

Kampala: City report

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Abstract

This paper draws on the ACRC's holistic framework components – politics, systems and development domains – to analyse urban development in Kampala City. We model how power is configured at the national and city levels, and then analyse how these configurations of power shape (and are shaped by) urban development processes in the city. The systems component analyses the functioning of the key systems that sustain and/or improve urban life in the city. The domains component looks at some of the distinct fields of discourse, policy and practice that have formed around complex, intersystemic development challenges in the city, and analyses how the actors (political, bureaucratic, professional and popular) engaged in these fields collaborate and/or compete for authority. The paper shows that national and city-level politics, urban systems and particular configurations of actors, agencies, ideas and practices have shaped development in the domains. And yet, urban developmental problems that particularly affect marginalised groups persist, considering that access to essential services, including safe drinking water, safely managed sanitation, healthy diets, affordable, reliable and safe electricity supply, adequate waste collection systems, cooking fuels, adequate transportation, and so on, are inadequate. Private formal and informal actors are filling the many gaps in centralised systems, resulting in complex formal–informal modes of delivery that rarely offer reliable and affordable services. Indeed, urban life in Kampala typically survives and endures in the “alternatives” and the dysfunctionality of institutional models explains the rise in local electricity power connectors (commonly referred to as *Kamyufus*), village health teams (VHTs), gulper technologies, waste pickers, water vendors, and so on. Political authority in Kampala City has become highly fragmented, with a myriad of power centres emerging, and this undermines prospects for ambitious reform programmes or coordinated action by political and bureaucratic actors. The existing politicised city culture, and sharp interest politics, including political manoeuvres like recentralising the functioning of Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) directly under the President's Office, have not helped either, except to entrench deep-seated corruption and a culture of patronage, woven into the fabric of the state. Finally, KCCA lies in a complicated and manipulative national landscape that has created an institutional landscape geared towards enhancing short-term political gains, while compromising long-term focus on service quality, relationships and efficiency across all systems.

Keywords: City systems, domains, informality, Kampala, Uganda

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1. Introduction and Kampala City context

Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, is located at the fringes of Lake Victoria. It serves as the country's major administrative, commercial and residential centre. Home to 1,680,600 people, with a daytime population of 4.5 million, Kampala is one of the fastest-growing African cities, with annual growth rates of 5.6% (KCCA, 2019). Originally designed to host 300,000 people, it has expanded rapidly over the past 40 years, with planning functions and infrastructure struggling to keep pace (Vermeiren et al., 2012).

Figure 1: Map showing the geographic location of Kampala



The formation of the urban geography of Kampala dates back to the early colonial period (Fredby and Nilsson, 2013). Kampala's first modern town planning was in 1903, and would later evolve through numerous series from 1912, 1919, 1930, 1951, 1972 and 1994 (Omolo-Okalebo, 2011). Presently, the administrative city comprises five divisions: Makindye, Rubaga, Nakawa, Central and Kawempe. Records reveal that early planning instituted a spatial divide that still persists decades into the post-colonial era: Mengo was for the native Baganda people, and Kampala was

for the Europeans (and later Asians), and planning applied to the colonial city (Fredby and Nilsson, 2013)¹ as the rest of the city grew unplanned (Street, 2012). These planning schemes had and continue to have influence on present approaches to planning and the spatial layout of Kampala (Omolo-Okalebo, 2011).

Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) launched its five-year strategic plan for the period 2020/21-2024/25 on 29 September 2020 (KCCA, 2020). This strategic plan is aligned to the National Development Plan III and it is the principal tool that guides citywide interventions. It calls for an investment outlay of UGX 7 trillion (estimated at USD 1,853,920,600) over its term, and moots new developments for the capital city which Ugandans can be proud of, such as roads, junctions, signalised (road intersections), social protection, neighbourhood planning, urban farming, urban regeneration and slum conversion, among other things. The strategic plan is underpinned by sectoral strategic plans, such as the Kampala Physical Development Plan, Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area Multi-Model Urban Transport Masterplan, Kampala Sanitation Improvement and Financing Strategy, Kampala Public Health

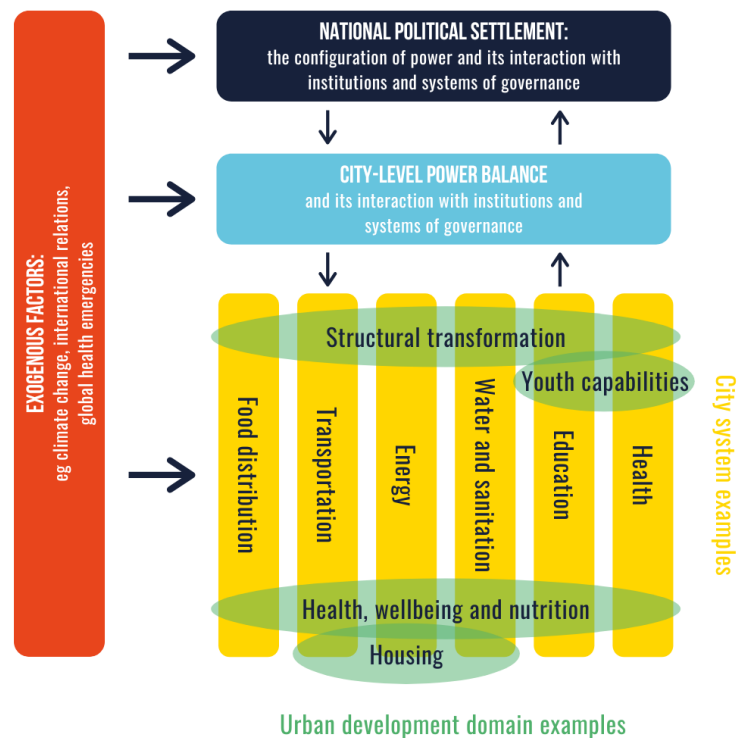
¹ This was the area within a three-mile radius stretching from Old Kampala to Nakasero. (This was dominantly the European-Asian area.)

Strategic Plan and the Kampala Smart City Strategic plan, among others (Ngwomoya, 2021).

The city is championing a Smart City campaign by leveraging technology to improve service delivery based on three core pillars of a Smart City: technology, infrastructure and people's wellbeing. Some of the roles assigned to KCCA are defined in the KCCA Act (2011) and some are defined by the 2021-2-26 NRM Manifesto. But presently, Kampala is characterised by high traffic congestion, a growing informal economy and significant challenges to delivering amenities and public services to the city's rapidly growing population (Bidandi and Williams, 2017; Vermeiren et al., 2012). In addition, the city suffers persistent deficits in planning and public services provision, despite national planning standards and guidelines suggesting otherwise (Bidandi and Williams, 2017). There is a large informal sector and although its enterprises are typically characterised by low productivity, low wages and non-exportable goods and services, the sector provides crucial livelihoods to the most vulnerable of low-income urban residents. Indeed, infrastructure projects launched in the 1990s were an improvement, but still left many of the city's poorest residents underserved, alienated and fending for themselves in inadequate, costly or environmentally damaging ways (Karabegovic and Gelman, 2018). A mapping exercise of firm density in the Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area showed that there were three visible clusters of informal firms: Katwe, Kasubi and Masaka Road; and their location reveals a clustering near the Central Business District (where customers would be) and in close proximity to low-income housing (ibid).

This paper draws on the ACRC's holistic framework for analysing urban development in Africa, which has three integrated components – **politics, systems** and **development domains**. The politics component uses “political settlements” theory to model how power is configured at the national and city levels, and then analyses how these configurations of power shape (and are shaped by) urban development processes in the given city. The systems component analyses the functioning of the key systems (composed of physical infrastructure and people organised in various ways) that sustain and/or improve urban life in the city. The domains component looks at some of the distinct fields of discourse, policy and practice that have formed around complex, intersystemic development challenges in the city, and analyses how the actors (political, bureaucratic, professional and popular) engaged in these fields collaborate and/or compete for authority. The diagram below gives an indication of how these three components come together, and each component is explained in more detail in the main sections of this report.

Figure 2: ACRC's conceptual framework



2. Locating Kampala within the national political settlement and governance structure

2.1. Overview

To understand urban development and prospects for developmental reform in Kampala, we need to understand who wields power and how they use it. City-level power dynamics do not exist in a vacuum; they are typically influenced by what we call the country's "political settlement". A political settlement is a common understanding among a society's most powerful groups about the basic rules (or institutions) of the political and economic game. Those rules create opportunities or benefits for "insider" groups, often to the exclusion of "outsiders".

Political settlements can be analysed in a variety of ways, but we focus on two main dimensions: *power configuration* and *social foundation*. The power configuration describes the relative strength of groups loyal to the leader (collectively referred to as the "leader's bloc") vis-a-vis groups that oppose the leader or are only contingently loyal. Crudely, where the leader's bloc is strong, we say that power is "concentrated". Where, by contrast, the leader's bloc is weak, we say that power is "dispersed". Power concentration, interacting with other variables, shapes the ability of the government to make and implement decisive, consistent urban development policy.

The social foundation describes the breadth and depth of groups that are “insiders” to the settlement.² Where a relatively large proportion of the population are insiders, we describe the settlement as “broad”. Where, conversely, only a relatively small proportion of the population are “insiders”, we describe the settlement as “narrow”. The social foundation, interacting with other variables, will shape the degree to which governing elites are committed to “inclusive” urban development policy. (For further details see Kelsall et al., 2021).

The current political settlement of Uganda can be characterised as broad-dispersed. Much political analysis to date has had a focus on the national rather than the sub-national scale. In this section, we analyse how this political settlement has historically shaped urban development in Kampala, and shapes the city’s prospects for reform. In the main, despite President Museveni’s longevity and apparent dominance over the main levers of power, the reality of Uganda’s broad-dispersed political settlement is more complex. By artfully playing a game of divide and rule, carrots and sticks, the president has maintained his ascendancy while allowing factional disputes – both among members of his own ruling coalition and between the ruling coalition and the opposition – to rage on. The powerful groups that make up the loyal elites include members of the first family, high-ranking military officials, former bush war heroes/historicals³ and some of the senior bureaucrats. Members of this loyal bloc tend to compete amongst themselves, but also with the bloc that is contingently loyal to the president, comprised of mostly ruling party members of parliament (MPs), business moguls whose breakthroughs came after 1986, and leaders of the major religious and cultural groups and co-opted politicians.

The conventional political opposition in Uganda has a weak resource base – relatively small numerically and highly concentrated in major urban areas. The opposition bloc is also fragmented, with a variety of interest groups, including political parties, unemployed youth, middle- and lower-level government and private sector workers, and casual labourers with limited opportunities for collective action. The political set-up has accorded the ruling elite macro-level political stability but micro-level instability, and political continuity at the expense of institutional growth and transformational change.

In Kampala, this is evidenced by the glaring fragmentation within the city’s governance (Nabukeera, 2023) and managerial structures, leading to poor service delivery in all sectors. There have been many collisions, recurrent wars, displays of egotism and contestations in KCCA since the inception of the KCCA Act (Nabukeera, 2023), and

2 To be an “insider”, a group has to satisfy two criteria: 1) it is potentially powerful enough, acting alone or with others, to make significant trouble for the leadership and/or significantly affect struggles between political blocs, and 2) the leadership chooses to manage this potential threat predominantly by “co-opting” the group, and thereby incorporate it into the settlement, by channelling benefits of some description to it. Groups that either lack the power to affect struggles in this way, or that are predominantly repressed by the leadership, are “outsiders” to the settlement.

3 Historicals refer mainly to fighters and political leaders that made a significant contribution to the struggle to liberate Uganda and bring the NRM government to power after the 1981-86 bush war (Arinaitwe, 2013).

this has allowed multiple power blocs to reinvent themselves and others to emerge from time to time. The KCCA Act reduced the legislative powers of the Lord Mayor to the Speaker, hence making the Lord Mayor accountable to the city council; the Ministry of Kampala and Metropolitan Affairs in consultation with the Ministry of Lands and Local Government shall coordinate the planning of the city and proposed an establishment of an executive committee appointed by the Lord Mayor on matters of legislation.⁴ Moreover, the amended KCCA Act (2019) created the position of Minister for Kampala City and Metropolitan Affairs, who is directly appointed by the president, and reduced the power of the executive director of Kampala Capital City Authority, since s/he reports directly to the minister. Yet in the 2010 Act, the director was reporting directly to the president (Nabukeera, 2023). There are a series of other informal power centres, such as informal transportation workers (*boda boda* riders and commuter taxi drivers) and “Seven Hills” waste pickers, who have evolved and emerged and used their collective agency to influence political power across formal and informal spaces, thereby influencing how the city is inhabited, used and governed.

Drawing on case studies around the management of public lands and city markets, the paper shows that the major concern of elites has been to facilitate rentseeking opportunities for themselves, while alternately repressing and placating the political opposition to achieve a level of stability that is necessary to keep critical systems and maintain power. We conclude that the current political settlement (stalemate) provides neither incentives for central government to invest in a sustained developmental response to Kampala’s multiple challenges, nor motivation for coordinated action by city-level political and bureaucratic actors on the same.

By the mid-2000s, there was near total breakdown of systems and service delivery in Uganda’s capital city, Kampala. This was administered by the Kampala City Council (KCC), a local governance structure provided for under the 1995 constitution and 1997 decentralisation policy. KCC was dominated by opposition-leaning politicians and universally denounced as corruption-ridden, characterised by mismanagement, fraud and lack of financial accountability. The actions of both politicians and technocrats in KCC had resulted in massive financial losses, loss of public property, poor service delivery, infrastructure breakdown as well as haphazard, uncontrolled development of Kampala City over the years.

To address these challenges that plagued Uganda’s capital for decades, central government embarked on sweeping legal and institutional reforms. It influenced the enactment of the Kampala Capital City Act, 2010, which enabled the creation of a semi-autonomous public agency called the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) to replace KCC (Sserunjogi, 2012). With the Kampala Capital City Act, 2010, Kampala ceased to be a local government entity, and became an authority administered by the central government. Besides the authority, Kampala also got a whole ministry, directly overseen by the Office of the President, with two ministers (cabinet minister and minister of state). With these changes, real decisionmaking powers shifted from

⁴ Ibid.

politicians into the hands of technocrats appointed by the president (Gore and Muwanga, 2014). However, unlike other government parastatals, with boards of directors that handle policy issues, the KCCA Act provides for councils of elected politicians as the policymaking organs at city and divisional levels.

KCCA reforms were at the centre of President Museveni's political strategy to snatch the city from the opposition parties that had controlled Kampala's political space since 2001 (Muwanga et al., 2020). Kampala City is important to the ruling coalition in several ways. From an economic point of view, Kampala is the single most economically productive area in Uganda. It hosts over 70% of the country's manufacturing plants, 80% of commercial activities and generates about 65% of Uganda's GDP (World Bank, 2017; KCCA strategic plan 2016-21). This means the city is an important tax base and a major source of economic rents. Most elites have homes, investments in the productive industrial base, real estate and land. It is these stakes that make Kampala significant for the ruling elite, motivating them to guarantee minimum levels of service delivery to keep the city functional.

Contrary to popular opinion, winning Kampala electorally is not the overriding goal of the elite, as they do not depend on it to win the national vote (although it would be symbolically significant to defeat the opposition in their main stronghold). However, with electoral victory beyond their immediate reach, the focus of the ruling elite has been on reaching out to the different sections of the city that are hostile to the NRM's rule, to make deals that allow the city to function in minimally acceptable ways. Indeed, the media has recently been awash with stories that the Lord Mayor, a hitherto ferocious critic of the ruling government, was getting "political support" from President Museveni's brother (see Section 3.2).

To provide the requisite minimum levels of service delivery, the KCCA was constituted in March 2011. It received enhanced budgets to make investments in infrastructures like roads, markets, drainage channels and traffic control systems. The transition from KCC to KCCA required strong technical leadership. Jennifer Musisi, a lawyer with rich experiences from another successful Ugandan public agency – Uganda Revenue Authority – was given the job with full presidential backing and guaranteed public funding. Musisi reportedly accepted the role of executive director after getting several reassurances from the president: that he would provide her with "a budget to pay our workers well and to do the things we need to do"; grant her the freedom to hire and fire staff; and that there would be "no political interference from you [the president]; your family, your members of parliament or anybody because it was political interference that destroyed... systems in the city in the first place" (Weinberger and De Jong 2019: 3-4).

Government boosted KCCA's budget and the institution itself raised own revenues. It also obtained foreign/external funding through grants and loans from donors. These financial arrangements are, however, negotiated on KCCA's behalf by central government, approved by the national assembly, and received through the Ministry of Finance (Vo et al., 2019). Within a few years, the roads, drainage channels and traffic

lights improved tremendously. Presidential backing was central in enabling KCCA to push through unpopular reforms aimed at fighting corruption, modernising tax and revenue administration and improving service delivery systems. With presidential backing, the executive director also succeeded in fending off threats of strikes and violence orchestrated by the disempowered politicians, contractors, taxi drivers and street vendors, as well as “corrupt” officials of the disbanded KCC.

However, Musisi lost the same support following President Museveni’s humiliating defeat in Kampala during the 2016 elections. At his swearing-in ceremony, the president attributed his and NRM’s loss to Musisi’s aggressive approach, which had created more foes than friends of the government (Muwanga et al., 2020). Yet, Musisi’s problem was not so much about directly causing Museveni’s electoral defeat; rather, her reforms had *indirectly* fermented anger and were threatening to cause open revolt against government officials by the so-called “unruly citizenry of the capital” (Golooba-Mutebi and Hickey, 2016: 613). Barely a year into her tenure at KCCA, sections of the public were protesting her brutality, and through various avenues, including songs, were appealing to the appointing authority to reign her in and reminded them that “the city is ours!” (Baral, 2019: 57). Therefore, the 2016 electoral defeat was a wakeup call for the ruling elite. The reform-minded CEO was ordered to relax the reforms credited for turning around Kampala, in relation to disciplining the traders, taxi drivers, *boda bodas* and street vendors. The president also started to directly interfere in the management of KCCA affairs to paint an image that he was on poor people’s side (Baral, 2019). For example, in 2017, he issued a directive to lower the tax rates paid by taxis in the city to the detriment of KCCA’s revenue collection efforts. Musisi had also decided to remove hawkers from the streets of Kampala and to start taxing commercial motorcycle riders, popularly known as *boda bodas*. Again, both decisions were reversed on President Museveni’s orders. Citing political interference, KCCA’s deputy executive director quit in 2017 and Jennifer Musisi herself followed suit in October 2018.

2.2. City-level power balance and governance

We have analysed Uganda’s national political settlement and discussed the importance of Kampala. Now we look more closely at the power balance and governance arrangements at the city level. Given the city’s importance to the national settlement, the president is keen to influence the power balance within the city. The president’s powers are projected through three groups of appointees that perform three often overlapping functions on his behalf, namely: political leadership, security and administration. As we have seen, power in Kampala City has been recentralised under KCCA, with a ministry specially created to oversee the governance of Kampala City. The ministers for Kampala Capital City and Metropolitan Affairs perform the political functions, resident city commissioners (RCCs) coordinate security, and the executive director oversees the day-to-day operations of KCCA with the technical/administrative team.

However, the de facto leader of the city is President Museveni, who, informally, co-governs with his young brother, retired General Caleb Akandwanaho aka Salim Saleh. While Museveni is the chief architect (Golooba-Mutebi, 2018), political pundits agree that Saleh is “a king maker and pivot on decisions and appointments made in his brother’s Government” (Benj, 2022). Mostly operating behind the scenes and through secret encounters, the general literally handpicks those whom the president eventually appoints to work in and for Kampala City. Golooba-Mutebi (2018) writes that Museveni and Saleh employ three Cs – co-optation, control and camouflage – as mechanisms to cannibalise opposition parties and organised groups.⁵ The cases of Beti Turomwe Kamywa, formerly of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) party, and then Uganda Federal Alliance; and Betty Amongi Akena (commonly known as Berry Amongi)⁶ despite her affiliation to the opposition Uganda People’s Congress (UPC), are clear examples of the co-optation process practised by the ruling government.

KCCA is the governing body created to administer Kampala City on behalf of the central government by an Act of Parliament in 2010, which became effective on 1 March 2011. Within KCCA, two parallel structures exist (Figure 3): the technical arm, headed by the executive director (appointed by the president); and the political/policy arm or council, made up of the lord mayor and councillors elected via universal adult suffrage. Contrary to expectations in the KCCA law, currently, most policy directives of KCCA originate from central government, rather than KCCA’s council. This is perhaps because, since its establishment, KCCA has had the same lord mayor, Elias Lukwago, who is popularly voted in, despite being a long-standing critic of the president. Observers note that government’s intention has been to reduce the powers and influence of Elias Lukwago to ceremonial roles.⁷ In response, the lord mayor has been preoccupied with resisting the policies imposed from “above”, rather than generating his own.

Since the establishment of KCCA, there has been tremendous growth in revenue collection, from UGX 40.96 billion in 2011/12 to UGX 93.24 billion collected in 2021/22; and a revenue growth of 16%, despite the tough Covid-19 economic circumstances (KCCA, 2022c). The increase in revenue performance was largely attributed to: 1) automation, digitisation and reconciliation of all the key revenue processes; 2) introduction of the e-cities systems, which permitted almost all revenue administration processes to be done online; 3) vigorous taxpayer sensitisation campaigns using electronic, print media and workshops to educate taxpayers; and 4) revaluing of all the

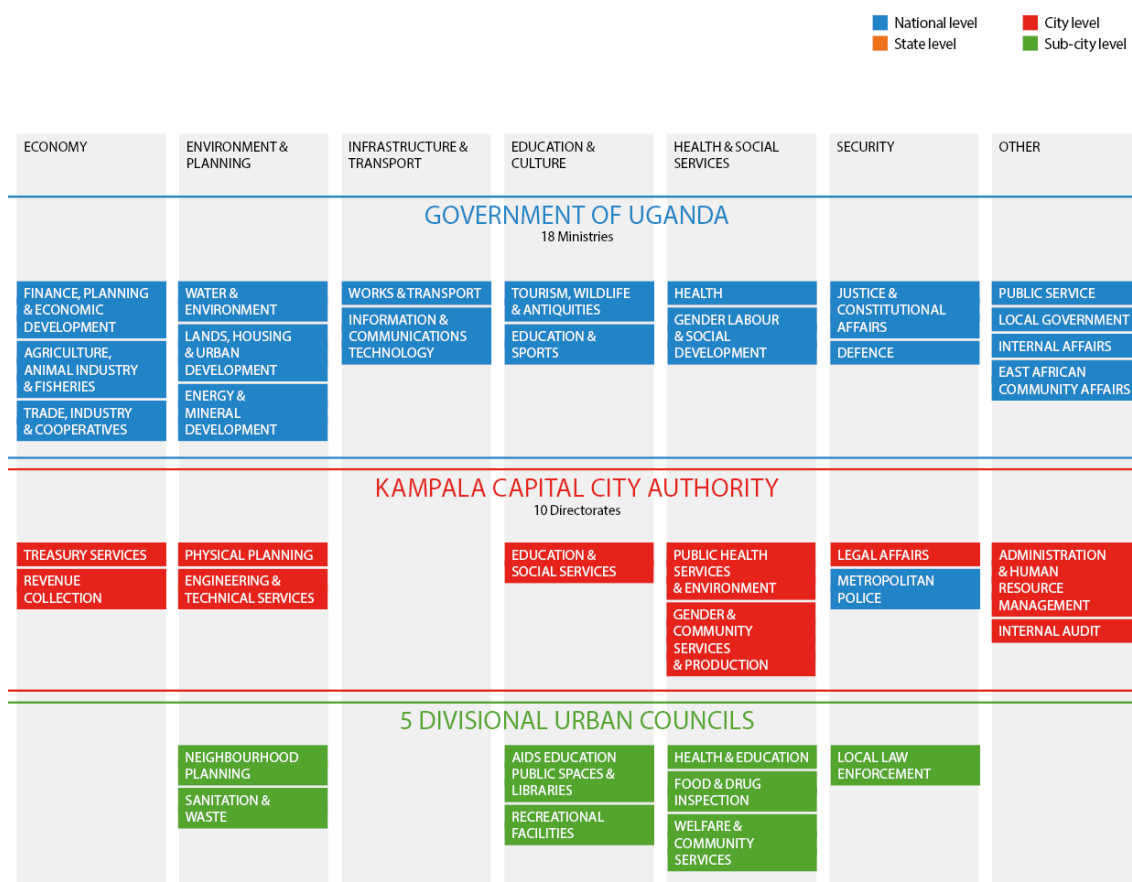
5 These involve appointments (disbursements of resources and favours) for supporters and opposition figures.

6 The former was appointed cabinet minister for Kampala Capital City and Metropolitan Affairs for the period 2011- 2016, before switching to the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development and she now occupies the position of inspector general of government; while the latter previously served as the cabinet minister for Lands, Housing and Urban Development, minister for Kampala Capital City and Metropolitan Affairs and now minister for Gender, Labour and Social Development.

7 https://content.cityleadership.harvard.edu/BHCLI_BeyondTable_0023TC.pdf (accessed 22 October 2024).

properties within the city, reporting and the regular collection of taxes and fees arrears (KCCA, 2022c). Despite these increases in revenue and other achievements⁸ registered under KCCA, the political situation, characterised by power struggles, corruption and ineffective governance and decisionmaking processes, delays and disrupts efforts to address the city’s development challenges. And mistrust continues to characterise the relationship between the political leadership of the city and country, respectively, reducing the prospects for coordinated reform efforts and sustained investment.

Figure 3: KCCA governance structure



Source: LSE Cities (2018).

Operating informally alongside the formal political and technical structures are powerful political and business elites with strong connections to the NRM government and the president. Individuals of varying allegiance to the NRM and the opposition have also

⁸ The improvements were registered in the areas of improved revenue performance by expanding the tax base, KCCA reclaiming land and buildings that had been occupied illegally without compensation, registering and licensing taxi operators, raising parking tariffs and increasing its grant portfolio by attracting beyond the central government. In 2015, the reforms seemed to bear fruit, when the Global Credit Rating Company gave KCCA a higher credit rating. See www.kcca.go.ug/uDocs/KCCA%20credit%20rating%20report.pdf (accessed 22 October 2024).

been co-opted to work under a complex geometry of informal–formal political bargaining. These city-level power networks filter downwards through rentseeking and clientelism to impact service provision, critical infrastructure, financial and development programming (such as roads, slum upgrading, markets, taxes, licensing, vending and so on) and law enforcement. All of these significantly impact the everyday experiences of residents, particularly in the city’s informal settlements.

3. City of systems overview

In the last section, we examined how the distribution of power in Uganda influences development and the prospects for developmental reform in Kampala; in this section, we add a more material dimension, analysing the systems by which various actors and agencies attempt to sustain and/or improve urban life. All of these “urban systems” depend on both physical infrastructure and human actors (but in more “social” systems, such as healthcare and education, humans play a more pivotal role in system functioning). The partial dependence of all urban systems on physical infrastructure creates powerful constraints and path dependencies, and produces unintended (negative) externalities. We analyse how the externalities of systems (compounded by intersystem interaction⁹) and the scale of system failures/fragmentations add to the challenges that residents and enterprises face.

Since systems are also governed and resourced by numerous human actors (formal or informal, public or private actors – but usually a combination of these), their functioning is impacted by the political settlement described above, as well as by ideas deriving from developmental paradigms like modernism and neoliberalism. This means that systems tend to unevenly allocate goods and services, and may be used to extract benefits and secure political advantage. The main systems examined here are water, energy, waste management, sanitation, education, healthcare, food distribution, transportation, finance and law and order. We examine how they function, how they support or hinder urban development, and how they may be improved.

3.1. Governance, coverage, quality and affordability

The dominant organisational architecture of formal systems in Kampala has, for some time now, been mixed public-private ownership, governance and delivery, representing a departure from the traditional public vs private duality. A loose categorisation of ownership and governance arrangements in the city is provided in Table 1. But in addition to public sector departments and private firms, numerous other actors are involved in system governance at various levels, including faith groups, community organisations and informal actors, which has resulted in a broad array of mixed governance configurations. Most of the systems across the city are consequently highly **fragmented**. Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) and the central government often

⁹ Complex problems in African cities often involve multiple city systems that interact with each other; we will capture intersystem interaction in our third concept of “urban development domains”.

struggle to coordinate service delivery within and across these fragmented systems, and the infrastructure across the city is generally of poor quality and short lifespan, due to subpar construction methods and materials and irregular maintenance. Endemic corruption exacerbates these issues.

Since centralised service delivery systems (whether publicly owned/managed, public–private or fully contracted to private entities) have not delivered the results that the government and KCCA expect, urban life in Kampala City survives and endures in large part because of alternative informal and private systems of public services delivery, such that the city can be considered an “**adaptive city**”. All systems rely on decentralised organisations, infrastructures and technologies, such as local (illegal) electricity power connectors (commonly referred to as *Kamyufus*) and/or alternative energy sources, such as solar power; water vendors and boreholes/wells; village health teams; gulper technology providers; bio-fill toilets; septic tanks; bio-digesters; tricycles; trucks; cesspool emptiers; elevated toilets; informal waste pickers; neighbourhood watch systems, and so on. One can also argue that the rise in *boda boda* transportation is due to the failures of conventional bus and commuter rail systems. Overall, system shortcomings and improvisations have resulted in what we call the Kampala “ins”: informal neighbourhoods, inaccessible settlements, inefficient transport systems, ineffective electricity distribution systems, insecurity, injustice, and so on.

Table 1: Ownership and governance of critical systems in Kampala City

	Direct service delivery	Contracts and/or joint ventures	Other (beyond government agencies and large private firms)	Dominant governance and organisational model
Water	National Water and Sewerage Corporation; a government body organised under private commercial rules		Water vendors	Centralised semi-autonomous body including strategic partnerships with local leaders and organisations such as Rotary International
Sanitation	National Water and Sewerage Corporation and KCCA	Private sanitation providers given licences to collect and transport faecal sludge from the city to treatment plants	Gulper technologists, pit emptiers and private individuals	Mixed forms
Waste management	KCCA	Private companies	Waste pickers	Contractual/ concessionaires
Energy		Private company	Private individuals	Contractual
Healthcare	National government KCCA	Private health service providers	VHTs and traditional birth attendants	Hierarchical
Education	National government KCCA	Private education service providers		Hybrid
Food distribution		Private sector		Private sector
Transportation	Uganda Railways Corporation	Private sector production and provision (commuter taxis and buses)	<i>Boda bodas</i> (motorcycles)	Public–private partnership
Finance		Private sector players	Money lenders, SACCOS, VSLAs	
Law and order	Uganda Police and other security agencies	Private security firms	Neighbourhood watch systems	Centralised with private security providers

Source: Categorisation based on the interviews and literature search.

Water

The city enjoys a relatively higher level of penetration by the National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC) (KCCA, 2019) compared to other NWSC service areas across the country. The corporation aims at providing clean and affordable water to 100% of the population within the Kampala Water area under the 100% Service Coverage Acceleration Project (SCAP100), with two public stand taps per village, or a tap for every 200 people. However, even with establishing a dedicated urban pro-poor policy (UPP)¹⁰ and branch in 2006, some sections of the city continue to access water from other sources, including rainwater harvesting schemes, open wells and springs, protected springs, boreholes, streams and lakes.

Due to the increasing density of population and economic activities in the city, much of the water in Kampala City has become too contaminated for public use (according to medical authorities), and the city has suffered from numerous epidemic diseases like cholera and typhoid. While the city has numerous water sources, the quality of the water sources outside the NWSC is poor (Murphy et al., 2017; Tenywa et al., 2024; Kiwanuka, et al., 2023). Only national water NWSC fulfils the high quality standards of water, with 99.6% of the provided water meeting national standards for drinking water (WSP, 2011). Studies on the bacteriological quality of water from ten springs in the large low-income areas of Katwe and Kisenyi, for example, found that the total coliform counts in 90% of the samples exceeded WHO guidelines for drinking water. What some households in informal settlements do to ensure drinking water is safe is cover water during storage, boil and filter it, among other things (Muwereza, 2016).

Kampala City is faced with non-revenue water (NRW) (water that is supplied into the distribution systems but is not billed), due to 1) old water networks that are prone to leaks and bursts and require replacement; 2) water thefts and illegal water use by some customers; 3) damage done to water pipes during road construction works; and 4) old water meters which under-register consumption (Etiang, 2022; KCCA, 2019). House-to-house verifications by NWSC revealed that some customers colluded with NWSC staff to not only carry out illegal (re)connections, both on water pipes and sewerage systems, but also alter meter readings and tariff categories (Matovu, 2021), costing the company over UGX 25 billion monthly (Monitor, 2021; Wendo, 2009). Moreover, water thefts are not limited to low-income settlements; the vice is widespread across the city, with rich urban residents (city tycoons), city businesses, private schools, hotel owners, hostels, lawyers and members of parliament considered as the biggest defaulters.

10 NWSC adopted three pro-poor measures: 1) the affordable connections policy aimed to increase coverage by lowering the connection fee cost for customers within 50 metres of the water main; 2) NWSC shifted from a uniform tariff structure for domestic and non-domestic customers and public water points (PWP), thereby promoting equity in pricing and supply across domestic, commercial, government and industrial sectors; and 3) a pro-poor targeting project which subsidised water supply connections in informal settlements (NWSC, 2024).

Sanitation

The quality of sanitation services across the city is variable but generally very poor. The National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC) manages a reticulated sewerage system. The quality of the sewerage network is reduced by the poor drainage systems in the city, the sprouting of commercial centres (which illegally connect stormwater from roofs into the system), and poor usage of toilet facilities, leading to frequent blockages and overflows onto the city streets. Whenever it rains, the roads flood and the sewer manholes get submerged, leading to the entry of large volumes of stormwater into the sewerage system and consequent outbursts along the sewer lines (NWSC, nd).

A large proportion of Kampala's residents use onsite sanitation facilities – including pit latrines and a few locally set up septic tanks – of variable quality and effectiveness that require emptying from time to time. Informal settlements, in particular, rely on non-networked, substandard sanitation facilities (Lukooya et al., 2019; Nsangi et al., 2021; Nkurunziza et al., 2017), a situation aggravated by an influx of migrants, including refugee communities (Lukooya et al., 2019). A study done in 2012 by the Water and Sanitation Programme (WSP) of the World Bank showed that poor sanitation costs Uganda UGX 389 billion each year (equivalent to USD 177 million) and this was equivalent to USD 5.5 per person in the country per year or 1.1% of the national GDP. The majority (84%) of these costs come from the annual premature death of 23,000 Ugandans from diarrhoeal disease, including 19,700 children under the age of five. Health-related costs accounted for 12% of the total economic costs, while access time and productivity losses accounted for about 4.1% (World Bank, 2012).

There are a number of stakeholders in sanitation: private sector emptiers engage in faecal sludge management, especially in the collection and transportation to treatment/disposal sites. But the inaccessibility of informal neighbourhoods (with roads too narrow for vacuum trucks) means that most private collection companies avoid servicing low-income settlements.¹¹ Despite the direct faecal–oral transmission risks, the gap is usually filled by manual emptying service providers (which use no mechanical equipment), who remain the only form of faecal de-sludging, due to the lack of pathways for mechanical de-sludging.¹²

Solid waste management

The only designated site for Kampala waste disposal (Kiteezi landfill) – shared by all areas within Greater Kampala – appears to have technical, environmental, social and financial challenges and is exceeding waste capacity (Aryampa et al., 2022). Also,

11 The cost of dumping several litres of sewage at the existing and centralised sewerage treatment plants is also high for private companies. By 2017, to dump 3,000 litres of sewage at Lubigi Sewerage Treatment Plant, NWSC charged UGX 10,000 (estimated USD 3). From 3,000 to 7,000 litres, it charged UGX 14,000 (estimated USD 4), and above 7,000 litres, it charged UGX 25,000 (estimated USD 8) (Tajuba, 2017).

12 These are indispensable groups of people, either working as individuals or in teams in the expanding sanitation value chain system across Kampala City.

large amounts of organic solid waste are persistently dumped in open drains. These decompose with time and, when mixed with storm water flowing over quite long distances, give a characteristic bad odour. This is commonly experienced in channels draining the city markets, informal settlements and congested areas.

Most low-income settlements do not even enjoy regular waste collection services – either state-provided or private. Not only are most residents in such areas presumed too poor to pay for regular services, but conventional solid waste trucks (just like human waste vacuum trucks mentioned above) cannot easily enter into the densely populated informal settlements across the city. The time lag between generation and collection of waste (if it happens at all) in many areas of the city has led to high environmental and public health risks, including surface and underground water pollution, air pollution and soil contamination (KCCA, Republic of Uganda and IFC, 2020).

On a positive note, under the World without Waste Partnerships, KCCA has partnered with Coca Cola Beverages Uganda (CCBU) and several other players, through their Plastic Recycling Industries Initiative (PRI), to increase plastic waste collection efforts across the city.

Healthcare

The public healthcare system in Kampala is planned and managed by both the Ministry of Health and the KCCA. A health facility¹³ census conducted by USAID in the five divisions of Kampala City found a total of 1,554 health facilities. The city has only 26 publicly managed health facilities for a population of about 5 million people (residents plus daily commuters (KCCA, 2019)). KCCA only manages eight of these facilities, whilst the Ministry of Health manages all other facilities. It is national policy that that all public healthcare systems are free for users (Magunda et al., 2023). Overall, the majority of the government health facilities are located in the centre of the city (Figure 5) and most of the informal settlements do not have government health facilities. In 2020, the KCCA had six public ambulances, an inadequate number to serve 3 million people.

Private facilities play a greater role than public ones in Kampala City,¹⁴ handling close to 36% of deliveries, 74% of modern contraceptives and 82% of childhood illness services in the city (KCCA, 2022b). Since most of the health facilities are in the private sector and KCCA is not in charge of any hospital, the authority is deliberately working to upgrade the few public health centres in the city into hospitals to accommodate all

13 Uganda's health facilities are classified into seven levels, based on the services they provide and the catchment area they are intended to serve. The health facilities are designated as health centre level one (HC I), to health centre level four (HC IV), general hospital, regional referral hospital and national referral hospital.

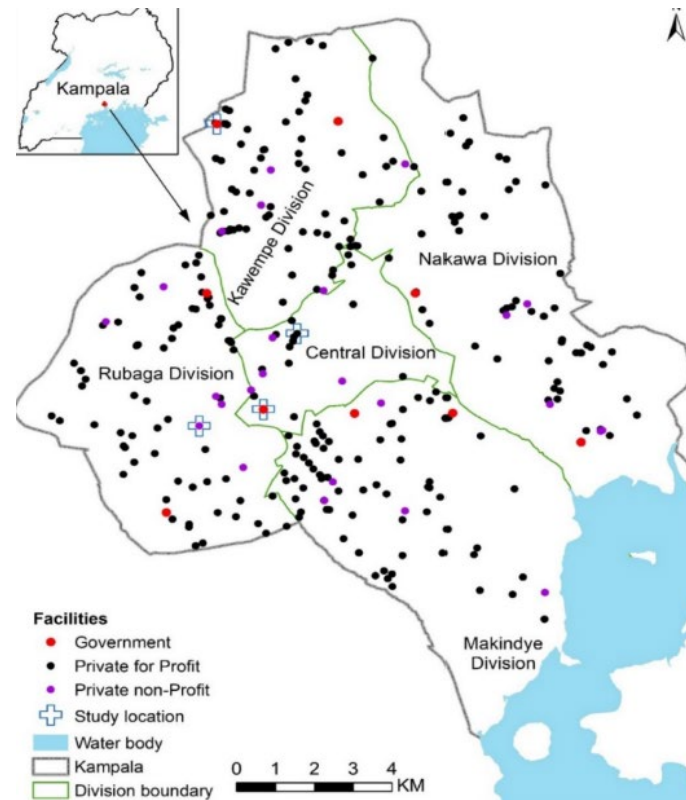
14 The Uganda government recognises the importance of the private health sector in delivering services to the general population. The Health Sector Strategy and Investment Plan (HSSIP), implemented over ten years and currently in its fifth phase, includes reforms to promote the private sector involvement in health care service delivery to reach more residents.

the patients that benefit from KCCA services within and outside Kampala City (ibid). There has been a remarkable increase in the number of private for-profit health facilities opening over the years, especially since 2010. There are also many undocumented, unregulated and underutilised privately owned ambulances, which can potentially be harnessed into a unified system, in collaboration with public ambulances to serve the urban population more efficiently (Ononge et al., 2023).

There is a sense among the general population that private health providers are more readily accessible and provide a higher quality service than the public sector. A 2023 survey of 17,912 individuals who sought care (Turyamureba et al., 2023), found that 36% used a government facility, 60% used private facilities, while 4% had self-care/treatment. Dysfunctionality, frequent failures/breakdowns and rampant theft of medical equipment in public health facilities in the city have been reported (see, for example, Abet, 2023). Studies have found that more than half of the patients that visited public health facilities across the city had to wait for more than an hour before they could see a health worker, only to be told that there was no medicine or basic equipment like blood pressure measuring machines to assist in their diagnosis (Health Journalist, 2022; UNHCO and HEPS-Uganda, 2012). In addition, patients also complained about the poor bedside manner of healthcare workers, especially at the maternity and out-patients' wards. The duration of time they spent waiting to access medical care could be attributed to the low staffing levels at hospitals (ibid). But private health facilities also face significant challenges to hire, employ and retain qualified staff (Banyan Global, 2015).

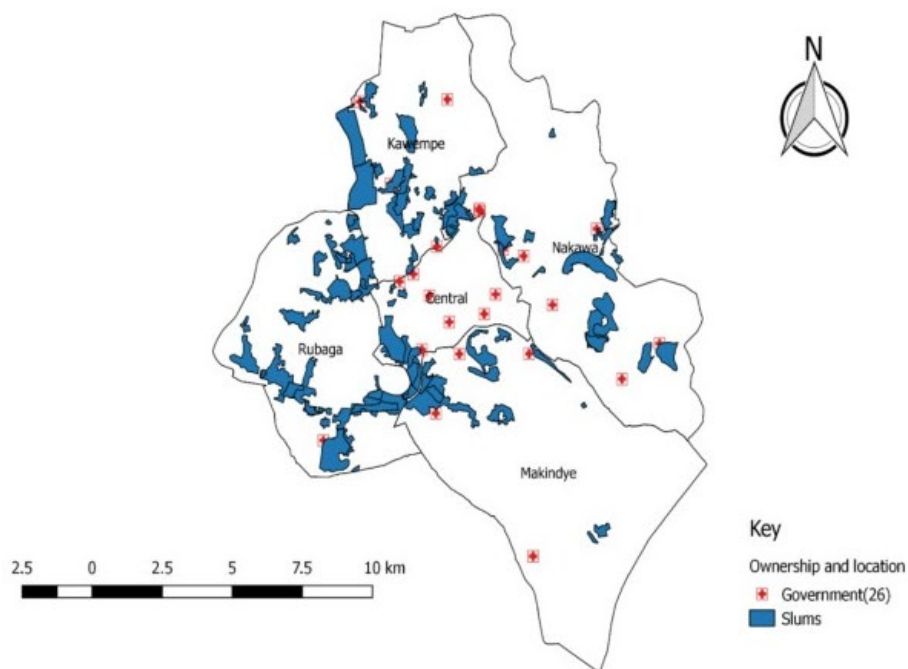
Kampala City residents practice medical pluralism – combining biomedicine with traditional means of care (Jitta, 2002). The latter include traditional healers (herbalists and diviners and traditional birth attendants (TBAs), sometimes referred to as indigenous midwives), who offer services openly, while others provide herbs secretly. These parallel care services are particularly utilised for illnesses that are believed not to be resolved in biomedical units, for example, mental health, epilepsy, HIV/AIDS and related conditions, misfortunes and suspected witchcraft (Smith, 2019). The rise in medical pluralism may also be a result of lack of medicines in conventional public health facilities. The government banned traditional birth attendants from delivering babies in 2010 (Kabayambi, 2013) in the hope of improving maternal and infant mortality rates (Segawa, 2018), but the practice remains widespread and popular, and with the shortage of medical workers, TBAs remain very much in business (Monitor, 2013).

Figure 4: Health facility locations in Kampala City



Source: Birabwa, et al. (2024)

Figure 5: Distribution of government health facilities against informal settlements in Kampala City



Source: Magunda et al. (2023).

Transport

KCCA is at the core of the organisation of different modes of transport – designating routes, rehabilitating stages, granting operation licences, approving associations and regulating the transport system as a whole. The city’s transportation system is largely dominated by a mix of private vehicles, taxis, motorcycles (*boda bodas*) and heavy-duty vehicles, due to the shortage of state-operated public transport (Takayuki, 2022). Nothing much has changed since the World Bank warned of a serious shortage of public transport back in 1983. Walking is the dominant form of mobility in Kampala City; for those who commute, *boda bodas* have the highest share of vehicle movements (42%), but only transport 9% of commuters; minibuses have only 21% of vehicle movements, but transport 82% of commuters in the Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area (Ngwomoya, 2018a; World Bank, 2017). Nevertheless, *boda bodas* have become very popular, as they fill a crucial gap at a time when there is limited infrastructure in many parts of the city, offering fast, flexible and reliable services to passengers. However, there are no limitations on when transport operators are allowed to raise fares, and high fares deter many households from travelling unless absolutely necessary, which means they may disengage from city affairs.

Buwembo (2020) describes the existing public transport system as deceptively rowdy, yet paradoxically the country’s most efficient self-regulated economic subsector. The sector has long been operating under various organised formal bodies, termed “associations”; organised and supervised under “stages” (or, more accurately, routes), they have very strict operating codes and procedures. The *boda boda* industry is also highly self-regulated, taking both formal and informal modes of organisation. The city does not have an independent city rail transport network of its own, but part of the national rail network managed by Uganda Railways Corporation operates a commercial cargo and passenger rail service (KCCA, 2019). A concession was granted to Rift Valley Railways in 2006 to manage railway services across the country, including a commuter rail system in the city, but this suffered many contractual failures and errors until it was revoked. Currently, Uganda Railways Corporation operates passenger trains between Kampala and Namanve and there is hope that services will be extended to other parts of the city.

The city’s road network consists of a total of 2,110 kilometres, of which only one-third are paved (Office of the Clerk to Parliament, 2023), and only a third of those paved roads are considered to be in good condition, with the rest poorly maintained (Sserugo, 2022; Tinka, 2021; World Bank, 1983). Over 75% of the paved road network is over 35 years old and has been patched and repaired too many times (Oguzu, 2024). Some of the roads have been around for over 50 years and yet they were designed to last for 15 years (Murungi, 2019). In 2023, KCCA recorded an area of 8,500m² of potholes across the city. Most roads in any division, parish or cell have ceased to be roads, and become trenches or potato gardens (Tinka, 2023). For motorists, the poor state of the roads has increased vehicle operating costs, which translates into losses to the tune of UGX 2.9 trillion annually in vehicle maintenance and operational delays (Draku, 2021;

Katushabe, 2023). Only about 12% of roads are street lit (mostly non-residential); some are half-lit by faulty LED and solar-powered streetlights. Dark backstreets put the lives of city residents at risk of attack or accidents (Ngwomoya, 2018b).

Meanwhile, there is heavy traffic on most Kampala City roads, resulting in 24,000 man-hours lost per day (about 288,000 man-hours, or 52 days, lost per year) and an equivalent of UGX 500 million lost daily¹⁵ with car speeds falling from an average of 28kmph to between eight and 14kmph, due to traffic jams (Oguzu, 2024; Ladu, 2022). In sum, traffic congestion in the city leads to reduced productivity of the city's workforce and business owners, increased commuter fares, increased road maintenance costs as well as increased air pollution (KCCA, 2022a).

Finance

Currently, Uganda's financial sector is divided into four tiers: the first tier comprises commercial banks, development banks, pension banks and capitals markets; the second tier includes credit institutions and financial companies; the third consists of microfinance deposit-taking institutions (MDIs), credit institutions, insurance companies; and the fourth includes the Savings and Credit Cooperative Associations (SACCO), financial NGOs and all other non-deposit-taking financial institutions (BOU, 2017). Tiers 1-3 are regulated and supervised by Bank of Uganda. However, financial inclusion in Uganda is still very low. The share of the bankable population in Uganda is unclear. Different surveys in Uganda have produced different estimates of the state of financial inclusion. A survey in 2021 showed that 88% of Ugandans aged ten years and above did not own a functional bank or savings account, 9% of the population had a functional bank/minority depository institution (MDI) account, and 3% of the entire population possessed a microfinance institution/SACCOS account (FSDUganda, 2018). One of the most trusted reports on banking and the status of financial inclusion in Uganda showed that Kampala City had the highest percentage of banked adults (42% of adults in the city) compared to other regions across the country, with a median monthly income of UGX 300,000 (estimated USD 85) (FSDUganda, 2018) and this is in part attributed to the widespread use of mobile money, with ubiquitous service centres and variety of services for peer-to-peer money transfer. This has changed the share of individuals operating a bank account to steadily increase from 20.5% in 2011 to 58% by 2017.¹⁶ The informal financial sector comprises village savings and loan schemes (VSLAs), savings and credit cooperative societies (SACCOs) and microfinance institutions that play a pivotal role in supporting the population in Kampala to access financial services, save money and learn key financial skills (Mpuga, 2008; IOM, 2017). They are usually organised in small groups of ten to 25 members that have well

¹⁵ Other reports indicate that the daily cost of congestion in the GKMA was equal to USD 1.5 million (4.2% of GKMA's daily GDP) (Baertsch, 2020), and USD 800 million is lost annually in productivity compounded by wasted fuel and increased emissions (Oguzu, 2024).

¹⁶ See www.ceicdata.com/en/uganda/bank-account-ownership/ug-bank-account-ownership-at-a-financial-institution-or-with-a-mobilemoneyservice-provider--of-population-aged-15.

defined procedures, allowing members to save and borrow from the group in a transparent and democratic manner.

There is evidence that low-income and financially excluded populations have active financial lives and need a broad range of financial services to take advantage of economic opportunities (Buyinza et al., 2018). And indeed, mobile money users describe its benefits as reduction in transaction time, improved security and convenience (Lakuma and Kuteesa, 2014). However, there is an increase in unlicensed and unregistered online money lending dealerships and apps that have flooded the digital space, such as Mangucash, Kasente-Instant Mobile Loan, Quick Loan, Ukash-Personal Online Loan, amongst many others,¹⁷ through which unsuspecting residents in Kampala City and across the country are facing illegal exorbitant fees to obtain funds for their survival (Nsubuga and Ssuubi, 2024). Many of these offer cheap and instant loans, most of which are available, as long as one has access to a smart phone and the internet.¹⁸ These online lenders source clients either through unsolicited bulk text messages, with tempting offers, or unregulated social media advertising, or by word of mouth. And with this kind of arrangement, money is wired directly to an applicant's mobile money account. No face-to-face contact even occurs.

An online campaign on X, trending with the hashtag “#IllegalOnlineLoanApps”, has highlighted significant issues for many individuals that have fallen prey to loan sharks and online lending apps (Nsubuga and Ssuubi, 2024). The apps offer loans with very high interest rates, and when borrowers fail to pay, they are subjected to harsh debt collection tactics, such as data shaming on social media platforms, intimidation, harassment, blackmail and threats (ibid). Considering that the apps access and capture sensitive financial information from the family and emergency contacts of borrowers, the threats even extend to these third parties, who are harassed and tormented by the loan recovery agents (Serugo, 2024); some are brought to the cliff's edge (“*ku bunkenke*”).¹⁹ Additionally, the loan apps employ SIM boxing technology, which allows them to run robocalls that continuously switch numbers, making it challenging for government authorities to track and identify the perpetrators (Nsubuga and Ssuubi,

17 A full listing of the loan apps that give instant loans in Uganda, including the loan range, repayment period and annual percentage rate (APR) (which includes the cost of borrowing – the interest rate and any additional fees associated with the loan) can be found here: <https://blog.pesasave.app/top-100-loan-apps-in-uganda/> (accessed 22 October 2024).

18 Most of these require the applicant to have a National Identity Card and guarantors, with an option that requires applicants to allow access to their phone contacts, call logs, location information, photos and SMS, among other things, unlike banks and other financial institutions that ask for collateral to acquire a loan.

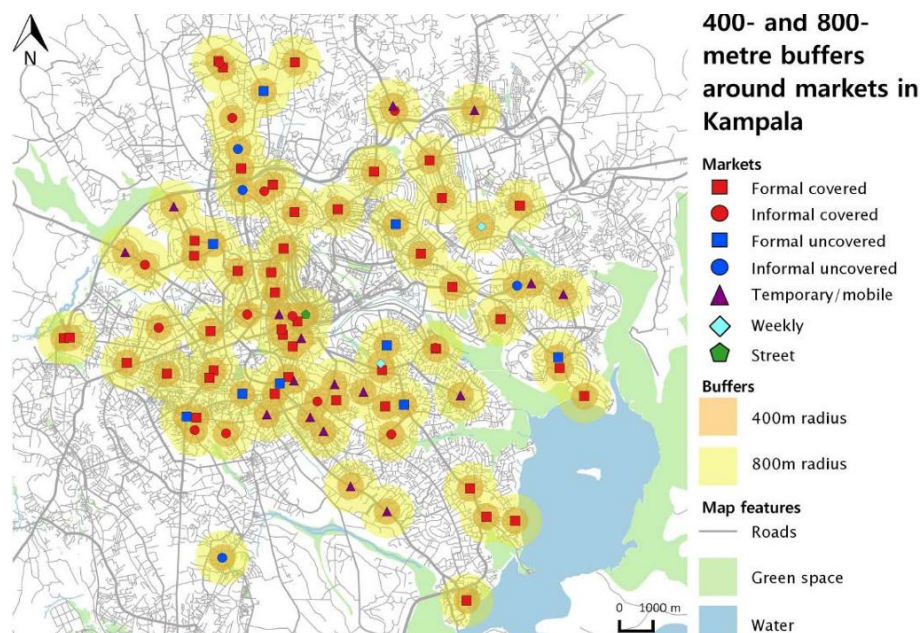
19 In the public domain, these are frequently referred to as spy loan apps, to which multiple vulnerable Ugandans have fallen victim. While Anti-Money Laundering Regulation 2015 requires an accountable person to undertake customer due diligence measures before establishing any business relationship, Regulation 15, Subsection C under the Digital Lending Regulations states that, “A digital credit provider must not make unauthorized or unsolicited calls, social media channels, or messages to customers' contact lists who were not parties to the loan transaction”. Some of the Online Loan Apps in Uganda that have been declared illegal by the Uganda Microfinance Regulatory Authority (UMRA) can be found in Agaba (2024) and Wandati (2024).

2024). The Uganda Police has indicated that such unregulated online lending and borrowing could be a conduit through which criminals are laundering dirty money across cyberspace in Uganda (Opio, 2024).

Food distribution

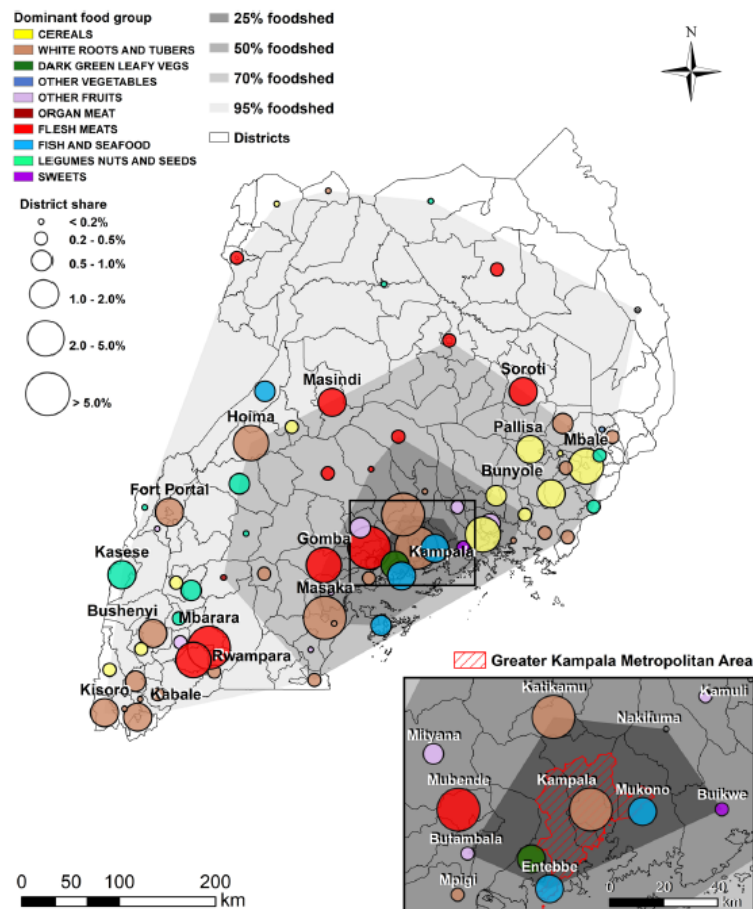
Food distribution in the city boundaries is organised in the form of various access points, especially food market areas, which are well distributed across most parts of the city (see Figure 6). Previously, the formation and maintenance of local markets was the responsibility of the local government, according to the Market Act 1942 Cap94, giving Kampala Capital City the authority to establish and maintain Kampala markets. However, private entities have been given the ability to apply and acquire licences to establish markets, creating an increase in privately owned markets alongside KCCA-managed markets. By 2018, KCCA officially listed 84 markets, of which it owned seven and co-owned one, whilst the remaining 76 were privately owned (Advocates for Public Space, 2020). Local markets have the ability to link urban and rural communities to ensure food flows throughout the year from different food sources (Advocates for Public Space, 2020) which constitute the food shed for Kampala City in Figure 7. A study by Advocates for Public Spaces (2020) found that the existing markets were within walking distance for most city residents (Advocates for Public Spaces, 2020).

Figure 6: All types of markets within 400m and 800m walking radius in Kampala City



Source: Advocates for Public Spaces (2020).

Figure 7: Foodshed for Kampala City



Source: Hemerijckx et al. (2023).

The food security situation across Kampala varies, with 17% of the overall population facing acute food insecurity – similar to the 19% recorded for 11 other urban centres assessed. On the other hand, among school going children, hunger was as high as 65%, with most of them spending a whole day in school without a meal. Overall, the prevalence of undernourishment remains high, with nearly 40% of individuals in the city being classified as undernourished, and 15% of households chronically undernourished. Moreover, healthy foods are disappearing and the consumption of fast food and ultra-processed foods (often carrying marketing claims that sound healthy – such as “fat free”, “less sugar”, “high in vitamins” and “reduced sodium”) is increasing across the city. Food and beverage companies have, of late, come up with smaller, “cost-friendly” packages of most products previously only afforded by elite city residents, which are linked to a long list of unhealthy effects – starting with obesity, poor blood sugar control and diabetes. Recent studies have found their association with high blood pressure, high cholesterol and heart disease. There is also a surge in internationally recognised fast food providers, such as KFC, Nandos, Debonairs Pizza, and Steers opening up shop in Kampala City. This has outcompeted traditional players like Jikoni, La Cabana, and Khazana (Mugisa, 2019). It is also common in low-income areas across the city to find small restaurants and youths/women with big pans already

lined up along the roadside (see Figure 8) frying all kinds of meats and chips, up for grabs for as low as UGX 2,000 (~USD 0.5).

Food contamination is another issue that has a long history in Kampala. In mid-1979, hundreds of people were left dead and others blinded after consuming adulterated alcohol, and similar deaths were reported in Kulambiro, a suburb of Kampala, in 2009 (Mufumba, 2018). The prevalence of aflatoxins in foods are well documented in not-well-dried foods, such as maize, groundnuts, sorghum, soya beans, millet, cassava, sweet potatoes, spices and fish, as well as animal feeds if processed from contaminated foods (The Independent, 2022). Uganda's popular snack, grasshoppers, and beef-stock are frequently adulterated using insect repellents and formaldehyde, a chemical used to preserve dead bodies (Mufumba, 2018), while pollution from storm water, effluent discharge and other hazards have made fish unaffordable to ordinary Ugandans (Ssemogerere, 2023).

Several reports also indicate the widespread use of hazardous pesticides – including powdered fungicides – to boost the production of vegetables such as green pepper, tomatoes and other horticultural products. In one specific case, the Uganda National Association of Community and Occupation Health (UNACOH) found that samples from markets in Nakasero, Kalerwe, Nakawa and Kasubi had abnormal levels of contamination with chemical residues. When UNACOH peeled tomatoes and took off the outer skins, it found a lot of chemicals remaining on the peeling. The peeling reduced the chemical concentration by 69.7% and washing with warm water reduced it by about 38%, and with cold water by 30% (Owiny, 2023). In other reports, some brands of formula milk were found laced with melamine, a chemical used in manufacturing plastics, whilst dairy milk is often diluted with water to increase quantities (Mwesigye, 2010). Often, street food is prepared using a mixture of transformer oil and oil that is recycled²⁰ or used several times and this oil has peroxide values (10 mEq O₂/kg) that are about four times above the recommended quality specification (Okalany et al., 2024).

²⁰ Street food vendors keep the oil overnight after cooking and keep adding fresh oil, in order to save money. When mixed with transformer oil (pilfered from transformers and then filtered), the concoction is reported to cause an array of respiratory illness, which after prolonged consumption can cause throat cancer.

Figure 8: A food preparation area typical of some informal settlements and market areas in Kampala City



Source: Taken during the data collection phase in 2022.

Law and order

As the centre of administration, economic and political affairs, and with its high population influx, Kampala City has emerged as one of the most crime-ridden areas in Uganda.²¹ The law and order system is governed predominantly by the central government through the Uganda Peoples Defences Forces (UPDF), Uganda Police Force (UPF), Uganda Prisons Service (UPS) and several other auxiliary forces. In fact, under article 212 of the 1995 Uganda Constitution, the Uganda Police Force is the custodian of law and order and of the public interest where there is any conflict, and this authority cannot be ceded to any other authority. However, the KCCA Act (2020) and the Local Governments (Kampala City Council) (Maintenance of Law and Order)

²¹ In 2021, the Uganda Police Force reported 3,262 crime cases in Old Kampala – a police division in the city that has the highest number of reported crime cases in the country.

Ordinance (2006²²) empower the KCCA to assist in the maintenance of law, order and security as one of its critical functions. The KCCA's scope and breadth of enforcement cover the following:

1. Control of public nuisances
2. Waste and sanitation compliance
3. Control of noise pollution
4. Monitoring billboards and display of all advertisements in public places
5. Curbing illegal trading and vending
6. Revenue collection enforcement
7. Development control compliance
8. Stray animals impounding
9. Street parking control
10. Green belt control

The local council system (LC system) also plays a critical role in local security provision and usually enjoys more trust in the community than the police or political leaders (FES, nd). The private sector is also a critical player in the maintenance of law and order in Kampala City: there are at least 35 private security firms, each with an average of 250 guards.²³ As the general public moves to secure their homes, businesses and property, private security is on the rise (as in other parts of the country). And since 1991, there has been an emphasis on community policing through crime preventers. The programme has been launched and re-launched several times – each time proposing a slightly different concept, and varying in focus from fighting crimes to policing of elections. By 2016, the government of Uganda reported that there were 30 crime preventers in each “village”, and each of the crime preventers comprised a volunteer force under police management that was trained in self-defence and crime prevention, but also ideology and patriotism (Geeska Afrika Online, 2016). In many neighbourhoods across the city, there are also community-driven schemes called *Mayumba Kumi* (ten households), and neighbourhood watch systems that closely work with the Uganda Police to secure their neighbourhoods. There are also several military outfits in the city, including Kifesi, Kasolo Boys, Boda 2011, ECOMOG, NATO, B13, Naguru Arrow Boys, Bijambiya, Bukola, Cheap Stores and Lukanga. They have

22

www.kcca.go.ug/uploads/acts/Kcc%20Maintenance%20of%20Law%20and%20Order%20Ordinance,2006.pdf. The ordinance is broad and focuses on: 1) maintenance of order (dancing and drum bearing, removal of trees, removal of obstructions, stacking of wood); 2) fire prevention (interference with fire alarm, dangerous fires, and permission to burn rubbish); 3) street traders, food sellers and hawkers (street trader permits, permits to erect booths, hawkers permits); 4) special hire taxis and *boda boda* (special hire permit, *boda boda* permits, applications for permits, badges and uniform); 5) car washing bays (car washing bay licence and application for car washing bay licence) and several other miscellaneous issues, such as permits to camps, parks and associated fees, offences and penalties.

23 www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/business/prosper/security-firms-seize-opportunity-as-need-for-protection-services-rises-1478382.

demarcated territories (like the “area boys” in Nigeria), where there exists an unwritten understanding among these military outfits – some of which engage in unlawful activities – to respect each other’s territorial space, except in circumstances of escaping from the law (Monitor, 2010).

Quality issues with state security: A study by the IOM (2017) found that while the service and capacity of the police and other security agencies in Kampala City had improved tremendously in terms of deployments, size of the police fleet and community policing, there remain numerous issues with the quality of these various security systems. The Uganda Police Force is the first institution that any resident in Kampala City should run to in case of a problem, but it appears to be politicised, interpreting the law selectively and acting illegally in stopping some public assemblies, and using excessive force to disperse assemblies of opposition politicians. Since the early 2000s, when Kizza Besigye broke ranks with the regime, the country has witnessed state-sponsored violence (Musisi and Wandera, 2022). Since mid-2018, the city (and country) witnessed security agencies,²⁴ including the Uganda Police, acting with unprecedented impunity and high-handedness; there were arbitrary detentions, arrests and kidnappings, torture, wanton murders among other things (ibid). A report by Advocates Sans Frontières (ASF) revealed that the 48-hour constitutional rule²⁵ is not complied with in the Uganda Police and prisons and 58% of suspects spent more than 216 hours (nine days) in detention without trial (Nakirigya, 2023). And the “yellow army”²⁶ – the thousands of youths recruited by General Kayihura (the then inspector general of police) as “crime preventers” – severally came to the limelight (Katusiime, 2015) as a pro-government force – trusted informants – for political mobilisation and intimidation. They also blurred the lines of responsibility with official security services and eroded legal principles, transparency and accountability.

KCCA enforcement personnel, while implementing the law in their routine enforcement operations, also often use unreasonable and excessive force to torture and confiscate the merchandise of many of the vendors across the city.²⁷ This has intensified since the city authority launched the “Smart City Plan” in 2020 under the leadership of the current executive director, seemingly in line with the global desire for fast growing cities in the south to be turned into “inclusive, liveable and sustainable urban areas”.

Hawkers who are arrested on suspicion of illegal trading face up to six months in prison or pay fines in excess of UGX 400,000 (estimated USD 110), which vendors and

24 There are a series of military agencies in Uganda, including but not limited to the Uganda Police Force, Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF), Internal Security Organisation (ISO) of Uganda, External Security Organisation (ESO), Joint Anti-Terrorism Task Force of Uganda.

25 According to the supreme law of Uganda, this is the 48-hour detention period for which the Uganda Police is allowed to hold suspects from the time of arrest before producing them in court or be released on bond.

26 Yellow is the party colour for the National Resistance Movement; the ruling party in Uganda.

27 Many reports indicate that male enforcement officers do not accord women their dignity during arrests. While confiscating their merchandise, the male officers undress the women vendors, tear their clothes, assault them and mercilessly drag them to the police, where they face numerous charges. Several cases of mistreatment of vendors can be found in Wepukhulu (2024).

human rights defenders have called “prohibitive” (Wepukhulu, 2024). The LC system is also being eroded and losing legitimacy, authority and functionality at village and parish levels, due to a failure to hold elections since 2001.

Education

The education system in Kampala City is part of the national education structure, which has undergone different phases of restructuring under different political regimes. A pivotal phase was in January 1997, when, in order to enhance accessibility to education, Universal Primary Education was launched. The programme provides free education for primary education in public schools and because of this programme, by 2001, enrolment for primary education had doubled to 5.5 million pupils (NPA, 2020; UNICEF, 2024).

The KCCA has an ambitious “education master plan” for model schools in the city, with the following guidelines:

- To host a population of about 1,500-2,000 pupils;
- Not more than four storeys high;
- A classroom pupil ration of 1:45;
- At least five streams for every class;
- Facilities for learners with special needs;
- Each school to be known for a specific performance niche;
- An IT and computer lab for every class;
- At least two toilet stances²⁸ for every stream even on a single block (one for boys and one for girls);
- A school library to sit about 100 learners for every class;
- A science library for hands-on experience;
- Education social worker in the schools for guidance and counselling;
- A school clinic with a trained nurse to cater for health needs during school;
- A multipurpose auditorium to serve the performing arts, assemblies and indoor and outdoor sports;
- A swimming pool for swimming and other aquatic games;
- A resource centre.

But the lack of adequate funds is responsible for the master plan’s non-implementation to date. The need for adequate funding is also required for the education system to: 1) support the titling and fencing of schools sitting on land owned by KCCA; 2) apply and process leases for schools sitting on land owned by other controlling authorities; 3) pursue memoranda of understanding with faith-based institutions and other such

²⁸ Most of the toilets in schools are (squatting) pit latrines. Stances are holes or toilet drains that allow for defecation and for female urination.

foundation bodies; and 4) purchase land for schools which sit on privately owned land (Lukwago, 2022).

In 2018, KCCA ran only 79 government-aided primary UPE schools, 22 government-aided secondary schools and one USE school with a population of over 80,000 (Kiggundu, 2018), and some areas are particularly poorly served, such as Kawempe Division, which has only two government-aided secondary schools. The private sector has stepped in to fill the gap in public education, such that most Kampala schools are private, and the government appears to have stepped back from its obligation to provide quality education (Namusobya, 2016). Most schools are owned by private investors, foundation bodies²⁹ – including religious bodies, such as the Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, and the Muslim Community – as well as communities and non-governmental organisations. These have invested millions of dollars in the education sector and now dominate service at secondary and tertiary levels (Tairo et al., 2023).

Available statistics from KCCA indicated that the teacher–pupil ratio stood at 1:54, for both government and private schools, which was considered fair by national standards, but fell short of the international standard of 1:17 (Lukwago, 2022). Furthermore, the quality of school infrastructure is inadequate for many of the public schools across the city, and the level of performance is inadequate too. In 2022, of the 38,105 pupils who sat for primary leaving examinations from the 79 KCCA schools, 1,930 failed, compared to 1,266 in 2020 (Katushabe, 2023). And a study found that at any given point, 11% of teachers in the city were absent, and of the rest, 38% were, for whatever reason, not in class, meaning classrooms of 100 children might have no teacher in the room (Weinberger and de Jong, 2021).

Energy

For many years now, even with the commissioning of several hydropower plants, the city faces severe planned and unplanned power outages and blackouts. This has continued to raise questions around how much of the country's generated electricity serves the needs of city residents. No part of the city has been spared, and many businesses, industrial establishments, residential areas and health facilities, including critical infrastructure systems and networks, continue to report the unreliability of electricity supply as the main obstacle to doing business and also to household productivity (Mawejeje and Nampewo, 2012; Sekanjako, 2021).

Data on the length of outages is still unclear, but the World Bank (2013) enterprise surveys showed that the average duration of a typical electricity outage is longer (6.8 hours/day) than the sub-Saharan Africa average (4.6 hours/day) and associated losses are larger. In other cases, outages are transient, lasting only a few minutes, or are

²⁹ These foundation bodies run what are considered as Tier 1 schools that are government aided, whose mission is to lift the livelihoods of their faithful, especially those from low-income families. These schools are run semi-autonomously and levy what are sometimes high fees to maintain their high academic and infrastructure standards (Tairo et al., 2023).

brown-outs (a temporary drop in the magnitude of voltage in an electric power system). Oseni (2019) reports that businesses experience on average 50 hours per month of electricity outage, which translates into a loss of 25 days of economic productivity per year. And even in the informal sector, it is possible that the overall costs of electricity outages are huge.

In addition to poor maintenance of transformers (Mulindwa, 2024; Wabukala, et al., 2022), electricity supply is affected by vandalism of the electricity supply/distribution chain at all points (consumption, distribution, transmission and generation³⁰). At the distribution and consumer points, the main form of vandalism is power bypass (power theft). Asset vandalism of the transmission lines targets conductors, distribution boards/panels, stay wires, reactive power compensating devices such as capacity banks and reactors, copper wires, transformers, wooden poles, and pylons (Kasozi, 2022). Vandalism has been especially rampant in Nsooba, Mulago, Kawempe, Kisenyi II Zone, New Taxi Park, Old Kampala, Lusanja-Kasangati, Kakajoo Zone-Bweyogerere, Najjanankumbi, Kisekka Market, Namuwongo, Kabaawo Zone and Mutundwe (Nagitta, 2022). The impacts are usually felt across small areas, but can escalate to further areas if the area transformers go out completely. If power network protection devices fail to isolate these faults, they can spread up to the distribution substations, causing the frequent severe and forced power outages over very large areas (Monitor, 2016; Nabisubi, 2024; Sekanjako, 2023).

In the face of these energy system failures, individually owned generators have become an indispensable unit for businesses, industries and offices across the city (Agiresaasi, 2022; Namiti, 2022). Firewood and charcoal are also indispensable for a large population of the city, especially in informal settlements, mostly for cooking – which exposes residents to poor indoor air quality and poses broader environmental management threats.

According to the Kampala Climate Change Action Plan, the city plans to reduce emissions by 22% by 2030 to position Kampala as a low carbon emissions city. The plan recommends generating 10% of the city's energy demand from within the city and ensuring that 20% of cooking energy comes from renewable alternatives other than charcoal.

3.2. History and record of contestation

The systems across the city exhibit several areas of contestation at national and city scale, some of which are of a historical nature. Most of Kampala's urban systems –

³⁰ There have been cases where segments of the electricity network have been destroyed out of malice, including by siphoning transformer oil, causing transformers to burn. Vandalism has had a relationship with the unregulated scrap collection centres, established by businessmen who buy used items and re-supply a few factories that are able to reuse them as raw materials in their production processes (Nankabirwa, 2021). Quite often, the electricity networks are vandalised by thugs who sell the stolen materials to local contractors. Moreover, the vandals damage their loot to the extent that they cannot be reused in the reconstruction of any electricity network.

including energy, health, education, law and order and finance – are better understood from a national political settlement perspective, rather than a city-level perspective. These systems are governed by national-level policies and regulations. The systems that are shaped more by city-level dynamics are transport, sanitation, and waste management.

The current politics within Kampala City is typically counterproductive, characterised by power struggles within the decisionmaking processes and structures, which all delay efforts to improve service delivery for city residents. This may be attributed in part to the contradictions in the KCCA Act, 2011 (which at the time was considered as the hammer solution to Kampala City’s perennial leadership and service delivery challenges). Moreover, there exists deep-seated mistrust between the political leadership of the city and the technical arm of KCCA, which reduces the prospects for coordinated reform efforts and sustained investment.

Often times, the city authority has become a fighting arena between the political wing, led by the lord mayor, and the executive wing, led by the KCCA executive director and the minister for Kampala and Metropolitan Affairs. These different power centres, including the resident city commissioners, hijack the KCCA’s technical work to create a chaotic and hostile working environment within the authority. This ultimately has affected budgeting processes and approvals, including neglect for community development, capacity development and welfare for the city. The deeper issue is factional politics and the state’s manipulation of the law and certain proxies (such as councillors) to eclipse the lord mayor (given its failure to politically capture the city). Service users are caught in the middle of these disruptive political processes (Monitor, 2013).

The ruling NRM government often blames the failures and mess in the city on former mayors, but the frequent manipulation of KCCA structures and processes, including interferences in contract awarding processes, undermines effective mayoral decisionmaking. Even when the KCCA Act deliberately gives the mandate to KCCA to govern the city, we observed that there are a series of power centres that have been created to manage city systems, most of them with deeply vested interests. Political authority in Kampala has become highly fragmented and personalised, and there is fighting between elected leaders and technical officials at KCCA and in ministries, undermining prospects for ambitious reform programmes or coordinated action by political and bureaucratic actors. This continues to profoundly weaken the capacity of both central and city governments to govern critical systems and services in an effective and coordinated manner. Most opposition politicians have attributed the bickering in the city to what they call “an invisible hand” and the need to submit to “orders from above” (as well as the networks based on business, kinship, tribe, NRA war history, and so on). This popular adage – order from above – suggests the existence of the “big man” around whom power revolves.

Indeed, Kampala City matters more to ruling elites as a tax base and major source of economic rents, particularly from real estate and land. Rising land values have

intensified a politics of dispossession and exploitation; politically connected investors at multiple levels benefit from informal patterns of speculation and exchange, generating even higher levels of tenure insecurity and vulnerability in Kampala's informal settlements. The city is, to a great extent, governed informally alongside the formal political and technical structures. There are powerful political and business elites with strong connections to the NRM government and the president, that use secretive, unauthorised and violent intimidation to manipulate local economic activity across the city, including taking over particular spaces, profitable enterprises and critical urban systems such as transportation, energy, education, healthcare, food distribution, law and order, finance, water and sanitation, market areas, abattoirs, public spaces and lands. Examples include Drake Lubega and Bosco Muwonge,³¹ who (along with many others) coalesce politically under what is popularly referred to as the NRM Entrepreneurs League, and in their private life as “*Bagaga Kwagalana* Group” (the “Wealthy Love Each Other”).

The government has come to realise that many of the agencies that it had established during the privatisation phase were not only draining the public purse and had ambiguous or overlapping functions, but were also failing to deliver services adequately. For example, electricity costs have risen, despite significant reductions in technical and commercial losses. Previous investigations into the operations of UMEME in 2009 by Salim Saleh (*Caleb Akandwanaho*) and Mwenda (2009) showed that the company defrauded the government of roughly USD 225 million in the first four years of operation, by inflating electricity losses. The partnership arrangements between KCCA and the private sector have also created opportunities for political gain within the city. Since opposition politicians, state powerbrokers and technocrats at KCCA can facilitate as well as obstruct the local implementation of contracts, the awarding process is often used to gain legitimacy from citizens, for example, by promising youth and women employment in the waste picking sector.

The privatisation of garbage collection can create opportunities for valuing waste as a resource (materials, energy, and so on), but this has largely been ignored by the state and KCCA, and left to informal waste workers and recyclers, CBOs and NGOs to develop onsite re-use and recycling methods. The waste workers supported by CBOs partly rely on informal door-to-door garbage collection services, temporary storage sites, illegal dump sites and the officially recognised temporary waste storage locations. In many cases, this has led to the emergence of low-income groups that take the initiative to extract and add value to materials from the waste stream, although higher-income groups are engaged in similar activities (Buyana and Lwasa, 2014). Unfortunately, these low-income waste vendors and their CBO counterparts still have the least opportunity to negotiate with KCCA on scaling up their commercial activities for greater impact.

³¹ See, for example, Monitor (2020); Mulengera Reporters (2024); Wadero (2023); and Ndyamuhaki (2024).

The efficiency of solid waste concessionaires has been the subject of heated debate since their introduction in 2015, considering that, among other things, 1) the companies charge exorbitant fees in informal settlements; 2) KCCA requires the companies to pay a tipping fee for the use of the KCCA's landfill at Kiteezi; 3) the companies are brutal to their employees and lack the capacity to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to their staff; 4) there is a very unclear supervisory mechanism by KCCA; and 5) companies lack an adequate fleet of refuse trucks – many hire ordinary vehicles (Lukwago, 2022). A number of SACCOs have operated in the cleaning space as a monopoly since 2014, and do not want the entry of newcomers or competitors. Often workers have downed tools to protest delayed payment, lack of PPE and forced association membership (Matovu, 2024).

Campaigns by the National Environment Management Authority, and the Presidential Executive Order regarding scattering of rubbish in the open, have not realised any tangible outcomes. Most politicians, manufacturers and indeed polluters only care about profits and not what the plastic wastes are doing to the environment, and the KCCA does not have the financial resources to undertake what the directives dictate. Indeed, intense lobbying from manufacturers, traders and politicians forced the government to stop National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) from enforcing the ban (Balunywa, 2023) and instead pushed the responsibility to the Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS), a body that is not known for protecting the environment (Kagoro, 2024; Tugaiza, 2019). The lobbyists (and the broader manufacturing sector) have been working hard for many years now to obstruct implementation and immediate enforcement of the plastic ban, citing confusion as to what exactly the ban should cover (Behuria, 2019). Manufacturers have developed strategic relationships with politicians over the years, leveraging their connections to successfully stop or postpone prior bans (Agiresaasi, 2019). Meanwhile, the Kampala City Traders Association estimates that there are over 20 companies manufacturing plastic bags and the ban would mean laying off a workforce of over 1,000 people (Nsimbe, 2009).

In the education sector, the most significant change that has happened in the past 40 years, following liberalisation, is the mushrooming of private schools. It is clear that the government's surrendering of the delivery of quality education to the private sector, which then auctions it to the highest bidder, is exacerbating the education divide across the city and of course the country (Mafabi, 2017). With liberalisation, there has been a rise in academic competition at kindergarten, primary and secondary school levels, with the new schools trying to outperform each other and the traditional schools across the city (Mwesigye, 2017). Consequently, young school going children's lives have changed significantly, with the toddlers reporting to school at 6am and getting back home after 4pm, while the older students have to stretch for many more hours past 7pm (ibid). Mugagga-Muwagga, in a conversation with colleagues on the Makerere University staff platform, summarises the malaise found in the education sector, especially private schools across the city:

Children wake up at 3am, some sleep at 11pm because of travelling to and from school. They reach school very early and tired. The parents are also too tired and stressed over children travel to school and homework. We are talking of children between one year to six years. These children grow up very stressed with that thing called schooling. After nursery, they are sent to boarding schools as if parents have survived the terrible burden. In boarding schools, the teachers and matrons are also like slave warders or prison guards. Even school van drivers barely sleep. The majority sleep for less than four hours at worst two hours. They have to wake up, get the school vans to search and collect children in various places but also sleep very late returning children to various homes.

As indicated in the previous section, there are no limitations on school charges. Attempts by the Cabinet to implement a directive – the School Fees Regulation Policy – through the Ministry of Education and Sports have fallen on deaf ears, especially in privately owned schools (Kahungu, 2023; Mafabi, 2017; Mukhaye, 2023; Nafula, 2023; Nakulima, 2023). Moreover, any fees caps proposed by the government (excluding international schools) have overwhelmingly been challenged at all levels because the drivers of fees hikes – namely food and utility prices, among other things – are not regulated and keep fluctuating (Ladu, 2023; Wamala, 2023). Moreover, whereas government schools are highly subsidised by the government through salary payments, tax waivers or infrastructural developments, private schools have to pay for everything, from chalk to teachers' salaries, taxes, water, food, electricity bills, re-tooling teachers, and so on (Mukhaye, 2023).

Meanwhile, there is contestation over the land occupied by KCCA schools across the city and KCCA has fought hard to protect land from encroachers and city tycoons with their eyes on various prime plots of land. In fact, KCCA has faced off with a number of high-profile businesspeople and city moguls who want to take over KCCA land, especially where schools are situated, and replace them with commercial developments (The Independent, 2018). The worst threat over contested land titles is faced by those schools that are in Central Division, and while KCCA has undertaken efforts to secure land leases for KCCA-managed schools, many have suffered gross encroachment on their land, which is often administered by one of a handful of non-KCCA authorities, such as Uganda Land Commission, Kampala District Land Board, Buganda Land Board, or faith-based organisations or private individuals (Lukwago, 2022; Weinberger and de Jong, 2021). More than 33% of KCCA primary schools are facing an existential threat, due to protracted land wrangles (Lukwago, 2022).

In the health system, Kalinaki (2023) writes that citizens will only believe the quality of public services if they see government officials using them. But rather than focusing on improving Ugandan facilities so that VIPs can use them, the government is diverting resources abroad at an increasing rate. This is a particularly common area of contestation. The cost of treatment abroad is clouded in mystery, because the Uganda Medical Board does not reveal to the public which persons are eligible under the scheme and who has so far benefited from it, what kind of ailment they were treated for, and so on (Ladu, 2022). But the amount the government spends on politicians

getting treatment abroad is estimated to be sufficient to construct ten medical facilities of the standard of Kampala International Hospital and to install not less than 70 intensive care units in hospitals around the country (Ladu, 2022).

In the food system, there is contestation around food quality issues. The Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) has been accused of failing to monitor and enforce food standards. There are particular safety challenges in the informal food systems, with everyday consumers unable to compel bad acting companies and food producers to fall in line with food safety standards. The city market is also flooded with numerous pre-packaged products that fall below the required measurements (The Independent, 2023b). Bread is the most common underweight product on the market (Nagitta, 2023; The Independent, 2023b).

Transport is the most visibly contested system in Kampala. Several public and private attempts have been made to introduce higher occupancy vehicles/buses, but the dreams of an efficient transport system remain elusive. The city has witnessed a shift from a mixture of public buses and private taxis immediately after independence through to the early part of the 1980s, to a sector dominated by largely privately operated, inefficient, low-occupancy minibuses and throngs of *boda bodas*. It was populist politics that allowed the *boda boda* industry to grow unregulated. President Museveni and the NRM have always had a soft spot for *boda boda* cyclists, who form an integral part of Museveni's re-election strategies (Bwanika, 2020). Furthermore, the myth that *boda bodas* are impossible to regulate is promoted by rich people who have invested heavily in *boda boda* fleets. The result is a mushrooming sector that largely benefits chairs of *boda boda* stages, their leaders in associations, the KCCA enforcement personnel, traffic police and the KCCA leadership.

The story of Uganda Taxi Operators and Drivers Association (UTODA), the former taxi drivers' association in Uganda, also illustrates the politicisation of the transport system. Starting in 1986, UTODA originally had a strained relationship with the police, owing to the latter's roadblocks and demands for money (Baker, 2015; Goodfellow, 2017). Over time, however, the working relationship improved significantly and UTODA established itself as a managing and policing organisation for taxis nationwide. As a result, in 1993, KCC gave them the authority to run the old taxi parks and new ones that were established in the capital. This entailed law enforcement and traffic warden duties – both facilitated by police training – plus a mediating role between police and drivers. Created as a loose self-help coalition of patriotic taxi operators and drivers, UTODA had no manual or template to work with, but over time it managed to network the whole city, including creating jobs (Goodfellow, 2012; Kato, 2006; Senyonga, 2011). This kind of partnership between UTODA and KCC meant a degree of legitimacy for UTODA, plus valuable revenues – which at the time was considered a successful engagement (ibid). It is public knowledge that UTODA was one of the biggest funders of the NRM regime and its agents, but also paid KCC millions of shillings each month. However, a simmering wrangle between KCC (now KCCA) and UTODA over the need to re-organise the transport sector in the city grew, and the contract was never renewed.

Moreover, the newly elected Lord Mayor Erias Lukwago had to mount a tough fight against UTODA operatives, whom he accused of having been at the forefront of pre-ticking ballots in favour of Peter Sematimba, the NRM candidate Lukwago had eventually defeated to the mayorship. Lukwago also claimed that UTODA was a very unpopular organisation among its drivers, conductors and taxi touts (see, for example, Sserunjogi, 2011).

In 2012, following a commuter taxi drivers strike which paralysed transport in the city, the government of Uganda and KCCA swiftly ushered in Pioneer Easy Bus Company (PEBC³²) – even without number/licence plates, third party insurance cover, seat belts, speed governors, and so on – as a stopgap measure and “emergency call” to undermine the strike (Otage, 2017). PEBC started with 100 buses and aimed to deploy 500, but after one year the buses were impounded by Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) for alleged tax evasion in 2013, amounting to UGX 8 billion (estimated USD 2.1 million), and remained grounded at Mandela National Stadium, Namboole (see Figure 9) with little hope of returning to operation. Several years down the road, the company is regretting that it commenced operations prematurely without ensuring that government fulfilled its side of the bargain³³ and this journey to collapse is given in Figure 10. Similarly, Awakula Enume and Tondeka buses have struggled to gain traction among commuters (Olwenyi, 2024).

Contestations have frequently arisen out of the nature of the concessions in the public–private partnership (PPP) between government/KCCA and PEBC, and the government’s failure to provide an appropriate operating environment, including laws and regulations.³⁴ Moreover, PEBC operations met stiff resistance from Mukono municipal council and Wakiso District local government over the loss in revenue from taxi operators and non-payments of revenue by PEBC. At the time, when PEBC hit the road, KCCA and the World Bank were exploring a rapid bus transit system in the GKMA, but some individuals at PEBC grabbed the idea with only a USD 11.5 million loan from Standard Chartered Bank, of the USD 61 million required for the project (Ogwang, 2012).

The state of city roads has been a key public policy concern and an enduring challenge (Bwesigye, 2023; Wanyenya, 2023), and the institutional dragging exhibited by KCCA and other agencies, such as road contractors, to fix the city is a concern for city residents. KCCA is mandated to plan, construct and maintain city roads and drainage

32 First incorporated in 2005, PEBC was composed of several companies that came together with former minister Matthew Rukikaire being the majority shareholder, with up to 4,171 shares (45.04%). The others included Atlantis Holdings Limited (1,800 shares), Kenloyd Logistics Uganda Limited (1,526 shares), Invespro Holdings Limited (1,170 shares), Deluxe Solutions Limited (1,000 shares) and Urban Transport Company Limited (333 shares).

33 The government, together with KCCA, was supposed to demarcate special lanes for the buses, give them a subsidy, determine fares and review them annually, provide exclusive rights in the Eastern and Western zones of the city, and so on.

34 KCCA raised reservations about the designation of bus lanes in the city, citing the narrow widths on some roads, the need for approval by city councillors and the loss of income due to taxi and business parking and taxi business lots being converted into bus lanes.

infrastructure but is over reliant on central government funding, with disbursements often needing to be authorised by the president. Kafeero (2023) writes that, for several years, more than UGX 2 trillion has been allocated for roadworks in the city, a sum that should have had a substantial impact on the city's failing road infrastructure. However, as Table 2 indicates, the government has arbitrarily cut KCCA road maintenance budgets, to the detriment of the road infrastructure across the city. Moreover, a series of issues, including abuse of the limited funds available and syndicated corruption in the procurement sector, low local construction capacity, poor contract management and delayed completion of roadworks, compound the situation and these in combination have hindered the efficient implementation of road projects (ibid).

Figure 9: Nearly three dozen PEBC company buses parked and rotting at Mandela National Stadium Namboole³⁵



Source: Mugabi (2024).

Table 2: Funding releases for road upgrading and maintenance for KCCA

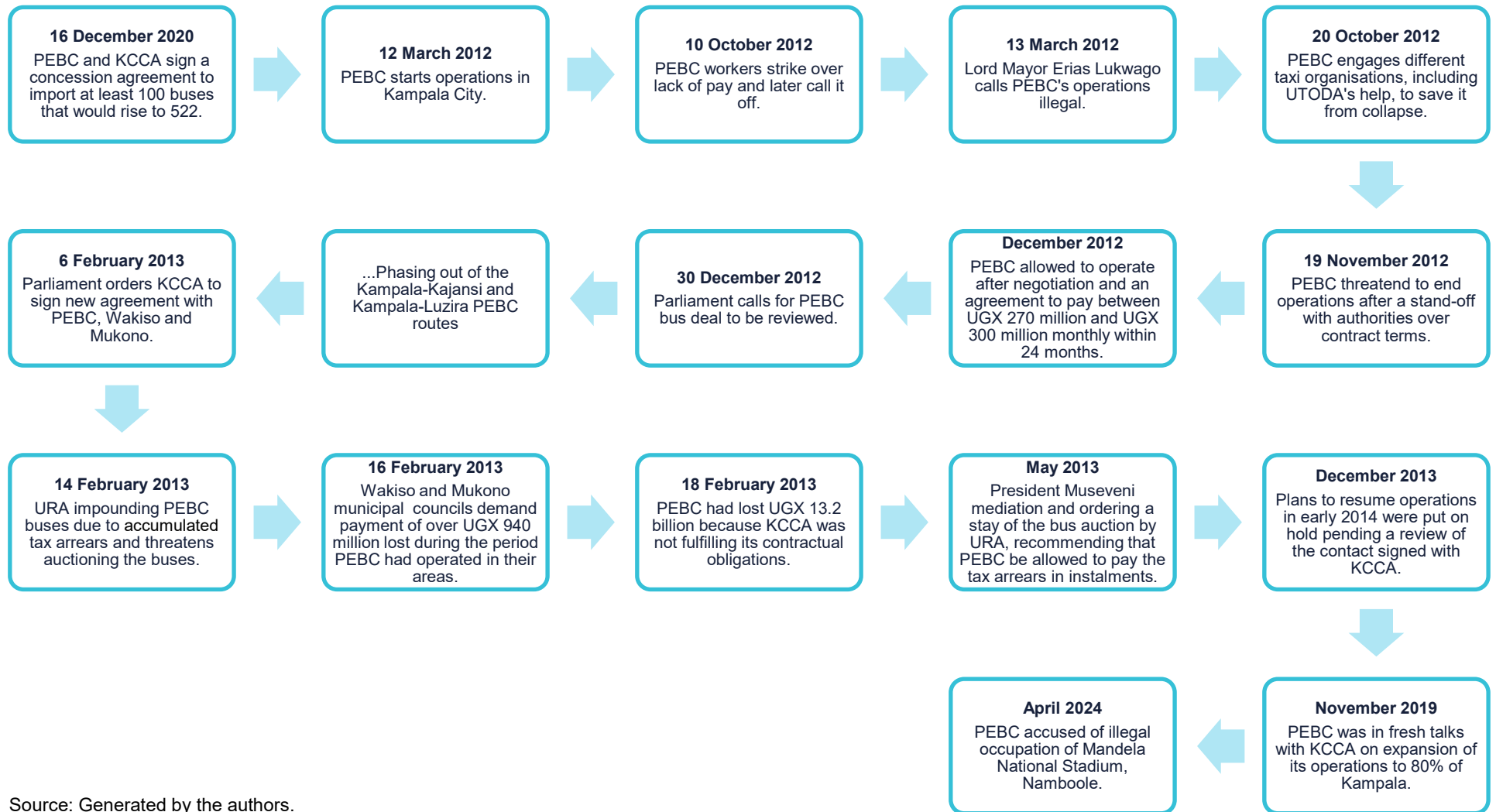
Funding programme	Purpose	FY 2020/2021		FY2021/2022		FY2022/2023		FY2023/2024
		Budget (billion)	Release (billion)	Budget (billion)	Release (billion)	Budget (billion)	Release (billion)	Release (billion)
GOU capital development	Road upgrading/reconstruction	34.9	34.9	47.4	47.4	48.2	15.9	10
Uganda Road Fund	Road maintenance	27.4	24.6	24.9	11.7	24.9	14.8	24.9
Total		62.3	59.5	72.3	59.1	73.1	30.7	34.9

Source: Office of the Clerk to Parliament (2023).

³⁵ Part of the 128-acre of prime land considered to be part of Mandela National Stadium, Namboole which was allocated to PEBC under a 49-year lease arrangement that was executed to them by the Uganda Land Commission (ULC).

In the year 2000, a kilometre of road cost UGX 500 million; seven years later, it shot up to UGX 1.5 billion (Musisi, 2022). There are fears that the cost of road construction will continue to be inflated as long as lucrative tenders go to powerful and syndicated cartels that seek to feather their nests (Kiyonga, 2023). Moreover, challenges with right-of-way land acquisition and utility service providers, including UMEME, National Information Technology Authority (NITA-U), NWSC and the Uganda Police, further delay timely completion of road construction projects.

Figure 10: PEBC journey to collapse



Source: Generated by the authors.

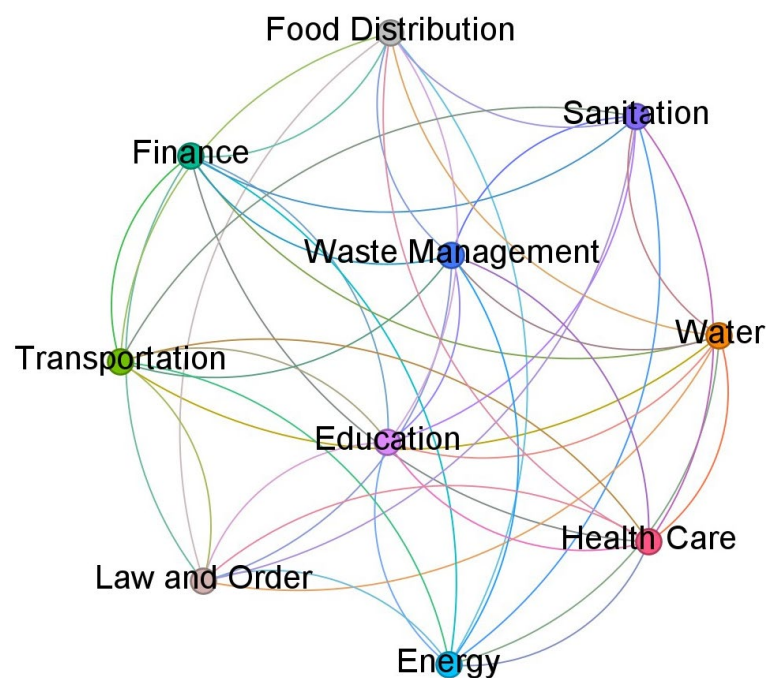
In 2023, there was considerable public dissatisfaction and anger over the existing state of health infrastructure and roads. To placate the citizenry and protect the NRM government from political fallout, the president issued directives in May 2023 for: 1) the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development to dole out and release, with immediate effect, a paltry UGX 6 billion (estimated USD 1,600,000) to bail out KCCA (Kiyonga, 2023); and 2) UPDF Engineering Brigade and Special Forces Command Construction Regiment (SFCCR) to take over the maintenance of city roads, including doing section, pavement and pothole repairs in selected areas of the city (Bagala, 2023). Nevertheless, the SFCCR had by October 2023 only focused on what were referred to as the “presidential routes” (only the ones used by the president in the city) – those that facilitate movement of foreign dignitaries and provide key access to hotels and conference venues. These actions reflect the harsh reality that all of KCCA’s failures have been overseen by the very leaders who have been in power for 35 years, but then turn around and pose as saviours of city residents.

3.3. Connection with other systems and risk

Despite institutional siloing, critical linkages exist between the different systems in Kampala (as depicted in Figure 11).

The **finance system** affects the functioning of all systems in the city. Poor financing leads to system underperformance, which in undermines the city’s finances. For example, the Water and Sanitation Programme (WSP) of the World Bank estimates that Uganda loses USD 177 million (UGX 636 billion) per year, due to poor sanitation alone, with a large share of associated health costs and typhoid cases experienced in Kampala City (IWA, 2017).

Figure 11: Connections that exist among the city systems



Waste management is unaffordable to KCCA. In 2016, it spent USD 1.53 million per month to remove only 30% of the total waste generated (Agiresaasi, 2016); it spends about UGX 10 billion in unblocking drainage channels (ibid); it employs over 4,000 frontline workers, the majority of whom are women and youths, who carry out street sweeping, drainage, de-silting and other solid waste management activities (KCCA, 2023), with many protesting against delayed payments and cancellation of their contracts. Given the KCCA's struggles, waste collection is dominated by private and informal sectors that lack access to the necessary finances, technology and infrastructure to sort and process waste, and to recycle waste plastic into a viable product (Burke, 2023).

Education is underfunded. Most of the central government allocation to KCCA goes to teachers' salaries, with a paltry share designated for school infrastructure development. There is essentially nothing extra for KCCA to spend on the ageing properties for which it is responsible. Moreover, it is difficult to transfer funds from one part of the approved KCCA budget to another, for example, to improve education structures and meet other basic requirements; and the authority's taxation powers are limited (Weinberger and de Jong, 2021). In all the KCCA UPE schools, each child is allocated a paltry sum of UGX 9,300 per year, which is illogical, considering that government-aided rural schools are allocated UGX 12,000 per year, yet the cost of living is higher in Kampala (Lukwago, 2022).

The functionality of the healthcare system is also dependent on the availability of reliable funding streams. Inadequate funding and financial disruptions are responsible for the frequent drug stock-outs registered across the city (ISER, 2024; Ssenkibirwa et al., 2024). Improving the quality of healthcare also means investing in essential medicines and health supplies, strengthening human resources for health, investing resources in primary healthcare and ensuring that there is adequate and functional medical equipment.

The performance of the transport system is also heavily dependent on the availability of finance options. KCCA and politicians tend to blame Kampala's transport system woes on the meagre funds allocated to KCCA for road maintenance and improvements. The struggles of PEBC are in part attributed to inadequate financing and debt accumulations as a result of import and excise duty incurred from the importation of 100 buses. More importantly, the public transport sector across the GKMA is looked at solely by KCCA and surrounding municipalities as a source of revenue to fund their local development and recurrent expenditure needs; and, indeed, public transport operators have for a long time been required to pay "monthly fees" to the different tiers of government across the GKMA.

The **energy system** also affects the functioning of all other systems. For example, power outages at Ggaba Water Works and related water supply installations in the Kampala Water Network affects normal water production in all its stages. Frequently, UMEME and NWSC have locked horns over power supply interruptions. The main water works at Ggaba do not have standby generators, and whenever there are power

interruptions, they can only pump 230 million litres instead of the 240 million daily uptake in Kampala City (Kazibwe, 2020; Nakato and Kirunda, 2022). Even at household level, for those dependent on household water connections, such as wells, there is a need for reliable power supplies to run pumping systems.

Power fluctuations and cuts strain the healthcare system across the city. There has been indiscriminate load shedding in public and private health facilities, which has led to many patient deaths. Moreover, many health personnel have struggled to keep patients alive, due to constant power cuts (Wesaka, 2012). The most sensitive areas are the intensive care units (ICUs), where patients are put on life support machines, and the mortuary, where bodies are preserved. Power failures have affected the labour and casualty wards, the gynaecology and surgery departments and pharmacies (Kiwawulo, 2010).

There are also serious health repercussions from the use of traditional fuels in low-income households. Spot measurement campaigns have been implemented across Kampala to explore spatial and temporal variation of air quality in the micro-environments where people spend significant periods of time, and the measurements suggest that indoor air pollution is an issue of concern, with a large proportion of households reliant on a fuel mix that includes charcoal and firewood. Air quality during cooking in many households reaches an alarming level. Average levels of air quality monitored across households were 205 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ 24-hour mean (very unhealthy levels according to WHO standards) (ASAP-East Africa, 2020).

Power cuts have also negatively impacted the education system, as learning and assessment is now reliant on computers, for example, to record grades. Furthermore, power interruptions across the city have forced many businesses and commercial zones to operate at reduced capacity or shut down completely.

In the face of energy challenges, Kampala residents are becoming innovative in creating energy from waste. One innovation in informal settlements is making energy briquettes from both organic and human waste. KCCA also has plans to add value to garbage at the new landfill in Ddundu by converting it to electricity (Draku, 2023). In addition to the predominantly small-scale waste recycling within communities, Kiteezi landfill could generate up to 774kWh per tonne of municipal waste, which would power over 1,062 Kampala households for a month (Amulen et al., 2022).

Energy systems also affect law and order. As load shedding and other power-related failures intensify across the city, so too do crime and insecurity. Dark streets allow criminals to hide and attack people. Many commentators have described Kampala as a city of darkness, with several dangerous night spots where many people have fallen prey to robbers and murderers, including City Square, Lugogo, Mulago roundabout, Makerere Hill Road, Sir Apolo Kagwa Road, Nakasero Hill Road and Kololo Hill. Moreover, the power cuts provoke riots and demonstrations.

The **water, sanitation, waste management** and **health** systems all impact one another. Owing to the extended urban growth, there has been heavy encroachment by

informal settlements on the city's wetlands, which has led to increased faecal contamination of groundwater sources (Lukwago, 2022). With only about 10% of Kampala City hooked to sewerage lines, there is a heavy reliance on pit latrines. But a lack of collection and treatment services means households often open up their pit latrines during the rainy season to flush out untreated waste (Karabegovic and Gelman, 2018). Alternatively, toilets that have not been emptied for extended periods of time end up overflowing during seasonal rains (Kwiringira et al., 2021). The result is a polluted and deadly urban ecosystem, and three cholera outbreaks in the city between 1997 and 2015 were directly attributed to poor sanitary conditions (ibid).

Wastes harm human health and the environment at every stage of their life cycle. The enormous quantity of waste dumped at the Kiteezi landfill over the years has led to several complaints by the surrounding population about loss of value of their land, bad odour, leachate, mosquitoes and flies (Komakech et al., 2014). Uncollected garbage or litter ends up on streets of the city, in the corridors of buildings, and clogs drainage channels (Nangayi, 2020; Ndongo et al., 2017). Plastic bags are increasingly used to package foods, even bananas, and plastic waste has a terrible health burden on the population, releasing cancer-causing pollutants and heavy metals into the environment. Over 13,000 chemicals are associated with plastics, some of which leach into air, water and soil. A study by Wandeka et al. (2022) showed that one in five fish in Lake Victoria has been found to have ingested plastic. Birds and aquatic animals have reportedly died from ingesting or getting entangled in plastic debris (Akullu, 2023).

Almost all the healthcare institutions dispose of wastes in dumpsites or shallow pits without pre-treatment, leading to hazardous environments around the health institutions (MoH, 2009). The transportation of HCW is done with wheelbarrows and the transport staff lack satisfactory PPE (Katusiime, 2018). Incorrect disposal of the medical waste can lead to hospital-acquired infections. Other workers involved in handling refuse and street children who scavenge on dumpsites or shallow pits are also at risk of injury or infection (MoH, 2009).

Water access issues lead to health problems. Many residents use spring water because it is free or cheaper than conventional water sources, but get sick because the springs are affected by infiltration of wastewater in their recharge areas. Some referral hospitals across the city have gone for weeks without water, disconnected because of accumulated water bills. In recent years, in order to sustain water supplies at KCCA-managed health facilities, the authority has mobilised and fundraised for resources and rainwater water harvesting initiatives, including water tanks, from several philanthropic agencies and corporate bodies. The project is part of the Greater Kampala Integrated Flood Resilience (GKIFR) Partnership Project, which aims to integrate nature-based solutions into urban infrastructure planning.

There is a connection between **education** and **health** and KCCA has considered education as, to a large extent, an urgent matter of public health. Some public schools suffer acute water shortages and insufficient toilet facilities. As a result, some learners are forced to miss lessons, especially girls, who need more water during menstruation.

Some of the water used at schools is collected from dirty water sources or shared by animals, such that students need to chase away the animals, then allow the water to settle for some time, before collecting it, which wastes a lot of time. Schools located in the hilly parts of the city have particular challenges with water and they share rainwater harvesting systems with surrounding communities. There are also issues with asbestos roofing, which the KCCA has tried to remove in ten government-aided schools (Lukwago, 2022). But, most importantly, education institutions are the key foundations for enhancing health-seeking behaviour and practices among young learners and adults.

The **food distribution, sanitation and health** systems are connected: most of the health burdens that arise from food consumption across the city arise from the basic sanitation failures in food production, processing, storage, transportation, retailing and handling in the home (Mufumba, 2018). There is conflicting evidence on the effect of aflatoxins on child health, but a study in Africa found that aflatoxin exposure made a significant contribution to disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) lost due to stunting, with an average of 16% of lost DALYs attributable to aflatoxin exposure (Rasheed et al., 2021).

The **transport** system affects **water, waste management and sanitation** systems. These often rely on private companies having good road access to neighbourhoods, which is often not the case, especially in informal settlements.

Transport also affects **education**. While a large number of pupils walk to school, motorised transportation is also key, including *boda bodas*, dedicated school shuttles and busing services, 14-seater commuter minibuses and private transport. This leads to safety issues, especially with *boda bodas*. Several international studies show that little children should not be on a bus for more than 30 minutes one way, middle school students 45 minutes and high school students 60 minutes (Natukunda, 2013), but anecdotal evidence in Kampala City shows children often spend longer on school buses, which psychologically drains them.

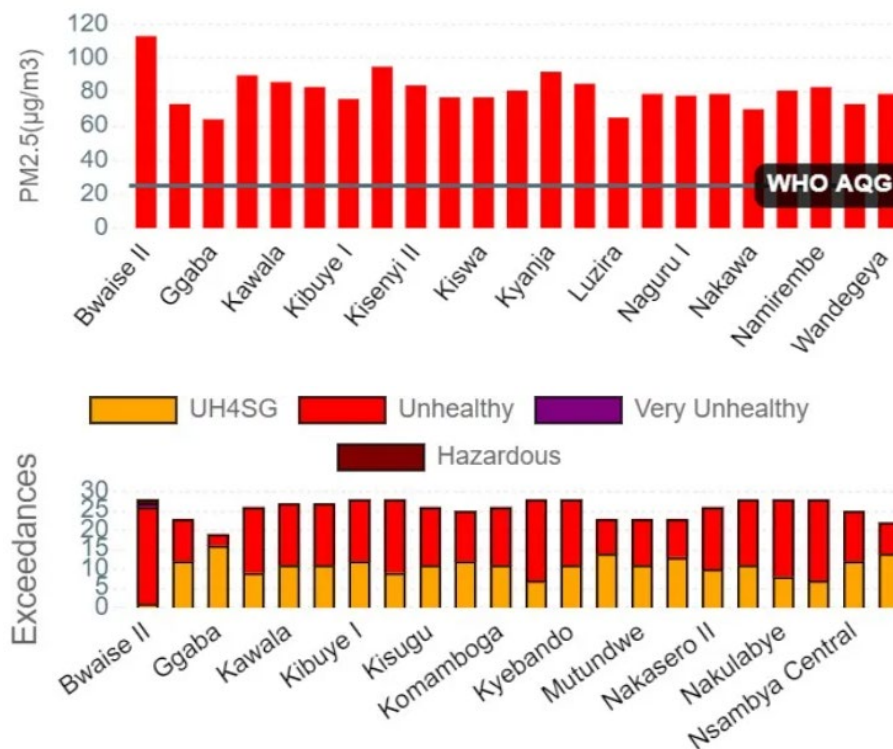
Finally, the **transport system** affects **health**, particularly in the form of air pollution, which is worst in the Central Division of Kampala, with its average ambient air quality of 134.5, far higher than the recommended index scale levels.³⁶ Kawempe's air quality is 133.6, Lubaga's 127.6, Nakawa's 119.6 and Makindye's 111.9. Transport contributes to this pollution through vehicle emissions and unpaved roads (waste burning and industrial pollution are also contributors). The evidence available for Kampala City is not conclusive enough and KCCA has frequently reported that Kampala's air quality is six times worse³⁷ than global standards. A single estimate in 2018 showed that air quality index standing at 162($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$), which was far higher than the World Health Organization Air Quality Guidelines 25($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$). This can also be contrasted with cities

36 The air quality index scale runs from 0 to 300+, where 0 to 50 is considered good, 51 to 100 is moderate, 101 to 150 is unhealthy for sensitive groups of people and 151 to 200 is unhealthy, while 201 to 300+ is considered harmful.

37 See for example, KCCA (2018).

with clean air quality levels taken at the same time as Kampala's, yet these are some of the most industrialised cities in the World. Beijing's air is at $48(\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3)$, Zurich at $21(\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3)$ and Los Angeles at $25(\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3)$, all cleaner than Kampala. Kampala has a high concentration of tiny air particles small enough to invade even the smallest airways. Another study by Ndyabakira et al. (2021) found concentrations of particulate matter³⁸ (PM) 2.5 to oscillate from 65 to $110\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, which were still well above the WHO recommendations (Figure 12). Meanwhile, ASAP researchers collated visibility data for the period 1974-2018 alongside meteorological factors (relative humidity, temperature and wind) and observed that there has been a significant loss (0.45km per year) in visibility, while air pollution levels have increased by 162% between the 1970s and 2018. Mobile air quality monitoring onboard *boda bodas* indicates that certain occupations, particularly transport providers, spend significant periods of time (up to 25% of journey times) in locations where air quality is at a level considered "unhealthy" (ASAP-East Africa, 2019). The exposure to air pollution is linked to respiratory health conditions.

Figure 12: Mean pollution levels (above) and mean particulate matter 2.5 exceedances, May 2021 (below) in selected areas in Kampala City



Source: Ndyabakira, et al. (2021).

³⁸ Particulate matter (PM) – also called particle pollution – is everything in the air (mixture of solid particles and liquid droplets) that is not gas. It consists of a huge variety of chemical compounds and materials, some of which can be toxic; some of which might be large such as dust, soot or smoke and can be seen by the naked eye or are too small and can be detected by a microscope. Due to the small size of many of the particles that form PM, some of these toxins may enter the bloodstream and be transported around the body.

4. Domain summaries

We have examined the political settlement and city systems; now, we analyse how these shape some of the development domains in Kampala. Indeed, domains can also shape city systems and political settlements too. A development domain is a distinct field of discourse, policy and practice that has formed around a complex, intersystemic development challenge in a city, wherein various actors (political, bureaucratic, professional and popular) offering solutions collaborate or compete for authority. These development challenges usually fall under the remit of specific central and/or local government departments. In most cases, affected residents and civil society groups become involved in addressing them; experts (often constituting an “epistemic community”) also get involved; and ruling elites may or may not get involved, depending on the opportunities that these domains offer for asset accumulation, rent extraction and electoral success (through the representation of ideologies, demonstration of state capability or manipulation of voters).

In each development domain, particular ideas, practices and systems interoperate in ways that either sustain or reshape the power configuration in the city and country. If we wish to change the way a domain’s problems are framed and addressed, we need to understand its key actors and interoperating ideas, practices and systems. In this section, we generate such an understanding for the domains of informal settlements; youth and capability development; land and connectivity; and health, wellbeing and nutrition.

4.1. Informal settlements

Kampala City Council Authority (KCCA) reports that 60% of its urban population resides in informal settlements (ISs), with an estimated population of 560,000 families (approximately 2.3 million people). Combining actor-oriented and political settlements approaches, this research examined the decisionmaking processes that underpin service provision/access within the broader context of informal settlement upgrading in Kampala. More specifically, the research probed the everyday ways in which space is contested and (re)produced, the relationship between community involvement in decisionmaking and the provision of social services. Through a critical analysis of different actors’ involvement in decisionmaking processes in the informal settlements of Kisenyi III and Katoogo-Ggaba,³⁹ the research generated valuable insights into the contested relationships between the informal and formal governance structures, from the local and neighbourhood levels upwards to the city and national levels. The insights were drawn from data and information generated via key informant interviews, focus group discussions, local knowledge and a review of existing literature.

Overall, the findings suggest that the provision of basic services (that is, piped water, sanitation, solid waste management, food supply and energy), livelihood opportunities (that is, markets or engaging in the urban economy) and access to land for meeting

³⁹ The two settlements were selected on the basis of a bottom-up approach.

housing needs in Kampala's informal settlements are circumscribed by fragmented and diverse actors and processes. These geometries enrol multiple local actors (including landlords/landladies, "community mobilisers", property owners, cultural/religious institutions, and so on), with varying levels of connections to actors at city level and/or State House. The interaction of national-level semi-authoritarian politics with city-level partisan politics, within a context of a highly bureaucratic recentralised urban governance system, highly influences the capacity of informal settlement communities to navigate and negotiate everyday challenges, from evictions to accessing water supply or safeguarding their livelihoods. At the local level, the less visible NRM local "mobilisers", who also double as LC1 chairpersons working clandestinely with State House-connected elites (that is, businesspersons, military officers and politicians), are especially instrumental in determining the success or failure of local water supply, sanitation or market management projects. Local leaders (elected and unelected), service entrepreneurs (MSMEs), landlords and property owners, though arguably less powerful than the community mobilisers, also wield considerable influence over everyday life at this level. Such influence is derived largely from their command over financial resources and assets (such as land and buildings) and their knowledge and social networks. In this way, they indirectly determine who has access to water and sanitation services, housing and livelihood opportunities in the IS.

At the city level, KCCA and NWSC, which are the key state institutions mandated to implement national policy in collaboration with ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) including MLHUD, MWE, NEMA and various transnational bodies (including WB, AfDB, AFD, CA, SDI, and so on), play key roles in driving informal settlement upgrading programming within the broader urban development agenda. They also play other equally important roles in terms of planning and implementing state policy, which trickles down through urban development programming to impact service delivery and slum upgrading. Of course, these state actors are not working in isolation. The complementary roles played by CSOs/NGOs/CBOs, transnational bodies, religious and cultural institutions in shaping interventions to improve the livelihoods of low-income urban residents cannot be overemphasised. Informal settlements have inevitably been enrolled into the politics of clientelism, subsequently attracting the interests of powerful political, business, military and public service elites with strong connections to State House, whose actions increasingly affect the lives of low-income urban residents. These actors interact in a complex configuration of formal and informal power networks, operating fluidly between the interstices of legality and illegality, where values and rules are constantly (re)negotiated, adjusted or simply bypassed, either to enable service delivery and open up possibilities and opportunities, or to foreclose them altogether to satisfy vested interests. The functionality of critical systems that Kampala's IS communities depend on is closely linked to the nature and outcomes of the above power relations. The decisions or non-decisions made through these multi-actor interactions across city and local levels are implicated in how low-income urban residents access social services, livelihood opportunities, secure their tenure, participate in decisionmaking processes and also their inclusion in the urban economy.

According to KCCA, MDAs and CSOs, the city has recorded considerable improvement in extending coverage of critical services, such as piped water, sanitation, electricity, solid waste management, healthcare, education, law and order services, to informal settlements. However, there remain serious shortcomings regarding access, quality and the involvement of the IS communities in the planning, organisation and implementation of these services. This is in addition to finding lasting solutions to the growing housing deficit, gender-based violence (GBV), flood risk, communicable diseases (such as cholera, diarrhoea, and so on), noise pollution, crime, drug/alcohol abuse and high HIV/AIDS prevalence. IS residents and their leaders, while acknowledging some of the above challenges, emphasise the need to urgently confront the pervasive challenges of tenure insecurity, youth unemployment, the politicisation of IS, lack of meaningful engagement in decisionmaking processes and inadequate awareness about vital knowledge regarding their basic rights and the current legal and institutional frameworks, especially in relation to development planning, justice/restitution and governance processes. Keeping track of all these different development challenges highlighted by the different actors is critical when devising long-term solutions. Needless to say, the effectiveness of any long-term solutions to the above pervasive challenges depends on an understanding of how multiple systemic and political factors, including corruption and resource mismanagement, recentralisation (thus disempowerment of lower city government units) and politicisation of service delivery have contributed to the failure and fragmentation of key systems.

Evidence suggests that informal settlements have become increasingly important to city and national-level elites, for both the economic rents and the political benefits they present. Many a time, informal settlements are considered as huge voting banks and also the arenas where some of the political fights are held. Whenever there is an informal settlement upgrading project that demands demolition of structures or displacement of people, politicians who want votes intervene and the programmes are halted. Moreover, the legal framework in the city has made it hard for KCCA to develop the informal settlements; the Land Act (1998), for example, stops KCCA from evicting people who have lived in the informal settlements for more than 12 years (Semakula and Masinge, 2011).

However, these dynamics vary somewhat between settlements/contexts, as seen with Kisenyi III and Katoogo-Ggaba. The former has become increasingly important for the economic benefits it offers to elites, while, for the latter, the political benefits as a vote bank are more important. This is partly determined by the locations of the settlements. Katoogo-Ggaba is located in an area which remains less lucrative in terms of economic value, whilst Kisenyi III is located on prime economic land close to the CBD. At the same time, the local leadership in Katoogo-Ggaba appears to have strong links to State House through its chairpersons/NRM community mobilisers. For Kisenyi III, the high value of its location, coupled with the weak links that its local leadership appears

to have with State House, has exposed the settlement to the imminent forces of gentrification and possible erasure.⁴⁰

With reference to the study's initial research questions, the findings show that negotiation, bargaining, transactional and competitive relations underpin how different interests shape the contestation and reproduction of space in Kampala's IS. Secondly, the evidence is unequivocal in emphasising that there is a clear linkage between the level of engagement of low-income urban residents in decisionmaking processes and the delivery of critical services, such as piped water, sanitation and solid waste management. Thirdly, although slum upgrading efforts by the city government, KCCA and other actors have faced numerous hurdles over the years, there are several opportunities, including the prioritisation of urban housing challenges and informal settlements in the NRM's 2021-2026 manifesto,⁴¹ the lobbying by the legislature⁴² to provide more finances to KCCA to support IS upgrading interventions, the existence of relevant policies, such as the National Housing Policy (2016) and National Urban Policy (2017) and the Slum Upgrading Strategy and Action Plan (2008), which can be harnessed and exploited to respond to the informal settlement challenge. Finally, as explained above, the power relations and configurations that characterise Kampala's IS are largely polycentric. These involve multiple actors deriving their legitimacy from varied sources, operating across local to national levels. These interact largely through personalised and informal power relations, which impact the livelihoods of low-income urban residents far more than the formal institutional structures and processes.

Targeted, co-produced action research projects that fully account for and engage with the above power and system dynamics are critical to engendering transformative initiatives to enhance the conditions and life chances not only of the disadvantaged informal settlement communities, but also of the city population as a whole. In a context where resources are increasingly scarce, the ACRC's theory of change is very helpful to KCCA, to: 1) explore further how its vision of a "vibrant, attractive and sustainable city" can be actualised; 2) harness the catalytic effects of improved welfare for low-income urban residents in terms of their contribution to increasing economic productivity and social stability; 3) improve the marketability of Kampala for direct economic investments and the derivative benefits that accompany such processes; and 4) achieve a healthier, more manageable and cleaner urban environment (for example,

40 These insights are derived from a critical and in-depth examination of several projects, including the Kisenyi III housing, land sharing and slum upgrading project, the Kisenyi III water and sanitation project as well as the Katoogo-Ggaba portable sanitation project by Rotary International. In addition, the research examined multiple Kisenyi eviction events, the ownership wrangles over Ggaba market, and the roles of NRM community mobilisers in both settlements, to decode how the highly informal, negotiated and competitive actor interactions at and across various levels (that is, settlement/local/micro, city/meso and national/macro) were implicated in (re)producing the geographies of inequality, exclusion and poverty in Kampala's informal settlements.

41 Section 4.0 on Infrastructure under subsection 4.6.14 on Urban housing (NRM Manifesto, 2021–2026); www.nrm.ug/NRM_Manifesto_2021-2026.pdf

42 See www.parliament.go.ug/news/5836/kcca-seeks-shs-11bn-slums-upgrade; and Dominic (2022).

blue-green infrastructures), while setting an important precedent for a more inclusive, just, efficient and smart urban development model for other urbanising areas in Uganda.

4.2. Youth and capability development

This section analyses the developmental challenges faced by Kampala youth, focusing on the interaction of the political settlement and city systems. It suggests the most effective ways to implement urban reform measures that will improve the livelihoods of youth in Kampala, increase their productivity and enable them to actively participate in wider city and urban reform.

Data collection involved three complementary approaches – a review of documents, key informant interviews and focus group discussions – providing a valuable form of triangulation. This was especially important for validating the verbal information on the key issues related to youth capability and development, policies and funding. As a starting point, the research sought to map: who the youth in Kampala were; who the key stakeholders were influencing their participation in productive economic activities; what governing structures exist for the youth; and what city systems they interact with the most. This report identifies the gaps and challenges within the grassroots-, city- and national-level structures that are currently governing the youth. Furthermore, it identifies fractures in the main city systems that the youth interact with, focusing particularly on health, education and finance.

The research also examined the main developmental challenges faced by youth in Uganda, with a focus on the vulnerable groups. The domain findings reveal:

1. Overall dissatisfaction among the youth with programmes set up by government for them. Preference and recognition was stronger for programmes and initiatives set up by NGOs;
2. A lack of accountability for poor service delivery;
3. A discrepancy between the views expressed about the “success” of Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP) by government, as the leadership implementing the project, and the views expressed by the youth, as the beneficiaries of programmes;
4. A divergence of views between youth and local leadership concerning the livelihoods of youth and the measures in place to improve them.

On the part of the youth, the findings revealed that:

1. Youths are used by political leaders for political clout. Some of the youth are aware of this and use it to gain access to resources and to avoid manipulation;
2. Youths remain vulnerable to violence and insecurity, as much as they are also accused of creating it;
3. There is a rise in teenage pregnancies and drug abuse that contributes to the cycle of poverty and vulnerability among the youth;

4. There is no platform – formal or informal – to host youth as beneficiaries together with youth programme coordinators, or other key actors, in order to establish dialogue;
5. Refugees are acknowledged as part of the communities under research but they did not contribute to any of the discussions.

During the wider uptake activities, community leaders and KCCA division leaders also highlighted that there is a substantial information gap on the youth demographic as well as the initiatives and programmes for the youth in Kampala. This proved to be one of the key limitations when undertaking this research. Additionally, this information gap is negatively affecting the youth because they are unable to benefit from different opportunities that have been made available to them. The information gap also affects key actors because they are unable to learn from each other; furthermore, they are tailoring programmes and initiatives based on information that is largely out of date.

Based on the precarity of youth livelihoods across the city as the domain results revealed, the team recognised two priority complex problems (PCPs⁴³) and respective actions to address them.⁴⁴ A new phenomenon that was not fully explored during the foundation stage was the increasing number of urban refugees in Kampala City, and their experiences in the city including involvement in local politics, their relationship with the host community and broader involvement in economic activities needs to be understood.

The gaps and challenges within the grassroots, city and national structures that are in place to support the youth have caused dysfunctionality within them. This has been quite detrimental to productive economic engagement of the youth. Fortunately, there are a number of key actors within the youth domain that the youth can rely on to obtain support in various aspects of their life. However, the lack of consolidated information about the key actors within the domain and, more importantly, the location of their initiatives, reduces their impact. In addition to this, the dysfunctionalities of the grassroots, city and national structures cannot be adequately addressed if duty bearers remain unaccountable. Without robust accountability processes and platforms, this issue cannot be attended to. Lastly, unemployment is one of the key developmental challenges that youth in Kampala are facing; it exerts a ripple effect that leads to more

43 This term was coined by the African Cities Research Consortium. It refers to issues that hinder economic development and poverty reduction and/or contribute to the climate crisis.

44 Two action research projects have been proposed: 1) **Economic Integration and Sustainable Refugee Hosting: A Model for Urban Refugees** (that looks at proposing a practical and sustainable model for refugee hosting). The project is proposing exploring the economics of refugees in Kampala City, refugee engagement in local politics and economic enterprises; and refugee host relations in Kampala City, and 2) **The Kampala Urban Youth Information Hub Initiative**. The youth project is interested in exploring three important questions: 1) In what ways can elite commitment be rendered to create a more cohesive approach to tackling youth issues, thereby creating a reform coalition between both governmental and non-governmental actors within the youth and capability development domain in Uganda? 2) Can youth within informal settlements be strategically mobilised to effectively engage with and improve governmental programmes? And 3) To what end can the capacity of KCCA be enhanced to improve information collection and dissemination of youth initiatives within Kampala?

developmental challenges, such as alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence, other forms of violence and insecurity.

At first glance it would appear that the large youth population in Kampala is not only significant to the development of Uganda as a whole, but also significant to city and national political elites. City political elites are persons that hold positions of power within city structures and may include the mayor, the executive director of KCCA, KCCA council members, prominent business leaders and other influential figures in the grassroots structures. It generally refers to individuals who have significant authority and influence in the processes and areas that affect the lives of Kampala's residents. This may be through influential involvement in the city's economic development, infrastructure projects, social policies or decisionmaking processes. "National political elites" refers to persons who hold positions of power within the central government, military and other institutions that are influential at a national level. Generally, it refers to persons who are able to influence the country's political and economic affairs. By extension, those within close proximity to national and city political elites are also considered to be political elites, depending on how influential they are to the persons actually holding the power.

It is logical to assume that the large youth population in Kampala would be crucial to national and city political elites' survival strategies, as they could decide the outcomes of elections and influence the political discourse in the country. Consequently, it could also be assumed that the national and city political elite would seek to ensure there are functional structures promoting youth capability development. However, historical analysis of the political settlement of Uganda demonstrates that whilst it is important for city elites to obtain the support of youth in Kampala, national political elites are able to dominate in Uganda without completely securing this vote. This is arguably as a result of entrenched dominance by the ruling party that has been secured through a myriad of strategies.

The president has been involved with the youth in Kampala since the early 1990s; however, his engagement always increases closer to election time. This engagement has taken different forms and has not always been successful. For example, in 2016, Museveni tried to connect with the youth through music and pop culture, by recruiting a number of popstars to create a song called *Tubonga Nawe* ("We Are with You") which praised the president and urged people to vote NRM. The song was not received well and ignited a debate on social media about the role of popstars in politics, which ultimately led to the boycott of stars who had participated in the song. The decision to engage with the youth in this way can be explained by the fact that in 2016, the youth heavily supported the musician, Bobi Wine (Robert Ssentamu Kyagulanyi). As a youthful leader in touch with the needs of youth, particularly youth within informal settlements, Bobi Wine has intensified the pressure on NRM to enhance its attractiveness to urban youth.

Throughout his rule, President Museveni and his elite network have been able to use state funds to further their political interests. It appears that Museveni has used state

funds to win over youth in informal settlements; considering the 2014 census results showed, together with the 2021 projections, that youths comprised the largest share of the city population. This assumption is further strengthened by the fact that Bobi Wine was able to secure a win in Kampala in the 2021 general elections and his biggest support base was within this category of youth. The exact source of the funds being used to win over the youth is under debate, however; there are unverified claims that State House commissioned a “Ghetto Fund”, worth UGX 1.8 billion (approximately USD 478,000), to entice the youth into supporting NRM. It is widely speculated that these funds have been redirected from productive government projects to ensure a consistent supply. If true, then the misuse or diversion of such funds hurts the youth in Kampala more than it helps them. This is because the youth who are not on the receiving end of the funds continue to be deprived of good quality essential services and infrastructure that would have been delivered, had the funds been properly used for their intended purpose.

Rather than relying on his subordinates during campaign season, Museveni has chosen to distribute the cash himself to selected youth. This approach not only allows him to directly connect with the public, but it is also seen by some as a way to reduce financial impropriety and corruption, by ensuring that the allocated funds actually reach those intended. It is further argued that, in doing so, the president is revealing his awareness that entrusting the money to formal government channels, and by extension his elite network, would likely lead to corruption. An alternative approach used by the president is procuring the services of “socialites-turned-philanthropists” to garner the support of youth within informal settlements.

Furthermore, in Kampala, the NRM elite have established a large number of youth projects in various parts of Kampala which are managed through the participants’ SACCOs. These projects have been engaged by the president and State House handlers and have even extended to Kamwokya, an informal settlement in a Kampala suburb that is the base of Bobi Wine. However, it is evident from the fact that there are no consistent standards used to choose the beneficiaries, or determine how the funds should be used, that this is essentially a form of vote buying.

The government strongly denies these allegations, however, and claims to be merely addressing the needs of the most disadvantaged people, regardless of their location. It should be noted that the funds discussed above are highly political in nature and are not part of the Youth Livelihood Fund overseen by MOGLSD and KCCA. The tactics discussed above were not very effective in terms of securing support for the president, as Bobi Wine won Kampala in the 2021 general elections by a landslide, receiving 72% of the city’s votes to Museveni’s 23%, while the other candidates share the rest.

4.3. Land and connectivity

The land and connectivity domain in Kampala City deployed a political settlements framework to examine the complexities which underpin the contemporary land question in Kampala City and to underscore its interconnectedness with connectivity

infrastructures. The domain focused on three interrelated issues: 1) land tenure administration and management in Kampala; 2) land value creation and destruction; and 3) the link between land and connectivity (which is termed the “land and connectivity nexus”). The last component of the research paid special attention to digital connectivity as an emerging trend in the land sector in Kampala City, where the internet and other digital channels of communication are reshaping access to, and use of, land by the different social, political and economic classes. We deployed a mixed research design and methodology: key informant interviews, focus group discussions, observations and a literature review. We deployed thematic, content and discourse analysis to analyse and make sense of the data that was collected.

Our research shows that land in Kampala City is a strategic resource because of its intrinsic value, and both real and anticipated economic returns. Land is also used to store value – what has been termed “land banking” – in that people hold and buy land in anticipation of profit in a short time. It is also a key resource for economic control – where landlords are able to control the landless – and political control – where politicians can control and marginalise the landless. Land management, control and administration are either direct or indirect tools of power in Kampala. The central government and the Buganda kingdom have continued to compete to be in charge of land administration, from the colonial period to the present. This has often resulted in collusion between these two key strategic institutions in land administration and management in Kampala City, raising questions about the legitimacy of both institutions to administer land in Kampala City.

The existence of multiple competing and overlapping tenure rights has heightened land tenure confusion, contention and insecurity. Land in Kampala is owned under three tenure systems: Mailo land, leasehold/public land and freehold land. All tenure systems have been prone to controversy, evictions and conflicts, but Mailo land has in the recent past been particularly politically contentious, with the central government pegging all the land-related problems in Kampala and the central region on Mailo tenure. The Mailo land tenure system emerged with the signing of the 1900 agreement between the Buganda kingdom and the British colonial government. Mailo tenure separates land ownership rights from land use/occupation rights, thereby separating ownership (landlords) from use (tenants), with both parties having legally recognised rights. The relationship between the landlords and tenants has always been conflictual and the government seems to be deadlocked in resolving the Mailo land use impasse. Various post-independence regimes have tried to introduce land reforms but these issues have not been resolved; rather, they have further complicated the problems.

Land is highly politicised in Kampala City and, together with connectivity, it brings together a diverse and intricate set of actors and institutions with varying and competing interests, positionalities, responsibilities, influence and powers. At the macro level there is the Uganda state, which is in charge of land administration and management. At the top is the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Economic Development (MLHUD), which is responsible for providing policy direction, national standards and

coordination of all matters concerning lands, housing and urban development; the Uganda Land Commission (ULC) manages land vested in the government or which the government may acquire. All lower-level governments (cities, districts, municipalities, town councils, sub-counties, parishes and villages) manage and administer local area land matters. In Kampala City, the Kampala District Land Board⁴⁵ (KDLB) holds and allocates government land in the city, while the political arm of the city, including area councillors, offers supervision and oversight roles in public land management and land transactions in the city. At the micro or lower levels are different land committees, whose members are appointed by the Land Board, following the advice of the lower division councils. For cities and municipalities, land committees operate at division level (Land Act, 1998). Within the land committee is the office of the recorder, who also doubles as the assistant town clerk. The recorder participates in a number of activities concerning the update of records of interests in land. It is the recorder who issues certificates of occupancy and ensures any conditions or restrictions that are agreed upon are set on the certificate. There are also local council courts, which resolve land disputes.

The study found more non-governmental actors operating alongside the various levels of the state, including:

1. The international community, which funds the land sector in Uganda – namely the World Bank and development partners such as GIZ, JICA, USAID.
2. Civil society, which mainly plays an advocacy role; it specifically defends the land rights of vulnerable and poor people.
3. Buganda kingdom and its administrative arm, the Buganda Land Board (BLB), which is charged with governing official Mailo land (land belonging to the kingdom) and land belonging to the king of Buganda. However, there is a rift between the state and Buganda kingdom over the legality of the BLB.
4. Religious institutions, including the Catholic and Anglican/Protestant churches and mosques, which are some of the biggest landlords in Kampala. They administer and manage church land or land belonging to the Muslim community. Their land is highly targeted because of its prime location.
5. A host of other actors, including the Justice Law Order Sector (JLOS), such as the Judiciary and Uganda Police Force (UPF), *Bibanja*⁴⁶ owners, land brokers/dealers/agents, Association of Real Estate Agents (AREA), financial institutions, individual landlords, real estate developers, law firms, land sellers

45 The people who sit on the various land boards at the different divisions in Kampala city are never “apolitical”. Rather, they tend to side with the ruling government or the opposition. This mirrors and is exemplified in the fight between the state and Buganda kingdom over Mailo land, but also between the incumbent government and other opposition leaders.

46 *Bibanja* (plural)/*kibanja* (singular) are lawful or bona fide occupants of land who enjoy security of occupancy on registered land. Furthermore, a *kibanja* owner may apply to the registered proprietor for and be issued with a certificate of occupancy in respect of the land which s/he occupies. A *kibanja* holder may assign, sublet, pledge, create third party rights in, subdivide and undertake any other lawful transaction in respect of the occupancy. However, before selling the *kibanja*, the landlord must consent to the sale (Kamuhanda, 2024).

and buyers. In this category, land brokers emerge as a very powerful group, especially in determining values of land.

While the above-mentioned actors are directly involved in land administration and management, the study equally documented a host of actors that are specifically responsible for land connectivity issues. These include several ministries, departments and agencies: the mandate to establish and maintain transport infrastructure, including roads and railways, falls under the Ministry of Works and Transport (MWT). The Uganda Railways Corporation (URC) Act [Cap331] mandates URC to carry out railway, marine and road services in Uganda for the carriage of goods and passengers. The Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA) develops and maintains the national roads network, advises the government on general roads policy and contributes to the addressing of national transport concerns. The Ministry of ICT was established with a mandate of providing strategic and technical leadership, overall coordination, support and advocacy on all matters of policy, laws, regulations and strategy for the ICT sector. The Ministry of ICT has two key agencies that help to implement its mandate, namely the National Information and Technology Authority Uganda (NITA-U), which is an autonomous statutory body established under the NITA-U Act of 2009, to coordinate and regulate ICT services in Uganda, and the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), which is mandated to promote and regulate communications sector activities, including telecommunications, broadcasting, radio communication, postal communications, data communication and infrastructure.

There are other key players in the land and connectivity domain whose mandates directly interact and influence land values; these include:

- The National Planning Authority (NPA), which is mandated to produce comprehensive and integrated development plans for the country, including land use plans and infrastructural development plans, together with other line ministries;
- Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), which determines, enforces, assesses, collects and accounts for various taxes;
- The Directorate on Land Matters at the State House, where the politically connected go to have their land matters resolved;
- The judiciary, which has the mandate of resolving/settling land disputes/conflicts; and
- Uganda Police Force (UPF), which is charged with keeping law and order, protecting lives and properties of Uganda (however, the UPF has been accused of failing on its mandate during legal or illegal evictions).

In summation, there are several actors with various interests, powers and mandates, which in most cases overlap, making land administration and issues of connectivity complicated and difficult to manage in Kampala.

Owning land across Kampala City and indeed the whole country is a significant undertaking, often tied to livelihoods and dreams of property ownership. However, the process of acquiring land requires careful consideration, adherence to legal principles,

and a thorough understanding of the risks involved (NilePost, 2023). We pay attention to land brokerage and real estate business as one of the emerging processes that is influencing the dynamics around land, its relations and politics in Kampala City. We found that land brokerage and real estate business is very influential in land and connectivity. This is because of incoherence in land-related information, particularly who is selling the land, where and at what price. Land brokers are described as “a necessary evil”, as they deploy overt and covert mechanisms to access information on the land available for sale, the owner(s), location and the asking price. In many cases, however, land brokers capitalise on, and have taken advantage of, the gaps and loopholes in land information flow to shape and influence land values. Brokers often liaise with local, regional and national elites, politicians connected to the ruling government, and real estate companies to buy the land which is later sold at huge profits. The brokers often know the low-income residents who want to sell land, and have connections within the institutions that are mandated to regulate and implement land transactions. Since they can set the price of land differently from the official land values (which they often reject or challenge), land brokers have become a very influential force in determining the value of land in Kampala. Although the brokers make substantial profits from land sellers and buyers (often 10% of the sale/buying price⁴⁷), many do not pay taxes to the government, since they operate outside of the law and are not registered. The government loses substantial revenue due to the uncollected taxes and therefore needs to find ways and means of recouping and taxing the brokers.

In a move to curb land transactions fraud that has increasingly found traction across the country, including Kampala City, the government, through guidelines that came into effect on 2 July 2018, banned all property brokers, intermediaries and agents that had been the go-between landowners and prospective buyers in land transactions. The guidelines emphasised that:

All instruments of subdivisions, transfers, leases and mortgages deposited for registration at all Ministry of Lands Zonal Offices shall be submitted by the registered owner in person and not by a broker or agent.

However, there is a proliferation of land agents and brokers (Figure 13) carrying out fraudulent land transactions. Several crooked land brokers in the city traverse the city neighbourhoods with prospective clients and dupe them by showing them plots that are not for sale and whose owners are unknown to the brokers. To protect land from these unscrupulous brokers, there are several signs and notices (see Figure 14) that

47 There is no specific and standard practice for commissions considering the number of actors involved in land transactions, and the efforts and time invested in the transaction. But the challenge speaks to the broader property market where, for example, if a broker finds an apartment that someone opts to call home, he earns the equivalent of one month’s rent from the tenant, as well as 10% of that month’s rent from the landlord; on top of that, he rakes in what he calls “fuel” – a fee for his time moving back and forth across the city (LANDWatch, 2018; Namara, 2019).

landowners use to prevent encroachment and tiresome inquiries by prospective real estate developers.

Three types of land brokers in Kampala City were identified. First are high-end brokers who broker high-value land, often in US dollars or billions of Uganda shillings, and their transactions are often overseen by lawyers, usually in high-end offices in areas of uptown Kampala, such as Kololo and Muyenga. The elite brokers cannot be side-stepped in the land deal because of their connections with the state and non-state actors, and they charge and earn up to 10% on every land transaction on both the buyer and seller. Since the transactions involve huge sums of money, their overall take-home is quite substantial. Second are relatively affluent and middle-class brokers, who sell land to middle-class customers, normally Ugandans and foreigners who engage in private businesses, such as lawyers and businesspersons, or civil society workers, including local and international NGO staff. The money involved is often less than what the elite brokers/dealers are transacting, and transactions are mostly in Uganda shillings. The brokers first negotiate the price of the land with the seller before engaging the buyer separately. Once the price has been agreed, and an agreement drawn up, or trust established (so the broker knows the seller and prospective buyer will not sidestep him/her), then direct connections are established between the seller and buyer. Usually, the price that the middle-class brokers agree with the land buyer is higher than that agreed with the seller; this extra amount is taken by the broker/dealer, *in addition* to the 10% value of the land. Also, the buyer pays a fee to the broker/dealer for the brokerage service. In essence, the middle-class brokers/dealers earn much more than the sellers on every land transaction. Third are the “everyday” low-class and village-based brokers/dealers; they are the most common type of broker in Kampala. In the informal settlements, virtually everyone is a broker of sorts. Although the norm is that brokers charge 10% on every completed land transaction, the low-class and village-based brokers/dealers are often willing to accept a lower percentage, as many are looking for daily survival.

Similarly, this domain research established that connectivity is key in determining other land relations, including land access and use. Most interesting is the finding that digital connectivity is influencing the land market by making information about land readily available and easily accessible to anyone who has access to the internet. This has particularly enabled and accelerated women's access to land. However, the internet has not come without challenges. Digital connectivity has created a new crop of online land brokers and online land scams that dupe unsuspecting land buyers by easily issuing false land documents and titles. Since the increase in the use of digital technologies in land transactions, and efforts by the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development to digitise the land registry, many individuals have reported instances of block numbers getting mixed up, or fixed on the wrong digitised files. Moreover, the language used in the digitised system is not easily understood and it does not provide the capability for land sharing over a wider area network, which exposes it to fraudsters and speculators.

Figure 13: Land brokers and agents have been blamed for the rampant land fraud witnessed in Uganda



Source: Landwatch (2018).

Figure 14: A familiar and common practice in many parts of Kampala City



4.4. Health, wellbeing and nutrition

4.4.1. Introduction

The health, wellbeing and nutrition domain research focused on (un)healthy diets in informal settlements in the city, where there is generally a triple burden of

malnutrition,⁴⁸ from ingesting foods high in sugar, recycled oil, and salt, and lacking in micro and macronutrients. It was observed that the (un)healthy diets that are typical of informal settlement dwellers were due to a number of factors.

One major factor is food cost. However, data on food expenditure for Kampala City is very scanty. There is conflicting evidence on the costs that Ugandans incur in expenditures on food. Galema et al. (2024) showed that, on average, Ugandans spend nearly 50% of their total outgoings on food. This is significantly higher for the low socioeconomic classes (57%) than the highest socioeconomic class (41%). Results from a UNICEF (2019) in Uganda study revealed that, on average, households spent 59% of their total expenditures on food. Purchases made up 54% of food expenditures (that is, total value of food from all sources), while 46% came from own production and other sources. Average food expenditure in the lowest decile was 60% less than in the average household and 80% lower than in the highest decile. Households with children aged six to 23 months allocated most of their food expenditure to staples, including cereals (mostly maize flour, also rice); roots and tubers (mostly cassava and sweet potatoes); and fruits (mostly plantains/matooke).

The analysis by UNICEF (2019) shows that complementary feeding gaps in animal-source protein, iron and calcium cannot be affordably filled by all households, particularly the lowest-spending 15-20%. These households rely on the cheapest available staple foods and therefore struggle to meet energy and nutrient requirements. There are informal food vendors in the settlements selling healthier produce, but to operate their businesses, these vendors must pay taxes (up to 30%) and get licensed through a process which has been reported as exorbitant, unfair and corrupt on the government side – making it difficult for them to get affordable (and accessible) spaces to vend their food. When they do, taxes and fees are imposed on the food items, which make them expensive and unaffordable for the poorest informal settlement dwellers, who end up buying cheaper but less healthy alternative foods, such as processed meats.

Another factor is storage and cooking methods: many households and shops lack storage facilities to keep seasonal healthy foods containing vitamins, like fruit and vegetables. Furthermore, meals are usually prepared at home with long cooking times, wherein they lose micronutrients (out-of-home consumption is gaining importance because it is often cheaper than preparing own food). Kampala City residents should also be aware not just of the basic nutrients in food but also how it is prepared and what happens to it before it reaches their table.

Another factor is lack of knowledge. Even residents in informal settlements who earn sufficient income to purchase healthy food tend to lack knowledge about what is healthy. Community knowledge and understanding of healthy diets differ starkly from those of the elite and policy experts working to improve population health, with the

48 The triple burden of malnutrition includes – undernutrition (underweight, stunted or wasted), micronutrient deficiency, and overweight and obesity (weight that is higher than healthy for height).

latter lacking awareness of IS residents' perceptions and practices. The community's understanding of healthy diets continues to be constrained, and heavily manipulated by a growing private sector, following the government's liberalisation policy. With a free market economy, the private sector's prominence (and the government's apparent loss of control) has become more pronounced across the entire HWN domain in Kampala City. Kampala City is an epicentre of aggressive unhealthy food marketing on radio, billboards, television and social media, and children and teenagers prefer sugar-sweetened beverages and fast foods to traditional foods as a result.

A fourth factor is manufacturing quality. The manufacture, advertising and distribution of food remains a weakly regulated space; in some instances, there is no regulation at all, and where it exists, extortion has been reported, so toxic and poor-quality food products remain on the market. Moreover, the safety of chopped pieces of fish, pork and beef that end up on the charcoal stoves, and in the sooty frying pans full of dark oil, is difficult to monitor and enforce. Consequently, the seemingly cheap and convenient transition to unhealthy fast food is resulting in overweight, obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases, notably diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer (Kirabo, 2022).

Business owners are increasingly bringing food products and services closer to the people. These products can be brought to people's doorsteps – cars, motorcycles and bicycles vend them within communities, unlike before, when customers had to get out of their home and/or comfort zone to access a product. Technology, advertising and high mobile phone ownership have greatly supported this drive, where currently city residents can call, use an app or make online orders. However, this perceived effort to increase access and affordability has largely compromised quality; typically, packaged food sold to people with low socioeconomic status (SES) is of lower nutritional quality, due to poor regulation and the need to cut costs by these small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Low SES spaces are specifically targeted by a distinct type of producer/distributor, which also highlights the subtle existence of a segmented market for food.

4.4.2. Domain significance

HWN is very important to the central government bloc and presidency, mostly because of its linkages to human capital development and the need for a healthy population to achieve the desired middle-income country status in line with the NDP III and Uganda's National Nutrition Action Plan II (2020/2--2024/2025). Dietary health is not as visibly significant as issues like HIV/AIDS, malaria or maternal and child health, which seem to attract a lot of funding and public attention. Most government agencies do not sufficiently integrate nutrition and food security issues into their portfolios and operational agendas. Even the attempts of the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) to coordinate a multi-sectoral response across key line ministries and MDAs has not been very successful. At the city level, nutrition falls under the Directorate of Public Health and Environment; a directorate that receives relatively generous funding allocations. As stated by a KCCA official, "health gets the biggest part of the budget in the city and that

is how we prioritise”. Nutrition interventions are supported by several other development partners, UN bodies, international partners and their implementing partners (IPs), such as UNICEF, WFP, USAID and EU, among others. Nutrition is perceived as a high leverage intervention point because it also tackles women, newborns, infants and children – all key population categories that not only garner sympathy and support for funding but also whose wellbeing is directly tagged to development and performance indicators. Politicians also use health (including nutrition and food security) to mobilise votes.

However, there is no clear-cut coordination of these institutions and the roles they play; some line ministries (for example Trade and Commerce) focus more on the products that bring most revenue into the country (export), while most domestic food safety issues are handed over to UNBS – which is also limited in scope and capacity. Without an authority or agency that is solely responsible for food safety, this issue will always be sidelined in favour of other more economically viable commodities, like petroleum, minerals, cotton, and so on.

For the **private sector**, the HWN domain is very important – mostly to match up the supply side. In fact, the private sector pushes for the demand side to be as high as possible, through marketing, advertising and appealing to the aspirations or distant dreams of IS residents who consume private sector outputs, products and services. Historically, the private sector has also evolved and taken on an increasingly prominent role in the health and nutrition/food security sector.

5. Overarching analysis

This report has shown how national and city-level politics, urban systems and particular configurations of actors, agencies, ideas and practices have shaped development in the domains of informal settlements; youth and capability development; land and connectivity; and health, wellbeing and nutrition in Kampala. It has also shown that developmental problems persist, affecting the wellbeing and life prospects of urban dwellers – particularly marginalised groups – and damaging the environment. The holistic analysis presented in this report enables us to identify the most pressing developmental problems in Kampala, and the challenges that will likely be encountered in efforts to solve them in an equitable and (environmentally and fiscally) sustainable way. In these concluding sections, we sum up the main developmental problems and propose suitable ways of addressing them in light of the described challenges.

Many city residents lack access to essential services, including safe drinking water, safely managed sanitation, healthy diets, affordable, reliable and safe electricity supply, adequate waste collection systems, cooking fuels, adequate transportation, and so on. And key regulatory functions have been undermined, including around the governance of land, food standards, education and environmental standards, in ways that have particularly negative implications for low-income communities and residents. Private formal and informal actors are filling the many gaps in centralised systems, resulting in complex formal–informal modes of delivery that rarely offer reliable and affordable

services. Indeed, urban life in Kampala typically survives and endures in the “alternatives”. The dysfunctionality of institutional models explains the rise in *Kamyufus*, VHTs, gulper technologies, waste pickers, water vendors, and so on.

These developmental problems result from a longstanding commitment to privatisation and market-driven responses that have profoundly weakened the capacity of both central and city governments to govern critical systems and services in an effective and coordinated manner. Moreover, a highly politicised city culture, and sharp interest politics, including political manoeuvres like recentralising the functioning of KCCA directly under the President’s Office, have not helped, except to entrench deep-seated corruption and a culture of patronage, woven into the fabric of the state. Political authority in Kampala City has become highly fragmented, with a myriad of power centres emerging in the city, and this undermines prospects for ambitious reform programmes or coordinated action by political and bureaucratic actors.

KCCA lies in a complicated and manipulative national landscape that has created an institutional culture geared towards enhancing short-term political gains, while compromising long-term focus on service quality, relationships and efficiency across all systems. Scandals, corruption and shoddy and delayed works degrade most systems in Kampala – transport, education, healthcare, waste management, and so on – which, in turn, decreases productivity and increases living costs and negative externalities like pollution. The political drivers and processes that enabled the radical city-wide reforms of the early 2010s, following the 2010 KCCA Act, have been absent since 2016, when the ruling party lost an election in the city. The city governance processes, including infrastructure systems, appear to have gone back to the pre-2010 days, with infrastructure failures, corruption and governance gridlocks which work to the detriment of urban reform.

Informal settlements bear the brunt of many of these governance issues and elite rentseeking. They occupy much of the most accessible prime land across the city, and rising land values have intensified a politics of dispossession, generating even higher levels of tenure insecurity and vulnerability in the informal settlements. But informal settlements are also large potential voting blocs, and to that extent their residents are sometimes courted by politicians. Alongside formal political and technical structures, powerful political and business elites with connections to the NRM government and the president operate informally in informal settlements, influencing how the residents experience and navigate everyday challenges. The menu of tactics employed varies from one place to another and these lie on a spectrum ranging from ensuring heavy security force and military deployment and lethal crackdown of opposition supporters and spaces, to the less visible NRM local “mobilisers” – who also double as local council 1 (LC1) chairpersons – working clandestinely with State-House-connected individuals (such as large-scale businesspeople, military officers and politicians) in determining the success or failure of community mobilisation efforts, local water supply systems, sanitation, waste management and market development projects in informal settlements.

The challenges for urban reform in Kampala City are plentiful – but so are the opportunities. The potential for citizen agency across the city is huge, even when organised actions have come to be associated with opposition groups and disruptive forces. There is a lot of energy amongst city residents and working groups⁴⁹ demanding urban reform around key service delivery challenges – using platforms such as community and neighbourhood watch systems, (in)formal financing systems, digital warrior and or hashtag activism, community groups, and so on. These have increasingly been supported by civil society and CBOs, which also require significant support if they are to offer a stronger voice and more effective source of service provision for Kampala’s poorest residents. Oftentimes, though, organised groups that mobilise city residents against poor service delivery, non-collection of garbage, land grabbing, seizure of properties, eviction of vendors and taxi operators, registration of taxis and *boda bodas*, and so on, have been summarily disrupted by the Uganda Police Force and other security agencies. Indeed, public demonstrations on hot button issues have been criminalised and suffered grave intimidation in complete disregard of the constitutional right of citizens to protest and petition the government (Mwesigye, 2024).

Our analysis shows that priority reforms that are urgently required in the city include the upgrading of informal settlements, proper land registration, waste management, apprenticeship, skills development and vocational training for youth groups, public health campaigns on healthy diets. State capabilities to address urban development challenges are required in several areas, including financing, human resource capacity improvements, and the capacity to forge productive partnerships and new ways of working with relevant non-state actors and to undertake basic regulatory functions.

6. Implications for future research and policy interventions

The evidence provided in this synthesis report points to a series of knowledge gaps that have clear policy implications but also provide opportunities for conducting further research in Kampala City in a number of areas.

49 Some of the existing working groups across the city include the Informality Dialogue, National Transport Consultative Forum (similar to the GMKA Urban Mobility Consultative Forum), Advocates Coalitions for Environment and Development, Shelter and Settlement Alternatives, Urban Thinkers Dialogues; Informal Settlements' Forums, Vijana Corps, Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER), City (Division) Development Forum, National Urban Forum, Uganda Pit Emptiers Association, Mayors Forum for WASH, FSM/CWIS Steering Committee, Kampala Water and Sanitation (WASH) Forum, Water and Sanitation Development Partners Working Group, Gulper Association of Kampala, National Land Forum for Uganda, Uganda Muslim Youth Development Forum, Peoples' Parliament National, Division, Parish youth council meetings, community and division development associations, Technical Working Group for Sanitation, Waste Management and Resource Recovery, National Planning Authority Wednesday Forum, Platform for Vendors in Uganda (PLAVU), UTTEGA Taxi Transport Management Association, Mayors Forum on Sanitation.

6.1. Implications for policy

1. **While the size of the informal economy in Kampala City is unknown, it is a significant part of the urban fabric, including social and political structures.** How the city governance systems deal with it is very critical, and it is therefore important to explore the multiple government interventions that have been tried out in dealing with the sector, which at times conflict with one another. Many a time, political players have proposed an array of interventions to deal with informality, from tolerating the sector, to banning, engaging, ignoring, absorbing or expelling it, and the political calculations and intent of each of these attempts needs to be understood very clearly. For example, hawkers and vendors' associations put their number at more than 10,000, mostly economically vulnerable women; and this requires that their needs should be included in the "Smart City Plan" intentionally.
2. **The dominance of landfill solutions in managing Kampala City waste management challenges has not been very successful** and instead it has raised safety and health concerns for the city, including the most recent (August 2024) waste slide that claimed over 30 people. Therefore, KCCA should explore opportunities for scaling up transformation of organic wastes into usable products, as opposed to the activity remaining at a micro-scale in communities where research and pilots have been undertaken over the last two decades.
3. **Food markets and other economic spaces have become important areas for city residents to participate in economic activities.** It is therefore necessary that KCCA designs and plans appropriate and inclusive spaces, including markets for women and youths (the largest vending category in the city) to participate effectively in secure and productive economic livelihood activities. In addition, the management and governance modalities of built markets in Kampala city present serious challenges for physical access to healthy and nutritious food.
4. **There exists a clear disconnect between household and/or public and professional⁵⁰ understandings of healthy diets.** As a matter of policy, there is a need therefore to effortlessly provide and communicate what healthy food and diets are, to save residents from incurring high medical expenses, unpleasant hospital experiences and the opportunity cost of sickness. This process can piggyback on existing interventions, such as project NOURICITY, which look into the kinds of information channels that are used to deliver information on healthy diets in low-income areas of Kampala City. This process can bring together a series of nutrition stakeholders to share their experiences, innovations, research findings and lessons learned from projects that impact nutrition programming across the city. There is also an absence of a robust regulatory regime on manufacturing and distribution of foods. This has implications for enforcement of food quality standards. A lot of the processed foods available on the Ugandan market are high in salt, sugar and other hazardous content. Overall, there is limited investment and (technical and infrastructural) capacity in regulatory and oversight processes. This weak regulatory landscape is being exploited by an extremely aggressive private sector, which targets mostly the urban youth demographic (children, students, young working class, and so on) via persuasive adverts on phones and social

⁵⁰ This is provided for in the *Nutrition Guidance and General Guidance on Adequate Dietary Intake* manuals for the general population provided by the Ministry of Health. [Available online](#) (accessed 28 October 2024).

media, among others. Building a health foods advocacy working group that works in partnership with the Directorate of Gender and Community Services, Directorate of Public Health and Environment and Ministry of Health would go a long way in building a coalition of actions to move the health foods agenda forward.

5. **Most urban residents experience financial struggles and they therefore resort to all sorts of available financing options**, including taking loans from online money lending applications. While the Uganda Microfinance Regulatory Authority does not license any institution giving out loans without a physical office, many borrowers face unorthodox debt collection methods, such as data shaming on social media platforms, intimidation, blackmail and threats, which are illegal in light of the existing regulatory framework. Moreover, the roaming of loan apps has been exploited by a series of criminal syndicates which not only, do not comply with the required consumer protection measures, but also abuse customer data privacy. The need for closer monitoring of the financial sector, including appropriate protection of customers, is paramount. KCCA and other regulatory agencies need to work with Google and other aggregators to ensure that illegal moneylending apps are registered and their operations monitored very closely. As customers navigate the loan landscape, they need to be provided with appropriate information on the annual percentage rate, so that they can make informed decisions and other determinations about the overall costs of the loans. Loan apps should not only prioritise consumer protection, data protection and regulatory compliance, but also refrain from engaging in underhand methods, such as harassment, unauthorised data access and illegal debt collection practices.

6.2. Implications for research

1. **There is a need to further examine the operation and performance of the wide range of service delivery forms across the city.** A series of experiments, including decentralisation and recentralisation of the governance of the city, have been tried out, but these have not delivered the required service delivery outcomes for Kampala City. The city not only has a huge infrastructure need, even when a series of public–private partnerships across the waste, education, health, law and order, finance, and transport streams have been tried and tested; but also, it appears to be an experimental site for a series of governance interventions and political manoeuvres. This needs to be explored further, in terms of what can deliver sustained development outcomes for city residents and rescue the city from the persistent service delivery failures that have characterised it for many decades. There is a need to explore further what public–private partnerships mean and how the different actors across the city can work together. Most specifically, there is a need to explore: 1) the ways in which local communities can participate effectively in city governance affairs; and 2) how economists, political scientists, urban researchers and individuals or groups of individuals can give policy advice for urban reform without being construed as “government critics and members of the opposition”. In the waste sector, for example, there are plans for co-production and co-management landfill operations at Ddundu across the Greater Kampala Metropolitan Areas, and this requires further study to determine the operational effectiveness of such a practice – something that could be the first of its kind in Uganda. Broadly, what opportunities and kinds of innovative investments can be adopted, not only to fill the existing service delivery gaps in Kampala City, but

also to align them with the Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area Urban Development Programme, and the Integrated Urban Development Master Plan for Kampala Special Planning Area?

2. **The transport system appears to be the most politically hostile and contested area in the city.** The planning and coordination of public transport services, for example, is not vested in a single statutory authority. Despite the difficult relationship that has dominated the conversation between KCCA (even former KCC) and the commuter taxi operators, including the former Uganda Taxi Operators and Drivers Association (UTODA) and now Uganda Taxi Operators Federation (UTOF), the commuter taxi industry has stood the test of time. It is therefore important to explore how non-state actors, such as UTODA (now UTOF), have been able to navigate the political waters but also deliver a transport service for this long. What are the processes and structures that have enabled the commuter taxi system to endure, while higher occupancy vehicles, including buses and train services, have failed to provide a sustainable service for the city residents? Moreover, the series of presidential directives and city authority initiatives to not only register, ban and/or live with *boda bodas*, and revive the railway system, but also reduce conflicts within the *boda boda* sector and commuter service systems, at multiple scales, have not registered significant positive results. In addition, KCCA is more preoccupied with collecting revenues from private transport operators, as it was, for example, with the concession agreement with PEBC for provision of “affordable” public transport services. There is a need to examine further the vested interests in the transport sector and what potential there is for building just and inclusive systems. Essentially, the enduring lack of an organised, structured and reliable public transport system for the past 40 years calls for a thorough study, so that a just, economically feasible, efficient, effective and environmentally friendly public transport system for all is achieved. For *boda bodas*, for example, in what ways can informal services provision be recognised and integrated with formal services provision? And how can the management of areas/spaces by *boda boda* associations be improved to reduce the persistent conflicts among them? Considering that *boda boda* driving is dominated by youths, what kind of apprenticeship is appropriate for them? What sort of boundary/jurisdictional boundaries are required to sustain peace among *boda boda* operators, but also deliver adequate and safe services to clients?
3. **Although a series of social movements and working groups have been active in demanding for improved urban reform and service delivery across the city, there is a shift in their actions and calls for improvements in service delivery to digital spaces and online platforms that have transcended physical barriers and reached a global audience.**⁵¹

51 The traction of online social justice campaigns makes the riskier street protests unnecessary (Mwesigye, 2024). Examples of what would be considered as online media and digital activism that have allowed activists to disseminate information, mobilise citizens and draw attention to the governance and service delivery challenges facing the city include the #KampalaPotholeExhibition (that exposed the poor state of Kampala City’s roads), #UgandaParliamentExhibition (that laid bare the scope of profligacy and the wanton abuse of public funds in parliament as well as the blatant nepotism and favouritism in recruitment of staff), #UgandaHealthExhibition (that exposed the state of Uganda’s health facilities); #UgandaNGOExhibition (that exposed the rot in Uganda’s civil society agencies); #UgandaLabourExhibition (to shed light on the labour exports and treatment of Ugandans by labour exporting companies), and #UgandaSecurityExhibition, and so on. These have been joined by Ugandans from all walks of life to shine light on pressing public concerns.

Considering that city residents' voices can also be heard online, there is a need to determine: 1) whether protests are still viable tools for the Kampala citizens to effect change in city governance; and 2) the potential of, not only, offline and credible mainstream media but also online/digital platforms in driving urban reform in Kampala City, and specifically providing information and driving the demand for accountability and meaningful change in urban governance. Urban reform coalitions are not very active across the city, but there is a need to explore how to enhance the effectiveness of "coalitions" and mobilised citizenry that are impactful around key systems or that speak for all the systems and broader urban development agendas. There also exists the latent power and potential of micro-level systems and actors, including but not limited to schools, community health systems, faith-based and culturally based structures to transform societies. There is a need to explore how best they can be targeted to strengthen their transformative potential in the city.

4. **Data on the length of electricity outages is still unclear and data on the losses that households, businesses and industries suffer is not easily found anywhere.** There is a need for research on the productivity losses, direct economic costs and other lost opportunities from electricity outages in the city. This is particularly important for informal settlement dwellers, *jua-kali*⁵² operators and several economic spaces that survive along the axis of marginality across the city, whose level of dependence on electricity is extremely high. The economic costs of service failures and disruptions across the city, including the price that citizens pay for them and risks associated with illegal electricity connections, such as electrocution, need to be investigated further.
5. **The road sector suffers a lot from financial accountability and transparency challenges and the entry of the army/military (Uganda Peoples Defence Forces) in road maintenance and repairs is worth paying attention to.**⁵³ Considering that the army is reaching deeper into city politics and public affairs, it is important to look broadly at what it means for the army to gradually enter into city management affairs. Is the army part of the machinery to maintain power and expand it or is it intended to improve city management systems and processes? It is also important to quantify not only the economic losses from road accidents, including the cost of medical treatment and rehabilitation for accident victims, which continue to overstretch the limited health services, but also to estimate the losses in economic productivity from poor road infrastructure.

52 *Jua-kali* is a Swahili term for "scorching hot sun" and has increasingly become associated with labourers who work with wood or metal, especially in the informal sector artisans, such as car workers, metal workers, welders, shoe repair, automobile repair, carpentry – that is, physically difficult work – typically performed outdoors because of lack of premises. Gradually, the term came to refer to anybody in self-employment (King, 1996; UNEVOC, 1997). Today the term has taken on a dual meaning. It also means "to know". *Kali* means scorching, but it also means sharp and therefore scorching sun or sharp knowledge, and these apply to the informal sector of traders and small business owners running shops on the street or in open marketplaces in Kampala City too.

53 The army has gradually entered into many civilian institutions, where it is duplicating or supplanting their work – including guarding tax collection centres, running factories, herding cattle, chasing street vendors, training engineers and steering a whole community development programme: Operation Wealth Creation. For details, see Taylor (2022).

6. **How can material and resource use across the water, sanitation and waste systems be (re)shaped for a smart Kampala City?** It is important to examine how sanitation services, including waste management streams, can incorporate resource recovery to produce environmentally acceptable effluents and reduce the overall costs of sanitation services. This is also very relevant for the waste management sector, where there is a need to deepen circular economy principles and business models that reduce the amount of solid wastes that reach landfills.

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