

African Urban Development in a Post-Aid Era: The ‘Dutch Approach’ to Urban Restructuring in Beira City, Mozambique

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A new era of African urban development is emerging at a time when global aid regimes are undergoing fundamental shifts, becoming increasingly competitive and centred on donor ‘value for money’. For aid-dependent countries in Africa, these shifts are likely to have an influence on the priorities and interests associated with urban development. So far, however, their implications remain unexplored within this context. Taking this research agenda as a starting point, this article presents in-depth empirical research on a novel country–city modality established between the Netherlands and Beira City, Mozambique, known as the Beira Partnership. By means of a new masterplan and numerous follow-up projects this partnership represents an unprecedented effort at restructuring Beira City, while securing Dutch interests in the process. By unpacking the various interests and initiatives associated with this partnership, the article demonstrates how it represents an effort to institutionalize new claims to Beira’s urban land which is fundamentally at odds with certain pre-existing land claims of the urban poor. With many similarities to exploitative developments observed elsewhere in Africa, the article demonstrates how the Beira Partnership cannot be explained as an encroachment of global capital but instead as a decidedly trans-local initiative aimed at securing Dutch influence abroad. The findings point to a distinctly geopolitical agenda which has largely alluded contemporary debate which is likely to become more pronounced as urban development continues to gain momentum.

In recent years urban development has become a priority within the context of international development policy, outlined in global development agendas such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and New Urban Agenda (NUA). For the African continent these agendas point to a new development paradigm after decades of anti-urban policies (Parnell, 2016; Jones and Corbridge, 2010). With debates on African urban development

now picking up steam, land governance has emerged as a priority in the realization of a more inclusive urban future in Africa. Whether it be issues of tenure, planning or infrastructure, African urban land governance systems have been broadly characterized by profound inequity (Parnell and Pieterse, 2010; Watson 2016; Zoomers *et al.*, 2016). Indeed, the staggering growth of exploitative masterplans and speculative developments in recent years,

suggests that African cities have drawn the attention of various (global) interests which are fundamentally at odds with more inclusive urban change (Watson, 2014; Noorloos and Kloosterboer, 2018). It is against this background that scholars have become increasingly sceptical about the role of the (global) private sector in African urban development (Grant, 2014; Parnell and Pieterse, 2014).

For aid-dependent countries like Mozambique where, historically, development institutions have been influential in setting and financing development priorities (Hanlon, 2017), it is to be expected that international donors will also play an important role in shaping the priorities of urban development. Recent debates on the politics of development policy-making have observed fundamental shifts in global aid regimes, coming off the back of the current multi-polar world order. Referred to as 'retoliberalism' and 'post-aid' (Murray and Overton, 2016; Mawdsley *et al.*, 2014), these shifts point to an increasingly competitive arena of international development along with a return to 'hard' development priorities and the over-pursuit of donor self-interest. Although these shifts have been referred to as paradigmatic by development scholars, their implications for aid-dependent countries have yet to feature in debates on African urban development.

It is against the background of these debates on African urban development and global aid regimes that this article presents an empirical interrogation of a novel country-city modality which has been established between the Netherlands and Beira City in Mozambique. In recent years the Netherlands has emerged as a frontrunner of the new aid paradigm, shedding its image as a posterchild of benevolent aid in favour of an agenda aimed explicitly at securing its domestic interest abroad (Murray and Overton, 2016; Breman, 2011). Beira, Mozambique's second largest city, is a strategic port settlement and stronghold of political opposition to the central state. Known as the Beira Partnership (BP), the new modality consists of a long-

term partnership between the Netherlands and Beira which has manifested itself through a new masterplan and numerous follow-up projects for Beira City. Taken together the BP represents an unprecedented effort at redefining Beira City while securing Dutch business interests in the process. As a result, the BP provides a unique insight into the politics of development which emerge on the nexus of urban policy and shifting aid regimes and their implications for urban land governance in a specific urban context.

The article begins with a discussion of contemporary debates on African urban development and the politics of international development policy, demonstrating that these have occurred in relative isolation from each other. This is followed by a discussion of the current 'retoliberal' aid agenda of the Netherlands (Murray and Overton, 2016; Mawdsley *et al.*, 2014). The next section is a discussion of Beira's historical urban trajectory and its implications for contemporary urban land governance. The findings section begins with a discussion of past Dutch engagements in Beira pointing to a longstanding institutional relationship between Dutch institutions and the city. Following this, the article unpacks the current Dutch engagements in Beira, revealing the various interests and developmental priorities shaping the BP. In doing so the article reveals that the BP has sought to restructure the city's land governance in a highly technocratic and exclusionary manner, competing with the historical claims and land-use practices of the urban (majority) poor.

The findings are followed by a discussion arguing that the BP has many of the traits of exploitative developments observed elsewhere. Instead of being driven by global capital however, the BP appears as a distinctly *un-global* geopolitical agenda of the Netherlands, aimed at securing preferential access to Beira's governance. This points to a decidedly trans-local dimension that can only be understood from the perspective of historical ties between the Netherlands and Beira, and the contemporary Dutch aid agenda. The article

concludes by arguing that such longstanding trans-local ties will likely become more pronounced in shaping urban development in aid-dependent regions elsewhere, as the topic of African urban development gains momentum. In doing so the article provides important insights into contemporary debates on African urban development, international development and urban land governance.

The New Geopolitics of African Urban Development

A New Era of African Urban Development

The recent adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and New Urban Agenda (NUA) have seen urban development emerge as a major global development priority (Parnell, 2016). For Africa, home to the fastest rate of urban growth in the world (Parnell and Pieterse, 2014), these agendas represent a drastic reformulation of long-held developmental priorities and assumptions. Manifested through decades of anti-urban policy and 'nonsense statistics' (Jones and Corbridge, 2010; Satterthwaite, 2003), urbanization has been historically neglected and misdiagnosed within the context of national development strategies. It is perhaps not surprising therefore, that African urbanists have greeted these new agendas with measured optimism. Not only for putting urbanism on the map of policy-makers, but also for the notably holistic conception of development underlying the agendas (Parnell, 2016; Pieterse *et al.*, 2017). Emphasizing social, economic and environmental aspects of development, these agendas allude to a welcome departure from the economic reductionism which has long dominated development policy, epitomized in the SDG goal of developing an *inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable* urban future.

There is a growing consensus among scholars that a more inclusive urban future will be dependent on restructuring urban land governance systems. Whether it be issues of tenure security, urban planning or infra-

structure provision, land governance in African cities has been characterized by profound inequity (Satterthwaite, 2016; Parnell and Pieterse, 2010; Zoomers *et al.*, 2016; Steel *et al.*, 2017; Noorloos *et al.*, 2018; Watson, 2016). This is illustrated by the fact that informality is the dominant urban condition in Africa. Therefore, as argued by Pieterse, 'the shanty city is by and large the *real* African city' (2011, p. 6). Thus, with the urban majority existing in a realm of state absence and/or indifference, land governance has broadly continued along the lines imprinted by colonial administrations, with 'formality' and 'development' serving the interests of elite minorities only (Parnell and Pieterse, 2014). How these underlying systems are dealt with will therefore largely determine how inclusive Africa's urban future will be.

In fact there is ample evidence of these structural inequities being taken to new extremes in recent years, as illustrated by the so-called 'African urban fantasies' which have emerged (Watson, 2014; Noorloos and Kloosterboer, 2018). Developed by various international engineering and property firms, these initiatives span a range of new city developments and enclaves, promising to (re) build African cities in the image of modernity and affluence. These developments appear to bear no relation to Africa's real cities, nor do they provide solutions to the precarity and poverty of the urban majority, focusing instead on affluent minorities seeking to retreat from the reality of contemporary urbanism. As argued by Watson (2014) and Noorloos and Kloosterboer (2018) therefore, these new city initiatives represent little more than an exacerbation of contemporary inequities. At the same time, the stark contrast between real and planned urbanism which underpins these projects, suggests that many may in fact be intended to remain as fantasies, serving instead as place-marketing tools to attract global capital into African cities (Steel *et al.*, 2017).

The highly speculative nature of these initiatives has led Watson (2014) to argue that

they represent a coming-to-Africa of ‘speculative urbanism’, a concept which has become increasingly influential in debates on African urban development (Fält, 2016; Noorloos *et al.*, 2018). Initially observed by Goldman (2011) in Bangalore, India, speculative urbanism represents a mode of urban governance whereby urban administrations become centred on displacement and the commodification of (peri)urban land with the purpose of attracting global capital investments. While bearing many similarities to the basic tenets of neoliberal urbanism, Goldman has argued against deterministic understanding of global capital expansion, describing speculative urbanism instead as a distinctly endogenous process of institutional change aided by global policy networks and development institutions. So far, however, it is precisely this type of endogenous institutional change which has yet to be explored within the context of Africa’s urban fantasies (Watson, 2014; Noorloos and Kloosterboer, 2018).

These observations raise important questions as to whether the emerging urban policy paradigm will offer any alternatives to such exploitative dynamics, or if it will simply represent a further extension of speculative trends into new frontiers (Zoomers *et al.*, 2016). Perhaps most importantly, this debate raises a fundamental dilemma which has yet to be resolved. For while critiques of the private sector have become increasingly common place within the context of urban development (Parnell and Pieterse, 2014; Grant, 2014), there is also a general agreement that inclusive development will require massive investments in the realm of urban infrastructure in Africa (Pieterse *et al.*, 2017; Zoomers *et al.*, 2016). Thus, for struggling African municipalities this will imply mobilizing investments from abroad, so what will be the developmental modalities through which an inclusive urban future is to be realized and financed? Who will be the new actors of African urban development and which incentives will lead them to take this role? (Noorloos *et al.*, 2018).

A New Era of International Development

For aid-dependent countries like Mozambique, where aid makes up more than half of the state budget (Buur *et al.*, 2011), it can be expected that international donors will become increasingly prominent in urban development. Although Goldman (2011) (see also Goldman, 2015) has demonstrated that there exists a considerable overlap between global development institutions and speculative urbanism, international development is nonetheless comprised of a distinct set of institutional arrangements and interests which cannot simply be equated with the (global) private sector. More importantly still, in recent years scholars of development studies have observed fundamental shifts in global aid regimes which have not yet appeared in debates on African urban development (Murray and Overton, 2016; Mawdsley *et al.*, 2014; Rampa and Bilal, 2011; Arsel and Dasgupta, 2015; Green, 2015).

International development policy-making has long been understood as a Western affair. Recently this has changed with the rise of new global superpowers, China in particular (Arsel and Dasgupta, 2015). China’s engagement in Africa has been associated with the establishment of parallel institutional channels and development ideologies, which have circumvented the ‘traditional’ Western institutions of development entirely (Power and Mohan, 2010; Dietz *et al.*, 2011). China’s policy of rapid infrastructure development has proved particularly attractive to many African leaders, coming at a time when Western donors had scaled back investment in infrastructure in favour of the ‘soft’ targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Kilama, 2016). Modelled on the notion of mutual-benefit, Chinese engagements in Africa have also represented a notable break with the sanctimony and covert interests which have characterized much of Western development assistance. Our interest here is not with China in particular, however, but with the response it has prompted in the

broader arena of international development policy-making.

Prompted by the new multi-polar world order and the financial crisis of 2008, a development policy paradigm has begun to emerge among Western development institutions. Referred to with terms such as 'retro-liberalism' and 'post-aid' (Murray and Overton, 2016; Mawdsley *et al.*; 2014; Rampa and Bilal, 2011), the characteristics of this paradigm include an increasingly overt pursuit of donor self-interest, a growing emphasis on economic and infrastructure development and increasingly hybridized public-private finance arrangements. These trends suggest that 'value for money' and 'hard' development have emerged as the new priorities of many Western donors, representing a breach with earlier MDG era concerns of donor alignment, coordination and poverty eradication (Mawdsley *et al.*; 2014; Green, 2015). As a result, the emerging paradigm appears as a hybrid of earlier iterations, combining the global geopolitical and infrastructural agenda of the modernization era with the market predilection of the neoliberalism (Murray and Overton, 2016). Despite drawing heavily on narratives of aid-ineffectiveness, however, this new paradigm does not actually represent a reduction of aid budgets, but simply a re-direction of aid flows into new policy areas (*ibid.*).

As a result, features of the Chinese development model appear to have rubbed off on 'traditional' donors as they seek to (re)assert themselves in a multi-polar world. More than a politics of spatiality therefore, which hitherto development has always been (Power, 2010; Sidaway, 2007)), international development is now an increasingly *competitive* politics of spatiality, bringing a new geopolitical dimension to global development. As argued by Rampa and Bilal (2011), this geopolitical competition has provided newfound leverage to African leaders who can now shop around between donors. Elsewhere Bugalski (2016) has warned that growing competition between development banks has prompted a 'demise

in accountability' at the World Bank, pointing to a race to the bottom of social safeguards.

Returning to African urban development, we see that these global shifts have already had very tangible outcomes in the form of urban mega-projects, left in the wake of Chinese engagements (Cain, 2014). Indeed Schindler (2017) has argued that China is now at the forefront of urban development in Africa. What has not been explored, however, is how the shifts in global development will influence the engagement of other development actors, and urban development policy more generally. What will urban development look like in a post-aid era? And what type of development models will Western donors offer to win over Africa's urban elites? And finally, to what extent will these new modalities be facilitative of inclusive urban development?

The Netherlands as a Frontrunner of Retroliberal Development Policy

The Netherlands has long been considered a posterchild for benevolent development support, influenced by domestic social movements centred on working-class emancipation and post-colonial solidarity (Bremans, 2011). Dutch development policy has nonetheless been the product of continued competition with other factions seeking to advance domestic economic interests. This struggle has been depicted as 'the merchant' vs 'clergyman', whereby the latter has broadly proved more influential since the 1980s (Hoebink, 2007). This continuous struggle has meant that development policy has not been a product of a coherent ideology or political consensus, but one of substantial political contingency, often leading to contradictory applications within a single policy era (*ibid.*).

In recent years, however, the Netherlands has emerged as a frontrunner of the retro-liberal/post-aid development paradigm, pointing to a resounding victory of the merchant faction (Murray and Overton, 2016). In the wake of successive centre-right governments

and the financial crisis of 2008, the contours of the new Dutch aid agenda began to emerge in 2010 (Breman, 2011). By 2013 it had taken the form of an agenda titled *A World to Gain: A New Agenda for Aid, Trade and Investment* (Government of the Netherlands, 2013). Formulated as an explicit response to new global powers and increasing global competition, the agenda details a strategy seeking to advance Dutch business interests through development support.

Lamenting that the Netherlands is 'failing to connect' with economies in Africa, and that the 'The Netherlands is no longer invited' to the G20, the new agenda argues that 'longstanding aid relationships' provide a unique opportunity to gain access to new economies (*ibid.*, pp. 5–6). These new opportunities have been categorized as 'transitional' country relations, based on the assumption that growing prosperity will soon warrant a full transition from aid-relations to purely trade-based relationships in specific countries. In an implicit nod to the Chinese development ideology, trade relationships are referred to as being an expression of 'equality' between countries, doing away with the old virtues of solidarity-based relations (*ibid.*, p. 6). For such transitional countries, which include one of the poorest countries in the world, Mozambique, developmental engagements are modelled on ideals of so-called 'solidarity and enlightened self-interest' (*ibid.*, p. 7).

A central principle of the new agenda is that the Dutch private sector is to be integrated where possible into development engagements, premised on the notion of win-win outcomes. Within this context several themes have been identified based on the purported added-value of Dutch expertise and business, one of which is 'water'. The Netherlands has often positioned itself as a global leader in the water sector, playing a key role in the production and dissemination of (controversial) water management epistemologies in the global South (Mehta *et al.*, 2014; Goldman, 2007). Despite being marketed as a single 'water sector', however, it encompasses

a slew of disciplines and entities in the realm of fresh water and sanitation services, water basin governance, flood resilience planning and infrastructure development (among others). It is through this framework that engagements in Beira were established.

The shift towards a private sector led development model has been associated with the establishment of various institutional platforms and financing arrangements intended to advance the interests of Dutch businesses abroad. This has created a new and diffuse institutional context, with aid flows being allocated to various coordinating bodies with different developmental mandates. The shift towards the private sector also entailed a slashing of support to Dutch NGOs which had long constituted the primary partners within the context of Dutch development policy (Breman, 2011). Thus, amidst the new flows and institutional bodies established within the context of the new Dutch aid agenda, the foothold of established NGOs has been drastically reduced.

In recent years the umbrella of the Dutch 'water sector' has been deployed in various urban locations in the Global South, which included several far-reaching urban development and land reclamation initiatives, such as the controversial Garuda coastal protection program in Jakarta Bay, Indonesia. Dutch development policy has therefore already begun influencing urban development in recipient countries. Within this context, Beira has emerged on the frontier of Dutch aspirations in Africa, based on a long-term commitment to the city's development which has been marketed as a model for engagement elsewhere in the continent.

Research Context

The Historical Trajectory of Urbanization in Beira

Located on the coast of the central Sofala province, in low-lying marshland at the mouth of the river Pungwe, Beira City was initially established under the Mozambique

Company (MC) towards the end of the nineteenth century. The MC was a private charter company which had leased concessions to central Mozambique from Portuguese colonial rulers, as part of the Portuguese effort to meet the principle of 'effective occupation' as demanded by the Berlin conference (Sidaway, 1993). Initially established as a port settlement, Beira would grow to become the central node in a hinterland corridor known as the Beira Corridor, spanning road, rail and pipelines and serving as a logistical backbone for neighbouring Rhodesia. In 1941 the MC's concessions ended and central Mozambique came under the administrative rule of the fascist New State regime in Portugal. Under this regime Beira was viewed as a crown jewel of Portuguese imperialist ambitions in Africa, embodied in the outlandish 370-room Art Deco 'Grande Hotel' built in 1955 (Lança, 2010).

Under colonial rule urban planning and governance in Mozambique was based on a racialized dual system, which manifested itself in two distinct social-spatial categories, known as the *cidade de cimento*, (cement city) and the *cidade de caniço* (cane city) (Anderson *et al.*, 2015a). The cement city comprised several Portuguese style neighbourhoods and commercial zones, which fell under colonial land administration and planning. The cane city, in contrast, was not serviced by colonial infrastructure, appearing simply as 'native reserves' on colonial plans and was inhabited by indigenous Mozambicans prohibited from living in the cement city (Anderson *et al.*, 2015b). The cane city fell under the administration of community *regulo* chiefs, mandated with land allocation and serving as subordinates in the colonial system (Anderson *et al.*, 2015a). In addition to housing, land use in the cane city also included agriculture on so-called *machamba* plots which was practised predominantly by women (Sheldon, 1999).

The colonial rule of the MC and New State was notorious for the enforcement of forced labour practices until 1961 and the extremely poor development of Mozambique

more generally (Allina, 2012; Morgan, 1990). After a war for independence headed by the Mozambican liberation front FRELIMO and the toppling of the fascist regime in Portugal, colonial occupation eventually came to an end in 1974. FRELIMO would go on to declare itself a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party, establishing a single party state in 1975 and implementing far reaching socialist reforms (Sumich, 2010). This included the nationalization of land, the abolition of the dual urban governance system and nationalization of the cement city housing stock. Reporting on Beira, Finnegan noted how this policy allowed 'city gardeners and street sweepers' to take up residence in the luxurious properties of former colonial elites (1992, p. 100). The socialist experiment would soon be disrupted by a bloody war however, headed by the paramilitary Mozambique National Resistance Army (RENAMO) which was established by white minority Rhodesia with the aim of destabilizing the FRELIMO state (Vines, 2013).

For Beira city, independence was associated with rapid economic decline, beginning with the adoption of sanctions against Rhodesia and followed by the war of destabilization which became centred on the Beira Corridor. As a result Beira's ports and railways came to a standstill, while the war resulted in a massive influx of refugees from surrounding districts (Finnegan, 1992). Coupled with the exodus of Portuguese administrators after independence, the war led urban planning to come to an effective standstill. The rapid urban expansion associated with the war thus occurred largely outside the reach of the formal bureaucracy. After the fall of the Rhodesian regime in 1980, custodianship over RENAMO was taken over by the Apartheid regime in South Africa which continued the war against the Mozambican state. Facing a massive loss of territory and increasing international pressure, FRELIMO eventually abandoned the socialist experiment in 1987 in favour of a Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) under the auspices of the World Bank and IMF.

For Beira, Mozambique's 'turn to the West' was associated with new reforms in urban land administration, as well as a massive inflow of donor finance aimed at rehabilitating the port and the broader Beira Corridor, costing an estimated US\$670 million (Sidaway, 1993). Whereas land remained nationalized, urban properties were privatized again, causing property prices in the cement to sky rocket. As a result, the 'city gardeners and street sweepers' which had taken up residence under socialism were subsequently displaced back to the cane city (Finnegan, 1992, p. 100). The rising property prices were further exacerbated by the influx of affluent foreign engineers and consultants working on the Corridor's rehabilitation. Together with rising food prices and wage cuts, Mozambique's turn to the West had only served to exacerbate Beira's wartime hardship (Sheldon, 1999; Sumich and Honwana 2007). From the perspective of FRELIMO elites, however, it proved to be a master stroke, allowing unfettered access to donor finance and privatized state resources, thus solidifying their control over the state and international relations (Sumich, 2010; Hanlon, 2017).

The war eventually came to an end in 1992, having resulted in an estimated one million deaths and displacing a further five million Mozambicans (Wilson, 1994). Peace agreements were followed by the installation of multi-party politics, with FRELIMO and RENAMO continuing their rivalries as the main political contenders. By then RENAMO had evolved from a foreign destabilization tool to a legitimate grassroots movement through the mobilization of various segments of the population disenfranchised by the FRELIMO regime. FRELIMO appeared to be better resourced and more politically savvy however, going on to win all subsequent national elections. As the post-socialist state had initially been designed on a 'winner takes all' model, RENAMO constituents were systematically marginalized in the post-war era (Sumich and Honwana, 2007). This had particularly notable implications for Beira

City which emerged from the war as a RENAMO stronghold, with a unique culture of political opposition towards the central state (Shankland and Chambote, 2011; Igreja, 2013). Thus, while the FRELIMO stronghold and national capital Maputo City became a focal point of post-war accumulation, Beira continued on a path of urban dilapidation and under-investment, revealing a contrast which is generally considered to reflect the competing political allegiances of the two cities.

In the 1990s and under pressure of international donors, Beira was subjected to two institutional reforms which served to further restructure the city's urban management. The first encompassed the privatization of the port operations, a contract which was secured by a PPP headed by the Dutch Cornelder company together with the parastatal port and railway company CFM (Hanlon and Mosse, 2010). The second reform came in the form of municipality decentralization, which paved the way for local elections and a certain degree of administrative autonomy. Local elections provided a means for Beira's political culture to translate into bureaucratic power and in 2003, after boycotting the first election in 1998, a RENAMO-led coalition won the municipality election. Decentralization had not included control over the port however, which remained with the central government. As a result the city was effectively split from its main economic driver, with the municipality and the port falling under the control of two rival political factions.

Beira's mayor under RENAMO was Davis Simango, who soon gained a reputation as a man of the people and hands-on modernizer. Threatening to outshine RENAMO's leader Afonso Dhlakama, Simango was eventually removed from RENAMO's candidacy for the following elections in 2008. Running as an independent candidate, Simango continued as mayor for a second term nonetheless, establishing a new party, Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM), which would go on to vie for national politics. Posing an

existential threat to established political elites, MDM drew the ire of both FRELIMO and RENAMO (Hanlon, 2010; Vines, 2013; Nuvunga and Adalima, 2011). These contentions were responded to by Western donors which came to the aid of MDM, due to the latter's self-professed democratic credentials, a move which soured long-standing relations between donors and the FRELIMO regime. MDM would eventually go on to win subsequent municipality elections in 2013 and 2018, while building strong ties with Western donors.

Urban Planning and Land Governance in Post-Socialist Mozambique

Mozambique's turn to the West ushered in an era of *laissez-faire* land politics which served the elite's interests in accumulation. It is widely recognized that ambiguous laws and poor implementation of land regulations were a crucial component of this system, which allowed elites to grab land (West and Myers, 1996; Anderson *et al.*, 2015b). In 1998, in response to growing protests, a progressive national land law was adopted, which established legal parity between the use rights (DUATs) of land acquired through customary means, good-faith (ten-year) occupancy and cadastral allocation. However administrative capacity continued to remain far behind.

This was particularly true for urban land administration, which was not addressed explicitly until urban land regulations were established a decade later in 2008, watering down and contradicting the national land law in several areas. For instance, urban planning was established as a prerequisite for the formalization of good-faith occupancy (Anderson *et al.*, 2015b). In addition, no mention was made of customary rights, nor were any specific provisions established for the formalization of urban agriculture. As a result, good-faith occupancy was made dependent on the capacity of municipality planning, while other widespread forms of land use were not mentioned at all. Due to these contradictions and the poor capacity

of urban planning systems, the regulations effectively meant that the vast majority of urban land users were not eligible to formalize their rights.

From a historical perspective, these regulations can be seen as the latest in a succession of state regimes which have been indifferent and/or hostile to the interests of the urban majority. It is against this historical background that strategies of 'state-avoidance' have become the dominant mode of urban land governance (Anderson *et al.*, 2015b, p. 347). The formal municipal bureaucracy has therefore continued to play a marginal role in urban land governance. Far from existing independently from municipality institutions however, these 'informal' practices are overseen and profited from by the lower administrative bodies of the municipality. It is due to the socially legitimate and hybrid nature of these practices that they have been referred to as 'alternative formality' and 'twilight' institutions (Anderson *et al.*, 2015b, p. 424; Earle, 2014; see also Kihato *et al.*, 2013). From a legal perspective however, alternative formality is illegal, as it is based on the private sale of land. As a result there exists a fundamental discrepancy between the legality and social legitimacy of urban land governance systems.

Alternative formality can be understood as an evolution of the urban practices associated with the cane city. Although the building materials have changed, with brick housing now being widespread, the duality of the cane/cement city is still imprinted on the city's contemporary social and spatial dimensions. Thus, the cement city remains a place for affluent elites and international staff serviced by dilapidated colonial infrastructure, while the cane city is home to the urban majority who built it through bottom-up city making practices. Similarly, urban agriculture continues to be a major category of urban land use in Beira, providing a crucial contribution to household subsistence. Although urbanization has gone hand in hand with the displacement of urban agriculture, several centrally-located flood plains have

continued to serve as prime agricultural zones in the absence of competing land claims. In addition to these historical land-use categories, Beira has also seen the emergence of dynamics which confound the duality of the cane/cement city, such as the growth of elite developments, often established illegally but becoming 'formalized' through cadastral corruption nonetheless.

Methodology

This article is based on data collected within the context of ongoing PhD research on international development cooperation, urban development, and land governance in Beira City. Qualitative interviews were the primary data collection method, which encompassed open, semi-structured and informal formats,



Figure 1. Urban agriculture in the industrial zone of Vaz.



Figure 2. Brick houses in the 'cane city' neighbourhood of Chota.



Figure 3. The municipality square and centre of the cement city.

totalling 220 interviews. The main respondent categories consisted of institutional stakeholders (donors, consultants, government) and members of displaced households in various locations in Beira. These qualitative methods were complemented by extensive observations throughout Beira and attendance of various stakeholder events in Mozambique (Beira, Maputo), the Netherlands (The Hague, Rotterdam) and Ecuador (Quito) for the HABITAT 3 conferences. Additional project documentation was also consulted and analysed. Finally, a concise non-randomized survey was undertaken in December 2016 among sixty farmers in the Maraza neighbourhood in order to gain insight into their basic land-use characteristics.

Research in Mozambique was undertaken in 2015 and 2016, encompassing two periods of 22 and 20 weeks respectively. This was undertaken with support from Centro Terra Viva, a Maputo-based land rights organization, and the Catholic University of Mozambique in Beira. Additional data were collected over a 4 week period in 2017 within the context of a report commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs into the politics of resettlement in Beira.

Research Findings

A History of the Dutch Merchant and Clergyman in Beira

Dutch involvement in Beira goes back to the early 1980s, when the Dutch solidarity initiative Eduardo Mondlane Foundation (EMS), named after FRELIMO's founding president, began undertaking a range of activities in the city. These included various projects in education, technical support, and staff exchanges between Amsterdam municipality and Beira. Engaging the Municipality of Amsterdam was a major strategy of EMS as the city had its own foreign aid budget at the time. These initiatives ran parallel to several projects undertaken by Dutch engineering and dredging firms in port rehabilitation, with funding from various donor agencies. During the first half of the 1980s Western donor funding was generally limited however, due to the anti-socialist orientation of the World Bank and IMF (Hanlon, 2017). After Mozambique's turn to the West however, and subsequent inflow of donor resources, the Netherlands became a major donor supporting the rehabilitation of Beira's port within the context of the broader Beira Corridor rehabilitation programme.

Through the efforts of EMS, the Municipality of Amsterdam eventually formalized its commitments to Beira's administration in the form of a twinning partnership in 1995. Meanwhile Dutch support for the port's rehabilitation continued under the auspices of a Dutch port chief. This longstanding involvement in the realm of ports development assured that Dutch actors were strategically well positioned when port operations were privatized in 1998, leading to the establishment of the PPP mentioned earlier, known as *Cornelder de Mozambique (CdM)*. Privatization under CdM was associated with a massive lay-off of staff and would also find itself repeatedly at the centre of national controversies (Hanlon and Mosse, 2010). Many of these controversies were centred on CdM director and consul to the Netherlands, who would later go on to serve as transport minister after the 2014 national elections, revealing a murky realm of ties between Dutch business, Mozambican political elites and the Dutch government. Following its privatization however, port revenues increased dramatically, which led CdM to be hailed as a development success story among Dutch advocates of a private sector development model.

In the early 2000s Dutch development policy began to shift gradually towards a more pragmatic agenda based on national self-interest as a result of political shifts to the right. This came at a time of growing criticism of the Municipality of Amsterdam, which had been unable to deliver on its commitments to Beira, including the development of a coastal protection programme, leading to disappointing results for the twinning partnership. In addition, RENAMO's victory in the 2003 municipality election meant that the city was no longer ruled by the party upon which EMS (by then known as NIZA) had built its relations with Beira. As a consequence Amsterdam's twinning partnership was eventually aborted in 2005 and NIZA's presence in Beira phased out, leading to a significant withdrawal of the Netherlands

institutional presence in the city.

In many ways the history of Dutch engagement in Beira is illustrative of the merchant and clergyman factions which have historically shaped Dutch development policy (Hoebink, 2007). Dutch aid imbursements having played an important role both in EMS activities and the establishment of CdM. Perhaps more fundamental than the ideological content of these different engagements however, is the fact that they collectively represent a longstanding trans-local relationship between the Netherlands and Beira, which has served as a conduit for various agendas and interests throughout the years. It is this trans-local relationship which would ultimately serve as the foundation for the re-establishment of a long-term Dutch presence in Beira in the early 2010s.

The re-establishment of ties between the Netherlands and Beira came at the height of Mozambique's 'development success story' which had been widely trumpeted by Western donors. This 'success' was closely related to the country's coal boom and subsequent discovery of massive offshore gas reserves in the early 2010s. Although commentators warned of the hollow foundation of this extractive FDI-driven success story (Hanlon, 2017), donor countries such as the Netherlands anticipated that the extractive boom would see a massive growth in national welfare. Thus from the perspective of the Dutch government, Mozambique came to be known as an emerging market which could be accessed by Dutch businesses through the longstanding aid relations, as outlined in the Dutch aid agenda of 2013 (Government of the Netherlands, 2013).

In addition to historical ties, Beira City was a particularly attractive candidate for Dutch support as it had emerged as a crucial node in various national developments, such as the country's coal boom and the Beira Agricultural Growth Corridor initiative (BAGC) (Kaarhus, 2018). Taken together with the city's extreme susceptibility to flooding and coastal erosion, Beira emerged as an ideal

candidate for a business-centric approach centred on expertise from the Dutch water sector. Last but not least, Beira provided a new political inroad into a country whose national government was increasingly shifting towards China against a background of souring relations with Western donors.

*Re-Establishing Trans-Local
Ties through the Beira Partnership*

The Dutch government re-established an institutional presence in Beira by means of the Beira partnership (BP), consisting of a long-term commitment of no less than ten years to the city's development. The BP was largely coordinated and financed through the Dutch Partners for Water programme, which was an inter-ministerial initiative based in the Netherlands, thus differing from the 'traditional' aid coordination undertaken by Dutch embassies. The BP acted as an institutional umbrella for mobilizing finance and implementing development projects, while serving to secure preferential involvement of Dutch businesses in the process. In the eyes of the Dutch, the aim of the BP was no less than a fundamental restructuring of the city's governance and urbanization trajectory, through a range of infrastructural and institutional interventions. As a result the BP came to resemble a total urban development package for Beira's urban transition.

Institutionally the BP differed from other donor engagements in Beira as it was premised on a direct partnership between a Western state and Beira's municipality, while other donors negotiated their imbursements at the central government level first. Despite constituting a novel country-city modality however, the BP could not circumvent the formal patchwork of central and municipality mandates which make up urban governance in Mozambique. Thus, while the BP was premised on negotiating directly with the municipality, involvement of the central government of Mozambique was unavoidable at various stages. An issue which would

prove to be particularly challenging as the BP picked up steam.

*Masterplanning the BP's Claims
to Urban Territory*

The BP's flagship project came in the form of 'the Beira Masterplan' which was published in 2013 by a consortium of Dutch planning and (hydraulic) engineering firms (see figure 4). The masterplan detailed a vision of 'orderly' urban expansion based on a discussion of hydraulic modelling, urban expansion and industrialization based on Dutch technical sensibilities. Encapsulated in the slogan *a safe, prosperous and beautiful Beira*, the masterplan comprised a strategic vision for the future far removed from the poverty, unplanned urban expansion and flood vulnerability which characterizes much of the city.

The masterplan focused particular attention on the intuitional context of Beira which was understood to be at the root of Beira's development challenges. However, this analysis was limited to the workings of the formal state bureaucracy, which has historically had a negligible role in shaping the city. Not surprisingly, the capacity of these formal institutions was found wholly insufficient in the masterplan, having resulted in poor land management, a poor business climate, and poor institutional coordination (among other things). Thus, broadly reflective of the technical expertise associated with its design, the masterplan did not include a diagnosis of the 'informal' urban governance dynamics which had shaped the majority of the city outside the limited reach of formal institutions. In an effort to couple planning to implementation, the masterplan also included a range of follow-up projects which were to be implemented within the context of the BP. It is through this process that several priority projects were identified in the realm of coastal protection, land management and real estate development, premised on the involvement of Dutch businesses.

The masterplan was presented in various

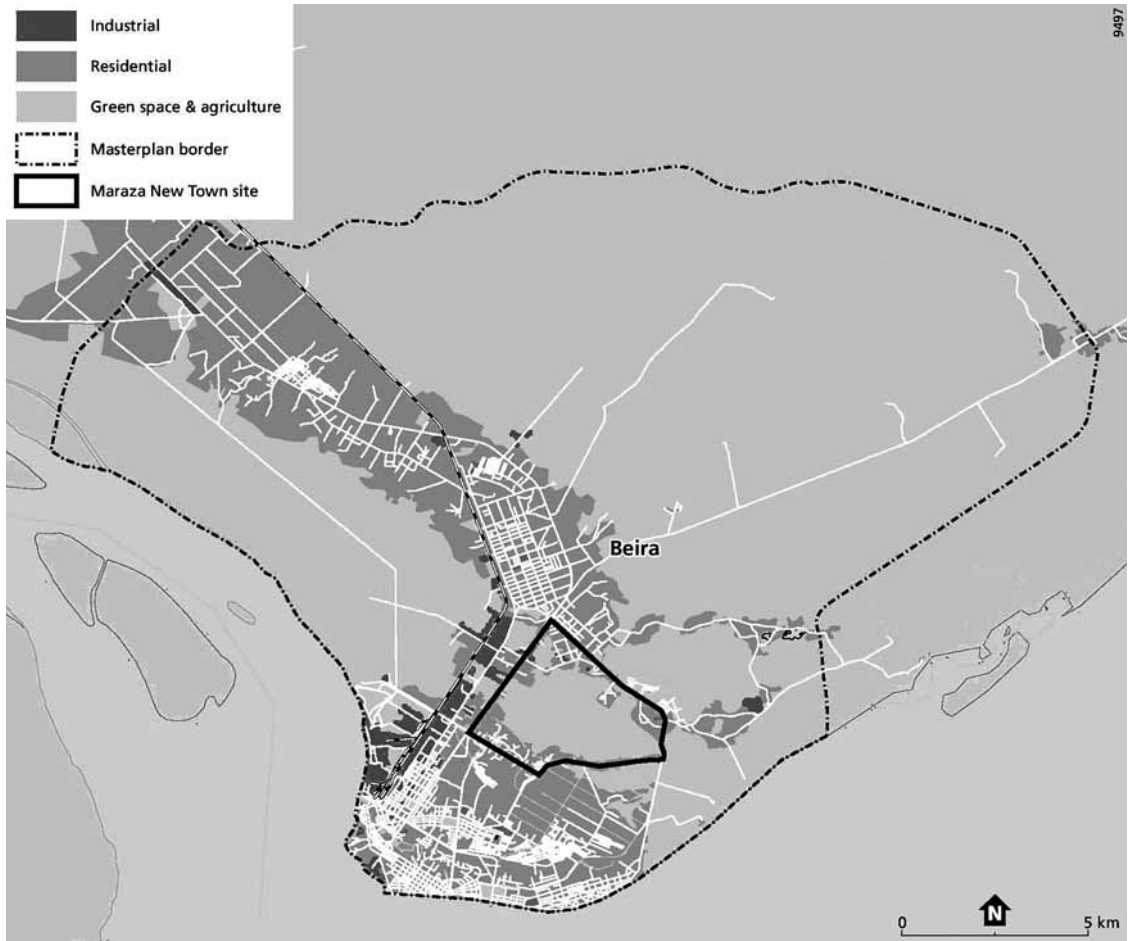


Figure 4. The urban expansion zone detailed in the masterplan together with the envisaged Maraza New Town site superimposed on to Beira's current land-use characteristics.

public forums as being the result of extensive stakeholder participation and coordination, which was often referred to as the 'Dutch approach'. On closer inspection, however, the title 'stakeholder' had only been allocated to representatives from (local and central) government bodies, utility companies, the private sector and local universities. As a result, no civil society or structured form of public consultation was involved during the masterplan negotiations. Thus, while the masterplan represented a notably rare consensus between institutions usually divided along factionist lines, it was not based on any

input from other societal interest groups such as informal communities or farmers.

The reasons for this selective stakeholder engagement were understood differently among BP members. A key Dutch mediator of the BP argued that such consultation was not necessary as Beira's mayor was vested with the mandate to speak on behalf of Beira's citizens. While formally true, the municipality's track record with civic engagement had been notoriously problematic, illustrated by a recent civil society project in the city which found that 'interaction between local stakeholders and the municipal institutions

was nearly non-existent' (Dialogo, 2016, p. 1). The poor state of civil society in Beira is widely considered to be the result of the factionist struggles which have shaped the city's governance. Indeed, another key Dutch BP member found that civil society in Beira was simply too politicized for NGOs to be engaged in the master-plan process.

What these varying considerations revealed, irrespective of their validity, was that the master-plan process had been shaped at the discretion of its initiators, without the imposition of any protocol or conditions on behalf of the Dutch with regards to civic participation. Indeed, from a legal perspective the master-plan was not actually a formal urban plan. According to Mozambican planning regulations, city-level plans (i.e. structure plans) are based on a different methodology from that used for the masterplan. Thus, whereas Mozambican law has established provisions for civic engagement in urban planning processes, no such requirements were applicable to the masterplan. This meant that the master-plan was actually little more than a political manifesto of the BP, with no formal institutional basis. However, it was wielded by the municipality leadership as authoritative nonetheless. For instance, when municipality respondents were asked about the planning procedures which had preceded the development of a new Special Economic Zone in Beira, the masterplan was pointed to as the only urban plan detailing its development.

Institutionalizing the BP Claims through the Land Development Company

The most fundamental project of the BP was the establishment of a so-called Land Development Company (LDC). The LDC was designed as a municipality-level institution tasked with generating revenues from urban expansion. The basic principle was that the LDC would be allocated land concessions by the municipality, which would then be provided with flood protection and infra-structural services. The enhanced plots created

through this process would then be sold on as 'improvements' to property developers. By framing these activities as the sale of 'improvements', as opposed to the sale of land itself, the LDC would therefore (hypothetically) be able to bypass Mozambican laws which prohibit the sale of land. This model was envisaged as a means of generating municipality revenues, reducing its dependency on the central government, while also contributing to 'orderly' urban expansion in the process. In doing so, the LDC would serve as the main institutional and financial driver of the masterplan vision.

The LDC was designed as a public-private partnership (PPP) in accordance with the Dutch aid paradigm. After negotiations were held with various potential Dutch investors, the Dutch development bank FMO agreed to partner in the LDC, signing a memorandum of understanding with the municipality in 2015. FMO is a bank whose majority shares are held by the Dutch state, while other shares are held by financial institutions. Until then FMO had only financed the private sector; the LDC was the bank's first venture into a partnership with a public institution. The PPP construct was based on the agreement that the municipality would provide the necessary land concessions, while FMO would provide financial and technical resources to the LDC. More than simply providing a loan however, the FMO investment was premised on a long term buy-in by FMO, which would see the bank owning *circa* 50 per cent of the LDC shares. The logic behind this model was that tying the interest of FMO to the long-term success of the LDC would increase the sustainability of the initiative, an approach modelled on Beira's port operations by CdM. Based on this model FMO, and therefore indirectly the Dutch state, would become co-beneficiaries of revenues generated through Beira's urban expansion.

The LDC was initially planned to encompass an industrial and residential area of 500 hectares each, each commencing with a plot of 50 hectares. In the years

that followed however priorities of the BP shifted to the residential component known as 'Maraza New Town' (see figure 4). This development was allocated an area in the neighbourhood of Maraza, consisting of a floodplain which has remained largely isolated from urban expansion. Through a process of land elevation with sand secured from nearby dredging in the port channel, the LDC would convert Maraza's floodplain into a prime real estate zone. Thus, more than a land development institution alone, the LDC was also designed as a land reclamation tool, serving to engineer the city's green zones into urban expansion areas.

Although much of the land targeted for the LDC was largely uninhabited, it was by no means unoccupied. Maraza has historically been a major agricultural zone used primarily for rice cultivation by poor households, which had historically been the recipient of support from the Mozambican central government and international donors (Sheldon, 1999). Under the auspices of the BP however, agricultural land has been recast as a raw resource for the LDC expansion. In fact, no mention was made of urban agriculture in the masterplan's vision for Beira's future, meaning that all agriculture was assumed to be erased from the city by 2035. This anti-agricultural approach was more broadly reflective of MDM's development ideology, which was premised on the systematic displacement of agricultural land use from the city. Farmers losing their land generally receive a one-off compensation of 3000–5000 metical per plot (US\$50–83 at the time of writing), an amount which was broadly recognized to be far below the actual value of the land, so exacerbating household vulnerability (Shannon *et al.*, 2018).

For the LDC model to work, however, areas such as Maraza had to be rendered legible and exchangeable by the municipality's formal land administration. In order to realize this, the masterplan was followed by numerous projects aimed at restructuring land management in Maraza. As of mid-2018 these develop-

ments spanned interventions in the realm of cadastral reform, municipality management, impact assessments, urban design and business-case development, each associated with different Dutch institutions and various funding arrangements. The Maraza project was also associated with a so-called low-cost housing component, which was in fact the only BP project which alluded to addressing the needs of the urban poor directly. On closer inspection, however, the initiative appeared to be firmly targeted at Beira's middle class, as housing for the urban (majority) poor was considered unfeasible from a business-case perspective. The proposed development of Maraza would therefore be inaccessible to those segments of the population most vulnerable to displacement.

What is of particular significance is the fact that the displacement associated with Beira's development was not addressed in any systematic way in the masterplan. Amidst the many follow-up projects detailed in the masterplan, none were aimed at mitigating displacement impacts associated with its implementation. Instead, agricultural land was simply cast as a readily available resource. Had representatives of urban farmers been engaged in the BP process, then it would undoubtedly have been associated with a different set of development priorities. This reveals a particularly salient rationality behind the selective stakeholder representation during the masterplan process, whereby those whose land is needed for urban expansion are simply excluded from negotiating the terms of Beira's development trajectory.

The BP as Trans-Local Urban Governance

As of mid-2018 about twenty-five Dutch public, private and semi-private institutions have been involved in the BP, either as formal project counterparts or as informal negotiators. By this time the Dutch embassy in Maputo had also taken up a secondary coordinating role alongside the activities

coordinated from the Netherlands. However it was only after mid-2017 that any Dutch counterparts began establishing a long-term presence in Beira. Prior to this all BP negotiations had been based on Dutch missions to Beira, or negotiations in Maputo and the Netherlands.

Within the broader context of BP negotiations, the role of the municipality often appeared to be a marginal one, with some Dutch counterparts lamenting the 'donor pleasing' tendencies and limited assertiveness of the municipality. Realistically, however, there was little incentive for the municipality to take on a more proactive role. The BP had brought prestige along with unprecedented political and financial clout to Beira, boosting Beira as a showcase for the national political aspirations of MDM. As the BP had tacitly agreed to keep the municipality's authoritarian governance intact, municipality leaders could rest assured that Dutch support would not undermine their primary political interests. Outsourcing urban governance duties to Dutch actors thus effectively allowed municipality leaders to concentrate their limited resources elsewhere. As a result there was little incentive for the municipality to disrupt the lopsided balance of the BP which, for many actors, was a mutually beneficial one.

As a consequence of these dynamics the BP began to take the form of a parallel governance structure, where important decisions about Beira's development were negotiated, planned and implemented largely outside Mozambican state structures. This decidedly trans-local structure was characterized by a substantial degree of temporal and spatial variability, touching ground in Beira, Maputo and multiple sites in the Netherlands. Because these amorphous governance spaces were accessible only by invitation, the inner-working of the BP remained largely unintelligible to non-affiliates. This was exacerbated further by the lack of neutral oversight and structured transparency measures through the BP. Thus, for citizens of Beira, the un-

responsive municipality remained the only entry point into these governance dynamics.

It should be noted, however, that the direction of the BP was itself subject to constant negotiation among its various formal and informal counterparts. These actors represented a multitude of (competing) interests, as well as divergent ideas about the BP priorities. The most notable division was that between private sector actors attracted to Beira by the prospect of project acquisition, and Dutch civil servants tasked with realizing the contradictory aims of the Dutch trade and aid agenda. The sheer number of Dutch entities involved in the BP, each embedded in different institutional arrangements, meant that many BP counterparts were themselves often unaware of each other's activities. By aiming to be an all-encompassing development framework for Beira, the BP had thus drawn on such a broad array of institutions and interests that it began to buckle under its own weight.

By mid-2018 the BP remained an initiative made possible by the grace of Dutch public resources, despite its allusions to private sector-led development. Where private actors were involved, they had been enticed through subsidies and preferential financing arrangements. Elsewhere pivotal players withdrew their support, the most notable being FMO, which abandoned the LDC project for reasons unknown to many BP counterparts. Without the backing of a large-scale financial investor, the LDC project was suspended indefinitely. As a result the development of the Maraza New Town area became dislocated from the LDC project, continuing with additional public resources from the Dutch government. Elsewhere, antagonism between the central state and municipality began to raise its head, leading to further delays, while dispelling initial hopes that the masterplan had represented a long-term victory over factionalist politics in Beira.

Setbacks to the BP increased dramatically with the Mozambican debt scandal in 2016, which served as a very public contradiction

of Mozambique's developmental success narrative and considerably reduced the BP's ability to attract large-scale finance. As the BP remained largely inaccessible to non-affiliates, however, its outward narrative continued to be controlled by the interests associated with it. Despite the mounting delays and downscaling of its projects, the BP continued to be framed publicly by Dutch counterparts as a success story, albeit with the occasional addition of it being a process of learning by doing. In fact, when royal Dutch Shell secured concessions to Mozambique's Northern gas fields in early 2017, the utility of the BP began to take on a new form, as attention began to shift towards the Northern town of Palma which was expected to undergo massive expansion due to the emerging gas industry. It is against this background that the BP success narrative began to be invoked in efforts of the Netherlands to claim leadership in Palma's urban development. And thus the 'Dutch approach' to Mozambican city-making began to set its sights on new urban frontiers.

Discussion

The current epoch in international development is one of both urban optimism and shifting global power balances, which has brought traditionally isolated debates on international development and urbanism closer. Emerging on the nexus of both trends, the BP provides a crucial insight into the novel politics of urban development which are now appearing on the African continent.

In terms of its content and priorities, the BP reflects a set of developmental assumptions which have been widely questioned by scholars of critical development studies and urban theory; namely that technology and enterprise are the primary drivers of human progress (Green, 2015; Brenner, 2009). The consequences of this technocratic and market-centric epistemology are that progress in other social domains is considered contingent and/or subordinate to these primary drivers.

Thus, amidst the plethora of projects dealing explicitly with infrastructure and business development in the BP, issues of social equity and inclusion remained in the realm of abstraction, never appearing concretely in the form of specific expertise, binding conditionalities or civic mobilization. As a consequence of this implicit hierarchy, issues of inclusion are not simply overlooked, but actively contradicted through the establishment of new and exclusionary decision-making spaces.

In line with current debates, the findings demonstrate that urban development is also a process of new actors asserting claims to urban space which are often incompatible with pre-existing land-use patterns and institutions (Zoomers *et al.*, 2016; Steel *et al.*, 2017; Noorloos *et al.*, 2018; Noorloos and Kloosterboer, 2018). In Beira this has revealed itself through the efforts of the BP to assert control over land which has historically been owned and depended on by urban denizens. Masterplanning constitutes a crucial tool in this regard, used to recast occupied land as an unused resource while denying its historical claimants a voice as urban stakeholders. Within this context urban farmers appear as convenient place-holders to be displaced at will. Despite being premised on the expansion of the formal bureaucracy, however, we see that these tools are not part of the formal governance toolbox, occupying instead a new and ambiguous space between formality and informality. Thus the power of masterplanning lies not in its ability to bring 'orderly' urban expansion, as this has yet to be demonstrated in Beira, but instead in its ability to legitimize and delegitimize certain claims to space irrespective of their social legitimacy or legal standing.

The findings underscore recent critiques of masterplanning in African cities as being conduits of elite interests and displacement of the urban poor (Watson, 2014; Noorloos and Kloosterboer, 2018). Instead of remaining in the realm of planning however, as many such plans have, the BP provides a novel insight

into a concerted effort at following-through with land management reforms. Here we see initiatives which bear many resemblances to speculative urbanism as observed by Goldman (2011), whereby the dispossession of land and the management of land transactions are envisaged as primary functions of the urban administration. Where the BP differs fundamentally from speculative urbanism as observed by Goldman (2011), and the African urban fantasies observed by Watson (2014) however, is that it is not the product of global capital and policy networks, but of distinctly *Dutch* capital and *Dutch* policy networks. In fact the purpose of BP is arguably to keep Beira's development as un-global as possible, by providing a total urban development package under the banner of the 'Dutch approach'. The underlying aim here is not to connect Beira's land to global circuits of power and capital, but to connect it to a specific circuit of foreign interests.

Thus, while the BP bears many similarities with contentious urban developments observed elsewhere, its trans-local nature appears to be a novel one in light of current urban debates which have centred on the 'global' or the 'local' scale (Sheppard *et al.*, 2015). The trans-local nature of the BP is clearly reflective of the current retoliberal development agenda, whereby developmental engagements are used to secure preferential access to recipient states (Murray and Overton, 2016). The BP did not fall from the sky as a result of retoliberal policy alone, however, but was established on longstanding trans-local ties between the Netherlands and Beira. From this perspective the BP can be understood as the latest iteration of this longstanding relationship, for which retoliberal policy now provides the parameters of engagement. These findings suggest that such trans-local relations are likely to become more prominent in shaping urban development trajectories in other aid dependent regions as the global urban agenda picks up steam (Parnell, 2016).

There is another important question to be asked here about the nature of the Dutch

interest being served by the BP. Despite being couched in a language of private-sector efficiency, the BP has existed by the grace of Dutch public resources. Indeed the interests and presence of the Dutch private sector in Beira has proved very limited. This suggests that there is an additional agenda at work which has been obscured by the façade of private sector development, namely one of a foreign state seeking to secure political control abroad. This agenda has appeared explicitly in the case of the LDC, which would have seen the Dutch government, via FMO, becoming institutionalized in the long-term territorial governance of Beira. Such geopolitical agendas have often been revealed within the context of 'emerging' donors (China, South Korea etc.) in Africa (Kim and Gray, 2016; Power and Mohan, 2010). What the research findings demonstrate therefore, is that such geopolitical critique can no longer be applied selectively to new global powers, as Western donors are responding in an effort to re-assert their presence in Africa. African cities are therefore emerging as new geopolitical frontiers, whereby urban territories are being loosened from the central state and brought into the orbit of foreign powers.

So where do we go from here? At the very least the findings demonstrate that techno-centric and econocentric knowledge is unsuited to tackle Africa's urban crisis single-handedly. Not only due to the reductive and potentially disastrous social epistemologies, but also because their solutions do not translate into urban practice. Nonetheless finance and infrastructure are very real challenges to African urban development. Refusing to engage with these dimensions is therefore no more useful for an agenda of progressive urban change than the reductionist solutions provided so far. In line with recent arguments by leading African urbanists, the findings point to the need for substantial knowledge development and partnership building between various facets of (isolated) urban expertise and policy (Pieterse *et al.*, 2017; Parnell and Robinson,

2012). Currently, however, there appears to be limited methodological, intellectual or financial basis for a framework of holistic urban development as described in the SDGs and NUA. The proposed agenda is a political one, and a strategic one at that. For while policy paradigms such as retroliberalism are clearly problematic, their translation into praxis is always the result of negotiations and contentions between a plethora of actors with differing interpretations and interests. Indeed many such actors exhibit a genuine commitment to urban development, albeit based on reductive epistemologies. It is in this amorphous grey zone where there is unexplored potential for building alliances with progressive factions and other corners of urban expertise in line with the 'post-neoliberal' institutional ambition recently articulated by Parnell and Robinson (2012).

Conclusion

The aim of this article is to explore the modalities of development which are emerging on the nexus of urban development and 'retro-liberal' policy paradigms. Focusing on the Dutch engagements in Beira city the article demonstrates how a new mode of urban governance has emerged in the form of a country-city partnership. While exhibiting many of the features of exclusivist and speculative urban development models which have been critiqued extensively, the BP does not fit neatly in the common rubrics of exploitative global capital or global policy circuits. Instead, it points to a distinctly trans-local effort to expand the Dutch circle of influence into areas of strategic relevance in Mozambique. These findings underscore the need for continued interrogation of the various interests which have been mobilizing around the global urban agenda. For the African continent in particular, the realization of this urban agenda will inevitably be premised on massive support from abroad. As history has demonstrated repeatedly, such support always comes with strings attached.

Understanding Africa's urban age is thus a matter of understanding the changing politics of global development, which is arguably more fragmented and competitive than ever.

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