

# RELIGIOUS URBANISATION AND INFRASTRUCTURAL LIVES IN AFRICAN MEGA- CITIES: MORAL ECONOMIES OF DEVELOPMENT IN KINSHASA AND LAGOS

*Research and Policy Briefing Paper*

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**WORK PACKAGE I: Connectivity and inclusive spaces**

**WORK PACKAGE II: Citizenship and aspirational cultures of development**

**WORK PACKAGE III: Public trust and the moral economies of religious infrastructures**

# ABOUT THE RUA PROJECT

In recent years, the economic and social impacts of religious actors and faith-based groups in large cities of the developing world have been significant. However, this phenomenon is little understood and under-researched, and often goes unnoticed by NGOs and development specialists, deemed only as evidence of rising levels of religiosity. In some contexts, for instance in African 'mega-cities', religious groups have been at the forefront of development initiatives involving the creation of alternative urban spaces, large infrastructure and buildings providing key services in health care or education. In often difficult, informal and unstable urban environments, do these religious spaces solve or exacerbate everyday problems faced by residents? How are religious groups reimagining the city they are shaping and transforming? Funded by the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) through the British Academy, the RUA Project addresses these questions using a mixed methodology combining qualitative and quantitative research. Our project involves three groups of actors: development and urban experts, local residents living around key religious sites, and religious actors/institutions.

The research is conducted in two of the fastest growing cities in Africa – Lagos and Kinshasa. To explore the impact of religious urbanisation and to 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.

The first Work Package is concerned with the production and use of religious urban space in Lagos and Kinshasa, and the intersections between religious urban developments, infrastructures and the provision of utilities. The second Work Package investigates religious notions of the 'ideal city' in Lagos and Kinshasa and ways in which such notions become translated within each actually existing city. We consider how models of infrastructural development newly mobilized by religious actors are brought into tension with existing regimes of planning. We consider ideals of belonging and citizenship promoted by religious actors at local, national and transnational levels. The third Work Package explores how religion responds to the unpredictability and informality of everyday life in Lagos and Kinshasa. It is concerned with unravelling the complex moral economies deployed in the production and use of religious urban infrastructures. Of interest are the levels of trust that urban dwellers place in religious infrastructures and how this compares with trust in state institutions. To what extent do religious institutions provide symbolic and material resources to negotiate unpredictability and socio-economic uncertainties through production of urban/infrastructural space?

A major objective of the RUA project is to provide recommendations aimed at promoting civic urban culture in the context of growing inequalities and widespread informalisation of urban life in cities where religious actors play significant infrastructural roles.

The following sections of the report will present some of the findings of the qualitative study and associated policy recommendations. More information on our project and research finding updates can be found here <https://rua-project.ac.uk/>



# PROJECT METHODOLOGY



In the first phase of the research (November 2017-February 2018) we talked to a wide range of urban/development experts in the two cities and conducted interviews with key stakeholders who shared their perceptions of the various challenges and opportunities of religious urbanisation and religious infrastructural development. In this initial phase, we identified policy priorities about the existing and potential role of religious actors in mega-urban contexts. During the second phase of the research (March-August 2018) we worked with religious actors across 10 urban-religious sites in Lagos and Kinshasa. We conducted interviews and ethnographic fieldwork in and around these sites, which included religious schools, universities, health centres, hospitals or religious 'mini-cities' and prayer camps.

During the third phase of the research we surveyed residents around our 10 case study sites to measure levels of trust and to assess barriers to inclusion, participation and use of local infrastructures, services and facilities. As part of our policy and public engagement activities we also organised 6 workshops with researchers, stakeholders, policy makers and a range of religious actors in both urban contexts, with a major international policy conference taking place in Lagos in June 2018.

## Summary of data collected:

- Qualitative interviews with **42 stakeholders** (including urban planners, NGO and government representatives, development experts and members of urban local authorities) in both Kinshasa and Lagos.
- Qualitative interviews with **80 religious actors** (including Pentecostals, Catholics, Muslims and Kimbanguists) in Kinshasa and Lagos.
- Ethnographic observations in/around **10 major religious sites** (mostly religious educational and health infrastructures, residential spaces and prayer camps) in Kinshasa and Lagos. Use of audio-visual methods.
- A quantitative survey of local communities around 10 key religious sites (a total of **571 respondents** for both cities).
- **6 panel discussions** with academics and stakeholders during policy and academic workshops in Lagos and Kinshasa.



# WORK PACKAGE I: CONNECTIVITY AND INCLUSIVE SPACES

## Key research questions:

- What are the main types and most important examples of religious urbanisation in Lagos and Kinshasa?
- What is the impact of religious urbanisation in terms of land use, infrastructural development and local social relations?
- What are the limits of inclusivity with regard to public access to urban religious spaces and resources?

## Summary of key observations and emerging issues:

Religious urbanisation has dramatically altered the urban fabric of Lagos and Kinshasa, a process which has had significant impact in terms of transport and inter/intra urban mobility, land value, sustainable infrastructural development and material inequalities. Types of religious urbanisation range from large residential camps, auditoria, health centres and hospitals, university campuses, infrastructural projects such as bridges and the piecemeal regeneration of city neighbourhoods.

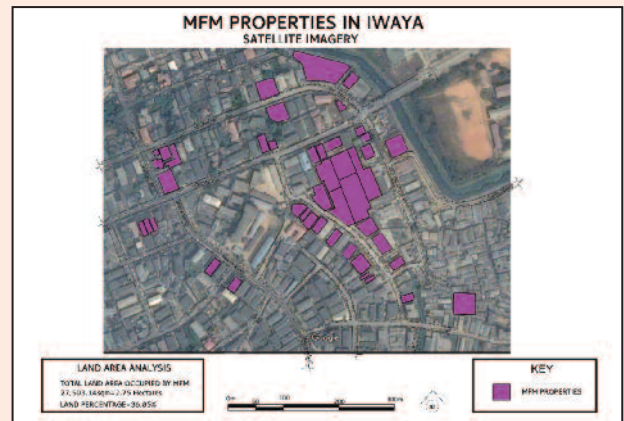
Our study suggests that, in comparison with Kinshasa, the development of religious urbanisation is more in evidence in Lagos, where we have identified significant changes to the urban fabric on both the periphery and in central districts of the city. Processes of peripheral religious urbanisation include for instance Pentecostal 'prayer camps' on the Lagos-Ibadan expressway; and more centrally located forms of religious territorialisation are noticeable in areas such as Onike where the MFM church has acquired and converted dozens of properties over the recent years (see Box 1).

## Box 1: Case study of the impact of MFM in the Onike neighbourhood, Lagos

*In Lagos, there are several examples of churches impacting significantly on the fabric of local communities. These include the Deeper Life church in Gbagada, the Fountain of Life church in Ilupeju, the Believers' LoveWorld in Oregon or the Mountain of Fire and Miracles (MFM) church in Onike.*

*In Onike, our analysis shows that MFM appropriates the use of 36.85% of the entire land area. The land use mapping revealed that MFM is using 28 sets of buildings in the study area for various uses ranging from church auditoria, bookshops, small workshops, music school, children recreation centre and guest houses among other uses.*

*From our interviews, it was discovered that from 1994, when the church first purchased a single plot of land, there has been a strategy for acquiring plots and properties in the entire area, thus driving the pattern of land use change from residential to religious, and triggering intense changes in land value (similar to a gentrification process). For the MFM members we interviewed, the church is driving a project of moral, social and spatial regeneration. For many residents MFM activities in the Onike area have both positive and negative impacts. The growth of the*



*church has been economically profitable for some local traders and businesses, for instance, and there was a widespread view that security had improved over the years with the church's presence. It was also observed that the church had been instrumental for some basic service provision and infrastructural interventions locally. However many local residents we talked to also pointed out that some of the church infrastructural development (road maintenance/improvement for instance) was incomplete or 'served only the interest of the church and its members'. Planners also held negative views about these local changes, arguing that they 'distorted the identity of the area' and that MFM's presence has had a negative impact on the traffic flow, causing government to spend more on traffic management, and involved increased noise and waste pollution.*



## WORK PACKAGE I: CONNECTIVITY AND INCLUSIVE SPACES (CONT)

While most religious actors construe 'development' around moral, individual values they have invested significant financial and social resources in what could be considered secular development domains. For example, in Lagos and Kinshasa, religious actors have invested in developing educational infrastructure, primary schools, secondary schools and even universities. Most of our stakeholders welcome this investment, especially in the context of the perceived decline of state schools. However, there are clear disparities regarding inclusivity (driven by higher school fees for instance, or requirements regarding religious affiliation), increasing the negative perceptions of religious urbanisation as exclusive or even 'segregationist'. In Kinshasa certain stakeholders we interviewed were critical of the role of some religious organisations setting up networks of primary and secondary schools. Some of these institutions were seen as fulfilling what could be called an 'expansionist vision', perceived to be accumulating symbolic (and financial) capital instead of contributing to sustainable development and societal wellbeing. Religious urbanisation is therefore a deeply ambivalent phenomenon.

Some of the most ambitious and large-scale infrastructural/spatial religious developments, such as the RCCG prayer camp in Lagos, have now become 'models' of religious urbanisation that circulate across religious boundaries and are emulated transnationally (see Box 2). In Kinshasa some of the Pentecostal actors we interviewed praised the RCCG's expansionist vision and its strategy of urbanisation through the development of suburban enclaves.

In Lagos, we documented tensions over the purchase, transformation and use of urban (or suburban) space by religious actors, leading to displacement of existing populations, encroachment and/or a change in the aesthetics of the area that caused some to feel they no longer belonged. It is not the case that inequalities in infrastructural access and use are necessarily ameliorated when religious bodies offer an alternative to the state. In Kinshasa, many tensions we documented were linked to strained relations with state agents or local

authorities, often seen as obstructing rather than facilitating infrastructural development (such as access to electricity or road construction). Noise pollution was also a key issue as far as the religious urban presence of Pentecostal churches was concerned (see Box 1).

Finally, while most of the literature on religion and development in West and Central Africa tends, with some justification, to focus on the role of Pentecostal churches or, to a lesser extent, on Muslim institutions, we have found that through its wide range of social, health and educational infrastructure and its dense urban network structure the Catholic Church has also a significant impact on urban civic culture and development, especially in the DRC.

### Some recommendations:

- We have found that urban policy and development policy pays little or no attention to the solutions/ problems/ conflicts created in African cities by religious urbanisation. And yet, 'on the ground' in Lagos and Kinshasa, we have discovered significant amounts of interest in religious urbanisation among religious and non-religious stakeholders, as well as residents. However there is a need for appropriate and widely accessible fora in which to discuss how religious urbanisation is transforming these cities.
- More research needs to be conducted in local communities around large religious infrastructures (for instance Pentecostal and Muslim prayer camps in Lagos) to assess the potential for greater 'infrastructural interaction' and to improve inclusivity of access.
- In both Kinshasa and Lagos, many residents complain of the noise pollution generated by church activities. It is important that planning regulations and design considerations for noise control are enforced in the construction of all religious buildings. Existing buildings should also be retrofitted with noise reduction panelling to reduce the negative impact of the religious activities on the surrounding community.
- Some conflicts between residents and religious groups can be addressed by strengthening the range of urban management practices and mechanisms. For instance, drawing upon our study of Onike in Lagos, we can recommend the institutionalisation of a model of inclusive governance based on an active collaboration between the local government, the residents' association and the MFM church. Our view is that the increasing flooding risks linked to MFM urban developments in the neighbourhood could be addressed effectively through such a forum.
- We also recommend that state authorities, in particular in the case of Kinshasa, take more seriously into consideration the potential and existing role of religious organisations as partners in the development and implementation of urgent responses to population's most pressing and basic needs. However, our study suggests that there is also a need to improve procedures of quality control and monitoring of services provided by FBOs, especially to safeguard the wellbeing of children and the most vulnerable (for instance to address cases of witchcraft accusation towards children in educational settings).

# WORK PACKAGE II: CITIZENSHIP AND ASPIRATIONAL CULTURES OF DEVELOPMENT

## Key research questions:

- How are religious visions of the 'ideal city' materially articulated in concrete urban developments?
- Do religious infrastructures ameliorate or exacerbate everyday challenges of safety, inclusion, and security?
- To what extent do models of infrastructural development mobilised by religious actors conflict or cohere with existing regimes of planning and development?

## Summary of key observations and emerging issues:

Our study suggests that 'infrastructural autonomy' involving, for instance, limited reliance (i.e. dependence) on national water and electricity grids is mobilised by faith-based actors to fulfil their aspirations and visions for growth and development and to enhance their symbolic status and power. Autonomy is often valued over 'being on grid', especially when the grid itself is viewed to be unreliable; a symbol of the failings of the state.

Territorial expansion (linked to specific 'theologies' or religious visions) is a key aspiration of most religious groups covered by our research. The other relevant trend we observed is the *formalisation* of organic informal economies as models of growth, especially as far as the largest religious urban developments are concerned, particularly in the Nigerian context. What many religious urbanisation tropes share is the quest for an 'ideal city', which is presented as an alternative to the existing city (see Box 2 on the RCCG Camp). The ideal of a fully functioning and autonomous religious 'alter-city' is thus contrasted with the existing city whose supposedly immoral landscape is negatively afflicted by disorder, insecurity and infrastructural 'syncopation'. However, despite a quest for autonomy we argue that emerging religious forms of urban citizenship are not entirely cut off or removed from external models of urbanity and dynamics of belonging. In fact, in both Kinshasa and Lagos, there is a tight entanglement between religious and secular urban spaces. Moreover, religious 'alternative' urban models often reflect wider societal inequalities, for instance in the ways they are internally socially organised or in terms of access and inclusion.



We also found that religious infrastructural projects often appeal to notions of 'unblocking' – of movement, flows or circulation – whether regarding traffic and long commutes to work or school, obtaining a visa or medical treatment, having 'consistent electricity' or realising educational aspirations. The seductive appeal of unblocking can, however, have sometimes worrying and negative consequences, in particular when it overlaps with radical visions for expansion and unbounded territorialisation. This can cause displacement of local residents or a feeling of being harassed or 'pushed out' by religiously-driven changes to an area or neighbourhood. Echoing a widespread view, a Lagos-based urban planner pointed out that *'some religious groups think, because their vision is driven by God, that earthly laws don't apply to them – they are above such laws, for instance planning laws, and that God will give them strength to move over obstacles'*.

The ethnography also indicated that there seems to be a common trope, especially in Pentecostal engagements with planning, development and construction, that legal/administrative (and economic) 'hurdles' are akin to 'tests'. Managing to avoid, bypass or pass such tests is taken as evidence of 'God's faith', thereby justifying the expansionist strategies which they pursue and morally neutralising any negative externalities.

Moreover, also in terms of planning, while approvals for layouts are sought and obtained from relevant agencies, urban planners we interviewed in Lagos deplore the fact that FBOs sometimes deviate from what was initially approved, and state planning agencies do not have monitoring jurisdiction over some religious urban development and 'religious enclaves'.

A significant dimension of the tension between centralised planning and realised religious vision relates to time: planning processes are perceived to be both too cumbersome and too slow for religious organisations whose identity is bound up with the swift and professional transformation of space.

For FBOs, there is more at stake in the construction of infrastructure than improvement in urban living conditions: such infrastructures are also expressive either of the ability of such organisation to cater for their own members, or of their capacity to contribute to the urban commons in a way that transcends the 'enclaving' of religious activity.



## WORK PACKAGE II: CITIZENSHIP AND ASPIRATIONAL CULTURES OF DEVELOPMENT (CONT)

### Box 2: Building the 'City of God': visions for expansion in the RCCG 'Redemption Camp'

*The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) is the largest Pentecostal church in Nigeria with around 7000 parishes and several million members in Africa and globally.*

*The urban ambition of the RCCG finds its most tangible expression in its headquarters just outside Lagos: a self-sufficient city amidst surrounding 'bush' land, with its own banks, shops, guards, construction plants, electricity and water system, maternity clinic, and two preaching grounds, the larger measuring several kilometres long. 'Redemption city', as it is called, can be seen as a space apart, yet also a space identified in relation to Lagos.*

*This sense of semi-articulation with Lagos feeds into the expansive quality of planning visions that are projected from the camp into but also beyond the city. The RCCG is well known for its ultimate ambition of constructing a global grid of congregations within five minutes' commuting time from each other. More generally, however, the camp model itself can be replicated and diffused to other parts of the world—one urban planner who is also a member of the RCCG referred us to the group's Redemption Camp in Floyd, Texas, and added 'We are trying to do the same thing in Britain now. If you go to some other African countries like South Africa, Victoria, you can see us trying to have similar things.'*

### Some recommendations:

- It is important that planners and relevant stakeholders address the 'expansionist' challenges of religious urbanisation, especially when it comes to land use, potential displacement of population or infrastructural disruption. However it is important to recognise that faith actors are active members of the third sector, and as such they should be included in planning consultations and assured that their visions for urban planning and infrastructural provision are not always antithetical to what is desired by the state.
- Furthermore we found that, in Lagos, there was a need for more collaborative engagement between agencies, especially those of the Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development, Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Transportation to deal with the challenges posed by religious urbanisation. Many planners working for large churches have also worked in the public sector. We believe there already exists a common language and register for such engagement.
- While the major religious actors and FBOs in each city can mobilise significant financial, social, material, and symbolic resources as well as drawing upon huge reservoirs of willing human capital, we have identified capacity-building needs among smaller religious stakeholders. Some of these actors are generally more vulnerable to redevelopment, urban change and infrastructural deficit. We recommend that powerful religious actors in urban settings such as Lagos and Kinshasa reconfigure notions of expansion in terms of providing support mechanisms, improving infrastructural access and working to protect existing homes and livelihoods in parts of the city that are most at risk.





# WORK PACKAGE III: PUBLIC TRUST AND THE MORAL ECONOMIES OF INFRASTRUCTURE



## Key research questions:

- What are the levels of trust that urban dwellers place in religious infrastructures compared with trust in other actors (e.g. state institutions)?
- What are the moral economies deployed in the production and use of religious urban infrastructures?
- To what extent do religious institutions provide symbolic and material resources to negotiate the socio-economic uncertainties through the production of urban/infrastructural space?

## Summary of key observations and emerging issues:

There is evidence of relatively higher trust in religious organisations, linked to the possibility of accessing material and symbolic resources. This was especially the case in Kinshasa where those surveyed show, for instance, higher level of trust in health infrastructures run by FBOs than those run by the state or other private, non-religious organisations.

However the qualitative research suggests that there seems to be some ambivalence about public trust in religious organisations as, overall, there is disappointment and anger that the state is seen as not fulfilling its role, although this is not to imply that a 'Golden Era' of trust between citizens and the state had once existed and is waiting to be recovered. We find that trust is relational. In other words, increasing trust in church-provided infrastructures and services is often accompanied by disillusionment in what is seen as the failing institutions of the state. For some, the growing reliance on urban religious institutions for infrastructural provision is therefore negatively perceived as a form of misplaced trust. There is also the question of the role of these institutions in bridging socio-economic uncertainties: it appears that while FBOs are more trustworthy because of relatively better quality services, there are barriers to their use due to cost, suggesting a two-tier service.

When it comes to relations between FBOs and the state, while we documented tensions between religious and state actors at various levels (especially in Kinshasa), our study shows that religious actors in the city do not see themselves as seeking to replace existing, often

state-provided infrastructural systems but to improve upon them. The city is a medium for religious actors who often see their role as both a modernising and urbanising force and our research suggests that the argument that religion 'fills a gap' created by a weak or failing state has to be nuanced. Rather, religious forms of urbanisation exist 'as well as' or 'through' secular, state or commercially driven urban forms (even if on the ground, these distinctions are often blurred).

Finally it is important to appreciate the ways in which the moral economy of particular religious institutions operate if we wish to understand their perception of partnership with external organisations, INGOs or donors. For instance in the Kimbanguist church, one of the largest non-Pentecostal Christian institutions in the DRC, ritual offerings are central and considered 'sacred labour' and outside financial support is seen as a potential threat to sustaining an internally validated moral economy, which is key to maintaining clear boundaries with other religious actors (see Box 3).

## WORK PACKAGE III: PUBLIC TRUST AND THE MORAL ECONOMIES OF INFRASTRUCTURE (CONT)

### Box 3: The Kimbanguist church in Kinshasa

Initially a localised prophetic renewal movement led by Simon Kimbangu in the then Belgian Congo, Kimbanguism grew to become, over the years, one of the largest African-initiated Christian churches. Thanks to the diaspora of Congolese in Europe and North America, the Kimbanguist church has acquired a truly transnational scope over the last 20 years. Nkamba, believed to be 'New Jerusalem' on earth, is the birth and burial place of the prophet founder Simon Kimbangu, and the spiritual center as well as the administrative headquarter of the church. Contributing to the development of the holy city of Nkamba – through voluntary work or donations in kind or money – is considered a sacred duty and provides blessings in both spiritual and material terms.

There are many Kimbanguist infrastructures outside of Nkamba however, in particular schools and health infrastructures like the Kimbanguist hospital in the area of Kimbanseke (southeastern periphery of Kinshasa) where RUA researchers collected data. Opened in 1974, it was originally a smaller health center born out of the need of members of the church to create their own healthcare facilities. Indeed, before and just after the Congolese independence in 1960,

the Kimbanguists were marginalised and usually prevented from attending Catholic schools and health facilities, the only ones that existed at the time. The construction of the health center took place under the supervision of Joseph Diangienda, first spiritual leader of the Kimbanguist church. It was converted into a hospital in 1988 with the financial support of external partners – in particular Israeli and American development agencies, with some Belgian assistance too. Today the hospital mostly serves a local population whose vast majority lives in poverty. The institution is contractually a partner of the Congolese state but is suffering from a chronic lack of investment in capital, infrastructure and equipment. Apart from donations in kind from members of the church living in the diaspora, the hospital does not benefit from external support. Our research suggests several reasons for this absence of linkages with external institutions and donors. In recent years and under the leadership of Simon Kimbangu Kiangani, the development of Nkamba and the consolidation of its role as a spiritual centre have become a priority of the church. Supporting the church institutions in Kinshasa, like the Kimbanseke hospital, while still deemed important, has thus become secondary. Moreover, the spiritual and cultural importance of traditional, ritualised donations (*nsinsani*) by



members and the emphasis on self-reliance and financial autonomy are presented as a key element of a Kimbanguist religious identity and history. This explains the church's reluctance to solicit, at least officially, external financial support and partnership. Thirdly, divisions and conflicts within the church as well as problems of governance and rigid, centralised bureaucracy may have had a negative impact on the church's attractiveness to potential donors.







### Some recommendations:

- In terms of public trust, policies need to be aimed at expanding the provision of and use of public funded services which would involve restoring trust in the institutions and organisations that the state supports. There is a range of policy options available for restoring or building institutional trust (trust in institutions that provide infrastructure) but there needs to be more research on identifying which, if any, is more suitable for this particular cultural and socio-political context. For example, our study shows that there seems to be a lack of trust in the competency of the public service so regulation and control policies might be appropriate. However, if there is also a lack of trust in the intentions of the organisation because of possible issues of institutional governance then policies might focus on enhancing transparency and accountability.
- Our research in Lagos and Kinshasa indicates a need for greater clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of secular (i.e. state) and faith actors. For example, we have discovered that there is often confusion over who has jurisdiction for policing, public health, road maintenance and community safety within religious spaces/ enclaves/ camps in and around the city of Lagos. In addition, some religious groups face sanctions from the state when they embark on infrastructural development (in both Kinshasa and Lagos). Moreover, the infrastructural initiatives of religious actors, such as new roads and bridges, can actually place greater stress upon existing, often decaying infrastructures, placing increased pressure on a threadbare state to maintain infrastructural additions.
- In terms of relations between faith actors, our research suggests that while religious groups compete for symbolic/social capital and urban resources (land or infrastructure for instance) many residents are willing to cross religious boundaries; for instance, belonging to more than one church (in Kinshasa and Lagos) and/or attending a mix of Christian and Muslim services (in Lagos). In this respect, citizens reflexively engage with the range of faith-based infrastructures and service on offer in the city. In considering such strategies, it is important not to adopt Western models of relatively exclusive membership of discrete denominations.

# RUA VOICES

*As regards religious bodies and urbanisation, I think they are not being properly regulated. Many of them have enclaves – both Islamic and Christian believers have vast land spaces. But I do not think beyond getting their documents, their Certificate of Occupancy, their landed titles, I don't think the government regulates what happens within their premises.*

**Urban Planner, Lagos**

*Some religious education institutions are governed in a military fashion, the young especially are subjected to all manner of demeaning discipline. [When I was at University] I was part of a very robust culture of enquiry, we questioned everything, we questioned some of the lecturers, we engaged in debates with them. We were part of lectures, public lectures, symposia. But you don't have this in some of the so-called private universities, that is one. Two, the admission criteria for intakes, the standard also tend to be very low compared to public universities. In fact, most people, if you can afford it, they will take you anyway, whatever your score is, and yet they come up with first class. They tend to have very large numbers of first class and interestingly even in the industries, the industries are coming to the realisation that these first class people don't know anything, that it is a fake. So these are some of the very serious issues that have arisen out of the new trend of churches trying to provide some of these things.*

**Trade union representative, Lagos**

*In Nigeria, you cannot just erect a structure without getting building approval or government permit, so our [planning] department is the interface between the government of the state and the church, relating to planning activities. So it has to pass through government approval first...Whatever we do, it is in line with the vision of our leader...He is our coach, he's our pilot, he's our driver...So the master plan is prepared in line with his vision of what he wants the settlement to be... Redemption Camp is still expanding...until the Lord comes, until Jesus comes. The type of vision God gave him [our leader] is a city without boundaries.*

**Urban planner from the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Lagos**



*He who helps the poor, lends unto God, and God is going to pay him back. So that is the basis of the religious bodies, particularly the Christian faith investing in human capital development, building schools, giving scholarships, building hospitals and maternities, offering free medical services in maternities, in hospitals, and doing a lot of corporate and social responsibilities...*

**Pastor from the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Lagos**

*We prioritise the full development of the person: our discourse is about the individual – individuals need to make peace with themselves. The sick do not always show symptoms of a disease but we need to address what the individual has experienced in their environment and family. Then spiritual delivery happens, on a physical level. On the educational level, we teach Christian values, there is the identity, the habits which distinguish Christians everywhere. The church goes even further, it is interested in people's intimate domain, the soul, the spirit – it has an important influence.*

**Educator from Maman Olangi church, Kinshasa<sup>1</sup>**

*I believe that religion strengthens the ability to live together. Christian religion dominates among Kinois but there is very little rejection of other religions – although it is true that some places are identified as evil. The message [of churches] is: we will take care of the sinners. So the churches are open, the health centres are open, the schools are open. Even if there is always a risk of proselytisation and being a little segregationist in the wider society context.*

**Urban academic expert, Kinshasa**

*We meet the needs of those who are not from Kimbanseke because the hospital is open to everyone. The hospital is not open only to Kimbanguists, it is open to everyone, regardless of religion or whatever... Everyone has easy access to the hospital without any problem.*

**Representative of Kimbanguist hospital in Kimbanseke, Kinshasa**

*On the Lekki-Epe Expressway, there are huge churches with a lot of parking space – huge spaces taken over by churches, and I don't think it is firstly to pray – one can also pray in the house. The first thing is really to create affordable housing, and to create spaces for*

<sup>1</sup> Quotes from the fieldwork in Kinshasa have all been translated from French





people to have income opportunities and then wherever they are they can pray, they can come together and pray. But the problem is now you see other churches, other denominations following this trend. You can see the mosques... I think also they are building huge mosques somewhere, the Catholic churches want to build bigger and bigger churches. Everybody is just in a kind of competition. And it's wasting space for Lagos.

**Representative of an international urban foundation, Lagos**

We are trying to be closer to the population. When it is spiritual, we rely on members of the church who are capable of dealing with that... We collaborate with the state but we do not replace the state – our mission is different, we are only partners. Churches contribute to society, but the absence of norms is very negative.

**Director of a Pentecostal hospital, Kinshasa**

Personally, I believe in planning and I believe the church also believe in planning.

**Pastor from the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Lagos**

The church also has a role to play in terms of urbanisation. For instance, this place [RCCG camp] was a bush... It was a bush, it was a centre of activities of the underworld, armed robbers, dangerous animals.

**Pastor from the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Lagos**

Pentecostals preach the authority of the word of God and his spirit which must have ascendancy on the human mind, soul and body. Where there is this harmony, development is easily realised.

**Representative of a Christian NGO, Kinshasa**

We have a very cordial relationship with the authorities, we have not had any kind of friction with them. I am sure they are happy that we are there also to provide healthcare, because the government alone cannot do everything. So, we provide a lot of support to what they are doing and I am sure they are happy about that. We complement what the state is doing.

**Catholic leader, Lagos**

Obviously our facility is not as big as the state hospital. For instance, we cannot compare our hospital here with the Lagos teaching hospital. But with the little we have, what we do is better than what goes on there. It is cheaper there, it is cheaper in the public institutions, because the government subsidises them. But even here we try our best to make what we give affordable. The truth of the matter is that the services we offer, people usually judge them better. If they had a choice, they would rather come to us rather than go to the state hospitals.

**Representative of Catholic hospital, Lagos**

Where there is the prosperity 'seed' doctrine where one gives following their heart, this seed must be aimed at development and not for the personal enrichment of the pastors. Because some of them have become very rich, they buy flashy cars, they got rich on the back of the faithful – this is not normal.

**Researcher, University of Kinshasa**

The primary role of the church is to bring souls to the Lord – the salvation of souls – but the church must also take care of the social dimension. But in any case the overall development of the country is the role of the state. I can say that the churches have realised that the state has failed. The state has failed, it doesn't do its job properly. This is why there is this support from the churches. It is not the role of the churches, but the churches accompany the state.

**Representative Kimbanguist hospital, Kinshasa**

To the extent that they preach the messages of separation within families, some churches contribute negatively to the running of the society – cases of child witches, of divorce and divisions within families. Pentecostal religious schools are a good thing to the extent that they exclusively follow Biblical teachings. In the opposite case, they can be a ticking time bomb for society.

**Representative religious (Christian) NGO, Kinshasa**

The benefits churches bring are that they have a specific base, people who are loyal to them, they have structures of intervention, they can be effective on the ground. They have a credible leadership and are listened to by their faithful. The advantage is that they try to constitute a last bulwark for the population in case of need. Today they minimise the consequences of the

## RUA VOICES (CONT)

*social situation that prevails in this country...They alleviate the pain. But the disadvantage is that this reduces the political spirit of the population. People are going to confide more social problems to the pastor who is not the state, who is not in government... rather than going to the street or making claims to the state, the state is supposed to solve these problems...Churches prevent this mobilisation.*

**Political activist, Kinshasa**

*A lot of these churches, these religious organisations have political power, they just don't use it. And if they actually used it, they could do a lot more. So my opinion is that they should stop doing all this kind of, in a way, private facilities, and work with the public sector, to make sure that those facilities are at a better standard.*

**Urban expert, Lagos**

*One of the primary objectives of any religion is that you must have a positive impact on your immediate environment. Education is one of the greatest gifts you can give to a community. It is part of the contribution, and it is a reflection of the teachings of Islam that you must have a positive impact on the environment that you grew up in. One of the best ways is to have a school. If you can afford to build a hospital also.*

**Representative of a Muslim primary school, Lagos**

*Muslims in Kinshasa they had schools but not viable schools...so it was unbalanced...compared with churches. At the state level, among civil servants there are not many Muslims. Muslim children are not at the same level... But today we have the feeling that many Muslim children are catching up. They have acceded to certain functions but it is still very slow... that's the difficulty.*

**Representative of a Muslim NGO, Kinshasa**

*We have seen many children whose behaviour at home has changed. We have received many parents who are now praising the children, thanks to this change of attitude. There are some parents who have even embraced Islam, because of what they saw, the change of attitude of their children.*

**Representative of a Muslim school and NGO, Kinshasa**



*Today the biggest problem of the DRC is the problem of spirituality. To manage a society, one needs science but also the fear of God...The Muslim community needs more time, a lot of time. We don't have enough experience in development, we don't have enough hospitals. Muslim NGOs, from outside of the DRC, they try to create schools, create hospitals but so far it has been really insignificant in relation to the number of people living in Congo.*

**Manager of an Islamic foundation, Kinshasa**

*It is a child-centred school here, we are not only looking at the Islamic perspective of the growing up of that child. We are looking at everything that will make the child a good representative of the Islamic Umma, of the religion. And if you look at that, it is all-encompassing...It is not like an Islamic school where we only come to learn about God, no.*

**Muslim school teacher, Lagos**



KWARA STR

Jehovah Eye Salvation Ministries



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