

Full Length Research Paper

Reclaiming the role of the state in urban infrastructural development for inclusive communities: The case of Uganda's Kampala City

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Matching infrastructural development with the pace of urban population growth is a challenge in African cities, where the speed and magnitude of urban growth are incessant. Uganda is facing accelerated urbanization, but developing urban infrastructure for inclusive communities has become particularly challenging due to the disequilibrium of decentralized urban planning, manifested through myriad autonomy and jurisdictional contradictions. The 1995 Ugandan constitution created private land ownership and abolished land leases by urban authorities, making it difficult and costly for the state to acquire land and promote infrastructural development as desired in terms of cost, quality, and time. The central argument of this study is that inclusive infrastructural development significantly contributes towards the achievement of sustainable development goals as designated in SDG 11. Over the years, there seems to be a retreat of the state, manifested by the decline of state authority in urban infrastructural development. Therefore, there is an urgent need for the resurgence of the state in urban development beyond regulation, aiming at a future with cities that provide opportunities for all in an environment of improved infrastructure to foster macroeconomic stability and growth.

Key words: Infrastructural development, sustainable development goals, inclusive communities.

INTRODUCTION

The role and credibility of the state regarding urban infrastructure development is an issue of concern within academic and policy circles. In Uganda, urban infrastructure development holds particular economic and political significance due to its connection to national goals outlined in the country's Vision 2040, while simultaneously posing threats to the legitimacy and authority of the state and local governments. Uganda, through Vision 2040 and National Development Plans—currently at NDP 4—recognizes Sustainable Development

Goal 11, which focuses on urban development as critical to transformation. The country prioritizes it among government public spending areas and is greatly supported by UN-Habitat. Efforts to achieve sustainable urban development are related to the New Urban Agenda, an action-oriented document signed by United Nations member states during the UN 2016 Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development. In pursuit of the UN 2016 New Urban Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 11, UN-Habitat is working

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hard to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable (UN-Habitat, 2019). UN-Habitat supports the government of Uganda through the Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Urban Development (MLHUD). Aiming at sustainable urbanization, a UN-Habitat Country Programme Document (HCPD) was developed as a strategic tool to guide UN-Habitat activities from 2016 to 2021 to address the urban challenges facing Uganda. The HCPD presents a Sustainable Urban Development Programme (SUDP) for Uganda aimed at creating inclusive, resilient, and livable urban areas (HCPD, 2016a) by i) Planned Urbanization and human settlement development; ii) Youth and vulnerable groups' access to competitive skills and socio-economic opportunities; iii) Improved physical infrastructure, basic services, and urban economy; iv) Urban governance and capacity building; v) Housing and slum upgrading/redevelopment programs; vi) Management of land resources and the urban environment; vii) Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area development; and programme management.

Since these areas for UN-Habitat action are broad-ranging, this paper chooses to focus on issue iii) regarding improved physical infrastructure, basic services, and the urban economy. We believe that if this area is well addressed, it can help moderate the other six issues (listed earlier) for improved urban development. While acknowledging the many urbanization challenges in Uganda highlighted in this paper, those challenges associated with physical infrastructure, including inadequate basic infrastructure such as transport networks, water supply, sewerage, electricity, and telecommunications, which negatively impact welfare in urban and peri-urban communities were specifically recognized. A critical assessment of the existing policy, legal, and institutional framework for urban development will provide a foundation for the theoretical debate. To achieve its purpose, the paper will examine the following fundamental questions:

1. How do the existing legal, policy, and institutional frameworks for urban development in Uganda promote the resurgence of the state in urban development beyond regulation?
2. What is the effect of multitude, autonomy, and jurisdictional contradictions on the disequilibrium of decentralized urban planning?
3. What are the factors that contribute to the attainment of inclusive growth and development by the state in Kampala Capital City Authority, Uganda?
4. How and why do variances in land ownership, land use, and infrastructural development affect urban growth?

The paper begins with an introduction, followed by sections on materials and methods, results, and discussion. The discussion is themed around urban growth and development in Uganda, the governance framework for infrastructure provision in Kampala City, the state and urban development, the nexus between

infrastructure provision and urban development, the disequilibrium of decentralized urban planning—including multitude, autonomy, and jurisdictional contradictions—variances in land ownership, land use, and infrastructural development, and concludes with attaining inclusive growth and development by the state in Kampala City, Uganda.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study utilized documentary analysis and secondary data to investigate the role of the state in urban infrastructural development for inclusive communities, using Kampala, Uganda's capital city, as a case study. The primary sources of data included documentary analysis, secondary data, and key informant interviews. Documentary analysis involved reviewing government reports to gather information on specific policies, regulations, and programs. Academic publications, such as peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and conference papers, were used to understand the theoretical and empirical foundations of the topic. Media articles, including news articles and media reports, were examined to capture public discourse and media representation. Secondary data was obtained from national and international databases such as the World Bank, UNDP, and national statistics bureaus to gather quantitative information. Existing survey data from reputable sources were also analyzed to understand public opinion and demographic trends. Key informant interviews were conducted with a diverse range of stakeholders, including local communities, NGOs, the private sector, and academia. To ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, multiple data sources were used to cross-verify the information and ensure consistency. The data collection and analysis process was reviewed by experts in the field to ensure methodological rigor and accuracy, and sensitivity analyses were conducted to assess the robustness of the findings under different assumptions and scenarios.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Urban growth and development in Uganda

Africa is urbanizing more rapidly than Europe (UN Habitat, 2016a), with inequity and segregation spreading across cities on the continent. While the rate of urbanization is increasing rapidly in Uganda (World Bank, 2015), it is relatively low compared to East African counterparts like Kenya and Tanzania. The Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) has reported a steady increase in Uganda's urban population, reflecting ongoing urban development and migration trends. Uganda's urbanization rate is estimated at around 13%, with urban growth rates at about 4.5% per year (NDP II, 2015/16-2019/20). The number of urban centers has risen from 67 in 1991 to 350 in 2024. The human population in these urban centers increased from 1.6 million in 1991 to 7.4 million in 2016, with a population growth rate of 3.4% per annum and urbanization at 5.2% annually. According to preliminary results from the National Population and Housing Census 2024, Uganda's total urban population is approximately 14.6 million, representing about 29.3% of the total population. The Greater Kampala Metropolitan

Area comprises over 50% of Uganda's total urban population (UBOS, 2016; HCPD, 2016a).

Hasty urbanization is attributed to factors such as rural-to-urban migration, high fertility rates, the re-classification of land use from rural to urban, short-distance mobility of the working-age population from rural areas to adjacent urban centers, and adverse events like conflict and disaster (UN Habitat, 2016a; UBOS, 2016). The high annual population growth rate, coupled with incongruent urban infrastructural development, may pose a threat to sustainable urbanization. Challenges associated with urbanization include sprawling towns, a youth bulge, the proliferation of slums and informal settlements, dilapidated housing, and poor sanitation. Nearly 40% of the world's urban expansion occurs in slums, exacerbating economic disparities and unsanitary conditions, and leading to housing shortages, unemployment, insecurity, and inadequate social services. Environmental concerns and natural disasters, such as storms, cyclones, and floods, are also linked to rapid urbanization. Poor urban infrastructure, including unreliable power, congested roads, and inadequate public transport, hampers cities' development and economic progress (UNDP, 2018). In light of these challenges, the study advocates for the state's role in urban infrastructural development to foster inclusive communities.

The study will examine three specific infrastructural projects in Kampala to analyze their successes, challenges, and impact on inclusivity. These projects include the Kampala City Roads Rehabilitation Project, the Sanitation and Waste Infrastructure in Informal Settlements (Bwaise), and the Kampala Institutional and Infrastructure Development Project (KIIDP). This analysis is based on documentary research and interviews with a diverse range of stakeholders, including local communities, NGOs, the private sector, and academia. Each project is summarized in turn.

Kampala city roads rehabilitation project

Supported by the African Development Bank, this project aims to enhance mobility in Kampala by upgrading selected roads and junctions. Traffic congestion in Kampala is rapidly increasing due to a poor road network, uncontrolled junctions, and insufficient road capacity, which cannot keep up with the growing traffic. This congestion results in higher vehicle operating costs, longer travel times, and poor transport services. The city's aesthetics and quality of life are significantly compromised by dilapidated paved roads and sidewalks, unpaved shoulders, and roads that generate mud and dust over large areas.

Successes: The project has improved mobility and road safety, reducing travel times and vehicle operating costs by addressing congestion. Upgraded roads and better

traffic management have enhanced safety for both pedestrians and vehicles.

Challenges: The project faced environmental degradation issues and displacement caused by construction activities, necessitating compensation and resettlement plans.

Impact on inclusivity: Improved road infrastructure has enhanced access to essential services and economic opportunities, particularly in underserved areas. Extensive stakeholder consultations ensured that local communities' needs and concerns were addressed.

Sanitation and waste infrastructure in informal settlements (Bwaise)

This project focuses on improving sanitation and waste management in Bwaise, an informal settlement.

Successes: Enhanced sanitation facilities have led to better health outcomes by reducing waterborne diseases. The project successfully engaged local residents in planning and implementation, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Challenges: Limited financial and technical resources have hindered the project's ability to fully meet community needs. Ensuring the sustainability of the infrastructure has been challenging due to inadequate maintenance and management practices.

Impact on inclusivity: Improved access to basic sanitation services for marginalized communities has promoted social equity. Involving residents in decision-making processes has also been a key aspect.

Kampala institutional and infrastructure development project (KIIDP)

Funded by the World Bank, this project aims to enhance the financial and institutional capacity of the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) to deliver improved urban services.

Successes: The project has strengthened KCCA's ability to plan, finance, and manage urban infrastructure projects. Enhanced infrastructure and services, such as roads, drainage, and solid waste management, have improved residents' quality of life.

Challenges: Effective coordination among various stakeholders, including government agencies and local communities, has been a significant challenge. Ensuring the long-term sustainability of infrastructure improvements requires ongoing investment and maintenance.

Impact on inclusivity: The project has promoted inclusive urban planning by involving diverse stakeholders in decision-making. Improved infrastructure has facilitated economic activities, benefiting both formal and informal sectors.

These case studies illustrate the complexities and multifaceted nature of infrastructural development in Kampala. While there have been notable successes, challenges remain, particularly in ensuring sustainability and inclusivity. There is currently a turn to the government framework for infrastructure provision in Kampala City.

The governance framework for infrastructure provision in Kampala City Council Authority

Kampala City, Uganda's capital and largest city encompasses 31 percent of the total urban population. This has led to unplanned horizontal expansion into neighboring districts, including Mukono, Entebbe, Luwero, Wakiso, and Mpigi (World Bank, 2015). This urban sprawl occurs alongside the absence of a National Physical Development Plan, a rise in informal housing and land markets, competition for space on carriageways, sanitation challenges, and increasing urban unemployment. Although institutional arrangements and power structures for city management have evolved, with the government establishing the KCCA to improve service delivery in the capital, the urbanisation trends (Figure 1) indicate that changes in governance approaches are necessary to achieve sustainability.

Kampala hosts the seat of government and serves as the economic gateway of the country, contributing 65% of Uganda's GDP and accounting for 80% of the country's industrial output and commercial activity. The city has over 1.75 million residents and provides a working environment for an estimated daily workforce of 3.5 million people. The annual population growth rate is estimated at 3.9%. Kampala features a dynamic informal sector, with 55% of all micro enterprises in Uganda located within the city. The informal sector employment distribution is as follows: 71% in trade, 23% in manufacturing, and 6% in services. Additionally, approximately 40% of undeveloped land in the city is used for crop production. In 2010, the central government assumed management of the city, and by 2011, KCCA became a government agency responsible for urban development and service delivery.

The KCCA Act (2010) mandates the KCCA to oversee infrastructural development, transferring responsibilities for physical facilities, transport infrastructure, and social utilities like water, public health, and education to the divisions of Kawempe, Makindye, Nakawa, Rubaga, and Central. Urban infrastructure planning operates within a framework of policies, laws, and regulations, including the Local Governments Act (1997), the Physical Planning Act

(2010), and the KCCA Act (2010). Decentralization, with oversight from central government ministries such as Works and Transport, Housing and Urban Development, and Water and Environment, guides these policies. Despite provisions for women in political leadership, the integration of sector-disaggregated urban planning remains limited.

Administrative structures typically feature offices for water, transport, road works, health, and education, employing both project-based and sector-wide implementation approaches. The project-based approach aids in monitoring, while the sector-wide approach aligns with national priorities, involving national-level design and project-based implementation. However, the project-based approach has been criticized for sometimes leaving communities un-serviced, and the infrastructure developed in piloted areas can become unsustainable due to high demand. National-level urban infrastructure development is not well-integrated or spatially organized, with investment concentrated in the central region, particularly Kampala. Infrastructure development within Kampala has not kept pace with the city's 4.9% annual growth rate in service gaps, exacerbating urban poverty (Okwi et al., 2003).

Kampala faces major infrastructure challenges due to years of underinvestment and fragmented land use. It is estimated that 23% of Kampala's area is fully urbanized and serviced, while 60% remains semi-urbanized, with 62 informal settlements housing approximately 560,000 families. The remaining 17% of land is rural. Poor socio-economic conditions have significantly deteriorated infrastructure, including roads, schools, and hospitals (GCR, 2015). With the current NEP7 infrastructural investment on the African continent (NEPAD, 2015), Uganda's infrastructural issues have likely worsened. This context provides the basis for a triangulated study in Kampala City.

State and urban development

The role of the state in urban development is well-established and not a novel concept. Here, the state is understood as a political entity or territory governed by political leaders and bureaucrats. Edward Glaeser's *Triumph of the City* (2011), Witold Rybczynski's *Makeshift Metropolis: Ideas About the Cities* (2010), and Sandy Hornick's review, *The City and the State* (2011), offer significant insights into the necessity of urban planning in reshaping modern cities. Glaeser argues that cities, when designed thoughtfully, become healthier, greener, and richer places to live, effectively integrating rural migrants and fostering diverse economies that benefit everyone. Rybczynski (2010) highlights the advantages of population density and mixed-use developments to prevent unchecked urban sprawl, advocating for vibrant, heterogeneous cities. Hornick,

- 6.4 million Ugandans live in urban areas
- 70% of non-agricultural GDP in Uganda is generated in urban areas
- 54% of people living in Central region are residing in urban areas
- Eastern region is the fastest urbanizing region
- Kampala is home to 31% of Uganda's urban population
- 69% of Uganda's urban population live in small cities with less than 500,000 people
- 21 million people will live in urban areas in Uganda by 2040
- By 2013, 38% of the urban population was connected to the electricity grid
- The number of firms engaged in real estate and business services in Kampala is 11 times the overall average across districts
- Only 15% of the new employment opportunities in Kampala are in tradable activities
- Households in Kampala pay an equivalent of approximately 8% of the household budget for transport
- Walking is the main mode of transport in Kampala, and 70% of the residents of Kampala walk to work

Figure 1. Urbanisation Trends in Uganda.

Source: World Bank-Uganda Economic Update, Fifth Edition 2015.

however, points out that without clear government planning, achieving such ideal urban developments may remain aspirational rather than practical.

Hornick thus bridges arguments of Glaeser and Rybczynski by extending the argument of government planning in urban development. He contests the idea of holding a visible distinction between cities and their suburbs, arguing for maintenance and investment in infrastructure as central to economic activity for both. Hornick acknowledges the role of immigration in repopulating cities and fostering economic growth. He therefore calls for strategies to diminish tensions between cities and their suburbs, reasoning that they can mutually coexist. His support for central-suburb public transport linkages, inclusive regulatory frameworks, and government grants and planning may offer the promise of mutually supportive growth in both urban and suburban communities. Hornick (2011) argues that governments should ensure public safety and encourage immigration, which will repopulate cities and bring entrepreneurship and economic growth. We find Hornick's view that "governments should plan for activities that make sense in the center, from high-end office uses to entertainment and cultural attractions, all supported by 24/7 communities of people who want to live an urban lifestyle" (p.171) convincing and supportive of our claim that the state should be central in urban infrastructural development for all.

Nexus of infrastructure provision and urban development

Infrastructure services are central to economic production and urban growth and development. Power, telecommunications, road networks, water and sanitation provision, and safe waste disposal are major infrastructures that play a crucial role in stimulating urban

land development and private economic activity (Gandy, 2006). The adequacy of infrastructure determines a country's success by contributing to trade expansion, coping with population growth, and reducing poverty. It also aids in production diversity and improving environmental conditions. Infrastructure systems like roads enhance economic activity by offering producers access to markets, work, and recreation. Telephones and data devices facilitate information exchange and retention. Water supply, drainage, flood management, and wastewater treatment systems provide essential water resources, protect homes and businesses from flooding, and minimize environmental harm and health risks. Energy systems, such as power plants and their distribution networks, supply the energy necessary for economic functioning. Policymakers and planners have leveraged infrastructure systems to attract private investments for housing and economic development (World Bank, 2004; Ruth, 2009). The study's argument is that infrastructure has been used as a tool to stimulate the growth of human settlements in many urban areas. Therefore, inclusive infrastructural development will progressively contribute to achieving sustainable development goals, as designated in SDG 11.

Given the relevance of urban infrastructure in the development process, previous studies have explored the state's role in infrastructure and urban development. The design and availability of infrastructure services are typically managed by the state or its agencies through urban planning.

The disequilibrium of decentralised urban planning: Multitude, autonomy and jurisdictional contradictions

The Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development (MLHUD), Ministry of Local Government (MoLG), and various Local Governments are working towards planned

urban development. Institutional frameworks to guide physical planning and development have been established. At the national level, the Directorate of Physical Planning and Urban Development within MLHUD oversee departments such as Physical Planning, Urban Development, and Land Use Regulation and Compliance. The Ministry of Local Government has a Directorate of Local Government Administration responsible for guiding physical planning in municipal councils, overseeing infrastructure development, and participating in the annual performance assessment of Municipal Town Clerks. Additional structures include the National Physical Planning Board (NPPB), which advises the government on physical planning matters, District Land Boards (DLBs), and the Uganda Land Commission (ULC), which manages public land. Municipalities have Municipal Physical Planning Committees and Divisional Physical Planning Committees responsible for developing and approving their physical development plans (Auditor General's Report, 2015).

Urban planning under a decentralized government is managed by government agencies and local governments. The Local Government Act CAP 243 mandates district councils as planning authorities, tasked with developing integrated local government plans under the National Planning Authority's guidance. District technical planning committees coordinate and integrate sectoral plans. In Kampala capital city, the Kampala Capital City Act (2011) designates urban planning as a duty of the metropolitan physical planning authority, which includes experts in physical planning, civil engineering, architecture, environment, and public health (Section 21). However, this authority has not been fully operationalized since the Act's enactment in 2011, existing more as a legal framework than as a practical planning entity.

The capital city governance structure is managed by the KCCA, which comprises elected councillors led by a Lord Mayor and appointed technocrats under the Executive Director. The Authority is responsible for various functions, including physical planning and development control (Section 7 of the Act). To execute its planning mandate, KCCA has a Physical Planning Directorate responsible for planning, designing, and managing city infrastructure, zoning, and land use. The directorate is tasked with delineating areas for social infrastructure, conducting surveying and mapping, monitoring land surveying, valuation, registration, and administration, and resolving land disputes, among other duties. The Directorate also coordinates with adjoining districts, municipalities, and town authorities in the metropolitan area, including Mpigi, Wakiso, and Mukono, to ensure coherent planning and policies across administrative boundaries.

An assessment of the decentralized process reveals that physical development control often achieves minimal progress in infrastructure development. There is

frequently a mismatch between approved and actual infrastructure developments, with visible informal development in Kampala and its suburban communities. Despite the KCCA Physical Planning Directorate's mandate to coordinate with metropolitan areas, each district or neighbouring municipality has its own autonomy and power to plan for its jurisdiction. This fragmentation makes comprehensive development challenging. For example, effective coordination of basic infrastructure services such as transport networks, water supply, sewerage, electricity, and telecommunication—distributed by different vendors—across the city and its surrounding areas proves difficult. These services are provided by individuals, privileged groups, companies, agencies, and the government, often within the same jurisdictional area and across administrative boundaries. Addressing these legal and institutional challenges necessitates the state moving beyond creating comprehensive plans and regulatory frameworks to actually delivering infrastructure services to end users. We argue that these are public goods, and unless their provision is predominantly controlled by the state, rivalrous and exclusive supply will continue to impact marginalized urban poor, limiting the attainment of SDG 11. This perspective aligns with Sandy Hornick's (2011) view that cities and suburbs should coexist, supported by government infrastructure interventions to ensure mutual benefit and economic growth.

Variances in land ownership, landuse and infrastructural development

Land management in Uganda, particularly in Kampala City, presents significant challenges that hinder urban infrastructural development. To fully understand these challenges, it is crucial to examine the historical context of land ownership and the subsequent reforms that have shaped the current legal and policy frameworks.

Prior to colonial rule, land tenure systems in Uganda were diverse, varying among ethnic groups. Ownership was largely determined by clanship, individual hereditary rights, chiefdoms, and kingdoms. Customary and communal land tenure practices predominated, with land often held communally or managed by traditional authorities. While individual rights to land were sometimes recognized, they were typically subject to the authority of families, clans, or communities.

During the colonial era, the British administration introduced three main land tenure systems. The first was Milo Land, established by the 1900 Buganda Agreement, which divided land between the Kabaka (King) and other notables in the Buganda Kingdom. The royal family and high-ranking officials received private estates or "mails," while chiefs, private notables, and the government received portions of land. Some areas, including forests and wastelands, were vested as Crown Land under the

British monarch. Local peasants, who had previously occupied the land, were only formally recognized after the 1927 riots against land rent payments, becoming tenants under the system known as "busuulu" (Nsibambi, 1996; Tukahirwa, 2002; Wabineno-Oryema, 2015).

The second land tenure system was Freehold Tenure, which was introduced in the Kingdoms of Toro and Ankole in Western Uganda. This system was established through agreements between the kingdoms and the British, allowing for native freehold land tenure. It was unique to certain areas and was also utilized by a few individuals and religious institutions.

The third system was Leasehold Tenure, which allowed landowners to lease their land to occupants for a specified duration in exchange for payment. This system provided exclusive possession of the land to the leaseholder for the agreed term.

Following independence, Uganda undertook several land reforms aimed at addressing the complexities of land ownership and management. The Land Act (1998) was introduced to formalize and regulate land tenure systems, providing a legal framework for land ownership and management. It sought to balance customary land rights with formal land titles and included provisions for land registration and dispute resolution. The Constitution of Uganda (1995) recognized customary land tenure and emphasized equitable land distribution, establishing land tribunals to address disputes. Additionally, the National Land Policy (2013) aimed to address land management issues, including land tenure security, land use planning, and the integration of customary land practices with formal legal systems.

Despite these reforms, land management in Uganda, particularly in Kampala, faces several challenges. The coexistence of various land tenure systems and historical land allocations has created a complex and fragmented land ownership landscape, complicating land management and infrastructure development. Rapid urbanization and informal land markets have led to unplanned expansion and the proliferation of informal settlements, exacerbating the challenges in providing infrastructure and services.

Legal and institutional gaps also persist, with inconsistent implementation of land reforms and weak enforcement of land laws and policies. The lack of coordination among agencies responsible for land management further hampers effective land use planning. Additionally, land disputes and conflicts, often arising from overlapping land claims or inadequate land registration, pose significant obstacles to infrastructure development. These conflicts can delay projects and create uncertainty for investors and residents.

Addressing land management challenges is crucial for facilitating urban infrastructural development in Kampala City. A comprehensive approach that integrates historical land tenure systems with modern legal frameworks, enhances coordination among institutions, and addresses

the needs of both formal and informal landholders is essential. By overcoming these challenges, Uganda can better support sustainable urban development and improve the quality of life for its residents.

The 1975 Land Reform Decree marked a significant shift in Uganda's land management by vesting all land in the state as Public Land, intended to facilitate economic and social development and to be administered by the Uganda Land Commission. This decree converted Milo land into leasehold, granting public bodies' leases for 199 years and individuals for 999 years. These reforms were later enshrined in Article 247 of the 1995 Uganda Constitution.

Legal and policy frameworks guiding urban land use include the Local Government Act 1997 (Cap 243), the Land Act 1998 (Cap 227), the National Land Use Policy (2007), the Physical Planning Act (2010), and the National Land Policy (2013) (Table 1). These frameworks aim to regulate land use, planning, and management, integrating various aspects of land tenure and development.

Despite these reforms, urban infrastructure development in Uganda has faced significant challenges. The disconnect between landowners and urban planners has created persistent difficulties in managing and developing infrastructure. This issue has been consistently highlighted in various reports, including those from UN-Habitat (2016b) and Uganda's National Development Plans. The World Bank's (2012) report emphasizes the need for effective land use through securing land rights, addressing conflicts and disputes, improving land registration, and enhancing land markets. The report also advocates for better land documentation, valuation systems, and financial measures to support urban efficiency.

However, almost a decade after these recommendations, land use challenges remain unresolved. Community protests against road construction and infrastructure projects in Kampala and its suburbs, such as the Kampala-Entebbe Express Highway and the Northern By-pass, reflect ongoing issues. Stalled projects, compensation disputes, and resistance from landowners with significant investments have complicated infrastructure development. Peri-urban areas, where communities have settled informally, face even greater difficulties, with poor urban communities often bearing the brunt of these challenges.

Encountering such scenarios brings to mind the arguments of Edward Glaeser in *Triumph of the City* (2011), Witold Rybczynski in *Makeshift Metropolis: Ideas About Cities* (2010), and Sandy Hornick in *The City and the State* (2011). These works collectively underscore the need for a robust state intervention in urban development beyond mere planning and legislation. Glaeser (2011) argues that cities thrive through innovation and the dynamic interaction of people, businesses, and ideas, while Rybczynski emphasizes the benefits of density and

Table 1. Legal and policy frameworks in summary.

Framework	Specifics on infrastructure development
The 1995 constitution article 247	Vests the land into people's power. Land in Uganda belongs to citizens in accordance with the customary, freehold, Milo and Leasehold land tenure systems.
Physical Planning Act, 2010, Section 11	Mandates urban authorities to set up physical planning committees.
Local Government Act 1997 (CAP243), as amended	The second schedule (part 5) details the functions and services to be undertaken by an urban authority to approve building plans, development of master structure plan, cadastral survey and mapping, and mailo land administration.
National Development Plans (NDP)	Enhancing physical infrastructure is one of the four pillars of the National Development Plan (NDP) 2010/11–2014/15, NDPII 2015/16- 2019-20, The NDPIII (2020/21 – 2024/25), and NDP IV.
The Land Act CAP227	Articulates the role of land in national development, land ownership, distribution, utilization, alienability, management and control.
National Land Use Policy (NLUP)	Concretizes the role of physical planning in development and gives a general direction on land use planning and management.
National Land Policy (NLP) 2013	Articles 237(8) and (9) guarantee security of occupancy of lawful and bona fide occupants of 'Mailo' land and other registered land, and oblige parliament to enact a law regulating the relationship between them and registered owners of the land they occupy.

mixed-use developments. Hornick, bridging these ideas, highlights the necessity of government planning to support sustainable urban growth and manage the complexities of city and suburban interactions.

The World Bank's (2012) recommendation that "The government should consider interventions to find institutions that can meet the expanding demand for social services and other amenities" resonates with our view on the crucial role of the state in urban infrastructural development. This suggestion underscores a significant gap in urban growth and development processes, pointing to the inadequacy of current interventions and the need for more substantial state involvement.

In Kampala, urban land management has often been exploited as a political tool, enabling specific groups to operate in ways that contravene formal regulations. This exploitation has allowed private gains from urban land to be exchanged for political or economic support. Such practices involve not only traditional leaders of the Buganda Kingdom but also influential figures in the city's informal economy, including market operators, transport syndicates, and community leaders in informal settlements. This informal dynamic reflects Uganda's political settlement, where the ruling coalition secures support and mitigates opposition by adopting a lenient approach to land use regulations. This leniency has led to increased land use fragmentation, characterized by the development of luxury hotels, the loss of parks and green

spaces, and the proliferation of large informal marketplaces.

The informalization of land use was further reinforced in the 1990s when international donors like the World Bank promoted decentralization. The establishment of the KCCA aimed to consolidate central government control over the capital and limit the ability of elected political opposition to leverage urban land for political gain. This approach, as noted by Ernstson and Mukwaya (2021), reflects a broader strategy to manage urban development and political dynamics through selective regulation and enforcement.

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted that Uganda's urban growth rate and urbanization are increasing significantly. With an estimated urbanization rate of 13% and an annual urban growth rate of around 4.5%, there is a pressing need for meticulous and consistent urban planning. The fact that 50% of Uganda's urban population resides in Kampala City underscores a critical issue that cannot be localized. As Kampala expands rapidly, the transition from villages to towns is occurring without adequate planning for essential infrastructure such as road connectivity, water and electricity services, sewerage, drainage, and telecommunications.

Efforts to make Kampala's infrastructure inclusive, safe,

resilient, and sustainable are further complicated by "silomentality" planning. This approach, where each municipality, municipal division, town council, and district independently plans their infrastructure within the framework of decentralization, limits the coordination and harmonization of the city's entire infrastructure system. The delay in operationalizing a metropolitan physical planning authority has exacerbated these challenges, impeding intergovernmental efforts for comprehensive infrastructural development.

Moreover, urban infrastructural planning by government agencies often clashes with private land tenure systems, as evidenced by land conflicts and community resistance to development projects in both the city and peri-urban areas. The problems associated with private land tenure were initially addressed by the 1975 land reform decree, yet the poor administration of land nationalization has yielded limited progress in economic and social development.

Given these challenges, this study infers that the state must reassert control over land management to effectively implement urban infrastructural development structures, policies, regulations, and plans. As urban infrastructure constitutes a public good/service, it is crucial that its development is directed, controlled, and executed by the government within a robust national policy, legal, and institutional framework. This approach will ensure that cities become more inclusive, safe, resilient, healthy, and sustainable.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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