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# The Africa Problem of Global Urban Theory: Re-conceptualising Planetary Urbanisation

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## The Africa Problem of Global Urban Theory: Re-conceptualising Planetary Urbanisation

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### ***Abstract***

This paper works to address what I consider the enduring ‘Africa problem’ in global urban theory. I engage and critique selected relevant urban thought from the Globalization and World Cities research group, from Henri Lefebvre and from the new wave of urban theorisation inspired by Lefebvre’s (1970) idea of ‘complete, planetary urbanisation.’ I argue that urbanisation in Africa, largely absent from Lefebvre’s works, presents new twists that are better understood from outside a Eurocentric framework. I propose the possibilities of urban comparativism built from theories and conceptualisations that emerge from the global South and that can be utilised to compare non-Western cities’ urbanisation processes. I use case studies from Dakar and Zanzibar to examine the production of what Chinese urbanists detail as a ‘village’ in the city, on the edge of the city, and in the suburbs over the last half-century and the complexities and comparability of urbanisation processes in these settings. I end with reflections on the implications of these cases for any claims for universalising the twenty-first century’s processes of urbanisation and urbanism across the planet. My main finding for urban policy and planning practice is the documentation of the relevance and value of South–South comparisons of urbanisation processes for development.

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### ***Full text***

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## 1. Introduction

- 1 Urban theory still has an Africa problem, despite two decades of sustained critique of Euro-Americanism in theories of urbanisation. I contend that we can see this both in the work produced by the Globalization and World Cities (GaWC) research group and in ostensibly more Africa-aware work influenced by the recent push towards analysis of 'planetary urbanization'. The problem may be a different one in these two schools of thought, but it leaves us with an enduring lacuna where global South intellectual understandings and conceptualisations of urbanisation processes as they intersect with globalisation would otherwise drive scholarly analysis. My goal in this chapter is to explore an urban comparison across the global South, from southern China to two urbanisation processes in Africa (Dakar and Zanzibar), conceptualising from outside global North frameworks. I assess the utility of the intertwined Chinese ideas of a 'village-in-the-city,' a 'village-on-the-edge' and a 'village-in-the-suburbs'—in scholarship analysing processes of rapid urbanisation in the Pearl River Delta over the last fifty years—for the analysis of similarly rapid processes in sub-Saharan Africa over this same time period. In the first segment, below, I argue for thinking beyond global North theorisation. In the second, I make a case for the value of 'unexpected' comparisons like this (Myers, 2014). Thirdly, I turn to the case study comparison.

## 2. The Global South and 'Africa Problems' in Urban Theory

- 2 One can see an increasing interest in urban Africa across the social sciences in the global North recently. Although the list of exceptions may be growing, there is still little in this work that attends carefully to insights from African urban studies or from the global South more generally. Two very significant arenas of global analysis in urban studies, arenas that ought to have more emphases on African processes of urbanisation, are the works of the Globalization and World Cities (GaWC) group and the scholarship on planetary urbanisation.
- 3 The GaWC research group has developed important, data-rich empirical assessments of interconnections between cities in the world economy. I begin with its work, because it is arguably the place where most urban studies scholars start in attempting to come to grips with the interwoven impacts of globalisation and urbanisation. They have filled out previously intimated hierarchies and links resulting from competition between elite enclaves striving for economic command and control (Beaverstock et al., 1999 and 2000; Taylor et al., 2012). GaWC scholars have an ever-widening map of cities—but it is still a map dominated by select global North cities, albeit with a scattering of global South cities beginning to rise. The GaWC group ranks cities 'in terms of their advanced producer services using...[an] interlocking network model. Indirect measures of flows are derived to compute a city's network connectivity – this measures a city's integration into the world city network' (The World According to GaWC<sup>1</sup>). Cities are scored on a scale using the Greek letters Alpha, Beta and Gamma, and both plus and minus signs—the highest scores, for the most integrated or globalised cities, are Alpha ++, and the listing continues through to Gamma - cities; an increasing number of cities are ranked in two sorts of 'honourable mention' categories, High sufficiency and Sufficiency, below the 'lettered' cities.

**Table 10.1 Cities in Africa according to the GaWC Ranking**

City	2016	2012	2008	2004	2000
Johannesburg	A	A–	B+	B+	B+
Cairo	B+	B+	B	B	B
Cape Town	B+	B+	C+	C	C
Lagos	B+	B–	C	HS	HS
Casablanca	B	B	C+	HS	C–
Port Louis	B–	B–	C–	C–	C–
Tunis	B–	B–	HS	HS	HS
Durban	C+	C+	S	S	HS
Kampala	C+	HS	S		S
Accra	C	C–	HS	HS	S
Dar es Salaam	C	C–	S	S	S
Lusaka	C	HS	S		HS
Abidjan	C	HS	S		HS
Harare	C	S	S	S	HS
Luanda	C	S		S	
Gaborone	C–	HS	S	S	S
Douala	C–	HS		S	S
Dakar	C–	HS			S
Maputo	C–	S			S
Windhoek	HS	S		S	S
Pretoria	HS	S		S	
Abuja	HS	S			
Nairobi	S	B–	C+	S	C
Libreville	S		S		
Kigali	S				
Port Elizabeth	S				
Blantyre	S				
Tripoli	S				
Kinshasa	S				
Lomé	S				
Antananarivo	S				
<b>African Cities in the...</b>					
Alpha rankings	1	1	0	0	0
Beta rankings	6	7	2	2	2
Gamma rankings	12	3	5	2	4
High sufficiency list	3	6	2	4	6
Sufficiency list	9	6	8	9	8
<b>Total number of African cities</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Total cities actually listed</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>225</b>
<b>Percentage African in list</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>8.8</b>
<b>Cities in the database</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>525</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>315</b>

Source: Created by author from data available on the website of the Globalization and World Cities Research Group—<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/gawcworlds.html> (accessed on 17 April 2018).

- 4 Table 10.1 documents the history of Africa's cities in the GaWC rankings, where I abbreviate the rankings' letters with the English rather than the Greek alphabet's first three letters (A, B and C) and the 'honourable mention' categories as HS and S (for High sufficiency and Sufficiency, respectively). As the Table documents, Africa's proportional share of cities listed at all from 2000

through 2016 hardly changed. The 2016 table lists a few more African cities than in previous years, but on a scoreboard with more cities, and almost all the raw total increase is in cities newly listed in the lowest category of global significance, 'Sufficiency'. In 2016 and 2012 the lone African city in the top 'Alpha' levels (A ++, A +, A or A -) was Johannesburg, and there were no Alpha cities on the continent before this. Some massive African cities do not appear at all.

- 5 Even where African cities appear, there are oddities that seem inexplicable to African studies scholars. Between the 2012 and 2016 rankings, for example, Nairobi dropped from Beta+ to the lowest ('Sufficiency') category, when very little of the story of Nairobi in those years would indicate to any scholars of Kenyan urbanisation any reasons for a slip in global significance (Myers, 2015). The GaWC database is about office networks for advanced producer services—a very narrow economic understanding of globalisation, even if more recent lists include data on advertising, accounting and law firms. Yet even so it is an inexplicable oddity that the ranking for Nairobi—which any urbanist of Africa would recognise against any measure of globalisation as consistently one of the continent's most globally networked cities for financial services—has fluctuated radically in the GaWC's calculations and plummeted in those four years. One might claim that the map of GaWC in 2016 has improved on its Africa problem from the 2000 map, but largely by volume, not by intellectual veracity.
- 6 That earlier map shaped a critique of the GaWC approach from global South and Africa scholars (e.g. Robinson, 2002 and 2006; Bunnell, 2017). Robinson (2002 and 2006) contended that the GaWC neglected the cities 'off the map' and assumed globalisation and urbanisation to be universal, global North-driven and economic, and worked out from a game plan of terms that missed key dynamics of globalisation and urbanisation across 'ordinary' cityscapes in the whole world. All this set policymakers in cities on mistaken paths of development that short-changed glaring basic needs for most urbanites and largely ignored histories and specificities, extending the 'unequalization' of cities internally as well (Carmody and Owusu, 2016, 69). The drive to make cities 'global' seems to have had particularly negative consequences in cities in Africa (Myers, 2015).
- 7 Criticisms from Robinson and others led the GaWC researchers to expand somewhat their criteria for globalisation, but also to push back (Smith, 2013; McNeill, 2017). This counter-critique often centres on the 'absence of evidence' in the work of 'ordinary cities' scholars (Smith, 2013, 2301) and the vagueness of concepts in 'Southern' urban theory. Yet there is still much to criticise with the GaWC group, despite claims that its scholars have incorporated or surpassed the postcolonial critique, and most notably for urbanists who focus on Africa. Globalisation's impacts go far beyond the range of cities in Africa that GaWC includes in its surveys, to secondary and much smaller cities (Mainet and Racaud, 2015; Choplin and Pliez, 2015). GaWC scholars Caset and Derudder (2017) analyse the 'cultural' manifestations of global-and-world-city status, but their criteria for cultural significance are completely global-North driven. No city in Africa surfaces either in the top 30 of their statistical index or among their 51 global arts 'financial centres' (Caset and Derudder, 2017). Urban Africa's absence is a result that any globally minded comparative understanding should find implausible, given the central importance of Africa for *urban* culture in a long historical-geographical arc (Simone, 2010). Here, the GaWC framework for research into what constitutes urban culture does take note of the rise of Chinese cities as 'cultural' centres, but the framework cannot see African urban culture, or globally significant cultural institutions in Africa (or throughout the global South) that do not adhere to European criteria of culture.
- 8 A smorgasbord of more genuinely global urban studies building from Lefebvre has productively sidestepped debates between GaWC and global South scholars (McNeill, 2017). The Lefebvrian concept that the world has entered an era of 'complete, planetary urbanization' has gained great traction in urban studies (Lefebvre, 1970; Brenner and Schmid, 2014 and 2015; Merrifield, 2013; Ruddick, 2015; Millington, 2016; Soja, 1989, 2000 and 2010). The phrase itself is at least a half-century in the making, stretching back to Lefebvre's (1970) hypothesis of it in *The Urban Revolution*. Lefebvre, though, was writing from the vantage point of France. When he discussed the urban outside of Europe in *The Urban Revolution* it was with brief vignettes and broad strokes—Africa did not appear at all, and his analysis of China in 1970 became irrelevant in the era of economic reform there.
- 9 The contemporary push to conceptualise a stage of planetary urbanisation is more genuinely planetary in its reach, and more aware of Africa and global South urbanisation. Brenner and Schmid (2015), for example, offer seven theses on planetary urbanisation, the most relevant of which here is thesis three: that 'urbanization involves three mutually constitutive moments', which

they call concentrated, extended, and differential urbanisation. They argue that in this era ‘the city’ is no longer the only or the central concern—concentrated urbanisation, essentially the production of cityness, is but one of three processes of urbanisation taking place. Extended urbanisation and differential urbanisation are occurring in still-under-examined processes across the planet (Murray, 2017). Through these four through seven, which emphasise the ‘multidimensional’, ‘planetary’, ‘variegated’ and ‘contested’ character of these three processes of urbanisation, respectively, they invite exploration of the diversity of processes in both global North and global South urban regions.

10 As Schmid (2016, 30, 33) acknowledges, the ‘classic model of urbanity [...] has long been overtaken by worldwide urbanization processes’ and ‘we are living in a completely different urban world’ than Lefebvre in 1970. Brenner and Schmid’s (2015, 162) work to address that completely different urban world engages with postcolonial urban theory, but they emphasise the ‘urgent task of deciphering’ the way ‘contemporary forms of neoliberal capitalist urbanization are unfolding across the North/South divide’. They argue that postcolonial or ‘Southern’ urban theory’s emphasis on thick descriptions of everyday life and unique global South specificities leaves out or over-generalises urbanisation processes in global North contexts.

11 Eurocentric and universalising tendencies in older world/global cities studies were not eradicated with this strong new enthusiasm for Lefebvre (Sheppard et al., 2013; Shaw, 2015). The dominant voices and perspectives of this discussion still belong to the global North, and efforts to reach into the global South for analysis are not aimed at relocating conceptual starting places there. Many global South-oriented scholars have different emphases in mind when exploring the ‘planetary’ (Jazeel, 2011; Mbembe, 2017). A caution remains for postcolonial, global South and African urbanists with the possibility that ‘the universalizing force’ in Western thought might ‘reduce everything to “the same” through the Lefebvorean analytical lens of planetary urbanisation (Britton, 1999, 12; Glissant, 1989, 97).

### 3. Towards an ‘Unexpected’ Urban Comparativism

12 There are ways of rethinking the entire discussion that build from outside of global North urban theory, and from an approach that foregrounds postcolonial understandings. Like GaWC scholars, Storper and Scott (2016) and Rizzo (2017, 5–7) criticise postcolonial urban studies for overgeneralising, for selectively criticising modernism, or for weak methodology that make the resulting studies ‘woefully vague’, lacking in ‘empirical data’ and ‘lacking in [Marxist] attention to the economic and political structures in which the poor are located’. Some of these criticisms may have some validity, but even Storper and Scott (2016, 1121) agree that ‘urban theory must now range over the entire world for its sources of data and evidence while remaining fully open to new conceptual insights generated out of the experiences of the cities of the Global South’. There is still much ranging across Southern thinking needed, and openness to its insights for developing global urban studies, to challenge the conceptual assumptions that remain embedded in the field. This need may be felt in many contexts, but it is surely evident for the study of both Chinese and African urbanisation. As the United Nations has noted in outlining Goal 11 (making cities ‘inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable’) in the Sustainable Development Goals, ‘95 per cent of urban expansion in the next decades will take place in the developing world’, with China and sub-Saharan Africa very prominent in this expansion process<sup>2</sup>. It is completely logical to begin from analyses and conceptualisations of processes there to attempt to build an understanding of contemporary ‘planetary urbanization’.

13 Processes in China and Africa leading to planetary urbanisation go far back in time, well before this contemporary age of neo-liberal globalisation (which is also too often understood only from the perspective of the global North). There is ample latitude for detailing the specificities of globalising processes over many centuries (Meier, 2016; Prestholdt, 2008). Global South approaches give us tools to see the making of globalised cityscapes differently, from the margins and shadows that run parallel to, connect with or contest Northern understandings of urbanism and urbanisation.

14 I build on Robinson’s broad rubric for global urban comparativism here. Robinson (2016 and forthcoming) proposes remaking comparative global urban studies as multiple variations on ‘thinking cities through elsewhere’ or ‘thinking with elsewhere’ (Robinson, 2016). She provides

elaborate means for developing robust, historical–geographical comparisons. Comparisons, in her schema, can be genetic or generative, and scholarly tactics can involve tracing, composing or launching these comparisons (Robinson, 2016). This chapter is an exploration of the ‘launching’ of a comparison that is at once genetic and generative, in Robinson’s terminology. The genetic launching starts with a singularity, the southern Chinese idea of a village-in-the-city, but includes ‘inserting analysis of this case into wider conversations’. It is generative, too, in that I take a concept out of China that I ‘put to work elsewhere’. Since ‘a revised comparativism would seek to deliberately stretch concepts’ even to the point of breaking them, the experiment here is ‘highly revisable’, and I have conducted it with what I hope is a ‘modest authorial voice’ (Robinson, forthcoming).

15 A vital aspect of my approach to comparison also relies on Glissant’s postcolonial Caribbean discourse of ‘Relation.’ At root, for Glissant, Relation is a form of comparison reliant on ‘equality with and respect for the Other as different from oneself’ (Britton, 1999, 11). Glissant’s vision of comparison is ‘nonhierarchical and nonreductive’, avoiding a ‘universal value system’ and acknowledging the ‘particular qualities of the community in question’ (Britton, 1999, 11). This is a comparativism that makes use of the thick descriptions of particularities in the global South by testing their relation to one another. In Glissant’s (1989, 98) vision, comparison celebrates ‘diversity [...] without universalist transcendence’, where postcolonial societies exist ‘no longer as objects to be swallowed up, but with the intention of creating a new relationship’. Glissant (1990) resists the colonisers’ determination to subsume and excise the ‘roots’ of other peoples beyond the global North or the West into the ‘mono-root’ of Western thinking.

16 To counter any potential criticism that this leads to another ‘vague’ and ‘convoluted’ postcolonial approach to urban studies, I put an empirically grounded emphasis into the dynamics of this comparison. To that end, I examine the Chinese terms, *chengzhongcun*, *chengbiancun* and *chengwaicun*—translated as a village ‘in-the-city’, ‘on-the-city-suburb-edge’ and ‘in the suburb’—in terms of their potential relevance in Africa. They arose as means of describing and analysing what is happening to the small settlements (*cun*) swallowed up all over the Pearl River Delta’s megacities as they grow exponentially following China’s explosive industrialisation over the last forty years (Al, 2014; Altrock and Schoon, 2014; Chen, 2007; Chen and de’Medici, 2012; de Meulder and Shannon, 2014; Roberts, 2013; Schoon, 2013; Wu et al., 2012). In the Pearl River Delta (PRD) in 2018, hundreds of villages remain inside, on the edges of and in the outskirts of Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Dongguan and other megacities in the region.

17 The distinctions between the three terms are subtle. The vast majority of all pre-existing villages in the PRD were what are called ‘lineage villages’, meaning that their residents shared ancestral lineage (Cenzatti, 2014). What happened to the villages with urbanisation partly depended on where they were in relation to industrialisation or urbanisation projects. On one hand, there is a simple spatial distinction: villages that are encased within a fully urban setting are *chengzhongcun*, those which lie firmly outside the urban boundaries are *chengwaicun*, and those in between are *chengbiancun*. This goes together with a continuum of density in both population and structures, from the densely populated built environments of *chengzhongcun* outward to the lesser density of the *chengbiancun* and the least dense *chengwaicun*. As megacities expand in the PRD, though, the spatial separation and density gradation have become more difficult to identify. The implicit assumption of the inevitability of the development of all villages into *chengzhongcun*, villages-in-the-city or urbanised villages, and then their destruction and reconstruction as regularised ‘proper’ sections of urban areas, ultimately proves problematic. Some *chengwaicun* stabilise as important agricultural producers for the urban cores (Cenzatti, 2014), some *chengzhongcun* reinvent themselves to retain some vestiges of their pre-existing character (Crawford and Wu, 2014; Jun, 2014), and some *chengbiancun* seem to remain in between in both density and urban character (Hao, 2014). Despite the tendency to resort to calling all three types *chengzhongcun*, or rendering all three types in English as urbanised villages, and despite the difficulty occasionally of differentiating the three types, it remains worthwhile to sort them as distinct, both in spatiality and density, and in terms of the intensity at which processes of urban development transpire along the gradient that connects the three.

18 These concepts of villages in-the-city, on-the-edge, or in-the-suburbs are fascinating for comparative purposes in Africa. As cities have grown throughout the world historically, they have swallowed up the farmlands and hamlets within and around them. In *The Urban Revolution*, Lefebvre (1970) wrote that ‘in many places around the world, and most certainly any place with a history, the existence of the city has accompanied or followed that of the village’. He was certainly identifying something akin to what the Chinese terms aim to explain, but within his ultimately



Eurocentric framework. One is left to wonder what would have met his definition of a 'place with a history', for example, since the history of cities in Africa did not attract his attention. He does critique the 'ideology' that he associated with the representation here of 'slowly secreted urban reality', but not really for the fact that it 'generalizes from what took place in Europe'. The processes and pathways by which villages evolve into cities or become enmeshed in urban realities have varied tremendously, as has their pace, around the world.

- 19 As we look at the urban world of the early twenty-first century, nearly everywhere in the rapidly urbanising portions of the global South we can see places that look like villages in the city, on its edge, or in its suburbs. The literature on South Asian or South-East Asian urbanisation, for instance, has long highlighted these phenomena (Hust and Mann, 2005; McGee, 1997). Here, I take a focused approach of using these types from the Chinese literature and apply them to two urban regions, Dakar and Zanzibar, with the task of comparing how their 'urban villages' have come to be. Example 'villages' like Ouakam, Thiaroye and Keur Massar in and around Dakar, and Kikwajuni, Fuoni and Mwera in Zanzibar are parallel with the three Chinese settings, respectively, as we move out from the city boundary. I am arguing that perhaps this tripartite conceptualisation about the spatiality and pace of the urbanisation process from China, rather than Lefebvre's ideas for 'complete, planetary urbanization,' might be of more relevance to the similarly rapid pace and broad sprawl we see in sub-Saharan Africa. In the interest of brevity, I concentrate on the cases of Thiaroye and Fuoni, as villages-on-the-edge (*chengbiancun*) in the Dakar region and Zanzibar, respectively. I compare these with PRD examples in terms of land development, governance and participation in housing and urban development. I contend that, while these two African cases are different from each other and from the PRD cases, the comparability is more enlightening than an attempt to shoehorn either African case into Western-defined processes of globalisation or of planetary urbanisation.

## 4. Comparing the Edge Urbanisation Processes in the PRD and Sub-Saharan Africa

- 20 As Förster (2016, 7) has put it, in Africa 'urbanites make their cities in ways that scholars have yet to comprehend', especially in, around and across the city edges. Might the Chinese concepts take us towards such comprehension? The tripartite division of Chinese processes has the potential to do so, even if there are notable differences. First, however, let me make a more basic case for comparability between the PRD, Dakar, and Zanzibar, particularly in these edge settings. The logic of utilising Dakar and Zanzibar arises not simply because I have conducted fieldwork in urban and peri-urban 'villages' of both contexts. These are also deliberately chosen for being much smaller cities than the PRD's megacities, and therefore representative of cities often left out of the analyses of GaWC or of Lefebvrian planetary urbanisation; but they are also ones which—like the Pearl River Delta region—have been defined around their 'planetary' relationships for centuries. As slave-trading ports and entrepôts of global trade from the 1500s (in the case of Dakar) and 1600s (for Zanzibar), links with Europe, Asia, the Americas and the rest of Africa were crucial to the formation of the urban identities of both cities. These global histories make Zanzibar and Dakar well situated for illustrating different starting places for something we may call 'planetary' urbanisation.
- 21 More immediately, all three urban regions (the PRD, Dakar, and Zanzibar) have experienced rapid urbanisation in the last half-century. Within the PRD, the most profound narrative of rapid urbanisation thus far arguably belongs to the megacity of Shenzhen. Shenzhen's urbanisation and industrialisation was transformed by the 1978 decision to establish China's first special economic zone there (Chen and de'Medici, 2012). Shenzhen had a population of around 30,000 people at the time, with the many surrounding villages containing at most 300,000 people. The overall metropolitan area is now around 60 times larger than it was 40 years ago. Much of the growth has been in the population moving to Shenzhen for industrial employment, but with rural *hukou* (registration). People lacking urban *hukou* comprise almost 80 per cent of Shenzhen's population. Many of them reside in urban villages because the lack of urban *hukou* makes obtaining housing elsewhere more difficult; the lower regulation and cost in urban villages produce a market that is available for low-income migrants. However, as urban villages are demolished or gentrified, many



of Shenzhen's floating population are pushed farther out to the edge villages or suburban villages (Tian, 2008; Zhang et al., 2016).

22 Dakar and its satellite city of Pikine have experienced a similar phenomenon, at a relatively slower pace and smaller scale. Dakar's population is currently estimated to be just above 3 million, more than nine times its size at independence in 1960 of around 350,000. The area that is now part of the city of Pikine at its initial establishment in 1952 was home to about 8,000 villagers, in several farming settlements. Thiaroye was the largest of the pre-existing villages. Pikine's population is more than 1.2 million now, and Thiaroye has more than 225,000 inhabitants—around 40 times its size in 1952. Thiaroye has grown largely as a result of displacements due to rising housing costs in Dakar, in combination with rural-to-urban migration caused by stress on Senegal's agricultural economy—rather than as a result of a massive wave of industrialisation.

23 Zanzibar has also experienced a relatively rapid urbanisation of its edge, in places like Fuoni. The small city proper had a little more than 49,000 inhabitants on the eve of independence in 1958, 115,000 in 1978, and 223,000 in 2012. But West Districts A and B, the edge communities that are now thoroughly morphological and functional parts of urban Zanzibar, grew from a set of rural farming villages with less than 20,000 people in 1958 to 370,678 in 2012 (Myers, 2016). Fuoni went from a tiny village of less than 1,000 people in the 1970s to a village-on-the-edge of 34,774 as of 2012, now subdivided into two enumeration areas. I remember bicycling through coconut plantations and python-rich swamps in Fuoni in 1991, and by 2017 it is essentially the new downtown of the Zanzibar metro area. Fuoni, as with Thiaroye, owes its growth to the high costs of housing in Zanzibar city in combination with rural-to-urban migration, rather than to the Shenzhen sort of industrial explosion.

24 The reasons for focusing in on Thiaroye and Fuoni are as follows. The most thoroughly studied of the three Chinese categories (*chengzhongcun*, the village-in-the-city or urbanised village) is self-explanatory: these are the pre-existing villages that become quickly surrounded by dense urban development. But it is also the least like most urban African cases. This is because colonialism's restrictions on migration and urban residence caused most cities on the African continent to grow slowly until the waning days of European rule. In that context, pre-existing urban villages either were demolished, slowly eroded away, or ossified. Only very recently, with for instance Huruma in Nairobi, Ouakam in Dakar, or Kariokoo in Dar es Salaam, do we see processes in Africa that might more precisely mirror the *chengzhongcun* of the PRD, in the form of extremely dense, high-rise and low-rent apartment development that accompanies—and forms an intrinsic part of—rapid urbanisation of land and population (Myers, 2016; Huchzermeier, 2011; Seifert, 2011). Massive, nearly instant processes of urbanisation are more common straddling or outside municipal boundaries in Africa, what is often termed the peri-urban zone, and they occur along the two broadly distinct trajectories identified by Chinese scholars as *chengwaicun* and *chengbiancun*—villages on the city edge and villages in the suburbs—but most intensely right along the urban edges.

25 To go anywhere with this comparison, though, we must recognise that there are important differences. Two overwhelming differences noted already are the overall numbers between the PRD and African urban cases as well as the absence of massive industrial employment growth in the latter. A third lies in the built environment, in the housing stock—the 'handshake-houses' and 'thin-line sky' characteristic of the three 'village' types in China (Roberts, 2013; Al, 2014; de Muelder and Shannon, 2014) are less common in Africa. Handshake-houses are tall, narrow apartment buildings built so close to one another that people say one could reach out a window and shake hands with a resident of the next building. The closeness of these towers leaves an observer in the alley a view of only a thin line of sky above, hence the 'thin-line sky'. Again, there are the beginnings of high-rise developments of a comparable density in African *chengzhongcun*, but far less in the *chengbiancun* or *chengwaicun*.

26 Still, all three edge-village (*chengbiancun*) settings have experienced rapid urbanisation for at least some comparable reasons, like overcrowding in a nearby city and in-migration from both city and countryside. All three edge-village areas, then, experience overcrowding in substandard housing. All three are full of highly underserved neighbourhoods. All three have sociocultural tensions and rising inequalities between villagers and newcomers—and within indigenous village societies—that sometimes spill over into politics. In housing terms, the parameters are similar even if the physical housing stock differs. Even greater commonalities can be found in land development, in the fluid and variable roles of 'village' participation in governance, and in the development processes in these edge areas, as I examine below.

27 In the PRD, the urbanisation of land starts with the appropriation of agricultural areas by the government—often the local or municipal government (Shin, 2014)—and private interests allied to it, for factories and formally developed urban areas. This ‘entrepreneurial push for urban redevelopment’ through state-led ‘strategic planning’ uses land as an accumulation strategy (Shin, 2014, 269). However, because villagers retain the rights to their housing stock, when confronted with the subsequent loss of farming livelihoods many village development committees of residents seek investors to build larger structures for rental to migrants on their housing areas. Villages thus typically retain somewhat the morphological structure of the pre-existing village, with much taller structures (Wiethoff, 2014, 336). Open spaces that passed for a sort of public space between villages steadily disappear at a rapid pace of ‘everyday urbanization’ (Wiethoff, 2014, 341). This is not a uniform or predictable pace for land urbanisation, and it has a potent mix of ‘formal de jure permissions’ and ‘informal de facto reactions’ embedded in it (Wiethoff, 2014, 341).

28 There are striking parallels here to West District of Zanzibar around Fuoni, and even to some extent with Pikine. The morphological structure of Fuoni and Thiaroye still retains, in segments, a relationship to the built environment of the pre-existing villages. The ‘everyday urbanization’ in both settings contains a mix of state-led order in the distribution of land and informal reaction. For Fuoni, the 1964 nationalisation of land—here, initially, for a socialist ideological development policy rather than the financialisation of land as an investment—eventually played a part in the urbanisation pattern, but in a manner that is quite relatable to the PRD cases. The long, drawn-out implementation of the 1982 Chinese Master Plan for Zanzibar included development of planned and ordered neighbourhood units (NUs) in Fuoni, but few of these grew in a manner anything like that proposed by the plan. In the 1960s, many properties had been allocated to revolutionary cadres in the government’s three-acre allotments, and these were frequently the first areas to be informally urbanised—a process often led, in Fuoni, by the informal plans of three-acre plot holders themselves (Myers, 2016). Land control steadily slipped from a central government intent on allocating it in new, planned NUs into an informal system where land rights became instruments of benefit in the hands of local party officials. Thiaroye experienced no strictly socialistic nationalisation, but it nonetheless developed as a complex mixture of formally and informally organised and controlled urban lands, with segments of state-led, grid-like development surrounded by haphazard construction, particularly in marginal zones.

29 The participatory governance dynamics in relation to the state in these three contexts may present contrasts, but there is still room for comparability. In the Pearl River Delta, and perhaps especially in Shenzhen, there is a degree of local government autonomy rare in much of urban China. This gives rise to flexibility in *hukou*, for instance, so that Shenzhen’s government has been able to grant certificates of residency that amount to a quasi-legal urban *hukou* for many rural-*hukou* residents. The villages in the city, the edge and the suburbs, while varying in the capacity for implementation of planning or governance initiatives in them, also contain governance units with effective opportunities for action, in the form of village development committees. Some are just meant to serve as tools for state actions, such as in Shin’s (2014) case study of Enning Road in Guangzhou, where the old village area was scheduled for demolition. Many village committees have more effectively organised villages for collective development action; even in Enning Road, sustained residents’ resistance slightly reduced the scope of demolitions and displacements (Shin, 2014, 279; Zhang and Li, 2016). Often, the process has resulted in the development of mid-rise and high-rise apartment buildings on the land formerly occupied by single-story village houses. In some cases, officials cite claims of extraordinary wealth flowing to village development committees (which is occasionally the case) as a way of suggesting that a stand-in for the villagers are benefiting; but in reality most villagers have seen few gains from the process, and migrant residents even less. Inequalities long seen in *chengzhongcun* are now also beginning to rise in edge and suburban villages (Zhang et al., 2016). In Xiaohong and Schoon’s (2014) case study of Guangzhou’s Lieda village, the villagers leading its ‘joint-stock company’ held the upper hand, but ordinary residents worked hard to participate in decision-making during the redevelopment. There is a high degree of heterogeneity in the capacity for negotiating powerful roles—and the incoming migrants have even less power or capacity than lower-status villagers (Wiethoff, 2014). Still, there are numerous examples throughout the PRD of attempts at more participatory planning of village urbanisation dynamics, variations on what Zhiqiang (2014, 221) refers to as ‘gaming’ in the decision-making process. A few smaller urban villages stabilised by developing a peculiar economic niche; these include Dafen, the ‘Oil Painting Village’ of northern Shenzhen. In others, wholesale demolition has taken place or is scheduled for the future. In Hubei, a religious minority community has maintained just over half of its neighbourhood of single-story, closely

built humble homes in the shadow of a fancy new shopping district. The local government has long scheduled Hubei for complete demolition. But the recent effort to showcase the vibrancy of *chengzhongcun* and *chengbiancun*—ironically, by having villages host the 2015 Shenzhen architectural biennial—has helped local planners and activists to navigate towards a plan that may preserve approximately one fourth of the original residential space of the village (Fu, pers. comm., 2017).

30 Local government and developers in the PRD, along with the local media, use the poor physical conditions of villages and their alleged association with unsavoury or even illegal activities as discursive tactics to push for village demolitions. Perhaps the most interesting example of this for this chapter is in Guangzhou, where the *chengzhongcun* of Xiaobei, derided in the local press as ‘Chocolate City’ for its considerable African population, faces intense pressure for redevelopment (Badgley, pers. comm., 2017; Li et al., 2009; Su, 2016). And in the Pearl River Delta, the forces for demolition and redevelopment allied with and often led by the state, eventually win almost all the battles over *chengzhongcun*, which then leads to the further growth of *chengbiancun* and *chengwaicun*.

31 On the surface, Thiaroye and Pikine/Dakar present something very different in governance terms. First, the framework for governance is built around a lively multiparty democratic system, rather than China’s single-party Communist system. Since the 1998 reorganisation of local government, Pikine has been a city in its own right in the Dakar Region, divided into three *arrondissements*, Dagoudane, Niayes, and Thiaroye. Below this are 16 *communes d’arrondissements*, five of which are in Thiaroye. Each commune has a *chef de quartier*. But there are elements of confusion and varying degrees of incapacity for this governance structure. For example, the *chef de quartier* of Thiaroye Gare in 2013 was at pains to point out that he considered himself a *chef de village*, both in naming the pre-1998 designation of Thiaroye as a village and citing his long connection to the village itself as its *chef*. Yet whether it is in *quartiers* or *villages*, collective action has a strong foothold in Dakar and Pikine politics and governance (Brown, 2015; Fredericks, 2014).

32 The local state is strangely both more responsive and sensitive to the ordinary people of Thiaroye than the local governments of the PRD are in relation to urban and edge villages, and less capable, largely because of a staggering lack of resources, of meeting their needs. While a major new toll road was built, with Chinese engineers, through Thiaroye without compensation being given to the residents of sixty or so houses that were demolished, the community suffers from near-annual disastrous flooding, an absence of solid waste management, chronic shortages of electricity and water services, a severe environmental health crisis, and haphazard construction. Yet it is, as its *chef de village* put it in 2013, ‘the heart of Pikine.’ Its largely informal market is one of the largest in Senegal. Politicians, local officials and mosque leaders share with ordinary people a sense of pride in Thiaroye for its welcoming, cosmopolitan character balanced with Lebou village traditions. While a form of gentrification has certainly established a foothold, in the *commune d’arrondissement* of Thiaroye sur Mer, which is technically a part of Thiaroye *arrondissement* but quite geographically distinct on the opposite side of the new toll road, it is nonetheless hard to imagine Thiaroye becoming like Hubei. It might, on the other hand, have more in common with Dafen, as its artists and musicians, such as those based at the artists’ cooperative Africulturban, become genuine engines for the populist development of many Pikine neighbourhoods like Thiaroye (Mbaye, 2014). There is much that is parallel to Zhiqiang’s (2014) notion of residents’ ‘gaming’ the dynamics.

33 In Zanzibar, the local government structures lie somewhere in between the more controlled hierarchy of the PRD and the more open democracy of Dakar. Since 1995, Zanzibar has had a multiparty system, but the ruling Revolutionary Party has manipulated all five national elections to stay in power, while bleeding away the powers intended for elected local government into central government-appointed units (Myers, 2016). Zanzibar’s 2000 restructuring of local government re-introduced a colonial-era local government representative, called a *sheha*, as an appointment from the central government working under the appointed District Officer. *Masheha* (pl.) have been principal agents of the continued chaotic urbanisation of West District, particularly in the wards of Fuoni and other edge communities. The edge villages of West District, along the line of the official boundary with the municipal government, had by the late 1990s earned the local nickname of the Gaza Strip, as a hotbed of sometimes violent opposition to the Revolutionary Party. In 2012, the government of Zanzibar subdivided West District into an A and a B, but its efforts to provide services in either district have been meagre, just like in Thiaroye, in every sector other than road-building (Myers, 2016). Fuoni in 2016 and 2017 witnessed the massive widening

of its main road, replete with the largely uncompensated demolition of its small businesses, and the paving of many of its side streets. It lacks other basic services, but widening the main road greatly enhanced the central route to Zanzibar's southern and central east coast tourism zone and provided an aesthetic mask for tourists over the conditions inside neighbourhoods like Fuoni. That the Revolutionary Party remains one that was modelled on the Chinese Communist Party is clearly reflected in its similar lack of allowance for oppositional voices in planning processes in edge villages. Yet even here there are pathways for the expression of non-compliance, such as in what I have discussed elsewhere as spatial discourses of *fitina* (discord) (Myers, 2016). For instance, in Fuoni and other parts of both West A and West B districts, one often finds, deeper in the alleyways, the light blue-white-and-red banners and insignia of the opposition Civic United Front hanging, tattered, years after an election campaign.

## 5. Conclusion

- 34 Globalisation in cities, the globalising of urban areas or regions, and the 'planetaryization' of the urban are all themes that have preoccupied many urbanists over the last four decades. These global North-driven discussions have been late in coming around to urban Africa, and when the attention does come, it is not generally seeking to build from existing African scholarship or Southern analyses or frameworks, instead attempting to fit them into Northern frameworks. One way to address urban theory's enduring problems with Africa, such as what I've argued may be found in the work of the GaWC or Lefebvrian approaches to planetary urbanisation, is to build South-South comparisons that utilise concepts or frameworks designed for explaining Southern urbanisation. The highly comparable rapid urbanisation processes for previously rural village land on the edges of cities provide one empirical context for testing this premise.
- 35 In these villages on the edge, we see 'planetary' histories and futures. The processes have great variability and fluidity within and between the settings of this study, but there is much to compare—so much that, in fact, I have merely scratched the surface. For instance, while there is no *hukou* registration system for Senegal or Tanzania, new migrants to Pikine or West District find themselves similarly situated in a divided landscape of insiders and outsiders with varied capacities for belonging. Land development has resulted in notably different urbanising forms, yet through comparably complex pathways that involve variations on limited capacity for local participation and gain from 'gaming' mixed and corrupted systems.
- 36 One might counter my examples by saying they are just variegated cases of the 'extended urbanization' of Brenner and Schmid's (2015) Lefebvre-inspired theses on 'planetary urbanization'. But the paths of these 'extensions' are markedly distinct in China, Senegal or Tanzania, respectively, and from global North cases. It is precisely towards thick description of the difference that we must turn, especially if critics of postcolonial or Southern urban studies continue to speak of an absence of evidence or of conceptual vagueness. The ordinary cities that are still too often 'off the map' are telling stories that should change the narrative. After all, if the narrative is about the rapid urbanisation of the planet, that is a narrative that, in the twenty-first century, clearly belongs to South Asia, South-East Asia, China and sub-Saharan Africa. Countries like Senegal and Tanzania have rates of urbanisation that have topped the world for many consecutive decades now.
- 37 In thinking with these urban elsewheres, putting the three village-in-the-city concepts to work in African cities, I have certainly stretched the concepts. I have attempted to do so while remaining mindful of Glissant's goal of non-hierarchical, mutually respectful comparison that rejects universality and makes productive use of particularities in the differences. Obviously, there is much more that could be discussed regarding the potential comparability of these neighbourhoods—let alone the comparability of all three of the PRD types. The point is, again, that there are in fact so many realms of comparability. One might just as well start the story from the African settings and use conceptualisations of urbanisation from Senegal or Zanzibar to see how they might help to explain urbanisation in the PRD. I contend that this approach, too, would likely be more enlightening than an effort to apply Lefebvre's ideas about planetary urbanisation from France nearly a half-century ago to these rapidly expanding urban edges in global South contexts. It is through exploration of these seemingly unexpected South-South comparisons that policy makers ought to find more cogent pathways to more sustainable and just urbanisation.

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## Notes

1 The World According to GaWC, <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/gawcworlds.html> (accessed on 3 November 2017).

2 *UN Sustainable Development Goals*, Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/> (accessed on 18 January 2018).

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## List of illustrations

<b>Title</b>	Table 10.1 Cities in Africa according to the GaWC Ranking
<b>Credits</b>	Source: Created by author from data available on the website of the Globalization and World Cities Research Group— <a href="http://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/gawcworlds.html">http://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/gawcworlds.html</a> (accessed on 17 April 2018).
<b>URL</b>	<a href="http://journals.openedition.org/poldev/docannexe/image/2739/img-1.png">http://journals.openedition.org/poldev/docannexe/image/2739/img-1.png</a>
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