



Ubuntu nests and the emergence of an African metropolis

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Cities are not homogenous sociocultural entities. The city of Nairobi exhibits the phenomena of 'cities within cities' and 'African city forms'. Social and economic forms of African, western and Asian cities compete for space within Nairobi. This paper refers to the African city form as the 'African metropolis', which exhibits the African logic, norms and values in its architecture and human social relations. The African metropolis is made up of slums, urbanized villages, self-developed urban fringes and indigenous markets. In urban literature, these spaces are referred to as informal or unplanned settlements. As drivers of this African form of urbanism, traders and artisans use the African logic, norms and values in the construction of the African metropolis. The traders and artisans contribute to the African metropolis, by hiring labour and investing surplus earnings, and are bonded into Ubuntu communities of family, friendship and ethnicity. The paper is based on data gathered through a questionnaire survey of traders and artisans. It contributes to urban theory, by showing how less dominant and subtle forces contribute to city-forming processes. I propose the concept of cultural villages as a strategy for blending African logic, norms and values with those of global urban planning.

Keywords: Ubuntu nests, African markets, African cities, traders, artisans, surplus

Introduction

Nairobi has often been presented as a 'divided city' and 'fragmented paradox' by scholars like Charton-Bigot and Rodriguez-Torres (2010). This narrative is often explained in terms of poverty, rapid growth and failed policies of the city administration. Patrick Mbataru of the *Daily Nation* (2015), one of Kenya's leading newspapers, sees the city as a noisy, dusty, dirty and polluted place where human beings and livestock coexist and readily available jobs are found only in the mechanical and hawking sectors. While Mbataru attributes this situation to the socio-economic divide, I argue in this paper that the 'divided city' and 'fragmented paradox' phenomena are a reflection of a complex mosaic of western, Asian and African cultural forms of urbanism.

African urbanism is constructed on the basis of the African logic, norms and values of Ubuntu. This form of urbanism is perpetuated by traders and artisans, who claim identity and citizenship in the city to create an urban form, which I refer to as the 'African metropolis'. I use the theoretical construct 'African metropolis' to explain the prevailing African logic, norms and values in settlement formation, built environment and organization of social relations as a form of urbanism in African cities. I build on my previous works (Kinyanjui, 2013; 2014), which demonstrate that women garment traders used solidarity entrepreneurialism and collective alliances to move into Nairobi's central business district, creating arguably a new form of urbanism based on the African indigenous market in the central business district. The broad objective of the paper is to explain how the African forms identified by Myers (2011) are formed. He proposes that African urban dwellers evolve their own urban forms and norms that help them navigate the crisis emerging from postcolonialism, informality or new regimes of governance.

In this paper, I show how traders and artisans in African indigenous markets in Nairobi use their Ubuntu solidarity nests to shape the evolution of the African metropolis, by hiring labour and investing their surplus earnings. Ubuntu is a Zulu, South African Bantu community word, coined from the term *ntu*, which means 'human' among the Bantu communities of eastern and South African region. 'Ubuntu' means humanness and solidarity and explains the way people are inextricably connected to each other (Tutu, 1999). This means that the action of one person affects others in the community: I am because we are, and because we are, therefore I am (Mbiti, 1969). The term 'nest' is used to describe the African indigenous market as a space where a close group or cluster of people display similar characteristics and subscribe to a similar philosophy. 'Nest' also refers to the nurturing and empowering effect of these clusters. The African market nurtures its traders and artisans like how a mother bird nurtures its baby in a nest until it finally becomes of age to fly and build its own nest. The traders and artisans involved in the African markets are empowered and become economically stable to nurture others. The cycle continues until one retires or dies.

I attempt to answer two questions in this paper. How does Ubuntu manifest itself among traders and artisans in African indigenous markets? How do the traders and artisans contribute to the emerging African metropolis? The paper is organized into the following sections: definition of the African metropolis, analytical framework, methodology and the role of traders and artisans in the construction of the African metropolis.

The African metropolis

The term 'African metropolis' is a combination of two problematic terms. The term 'African' raises some definitional problems in terms of geography, race, religion, ethnicity and history. It also raises some sociological questions in terms of modernity, urbanism and development. In this paper, I focus on ordinary Africans—the traders and artisans—who play a role in urban settings that are increasingly borrowed from the western and oriental (Chinese, Arabic and Indian) orientations. A walk across the Nairobi city reveals the imprint of Europeans, Indians, Arabs and now the Chinese in terms of architecture and neighbourhoods for example. Through African urbanism, African traders and artisans also leave a mark on the city. Most of them have basic western education and never went beyond primary or secondary school levels. They thus cannot access jobs in elitist formal business, multinational firms or the government service, as the exam-oriented culture has rendered them unqualified for modernity. Consequently, they are left with no other livelihood option and can only draw from the African logic, norms, values and experience.

Their gateway to the city and urbanism is through trade or artisan work in African indigenous markets. Literary and historical works like Mugo wa Gatheru's (1971) *Child of Two Worlds*, Mazrui's (1987) *African Triple Heritage* and Allfrey's (2014) *Africa 39: New Writing from Sub-Saharan Africa* depict Africans struggling with the identity question, in the context of western and eastern cultural influences. Mugo wa Gatheru depicts a situation where an African is struggling to choose where to position himself, because of his exposure to western influence in the Nairobi city and in the western world. Mazrui proposes that the identity struggle of the protagonist in changing gender roles, technology and natural calamities is a product of his exposure to African, Islamic and western cultures. *Africa 39* demonstrates that African logic, norms and values supposedly influence the generation of Africans who have not experienced colonialism or growing up in traditional African societies. In the words of Ngugi (*Los Angeles Review of Books*, 2014), this

generation of Africans is in a state of melancholy, mourning the legacy of colonialism, which created dichotomy and socio-economic conflicts that they did not experience.

In the same way, the traders and artisans confront a triple rejection by education, modernity and urbanism, by turning to their past. They comfortably roast maize, *mitura* (intestines) and *mara* (ovals), do craftwork and practise their rituals undeterred by modernity in their livelihood negotiations in the city. As they live in this reality of conflict and division, they construct an African metropolis. The African metropolis reflects logic, norms and values drawn from the past or passed on by others. This metropolis is the nuclei of future African urbanism, a fact that global urban theory should consider in its understanding of inclusive or slum-free cities. The African metropolis is thus a form of urbanism found in African cities that exhibits the African logic, norms and values in settlement formation, built environment and human social relations in African cities. It is made of four spatial components: slums, urbanized villages, self-developed urban fringes and African indigenous markets (Figure 1).

Slums

The first attempt for Africans to make claims to the city was the slums, which are known as *mitaa ya mabanda* or *vijiji* in Swahili. Examples of slum areas in Nairobi include Kibera, Mathare, Mukuru kwa Njenga, Mukuru kwa Reuben, Korogocho, Gothogoro and

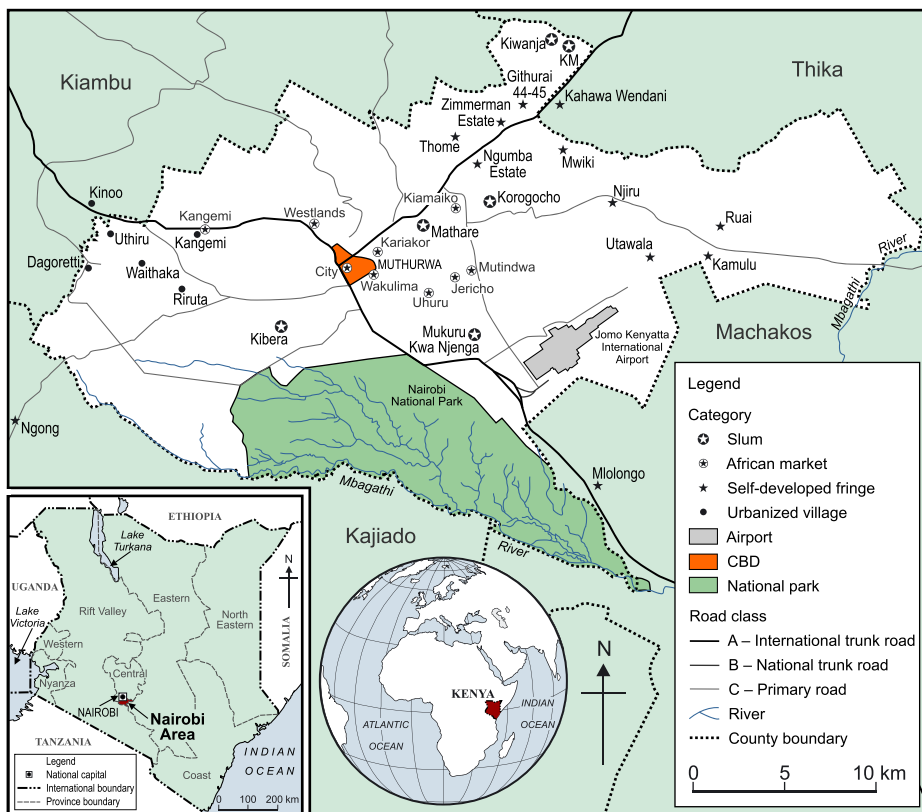


Figure 1. Map of the African metropolis. QuickBird satellite image, 2012, resolution 0.5 m. Department of Resource Surveys and Remote Sensing, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. Classification by Mary Njeri Kinyanjui.

Kamae. In the beginning, slums were temporary housing for traders, artisans, quarry workers, coffee pickers and houseboys out of work. These individuals were considered pirates in the city, as they did not live in Eastlands, the designated quarters for Africans in the city. Today slums are occupied by contract workers such as watchmen, cleaners, drivers and shop attendants. To a large extent slums are constructed by ordinary African traders and artisans who draw inspiration from their rural housing architectural designs. They form settlements based on the Ubuntu of family, friendship and ethnicity bonds. The slum is a spatial component of the African metropolis. Its built environment very much reflects African architectural use of mud, wood or corrugated iron sheet walls found in most parts of rural Kenya, where houses and outdoor outhouses are made from these materials.

Slums are also spaces where people affirm their cultural heritage. That is where one will find traditional food, barber shops, brewed alcohol, etc. The first Luhya traditional circumcision rite in Nairobi slums was performed in Kibera and Kawangware (*Standard Media*, 2014).

Urbanized villages

The urbanized villages cover the former Dagoretti¹ District, including Dagoretti, Kawangware, Uthiru, Kinoo and Kangemi. These settlements are older than the city of Nairobi and were the first sites of occupation by the British. Since the onset of colonialism, which began with the construction of Fort Smith in the Uthiru area by the Imperial British East Africa Company in 1895, the villages have resisted extensive urbanization and have chosen to adapt to urbanization at their own pace. In 1969, these areas were incorporated within the Nairobi city boundaries by a presidential decree.

African logic, norms and values stand out in urbanized villages except for a few enclaves along the major roads. Until recently, the built environment has been dominated by corrugated iron-sheet walled buildings with many units in one compound. A unit includes a main house, a kitchen, a house for sons and shelter for cows, goats and chicken. Lands in the urbanized villages are mostly owned by traders, artisans and farmers, and some landowners have constructed rental units. Traditional spaces of worship like the Mugumo tree in Uthiru have been preserved. Most households comprise people bound together by family, blood and trade relations. The community is preserved through the plot owners' associations or by families at household levels.

Self-developed urban fringes

Unlike the slum and urbanized villages, self-developed urban fringes are a more recent phenomenon. The oldest ones are Zimmerman Estate, Thika Road Side Estate and Ngumba Estate (named after the Mayor of Nairobi who initiated the project), built by individuals who banded together and bought land from departing white settlers. The uniform housing type in self-developed urban fringes used to be bungalows with indoor plumbing, but in the 1990s most of the old bungalows were demolished and flats were constructed. In other cases, urban fringes are developed when individuals bought plots of land from landholding companies and constructed houses. The city administration sets aside areas to construct public utilities such as schools, hospitals, police stations and markets.

Urban fringes evolve as either controlled developments or uncontrolled developments. In controlled developments such as the Kahawa Sukari, Membly and Thome Estates, the design and use of buildings are approved by the council, and the owners or land-selling companies have a say on the nature of the built environment. On the other hand, in uncontrolled developments such as the Githurai, Kahawa Jua Kali,

Kasarani Mwiki and Mwhoko estates, the house design is at the discretion of the owner, hence the varied designs in an area. The owner may also construct one's house and rental houses in the same compound.

In self-developed urban fringes, the African logic is maintained in both controlled and uncontrolled developments, as the compounds include spaces for livestock rearing and farming. Individuals are also closely connected by profession, family and friendship networks. Most of the successful traders and artisans occupy these urban fringes together with professionals such as teachers.

African indigenous markets

The African indigenous market is a mark of African logic, norms and values in the city. African markets played important roles in communities in precolonial Africa. They were the markers of time and seasons; days of the week were organized around market days. People converged to trade, chat, receive news and buy things to prepare for long journeys on market days. Farmers would bring their surplus goods, and artisans their craftwork, to be sold at the markets. The markets were open and free to all (including the psychotic) and had rules and regulations for governing trade. The markets comprised a square at the corner of the street, where African men and women, young and old, shared space, by sitting or standing side by side selling their wares. They could be selling anything from the latest Chinese garments and sweet potatoes to household utensils and farm implements.

The precolonial African indigenous markets have been adapted in African cities' frameworks. In some instances towns and cities are remnants of precolonial market spaces in Africa (Kinyanjui, 2014). In Nairobi, marketplaces have been reintroduced in the city by the first African city administration as a strategy for solving the problem of unemployment, influx of migrants and hawking. Nairobi has 45 African indigenous markets, the oldest of which are Burma and Kariokor, which were constructed by the colonial government to provide employment to former African soldiers in the Second World War.

The contemporary marketplaces are large halls that are subdivided into stalls or that are built with individual stalls in a row. Like in the precolonial indigenous markets, men and women, young and old, share business space. Traders and artisans either rent or buy the stalls from the county government. In a few of the markets, some traders and artisans own their stall space. Over time, the population of traders and artisans has grown, leading to an outflow of traders and artisans into open spaces.

Towards an analytical framework for the African metropolis

Until recently, academics and development practitioners in Africa have demonstrated the mass failure of development in postcolonial Africa, particularly in settlement formation, architecture, industrial and commercial transactions and human social relations. Literature on African cities has been fixated on governance, informality, poverty, inequality, disease and violence; hence the urgency and intensity of these problems have rendered theoretical construction a nonpriority area of epistemological work. Most of the epistemological works (Mitullah, 2003; Davis, 2004; Skinner, 2008; UN-HABITAT, 2010) have been largely directed towards identifying specific phenomena or problems and assessing needs for areas of intervention. While the importance of these works should not be underrated, challenges in the African city are seen as easily solved through financing, training on governance and human rights, substituting the state with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and making low-cost housing available, among other interventions.

Scholars, policy makers and city planners fail to come up with trajectories and drivers of the African city phenomena, because they have ignored the deep-rooted historical, economic and cultural factors that determine human agency on furthering change and continuity or resistance in urbanism. They have also ignored the drivers of urbanism in African cities, especially traders, artisans and small-scale farmers. As a result of the failure to theorize what is seen and observed in African cities, the same problems have persisted for decades.

For example, the problems associated with the informal sector, which were first highlighted in development discourse by Keith Hart in 1970s, continue to bother African cities' planners 40 years later. These problems include a small scale of operation, reliance on individual or family finance and lack of growth in employment. Further, efforts to build and supply low-cost housing, which began in the 1960s as a solution to the expansion of slums, have not borne significant results in many African cities. I agree with Myer's (2011) proposition on the need to rethink the role of local knowledge in the formation of a city. In this case I propose the need to identify the African logic, norms and values that drive the city. I argue in this paper that the ubiquitous traders and artisans in African cities have a lot to do with the evolution of cities, as they participate in the trade of goods and services, investment, nurturing of junior traders and artisans, and governance of the city as voters and stakeholders.

A large body of theoretical work developed in the Northern institutions is not supported by empirical works in east Africa. These empirical works are a postcolonial critique of the urban theory. They argue that no universal city theory can explain cities and their differences within a global context, as cities evolve differently and have unique regional differences. Robinson's (2002) paper entitled *Global and World Cities: A View Off the Map* sets the ball rolling in critiquing the urban theory, which frames the evolution of cities in the North as 'global' or 'world cities' and those in the South as 'third world cities' or 'mega cities'. She sees the 'world city' perspective as a narrow framework of studying specific urban agglomerations that shuts out diversity. The 'global city' analytical framework views the city in terms of globalization spearheaded by transnational organizations that situate their command posts in global cities. 'Third World cities' are described as those in poorer countries whose analyses are characterized by the studies of community participation, housing, land tenure, service provision, governance capacities, infrastructure and informal sector. She argues that this 'third world' and developmentalism approach to the studies is equally limiting, because it transposes parts of the city to the entire city fabric. The global, world and third-world city analytical frameworks do not explain the coexistence of local and translocal informal economic activities with national and transnational formal economic connections.

Robinson (2013) proposes the use of 'the urban now' instead of 'urban new' as an alternative strategy for comparative urban studies. While this paper is not a comparative analysis of cities, it draws from some of Robinson's views on the existence of different components of cities. Even at the intrametropolitan level, cities have differences that complicate the emergence of a comparative urban theory. Understanding the sources of these differences enhances theory building. This paper deviates from the frequently used models of informality and governance, by taking a business model of using traders and artisans to demonstrate that logic, norms and values exist in the evolution of an African city, Nairobi. Nairobi's urban landscape is partly a product of traders' and artisans' creativity in the city-forming process. The traders and artisans are a spatial entity of individuals bound together by Ubuntu relationships of family, friendship and ethnicity in African indigenous markets.

The works of Charton-Bigot and Rodriguez-Torres (2010) and Mbataru demonstrate that the different kinds of cities that Robinson tries to draw together at the global level can be seen within specific urban regions. One city can house many cities. Cities are not homogenous entities; they are fragmented or compartmentalized into spatial cultural components. In the Nairobi case, the compartmentalization is usually explained by poverty and inequality, but these factors cannot be both a cause and a manifestation of differences in African cities. Hence there is need to rethink the drivers of the African city, especially the African metropolis. This paper argues that the drivers include traders and artisans, who are influenced by African norms and values, and that the postcolonial city administration has failed to capture the traders' and artisans' imaginaries of African urbanism.

While Simone (2010) demonstrates that traders and financiers use their networks widely to mobilize resources and further translocal entrepreneurship, in other works, Simone (2004) argues that cities in the South are 'yet to be' and are characterized by early death, rampant violence, disease and uncertainty. I agree with him that social relations and associations are important in African cities, but there is need to go beyond the gloom and doom of African cities and demonstrate that traders and artisans, who use the African logic, norms and values, are key actors in the making of a city.

Mbembe and Nuttall (2004) challenge the tendency to view the African city through the lens of modernity and crisis and highlight the need for forms of capitalism in African cities to be understood. They argue that Johannesburg is a metropolis that harbours not just workers, the poor, criminals and illegal immigrants, but also civic-minded public intellectuals of all races, highly skilled migrants, jetsetters and new black elite. Johannesburg accommodates corporate headquarters, finance institutions, law and accounting firms, media outlets, entertainment industries and information technology ventures. It is therefore difficult to rule out Johannesburg as a city. This analysis calls for a deeper appreciation of the complexity and diversity in African cities, diversity that also comes from the less dominant groups of traders and artisans, who are a heritage from the African past and have maintained attributes of the past or adapted to continuity and change in African cities.

Another dominant strand of empirical and theoretical literature in African cities exhorts the dominance of economic informality in Africa's urban landscape (Macharia, 1997; Lindell, 2010; Myers, 2011; Kamete, 2013; Kinyanjui, 2014). According to Pieterse and Parnell (2014: 10):

Poverty, informality and the absence of a strong local state with a clear and unchallenged mandate to manage the city are arguably the leitmotifs of African urbanism today. The most telling illustration of this is the extremely high level of 'slum' living conditions in Africa, even compared to other regions in the global South.

Economic informality in African cities has attracted significant scholarship, because of its striking nonconformity to known forms of wage labour, capitalist production (Lipton, 1982; Portes *et al.*, 1989) and the formal sector (Hart, 1973). The marginalization by national land, labour and property laws (de Soto, 1989) differentiates African cities from western cities. The origin and survival of economic informality is attributed to accumulation of large capital (Bromely, 1978; Moser, 1978), indigenous traditional methods of organizing economies in cities (Gudeman, 2001; Kinyanjui, 2014) and the failure of capitalist growth-oriented models (Bangura, 1994). The dominance of economic informality in African cities is undoubtedly astounding in analytical theory, policy practice and methodologies of studying it. Most actors in economic informality in African cities are

traders and artisans, who play important roles in the formation of cities and nations and movement of goods, ideas and technology.

Methodology

This paper is a product of close to two and half decades of studying and promoting development activism of small businesses in Nairobi. When I began my studies in the early 1990s, I was hopeful that small businesses, as I called them then, would grow and evolve into larger businesses. I was hopeful that small enterprise clusters would transform into industrial parks and innovation districts like those of Europe and North America. However, after close to 25 years, the clusters have not evolved into what I had envisioned. Rather than trying to explain the failure to transform, I began to question the neoliberal framework of analysis that I was using. One, individuals whose businesses I expected would fail after five years did not. On the contrary, their firms have grown in the marketplace. Two, through my observations and interaction with informal workers outside the research environment, I realized that they owned plots and rental houses or invested heavily in their rural areas. I also learnt that some had sponsored the education of their children and siblings up to the university level. Government statistics supplied by the statistics bureau for a number of years showed that most of the job creation was coming from the informal sector. I saw that the Central Business District (CBD) in Nairobi was invaded by traders, who subdivided open-plan shops into stalls. The CBD has become one large marketplace.

These reasons led me to rethink and see economic informality from a different perspective. I began doing archival research at the Kenya National Archives to find documentation on the origins of economic informality in the city. In the archives, I found the Metropolitan Act of 1928, which defined hawking. All African traders and artisans are classified as hawkers and are required to pay a fee and seek permission from the municipal authority. I also interviewed the first African mayor, who in the archival documents was very sympathetic to hawkers and created open-air markets for them. He acknowledged that he borrowed the concept from African indigenous markets and introduced it to the city to house traders and artisans. I also went beyond structured questionnaires to open-ended questions. I realized that there were difficulties associated with translations and structured questionnaires. Narratives however captured more information. A direct question like 'Have you invested your profits?' would have more negative responses than the question 'How has this business helped you in life?' I also started collecting narratives from traders and artisans, keeping a journal of interesting observations of them and occasionally hiring photographers to document interesting developments in Nairobi.

This paper is based on the results of a survey carried out between January and April 2014 by research assistants. The assistants were trained and prepared to administer questionnaires to traders and artisans. The survey consisted of two independent samples—one for traders and the other for artisans. We selected and interviewed 385 traders and 289 artisans from 14 African indigenous markets in Nairobi city, using different questionnaires. However, most of the questions in the questionnaire were similar except those that specifically addressed production. Each sample was analysed separately. After the first person was purposively identified, the assistants would then interview every other third person in a row. If the person was not willing, he/she would not be interviewed. The research assistants informed the respondents that there were no expected immediate benefits from the research. The trader sample had 179 men

Table 1. Education profiles of traders and artisans in in Nairobi city.

Education level	Number and percentage of traders	Number and percentage of artisans
No education	15 (3.9 %)	8 (2.8 %)
Primary school education	75 (19.5 %)	89 (30.8 %)
Secondary school education	254 (66.0 %)	70 (58.8 %)
Tertiary education	41 (10.6 %)	22 (7.6 %)

(46.5 per cent) and 206 women (53.5 per cent), while the artisan sample had 216 men (74.7 per cent) and 73 women (25.3 per cent). Table 1 shows the education profile of the traders and artisans.

Findings: role of traders and artisans in the construction of the African metropolis

The traders and artisans make a significant impact on the African metropolis in terms of creating jobs, setting up residential areas and investing their surplus earnings. The nature of jobs affect the housing types, consumption patterns, migration trends and quality of life in the city. If the jobs are precarious in nature, the quality of life will be poor, affecting the housing, retail trade and the supply of other services in the city.

Entry into trade and artisan work

Ubuntu manifests itself in the strong family, friendship and ethnic bonds that exist between the traders and artisans; hence African indigenous markets in Nairobi are concentrated with traders and artisans who are closely connected to each other. They exhibit some degree of Ubuntu and solidarity in their transactions and entry into the marketplace. Often, when individuals discuss their entry into trade and artisan work, they make reference to the person who introduced them to business or taught them skills of production.

According to the survey, 74 per cent of the traders were introduced to the trade by either family members (34.3 per cent) or friends (39.7 per cent). The proportion of the artisans who were introduced into business in the marketplace was also high (80.3 per cent). Some 35.3 per cent of the artisans were introduced to the market trade by family members, and 45.0 per cent by friends. These statistics show that the concentration of workers in African markets is organized around bonds of family, friends or ethnic community. The act of inviting others to join or following others is based on the African logic of 'I am because we are, and because we are, therefore I am' (Mbiti, 1969:108). An individual going to the market to trade and meet his/her household needs is inclined or obliged to invite a neighbour, relative or friend along, because they too have similar needs. The individual wants the other to have a similar experience, since they have shared social experiences and aspirations from their background. It is in their interest and the community's to participate in the marketplace.

These bonds largely influence the traders' and artisans' behaviour in the marketplace. Their businesses are situated in close proximity to each other, and they often trade in or manufacture similar products. Further, they chat, collaborate and copy designs from each other. The marketplaces serve as nests of solidarity, where individuals with close relationships of family, friendship and ethnicity work together

to improve their socio-economic well-being. They deal with the concerns of necessity, exchange, production, consumption and surplus deployment in solidarity. Ubuntu business nests enshrine an African business logic that helps them survive and better the city. The strong bonds are essential in the understanding of the evolving African metropolis.

Labour hire and training

Hiring of labour is an interesting development in the Ubuntu commercial nests. In the survey, 33 per cent and 55.2 per cent of the traders and artisans respectively employed workers. Only 25.2 per cent and 13.2 per cent of the employed workers were the kinsfolk of the traders and artisans respectively, while slightly over 60 per cent of the respondents who reported having employees indicated that their workers were not from their tribes. Such dynamics are interesting in a context where ethnicity is seen as a source of political strife in the country.

The workers join the trade as trainees and become skilled by learning on the job. Most become employers after they have accumulated enough money to buy their materials, hence the short employment durations; the mean number of years a worker stayed in employment is three. This dynamism generates a situation where the businesses do not grow vertically by increasing the number of employees but horizontally by increasing in numbers. Thus, the workers become part of the community of traders and artisans in the marketplace.

Housing

Most of the workers are recent migrants and live in slums and other low-income neighbourhoods. This means that economic informality is contributing to the evolution of concentrations of slums and low-income neighbourhoods in the city, while the differences in residences between the employer and the employees are creating two polarized communities in one workplace, which might eventually evolve into stratified classes of owners of production and workers. Unlike the owners of the means of production in the city, traders and artisans are creating a new class of workers with a different path of self-reproduction in the city.

The African metropolis is an important residence for the traders and artisans, who buy land and build their own houses. Table 2 shows the percentages of traders and artisans living in slums, self-developed urban fringes and urbanized villages.

The presence and numbers of traders and artisans in the city are important to the African metropolis especially with regard to the trajectories of development and growth. Traders and artisans are likely to bring their logic, norms and values that will have a bearing on the urban culture and architecture. Their strong bonds will be reproduced in these spaces, making them more inclusive and open to diversity.

Table 2. Residences of traders and artisans.

	Percentage of traders	Percentage of artisans
Slums	40.0 %	33.6 %
Self-developed urban fringes	38.0 %	45.7 %
Urbanized villages	18.4 %	17.3 %
Did not specify	3.6 %	3.4 %
Total	100 %	100 %

Investment of surplus earnings

Some 83.5 per cent of the traders and 82.3 per cent of the artisans were able to meet their consumption needs like accommodation, household necessities, children's education, providing for elderly parents and paying rent for the market stalls, because they adopted the African saving and conserving logic. They then use the surplus earnings to purchase parcels of land, cows, goats or shares; build houses in rural and urban areas; contribute to a social welfare group in their rural villages; or invest in commercial properties.

Although the proportions of traders and artisans investing in real estate are not large, these traders and the artisans are making territorial claims in the African metropolis and will become a power to reckon with. No less than 32.9 per cent of the artisans and 28.7 per cent of traders invested their surplus earnings in acquiring parcels of land in the self-developed fringes or urbanized villages. The parcels are considered important assets, because they appreciate rapidly in price and can be disposed of in case of emergency in one's business or life cycle.

Some 24.2 per cent of the artisans and 20.5 per cent of the traders invested their surplus earnings in building houses in slums, urbanized villages or in individually built environment developments in the urban fringes. Some 37.0 per cent of the artisans used their surplus to construct houses in rural areas in different parts of Kenya such as Bungoma, Homabay, Kisumu, Kiambu, Muranga, Machakos, Kitale, Makueni, Nyamira, Siaya, Meru, Kirinyaga and Nyeri. The surplus earnings was thus redistributed to the places of origin of the artisans. This arrangement is in line with the cultural logic that a migrant's home is his or her ancestral home.

About 25.2 per cent of traders and 24 per cent of artisans also invested in urban public transport vehicles popularly known as *matatu*, motorcycle taxis known as *bodaboda* and handcarts called *mkokoteni*.

Conclusion

Traders and artisans in Ubuntu commercial nests propel the African metropolis to a large extent by hiring labour and investing their surplus earnings. They are closely related in terms of family, friendship and community bonds. They first create a nest from which they operate and then send their tentacles to the rest of the city. They draw their workers from the African metropolis, where they live and invest in. These close-knit relationships between the African market and the African metropolis operate subtly, fuelling the growth and expansion of the African metropolis. The nests ideally constitute the emerging creative processes, delivering alternative spatial and relational urban forms that answer to African urbanism. Traders and artisans are therefore important in the city-forming process in earning their livelihoods or actively taking part in decisions and actions that affect their economic well-being. This paper contributes to urban theory, by showing how a less dominant city-forming process by traders and artisans is shaping the city by hiring labour and concentrating capital in the African metropolis. The traders and artisans are shaping the emergence of the African metropolis through the Ubuntu logic of solidarity and providing for oneself. They demonstrate an alternative business model that concentrates labour and capital in an agglomeration, which provides employment, residence, consumption and self-reproduction through investment of surplus earnings in the African metropolis. By so doing they sustain an African urban form or metropolis.

The failure to capture the traders' and artisans' imaginaries of African urbanism has led to conflict between the city planners and actors in economic informality. The city history is replete with examples where the city administration has criminalized the

operations of traders and artisans, imposed harsh taxes upon them, failed to consult them when allocating business spaces, failed to improve infrastructure that would facilitate their operations, demolished their structures, confiscated their goods, denied them licenses and of late preferred Chinese traders over them. The traders and artisans on the other hand have known when to align themselves to formal city regulations and when to disengage. They have resorted to their solidarity networks, formed associations and appointed leaders who champion their course. Through the leaders and associations, traders and artisans decide when to demonstrate, resist pressure, riot or force the city administration to sit and negotiate with them. A good example is when the associations held demonstrations against Chinese infiltration, after the government gave a nod to the latter to engage in similar enterprises. The associations argued against unfair competition to protect their domains and called for the relaxation of visa rules, so that they could visit China for business trips. They also resisted the Chinese attempts to found small businesses in marketplaces or hawk items on the street. Their stance is clearly different from that of their government and elite businesses, which have welcomed Chinese as business partners. The government is cautious when dealing with traders and artisans, as their sheer number means they can easily influence election outcomes.

For sustainable and inclusive urban growth, planning and urban discourse has to include traders' and artisans' imaginaries and visions in the twenty-first-century city. Traders and artisans are likely to continue to contribute to the built environment and infrastructure and concentration of labour and capital in the African metropolis, because of their thriving businesses and their traditions of providing for oneself and nurturing trainees. Traders and artisans create employment and invest their surplus earnings in the marginalized African metropolis, thus improving the quality of life in the city. Hence city planners should work with traders and the artisans to design a city that encompasses the African cultural logic, norms and values, in order to make the city more inclusive. Rather than initiating policies that disfavour traders and artisans, the government should welcome them, by coming up with cultural villages, which blend African logic, norms and values with global urban theoretical propositions and practices. The process of creating cultural villages entails first learning the principles of the African metropolis and then blending them with ideas of the global urban theoretical propositions such as cultural districts, as they are called in Europe and North America. I prefer to call them cultural villages rather than districts, because cultural villages are based on a cultural logic of self or group provisioning of land and housing as well as infrastructure.

Cultural villages are an agglomeration of local economic and cultural community practices, consisting of local economic activities spearheaded by traders and artisans, village schools and health care systems. The process of creating the cultural villages is very much led by individuals, families or social groups. Cultural villages will strengthen the cultural identity of the communities and create a sense of belonging among residents. By feeling that they belong to a community, the individuals will use their resources, energies and aspirations to engage in social and civic activities that will benefit the village.

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Endnote

- 1 Although 'Dagoretti' is said to be a Maasai name, some quarters suggest it is the corruption of a Gikuyu word *ndaguriite*, which means that the Europeans grabbed the land without buying it. 'Dagoretti' was coined by women who resisted the white occupation, by not allowing the Europeans to collect firewood in the area, because they had not bought the land.

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