Trading Places

Napier, Mark, Berrisford, Stephen, McGaffin, Rob, Napier, Mark, Royston, Lauren

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Chapter 1

Land and markets in African cities: Time for a new lens?

Mark Napier

Most people living in cities in Africa live outside of the legal system, without clear rights to the land they occupy. These pieces of land make up the so-called slums which surround and permeate most growing cities, and which are home to between half and three quarters of African urban residents (Kessides 2006:22). According to the latest UN-Habitat State of the World’s Cities report, ‘today, of every ten urban residents in the world more than seven are found in developing countries, which are also hosts to an overwhelming proportion of humankind (82 per cent of the world’s population)’ (UN-Habitat 2012). Land reform initiatives and planning law reform projects over the last five decades have failed to make a significant difference to the lived reality of this majority (Berrisford 2011). The question is, how do people manage to access land and shelter under these conditions where the formal governance system and the market in registered land is failing to supply what is essentially a basic need, the need for space to live?
Research by Urban LandMark (Marx 2007) uncovered many stories of people moving to cities and finding places to stay. One of these accounts came from Nozipho, who moved to the city of Cape Town from the predominantly rural Eastern Cape Province in South Africa:

I grew up in Umtata, Eastern Cape. Then I went to Gauteng before moving to Cape Town. Before living in Enkanini, I was renting a backyard space in Makhaza.² I was living there with my relative. As time went by I decided to look for a place of my own. It’s difficult when you stay with other people, especially if you have children. Sometimes the landlord doesn’t like you in his yard.

I just saw that people were building their shacks here, so I decided to come too. I knew some of the people who were living here.

I like it here because I have my own place. Transport is not far from us, shops and banks are close. But we do not have things that we used to have in Makhaza. There we did not pay extra for water, electricity and toilets. Here I fetch water from a house and pay the owner. Every month we pay rent for toilets. If we want electricity we have to ask from those at the houses and then pay for it. But now we are used to living without electricity.

There are no documents to show this is my place. But that’s OK. My relatives know that this is my place, and people around here know. They know because they see me living here. I don’t have to do anything special to stay here, except to clean where I stay. If I move from here I can sell my shack.

When I came here there was no committee and nobody to report to, you just placed your shack. It is
not the same because now we have a [residents']
committee and they are the ones in charge now. You
have to attend meetings.

There are no spaces around here any more for new
people. They don’t want people from other places to
build shacks. But people do sell when they move out.
They only sell material if it is still in good condition,
but not the site because we also didn’t buy the sites.

The only way to live here now is to buy from some-
one who already has a place here and is selling or
moving. The owner must introduce you to the
committee. You must come with a letter from where
you are coming from. That letter would say what
kind of a person you are and why are you moving
away from where you would be coming from. You
give the letter to the committee and show
your Identity Book. The committee must give you
permission to buy a shack from someone who is
selling, or to use a space to build your own shack.
I don’t know anyone who rents a shack here. (Urban
LandMark 2010:3)

For many new urban residents, the city can be an inhospitable place.
For poor households in particular, finding a place to live and work in
the city is a struggle because legally registered and serviced land is
rarely available or affordable. So the most common course of action
is to access space in informal settlements to meet immediate shelter
and subsistence needs.

Because of slum formation, which absorbs home seekers, much
of the spatial expansion of cities in Africa comes from the growth
in the number of people living informally. Practitioners and
commentators who have observed and tracked slum dynamics, and international development agencies in general, have recog-
nised for many decades that ongoing slum growth constitutes one
of the key urban challenges to modern society. Despite at least
50 years of focused attention from the middle of the 20th century onwards, legally sanctioned and supported access to land remains unattainable to the majority in most cities and towns.

With extensive resources committed globally to fighting urban poverty, and having had a Millennium Development Goal devoted to improving the lives of 100 million of the over one billion slum dwellers (UN-Habitat 2006: iv), why have the many multilateral and bilateral funding organisations and city administrations not made more of an impact?

Much depends on how we as commentators, researchers and practitioners understand what is going on, how we see urban growth and the state of people’s livelihoods, and the lenses we choose to look through while assessing the nature of the challenge. Understanding just how Nozipho succeeded in finding a place to stay in Enkanini in Cape Town starts that journey.

Understanding urban growth

Much of the understanding of urban growth and the housing challenge has centred around urban governments simply not being able to cope with the number of people coming to and living in cities. As the 1996 UN-Habitat Agenda states:

The most serious problems confronting cities and towns and their inhabitants include inadequate financial resources, lack of employment opportunities, spreading homelessness and expansion of squatter settlements, increased poverty and a widening gap between rich and poor, growing insecurity and rising crime rates, inadequate and deteriorating building stock, services and infrastructure, lack of health and educational facilities, improper land use, insecure land tenure, rising traffic congestion, increasing pollution, lack of green spaces, inadequate water supply and sanitation, uncoordinated urban development and an increasing vulnerability to disaster.
... Rapid rates of international and internal migration, as well as population growth in cities and towns, and unsustainable patterns of production and consumption raise these problems in especially acute forms. In these cities and towns, large sections of the world's urban population live in inadequate conditions and are confronted with serious problems, including environmental problems that are exacerbated by inadequate planning and managerial capacities, lack of investment and technology, and insufficient mobilisation and inappropriate allocation of financial resources, as well as by a lack of social and economic opportunities. (UN-Habitat 1996: Preamble, Paragraph 8)

These certainly are the characteristic problems associated with slums, and the dynamics which lead to their formation and growth. But why can people find a place to stay in slums in vibrant cities, but cannot afford reasonably well located, formally registered land, and officially approved housing? It is more complex than people simply being too poor. There are many advantages associated with urban life, and great opportunities in growing economies. People would not move to centres of growth unless there was at least a perception of opportunity and of a better life than that which people like Nozipho experienced in rural areas.

The full picture is far from clear.

The role of the state in servicing land and providing housing, and the importance of improved urban planning and management, are only one part of solving the puzzle. As towns and cities continue to grow, so too do the numbers of people living in slums, despite a global commitment to improve the conditions of people living in informal settlements. ‘What is historically unprecedented is the absolute rate of urban growth in Africa – averaging almost 5 per cent per year, implying close to a doubling of the urban population in 15 years’ (Kessides 2006: xiv).

The failure to make much impact on how many people are accommodated on legally declared land, suggests that there are
other elements at play that are not sufficiently understood or addressed. Two aspects are usually underplayed or missing from the conventional development discourse. Their re-introduction would go some way to explaining why the poor struggle to access formally recognised places to live and work in the city.

The two aspects are land, as a resource, and land markets, as the basis for the mediation of access to land. Land and markets need to be better understood, drawing on real evidence to build a fuller picture so that urban practitioners can better design interventions to improve the situation.

The meaning and value of land

Firstly, there is the discussion of the role of land in the urban context. From a development perspective, land issues in Africa tend to be viewed predominantly through a rural lens. Yet in less than twenty years' time half of the continent's population will live in urban areas and by 2050 the continent will be 60 per cent urban (UN-Habitat 2010:41). Cities and towns are the main sites for slum formation and vulnerability. Without minimising the rural challenges, this implies that the development sector cannot keep seeing the land problem in the African context as mainly rural and agricultural.

There is also a tendency to view land in Africa as a fairly plentiful resource, but access to well-located and serviced land in urban areas is limited by lack of investment in infrastructure and by current patterns of ownership and control. As cities and towns continue to grow, competition increases among urban actors (such as current and prospective land owners, developers, investors and landlords) for well-located land near the existing public infrastructure and services, and the poor are most likely to come off second best.

National governments tend to see land as a national resource to be planned, regulated and allocated by the state on a broadly equitable basis. But the predominant reality is that the market in registered and unregistered land (influenced by the agencies behind those transactions) leads to outcomes which look nothing like the plans which governments put on paper.
In this context there is an added layer of complexity. The discussions of land and property are often emotive because land has many meanings. Land is an asset, a resource, and can be traded in the market as a commodity. But land is unlike other commodities and is often valued for social, cultural and historical reasons that have little to do with the monetary value that might be recouped on the open market in transactions between strangers. Land may be valued as an ancestral home, a means of achieving self-sufficiency and independence, and an inter-generational route out of poverty. Where there is a history of dispossession – as in much of Africa – demand for urban and rural land has particular historical and symbolic significance. In all of these cases, people may be unwilling to transact in land purely as a market commodity, no matter the price.

When the whites came we had the land and they had the Bible. They asked us to close our eyes and pray. When we opened them again, we had the Bible and they had the land. (isiXhosa proverb, cited in Rumney [2005])

Historical and legal contexts also make a difference to the way in which land is understood as a resource or a commodity (see UN-Habitat 2010). There are a range of regulatory systems which seek to govern the sale or exchange of land. In Tanzania and Mozambique for instance, nationalisation policies have made it illegal to own or sell land, although the buildings or other improvements on the land may be bought and sold (Urban LandMark & UN-Habitat 2010:18).

To give an idea of the richness of tenure diversity, here is a recent summary description of the West African situation:

The land governance procedures introduced by the French, the British and, to a lesser extent, the Portuguese have mostly been taken over by the newly independent States who wanted to keep tight control on land allocation and management processes.

The two prevailing legislations in the region are the French civil code and British common law. In
Francophone countries, land legislation is still based on the colonial civil code which recognises the public domain of the State that cannot be alienated; the private domain of the State that can be alienated under certain conditions; private land for which a title has been issued; customary land; and terres vacantes et sans maître (land with no clear status, unclaimed or vacant).

Ambiguities between the concepts of ‘public domain’ and ‘State domain’ blur the boundaries between alienable and unalienable land, frequently to the benefit of those working in government bodies involved in land allocation. (UN-Habitat 2010:117)

In many African countries, customary forms of land ownership thus continue to operate, where traditional leaders allocate land and may receive in return a gift of thanks, but not usually a market-related payment.

Understanding these many meanings and values associated with land is an essential part of understanding the dynamics of the urban context in Africa. Sometimes the depth of meaning and history associated with holding land has effectively suspended the discussion of how urban land should be managed and transacted in cities in Africa. However, if urban economies are to grow and be inclusive of the aspirations of poorer households and communities, this discussion is crucial.

Putting land markets into perspective

A second element that does not feature very much in conventional development discourse is the role played by land and land markets. Sometimes, in discussions of ‘the market’, people refer only to private sector interests (such as finance-backed investors, developers and construction companies), and their influence on what cities look like and where poorer people can afford to live.
The issue of land markets was raised in *The Habitat Agenda* (UN-Habitat 1996), but was limited to the recommendation that business should be encouraged by market-based incentives to invest more, and that more finance and subsidies for the poor should be provided to reduce the gap between what people could afford and what the formal system could produce. *The Habitat Agenda* thus produced a clear idea of ‘making markets work’, but this did not address the way the whole real estate market works, nor how the vested interests operating in urban areas could effectively lead to the exclusion of poor people.

The discussion of the market in land and shelter changes by taking a step backwards and looking at all the actors in the real estate market. This makes it possible to view all the transactions – whether registered in some formal government-held register, or simply witnessed by a respected community member.

Markets need to be considered because of the role they play in setting the value of land and shelter, and their usefulness in explaining the patterns of distribution of scarce resources. Land ownership patterns and the dynamics of real estate markets make well-located, serviced land expensive; this in turn increases competition and makes it difficult for the poor to access habitable land. People may be successful in accessing land on which to live or do business, perhaps with the assistance of the state, but as land values increase it becomes difficult to hold on to such land.

A detailed treatment of the ‘challenge of slums’ in the *Global Report on Human Settlements 2003*, placed clear emphasis on the importance of better land governance and access to finance, as part of the answer to unequal land access:

In many developing countries the legal and regulatory frameworks, particularly with regard to land markets and land acquisition (including land registry, land valuation, and legal instruments to facilitate land acquisition), are ineffective.

Furthermore, the poor often do not have access to the financial resources needed to buy houses, as
the existing housing finance system[s] are not accessible to them and subsidies for housing are not properly targeted. Without significant improvements in the legal, regulatory, and financial systems, the problem of current slums is only a glimpse of an even worse future.

In general, slums are the products of failed policies, bad governance, corruption, inappropriate regulation, dysfunctional land markets, unresponsive financial systems and a fundamental lack of political will [emphasis added]. (UN-Habitat 2003: xxxii)

Here blame is clearly laid at the door of the state, whose ability to govern land and to regulate markets is questioned. Government agencies and financial institutions also fail to extend enough low cost finance to facilitate market access.

At this stage in development thinking, not much was said about how urban land markets actually operate, especially for the poor attempting to access space. Where markets were discussed, the focus tended to be limited to issues of affordability for the poor, and on systems of incentives and subsidies to correct this.

Understanding the problem of affordability and the way land was valued, was not high on the agenda. As a result, a full discussion of the dynamics of the whole urban land market was missing, along with the origins and current realities of the patterns of land ownership and control. In addition, the dissonance between colonial land governance systems and customary systems was also underestimated, especially on urban peripheries where the two systems often meet across an urban boundary.

By expanding the discussion to who dominates land and market access, it is possible to start getting closer to an understanding of the real picture, or to grasp what is really going on. The discussion thus needs to become bolder, and to face the key issue of who owns what and who controls what. At the same time, the agency of the poor is central to how cities are developing in spite of those ownership patterns and unsupportive regulations. This is the discussion
of the political economy of urban land in Africa. It involves a review of how people are already using markets, how markets could be used as a positive force and the interventions required to maximise such benefits.

Factors constraining the debate

Part of the reason why the full debate hasn’t yet been held lies in the widely varying notions of land and property. Development experts on land in Africa apply one register, which references itself mainly off rural and historical evidence. A different register is used by property or real estate economists and those discussing investment on the African continent.

The lack of engagement between these different perspectives means that each is only considering a piece of the puzzle.

An incident that illustrates these different registers took place at a conference hosted by the South African Property Owners’ Association (SAPOA) in Cape Town in May 2008. SAPOA is a diverse voluntary association representing many different views and interests, including those of large and medium-sized property owners, managers and financiers. At this event, a debate took place between two academics: a professor of economics associated with SAPOA for many years (Professor Francois Viruly) and a professor in human rights law (Professor Shadrack Gutto). The law professor had recently chaired an expert panel established by government to review the patterns and possible regulation of ‘foreign land ownership’ in South Africa.

In their opening comments, the law professor talked about the historical dispossession of people in Africa from their land, cultural connectedness to the land, and collective ownership of a national resource. The economist talked about the market and about the need for foreign direct investment. The greater the investment, he argued, the greater the benefit to the economy of the country, whatever form that investment might take.

Whilst the law professor’s discourse was couched in culture, history and agency, the economics professor’s was couched in the
immutable logic of the market. The South African government could legislate in some way against ‘foreign’ land ownership, he argued, but the market would respond and self-correct so that new opportunities could be exploited under the new legislative system. The state representing society might like to imbue land with meanings and attachments, but the market would attach value to that meaning only if it was relevant in any given urban context.

In this debate there was very little common ground between the two perspectives. It illustrated why state policy makers and planners remain surprised by the ongoing displacement of the poor in urban areas, and why economists remain largely frustrated by the state’s well-meaning attempts to intervene on behalf of the poor. The bigger picture of how urban market systems operate is lost. Governments view large private sector actors as being concerned only with profit, and construe markets to be somehow unjust and antagonistic to development. Furthermore, urban officials fear that opening up real estate markets to investors might lead to a loss of administrative control and even rampant speculation. The private sector in turn views government and its regulations as an irritant.

Until recently, urban and housing development experts have not given much consideration to understanding how markets work, and the way in which markets influence land values and competition for space, especially as these affect poor households and communities who are somehow thought to exist outside this system. Similarly, those involved in property economics have spent little time with development practitioners or the state, considering the challenges of addressing the needs of the poor. Large numbers of relatively vulnerable people are integrating themselves into urban societies and economies without much help from formal regulatory systems and institutions. While many economists argue that the market will self-regulate excessive profit making, the inefficiency of markets (and land markets in particular) mean that it can take decades to self-correct. In the meantime huge social, economic and political consequences could materialise from the loss of shelter, the dispossession of homes and the disruption of livelihoods.

The net result is that the various protagonists have largely failed to have the urban land debate in the African context, and the
affordability barriers and price cliffs remain insurmountable to the majority of the newly, and not so newly, urbanised. What is needed is a more meaningful conversation and mutual understanding between the actors in the state, in the customary sector (e.g. traditional leaders), the many actors in the private sector, and people on the ground – including communities and individuals investing in land. The actions of all sectors (whether intentional or not) influence access by poorer people to habitable land and shelter in urban areas.

Advocating for a more nuanced understanding of markets should not be seen as the promotion of uncontrolled speculation and excessive private sector profiteering. While investment by private sector actors is crucial, a better functioning market can be as much about equal access (to land, to shelter, to trading space, to information) as it is about creating the conditions for private sector investment. It is precisely for this reason that state actors should understand markets better, so that the private sector development yields are well understood. This creates the conditions for realistic negotiations between public planners and private investors.

Ways of seeing markets

Urban land markets operate on many levels, from the informal to the highly formalised. If the market is understood as a series of transactions and exchanges (with rules and institutions to support those transactions), it is clear that the market is at work even in the alternative, so-called informal mechanisms through which many poor people attempt to meet their needs for land and shelter. The market is a set of events over time that cumulatively influences the value of land and buildings, and therefore affects affordability and spatial mobility.

When compared with formalised real estate processes, informal settlements provide quicker, easier and more affordable access to places and spaces to live, trade and produce than either the state or the private sector could easily match.

In a South African study of nine different settlements in 2007, people who were looking for shelter took an average 34 days to
find and occupy a shack room in a backyard, and 69 days to move in to a shack in an informal settlement. Government housing was available, but when waiting lists were taken into account, it took people a few years to access shelter through state allocation (Marx 2007).

The state typically does not release serviced land anywhere near fast enough to meet the demand, while private sector developers and financiers tend to target their investments and supply in the most profitable areas, unless they see a viable opportunity towards the bottom of the pyramid. Many actors in the sector calculate that supplying land or shelter at the bottom end of the market is too risky. By necessity then, a range of officially unrecognised actors (for example, poor households, informal landlords and land vendors) step in and become key role players in building the city from the bottom up, albeit unofficially.

Where the state has failed to provide land or housing (directly or indirectly), and where the private sector may not be interested in doing so, other market supply systems tend to fill the gap. This is often described as the ‘informal economy’, or the ‘informal housing market’. Essentially, however, it is part of a single urban land and housing market system in which the forms of tenure and the records of transactions are localised and are generally not recognised in the formal legal and regulatory systems.

The systems are highly interlinked since land markets do not float free from power relations. The land holdings of the state and of private land owners clearly influence land values, and have done so over many centuries. Land is a commodity which is location specific or locked in one place (as any fast food franchise owner will agree) and better land is held by more powerful interests that most often are backed by the formal system. The highest bidder wins, especially one that can defend its claim. The fact that wealthier land actors can outbid others and defend their rights in the formal legal system, impacts on poorer communities who occupy land in the path of future development (Napier 2008). The effect is that at some point land becomes very valuable and the lack of recorded, defendable land rights often results in eviction, with people having little recourse to the same formal system. Stronger actors can also hold
on to vacant land for future benefit, which creates scarcity and drives up value, but which also creates opportunities for investment.

From a policy perspective, being able to ‘see’ markets and gather evidence of how they work opens up a new dimension that may not have been visible before.

Finding ways to make markets work better for people entering urban economies or those wanting to advance within the same urban system, is not the same as promoting some kind of ‘free market’ deregulation approach. In fact deregulation may not be the best way of addressing the land issue in rapidly urbanising cities in Africa. Rather, it is a matter of recognising the pervasiveness of markets, which have operated all along. Transactions happen everywhere and habitable urban land is a scarce resource in African cities. The rationale behind market choices and the flow of information may be socially based, as Nozipho’s story makes clear, where friends and relatives play a central role at all stages of finding shelter and defending tenuous land occupation rights. However, there are costs involved in any chosen course of action – whether direct costs, transaction costs (the costs of participating in a market), or opportunity costs (opportunities forgone once a choice is made).

Moving to Enkanini provided Nozipho with a place of her own in which to raise her children, something she felt was a priority. She had to make trade-offs to get a place of her own as she then had to pay for services that she had not paid for before. But this was outweighed by the advantages of having her independence and being close to transport, shops and banks.

There was a clear economic logic to the chain of decisions that led Nozipho to where she was staying. Within these off-register markets, social relationships with people living in the community are as important as any exchange of money. Relationships are an essential factor in how people find out about new places to live and how they decide who to trust. Nozipho had felt comfortable moving to Enkanini because she knew others living there. While Nozipho did not have any proof of her claim to the site, she was not concerned, because her relatives and neighbours knew that it was her place.

The choices that people face in finding a place to stay, or in defending a place already occupied, and the costs and the rationale
behind localised decisions, make it clear why the supply of unregistered land is so attractive when compared to legally-sanctioned supply.

MISSING THE MARK IN HOUSING SUPPLY

There are clear examples that illustrate why state actors functioning in the real estate sector can get it wrong when they ignore markets, or act as if market forces are somehow suspended when the well-intentioned state engages in urban development. This Angolan example shows that state developments targeted at middle income citizens cannot be viewed as being detached from location or the market.

The ‘new city’ of Kilamba is a Chinese-built development in Angola, established at a reported cost of USD 3.5 billion. It was intended to address part of Angola’s chronic housing shortage. However, the city, designed for several hundred thousand people, is only slowly attracting occupants and at the time of writing is home to barely a tenth of that number.

The slow uptake of properties is blamed on their high cost – between USD 120 000 and USD 200 000 each – which is well out of the reach of the average Angolan, an estimated half of whom live on less than USD 2 a day, and even out of reach for middle income households.

Most of the country’s tiny middle class already have homes – yet they are the ones who could afford the apartments if they took a mortgage. For others a lack of land registry documentation has complicated the access to bank credit and many people feel uncertain about the viability of investing in Angola’s so-far untested real estate market.


Despite the barriers to accessing registered land, poor people are actively involved in markets through the range of transactions they conduct while working to meet their need for shelter and a place to work, trade and raise their families. By understanding these
transactions and how they relate to and are influenced by the transactions of other role players such as government and the private sector, it is possible to start building a more complete picture of the dynamics of life in the urban context.

If these experiences are also understood from the viewpoint of the transaction costs involved, or how long it takes people to find a place, and how much they have to invest in the process, then it is clear that slum formation is fairly efficient when compared to formal, often corrupt and inefficient official systems of supply, which are largely devoid of local meaning. Local meaning is embedded in a land management system when community members and government officials share a common understanding of who has what, and what land uses and practices are acceptable or not acceptable within the community. An official system of planning and law built on pre- and post-industrial European meanings of land and property may not be meaningful at a local level in rapidly urbanising cities in Africa.

The ongoing sense of surprise that slums continue to exist and grow on the continent is misplaced and unnecessary if one understands how the market works for the poor.

From basic land to complex land markets

The role of governments is to mediate access to land on some kind of equitable basis so that the competing interests of urban inhabitants can be managed (see Chapter 2). In most cases the state is in a very strong position because it regulates land, it leads on future spatial planning, it calls financing institutions to account, it legislates on tenure forms, and it keeps the land registries and holds the cadastre. The state is often a sizeable land owner itself.

The majority of urban residents live outside the official system, suggesting that the dominant reality for most is not the official version envisioned in formal planning processes.

Rather than rigidly pursuing an official form of land management and the official channels towards accessing space for shelter and conducting business, this book calls for the different systems
of real land management to meet one another. The informal (sometimes neo-customary) systems of land access, recording transactions, land use management and dispute resolution are as widespread, if not more so, than the version of urban land management typically countenanced in law.

But equally important is the fact that systems of land management developed to mediate land occupation and use in a customary setting are not well adapted to rapidly urbanising metropolises, cities and towns with high levels of competition and overlapping occupancy and use rights.

Rapidly urbanising conurbations not only have low density slums where subsistence agriculture and animal husbandry endures. Many cities also have multi-storey buildings of apartments (see Huchzermeyer 2011) where the individual link to a physically bounded plot of ground might be unclear. The layers of use in African cities are often much richer and more complex than the highly zoned cities in other parts of the world (see Zack & Arnot 2012). For example, African cities have both formally planned and informally growing transport nodes where many different types of transport interlink, and where smaller and larger markets locate to capture the passing trade. These are complex systems.

Creating a more appropriate system of land use management where the tenure rights of the majority of urban dwellers are properly recognised, and where many of the customary views of land are understood and codified, is not likely to be a simple matter. Access to ‘raw’ or undeveloped survival land might be the entry point into a city for many people, as Nozipho’s experience illustrated. But that is only the starting point of a much longer, multi-layered inter-generational process.

This chapter began by mentioning The Habitat Agenda (UN-Habitat 1996), and the way it described the challenges confronting cities and towns at the time. By 2010, the UN-Habitat’s The State of African Cities report devoted five chapters to describing access to land markets in the five sub-regions of the continent. This holds out hope that all urban actors will be able to engage effectively from more informed positions, especially if national governments and municipalities accept their responsibility to govern land by taking
into account the need for investment and the rights of all to the city.

If African cities are to become the economic engines of development on the continent, then the land and urban development systems need to be able to cope with the complexity in ways that are more just and equitable. Only then will the dream of urbanisation be attainable for more than just the urban elites. Although the diversity of history and the complexity of the legal and market systems is daunting, great encouragement can be derived from the many ways in which people on the ground manage to survive and thrive. The central challenge revolves around how the legal and governance systems, and the market support institutions, catch up with that reality. Collecting solid evidence of what is going on is the first step, which then makes it possible to move rapidly towards action from this more informed position. The perspectives and experiences captured in this book seek to start this journey.
Endnotes

1. ‘For all of Africa, over 70 per cent of the urban population is estimated to suffer shelter deprivation in terms of inadequate housing, water supply, or sanitation. [...] The UN-Habitat Global Urban Observatory estimates the number of slum dwellers in terms of five criteria of shelter deprivation (nondurable housing structure, overcrowding, lack of safe water, lack of sanitation, and insecure tenure). The estimate is based on the first four criteria, as there are currently few good estimates of tenure status.’ (Kessides 2006:48, citing UN-Habitat 2003)

2. Both Enkanini and Makhaza are on the Cape Flats, on the eastern periphery of the City of Cape Town.

3. Early individuals who represented the housing and land ‘development community’ included John Turner, Charles Abrams, William Mangin, Rod Burgess, Shlomo Angel and Hassan Fatty. Multilateral agencies that focused on housing and urban issues included UN-Habitat and the World Bank, along with many bilateral donor agencies and philanthropic agencies.

4. Urban LandMark implemented a ‘making markets work’ approach in the land sector. This approach was developed and promoted by donor organisations such as the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the World Bank to address how economic empowerment can enhance the achievement of social development objectives. For more information see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M4P, www.m4phub.org/, www.sida.se/Global/About%20Sid/S%2c3%2a5%20arbetsa%20vi/12700_Market%20Development_C4.pdf.

5. Professor in Real Estate Investment and Finance at the University of Cape Town.

6. Director for the Centre for African Renaissance Studies at the University of South Africa.