

Globalisation and the African City: Touba, Abidjan and Durban

By Bill Freund

Foreword

This paper is in essence the final chapter of a forthcoming book. It is preceded by a chapter more generally covering the post-colonial city in Africa. I take the view that the real historic break in urban development in Africa took place with the breakdown of modernist planning from the 1970s. Although there are some important exceptions (Algeria, Nasser's Egypt, the ex-Belgian Congo from 1960 and the ex-Portuguese colonies from 1975), there is a lot of continuity between late colonial urban development and that in the early independence period. As Mamdani writes, there is of course deracialisation but the prestigious modern city as development headquarters and focus of state attention remains a central phenomenon. This is true despite the unpredicted very rapid growth of cities and the failure of the planners to allow and cater for the arrival of large numbers of poor new entrants.

It is really with the stagnation or decline in the export crop/mineral economy in most of Africa, together with massive episodes of disruption in many countries (Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, etc.), that the cities seem to collapse in a welter of what can be called Afropessimistic catastrophe. After 1980, urban literature on Africa shifts to focus on coping strategies and survivalism, where it is assumed the state can deliver little if anything. However, there is as well the influence of a new kind of optimist looking at the poor "doing it for themselves" in a positive and even celebratory way. Andrew Hake's self-help city concept with regard to Nairobi is paradigmatic (1975) but even further along this road is the work of Aili Mari Tripp for whom the Tanzanian state is more or less the enemy and where self-help solutions and the decline of the state are the touchstones for a better life, especially for urban women. There is also a cultural parallel as witness the recent State of Siege volume which seems to depict Africans creating a new, genuinely post-colonial culture out of semi-ruined urban locations. What better for the myriad petty hawkers of Lagos than its impossible traffic jams tying down an immobile potential clientele, according to the Dutch architect Rem Coolhaas?

What follows tries to do something rather different: to look at globalisation as containing trends in which Africa responds in ways other than either devastated victim or liberated entrepreneur. I try to avoid both sliding into Afropessimism or rising to celebrate creativity in the ruins.

A Mouride Jerusalem

Touba is not a city that many outside Senegal know. Until the final quarter of the twentieth century, it was only a small town associated with the Mouride religious order established by the Senegalese Muslim teacher and organiser, Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba. However, it has become a good-sized city within recent years when its growth has frequently exceeded 15% p.a. With a population counted at 300.000 in 1994, estimates a decade later ran to as much as 500.000. It has certainly become the largest city in Senegal apart from the capital Dakar. This growth is the more striking by contrast with the relatively slow development of other provincial Senegalese towns.

Religious brotherhoods structure the world of Senegalese Muslims and the Mourides (Muridiyya) are the best known of these born in Senegal. The Mourides have long fascinated scholars of Africa and are the subject of a number of celebrated studies. Thanks to the recent outstanding work of the Senegalese geographer Cheikh Guèye who has termed Touba the Mouride Jerusalem, it is possible to follow the latest developments among the Mourides and, in particular, the rise of the city of Touba and the urbanisation of the Mouride order.

In the early colonial period, the French looked askance at the preaching of Bamba which they feared would take on an anti-French character, and he was exiled for many years to Gabon. However, as time wore on, a rapprochement was established and the Mourides gradually began to be seen as an element making for stability in Senegal. Bamba encouraged Senegalese men to volunteer for the French military in World War I. In return, after the war, he received permission to begin the construction of a great Mouride mosque in Touba in 1924 (completed only in 1963). The French consented to his burial in the town in 1927 and, to accommodate a growing annual pilgrimage to his tomb, allowed a spur of the railway to be extended to Touba in 1931. Nonetheless the growth of Touba was relatively modest; its core was (and is to a large extent) after all a monument to the dead. Its population was only 4.353 in 1960 at the time of independence, rising to 29.738 in 1976.

During the final generation of French colonial rule, and indeed well after, the Mourides acquired fame as the producers of a large part of Senegal's key export, the peanut. Indeed they tended towards growing peanuts as a monoculture and spread its cultivation deeper into the Senegalese interior into semi-arid areas of doubtful environmental sustainability, the so-called *Terres Neuves* (New Lands). This process went together with the hierarchial system whereby disciples or *taalibes* were considered under the discipline of their *marabouts* or religious leaders, themselves ultimately subordinate to the Khalifal order of Bamba's descendant-successors. Disciples were required to produce peanut crops in effect as part of their obligation in extending and sustaining the Mouride order and they were heavily tithed. The Mourides were prominent backers of the politician Léopold Sedar Senghor, Senegal's first president (and himself a Christian). Amongst other things, they received in return the right to distribute land in and around Touba, which lay in the heart of Mouride country. The mosque and the railway line extension were in part the work of pious Mouride volunteers.

However, this kind of economy did not lend itself to any very substantial sort of urbanisation. Gradually, a growing number of Mourides did settle in Dakar and other urban communities but, generally speaking, Mourides remained in rural areas and became the mainstay of the population of numerous small settlements. The *daara* was the name given to the pioneer settlement typical of this phase. The peanut export economy of Senegal reached its peak in the 1970s, however. Drought and declining international prices then brought about a marked decline and the Mourides in fact refused to sustain national efforts to rebuild the peanut economy to its peak.

Instead, they turned in growing numbers to commerce in a wide range of commodities as the order established impressive and far-flung economic networks. From 1980, very large numbers of Mourides began to be found not merely in West African cities such as Libreville and Abidjan but throughout Europe, North America and further afield. This emigration has itself been organised and promoted by the leadership of the order. Within Senegal itself, the order has given its blessing to the explosive growth of a city of peace and order—holy Touba. The great mosque at the heart of Touba was completed in 1963 and now boasts the sixth biggest minaret in the world, eighty-seven metres high. The pilgrimage attracts hundreds of thousands of worshippers.

But in addition, large numbers of Mourides have also been persuaded to abandon their residences in west-central rural Senegal and move to Touba itself, which has quickly grown into a substantial city. Land in Touba has been in the gift of the order to distribute and theoretically cannot otherwise be bought or sold. Thus the *taalibe* acquires his share of urban life through his adhesion to a Mouride leader. If the core of the order consists of the male grandchildren of its founder, the quarters of the city were established through the Wolof matrilineages established by him and his sons. Bamba had himself 29 wives who included women from the families of both religious leaders and Wolof aristocrats of the pre-French era and some of their descendants have established important neighbourhoods in Touba.

Guèye has provided us with a picture of the growing economic complexity of Touba. Apart from the benefits of religious activities, the city also contains merchants and speculators in local produce; with the decline of peanuts, as elsewhere in Africa, there is a growing commoditised trade in agricultural produce (with corresponding speculation) for local consumption. Perhaps 1/3 of households are primarily committed to farming and their inhabitants are often elsewhere in agricultural villages where they maintain a livelihood. In the 1990s, a growing percentage of the Touba population has come to consist of women and children, indicating that it has become the principal family residence of most of these households..

More important is commerce. More than half of all Touba households are described as primarily active in commerce and here imports and a consumer economy tied to the outer world, is especially significant. International remittances account for a huge share of income while the importation and dispersal of industrially produced goods from the whole world have taken over the Senegalese economy, so weak in “internationally competitive” productive activity. Touba makes sense as a town only if one starts to take

stock of one major aspect of globalisation—the large-scale temporary or permanent movement of Africans, notably West Africans, to all corners of the globe, together with the decline in productive local activity. For the Mouride hierarchy, the logic of the internal structure of the order is to collect funds in order to construct God's city of Touba. In this context, it is convenient and appropriate for economic as well as cultural reasons for large numbers to collect in a dense location.

The markets play a key role in the town. They began to play an important role in the Senegalese economy through the distribution of untaxed goods arriving from the Gambia, a measure of the growing inability of the Senegalese state to control its economic frontiers. Other goods coming across borders have now supplemented and replaced this initial source. Guèye stresses the complicated relationship of Touba to the Senegalese state. In a sense, this is a city that has emerged directly out of civil society and local forms of accumulation completely independent of the order of the colonial and post-colonial state. (ironically, the present President of Senegal, Abdoulaye Wade, is considered a Mouride) It benefits from the extent to which Mouride influence keeps the state at bay and tries to substitute a religious way of life for a secular order. It is a visible symbol of the eclipse of a political order in which the state would be expected to be the principal bearer of the gospel and the accoutrements of development. In holy Touba, smoking, drinking and other vices are all banned and there are virtually no non-Muslims resident. Europeans are not supposed to live in much of the city. In theory, such infrastructure as electricity and water are available at no cost; Touba is tax-free.

In reality, however, the very material reality of a modern city has intruded in all too real a way on the Mouride Jerusalem despite these bans. The very rapid growth of the city has engendered the other leg of its economy, the sheer weight of the construction and building industry. Devolution of plot assignments from the religious leadership to the neighbourhood village chiefs has gone hand in hand with a more or less legal but very extensive and lucrative market in housing, justified by the need to partition estates on death, amongst other things. This certainly has the potential to subvert the spatial order of the city focussed on the control of key lineages and their access to land near the great mosque.

If religious based associations (*dahira*) are founded sometimes to, for example, provide cemeteries or hospitals for the city, they are very inadequate.¹ In fact, the infrastructure, still not very developed, does require state intervention (telephone lines, water supply, road construction) even though this is difficult for Mourides to take into account in comprehending their city. There have been intense struggles over repayment of bills for services. In theory there are no squatter settlements in Touba but in fact, there are: squatter settlements (*khayma*) justified as homes-in-waiting for those not yet allotted plots of land.

The decline in recognised employment in Senegal and the burgeoning of the black market has led, even in Touba, to serious levels of crime, which the Islamic regime is unable to

¹ For *dahira* see, Momar Coumba Diop, "Fonctions et activités des *dahira* mourides urbains (Sénégal), *Cahiers des Etudes Africaines*, 81-83, 79-91.

control. This includes alcohol, drugs and a trade in arms. Many successful traders bring back a huge array of luxury durable items for their homes in Touba, again tempting criminal elements. Even in areas such as traffic control, the attempt to minimise the presence of the secular state by banning national police has created great problems. Touba lacks the most visible sign of the striking power of a state, an effective police force. Here we have a considerable urban agglomeration which has arisen despite or against the state, in sympathy with the dynamism of globalisation to which Senegal's main successful response has been emigration, creating a new kind of social phenomenon. But in Touba the classic problems of a modern city are far from absent. Nonetheless it represents a new kind of city in so far as its growth has been quite autonomous from the colonial and post-colonial economic or administrative logic of the twentieth century.

The Pearl of the Lagoons

Surprisingly our second city, which we shall highlight in order to consider aspects of the globalisation of Africa and its urban landscape, is almost of an age with Touba. Abidjan was established by the French administration of the Ivory Coast, also in French West Africa, in 1920. At that point, its population consisted only of those inhabiting a couple of dozen Ebrié and other villages around a network of islands and peninsulas on a lagoon. The French goal was to establish the ideal site for a railway terminus that would evacuate useful tropical commercial products and could be connected easily to a seaport. They wanted to find a relatively healthy site and they meant to develop it as a territorial capital. Abidjan became the capital of the Ivory Coast only in 1934 and in 1950 a cut through the island of Petit Bassam brought deep-water ships directly through to the lagoon, confirming Abidjan's location as the core of colonial development not merely in the Ivory Coast but in French West Africa more generally.

By contrast with Touba, the growth of Abidjan was explosive in the later colonial and, above all the early independence, period, the era of the so-called Ivorian miracle. In the decade after the Second World War, the Ivory Coast economy boomed as a source of coffee and then cocoa, grown in the forest hinterland of Abidjan. Initially produced by French planters who could dispose of unfree labour thanks to the colonial labour regime, real economic expansion came to depend on the initiative of small to medium growers using very little introduced technology. As was typical of colonial circumstances, Abidjan expanded dramatically as the headquarters of the administration and site of social, cultural and economic institutions. Under self-government and then independence, it was the purpose of the long-lived Houphouët-Boigny administration to make Abidjan a splendid gateway to the prosperity of this unusually successful territory. The air-conditioned modern towers of the urban core, the Plateau, rose over shops that made available the full array of French consumerism to what was by West African standards a large affluent population. There were 46,000 inhabitants counted in 1945, 180,000 in 1960 at the time of independence and some 1,269,000 by 1978.

To a casual visitor, a striking feature of Abidjan lay in the presence of numerous French people and the apparent replication of a provincial French city. The wealthy districts

seemed to be a West African echo of the settler cities of East and South Africa. Indeed this was the intention of early planners who did wish to minimise the African presence on the Plateau and create as salubrious and exclusive as possible an atmosphere suitable for the capital of a colony intended to have a significant white settler presence. This was how the residential district of Cocody to the east of the Plateau was laid out.

However, for a variety of reasons, it was not possible to reproduce southern African conditions in this sense in the Ivory Coast. Early on, the French rewarded building workers on the harbour and elsewhere with *lotissements*, plots of land on which to build houses and remain in Abidjan. The nature of the Ivorian economy was linked to the growing intensification of markets, markets that brought tropical products to the port but also connected the whole territory in time through the distribution of foodstuffs and a wide range of other goods. Across the impressive *Pont Charles de Gaulle* from the Plateau lay the great commercial hub of Treichville, an urban and always predominantly black neighbourhood where the early Ivorian elite used to gather to make plans for political change in the halcyon days of nationalist activity after World War II. A second great market breathed economic life into Adjamé, inland from the Plateau and the obvious connection point to the interior of the country. But indeed there were markets everywhere. And the different neighbourhoods of Abidjan, streets thronged with people, were far less defined in class terms than one found in southern Africa. Most of the spreading sections of the city contained petty bourgeois elements, notably clerical and other white collar workers, living amongst the poorer population. The richest parts of the city also hid squatter settlements full of those employed in the building services, providing services, etc.—settlements which Alphonse Yapi Diahou has shown have been major sources of economic activity and stimulation themselves. In the early independence period, there was a tendency to destroy such unsightly and unworthy settlements but since the 1970s they have been tolerated and accepted although their status remains somewhat precarious to the benefit of a patrimonial system based on bargaining and clientage.

In fact, in important ways, planners were never successful in creating a “rational” structure for Abidjan. While post-war governments constructed blocks of flats suitable for employees, the Ivorian people much preferred to live in compounds which would inevitably contain a varied range of relatives and clients as well as the core family. Indeed over time, suburbia developed, which allowed for such compound life while the blocks of flats, often in deteriorating condition, were rented out and sub-divided to poorer people. The city also contained other complexities: the French and after independence, the Ivorians, did not generally disrupt the original Ebrié settlements in and around Abidjan which were allowed considerable economic and planning autonomy in controlling their own development. On the whole, by the 1970s, Abidjan had evolved into a city that was taking on a distinctive cultural feeling based on its *maquis*-restaurants and cuisine, its distinctive French argot and its cosmopolitan character. This was despite the fact that the Houphouëtian political machine defined everyone (apart from the Ebrié) as outsiders who had their real home—above all their political home—in some ethnic hinterland from where their roots could be identified.

Many observers would ascribe a very large part of the success of the city, and of the Ivory Coast, to its tolerance and its capacity to engage the energies of large numbers of outsiders. Not only were there many French residents, there were an even larger number of Lebanese who played a role in most aspects of the economy. The agricultural export economy was dependent on the migration of northern Ivorians into the lightly-peopled south but also hundreds of thousands from the savanna countries, particularly Burkina Faso (Upper Volta), once joined as a colonial territory to the Ivory Coast, and Mali. There were also many migrants from neighbouring countries such as Dahomey (Bénin), Togo, Liberia and Ghana often also from forest zone environments. Immigrants often were able to own land and to find their way into the professions and civil service as well as the informal commercial sector where Ivorians exerted dominance in general in government work and in the formal working class. Up to a third of the population can be defined as being of "foreign origin". (Pierre Janne in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, October 2000²)

Establishing a balance between different parts of the heterogeneous Ivory Coast and between the natives and the outsiders was certainly the focal point of the system created by Félix Houphouët-Boigny, compared at an early stage to a big city political machine playing to a myriad of ethnic communities in the USA by the political scientist Aristide Zolberg. On the one hand, the final supremacy of the Ivorians who deserved the finest fruits of the harvest was to be sustained. But foreigners were to be welcomed and given their place in the pecking order. There were outbreaks of violence against foreigners at different points in time. Indeed the Ivory Coast government was critical in causing the break-up of the French West African federation in order to retain the rewards of regional success within the territory. Zolberg already wrote in 1964 of xenophobia as an Ivorian characteristic. But problems were inevitably resolved in terms of firming up a political and social order which promoted the Ivorian miracle socially and politically, elegantly defined in terms of the hospitality of the Ivorian people. The state fostered ethnic identity, ruled the countryside through networks of ethnically defined chiefs and then established an expert and flexible balance offering something to everyone that usually worked.

Unfortunately, the miracle did not endure past 1980. From 1980 to 1995, GNP per capita fell by approximately one-third. Despite various initiatives, the Ivorian economy failed to branch out and diversify very effectively. Indeed in the 1990s it tended to focus more narrowly around cocoa. Globalisation promotes exports but not generally peasant crop production that can be produced in a wide range of countries; prices fell and the indebtedness of the state mounted enormously. From 1990, Houphouët-Boigny, who had always bought out and incorporated political opposition, was forced to accept a multi-party system which threatened his machine's smooth running. When he finally died in 1995, he was succeeded by a far less effective political operator, Henri Konan Bédié. Bédié was the promoter of what was called *ivoirité*-a philosophy which exalted those who could prove that they and their parents were indigenous Ivorians. This opened a Pandora's box. On the one hand, it took off as a popular slogan for Ivorians who could identify with it in their frustration at a stagnant or declining economy and blame it on outsiders or foreigners. On the other, it was seen with mounting anger as a ploy on the

² In fact, the most recent correct census figure is 26%.

part of northern and western Ivoirians by the Akan-speaking cocoa belt forest dwellers to retain state power to themselves. In 1990, foreigners lost all residual rights to vote in the Ivory Coast while since 1999 they have lost the ability to own land and have been obliged to formalise their status as non-Ivoirians by accepting a system of relatively costly identity cards.. A key state commissioned report by the *Conseil Economique et Social* asserted that the number of those of foreign origin in the Ivory Coast, although no longer increasing, surpassed by far the limit which could be found tolerable. Konan Bédié's opponents demanded democracy but they also wanted a sharper distinction between Ivoirians and foreigners.

All this happens in an environment of expanding unemployment (according to statistics, considerably higher among Ivoirian nationals than foreigners) and AIDs, significant in Abidjan particularly. In the good times, education, access to the civil service, the move to town and ultimately Abidjan was the golden road to success, to becoming a real *patron* to one's friends, family and ethnic group for more and more Ivoirians; now the road was virtually cut off. The state offers less and less to the citizen. Good quality health and education increasingly means having the funds to revert to the private sector. No more public housing is erected. The economic environment is becoming notably harsher especially in this city of 2.500.000+ inhabitants. The long stagnation of the 1980s was to a limited extent briefly reversed in the middle 1990s but only due to a rise in cocoa and coffee prices that has not been sustained in the long term. At times, crime waves have overwhelmed urban life.

If we turn from the national picture to the urban one, I will suggest that there are two scenarios which have emerged within this context that are threatening to change Abidjan substantially. The first represents a strategy of capital and of class. I am able to understand this strategy thanks to the work of my Ivoirian colleagues in our mutual Three Cities Project but particularly am indebted to the ideas of Sylvie Bredeloup. (Bredeloup, 2002) Bredeloup has made a systematic analysis of commercial transformation in Abidjan. A noticeable shift lies in the growing decline of the popular market, maintained by the public authorities and used by everyone. Of course, the great Adjamé market continues but it is concerned to a considerable degree with produce and with wholesale activity. Elsewhere markets have been the victims of questionable arson attacks. They are tending to be replaced by covered private markets which are far more closely linked than in the past to nearby shops. Moreover, Abidjan, and especially the up-market parts of Abidjan, has seen the creation of a considerable number of shopping malls and super-cum-hypermarkets. The most important locales are focussed on Cocody, the eastern end of the mainland of Abidjan and the newer suburbs beyond, (above all Deux Plateaux which expands more and more into the interior) and on Marcory Zone 4, a desirable if far more crowded and environmentally problematic *quartier* on the island. The latter is near the industrial port but also near the airport and the Atlantic beaches beyond. . Much of this recreation of commercial life owes itself to a small number of Lebanese and Indian firms which are acquiring a dominance in this sector of the economy.

This shift in the market network can be seen as a gradual restructuring of the commercial arterial life of Abidjan putting paid to the old market structures of West Africa and creating new value for a bourgeoisie in touch with globalisation. Again, the accent is on imports and imported goods of an international character with a higher value despite growing immiseration of large numbers of Abidjanais, some of whom return to the countryside but many of whom have no real option to do this. A signal feature of contemporary Abidjan is the decline of the once-splendid Plateau; most desirable commercial activity has departed from the historic centre of the city. One could also point to a certain decline in state intervention. The capital has been moved, if rather ineffectually, to Houphouët-Boigny's home town of Yamoussoukro. The urban administration has been weakened through decentralisation into ten self-governing units which enjoy elections but have little in the way of revenues, forced as they are to find ways to tax itinerant traders and depend on the market rentals.

Bredeloup links this commercial shift to plans aimed at the construction of new bridges. This could create a new network for Abidjan traffic, linking up the two key elite residential areas to the commercially and industrially important parts of the island of *Petit Bassam* and the airport. It would bypass the old link between the Plateau and Treichville and confirm the decline of the Plateau, which would lose its sense of centrality. One aspect of new transport development, the modernisation of the airport, has in fact, proceeded so far.

But the new bridges haven't come into being. Instead, Abidjan has been plunged into prolonged waves of political crisis marked by considerable violence.³ Konan Bédié was overthrown by the army in 1999, the first intervention of its kind in the Ivory Coast. This in turn led to an election result rejected by the army strongman, General Robert Gueï. Gueï in turn was forced in a popular rising to give up power. One prominent aspect of the election was the attempt to freeze out former World Bank bureaucrat Alassane Ouattara, denounced as a Northern Muslim and foreigner, or son of foreign parents.⁴ This financial specialist was re-clothed by his enemies as an outsider to the code of *ivoirité* and demonised.

In a second phase of violence, elections were held (October 2000) and won by a southerner prepared to use this code himself, Laurent Gbagbo, a long-time "democrat" and opponent of the ruling regime. Killings, bodies found in the lagoon and forest, accompanied this victory. In fact, this has led to civil war in 2002 in which Gbagbo has held on to Abidjan while losing control of the north and west of the Ivory Coast and the French have played a leading role in trying to come up with some sort of compromise solution in order to bring back into place the old system or some reasonable substitute for it. Gueï was murdered in Abidjan in September 2002.

It may be that the uneasy truce of 2003 will lead to a stabler situation but it has so far not marked the end of problems that threaten the cosmopolitan character of Abidjan. Violent

³ For a convenient guide to the first stages of the crisis through 2001, see Marc le Pape et Claudine Vidal, *Côte d'Ivoire, l'année terrible 1999-2000*, (Paris: Karthala, 2002)

⁴ In fact, the origins of the Ouattara are mentioned above in Chapter One.

youths have been the bearers of the chauvinist politics that is taking on unprecedented strengths. Tensions, curfews, political murders have taken place in an environment where popular nightclubs feature singers who bemoan the illegitimate influence of foreigners. In the nightclub of Joël Tichi, former captain of the national soccer squad, Ivorians danced to "Libérez" and they meant liberate us--from the foreigners. (*Hindustan Times*, 25.04.03) One of the Ivory Coast's best-known comedians, a resident of Adjamé known to support Ouattara, was murdered, sparking violence in Adjamé amongst his supporters. (Voice of America on-line, 3.2.03) Gangs set torch to informal settlements and tens of thousands of their inhabitants make their way back to Liberia, Burkina Faso, etc. Burkinabe arriving back in Burkina Faso described themselves as "harassed, beaten and...arrested" in large numbers, as "treated like cocoa bags". (<http://afrol> 25.1.03) Students burnt down the Burkinabe embassy in January, 2003.

Abidjan is too large and too complex a city to say that globalisation has finished it off; its capabilities remain large compared to almost any other West African city. But there is no question that this classic city of import substitution, of the strong state, of peasant export crops, of the neo-colonial bargain of 1960, is reeling from the impact of a turn inwards. This turn inwards must be related to the decline and present limited prospects of the previous economic system that created the Ivorian miracle. And, as Bredeloup has shown, initiatives at reconstruction on the basis of more modest forms of growth, are really aimed at hardening class lines and creating a new and potentially less humane kind of urbanism in Abidjan where they have come on line; they are about identifying and privileging the minority still able to feed the circulation of money in a substantial way. . Nor is there the sign of a new moral order such as the Mourides offer in Touba to create a new rainbow on the horizon. Abidjan is not dying but it is altering in the new environment in important ways.

Durban; Umhlanga Rocks and Cato Manor Farm

The last example we shall examine is Durban, which is one of the two really large provincial cities together with Cape Town, in South Africa. The population of the extended metropolitan region approaches 3 million, which makes it roughly equivalent in size to Abidjan. Unlike Cape Town, Durban's growth is entirely tied up to the emergence of gold mining and the rise of Johannesburg and the complex of surrounding towns on the Witwatersrand some six hundred kilometres deeper in the interior. Durban is the port for this inland urban complex with a partly artificially opened harbour and a road-rail-air network built up through the twentieth century efficiently and impressively. By 1980 there were perhaps 180,000 industrial workers in Durban but the economic logic of this industry, little of which produced anything for export, was based on the harbour and the availability of imports.

Amongst South African cities, Durban can be noted for its successful development of a large community of professional urban managers and technical specialists following the English model. Over time, despite the existence of a rate-payer based elected Council, which since it was racially exclusive, reflected the anxieties and desires of the different strata within the white population, the bureaucracy acquired considerable autonomy over

urban planning and effective power in the city. In the 1980s Durban was more financially secure and had more capacity for urban development than any other South African city.

As a built environment, numerous commentators have in recent years emphasized an ideology of "modernity" as promoting a South African city where residential and business areas were distinctly separate, where the newer suburbs extended themselves on garden city lines and where the shabby, the indeterminate, the irredeemably poor, tended to be entirely left out of the city plans. The growing dominance of big firms and multi-nationals dovetailed with this process. However, the South African dimension to this meant that the class dimension was subordinated to racial politics. Particularly following the Group Areas Act of 1950, while Abidjan was losing any trace of formal racialisation, Durban was being reconstructed on precisely this basis. Security concerns were flagrantly emphasised in this segregatory planning phase which partitioned the residential part of the city between white, Indian, Coloured and African areas while making sure that in every sense the whites retained power over the core.

This created particular challenges for the new era which dawned from the late 1970s as this segregated structure began to manifest growing cracks in the wall. The city had carried out the construction of large family orientated housing estates for African and Indian people but these estates were poorly serviced with basic amenities, especially the African ones. Servicing required money and after 1980 employment ceased to expand in the city, particularly for the working class, creating increasing tensions and politicising struggles over rent and payments for electricity and other basic services. There were few licit economic activities in the African townships although market and even production activities gradually emerged despite the planning laws in some Indian areas. The centre of Durban witnessed the arrival of growing numbers of street traders and the bad fit between the "modern" structuration of the 1960s and the actual needs of a city thronged with poor people looking for means of survival on their doorstep became apparent.

The townships witnessed violent struggles between two African political forces, the African National Congress and the Inkatha Freedom Party, of which the former was overwhelmingly stronger in inner Durban. On the edge of the city, in areas controlled by the patrimonial Inkatha government of the Kwa Zulu Bantustan⁵, squatters were able to settle in large numbers. In certain areas nearer the city centre, refugees from violence came to live in sordid conditions. The *apartheid* state began to waver in its ability to push them around; by the end of the 1980s, it was no longer possible to expel them.

What the literature tells us about large cities with so-called Third World characteristics, unable to upgrade themselves to "world cities" suggests that such an urban world would be condemned to a downward spiral post 1980 and particularly after 1990 when the state effectively abandoned *apartheid* and agreed to negotiate a democratic future with representatives of the previously illegal opposition.

⁵ Bantustan is a commonly used sobriquet for the "homelands" created as part of the *apartheid* system intended to progress through decolonisation towards an independence that would not threaten the white South African core. In fact, the Kwa Zulu authorities never aimed at independence.

Thus we would seem to have an urban model which allowed for a city which grew impressively (the fastest of the bigger South African cities) in the era when South African mineral exports boomed, import substitution industrialisation appeared to work and both helped to prop up the *apartheid* system. This model could be predicted to experience crisis in the post-*apartheid* era. In fact, Durban has experienced very significant de-industrialisation especially in its consumer goods industries. The textile industry was a very large-scale employer of low-skill labour dependent on imported raw material and highly protected; it has experienced severe downturn, for instance. This has simultaneously meant a serious decline of the trade union movement, which had galvanised black workers during the 1980s when a number of the most important emerging trade unions had national headquarters for a time in Durban. Together with the impact of extraordinarily high degrees of unemployment, the city inherits an economic structure which makes it difficult for an "informal sector" to expand beyond the survivalist and the illicit and make a very significant contribution to productive activity. At the most positive we can talk about a clothing industry which has partly re-invented itself with less social protection and lower wages in sweatshops located away from the traditional industrial districts and perhaps taking up most of the workers otherwise pushed into unemployment (when measured in numbers.) Certain industries are far more successful (automobiles, chemicals, wood products, some metal goods) but based on stagnant or declining workforces. Moreover, Durban lies in the province of KwaZulu-Natal which has been considered the most highly affected part of South Africa by the HIV virus. And South Africa has the largest number of those living with HIV in the world. Very likely 20% of the population of Durban at the moment are condemned to die of AIDS within a few years—more than twice the proportion in Abidjan and several times that in holy Touba.

Yet only now is Durban experiencing another part of the modernist dream of the post-war era—the arrival of a national (and local) government committed to inclusive citizenship and determined to tackle poverty and lack of resources by the poor. As we shall soon see, there is a parallel to Abidjan in terms of attempts at physical restructuring to the benefit of the affluent. But the new government is committed to breaking down white power as it existed. From 1996, a new administration presided over more than forty previously extant racially defined municipal structured merged into a metropolitan council with sub-metropolitan bodies. This was restructured again from 2001 into a "Unicity" given the isiZulu name of Ethekeweni on a considerably more centralised basis that draws in a substantial rural periphery. This new structure is committed to equity in services, employment, etc. as part of the making of the "new South Africa". Moreover while the globalisation model predicts a growing dominance of ethnic and racial identity issues as the state is pre-empted by the dictates of capital, the ANC is committed to forging a new national identity, even while privileging the "previously disadvantaged" as they are termed, and with a strong bias towards centralised government dominating governance. In the remainder of this section of the paper we shall look at a couple of parts of the Durban complex in evaluating these changes.

One visible index of the new Durban is the very rapid growth of the northern areas of Umhlanga Rocks/Umhlanga Ridge. In the post-war decades, this section of the city essentially consisted of sugar cane fields while a small settlement around a lighthouse and hotel attracted white tourists seeking an unspoilt seaside environment. From the 1970s, this settlement built up rapidly with flats and time-share units as the well-to-do in Johannesburg searched for an outlet to a warm place by the sea away from the traditional Durban beachfront, too easily reached by public transport and beginning to fade as leisure tastes changed. However, just inland the sugar fields remained, in good part due to the tax regime which discouraged conversion from agriculture. One large company, Tongaat-Hulett, itself linked to the finance-mining giant Anglo-American, in large part owned them.

However starting with shifts towards economic liberalisation development planning began in the late 1980s. Tongaat-Hulett hired some of the best minds in the city to think about future spatial planning and has been a major actor in the growing environment of public-private partnership in Durban. In consequence of this, the company organised the sale of large amounts of cane land to create the foundation for what has been classically termed in the USA by Joel Garreau an "edge city". On the ridge overlooking the sea and the oceanside suburb of Umhlanga Rocks, one now finds hundreds of houses of the newly rich (no longer racially defined, of course), the largest shopping complex in South Africa modelled on activity-based US shopping malls and a growing array of corporate service offices and headquarters. Meanwhile further north, gloriously or hideously unplanned new beach suburbs on the so-called Dolphin Coast, much like Umhlanga Rocks, are expanding very rapidly to cater to the affluent retired and the needs to recuperate from the pressures of life in Johannesburg or Pretoria. Just inland, Mount Edgecombe sugar estate has been largely turned into a golf course and network of affluent gated suburbia. Further inland lies land designated for the less affluent and the site of what will be towards the end of the first decade of the twenty first century a new international airport partly aimed at the tourist market. By contrast, the central business district of Durban, although still a centre of government and harbour-related business and still a thriving shopping district for the working poor and lower middle class, is now largely bereft of boutiques, entertainment facilities and up-market office premises.

In more than one sense, Umhlanga symbolises the typical features associated with the globalised city: a sharp division between a cut-off and protected rich and growingly unwanted and irregularly supported poor, an obsession with security and the hunger of capital for exploitation of new land for constructing houses and commercial property. The architectural models used are eclectic and international with little or no use of any South African indigenous building forms. While the expansion of Umhlanga serves to decentre Durban, as in many international examples, the gentrification option is however also present in the form of upgrading the wealthiest parts of older inner suburbia of Durban. The stereotyped view of Africa assumes that the entire continent is simply cut out of these trends typical of richer nations and banished to some outer hell by

globalisation. In reality, the example of Durban, even more than Abidjan and increasingly less hesitantly, shows that these new divisions also form within Africa itself.⁶

Up to a point there is one striking difference between Umhlanga and American edge cities. Umhlanga remains a part of Metro Durban. It does not and cannot escape the fiscal and political dictates of City Hall in the manner of US suburbia. Tongaat-Hulett is also an important player in the attempt to create a new tourist mecca at the Point which marks the opening of the harbour right at the heart of the central city of Durban. However, this contrast should not be taken too far. The logic of capital is one that the ANC government is very unwilling to counter; there is complete acceptance of the need to accommodate and attract business as the key dictate in urban policy. Countering unplanned development, (or better put, development planned purely in the interests of the affluent), is no longer considered a sensible way to conduct urban politics. And thus the continuing edge city development of north Durban can be considered a certainty for the future.

Yet Durban's story is not this straightforward. A short account of Cato Manor development gives an interesting contrast to Umhlanga. Cato Manor is a large tract of hilly, relatively unstable land very close to and directly inland from the central business district of Durban. It was sub-divided in large part and sold to Indian smallholders who were the main inhabitants of a lightly peopled district. During World War II, already notorious as a locale for illicit activity, especially the brewing and sale of alcohol to Africans, Cato Manor attracted some tens of thousands of poor African arrivals from the countryside to whom Indians rented land or shacks. In 1949 it was the scene of the infamous Cato Manor African-Indian "race riots" which were partly instigated by ambitious African would-be entrepreneurs. In the 1950s it became associated with pockets of militant anti-government organisation and violent conflict between women beer-brewers and the police. Cato Manor was a zone that urban authorities could not control.

Before Group Areas, Durban had been largely segregated by race de facto. Now the state was determined to put segregation into force more thoroughly. Cato Manor was almost entirely uprooted and its Indian and African inhabitants forced to move into townships elsewhere in the early 1960s. It was proclaimed "white" but there was no commercial interest in developing the area for white suburbia and in effect this large central space languished for decades.

The post-apartheid authorities were anxious to use this space for large-scale greenfields housing despite the cost of shoring up land in most sections. In effect, the new regime has defined shack dwelling as part of a "housing shortage" and put much effort into devising policy that would involve handing over new housing to large numbers of poor people--housing planned for secure building sites and fitted with indoor plumbing and electricity. Cato Manor posed a particularly serious challenge. In the late *apartheid* era, the state had proclaimed the area suitable for Indian housing and some Indian families had returned to the area purchasing new little bungalows from the middle 1980s. Indian claims for Cato

⁶ For parallels in Johannesburg see Beall, Crankshaw & Parnell, 2002 and Tomlinson, Beauregard et al, 2003.

Manor were strong; the compensation money doled out in the past was minimal and the sense of dispossession a burning part of the legacy of *apartheid*. Such dispossessed Indians formed a major part of the claimants asking for land from the new government. And yet in 1992, impatient Africans living nearby in crowded circumstances were so upset at the new Indian arrivals that they invaded the last lot of *apartheid* housing, seizing these properties for their own, a situation still never regulated which represented perhaps the apex of the Cato Manor crisis of the transition years. Moreover, during the transition era, a considerable number of Africans, perhaps up to 20,000, had felt emboldened to build shacks in parts of Cato Manor. Many were refugees from violence and here again there was some sense of wanting justice about the past. But equally pressing were the violent activities of shacklords and gangs dominated by so-called veterans of the liberation struggle who preyed upon the illegal shack dwellers.

Given this volatile context, the city was prepared to authorise the creation in 1992 of the Cato Manor Development Agency to administer and further the development of the area. This agency was staffed with committed ex-activists associated with alternative housing NGOs and foreign sympathisers; while there was a board of control with local representation political circumstances meant that it was possible for these bureaucrats to operate free of political pressures. They were able to devote the first years of CMDA activity to knife-edge political negotiation at which they proved very skilful, gradually stabilising conditions. They also proved very skilful at attracting outside funding, particularly from the European Union, to what was billed a model project.

This situation controverts neo-liberal wisdom in important ways: a strong central state eager to make centre-left interventions, a set of enlightened bureaucrats willing to dispense with overly much stakeholder intervention and large-scale extra funding with few or no strings attached. The results have been correspondingly positive in important ways. Housing, while proceeding somewhat slowly, has gone ahead and included some interesting experiments involving more quality and potential for community formation than is typical. Sites have generally been allocated as fairly as possible without patronage taken into account, thus creating citizens rather than patrimonial clients. The foundation for far more building has been laid. Indian ex-residents, uninterested in the end in returning to mixed neighbourhoods, have accepted compensation on a large scale for their previous losses. A few live in middle class housing near the site of a large new specialised hospital. Others benefit from laying out commercial sites where they have been welcome to return as businessmen and women. The smaller post-1990 shack settlements have been destroyed and replaced by permanent housing. On the biggest site where perhaps 15,000 people live, some upgrading has taken place, the shacklords' power has been broken and there have at least been no successful further attempts at illegal settlement. A striking feature of the settled areas of Cato Manor has been the early provision of health facilities, schools and community halls. Some green space has been left in many areas. A major road has been driven through Cato Manor, opening it up to easy access to the city and commercial and industrial properties have begun to develop alongside. A small number of African contractors (c.100) have been used locally although, as is so typical of South Africa, construction remains overwhelmingly performed by public or corporate contractors with capacity.

The limitations of Cato Manor success need however equally to be spelt out. The residents suffer, it is estimated (but still not studied definitively) just as much from AIDS and just as much from unemployment as elsewhere in the city. The special features of the CMDA from early in 2003 will be a thing of the past; the city has adjudged crisis conditions to be over and will start to administer Cato Manor like anywhere else. Patronage in the form of clout-wielding elected councillors and their activities will no doubt return diluting the CMDA thrust on turning residents into pure citizens free of dubious forms of mediation.

Some of the housing in Cato Manor is pathetically tiny and basic and unsurprisingly gets sold illegally for less than the official value of the house (houses are supposed not to be legally sold for a fixed but considerable period of time). Given how rarely inhabitants are in steady employment, the private sector has effectively refused to involve themselves with any signal assistance. South Africa lacks more or less totally small businessmen living on the margins and prepared to take such risks to fill this gap. There are beginning to be problems with non-payment of bills; an experimental densely settled rental area is refusing to pay rent. Why should they after all if houses have been made available to others for nothing? These issues highlight the basic contradictions in government policy generally. On the one hand, an urgent and intense desire exists to "make up for" *apartheid* by making available some funds for handed out housing and provided infrastructure but on the other, there is no capacity to intervene massively to create jobs and no desire to try to channel private funds forcibly in directions they does not seek. A thriving private sector has been adjudged to be the bedrock of any national future and, in the most cases, this dramatically limits structured interventions by the state.. And finally—Cato Manor is only very marginally "non-racial"; it is a black "community", in part due to the choice to create almost no middle class housing (although the income mix is greater than in many other South African state housing schemes).

Cato Manor is then a qualified success despite these limitations but it is interesting to the extent that it goes against the grain of neo-liberal wisdom and yet can happen in the global environment that supposedly allows for no alternatives. In practice, South Africa has been able to find some purchase on the new international economic environment. Its exports of fruit and wine and so-called non-traditional exports have shot up. It attracts far higher numbers of foreign tourists than in the past who take advantage of the cheap Rand. By the end of the twentieth century, Durban harbour was choked with containers awaiting off-loading and badly in need of restructuring to accommodate larger business. Moreover there is a state anxious to retain nation-building prerogatives and to do something for its largely impoverished and often marginalized supporters. However, globalisation and the prescribed ties it enforces with business tends to limit the possibility for state-led development and create constant pressure for further marginalisation, if no longer on racial grounds. At best Cato Manor is now another urban township with all the problems experienced by the others, no worse but not dramatically better either.

This chapter falls hard upon its predecessor which contained some harsh scenes of urban life in contemporary Africa, scenes containing burgeoning cities struggling to cope with human needs. These cities seemed to tell a story where current trends in international political economy go right against desirable solutions. They undermine modernist plans of the late colonial era as well as the aspirations of the early independence period. This story seems to be one in which Africans figure largely as helpless victims. I have however tried to qualify this by suggesting aspects in which coping with these problems may contain the seed of new kinds of urban forms and solutions. In this chapter, I have tried to go a bit further and suggest that the script written above at first was too simple. By way of conclusion it can be said that even within Africa there is no simple formula for understanding the evolution of cities in the present phase.

The examples chosen here are not typical although they are significant. Globalisation is not something that "affects" Africa from without; it also operates **within** Africa in ways that suggest patterns to come, especially taken with some of the material in the preceding chapter. The South African case perhaps suggests some of the limitations that create boundaries for change today but also that possibilities for a determined state to operate independently are by no means negligible. Outcomes are not pre-determined; both Abidjan and Touba also makes it clear that they may be uncertain and contingent on political and social developments. Some previous roads to development are now clearly cut off but the alternatives people find to conduct their lives, which will inevitably be in large part urban alternatives, are more unpredictable. These very different examples, Touba, Abidjan, Durban, draw a wider range of developmental thrusts. And even within each the future is open-ended, uncertain and not lacking in contradictions. The African city will continue to develop and expand; it will continue to exhibit vitality and it will more and more be the place where African futures are decided.