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The conditional city: emerging properties of Kenya's satellite cities

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ABSTRACT

Satellite cities in Kenya are driven by belief in economic growth driven by emerging middle classes and investors. As visionary policy objects they help inform national economic policies and spatial planning strategies such as Kenya's Vision 2030. State and private investments required for their planned realization however remains elusive. This paper examines the emergent planning process of four satellite cities in Kenya based on interviews with key stakeholders and extensive document analysis. In their suspended states awaiting investment and development, these cities contend with 'ordinary city' dynamics. They start to articulate with changes in the political and institutional landscape and state-led decentralization initiatives. Our findings show how these cities represent an unwieldy blend of private and public elements that is shaped largely as a result of 'statist alignments.' In conclusion, we nuance the common conceptualization of satellite cities as planning contexts for expansion of neoliberal, speculative development and global city-making.

KEYWORDS

Urban planning; satellite cities; world-class city; conditionality; Africa

Introduction

Satellite cities are a new form of speculative urbanism that have only recently reached the African continent (Watson 2013). These mega-urban planning initiatives promise to attract foreign investment companies from China and other emerging economies and embed African cities in newly-constituted networks of cities (Myers 2011; Van Noorloos and Kloosterboer 2018). Although these projects vary in their objectives and form, they are generally fuelled by an optimistic belief in Africa's vast investment potential and high levels of economic growth (Grant 2015b). Afro-optimism is reflected in the cities' illustrious names like Hope City (Accra) and Eco Atlantic (Lagos) aimed at mirroring the success of cities like Dubai and Singapore. In catering for discontented middle- and upper classes, they are marketed to play into their desires to escape from the rampant informality of the existing city and are planned outside metropolitan areas in greenfield sites. In this paper, we discuss the emerging properties of four distinct plans for the development of a total of nine satellite cities in Kenya. These cities are in suspended states between planning and implementation, awaiting construction of business and residential units and basic infrastructure. Only in the cases of Konza Technology City and Tatu City has the land actually been purchased, but severe delays in construction were experienced due to prolonged court cases and changes in the constitutional and institutional landscape.

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We approach these cities as 'unwieldy assemblages' and socio-spatial alignments that unfold against the background of broader global, national and regional structures (Brenner, Madden, and Wachsmuth 2011; McFarlane 2011b). We argue that these satellite cities cannot be understood as being governed by a capitalist logic, creating spatial enclaves for the rich (Watson 2013) or expanding corporate-driven 'world-city making' (Goldman 2011), but rather as temporary instances of capitalistic organization (Farías 2011). In line with the 'world class city' characteristics, Kenyan satellite cities represent Western modernist city ideals, promote inter-city competition, use city branding to attract foreign investment, rely for financial viability on attracting well-to-do residents (the illusive 'middle class') and are governed and planned with a large private-sector involvement. The emergence of these cities coincides with a drive for master planning and the promulgation of neoliberal discourses, as is evidenced by their showcase status in Nairobi's Metro 2030 and Kenya Vision 2030 policies (Kenya Vision 2030 n.d.). Their suspended state between planning and implementation, however, also brings new, unpredictable types of articulation with state-led reforms such as decentralization. Driven by pressures to reform city planning and attract foreign investors, state-led planning processes capture satellite city models and partially adopt and rework them. This blending of statist planning and private sector-led city planning, and the embedding of these projects in the legal geography and governance of Kenya put central the state role in determining the shape and likeliness of satellite city establishment.

The emergence of these satellite cities imply uncertainties that contrast other experiences in emerging economies, where states like China have unrolled entire cities such as Shenzhen ahead of the population (see Bontje 2019). This paper rather focuses on their becoming as a tentative process – a city yet to come, but one that starts to exist as a planned imaginary and driver of economic growth strategies. We highlight the cities as conditional: they are planned ahead of the people and rely on certain things happening and others not. We focus on emerging properties of these cities over time and adopt a perspective to seeing who has the capacity for assembling the city (Anderson and McFarlane 2011). With satellite cities moving into prolonged planning processes, we witness a certain normalization of these cities: they start to become ordinary cities that are subordinated to larger policy processes and may (partially) lose their status as showcases and sites of exception (Ong 2006) outside the normal rules and practices that govern cities. Whereas these cities become entangled with local political economies and start to resemble ordinary cities, they still yield considerable 'symbolic power' as a narrative that informs national policies and planning approaches (van Leynseele and Bontje 2019).

To illustrate this point, the paper first elaborates on the approach to city assembling. In consequent sections, three main insights are provided. First, a review is made of Kenyan satellite city development, showing their neoliberal characteristics and how they are tied to national growth strategies. Second, we discuss their constitution as international blends of public-private elements. Thirdly, we show how project delays have led these projects to be overtaken by recent institutional and constitutional changes, necessitating adjustments and realignments. In conclusion, we reflect on the way satellite cities are shaped by conditionality and transformations in the political and institutional landscape. Data for this case was collected by conducting interviews with stakeholders from different involved governmental agencies as well as those working directly on the development of the satellite cities. Further, a broad range of documents were analysed, such as official governmental documents, master plans, promotional material, information from websites, news articles and press releases. The chief part of the data has been collected during two months of fieldwork in Nairobi between March and May in 2014.

Satellite city making: a focus on assembling

Satellite city development is often understood as an urban manifestation of neoliberalism. With its emphasis on economic growth strategies, a globalizing property market development led by foreign investors and its reliance on global city models, it combines symbolical and 'actual' effects associated

with neoliberal city development and neoliberal planning practice (Grant 2015a, 319–325). Regarding actual outcomes for populations, satellite city development can be seen as perpetuating urban inequality and producing new class divides (Watson 2013). Actual outcomes may be effectuated by urbanization driven by a global property market (Harvey 2008), resulting in a 'creative destruction' and emergence of awkward hybrid blends of state and market, as has happened in many Western settings (Brenner and Theodore 2002; see also Sager 2011). This expansive process has happened in conjunction with state institutions, leading Peck and Tickell (2006) to argue that the actual manifestation of neoliberalism depends on the national and regional regulatory frameworks and the pressures resulting from endogenous political and institutional landscapes (see also Peck, Theodore, and Brenner 2009; Van Noorloos and Kloosterboer 2018). National state institutions in the Global South have significant roles in the developing, implementing and coordinating of urban policies (Parnell and Robinson 2012, 597), particularly so in the context of satellite cities (van Leynseele and Bontje 2019).

Next to the attention for actual development outcomes and changing institutional configurations, it is crucial to consider the discourses and imaginaries that underpin the satellite city project (see Bhan 2013). By emphasizing that planning for satellite cities contributes to the making of a world city and fuels economic growth, the government justifies the channelling of its expenditure and planning capacity away from the existent city and the exclusion of the majority of the urban population. Symbolical aspects relate to how global cities thinking have produced a discursive space in which certain urban futures are dreamt and ideologically manifest themselves, obscuring and undermining in the process ordinary cities and abstracting away from everyday realities of the post-colonial city and diversity in non-Western city development (see De Boeck 2011; Murray 2011; Robinson 2005). In this relational guise, master-planned cities based on projections of sustained economic growth and Africa as the new real estate frontier can be understood as a form of 'jaundiced optimism' that also looks 'backward or around at the realities confronting cities' and the poor conditions faced by the majority of the urban population (Myers 2015, 343).

Watson (2013) sees symbolic power as being exercised through the production of promotional narratives that sell African satellite cities as themed 'smart cities' and 'eco-cities.' Such narratives aim to attract international and local investors and show 'a concern with the importance of the city in relation to other cities rather than the extent to which it functions for its citizens' (Watson 2013, 11). A broad range of rationales for similar projects emerges from the literature. Goldman's (2011) case study of Bangalore, for example, shows that the protesting of middle-class civic organizations against congestion, dirtiness and noise is only 'feeding comfortably into the justification for world-city projects' (570). Farhat (2014) has argued that the neoliberal discourse anticipates on anxieties about the erosion of community power and arrested social mobility. Gunder (2010) sees the neoliberal ideology as promoting enjoyment, which in planning translates itself into notions of sustainability, liveability and a globally competitive city. The disconnect between global city lifestyles on the one hand and the lives of ordinary citizens on the other will be elaborated below in terms of how housing developments in satellite cities that target 'middle class' residents and provide 'low cost housing' are based on income brackets that are far-removed from lived realities.

We blend these elements with a focus on the articulation of satellite cities with statist planning frameworks, within and outside of urban policy, and with changing political economies. In so doing we aim to overcome the tendency to narrowly analyse (satellite) city development in the Global South, or the obscuration of certain places or populations for that matter, in relation to global city models (see also Shatkin 2007; Smith 2013). The co-constitution of the symbolical aspects of cities, where they exist as implants of world city discourses, and the more relational aspects that link the city development to real-world challenges (e.g. in their mirroring to the undesirable informal city) and location in legal state geographies and governance, imply processes of cross-scalar alignment that cut across various sites and temporalities (McFarlane

2011a). The notion of city assemblages as becoming and unwieldy highlights a process of 'forging alignments' that may lead to unwieldy and temporary fixities (Anderson and McFarlane 2011; see also Collier and Ong 2005). Such a perspective sees neoliberal ideology not as unfolding as a single 'neo-liberal logic', but rather as being prone to translation through interaction with a 'a range of situated circumstances, practices and political rationalities' (Ong in McFarlane 2011b, 379). We foreground assemblage as an empirical approach to studying assembling practices and those interactions that explain the conditionality and instability of satellite cities. Assembling here is analysed in terms of the risks of prolonged planning processes and the shifts in governance that occur when actors' positions and the larger governance arrangements in which these cities develop, shift.

Kenya's satellite cities

Recent years have seen the emergence of at least four distinct proposals for the development of satellite cities within the Nairobi Metropolitan Region (Figure 1). All proposals were launched between 2008 and 2013. There is, first, the privately-initiated Tatu City that is being developed by Rendeavour, the African development branch of the originally Russian investment group Renaissance Capital; second, the national flagship project Konza Technology City; third, the county project Machakos New City; and finally, the Nairobi Metropolitan Spatial Plan that includes the proposal of six satellite cities throughout the region which have been named Cyber City, Transport New Town, Sports City, Amboseli New Town, Aerotropolis and Knowledge-cum-Health City. Although they are all designed as public-private hybrids, the projects are undergoing different trajectories due to their being initiated by different actors and embedded within different institutional and governance structures. This point corresponds with Watson's (2013, 217) assertion that 'their [satellite cities in sub-Saharan Africa] location in the legal or governance structures of a country is not clear' and that their plans

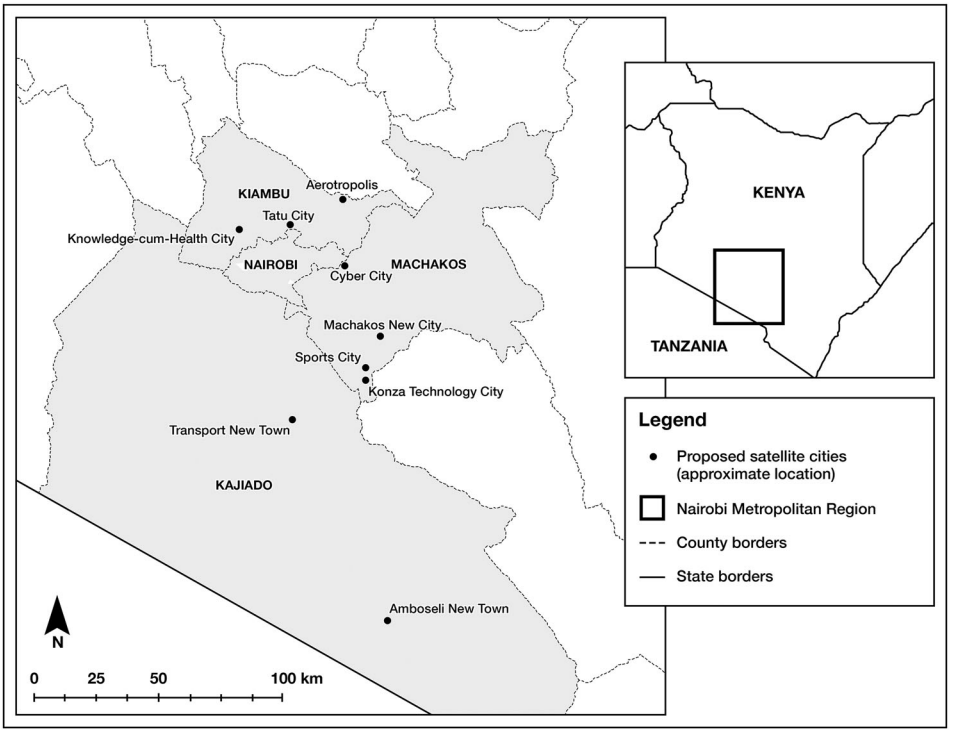

Figure 1. Map of satellite cities in Kenya (source: Authors).

might parallel or override formal city plans. As we will see below, shifts in planning approaches and governance, including the introduction of the new Constitution, have influenced the divergent trajectories of Kenya's satellite cities.

All projects are envisioned as being multi-functional, combining business and residential purposes. This design differs from the development of single-purpose residential real estate (e.g. gated communities) and from regular industrial or business park developments. These satellite cities' vast scale owes to the way they should (largely) be self-sustaining; they are planned to cover 2000–5000 acres and accommodate 70,000–185,000 residents. They are all planned to be located in greenfield sites some 20–70 kilometres distance from Nairobi, with the exception of the tourism-oriented Amboseli New Town that is planned about 200 kilometres from the existing city. Their urban designs consist of a major part of high-rise developments. Drawing inspiration from cities like Dubai, they share a 'vertical vision' that links them in a network of world cities (Watson 2013, 217). The projects also have a global orientation in terms of their positioning in relation to other African mega-urban projects. Tellingly, Konza Techno City is branded as 'Africa's Silicon Savannah' marking also its competition with other African technology-focused satellite cities such as Hope City in Ghana (Grant 2015a, 299).

The emergence of Kenya's satellite cities should be understood in the context of the country's recent aspirations and economic growth strategies. From the 1980s onward Kenya's economic growth strategies have increasingly focused on the private sector and the implementation of neoliberal policies (Hendriks 2010), a trend which is continued with the Kenya Vision 2030 (GOK 2007). The government follows a strong export-led growth strategy focussing on tourism, agriculture, wholesale and retail trade, regional manufacturing, business process outsourcing (BPO), IT-enabled services (ITES) and financial services.

Importantly, the Kenya Vision 2030 sees urban development around existing centres as a means for generating economic growth and attracting global business and foreign direct investment, and as such sets out to develop integrative plans for six urban regions throughout Kenya (Ministry of State for Planning, National Development and Vision 2030 2008, 114). So far, this project has only been realized for the city of Nairobi and environs, resulting in 2008 in the establishment of the Nairobi Metropolitan Region and the launch of the strategy document Nairobi Metro 2030, subtitled 'A Word Class African Metropolis'. The strategy's main aim is to become 'a world class region that will service as a regional and global service hub' (Ministry of Nairobi Metropolitan Development 2008, 37) and aims to uplift Nairobi in a global network of cities (Myers 2015). Developing sectoral spatial clusters is seen as a means to generate economic growth and an 'opportunity to develop [satellite cities] of world class standards to attract investments for international sources' (Ministry of Nairobi Metropolitan Development 2011, 8.12). For making Kenya more attractive to investors, making city planning more effective and promoting inter-city competition, decentralization policies have divided the country into 47 new counties with unique economic profiles and substantial autonomy.

The spatial plan attached to the Nairobi Metro 2030 proposes the development of satellite cities with distinct economic profiles. The notion of satellite cities as engines of economic growth is clear from the fact that they are designed as sectoral economic hubs. Konza Technology City, being Kenya's most ambitious project, as well as Cyber City and Machakos New City have a particular focus on ITES and BPO. At the same time, the spatial plan of the Nairobi Metropolitan Region represents an effort of integrated regional development in which the satellite cities occupy different sectoral niches. This is evident in their names: Aerotropolis, Knowledge-cum-Health City, Sports City, Transport New Town, Amboseli New Town (after Amboseli National Park) and Cyber City. Tatu City that has a strong private-sector involvement, is less firmly integrated into economic growth strategies but was nonetheless endorsed in the Kenya Vision 2030 (GOK 2011) and is thus officially part of national policy.

The contrast between lived realities and planned imaginaries is a common feature of urban planning of the Nairobi metropole. Town planning institutions historically have not been able to keep

pace with high urbanization rates, which has been accompanied by severe urban problems, such as housing shortages, pollution, traffic congestion and uncontrolled development (Opata et al. 2013; UN Human Settlements Programme 2014). These characteristics and related notions of 'dysfunctional urbanism' drive the planning of satellite cities 'from scratch' outside the existing city. Predictably, and in keeping with past practices, the belief in master planning has not wavered despite its limited claims to success in resolving urban challenges (Owuor and Mbatia 2008; Vanhoutte, Lagae, and Decommer 2010).

The proliferation of satellite cities should however not be understood as responding to urbanization and the crises of urban governance per se. It also anticipates the perceived emergence of a new middle class in Africa and is fed by the belief, fostered by private-sector think tanks and Western media, that Africa's economic growth will surpass that of Asia and other emerging economies (Grant 2015a). Policies like Kenya's national vision statement target an annual economic growth of ten percent and foresee Kenya becoming a middle-income country by 2030 (GOK 2007). The belief in a new middle class as driver of economic growth and city development was very prominent in discussions with stakeholders involved in Nairobi's satellite cities, even though studies show that measuring the size of the middle class in developing countries is an arbitrary undertaking (Ravallion 2010) and that people categorized as middle class may in fact be 'in a vulnerable position and face the constant possibility of dropping back' (Ncube, Lufumpa, and Kayizzi-Mugerwa 2011, 1). The mixed-use design of satellite cities further show that housing demands of middle classes play a central role in making them possible.

The current status of the different projects differs strongly. The developments of Konza Technology City and Tatu City are the most advanced: ground-breaking for both projects has taken place. The development of Tatu City has been delayed and reached a virtual standstill between 2010 and 2013 due to a prolonged court battle that pits the Kenyan shareholders and the foreign investors of Renaissance Capital (*The Star*, August 24, 2015). Thereafter the projects' development commenced: plots for the first phase residential development and the Industrial Park were sold starting from the second half of 2015 (Tatu City Limited 2016a; Tatu City Limited n.d.-c). The court-battle, however, still continues between Tatu City's shareholders (*Daily Nation*, March 23, 2016). Konza Techno City has also encountered major delays (see below), but as of November 2016 construction of the first flagship building has started (KOTDA 2016). The status of Machakos New City is currently unclear – after its celebratory announcement in 2013, there has been limited news. Finally, it is unlikely that the six satellite towns in the Nairobi Metropolitan Spatial Plan will ever be developed. The institutional transformations have abolished the responsible Ministry of Nairobi Metropolitan Development, resulting in a downscaled team without legal power, funds and staff. Given the prospects and progress of the different satellite cities, the emphasis in the remainder of this paper will be on Konza Technology City and Tatu City.

City branding and middle-class utopias

The combined future orientation and escape from the existing city is evident in how satellite cities are branded and planned as semi-autonomous, privatized spaces and implemented through alternative urban governance structures. Through branding, their developers and planners strive to attract investors and to play into the imaginaries of middle-class Nairobi residents seeking to escape the metropolitan area. For example, a video advertisement of Tatu City (TatuCityKE 2012) announces:

> Imagine a new lifestyle for you and your family – in a safe and beautiful urban environment, only a short distance away from the Nairobi Central Business District.

In the case of Konza Techno City, the designs do not only stand for a different type of city but also for a new and modernized nation. Marking the active role of the state, the Ministry of Information and Communication (n.d.) brands Konza Techno City as:

> a smart city; one of a kind in Africa. It is at the forefront of a technology-led business revolution which will transform Kenya and Africa. Konza is Africa's Silicon Savannah. […] The city represents an ambitious vision of a modern, all-inclusive and sustainable Kenya.

The branding of these cities to come are future-oriented and diverge from ideas about the existing city, reflecting a type of 'city double' (Murray 2015). Their urban design and graphical representations show a familiar picture of modern-looking buildings in a mix of high- and low rise, ample public space and lots of green, and clean, safe and quiet streets. Branding and design represent a universal and placeless city that can be replicated throughout the world, while simultaneously being very much constituted by the prevailing perceptions of Nairobi as being unmanageable and dysfunctional – characterized by its overcrowding, unsafety, congestion and informality.

These ideas are also expressed in the way the city is developed as a 'clean slate' in greenfield sites outside but still within reach of the existing city. Any attempt to improve the existing city is deemed impossible and wasteful by planners and state officials. The notion of starting afresh is powerful and speaks strongly to the developmental imagination of urban planners, with a planner from the Ministry of Devolution and Planning stating that it is 'an opportunity to develop those rural lands!' Inherent in this way of thinking is the belief that through master planning a city on empty land one can bypass the governance problems that are present in regular urban development in the existing city. From talking to participants of both Konza Techno City and Tatu City it became clear that these projects were initially not conceived as cities per se. For Rendeavour, the development agency behind Tatu City, a range of greenfield developments represented a viable business proposition. The operations manager of Tatu City explained how the project was initially conceived:

> The idea came that you could buy that farm and do some kind of development on it, but they didn't know exactly what then. […] There was debate about whether it should be a golf estate, or this, or that, or whatever. And then they came up with the idea that it should be a city, or a town.

The concept that is central in the marketing of Konza and Tatu cities – and satellite cities in emerging economies more generally – is the idea of 'world-class infrastructure' to be managed outside of regular state bodies. The developers of Tatu City particularly emphasize how the project has 'controlled development', seeing as their managing company will oversee and strictly guard all developments and thereby ensure that electricity, internet connection and roads work effectively and continuously. The operations manager of Tatu City explained how this gives investors a degree of security and effective governance that is lacking in the rest of Kenya:

> The whole idea is that […] as the master developer we are providing the opportunity to developers, at probably a higher premium as you would pay elsewhere, to build in a development that is controlled. That has rules and regulations, and is almost like a mini-ward or municipality with its own private management system, to protect and future-proof the investment.

This model of privatized urban development is seen as 'future proofing' investment, including that of small businesses and residents, and ensuring its value is maintained. The manager further emphasized that privatized development would be enhanced by handing over responsibilities to residents and future investors. The leading role of Tatu City Limited would decrease once the shareholding structure was in place and plots were developed: 'when we finish, we hand over the keys to the property owners association and then they do with it what they want.' For a large part, this marketing is focused on attracting investors that are small-business owners or individuals buying a house. Besides that, multinational companies that have recently pledged to invest and establish themselves in Tatu City include Unilever (Rendeavour 2016), tissue and hygiene product manufacturer Chandaria Industries and coffee exporter Dorman (Tatu City Limited 2016a).

By contrast, Konza Techno City targets a different investor. Being envisioned as a technology hub, this project focuses on firms and organizations in the field of BPO/ITES as well as life sciences, education and telecom (KOTDA n.d.-b). Although Konza Techno City aims to attract local, regional and global companies, the emphasis is on large multi-national firms (*Voa New*, 2012, March 18). The

Konza Technopolis Development Authority (KOTDA) has released very little information on which particular firms might be interested. The conceptual designs of Pell Frischmann, however, reveal the type of companies that the organization hopes to attract. Here, the graphical representations of the city show buildings with prominent display of the logos of major Western and Asian giants, such as Microsoft, HP, Toshiba, HSBC and Nokia (Urban Graphics n.d). The branding of Konza also emphasizes its world-class infrastructure, but extends this concept to suit the particular needs of major global companies, as well as innovative local or regional firms, for the most advanced technology. Hence, the city is profiled as one that employs cutting edge green technology 'and that has high connection speeds through its direct connection to Kenya's recently-laid fiber optic cables' (KOTDA n.d.-c). A KOTDA project assistant linked this demand to the inadequate communications' infrastructure by attributing Kenya's earlier slow satellite communication as a key factor that 'had kept investors from coming'.

Status updates from 2014 show that from the 345 received investment interests 81 percent are Kenyan firms, with firms from Europe, Asia and North America representing respectively 4, 2 and 1 percent of the total interests (Adeya 2014). Moreover, only 4% of the interested firms are from the BPO/ITES sector. Hence, KOTDA has adopted an 'Anchor Tenant Strategy', in which major Nairobi-based businesses and public institutions can function as 'anchors' to attract new firms. The investors mentioned include the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology and the University of Nairobi for education; the Nairobi Hospital for life sciences; financial software services firm Craft Silicon for BPO/ITES; and Safaricom for telecom. Media reports suggest that new investors are reluctant as they doubt the governments' ability to guarantee world-class infrastructure (e.g. continuous electricity even when Nairobi systems fail) (*Daily News*, January 26, 2016). This illustrates the problematic aspects and conditionality inherent in these partnership models. They rely on state involvement and its dedication to divert its resources to these (not yet) cities.

In addition to the belief in the ability to overcome existing governance problems and attract sufficient investors, the cities are based on a belief in the emergent middle class and the accompanying expansion of the domestic consumer market (Grant 2015a), as also expressed through media channels (e.g. *The Economist*, December 3, 2011) and strategies of major investment companies (e.g. Deloitte and Touche 2012; Goldman Sachs 2012). Parallel to this, the Kenya Vision 2030 aims to transform Kenya into a middle-income country by 2030. In line with these projections, Tatu City, according to its operations manager, 'provides opportunities for middle-class expansion' and will offer housing in the range between 150,000 and 500,000 US dollar. The brochure of Tatu City's first residential phase of development attracts residents who seek 'naturally exclusive urban living' in their 'premier gated community with spacious individual serviced plots' with all the amenities that are required so that 'one will be able to live in a comfortable, secure and tranquil environment within a well-planned modern city' (Tatu City Limited n.d.-a). Whereas most real estate developments are mainly residential, Tatu City as a self-contained lifestyle city is supposed to enable a new way of urban living and offer a new product through its mixed-use environments – or in more marketable terms: the 'live-work-play' principle. The operations manager of Tatu City explained the lifestyle as follows: 'you live there, you work there, you spend your weekends there, you got everything there, for you to enjoy'.

Tatu's first residential development, Kijani Ridge, is targeting wealthy residents. Plots with the size of ¼ acre or ½ acre are being sold with prices starting at 82,000–120,000 US dollar respectively, after which one can choose from 12 house designs. The combination of the ¼ acre plot with one of the cheaper houses can be bought for just under 200,000 US dollar. (Tatu City Limited n.d.-b). Tatu City also promises to cater for a more diverse group of incomes. In May 2016, a deal was signed with Lifestyle Properties for the development of 1200 housing units with a starting price from around 60,000 US dollar (Tatu City Limited 2016b). Besides that, Tatu City announced it was talking to partners about developing 1000 low price housing units offered at around 20,000 US dollar (Tatu City Limited 2016c).

Konza Techno City, as a government-led project, has a fundamentally different rationale. It is developed as a means to generate national economic growth and aligns with 'inclusive' state policies that stimulate diverse types of businesses and accommodate different income groups. The first development phase, scheduled for completion after 2020, is supposed to create over 17,000 direct jobs and annually contribute around 1.3 billion US dollar to the GDP (KOTDA n.d.-a). As such, the project is particularly seen as a *driver* of middle-class expansion, but not so much as a place that is exclusively developed *for* residential needs of the middle class. This is also reflected in way that the project was conceived since this flagship project initially emerged from the plan to build a more modest BPO park to drive economic growth (GOK 2007). Soon, however, it grew in scope and ambition, which required the inclusion of additional housing for company employees. For Konza, an exclusive focus on the middle class is not justifiable in the light of the housing needs of numerous low-income households and the government's commitment to provide decent housing for all citizens. Hence, the project centres on the idea of the 'economic pyramid', meaning that it will provide housing for all income groups. A project assistant of KOTDA contended that the city was 'open to all' and represents an investment opportunity for lower income groups:

> We need the people to brush shoes on the streets as well as the taxi people. That is why I say it has something for everyone. Anyone is free to invest in Konza! If you are a low-income earner, the best place would be to invest in the low-income projects.

A closer look at KOTDA's models and numbers quickly reveals that this framing is arbitrary and out of touch with development realities. Not only does the projected share of 20 percent of low-income households in Konza Techno City not come close to reflecting the society at large, but KOTDA's definition of a low-income household could probably be more accurately be seen as a middle-income one. Their documents show that a household is perceived as low-income if it has an annual income below $12,000, whereas the Kenyan GNI per capita was estimated at $2140 in 2011 (World Bank 2014) and the income of the forty percent under the poverty threshold does not exceed the $450 per person annually. Further, the Konza business model holds that the private sector develops housing. Due to profit motives it is unlikely that they are interested in developing for the lower income categories; housing incentives to stimulate this development are not (yet) in place.

From the above, it is however clear that both satellite cities are polarizing and speculative in the sense that they turn away from the existing city realities and widen the gap between world city imaginaries and lived reality, misrepresent their 'inclusiveness' and ability to absorb middle-income and lower income residents and rely on Afro-optimistic representations of economic growth. They show a firm belief in master planning as a means to bypass the existing crisis in urban governance and develop strong business cases for national and international investors. The prerequisites for success and the assumptions underlying their viability make these cities very debatable for ideological and practical reasons.

Between public and private: konza techno city

We saw in previous section that processes of alignment with business or state efforts led to different forms of branding in Konza and Tatu City respectively. As argued earlier, they also reflect unstable public-private blends consisting of governmental agencies, property developers, architecture, planning and engineering firms, which together strive for autonomous city governance. They also provide an entry point to understanding conditionality and instability in satellite city making. This point will be illustrated by showing how Konza Techno City is (supposed to be) managed, funded and developed. This project was initiated in 2009 by the Ministry of Information and Communication, which promptly contracted the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC) as its transaction advisor. The IFC assessed the feasibility of private-sector participation, through a study which included visits to twenty major developers in Europe, the USA, the Middle East and India (World Bank Group 2012). Konza Techno City would be realized through phased development, the first

four- to five-year-phase being development of a 400-acre site. Before construction can start, there has to be commitment of a sufficient amount of investors. In order to attract business, the government offers financial incentives.

Moreover, the Ministry of Information and Communication funds both the development of master and structure plan, and the construction of on-site and off-site infrastructure. These tasks have been put out for competitive bidding, resulting in the appointment of a consortium Master Development Partner 1 (MDP1) in 2012 to develop the phase one plans. The MDP1 was led by New York-based real estate development company HR&A Advisors and included other US-based global development firm Dalberg, consulting and engineering firm Tetra Tech, OZ Architecture, complemented by the Nairobi-based Centre of Urban and Regional Planning. After a second bidding process, the consortium responsible for the plan's implementation, the Master Development Partner 2, was contracted in 2014. The MDP2 is led by Tetra Tech (USA) and also includes technology company CISCO and engineering consulting firm Gauff Ingenieure (Germany). It attempts to combine global and local knowledge, by pairing national and international real estate firms HR&A (US) and Scion Real (Kenya), advertising companies Hill + Knowlton Strategies (US) and SCANAD (Kenya), architecture and design firms OZ Architecture (US) and Kounkey Design Initiative (Kenya).

For management of day-to-day affairs, the Ministry of Information and Communication has appointed the semi-governmental Konza Technopolis Development Authority (KOTDA), which consists of public and private-sector actors. KOTDA has been conceptualized as an 'under-one-roof' organization as to increase investor confidence and ease private investment by helping businesses to overcome institutional difficulties. A KOTDA project assistant explains their 'most important function' as follows:

> For the companies that will come we shall be doing all these things on a one-stop-shop process. If you come to our office in Konza we will finish all these processes for you and certify you for business … We are trying to reduce the bureaucracy and time spent … In Konza it shall be easier to export or import expertise from other countries.

KoTDA is an evolving organization that strives to manoeuvre itself outside of the existing institutional framework, by seeking to create new laws and adapt others. This becomes clear from another statement from the project assistant:

> We are still operating within the existing framework of regulation. This is giving us problems because we cannot be fully autonomous in our duties. But we want to be autonomous and surpass some of these regulations Kenya has. These were formulated at a time when Konza [City] had not been foreseen, so they are somehow obsolete to us. So we [KOTDA] developed a bill that stipulates what we shall be doing. For example on issues of incentives: we are best placed to give incentives, rather than deferring that responsibility to others.

KOTDA is supposed to evolve together with the city's development. It will function as the semi-private management organization once the city is finished, even though it is not clear how this will materialize in practice. From interviews and project documents, it appears likely that similar models are envisioned for the other government-led satellite cities. Tatu City works in fairly similar ways in the sense that Tatu City Limited funds and puts out for tender for master planning and the construction of main infrastructure. Thus, as we can see, the government not only promotes and stimulates private development by institutional reforms but takes an active role in the facilitating of private-sector development. Simultaneously, it shows a clear leaning towards global models of development and companies, particularly from the US, although domestic companies are included as well.

The effects of delays and decentralization policies

A closer look at the trajectories of the proposed satellite cities and their prolonged planning stages shows how they may lose their 'exceptional status' and become embedded in the political and economic landscape in which they are located. Shifts in governance structures and those related to the introduction of a new Constitution and devolution of power forces planners and management bodies

into a constant realignment. Konza Techno City is illustrative in this regard, as multiple delays have been putting off much-needed investments. As noted before, it was designed as a showcase project of the former government's Kenya Vision 2030. The start of the city's construction was scheduled for 2011 (*Business Daily Africa*, August 8, 2011). However, ground-breaking only took place in March and May 2014 and only in late 2016 was the first flagship building erected (KOTDA 2014a, 2014b, 2016).

Major delays occurred regarding the approval of both the Local Physical Development Plan and the Strategic Environmental Assessment, which are required for all major land-use developments in Kenya. The Ministry of Information and Communication and the IFC in 2009 hired Deloitte and UK-based designers firm Pell Frischmann for preparing the required planning documents. While the environmental assessment was submitted to the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) in January 2011, it was approved more than three years later. Further, the master plan by Pell Frischmann that was submitted to the Director of Physical Planning in April 2011 (Pell Frischmann 2010, 2011) was never approved and received a status as 'concept plan'. A new master plan was developed by the Nairobi-based Centre of Urban and Regional Planning, which was approved in the beginning of 2013.

Delays were not helped by the fact that Ministry of Information and Communication was the responsible government agency as opposed to a party that has (urban) planning expertise such as the Ministry of Land, Housing and Urban Development. As indicated before, this jurisdictional issue owed to the fact that the project originally had foreseen the development of a BPO park instead of an entire city. Several experts from governmental agencies explained that this problem was compounded because the Ministry of Information and Communication initially did not adequately involve the relevant ministries or other governmental actors. Foreign companies doing the master planning also lacked understanding of the local context and bureaucratic requirements. A high-ranking official from the Ministry of Land, Housing and Urban Development cynically remarked that 'they have no idea how cities are being developed, that is why development takes off so slowly.' Another stakeholder involved in the current master planning pointed out that the previous plan was not approved because the formal process as set out in the Planning Act had not been followed correctly with the planning department being side-lined altogether. Tensions with state planning authorities were evident in the way a NEMA official accused Konza's planning consortium of 'bulldozing' the planning process and pressurizing officials to meet the project's unrealistic timelines.

Moreover, the purchase of 5000 acres of land from the Malili Ranch Company for the projects' development has become the subject of prolonged court cases. From 2014 onwards, different stakeholders have been charged with the theft of a total of 179 million Kenyan Shilling, amounting to about 1.7 million US dollars. Those being prosecuted include shareholders from the Malili Ranch and governmental actors such as a Machakos County Senator, an ex-commissioner of Land, and the former Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Information and Communication. The latter also faced additional charges related to abuse of office and failure to comply with procurement laws (*Capital News*, September 5, 2014; *Daily Nation*, February 23, 2016). Prosecution, however, has been halted due to counter-claims concerning the abuse of court processes and malicious intent in stakeholders' prosecution (*Daily Nation*, October 6, 2016; *The Star*, August 10, 2016). At the time of writing, the outcome of this legal case is undecided.

Delays at Konza also brought new fears about informality and required adjustments to the initial plans. After the 5000 acre (2032 hectares) land designated for Konza Techno City was purchased in 2011, the area was fenced off in order to avoid any 'unwanted' developments on the land. In fact, the neighbouring settlement of Malili that sits just outside of the designated site along the Mombasa Road and is the source of labour for Konza's security staff has seen the arrival of resource-poor settlers who hope to acquire employment at Konza. A study into the livelihood strategies and push and pull factors for 31 of these settlers, showed that all lived under poor conditions typically associated with informal slums. Although some were not well-informed about the Konza City plans, 10 out of the 22 of the informed respondents indicated that they came after the city plans were announced

(Wapenaar 2015, 31–33). Whereas some planners had in the adjustment stages of planning, discussed the possibility to include Malili within the Konza City borders, most planners and officials involved in the project showed overriding concerns for the interaction with such 'informal slum development' and feared its negative effects on investor confidence. Planners rather opted for submitting plans for a buffer zone to the Ministry of Lands in 2012 with a radius of ten kilometres around the city's designated boundaries. The plan aims to 'promote harmonious development between the city and its environs, and avoid slums and unplanned developments' (KOTDA, n.d.-b), referring also to the protection of environmentally-sensitive wildlife areas to the West of the planned city. It sets out guidelines and standards on how development should be constructed, also with regard to infrastructure, and provides government with a legal instrument to remove all developments that have not officially been approved by local government.

Despite various threats by the government (*Business Daily Africa*, February 4, 2013), no action was undertaken by 2015 to demolish developments that are not compliant with new zoning regulations. Yet, involved planners and officials contend that this will inevitably happen once the construction phase starts. The emergent 'threats' to development and the related responses show how satellite cities divert responsibility for policing its boundaries to government, a responsibility a Land Ministry official deemed 'unrealistic' in light of the lack of capacity and state presence in such greenfield sites. It also illustrates how issues related to territorial boundaries of these cities, require new planning (rezoning) and renewal of state-public partnerships in order to draw in more state support for reducing investor fears.

Policy documents such as the Kenya Vision 2030 explicitly state that the institutional landscape hinders private-sector investment (Ministry of Finance 2011). It is in this context that a range of regulatory and institutional reforms have taken place in recent years that significantly change models of urban development. As mentioned earlier, the Constitution that came into operation in 2013 has devolved governance. Kenya was previously subdivided into eight provinces and their planning and urban development was done by the local towns and cities. They, however, had little authority as they had to get all of their expenditures to be approved by the national government. The constitutional change has devolved and downscaled planning authority and responsibilities to 47 newly established counties of Kenya (National Council for Law Reporting 2011). These counties manage their own budget and are thus increasingly independent and less steered by the national government.

The introduction of the new Constitution has impacted all satellite cities, albeit in different ways. Governance reforms led to the abolishment of the Ministry of Nairobi Metropolitan Development and the focus on city regional planning, which in turn led to the six cities proposed in the Nairobi Metro 2030 plan being annulled. The new acts make no reference to the scale of the metropolitan region at all (see the Urban Areas and Cities Act by the National Council for Law Reporting 2011). The former Ministry continues to exist under the Ministry of Land, Housing and Urban Development, but according to one of the planners working under the new Directorate, their activities have been severely restricted and there are no funds available to them. One of its planners explained that 'implementation is almost at the null, we haven't started at all'. Although the directorate's plan is supposed to function as a framework for the counties' spatial plans, there are no legal instruments in place. The idea of the metropolitan region, including the six satellite cities as showcases of what spatial development planning can achieve, is thus no longer prevalent in Kenya's official strategies of economic and urban development.

The effects of devolution on Konza Techno City are not as severe, as this is a national flagship project that has remained prominent in the media over the years. However, even in this case, the project has been initiated by the previous government, fuelling suggestions in the media that current government commitment will be less. The *Daily Nation* (March 11, 2014) stated that projects from the previous government, including Konza, 'face greatest test of time as regime changes' and the *Business Daily Africa* (February 2, 2014) suggests that the Standard Gauge Railway project might be the new government's number one priority (Halais, February 25, 2014). Recent updates point to the way the project is not as 'exceptional' as it used to be, with the main challenges being that

there is no funding and not enough staff (Ochieng 2016). It remains to be seen whether the newly-formed counties will adopt the satellite cities as status projects and if new legislative regulatory layers and compliance rules may further complicate the city's planning.

Devolution to county government has also brought new city planning initiatives that threaten to trump the older satellite cities. An example of this occurred in Machakos County within the Nairobi Metropolitan Region (now merely an administrative entity). In March 2013, Alfred Mutua was elected as the first governor of Machakos County. Shortly thereafter, the county launched a robust strategy to attract investors. The Machakos government now promotes itself as 'the premier trade and investment zone in Kenya' (Government of Machakos n.d.), pledged to give unutilized land for free to investors (*KTN Kenya*, May 16, May 16) and organized the first Machakos Investment Conference in May 2013. It was at this conference that the governor announced that Machakos will develop its own 2200 acre Machakos New City, only a few kilometres from the Konza City location (*Daily Nation, May 18,* 2013; see Government of Machakos 2013a, 2013b). The New City showcased the ambition of the governor's to create jobs and stimulate economic growth. Its plans called for development of a large Central Business District and the typical low, medium and high-density housing developments (*Daily Nation*, May 18, 2013). The governor's involvement is reflected in newspaper headlines such as 'Mutua hits ground running' (*Daily Nation*, 2013, May 18).

Commenting on the new competitiveness within government, a planning consultant for the Nairobi City Council explains:

> Every county government is trying hard to upstage the others in term of development initiatives, that is why the idea of Machakos' New Town has made the governor of Machakos County very popular. Many other people in other counties are pressurizing their county governments, [asking]: 'why is it only being done in Machakos? We are not doing anything here!'

Devolution, effectively, pits the more autonomous counties in competition with each other over state resources and political visibility and leads them to adopt the satellite city model in seeking investment support. Uncertainties arising from such competition was evident in media reporting that two of Konza's potential investors, the Nairobi Hospital and the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, were considering investing in Machakos New City instead (*Daily Nation*, November 18, 2013). Interestingly, other counties have also launched their satellite city variants as in Tarkana County, where soon after appointment of the governor, the tourism-oriented Tarkana Resort City was announced (*The Star*, September 17, 2014). For satellite city planners, devolution also presented new opportunities for private-sector support. For example, the operations manager from Tatu states that 'the governor is obviously quite excited about our project being in his area'. As such, the agendas of the county government and developers looking for investment in 'high-opportunity emerging markets' converge in these projects.

Conclusion: the conditional city and statist alignments

This paper has described the fantastical aspects of the current satellite cities in Kenya. These cities share certain characteristics that owe to the way they represent awkward public–private blends and the type of neoliberalism associated with world city development, speculative urbanism and the middle-class focused economic growth strategies that are pervasive in many emerging economies. Cities are branded independently and in relation to each other, implying a market place of 'city products' from which privileged consumers and local and national investors can shop. We have shown how cities are marketed as specialized hubs that fulfil specific roles like ICT technology development and middle-class housing developments that are preferred in national economic growth strategies. At the same time they mirror other satellite city development in emerging economies by also being shaped by the 'endogenous institutional landscape and spatial practices' and uncertainties that come with the linkages with state planning practice and regulatory frameworks (Shin 2017, 83; see also Peck, Theodore, and Brenner 2009; Smith 2013).

In looking beyond the neoliberal 'global city making' processes and the way these cities promulgate urban inequalities, for instance by drawing resources and tax money away from the existing city (Goldman 2011; Murray 2013; Watson 2013), we have argued that these emerging cities present a more unwieldy type of assemblage. These projects follow variegated trajectories and are contingent on certain conditions happening and others not. Uncertainties, for one, hinge on the very speculative way the city's actualization is linked to a non-existent middle class, or a middle class yet to emerge. The problems of the existing urban areas (framed for example as unbridled informality, congestion and irreparable infrastructure) are invoked to appeal to prospective consumers and investors. At the other end of the 'jaundiced optimism' (Myers 2015), the wildly optimistic visions of these cities do not, as yet, attract the necessary foreign investors and middle-class residents. Urban designs and marketing strategies to some extent anticipated this uncertainty, as was reflected in their flexible planning processes and staged implementation that came with renewals in public-private partnerships as conditions changed.

In the suspended states between planning and implementation, planners however encountered rather banal delays and every-day planning and institutional constraints that exposed the conditionality of satellite city development and limits to planning. Whereas Konza Technology City, was planned as a 'site of exception', it now contends with problems of ordinary cities, including 'threats' of unwanted informal settlement and 'normal' state regulatory systems planners aim to circumvent. We showed how recently the state has been implicated in the policing of boundaries in order to prevent 'slum development' at Konza. It was also illustrated how decentralization policies led to uncertainties resulting from newly appointed county-level officials appropriating or challenging the satellite city developments. This shows how Kenya's satellite cities sit at the intersection of global city-making and local political economies and governance processes, and how changing conditions and urban forms require constant adjustments and renewed planning efforts (van Leynseele and Bontje 2019).

From the above, we can see how assembling of satellite cities led to renewed cross-sectoral and inter-scalar collaborations and city planning. This assembling involves multi-sited practices by, for example, tying reputation-building strategies of local politicians to marketing strategies aimed at attracting national and international business. Although this city development certainly foresees a role for long-term state support in infrastructure support and building investor confidence, it is paradoxical, perhaps inevitable, that cities planned initially to have a great measure of autonomy from statist planning, should become so contingent on transformations in the political landscape and local political economies. Assembling satellite cities in Kenya, it follows, is not only conditional and uncertain but also foregrounds the state as a key actor in connecting its disparate elements and forging alignments.

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