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Topic: **Urbanisation in Africa – Challenges for Development Cooperation (DC)**

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B1.

a) From the African partners' perspective, what are the greatest challenges posed by urbanisation?

Given that Africa's urban population will more than double in only 30 years, it is imperative that the benefits of urbanisation are indeed harnessed. These benefits are understood to be: greater economic productivity due to agglomeration and economies of scale; easier provision of basic services to satisfy socio-economic rights and eradicate poverty; effective citizen empowerment through a variety of democratic systems that enable people to have a say in the running of their lives and communities. Most importantly, economic productivity and access to education and health supports a healthy labour market where especially youth can access jobs and security. Furthermore, cities offer the greatest opportunity to usher in a low-carbon and resource efficient growth path that is generative of job creation. None of these expected benefits are currently in evidence in most African cities. On the contrary, with rapid urban growth, and a youthful urban population (50% are younger than 19 years), we are witnessing the agglomeration of disadvantage and job creation in the informal economy and that tends to mean extremely low and precarious wages, which in turn undermines the possibility of social mobility. This is a recipe of large-scale social exclusion and fertile conditions for the intensification of political radicalisation, poverty, inequality and gender-based social violence. These trends are only arrested when national and local governments put mechanisms in place to understand the drivers and dynamics of urbanisation and align policies and investments across all levels of government to address the dysfunctional urbanisation.

b) Do donor nations and partner countries have differing views and definitions of needs? Are there sufficient opportunities for African involvement?

It is difficult to answer this question because most donor partners do not have an explicit strategy of support to advance sustainable and inclusive urbanisation in Africa. However, most would profess support for the SDGs (including goal 11), the New Urban Agenda and align those with the requirements of the 1.5 degree report of the IPCC that has a strong focus on the role of urbanisation and city building in achieving climate objectives. However,

how these policies translate into a specific set of priorities for the urban sector is at best vague if not unaddressed.

In terms of opportunities for African involvement, my opinion is that there are opportunities for some African governments if they fall into the priority-country list of a given European donor but this then takes on the form of traditional bilateral discussions. Other actors in the African policy landscape, e.g. subnational governments, civil society organisations, universities and think tanks and private sector interest groups with a stake in urban development, are largely ignored. This is short-sighted and unsatisfactory. To be fair, there does seem to be significant engagement with the United Cities and Local Government – Africa, which is the voice of African local government.

B2.

What kind of support for urban development is expected from Germany, the EU and international institutions such as the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), and which mechanisms would be appropriate? Should the focus be on regional and country-specific broad-scale measures or, rather, on model projects with a clearly defined best practice role (key phrase: charter city)?

Given my role in a university-based research and teaching institute with a mandate to produce problem-driven applied urban research, my reflections will focus on how European and international development partners can best use their resources to create a permanent system of knowledge production and innovation (linked to capacity building) to ensure that the challenges of African cities are solved by Africans. What is needed and what is missing?

African cities are confronted by the unenviable problem that they have enormous infrastructural deficits to address whilst they are hamstrung by limited devolution of powers and an extremely small tax base due to the predominance of the informal economy. Most city governments are also chronically under-staffed and often the existing staff are not equipped with tools, skills and resources to effectively problem solve. These inherited conditions are compounded by the 21st Century imperatives to build low-carbon, spatially efficient and highly integrated cities. Since fossil-era infrastructure solutions are inappropriate, African cities need to understand how best to introduce next generation sustainable infrastructure, combined with green infrastructure land-use models, and deployed as a catalyst for ushering in green industrialisation—the key ingredient for job growth for most African cities in a climate constrained world. International consultancy firms, European universities, Northern NGOs are not the ideal candidates to figure out how to advance this transition in specific African countries, cities, towns and regions. As a principle, local institutions need to be invested in so that they can collect the evidence, conduct the analysis, co-produce solutions with practitioners in government, civil society and the private sector, and through city-level innovation systems, mainstream these solutions. This is the only systemic way of solving Africa's urbanisation challenges over the next generation. In light of this assumption, what form of support from Germany and the EU makes sense?

I envisage a need for an **Urban Solutions Challenge Fund** anchored by three infrastructure banks with a vested interest in improving the quality of infrastructure investment strategies

at a national and city-level. These banks are: the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), and the European Investment Bank. It is conceivable that the BRICS Bank and the World Bank may also want to enrol. It would make sense for KfW to be a founding partner. However, the AfDB and DBSA should have a controlling stake to ensure an alignment with the interests of the Continent. Other stakeholders would include the National Statistical Institutes in Africa, the International Science Council, African Research Universities Alliance, African Urban Research Initiative, among others. The Challenge Fund will provide an opportunity for bilateral donors to contribute to a systemic institutional solution that will exist in perpetuity and provide an incentive for African governments to fund this kind of innovative applied research from the national fiscus over the time. The Challenge Fund can insist on a degree of matching finance from African governments after its first five years of operation once the concept of research and development on sustainable infrastructure for African cities have been entrenched and the benefits become evident. It is proposed that African governments will introduce a modest tax on infrastructure transactions (precedent exist in South Africa to fund the Water Research Commission) that is ring-fenced for applied urban research to solve infrastructure and land-use challenges but within the parameters of transitioning to low-carbon, affordable and employment generative models. This is the only long-term mechanism to sustain the ongoing innovation required to figure out the transition pathways for African cities and regions.

How will it work in practice? Every year a call will be issued for required research to solve priority urban development issues in African cities and towns. Only African universities and think tanks who are able to forge partnerships with relevant government bodies and affected communities and businesses are eligible to apply. An independent scientific committee will adjudicate the bids and make a fixed number of awards each year. Grants will be for 4-5 years because that is the minimum time required to develop effective co-produced, evidence-based, contextual solutions. The learning and insights from the innovation focussed research will be open-source and a dedicated facility will curate the knowledge and optimise its circulation and adaptation in other African cities and towns. Furthermore, the research will feed into the production of training and teaching courses to ensure that the necessary hundreds of thousands of urban professionals are produced over the next thirty years, again, by African institutions and in vernacular languages.

Practically, the Urban Solutions Challenge Fund must be substantial so that the grants disbursed are significant enough to make an impact. Considering that there are 54 African states, the fund should be capitalised at 270 million euros (5 million per state) so that the capital base is enough to ensure that through interest and investment enough revenue is generated to support the funding model outlined before. This is obviously a broad-based and systemic response and can serve as the basis for the generation of best practice examples. However, just doing the latter will be little more than a drop in the ocean.

Charter Cities are a totally inappropriate and unwelcome approach.

B3.

a) Are existing institutions and stakeholders up to the challenge? Are reforms or new forms and pathways for cooperation needed here?

Existing institutions and stakeholders are not up to the challenge because the investment into the system of urban policy development, linked with institutional support and altering the political economy of urban development governance in African countries are simply inadequate. Current levels of investment are so low and unstrategically focussed, it is unlikely to have much of an impact.

My answer in B2 applies to the question whether reforms or new pathways of cooperation are needed. I can add that the governance mechanism for this should be National Urban Policies (NUPs) at a national level, and City Development Strategies (CDS) that drive the content and priorities of the NUPs. The localised applied research discussed in the previous section should be identified through well-crafted and legitimate CDSs. National Urban Forums and City Urban Forums are important deliberative spaces where the state and non-state actors can debate and discuss the evidence, trade-offs, and priorities to advance sustainable and inclusive urban transitions.

b) What experience has been gained with the Chinese models of infrastructural investment, how are they rated, and what role will they play in future?

The Chinese approach has evolved very quickly over the course of the last decade or so. Initially, it was very crude. They would offer preferential infrastructure financing, linked to commodity offtakes, and then seek to provide a “turn-key” solution. In other words, they would supply financing, planning capacity, conduct the building of the infrastructure and supply both professional and manual labour, and get the operating concession, or a piece thereof. This model generated a number of problems: social strife, political unrest, poor workmanship and operating models that did not understand the nuances of the local context. Also, the infrastructure and building materials were often of a lower standard than what is acceptable in Chinese cities. Today, the Chinese are more careful to strike context specific agreements and involve local labour and firms in various aspects of the value chain. They also often work with firms from other countries, including Europe, the Middle East and South Asia (e.g. Singapore). The next step in this evolving relation is to persuade the Chinese to co-design with African institutions and explore how the new and relatively high standards for sustainable planning and building in China can be adapted to the African context alongside Africa’s commitment to strengthen local firms and value chains. If they are open to this shift, China’s future in Africa will be bright.

B4.

Should European partners support social service provision, participation or public safety in African cities and if so, how? What role can city partnerships play in shaping urban and social development on the African continent?

For me these issues are important but a lesser priority to the systemic approach outlines above in response to B2.

B5.

Are traditional lifestyles still relevant or have they already broken down as a result of migration and urbanisation?

The question assumes that tradition is something that exists in rural areas. It is not. Tradition is highly mobile, malleable, and it gets reinterpreted and adapted for the urban context. Furthermore, tradition is fundamental as social glue for bonding social capital. Migrants rely heavily on their ethnic and/or home-town ties that are embedded in social obligations shaped by traditional systems of value to find a footing in the city and access some form of social care and protection. In many African cities, traditional authorities are key actors as custodians of land and therefore deeply inserted into the routine governance and negotiation of the city. They have to be engaged in almost all urban planning, governance and management processes. African cities have profoundly complex and rich social cultures because its residents are able to move effortlessly between traditional, contemporary and digital reference points, sensibilities and values. To put it differently, traditional lifestyles are both modern and ancient and one has to be from these cities to know what that means for understanding and governing these spaces, which is precisely why it is so important to invest in the building of African institutions to generate the knowledge and solutions for Africa's cities.

Thank you for the opportunity to engage.