

Newsletter No.1 - Jan-Feb 2018

Religious Urbanisation in Africa

RUA Project

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RELIGIOUS URBANISATION IN AFRICA



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About the Religious Urbanisation in Africa project

Religious Urbanisation in Africa (RUA) is an international multidisciplinary project led by the university of Kent (UK), in partnership with the universities of Toronto, York, Kinshasa and Lagos. Its principal objective is to explore the links between religion, development and urbanisation in sub-Saharan African context.

The RUA Project is part of the British Academy [Cities and Infrastructures Programme](#) funded by the Global Challenges Research Fund ([GCRF](#)).

Urbanisation and development are usually conceptualized through secular frameworks. In recent years, however, the economic and social impacts of urban religious actors and faith-based groups have been significant, in particular in developing countries. For instance, many sub-Saharan African cities have been transformed by revivalist forms of Christian religiosity that promote - often spectacular - visions of urban development.

These visions often involve the creation of large self-contained spaces built on the urban

periphery, in addition to providing basic infrastructure, health and education facilities.

Taking as case studies Lagos and Kinshasa—the most populated and fastest growing cities in sub-Saharan Africa—our project explores how these religious urban models engage with challenges of infrastructural development, urban social cohesion and inclusion, safety and sustainability. We are focusing on the following questions: How are religious and spiritual visions of the ‘ideal city’ materially articulated in actual religious urban developments and how do these cohere with or challenge existing modes of planning and development? Do religious urban spaces and infrastructures ameliorate or exacerbate everyday challenges faced by residents?

To explore the impact of religious urbanisation and provide both an evidence-base and practical recommendations aimed at promoting functioning civic urban culture our project includes [three dedicated research work packages and one policy work package](#)



Spotlight on the Lagos team

The Lagos team includes Dr Xavier Moyet, postdoctoral researcher affiliated with the University of Toronto in charge of the ethnographic fieldwork of urban religious sites selected as case studies. The Lagos team also comprises an Urban Policy Analysis working group led by Professor Immaculata Nwokoro and which also includes Prof Leke Oduwaye, Dr Taibat Lawanson, Dr Oluwafemi Olajide and Mr Oluyemi Akindeju. The Survey Team is led by Dr Akeem Ayofe Akinwale and includes Dr Samson Ogege, Dr Demebi Anthony Ideh and Dr Olasunmbo Ayanfeoluwa Olusanya working as research assistants for the project.

Members of the Lagos Urban Policy Analysis group conduct primary research and facilitate policy dissemination, working with a wide range of stakeholders involved in urban planning and governance as well as FBO-led development. The survey team is collecting data around a number of key religious urban sites in Lagos. The main aims and objectives of the survey is to assess the inclusiveness of infrastructural religious spaces and to measure the level of trust local residents and users place in them.



Oluyemi Akindeju, Leke Oduwaye, Immaculata Nwokoro, Taibat Lawanson, Oluwafemi Olajide



Xavier Moyet trained as a social anthropologist. He received his PhD in 2007 from the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (EHESS, Paris) and completed his education with a postdoctoral fellowship at UQAM (Montreal, Canada). Xavier also worked as director of the French Research Institute in Africa (IFRA, University of Ibadan) and as press officer with the French embassy in Benin. He is conducting ethnographic fieldwork in and around key urban religious sites and coordinates the Lagos research team for the RUA project.

Leke Oduwaye is Professor of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Lagos where he is currently Head of Department. A chartered planner and architect, he is also Director of the Lagos Urban Research Network. Prof Oduwaye received his PhD from Obafemi Awolowo University and has over two decades of academic and professional experience in urban and regional planning.





Immaculata Ifunanya Nwokoro is Professor of Urban and Regional Planning and Director of the Centre for General Studies. A passionate environmental health expert and planner, Immaculata received her PhD from the University of Ibadan in 2008. Her teaching and research experience spans over twenty years with a specialisation in the areas of environmental health and planning especially in low-income communities, and gender issues. She also consults on environmental health and management issues and has worked for World Bank and UN-led projects.

Taibat Lawanson is Associate Professor in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning and currently leads the Pro-Poor Development research group at the University of Lagos. She holds a PhD in Urban and Regional Planning from the Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria and has conducted research on issues relating to urban poverty, informality, environmental justice, and pro-poor development.



Oluwafemi Olajide is Lecturer in the department of Urban and Regional Planning and a freelance consultant for urban planning and development firms. He completed his PhD in 2015 at Newcastle University, UK. Oluwafemi's work focuses on urban development planning, urban sustainability, and urban governance.



Dumebi Ideh, Olasunmba Olusanya, Akeem Akinwale, Samson Ogege, Xavier Moyet



Oluyemi Akindeju is a PhD candidate and Lecturer in the department of Urban and Regional Planning. His research interests include urban morphology, the science of cities, complexity modelling and environmental planning. His PhD project is entitled *Morphological implication of Space delimitation on the growth of Urbanized Islands in developing nations*. Oluyemi previously worked as a planner.

Samson Ogege is Lecturer in the Department of Finance, Faculty of Management Sciences, Adjunct Lecturer at Mountain Top University, and also at the Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta. Samson specialises in corporate finance, financial management, financial markets and international micro-finance as well as entrepreneurship and small-business financing.



Akeem Ayofe Akinwale is Associate Professor in the Department of Employment Relations and Human Resource Management. His areas of specialisation are employment relations, entrepreneurship, human resource management, and development studies. He is also one of the editors of the *Unilag Journal of Employment Relations* and the Nigeria consultant for a research consortium on agricultural development.

Dumebi Anthony Ideh holds a PhD from the University of Lagos and is currently a Lecturer in Industrial Relations and Personnel Management. Dumebi's research interest is in employment relations with a special focus on the working conditions in the informal sector and non-standard work arrangements in the formal sector of the economy.



Olasunmbo Ayanfeoluwa Olusanya obtained her PhD in Industrial Relations and Personnel Management from the University of Lagos in 2016 and has been a lecturer and researcher at the university since 2012. Her areas of interests include employment relations, informal economy and labour economics.

All the photographs illustrating this section were taken by **Hamed Adedeji**. Hamed is a freelance photographer, film-maker, writer and he is collecting visual ethnographic data for the RUA project. He has worked for Al-Jazeera, Die Zeit and The African Report. His current project is a series of documentary films about a sports coach who helps rough sleeping children by teaching them boxing. Another project looks at the lives of families who had to flee Chibok village due to the menace of Boko Haram. Link to Hamed's work: <http://www.elixirphotography.com.ng/>



RUA working paper no.1: urbanisation & development policy review

The policy review summarises key documents relating to urbanisation and development that focus on cities in a global sense or on cities in developing countries, in Africa in particular. It discusses recent reports produced by a range of relevant stakeholders and international organisations such as UN-Habitat, the African Development Bank Group, The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa or the African Growth Initiative. The aim of this working paper is to examine the main policy issues and key discussions in relation to urbanisation and development and assess the extent to which the role played by a wide range of urban actors, in particular religious groups and Faith Based Organisations (FBOs), is taken into

consideration. This paper argues that within policy discourse, especially with regards to urbanisation and development in African cities, religious urbanisation lies awkwardly between an example of 'legitimate' infrastructural development, urban informalisation, social business-led development and innovative, and community-based funding. Religious urbanisation is not a prominent feature of policy narrative but tends to appear as a disruptive or 'complexifying' influence.

To read the full document, follow this link: <https://rua-project.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/191/2018/01/RUA-Working-Paper-No1-2017-.pdf>

Past & future events

-Inception meeting at the British Academy -19 & 20 February 2018

On February 19th, the RUA project team met in Central London to discuss preliminary findings. This meeting was attended by: Prof Coleman (University of Toronto), Dr Milington (University of York), Prof Calnan, Dr Garbin, Dr Strhan, Daisy Emoekabu and Martin Legallais (all based at the University of Kent)

Dr Garbin, Dr Milington, Prof Coleman, Prof Calnan as well as Daisy Emoekabu and Martin Legallais then took part in the [Cities and Infrastructure Programme](#)'s inception workshop organised by the British Academy. Members of the team also attended the [Big Cities Small Changes conference](#) the next day.



Dr Strhan, Daisy Emoekabu, and Dr Calnan at the RUA team meeting



Prof Simon Coleman, Daisy Emoekabu, and Martin Legallais

-Project meeting in Lagos, Nigeria- 12 April 2018

-Project meeting and workshops on urban religions and development in Africa, Canterbury, UK - 10 & 11 May 2018