voluntary segregation).

PERSISTENCE OF A SEGREGATED URBAN FOOTPRINT

Before independence, in 1963, and knowing well that racial segregation was socially and legally unacceptable, the colonial authorities allowed unlimited influx of Africans into the city, with serious consequences. The first decade of independence saw a juxtaposition of racial segregation onto ethnic and economic segregation. Before independence, colonial authorities would ban entire ethnic groups from city of Nairobi. They continued to recruit labour for various government departments on ethnic basis. This generated an interesting spatialisation of ethnicity in government housing quarters. The bulk of African population remained in the former African locations – Eastland in the Nairobi City Council and Kenya Railway housing. Thus at independence the footprint of segregation had been strongly implanted in the city.

FAILED ATTEMPTS TO REINTEGRATE THE CITY THROUGH THE 1973 PLAN

In the context of failed state housing programme, joblessness and homeless, and informality, the post independence Kenyan Government initiated the Metropolitan Growth Strategy, in 1973. The study group produced a document which was meant to guide the development of the city to the year 2000 and beyond.

To address the functional segregation of the city, the 1973 plan envisaged self-contained neighbourhoods: encompassing residential, industrial, commercial and administrative areas in an integrated manner. The intention was to have local, self-contained neighbourhoods that would limit need to commute to and from the CBD. This was the basis of housing development in Buru Buru area; Umoja core housing and Dandora site and services schemes. All these schemes never produced integrated neighbourhoods rather they became new ›silo neighbourhoods‹ that were rather far from attaining autonomy as integrated districts.

By the time the Nairobi City Council was rezoning the Upper Hill Area for redevelopment with new development control regulations in early 1990s, any pretence at integrated neighborhoods in the City of Nairobi had been abandoned by the relevant authorities.

SILOS OF HIGH POPULATION DENSITY, INFORMALITY AND TENURE INSECURITY

One direct consequence of weak planning and weak implementation of the state's land use programmes was the development of high density ›silos‹ occupied by low income earners. Rooming had become the norm after independence. By 1981 over 80% of the African in Nairobi lived in single rooms, mainly in high density inner city locations, like Pumwani, Maringo, Mathare and Kibera. Currently, anecdotal evidence indicates that 55% of the city live in less than 5% of the land, creating a curious pattern of land use contrasting very low density footprint in the leafy suburbs of the city, with the high density rental tenements that proliferate in poor neighbourhoods.

NAIROBI: A CITY OF CONTRASTS

Lack of planning and understanding of the essence of informality has led to inappropriate ad hoc interventions, by the Central Government and the local authorities. Informal settlements have hardly been looked at as a response to lack of housing for the low income and to a largely informal economy. Increase in informal settlements is mainly a response to state inability to house its citizens. Informality is associated with illegality, with Nairobi pursuing a piecemeal approach, driven mainly by development partners, yet poorly linked with national policy framework.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Nairobi is urbanising at a very high rate. The levels of informality in the city indicate that it is more practical to work with informality than fighting it. The centralized, zoned city has failed to work; it is time to test out alternative visions. One such a vision is considering the city as a poly-centric amalgamation of autonomous districts. There is need for strong implementation of the programmes, in line with various planning tools, such as strategic planning, master planning and urban design.



04

THE COLOGNE EXHIBITION AND OPEN STUDIO

by Philipp Heidkamp, Jessica Stihl



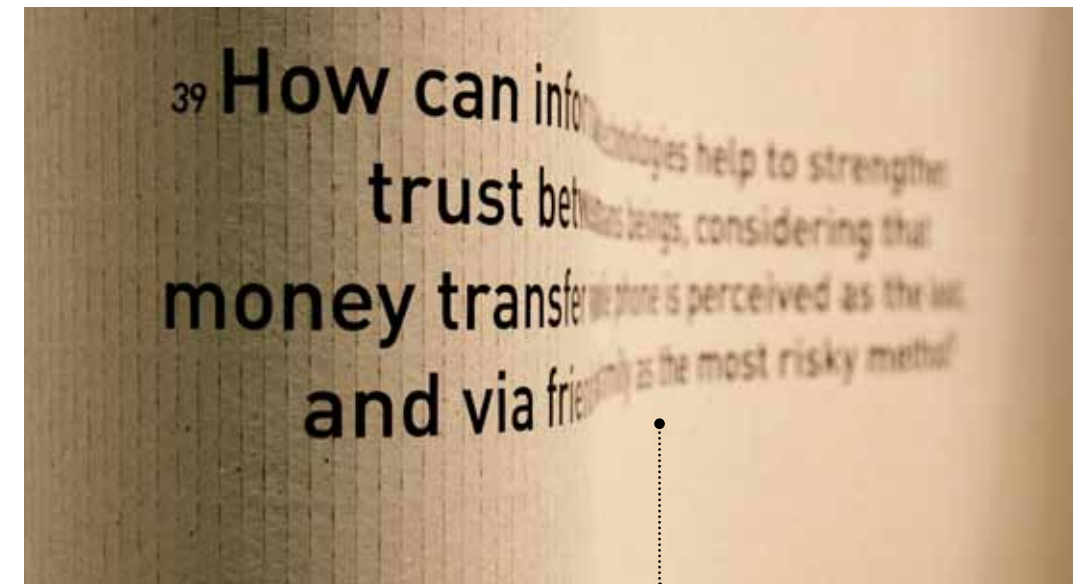
EXHIBITION OPENING AT PLAN09 WITH PHILIPP HEIDKAMP PAUL MPUNGU AND MAYOR ANGELA SPIZIG

After the on-site work in Nairobi, it was a crucial second step to have a workshop in Cologne with the whole team from the Kenyan capital. Thanks to the financial support of the DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst) it was possible to invite the students and Prof. Mpungu for a 2-week workshop here in Cologne. Part of the workshop was the conception and staging of an exhibition at Plan09, an annual architecture festival and exhibition that takes place at around 40 venues in Cologne. The exhibition was opened by the deputy mayor of Cologne, Angela Spizig and two short lectures by Prof. Mpungu and Prof. Heidkamp, whose task was to frame the complexity of the project for the audience.

The exhibition concept was based on two basic elements and the correlation between them: questions and photos. These give a taste of and refer to the six research projects. This way, the multifaceted aspects of mobility in Nairobi and its correlation in the questions and photos were revealed by linking them with each other and to related items on the Cultural Library website. The exhibition design worked with three different layers of content: experience, information and discourse. Not only were the results from Nairobi on display, but also the procedure and the systematic approach of Cultural Library were demonstrated.

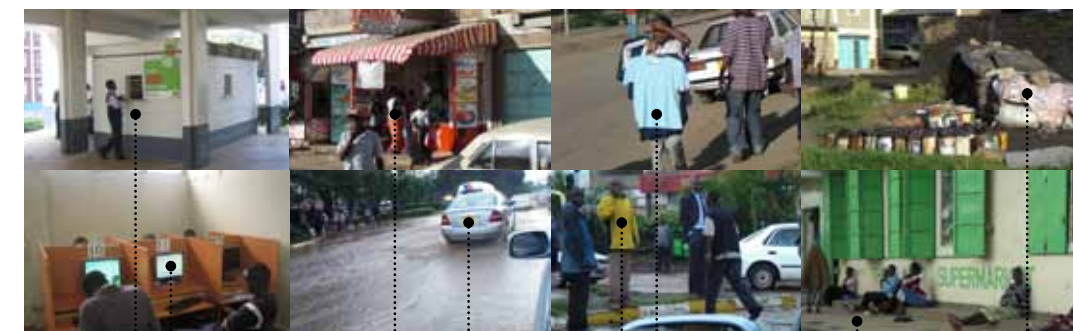
BASICS

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QUESTIONS

The questions are the main exhibits. They derive from the respective item sheets and topics and are the result of a research process. They are developed after analyzing insights. The modality of the questions shows that there had been a previous research process and that the results of it had been reflected. The intention of the questions is to kick-start a discourse and to think about transformation. Each question is exhibited with a number (the according item number) in a certain colour. The colour represents the relationship to one of the research topics. The questions are related to one or more photos by this number.



PHOTOS

Each photo is a momentary snapshot related to an item. It stands for and refers to an insight respective the research topics within the theme of ›Mobility in Nairobi‹. The photos are extracted from the item sheets and represent a single item. From the interplay of questions and photos, the visitors are able to reveal the different research topics and to reflect on them.

I. EXPERIENCE

CARDBOARD INSTALLATION

To refer to urban patterns of organisation and orientation, a maze made out of cardboard structured the whole exhibition – with hundred questions.

VIDEO AND SOUND INSTALLATION

In the entrance area of the exhibition, an installation consisting of three projectors and several loudspeakers projected busy street scenes from Nairobi. It acted as a bustling juxtaposition to the stillness of the cardboard maze.

SLIDE SHOW PRESENTATION

Photos extracted from the items were presented in a slide show. They were connected via a number to the questions on the cardboard walls to a large map and to the Cultural Library website, where the same numeric classification is used.

PHOTO › DANDELIONS ‹

For specific topics, photo ›dandelions‹ (photographs radially arranged in a sphere using wire rods) were positioned in the cardboard labyrinth, to enable a condensed visual access to the six topics of the project.



II. INFORMATION

NAIROBI MAP

A five-metre long by two-metre high map of Nairobi at the back end of the labyrinth showed the locations where the observations took place and where the photos were taken.

WEBSITE TERMINAL & ABSTRACTS OF THE RESEARCH TOPICS

Next to the working space, the visitors could access the newly launched website and browse the questions (numbers) and topics that they were interested in. Each topic was presented on the website: in addition to the items, photos and questions, the visitors could read the abstracts and outlines, to gain an overview of this publication.

CULTURAL LIBRARY INFORMATION

At the entrance of the feedback area, we installed an ›information wheel‹, where the visitors got to know key facts about Cultural Library and previous projects.



III. DISCOURSE AND FEEDBACK

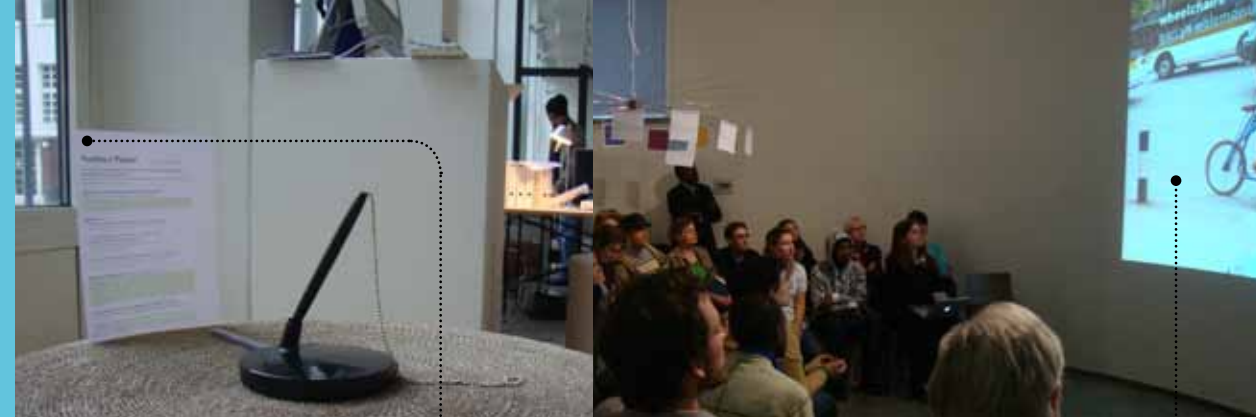


DIALOGUES

Every day of the week, project members from both universities were in attendance in the exhibition space, so that the visitors had the opportunity to start a dialogue at any time with the team members and researchers themselves.

OPEN STUDIO

A working space was set up, and each day of the exhibition was dedicated to one of the project topics. During the day, the team that had researched the topic worked in the studio on the articles for this book, making sure that both German and Kenyan viewpoints were addressed in the articles. Actually being in each other's presence and holding face-to-face discussions was far more productive than the previous 2-month phase of digital communication.



FEEDBACK SHEETS

Feedback, please – another crucial aspect of this exhibition. As experience shows, when asking for feedback, certain parameters need to be put forward: an open invitation to leave feedback will just result in a (possibly) interesting guestbook, so the questionnaire asked the visitors to reflect about the questions raised in the exhibition.

EVENING PRESENTATIONS

Like campfire meetings, every evening, the topic of the day was presented by the Kenyan and German team members in an open and unstructured discussion. These intensive discussions took about two hours every evening and revealed some very valuable insights: they were indispensable for the project as a whole.



MAIN EXHIBIT OF CARDBOARD DISPLAY LABYRINTH WITH ABOUT 100 QUESTIONS

The exhibition at plan09 and the parallel workshop in the open studio gave the students the opportunity to proceed with the work on their research topic and at the same time to be in a constant discourse with each other, the other project members as well as the audience – mainly designers, architects or urban planners. Of course, not only the students benefited from this opportunity – the visitors did too: since they had the chance to discuss questions that they discovered in the exhibition, a visit to this exhibition was very different from merely ›getting informed‹ or ›consuming cultural differences‹. It affords insights into cultural aspects of Nairobi that are based on a de-coding, it makes research processes transparent and deals permanently with the meta-level of the opportunities and challenges of an intercultural exchange.

The most important and successful arena for both cooperation and communication were the presentations that were held every evening. In these discussions, much contextual information about Nairobi cultural practices, traditions and rites came to light that had never been discussed before. One of the reasons for this was that they were, for the Kenyan team members, regarded as too self-evident to even warrant a mention.



This is exactly what we are aiming at: externalising the self-evident practices and backgrounds of everyday phenomena. This question, typical for ethnographical work, requires all participants to change their perspective and to be able to look at the topic from the outside in. Interestingly enough, this did not happen in Kenya; it happened in Cologne, in a culture and environment quite different to the Kenyan culture.

The open studio and the exhibition – with the evening discussions – were an essential element in the work of this publication. The concentrated work in the teams – with different experiences, backgrounds and expectations – helped to balance and synchronise the work previously done. Despite all the digital communication platforms, the face-to-face, on-site cooperation helped to make this joint project possible. The discussions with the exhibition visitors and the analysis of the feedback helped to prioritise questions and directions. This is a crucial step for the next Cultural Library project – and the continuously growing online knowledge base at culturallibrary.com

LEARNING FROM NAIROBI – REFINING THE RESEARCH DESIGN

by Philipp Heidkamp

The experience gained from the project helped us to refine the process in order to create a set of methods and improve the structure of the workshop. The timeframe for this project was extraordinary for a Cultural Library topic (half a year instead of one week), as one of our top priorities was to rethink, evaluate and improve our methodology. The learning outcomes were, therefore, also located on this meta-level, which will be of great help for future projects that have five days allotted for the on-site work. Such workshops are embedded in bigger projects (like the issue of mobility):

In a first step, the project initiators formulated their hypotheses and epistemological interests in a particular area. Then the workshop theme and the areas to be researched were agreed upon. They were precisely determined while still allowing a certain level of necessary openness. The role of the project- and research teams would then be analysed and formulated according to the particular context. Immediately before the start of the project week in the field, various topics related to the overall workshop (e.g. ›Urban Interactions‹) were decided upon in cooperation with our partners and with regards to the conditions in the field. For this work, communication platforms like KISDSpaces or weblogs were used beforehand. This meant that in the short time on site there was more time available for the field research and the review of solid hypotheses. In the workshop week, the student teams were to be introduced to the different topics (e.g. ›Using a Bus Stop‹). At the beginning of the workshops, the international, culture-spanning teams decided amongst themselves the situations to be observed (micro-events, e.g. ›In the Tube‹). These micro events more clearly defined the still somewhat abstractly formulated topic during the course of a workshop and further underlined the meaning of action and process that was to be considered.

In the following, some of the methods used by the on-site design research teams will be presented, organised under keywords.

This framework for a methodological toolbox is presented, continuously improved and updated on the website, where it will also help future project teams to do comparable work more efficiently.

As we saw in the exhibition, we mainly use questions in our work, either to follow our epistemological interests, to define a hypothesis or to work out a starting point for future design briefs. We formulate questions according to the material collected in the field research in order to interpret, analyse and understand it. This is an iterative process and team members – perhaps from other teams at other institutions – can be a great help. During the week, the questions also help us to get closer to a possible transformation.

cf. 04.1 THE COLOGNE
EXHIBITION AND OPEN
STUDIO

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THE CULTURAL LIBRARY METHODOLOGY:
TERMINOLOGY / ONLINE KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM STRUCTURE

CULTURAL LIBRARY META-THEME

ISSUE OF › MOBILITY

RESEARCH PROJECT / WORKSHOP: THEME

E.G. › URBAN INTERACTIONS ‹

TOPICS

E.G. › USING A BUS-STOP ‹, MORE CONCRETE DEFINITION OF

› MICRO-EVENTS ‹

E.G. › IN THE TUBE ‹

- INITIAL POSITION / ABSTRACT
- DESK RESEARCH
- FIELD RESEARCH (PHOTO / INTERVIEW / PROBE)

ITEMS

E.G. › THE PAYMENT QUEUE ‹

- PHOTO / INTERVIEW / PROBE
- CONTEXT OF THE OBSERVATION
- INTERPRETATIONS
- QUESTIONS
- RESPONSES

TRANSFORMATION /
INTERVENTION

1. METHODS

PARTICIPANT PHOTO OBSERVATIONS

At the beginning of the fieldwork, after formulating some guiding questions and setting up a preliminary observation plan, photo observations are conducted by the teams. As in ethnographic practice, the observations vary over time, from descriptive observations to focused observations, and might end up with selective observations. A continuous discussion and analysis of the daily practice of observation and the outcomes will help the teams to concentrate their focus and get a deeper insight in the respective areas of research. The observer is intensively engaged in the natural environment of the people under observation and the people involved will, naturally, realise that they are being observed. This might cause problems where the people being observed regard the observations as suspicious or invasive – here cultural probes might be a better method of gaining insights. In any case, observers need to be aware that they influence the situation just by their mere presence. The second important point is to understand that there is no such thing as an objective observation. The time, the standpoint, the camera angle – everything influences the situation. The observer constructs a picture rather than depicting a situation. This needs to be taken into consideration when analysing the pictures. There are two types of photo observation that we distinguish between in our research practice: either a situative analysis of a specific situation (finding out how people park their bikes, how people steer their vehicles at traffic jams or roadblocks, how people wait in specific situations, etc). For this type of observation, several different locations are chosen and each of these locations is observed for a longer period of time. For this type of analysis, a whole situation is taken into consideration (with reference to Christopher Alexander's pattern language¹): we investigate and analyse micro-events, we investigate the context. we aim to find parts of organisational systems (like timetables, ticket machines, etc.) and analyse their relationships and meanings.

The other option is a specific observation of typologies and variations and of types of products (like cars, vehicles, etc). Here the teams are looking for a wide variety of manifestations, different workarounds by various people, ways in which people have changed existing designs to make them fit for their purposes, etc.

Both types of observations can influence the other – a situative analysis might reveal the importance of dealing with a specific type of product or dealing with interventions by the users.

The visual outcome with the descriptions, interpretations and questions is published on the website, where it can be interpreted and commented on by other parties.

INTERVIEWS

The most important form of interviews are the semi-structured and ethnographic variety. The interviews complement the photo observations (or at least have a close relationship to them). Questions will arise from the analysis and description of the observations as local people explain the use, the background, the history and their rituals (and in so doing become informants – or local representatives – in the Cultural Library). This is an important cultural contextualisation. For the ethnographical interviews, the American ethnographer James Spradley (1934-1982) defined three types of questions: descriptive, structural and contrast questions. This classification will be used for the interviews. The interviews are also published on the website where they can be commented on by other parties.

CULTURAL PROBES

Probes are qualitative methods, used to understand the behaviour of people (and their relationship/interaction with products and processes). In order to investigate topics that cannot be explored by participative observations, the people involved are recruited as informants or local representatives for the Cultural Library. They are given a short briefing about what to focus on and are asked to make a photographic record of specific habits in their everyday life (other recording media such as diaries, dictaphones, etc. are also acceptable). In a next step, the photos are described by the local representatives. The descriptions are collected by a Cultural Library team member in an interview after the cameras are returned. In the next step, the description is the basis for a discussion (unstructured interview) between a team member and the ›photo author‹ (the local representative). This interview is important, because it is always hard to capture everyday behaviour, as people always want to show their best sides and, quite often, the participants do not understand how the mundane practices of waiting, preparing, talking, driving, etc. could possibly be of interest to other people. The methods for conducting these interviews will be evaluated and improved in the future. The probes are published at the website, where they can be commented on by other parties.

SHADOWING

Local people are observed or accompanied (shadowed) for a number of hours in their ›natural‹ environment during specific ›actions‹ by a project team member. Shadowing is a non-participative observation and aims to understand how people react and interact in specific situations. In an analogous manner to the cultural probes, the people being shadowed are interviewed after the observation period (and in most cases, people feel themselves to be under observation and so change their behaviour accordingly).

2. PROCESS

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Each workshop should have the same timetable of five days. The main phases will be the exploration of the topic, one day for creation and one day for sharing and presenting the findings. The schedule for the five days will be as follows:

First Day: Broad Exploration.

Understanding and exploration of the topic in its broadest sense (e.g. using brainstorming). Discussion of the specific cultural issues and initial research: open observation and recordings and conduct first interviews. Work on photos and desk research. The results will be divided into categories and questions to be addressed will be defined.

Second Day: Deeper Exploration.

Choosing an aspect, a situation or a manifestation: by a further concretisation of the topics (›Using a Bus-stop‹), the teams decide on a specific ›micro-event‹ (e.g. ›In the Tube‹) with a specific set of questions to be developed. Focusing on sample research: exploration of the defined ›micro-event‹ in more detail. Which structures can be revealed by observing manifestations (forms of appearance, objects, symbols and habits) and by analysing this situation, this ›micro-event‹? Looking beyond the obvious surface appearance, looking for invisible structures and exploring them. Understanding the context: when/what/where/why. Analysis and first visualisations of functions and processes. Beginning of the iterative work of (re)formulating the questions, aiming to find the questions that will guide the research. Creating the first item. De-coding the pictures: taking the observations of the chosen situation and finding out which meanings can be depicted. What is ›behind‹ the manifestations? How are they related to other manifestations, to different people/processes? How can they be interpreted? Those findings go into the interpretations of the item sheets. Here the teams already start to use the questions as a research tool, formulating them as precisely as possible.

Third Day: Exploration at the Same Level.

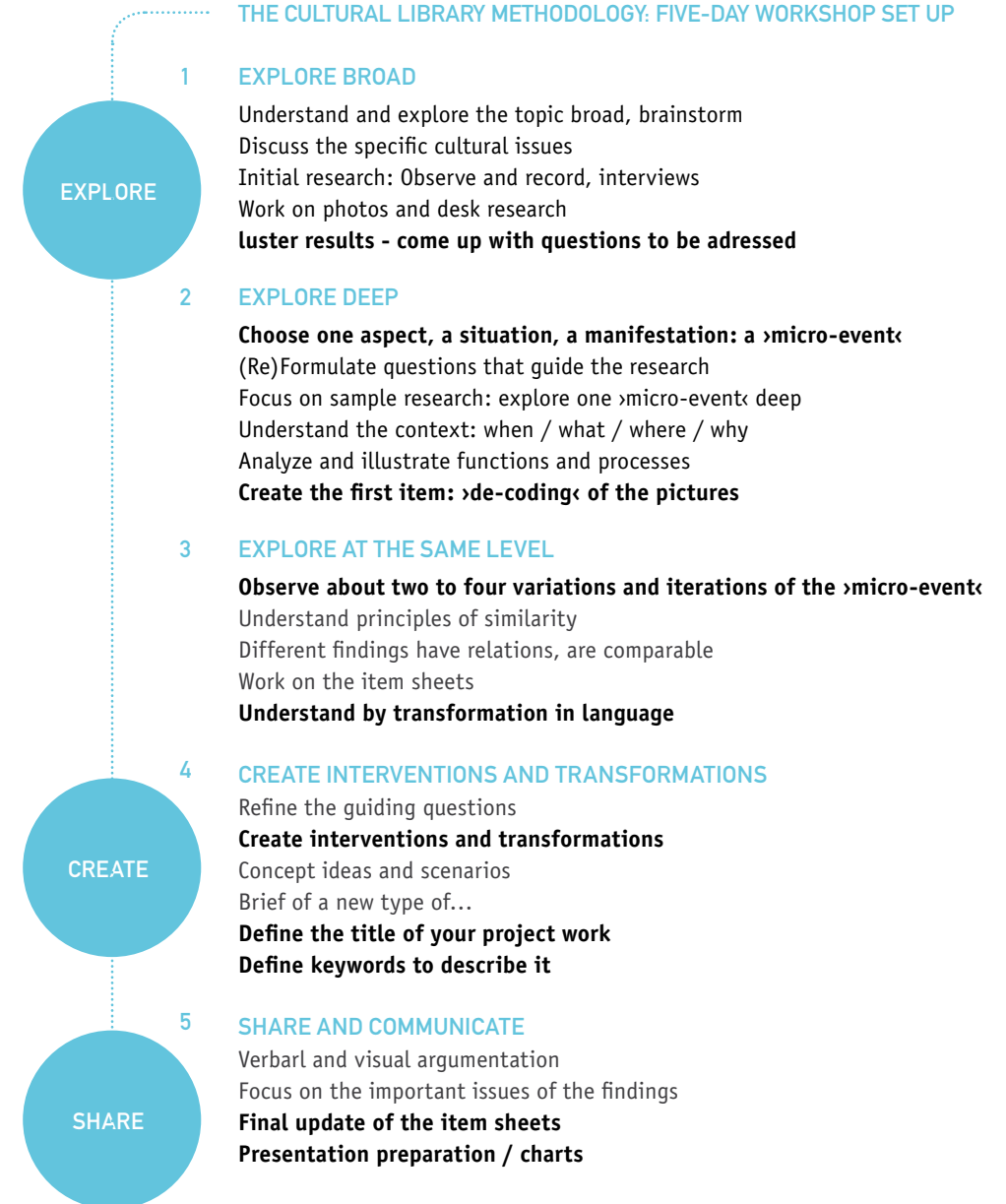
Observation of from two to four variations and iterations of the chosen situation (›micro-event‹). Understanding of the principles of similarity. Relationships between the different findings will be revealed. Item sheets will be used and completed. Language – driven by the work in re-formulating the questions – is used to understand the situation from a different point of view (findings are transformed into verbal language).

Fourth Day: Creating Interventions and Transformations.

Refinement of the guiding questions. Interventions might lead to deeper insights and to ideas for possible transformations. Scenarios are an appropriate tool for visualising the ideas. Definition of the title of the core idea/project work and of descriptive keywords from each team.

Fifth Day: Share and Communicate.

Verbal and visual argumentation. Presentation preparation/charts. Focus on the important issues of the findings. Final update of the item sheets.



OPEN STUDIO AND PRESENTATION

If possible, the workshop takes place in an ›open studio‹ that allows and promotes contact with local people. This eases the work with the local representatives and helps to spread the word about the Cultural Library. In all cases, each project / workshop on site ends with a presentation. A public presentation – a small exhibition – where the local representatives and other people are invited to participate is the best format for the presentation. It also aims to gather feedback from other parties (specific feedback forms that will go into the online database are available). Depending on the time available, the presentation can be followed by an open studio (where the work is extended for a couple of days). Public discussions are an important aspect of the presentation and the open studio serves to externalise implicit knowledge and experience. The results or further insights can be added to the respective items.

3. METHODS

THE ONLINE KNOWLEDGE BASE: A DIGITAL COMMUNICATION PLATFORM

The Cultural Library website is the digital communication platform and structural backbone for the on-site project work, providing input and methodological support. The intranet of the platform of the participating project teams helps to prepare the work before the on-site project and supports the systematic analysis by using a ›just-in-time‹ storage model for the project findings during on-site work (there will be no time after the project to do so). Its structure provides guidance through the process while still being open and flexible. It is based on the Items described above and on momentary snapshots. It focuses on questions, reflections and interpretations. The platform is sustainable, as all the projects and items are available for further use and interpretations to all parties. The digital communication platform is the next issue concerning the ongoing improvement of the Cultural Library, and this will be addressed in future projects: the current version shows a clear framework for further developments.

ITEM SHEETS/SNAPSHOTS

Item sheets support the methodological approach to reflecting, storing and sharing the research work. They contain the results and an analysis of the photographic observations (Photo Items), the Interviews (Interview Item) and the Cultural Probes (Probe Item). An item is a snapshot in time and space (referring to the topic or the ›micro events‹) that is subject to further interpretation by the workshop team. All items can be commented on by other parties, not only during the workshop, but also later, on the Cultural Library website. These comments are of great value: they are a permanent enrichment of the snapshots. All items are directly captured in the online platform's intranet and allow instant editing and commenting during the field work. Using the photos as a research tool means that the photo items are either a situative analysis of a specific place (with a number of photos taken at this place during the observation) or single snapshots allowing a precise image analysis based on Panofsky's Three Levels (Panofsky, German art historian, 1892 -1968).

Regardless of the cultural background, the iconographical analysis can be carried out together by all members of a team. The two dimensions of pre-iconographical description and iconographical analysis (or natural and conventional subject matter) are merged and combined into one dimension of analysis. Secondly, there is the iconological interpretation: dealing with the intrinsic meaning or interpretation of content is an open and ongoing process in the Cultural Library. The comment level of the items aims at this type of interpretation during the workshops, but interpretations can still be added later or even during a different project. Insights from discussions or feedback and interpretations by exhibition visitors might be iconological interpretations as well and can also be stored as comments. This notion also helps to structure the feedback of the people related to the photos and situations.

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cf. 04.3 ONLINE
KNOWLEDGE
BASE: SHARED
EXPERIENCE

TRANSFORMATION OPTIONS

The ethnographer needs to write an ethnographic report after analysing the ethnographic data. Design is very strong at envisioning insights. Research through design also urges the ›reflective practitioners‹ (Donald Schoen, American philosopher, thinker, consultant and professor at MIT, 1930-1997) to externalise their current status of insight and thus make it accessible to other people (in a discourse/viscourse) and to find new approaches in their own process). As the time for the one-week project workshops is extremely limited, there is correspondingly limited time to transform core questions or insights for the presentation at the end of the on-site project. Transforming the research findings into writing during the groupwork to define core issues and hypotheses of the team members is helpful in the process.

The analysis and clustering/categorisation of quantitative data and its transformation into graphs aims to gain new insights and to reveal new meanings in the data. Structural transformations (by changing the quasi-inherent structure) are an important option as well. The location of observations, photos and interviews are shown on maps: a spatial type of clustering aims to look for meaning in spatial relations. Critical design (Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby) uses designed artefacts, both to reflect use and cultural context and to reflect the process of designing. As a first step, even rough sketches for critical design approaches might be admissible.

All transformations aim to make insights more accessible in the discourse (and thus changing it to a viscourse) and to create new ideas or improve rough concepts for future (design) projects. This also makes the Cultural Library a library of relevant intercultural design projects.

THE CULTURAL LIBRARY DIARY

An old-style paper diary was used by every team member for taking down the most important notes during the whole research work : observations, reflections, ideas, fragments of discussions, etc. The diary is an essential tool for fieldwork and the exchange between team members and teams. The diary works without any categories or infrastructure: it is our companion in the project work from the very beginning to the end.



FIELDWORK TRAVEL CASE

Two huge metal travel cases include a laptop, scanner and printers, a tripod, digital photo and video cameras, dictaphones, hard disks, mobile phones, disposable cameras, diaries and other material. These are all used for Cultural Library projects in the fieldwork research phase and in the open studio work by the team members and the local representatives.

ONLINE KNOWLEDGE BASE: SHARED EXPERIENCE

by Philipp Heidkamp

Cultural Library will provide more than enough research opportunities for the foreseeable future, and its remit continues to grow. In the collaborative project with Nairobi, it became immediately obvious that the integration of local people (informants, as they are called in ethnography), in addition to the local workshop participants, will lead to a substantial improvement in the project results. In these projects, the local people were far more involved than just being informants: they made valuable contributions as cultural representatives and they felt like important participants in this project, not simply subjects being observed and described. Furthermore, visitors to the open studio at the Goethe-Institut, Nairobi and at KISD in Cologne and visitors to the exhibition and the online platform should be able to give both open and >directed< feedback, both as comments to, and further questions, on, the results of the projects. Their feedback and insights are very valuable, if it is >channeled< in a way that means that it can be compared to past and future entries, and goes beyond simply >I like< or >I don't like<, as is the current practice with guestbooks and lame social media aggregation concepts. With this qualified feedback, we are aiming at constantly refining and improving our interpretations (either as in-depth understanding or by adding new facets, as described in the previous chapter). So the process of cultural interpretation goes beyond the timeframe of the workshop and its fieldwork, as we plan to actively invite people from different cultures to participate in the project with their interpretations and questions. In the near future, we will be developing new ways of >inviting< and integrating people from all over the world at this specific stage of the project.

The current online platform that has been developed, designed and created for this project allows visitors easy access to the library via pictures and questions that guide them through the site, obviating the need to deal with the whole complexity of the project in one go. These pictures and questions (derived from the individual >items<) are taken randomly from the library and displayed on the starting page: this allows users to jump straight into a theme, a topic or an item.

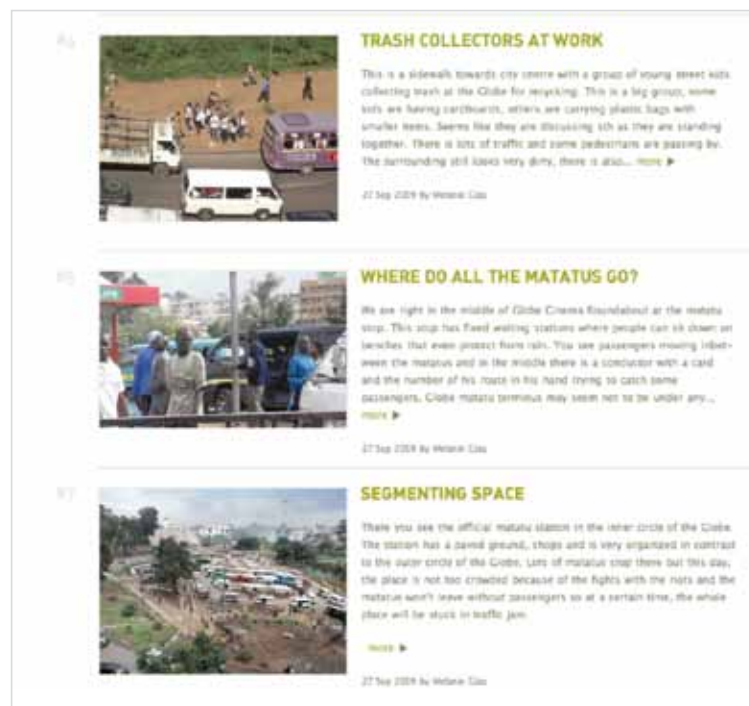
The reference number (here: #3) is available for every item in the library and is connected to the numbers in the exhibition as well as to the numbers in this publication. These numbers can be entered directly in the search field – a quick way to find items (if the numbers are known).

This connects the website as a dynamic digital knowledge base directly with the >physical world<: to this publication, to exhibitions and, in the future, maybe even to the places that have been observed using tags like QR code, linking directly to the Cultural Library website.



The online platform is a growing and living extension of this publication. But there are multiple ways to access the content of the online knowledge base: for other visitors, the Cultural Library website offers an overview of the more than 15 projects that have taken place in the last five years, being both a valuable source for current Cultural Library projects and other design and research projects that deal with the topics that have been researched. In the meantime, two more projects have been run in parallel in Cologne and Curitiba (Brazil).

Each Cultural Library project consists of several topics (mainly micro-events/situations), and each topic is classified and saved under an item. Those items are represented by item sheets. The type and number of items depends not only on the topic itself, but also on the research methods or the group knowledge concerning methodological work.

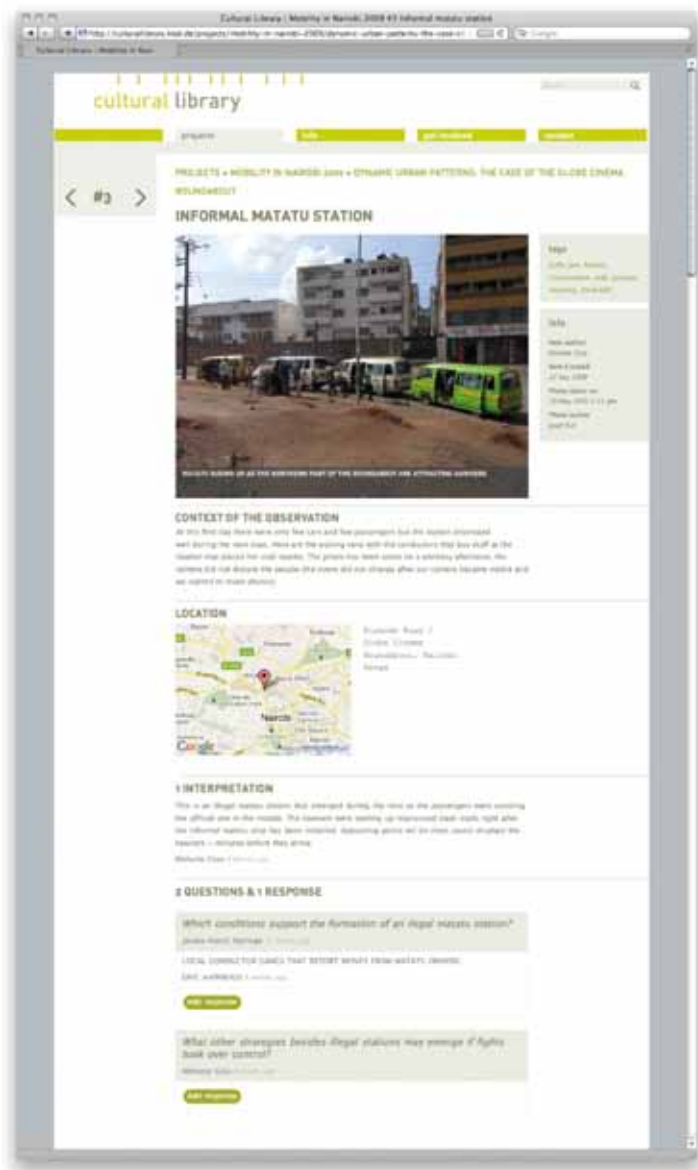


All the items of one topic (including their numbers) are shown in a short synopsis that allows the reader to get a quick overview of the content and the approach of the topic.

We are not aiming at solving problems, knowing that designers shift from creating solutions to defining problems. With Cultural Library we want to go one step further: to understand all aspects of a situation, of the usage of products or the behaviour of people as completely as possible without limiting ourselves by concentrating on a particular problem from the start. As a methodological aid for this process, the items and the respective item sheets are the core elements of the Cultural Library. With its precisely defined information architecture and structure, the online knowledge base is also an important tool for the workshop process and field work. We are working with the defined tools like the item sheets for photo observations, probes and interviews. The results are directly uploaded and edited by the members of the project teams via the intranet associated with the online platform. They are continuously edited and improved during the workshop. Tags (keywords) help the authors to think and rethink their work and to be more precise in their findings, but they also connect similar items across the themes, topics and years, allowing all users dynamic access to all the items.

In the item, the description of the **CONTEXT OF THE OBSERVATION** helps to understand the situation where the photo has been taken. To capture the spatial context, the **LOCATION** is shown on a Google-based map (including the respective address). The **INTERPRETATION** urges the author to investigate the meaning of the situation and thus leads to a more detailed understanding of the situation by subjective interpretation. Interpretations of other project members or even participants of previous projects might be added and help to enrich the understanding of the situation and to unveil new facets of cultural perception and understanding. The **QUESTIONS** help to identify possible (design) problems and then may lead to approaches or even solutions. We are aiming at open questions for investigating issues and at understanding why something is as it is. We want to find out what might be interesting for further observation and reflection. We want to see how people act and interact and we want to learn about, and from, the behaviour of people. We want to uncover cultural practices in everyday situations. Those types of questions support and show the openness of the authors and their cognitive interest in the situation and the meaning behind the surface. Formulating additional questions with different cultural backgrounds (from a different cultural perspective) enriches this understanding. **RESPONSES** to the questions are possible, but not necessary. In this case, finding a good, precise and intelligent question is more important than coming up with proper answers, and responses are not meant to be answers resolving the questions: they are meant to make us re-examine the questions from different perspectives. A response might lead to a reformulation of a question; the work on the items is an iterative process.

With those structured dimensions provided by our reflection on our observations, we can create a rich set of information around the photo observations of the everyday situation. We create a lasting and rich representation of everyday culture and make it accessible in Cultural Library.



This structure allows both the participants as well as other interested parties to continuously work with the information researched with in the short period of the field work. For the users of the website who have not participated in one of the workshops, the questions testify to the openness of the project, inviting them to participate in the project in this very moment: more questions and responses can be added after signing up for the Cultural Library website.

9 QUESTIONS & 5 RESPONSES

What was there first, the bus stop or the kiosks and stalls?

Stefanie Schidlief 2 weeks 3 days ago

On one point this question was important for us at the beginning, because the answer would tell us more about the needs from the side of the passengers and of the residents living near the bus stop. Maybe the good commercial area lead to the implementation of a bus stop, or the other way around, the constantly movement of people rushing by due the bus stop lead people to locate their shops on that surrounding.

This made us go a step further, and we analyzed the way the people that are waiting for the bus and the passengers that just got off the bus make use of the shops next to the station.

Stefanie Schidlief 2 weeks 3 days ago

Add response

What really influences the interaction with the bus stop surroundings?

Stefanie Schidlief 2 weeks 3 days ago

I think this depends on several factors, for example: has the person time to spend or is he/she in a rush? Is the waiting time long enough to spend the time in shops? Does the person really need to buy something or does he/she already has everything at home? Is the person hungry or did he/she already eat at home? Is he/she taking a bus which includes a bus stop where he/she can get certain things he/she needs? Does he/she planed to go shopping via bus or does he/she wants to buy stuff because he/she sees the shops on the way? Is the surrounding of the station inviting, friendly? Has it a lot of entertaining/shopping possibilities?

All this factors influences the behaviour of the passengers whether they interact with the bus stop and it's surrounding or not.

Carla Zimmermann 2 weeks 5 days ago

Add response

In addition to the workshop participants, we also expect other interested parties to participate and create a community of practice. Nowadays, audiences have the means to initiate and create, collect and interpret their own time and space, on their own terms¹. The online platform is the extension of a physical network of organisations and universities: it might become a small, but powerful community (Wenger et al.² define ›communities of practice‹ as groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis). The online knowledge base of the Cultural Library offers reference points and invites people and collaborators to share their point of view and their knowledge. It is an invitation for open discourses beyond the borders of disciplines, uniting architecture, urban studies, design, design engineering and the social sciences in a common goal: reflecting and understanding cultural practices, both in their own culture as well as in other cultures...

¹ R. Parry, *Recoding the Museum: digital heritage and the technologies of change* (New York, 2007), 102. ² E. Wenger, R. McDermott, W. Snyder, *Cultivating Communities of Practice* (Cambridge, MA 2002), 4.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES FOR THE CULTURAL LIBRARY

by Philipp Heidkamp, Jessica Stihl, Johannes Hossfeld, Paul Mpungu,

We can now look back over more than five years of Cultural Library projects (that have changed over time), and we are also looking back over an intensive, bi-national project between Cologne and Nairobi that involved architects, designers and the Goethe-Institut. We spent nearly a year finalising this publication and working on improved workshop structures (as they took place in Brazil) and implementing better and more precise methodologies in the online knowledge database. Now it is time to look ahead to new perspectives for the Cultural Library project and its partners.

KISD, COLOGNE Cultural Library will grow over the coming years:

a new project in Brazil took place in June 2010 and new projects in Japan and Taiwan are scheduled for 2010/2011. A conference in Cologne will bring together participants from various projects in order to set the agenda for the coming years. And we are expecting more: this project collaboration between Nairobi and Cologne has been quite intensive, and from the perspective of the project supervisors there has always been the defining question of how this project will change – and improve – future Cultural Library projects.

A first change – an insight gained thanks to this project – is the revised structure and time schedule. In the future, we will be concentrating on 5 day-workshops on-site, with a clear structure as described in this publication and with the support of our online knowledge base (and also our hardware toolbox to improve the project work on-site). We are also going to experiment with parallel project teams, like the project cooperation between Brazil and Germany in June 2010. In this project, two different teams carried out research in different cultural contexts, and both collaborated via the Cultural Library platform. Having another team working on the same topic, but at another location, really made the each team question the other's observations and interpretations. This way, the exchange helped with the decoding that we were expecting. Experiments like this aim at a continuous reflection and improvement of the Cultural Library as a process, as a tool and as a platform.

At the end of 2010, a workshop in Cologne will focus on the issue of the methodologies of visualisation and transformation in cooperation with another project about urban structures in Mainland China. For 2011, we aim to start a research project accompanying the two or three on-site projects. This will help to build a foundation for the work in the coming years. We are aiming at intensifying the partnership with a globally active organisation like the Goethe Institut or the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service), in order to provide a framework for future projects. For this further advancement of Cultural Library as a research project, we aim to strengthen the framework with several different aims:

1 The superordinate aim of the overall project is the investigation of cultural phenomena, dealing with intercultural communication as a design task, making research results interactively accessible and establishing a processual library of cultural snapshots and micro-events. This goes hand-in-hand with refining transformation options and enhancing a discourse, in order to learn from each other with regard to research and design approaches and to cultural phenomena. This aim is accompanied by the development of the online knowledge base, inclu-

ding the editing of the currently available material within the new structure. Furthermore, we are also aiming at putting together a proper analog format, as a necessary extension of the digital platform: exhibition systems, open studios and symposium structures. New technologies (like QR-codes) and social media will be used in the process to improve and extend the work.

2 The thematic focus of Cultural Library projects will be elaborated: currently we have a great variety of projects with regards to contents, structures and cognitive interests. The topics may change; Musashino Art University will investigate the issue of tea time: investigating different lifestyles by abstracting the same (or almost the same) types of activities around the world, such as dining and tea time. Cologne will narrow down the issue of mobility to smaller topics for each Cultural Library project. Nairobi has suggested different issues connected with urban life, like urban infills (the use of left-over spaces), the urban pedestrian (street morphology, use – manner/body language) or urban furniture. The topics have one thing in common: they take a closer look at the way things are used, they investigate structures and systems and they observe workarounds to problems. So we will see more detailed and thus comparable projects in the near future. We are not aiming to reduce this diversity – we all benefit from the diverse interests and approaches of our partners – but we will strive to refine the overall issue of ›Mobility«. Discussions are held, the result of which is the formation of a research group of postgraduates (from different universities) that will precisely formulate a thematic cognitive interest and will define a set of topic outlines that will be the basis for integrating the presented 5-day-workshops. This way it is possible to convert the on-site fieldwork into theoretical knowledge and to integrate the research results of the workshops over the long term into the superordinate research project.

3 Cultural Library will be used as platform for a discourse with regards to intercultural research, its opportunities and challenges and, where design research is concerned, its approaches and methods. The intention is to deal with the role of design research in an intercultural context and the question of in which way its approaches both coincide and differ from those of other disciplines like social sciences and ethnographies. We aim to push the advancement of our methodology continuously forward.

4 Furthermore, Cultural Library is an international network of research partners, institutions and universities. This network will be strategically developed further with the focus on different cultural activities and innovative academic structures. The cooperation with institutions like the Goethe Institut, the DAAD or other institutions with a focus on international exchange and research will be of great importance in the future. We hope to intensify this cooperation by planning and holding conferences, by building teams in different cultures, by supporting us with local networks and a discourse about topics. Exhibitions or even publications will be important in the future to create a platform for this project, allowing the Cultural Library to grow, to address more people and to actively integrate more and more people as researchers, librarians and local representatives.

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UON, NAIROBI Lorem ipsum Sandi volo ducipitisqui re vid es venis et ab ipsument, utaque consequias quis eturias simpior suntiorum quo dollatust, odis ad qui dolluptatus ate pro maio tore poribusant minum fugit, quost harum dit illatem quas postis a qui inctect otatemq uaernatio moles vereprecae peruptatata sitat quasit, necto voluptae saperum atum ullabo. Ita id expliti doluptatur aut porio dolorem ne cus dolore et id qui omnimol uptaspe rionser ferumqui id quiatur, consedis exped quibus volupta ipsa comninusam sequia siti to ercil ipsam, si to in repudi officimet endae velis equass erchil ipsus minveli beatur molest maxim rem. Ihilles tiorrorum sitium que et et laut rem con pedicium nim is abores suntecu ptioosi dolupta tatius derum quam, quatet ute pellabo. Et occumquae con ped quam repra corerernat esequas magnatium as ad milit, illuptas porestori qui debis everchitem fugiaescius, sum fugit in excero tor asimintemos nis andam, corum asi omni officiliae. Ero te volut aciis imolupt atemod ut por aut magnis coribus. Hendandant rentia vollut volut fugitate omnis aperatur moluptin natem aut fugitia debis as solorecusdam aut utem ad ma dolorio consed unt et fugitatur undae everciis dolorer aercieni des equatio officae aspero esti omnis voluptation eum volorererat ideles sinveli cidesequi blantur, eumquistrum ius res simille stibus nobit doluptis et vento optame perit mo milia vitas none nes quuntor eptatur? Lorepercidit idebist vent, sitio consequist qui officilis ipis as et, sam quat quam veligen torerae et porporu ptatur aut rae volo mo denim quassimped quid ut ipsamendem assuntore nihilit atquiae con poratur rendistin comninus nusdae ad modio idicillabor acerumquas quam equo minis ducitur rempor sant fuga. Aribusantis ma idundam sintio. Ut verisit amenihil maio millendipsam evelic tem ullabor ibusapic tet eicium que ea dunt. Ihilles tiorrorum sitium que et et laut rem con pedicium nim is abores suntecu ptioosi dolupta tatius derum quam, quatet ute pellabo. Et occumquae con ped quam repra corerernat esequas magnatium as ad milit, illuptas porestori qui debis everchitem fugiaescius, sum fugit in excero tor asimintemos nis andam.

A noun count noun this is the name given to the privately owned vans and mini-buses that have been ferrying people around Kenya since the 1940s. There is no centralized government run public transport system in Kenya and the only time in the late 1980s and early 1990s that the state attempted to do this through the Nyayo Bus Service Corporation the effort ended in spectacular failure. It is estimated that there are between eight hundred thousand and one million of these vehicles authorized to operate in Kenya but it is impossible to arrive at an accurate figure given that there are many matatu that operate using fake registration documents. MM

DIMMINA: MATATU MOBILITY AS A METAPHOR OF SOCIAL › SURVIVAL ‹ IN NAIROBI, KENYA.

by Mbugua wa-Mungai

Matatu work has traditionally been considered to be a male occupation and as such men comprise the majority of the labor force; most have at best a secondary school education (Khayesi, 1999). Socially these men, with the youngest being 18 years, are generally regarded as ›failures‹ and ›uncultured thugs‹ (Mutongi, 2006). The few matatu women working on these privately owned vehicles are often labeled in a manner that suggests moral turpitude on their part. See Wa Mungai, Mbugua (2004) Identity politics in Nairobi Matatu Folklore. PhD dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel, for a fuller discussion of matatu subculture. MM

Field notes from Magadi Road, Nairobi. October 30, 2009. A matatu tears up the crest of the hill at breakneck speed on the wrong side of the road. There is no space for me to move out of the way—sharply curved rubble strips have been planted into the road’s shoulders at regular intervals to dissuade any such maneuvers—and even if there was why should I cede way to the matatu man? When I stare down the driver of the fast-approaching vehicle he barges back into his lane, in the process sharply cutting in front of another motorist and occasioning a raucous screech of brakes. All around enraged motorists hurl a stream of epithets at the offending driver who merely laughs off the whole episode and as he flies past me he shouts in Sheng: »Mbuyu mbona unaniblock? Hii ni survival bwana!« (Old man why are you blocking my advance? This is my attempt at survival man!). I catch the sound of Eric Wainaina’s track More Fire floating through the open cracks of the vehicle’s heavily-tinted windows. From my vehicle’s side-mirror I catch a glance of the portrait of a man posted on the matatu’s rear windscreen. In large white letters is emblazoned the legend ›Animmid!‹ – a reverse rendition of ›Dimmina‹ that appears on the front windshield. In smaller yellow calligraphy a Sheng teaser appears slightly above the rear bumper: »Juala ya nini?« (What’s the point of using a condom?). There is an air of the surreal in the reversals that manifest themselves in the transactions obtaining from Nairobi roads generally but often the split second tensions as various players scramble for space can reveal useful insights into mobility in the city.

I am immensely indebted to the many matatu men (in particular Ahmed, Bena, Mwangi, Mr T, Sammy Muspike, and the late Jack), Alice the matatu woman and matatu decorator Charles Muia who over the last ten years have freely educated me about many aspects of their world.



1 HOI POLLOI

Animmid. Dimmina. Demeanor. ›Games‹, least of all those involving words, are a critical aspect of matatu culture and even where such word-play might tend toward the cryptic and the apparently ›bizarre‹ it nevertheless affords onlookers (motorists at dire risk of being mangled in a head on collision, pedestrians, passengers or students of culture) a useful entry point into this apparent upside-down world. In this paper, I seek to demonstrate how the matatu shifts meaning from being merely a mechanical factor of commerce to become a powerful vortex of semiotic signification. I will examine how matatu men communicate through a set of intertwined strategic modes of representation involving dress, aggression, music and vehicle decoration. In turn these are the elements that inform much of the public reaction to the composite phenomenon that has come to be called matatu culture. In effect many people in Nairobi—passengers, private motorists and law enforcement officials amongst others—tend to hold very strong opinions against matatu men. On balance however there exists a mutually hostile attitude between mainstream society and the subculture for reasons that will be examined in the course of the essay. However the fact that the core of the city’s mobility needs are fulfilled by the thousands of *matatu* that, like gossamers in a spider’s web, link up every dot of Nairobi’s space points to the centrality of these vehicles to the functioning of mainstream economic life. Thus ultimately my argument is that the subculture, often snobbishly viewed by members of the educated, dominant culture as a sui generis aberration, is indeed an intricate part of the workings of society. As such it is easy to see through the trickery of matatu men when they seek to represent themselves as marginal men through vehicle slogans like Hoi Polloi (Figure 1); in the proper sense of the term they are not marginalized at all and their invocation of notions of marginalization might be understood as a rhetorical strategy in the myriad identity struggles of the city.

The transformations that lead to the name ›dimmina‹ above illustrate some of the literal and symbolic workings in the processes by which the movement of matatu in urban space have come to forcefully take up

diverse meanings. As such perhaps the real import of the common noun ›demeanor‹ when it is transformed into a proper noun isn't to be found so much in the innovative ›corrupted‹ spelling ›dimmina‹ or in the metathesized form ›Animmid‹ as much as in the possibility that as a matatu name it might be read as an index of ideas, identities and character. Attitude in matatu subculture means more than the denotative sense of ›disposition‹; an appearance of contrariness, which crews' and matatu names deliberately enhance, is one of the critical modes by which matatu men engage with both their colleagues and the rest of society. For instance attitude is what enables the matatu man in the opening anecdote to attempt to crest the brow of a hill on the wrong side of the road and still exhibit contempt for motorists who berate him for breaching traffic regulations. In common Nairobi usage, the noun ›attitude‹ implies a negative manner (e.g. ›S/he has got attitude‹), particularly one undergirded by a confrontational stance as is the case with matatu men generally. As such common matatu names are formulated around motifs that convey fear, might and invincibility. Matatu names might thus be seen as palimpsests and the transactions they enable between matatu men on the one hand and on the other passengers and other road users bespeak a confluence of issues that range from the personal to the collective, the material, the symbolic, the overtly political, the patently inane, the intensely religious and scandalously profane amongst others.

Another way in which contrariness is practiced in matatu subculture is through their adoption of Sheng as the ›vernacular‹ of their work. A Kiswahili-based sociolect that works amongst other ways through affixation, inflection, innovation of new words as well as semantic shifts, Sheng was initially mainly associated with urban youth culture and it was seen as the language of rebellion¹. However Sheng usage is now wide-spread across Kenya with users ranging from children to university students and working class people; the major difference seems to be in the motivation that drives each of these groups' use of Sheng². In this linguistic code words quickly change meanings in a matter of weeks – sometimes in days – and usually from one neighborhood to another³. Sheng usage creates sodalities amongst matatu men in a manner that allows them to present themselves as a persecuted social category; words and ideas related to suffering and oppression by those in authority (›gava‹ i.e. government) abound. Thus looking at the linguistic behavior of the matatu man in the opening anecdote we see that his understanding of the barriers to his upward mobility is framed within ideas of generational competition (an old man obstructing his advance). In this manner road mannerisms become symbolic of other struggles. By their use of esoteric register, crews lock out for instance the police from their conversations; messages might be passed across to younger passengers while excluding older ones who might be listening in. Aware of actual and potential uses to which it might be put matatu men have self-servingly seized upon Sheng and rebel identity associated with it to enhance their ›attitude‹. In a related sense it is noteworthy that Sheng has a highly sexist nature⁴. As a function of a patriarchal social order the sociolect is conducive for purveying matatu men's ideas of masculinity. Bodily presentation, examined next, is one way through which critical statements about male identity and space are made.

Introduced by the then Minister for Transport John Michuki the regulations brought on through Legal Notice No. 164 of October 2003 are popularly referred to as »The Michuki rules.« Other than the dress code the rules specified that matatu should be painted a uniform color broken by a 6-inch wide yellow band, that vehicles should be fitted with speed governors and seat belts for all passengers, whose limit was set at twelve for smaller matatu and twenty five for the bigger ones. Breach rather than compliance with these regulations is generally the norm. MM



2 FEMALE CLIENTELE

Given that their work involves intense face-to-face interaction with passengers, matatu men are only too acutely aware of the immense signifying potential of their bodies. Despite the introduction in 2003 of regulations stipulating the dress code for matatu men, few crews pay attention to it, particularly in the face of lax or non-existent law enforcement. Trendy dress is for them a form of ›cultural capital‹⁵ that they can deploy to their advantage – or at the very least use it to make statements about themselves. Derided by society for being poorly educated, these men use dress to call attention to themselves; in youth culture they are regarded as pace-setters. American clothing designs such as Enyce, Ecko, Johny Blaze, Ruff Ryder, Roca Wear, Snoop Dogg amongst others are popular with *matatu* men. Whatever fashion brands might be chosen, the idea is to use these loosely fitting garments – sagging pants, T-Shirts and hooded tops are common – alongside expensive Timberland boots to strike poses that defy the fashion tastes of mainstream society where suits and neck ties are usually a core part of the dress prescription. The more rough-hewn the look, the better the aggressive poses with which these men sneer at society's ›polished‹ members; macho appearances enhance crews' feeling of invincibility in a hostile world. At the same time the usually cocky ›cool look‹ achieved by means of such dress and hairstyles plays a significant part in the social negotiations between matatu men and their female clientele (Figure 2). Winning over women is part of the grammar of control predominantly found not just in the world of matatu men but also the masculinity discourse that is widespread in patriarchal Kenyan cultures.

In a related sense Mahewa, as the music played on *matatu* is known in Sheng, is important for its symbolic functions. Played at ear-drum shattering volumes, loud music has been banned on Nairobi matatu under the ›public nuisance‹ regulations⁶. However the youth who constitute the majority of matatu travelers prefer boarding only those vehicles on which loud music is available. Indeed the current trend is fitting vehicles with DVD screens – sometimes three panels are installed – where both music videos and pornographic films can be watched. These excesses might be



3 MATATU

understood within the terms of generational competition (this is mainly a youth culture phenomenon) and as a contest with the dominant culture over the authority to define 'taste'. In this regard it is instructive that American gangsta rap, particularly that which has a proliferation of naked female bodies, is the more popular variety of music in the subculture. Even where Kenyan rap is played (Deux Vultures, Nameless, Nonini, Jua Cali and Kleptomaniax are some of the popular artists) its misogyny is still very much in evidence. It is possible to link the ideas purveyed through this music to patriarchal notions about women, their sexuality and male control over it at the same time that it complements the rough-cut image that the matatu man cultivates for use in his everyday negotiations with other city dwellers. Thus where these men see women advancing socially through careers and other forms of empowerment they tend to defensively fall back onto notions of control. This point might be understood within backlash discourse that is deployed to question the socio-economic gains made by women in contemporary society⁸ and it is especially relevant in the context of current discussions of the perceived disempowerment of Kenyan men⁹. Thus the question »what is the point of using a condom« raised in the introduction is not just a simple one about the function of juala but more significantly it alludes to the popular idea that using a condom doesn't allow the male to fully exercise his potency, hence loss of dominance, during sexual intercourse. Dragging matters of sexuality into the open in an otherwise conservative society like Kenya is considered highly transgressive but it is a modality of behavior that matatu men find highly useful for making statements about the rest of society. For instance in the subculture it isn't considered inappropriate to publicly execute distasteful behavior and to order those who don't like it to »shut up« as might be deduced from the sketch of a urinating boy posted on the back of a matatu (Figure 3).

The language of revolution also features prominently in matatu music and it can hardly be incidental that verbal aggression (insults and sexist language are predominant here) is a core part of the matatu man's



4 SOARING EAGLE

quotidian existence; the generally anti-women sayings carried in bumper stickers liberally posted on the vehicle's interior surface complement crews' linguistic excess. In the music, calls for Kenyan youth to forcefully take over power from the elders in government is a common theme. Groups whose music contains such messages include Girongi, Mashifta and Ukoo Flani Mau Mau amongst others. Even where the call is not for the overthrow of those in power, violence is understood as a necessary method of dealing with »the system« (i.e. a generally exploitative and risky socio-political environment). The matatu man is exposed to threats from various quarters – police, route control gangs, rival crews as well as passengers – and navigating this world often necessitates recourse to violence. Few people are willing to get involved in arguments with matatu men for whom adopting fearsome looks and violent language is a strategy for getting their way in a hostile city.

Finally vehicle decoration is a critical means by which matatu men brand their subculture. The decoration largely involves posting an icon whose image complements the matatu name. Thus for instance a mean-looking face stares from the back of the matatu named Dimmina just as a portrait of a man wearing a black-knitted cap and dark glasses looks on from beneath the legend »Hostile Takeover« posted on the front windshield on another vehicle. For these purposes popular icons are taken from films, book titles, World Wrestling Entertainment programs screened on local television, global black music figures (especially from hip hop culture), international black sports legends such as Tiger Woods, Jonah Lomu, Mike Tyson and Mohamed Ali amongst others. There is a perceptible identity politics here given that the subculture is predominated by Black icons. In doing so the matatu man aims to invoke the history of African persecution for example through slave trade, enslavement in the new world, racism and other forms of discrimination in order to symbolically mark himself as a marginalized man. There is a perceptible yearning embodied in these names in a manner to suggest the matatu man's own wishes to surmount the hardships inherent in his quotidian struggles. Thus might be under-

stood also the popularity of icons that represent transcendental ideas such as the soaring eagle (Figure 4), white stallions in flight and dragons, particularly when the latter are understood within oriental mythology¹⁰.

Matatu men routinely update the names and decorations on their vehicles, something that current local and international affairs enable them to do efficiently. Hence for instance the proliferation on *matatu* of portraits of former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan who in February 2008 helped broker a peace deal that ended Kenya's slide into total anarchy following the disputed December 2007 general election. That not a single portrait of Mwai Kibaki was seen on Nairobi *matatu* where quite a few had images of Raila Odinga, his opponent in the presidential contest, demonstrates that *matatu* are highly politicized spaces and that the subculture responds to, and at times helps to shape, mainstream politics. This was clearly seen in the events of the late 1980s that led to the abolition of a one-party political system in Kenya. During this period *matatu* men and Gikuyu popular musicians came out to overwhelmingly support the opposition¹¹.

I set out to survey some of the defining practices in *matatu* subculture. It has been demonstrated that appropriation and contingency are key aspects of the subculture. Decoding meanings is contingent upon one's access to a variety of 'keys'¹². That is why where some see the subculture as rebellious others take it as a celebration about surviving the odds in an extremely hostile environment. There is a politics about class, religion, culture, gender and taste amongst other issues that inform the discourse in and about *matatu* culture. Contradictions are bound to arise when *matatu* men deploy ideas and icons in new ways but the endless possibilities that obtain from (mis)reading and making meaning out of the myriad cues found on these vehicles—and the resulting masculine subculture—is what ultimately makes for an exciting engagement with *matatu* beyond the fact of seeing them as agents for physical mobility.

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GLOSSARY

by Paul Mpungu

ASKARI Is Swahili for a police officer. The term was coined from Arabic askaree and has over time been corrupted to refer to any uniformed security worker.

DUKA Swahili for small shop. The earliest duka was an architectural typology imported by Indians who came to Kenya at the end of the 19th Century to build the Uganda Railway from Mombasa.

GIKOMBA An area east of downtown Nairobi whose largely informal businesses include sales of second hand clothes and shoes, sawn timber, furniture and hardware.

KANGA A wrap-around rectangular cloth (1m x 2m), usually richly embroidered with floral patterns. This article of clothing is representative of Swahili culture and is extremely popular with women in East Africa. It would be unthinkable for a Kenyan bride not to receive a Khanga as a wedding gift, and is said to have more than 40 practical uses. A message of wisdom is usually printed along the edges of the main pattern.

KARAO Sheng (Swahili-English) for policeman. Usually reserved for traffic police officers by public transport (see Matatu) drivers.

MATATU A 14-seater, informal public transport minibus which derives its name from the three (10 cents) coins that made up the standard fare for most short distance travel within the city of Nairobi in the 1970s. Matatu means three (things) in the kikuyu language.

MKOKOTENI A rickshaw type of hand cart, also imported from India. For more than 100 years this form of haulage has formed the ubiquitous transportation system in most towns of East Africa. Trolleys are slowly edging the mkokoteni out of the centre of Nairobi because of their versatility easier manoeuvrability.

MURRAM A Murram road is a type of unpaved road surfaced with laterite brought to the site from a quarry or stream bed.

M-PESA A very recent and world-beating innovation by Safaricom (Kenyan Mobile telephone service provider) to transact banking and finance business using mobile phones.

SUKUMA-WIKI An affordable, fast growing, kale-type vegetable consumed in most homes within the East African region. It has a high nutrition value and has, over time, shed the stigma of being a cheap cabbage alternative for low income families.

BODA BODA A sort of bicycle taxi that originated in the Kisumu region. It is now quite popular in Nairobi as well, and is primarily used to transport passengers.

MALI MALI Traders who operate from door to door and exchange old clothes and goods for new articles, including plastic ware, cutlery and dishes.

MAMA MBOGA (Mama=Mother, Mboga = Vegetables) Ladies who sell vegetables from door to door. They carry a large bag with straps across their foreheads and back, leaning far forward in order to counterbalance the load.

MUNGIKI SECT An outlawed politico-religious group. It advocates a return to traditional African practices and denounces Western practices and values including Christianity. The name means ›A United People‹ in the Kikuyu language.

SIMU YA JAMII Literally ›Telephone of the People‹, this is an affordable product from the leading mobile communications service provider Safaricom. It provides handsets to entrepreneurs to be used as mobile payphones to call cellphone numbers. It is easily integrated into existing businesses and on makeshift mobile transports like mkokotenis - even on wheelchairs.

IMPRINT

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