

Africa Through the Just City Lens

African Case Studies

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Just City Project
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
P.O Box 4472
6 Mwai Kibaki Road
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
justcity@fes.de

Responsibility for content

Amon Petro

Contact

Amon Petro
amon.petro@fes.de

Design/Layout

Joseph Kengo/Standout Marketing

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Content

1. Life and Urban Informal Transport in Nakuru	4
1.1 Background	4
1.2 Challenges and Conflict	4
1.3 Solutions and Approach	5
1.4 Next Steps	5
2. Informal Transport and Urban Life in Kampala	6
2.1 Background	6
2.2 Challenges and Conflict	6
2.3 Solutions and Approach	7
2.4 Next Steps	7
3. Equitable Access to Public Goods and Services to Informal Settlements in Kitwe	8
3.1 Background	8
3.2 Challenges and Conflict	8
3.3 Solutions and Approach	8
3.4 Next Steps	9
4. Urban Life and Informal Economy in Bulawayo	10
4.1 Background	10
4.2 Challenges and Conflict	10
4.3 Solutions and Approach	10
4.4 Next Steps	11
5. Urban Life and Waste Management Reform in Bertoua and Kribi	12
5.1 Background	12
5.2 Challenges and Conflict	12

5.3 Solutions and Approach	13
5.4 Solutions and Approach	13
6. Urban Life and the Informal Transport in Dar es Salaam	14
6.1 Background	14
6.2 Conflict and Challenges	14
6.3. Anchoring the principles of just city	15
Towards the Just City in Africa:	18
The Narrative	18
Principles of the Just Cities	18
People-Centered, Participatory and Democratic Urbanization	18
Financing the Just Urbanization	18
Towards a just City	19

1. Life and Urban Informal Transport in Nakuru

1.1 Background

Nakuru City, officially chartered on 1st December 2021, is the capital of Nakuru County in Kenya's Great Rift Valley. With a population of approximately 400,000, it is the country's fourth largest city after Nairobi, Mombasa, and Kisumu. Its strategic location along the Great Rift Valley corridor makes it a vital hub for trade, agriculture, and transport, linking western and central Kenya. As one of Kenya's newest cities, Nakuru is undergoing rapid urbanization, which has brought both opportunities and challenges in shaping its future.

Since 2020, Nakuru has partnered with the **Just City Working Group (JCWG) and the Socially Just Public Transport Working Group (SJPTWG)**, facilitated by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Kenya office. These collaborations have focused on advancing socially just urban development through research, public dialogues, catalytic projects, and policy formulation. The city has become a focal point for testing innovative approaches to urban governance, particularly in the transport sector, where issues of equity, accessibility, and sustainability are most visible.

Public transport in Nakuru, like in

many Kenyan cities, is largely dependent on private operators such as motorcycles and bicycles (bodabodas), minibuses (matatus), taxis, and tuk-tuks. According to the Nakuru County Statistical Abstract (2022), bodabodas dominate the sector, with over 16,800 operators compared to 7,299 matatus, 1,308 taxis, and 1,960 tuk-tuks. Despite this, public investment has historically prioritized cars, with resources directed toward road expansion and parking facilities, while infrastructure for non-motorized transport (NMT) such as cycling lanes and pedestrian walkways remains minimal. This imbalance has created systemic injustices in mobility, disproportionately affecting pedestrians, cyclists, and low-income commuters.

Recognizing these inequities, Nakuru has embraced the **Just City approach**, guided by principles of dignity, equity, diversity, rights, and democracy. Through its partnership with JCWG and SJPTWG, the city is working to reframe urban growth in transport as an opportunity to build inclusive, sustainable, and citizen-centered mobility systems. This shift positions Nakuru not only as a growing urban

center but also as a model for socially just urbanization in Kenya.

1.2 Challenges and Conflict

The urban growth in Nakuru's public transport sector has led to serious injustices and structural imbalances as listed below:

- **Dependence on private operators:** Public transport is heavily reliant on **private operators**, with motorcycles (bodabodas), minibuses (matatus), taxis, and tuk-tuks forming the backbone of mobility. Bodabodas alone account for the majority of transport providers, highlighting their critical role in everyday commuting. Yet, despite their dominance, they remain largely unsupported by public investment, operating in a fragmented and often unsafe environment.
- **Neglect of non-motorized transport (NMT):** Despite the large number of bodabodas and pedestrians, public investments have focused on expanding road networks and parking spaces for car, while cycling lanes and pedestrian facilities remain minimal. This approach not only sidelines low-income commuters but also undermines sustainability and safety in the city's transport system.
- **Political resistance:** Efforts to decongest the city and promote NMT, such as the 2020 ban on matatus in the Central Business District, sparked protests and backlash from transport operators. Taxi and matatu stakeholders opposed interventions that threatened their business models, creating a political fallout that stalled reforms. These conflicts underscore the entrenched interests and power dynamics within Nakuru's transport sector.
- **Top-down planning:** The Nakuru City Board's approach was expert-driven and business-centered, with limited consultation of transport stakeholders and citizens. This exclusion of diverse voices from decision-making reinforces existing inequities, leaving many residents without safe, accessible, and sustainable mobility options.

Together, these challenges reveal a transport system that is fragmented, inequitable, and politically contested. They highlight the urgent need for a shift toward citizen-centered planning that recognizes the diversity of urban mo-

bility needs and prioritizes inclusivity, sustainability, and justice.

1.3 Solutions and Approach

To address these challenges in Nakuru's transport sector, the city adopted the **Transformative Change Making (TCM)** approach, firmly anchored in the principles of the Just City. This strategy emphasizes inclusivity, dialogue, and practical demonstration, ensuring that urban mobility reforms are not only visionary but also grounded in the realities of everyday commuters.

- **Dialogue and visioning:** The process began with dialogue, where the Nakuru City Board, supported by the Just City Working Group (JCWG) and the Socially Just Public Transport Working Group (SJPTWG), convened multiple stakeholder forums. These dialogues created space for diverse voices ranging from policymakers to transport operators and citizens to co-create an alternative vision for a just urban future. Urban mobility was a central theme, with participants agreeing on the need for research and design of non-motorized transport (NMT) systems to address the imbalance in investment priorities.
- **Building alliances:** A convincing narrative for NMT was developed through research and dialogue. A socially just approach to NMT, presented by Dr. Njeri Mburu of the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP), was adopted by stakeholders marking a significant step toward inclusive mobility planning.
- **Catalytic projects:** The NMT design was implemented in Nakuru's Central Business District, funded by the World Bank's Kenya Urban Support Programme. This project demonstrated the practicality and scalability of inclusive urban mobility initiatives.
- **Institutional adoption:** Finally, Nakuru ensured institutional endorsement of these principles. The City Board integrated the Just City framework into its long-term Vision **2050**, embedding equity, inclusivity, and sustainability into its development agenda. This institutionalization signals a shift from short-term interventions to a sustained commitment to building a city where transport systems reflect the needs of all residents, not just a privileged few.

1.4 Next Steps

To embed the Just City approach within Nakuru's public transport sector, a series of coordinated actions are required that combine political commitment, inclusive governance, innovation, and sustainability.

- **Political goodwill:** Endorsement and support from governing authorities are essential to ensure continuity and legitimacy of reforms. The current Nakuru leadership

under Governor Susan Kihika has already signaled strong commitment by embedding Just City pillars into Nakuru's Vision 2050 framework, which emphasizes inclusivity, equity, and sustainability. This political backing provides the foundation for long-term transformation.

- **Inclusive planning:** Urban development must shift from being business-centered to citizen-centered, ensuring that diverse voices such as commuters, transport operators, women, youth, and marginalized groups are actively consulted. This participatory approach will create policies and projects that reflect the lived realities of residents, fostering trust and ownership of urban reforms.
- **Scaling innovation:** The TCM approach unlocks innovation by fostering win-win solutions. Building on the success of the first NMT project, Nakuru County has redesigned three major roads (Mburu Gichua Road, Kenyatta Avenue, and West Side Mall Road) to include cycling lanes and pedestrian walkways.
- Finally, **sustainability** must be embedded into institutional frameworks. By integrating NMT and socially just transport policies into the **County Integrated Development Plan (2023–2027)**, Nakuru ensures that equity and resilience are not short-term goals but long-term commitments. This institutionalization guarantees that future urban growth aligns with the principles of justice, inclusivity, and sustainability, making Nakuru a model for socially just urban mobility in Kenya and beyond.

2. Informal Transport and Urban Life in Kampala

2.1 Background

Kampala's transport system is shaped by informality and private interests rather than public service provision. Mobility in the city is largely commodified, with private operators controlling access and shaping the daily rhythms of urban life. The most visible actors are boda-bodas, motorcycle taxis and 14-seater minibuses, which dominate the streets and provide the bulk of everyday travel. Their rise has been dramatic: the number of motorcycles in Uganda grew from fewer than 16,000 in 2007 to over 400,000 by 2014, with an estimated 30,000 boda-boda riders operating in Kampala alone.

The sector's informality also shapes the lived experience of mobility. Safety concerns are ever-present, with boda-bodas and minibuses often disregarding traffic rules and exposing riders and passengers to risk. Vulnerable groups such as women, the elderly, and people with disabilities are disproportionately affected. For women in particular, the system does not align with their mobility needs, which often involve multiple trips across neighborhoods while carrying children or heavy loads.

Additionally, Kampala's transport sector is a contested space, marked by recurrent conflicts between national and local governments, politicians, and operators. These struggles over jurisdiction, revenue, and control reflect the broader fragmentation of urban governance in the city. As Kampala grows rapidly outward, these tensions intensify, with transport becoming both a lifeline for residents and a battleground for political and economic interests.

In essence, Kampala's transport background is one of informality, fragmentation, and inequity. The system benefits private operators and political elites, while the urban poor, women, and other vulnerable groups bear the burden of transport injustice.

2.2 Challenges and Conflict

Kampala's transport sector is confronted with overlapping challenges and conflicts as explained below.

→ **Conflicts between commuters and operators:** At the commuter level, daily tensions arise between passengers and operators. With fares unregulated, costs fluctuate

sharply especially during peak hours or rainy seasons leaving commuters vulnerable to exploitation. This unpredictability undermines trust and makes mobility a constant negotiation.

→ **Political tension:** The sector is a politically contested arena. National and local governments clash over revenue collection, infrastructure ownership, and jurisdiction. These disputes reflect deeper struggles over urban governance, where transport becomes both a service and a source of political leverage.

→ **Disjointed Transport system:** The transport ecosystem in Kampala is fragmented. Apparently, operators, unions, and politicians exploit intra-sector rivalries to maintain influence and preventing the emergence of unified voices that could push for reform. This fragmentation keeps the system unstable and resistant to regulation.

→ **Policy gaps:** There is the mismatch between planning and realities on the ground in Kampala's transport ecosystem. The National Transport Master Plan (NTMP) notably excludes boda-bodas, despite their central role in everyday mobility across the city. This omission creates a disconnect between official planning frameworks and the lived realities of commuters. By sidelining such a dominant mode of transport, the NTMP reinforces informality, leaving a significant portion of the city's transport needs unaddressed.

→ **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Limited infrastructure for non-motorized transport (NMT) in Kampala is a critical issue. An estimated 70% of residents rely primarily on walking as their main mode of travel, yet the city provides very little in the way of safe and dedicated pedestrian facilities. Sidewalks are scarce and poorly maintained, this creates a dangerous and hostile environment, where walking is not only inconvenient but also unsafe.

Together, these conflicts and challenges illustrate how Kampala's transport system is not just about moving people, but about power, exclusion, and survival. It is a sector where every day struggles intersect with political battles, producing a transport environment that is fragmented, inequitable, and deeply contested.

2.3 Solutions and Approach

Kampala's transport sector requires a shift from fragmented, reactive management toward a more inclusive and visionary approach. Facilitated by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's (FES) Uganda office, a consultative platform was launched in 2019 to bring together paratransit operators and public authorities in Greater Kampala.

The initiative sought to overcome long-standing challenges such as fragmented urban transport planning, exclusion of informal services from formal structures, inter-agency conflicts, and strained relations between workers and regulators.

This effort gave rise to the **Paratransit Consultative Forum** a multi-sectoral space for dialogue and coordination among government ministries, local agencies, informal transport representatives, and civil society. The Forum adopted a participatory approach that emphasized:

- **Regulatory reforms and future mobility planning** to integrate informal operators into formal systems.
- Organizing and leadership training to strengthen workers' representation and build capacity for advocacy and negotiation.
- **Business improvements** to enhance the sustainability and professionalism of paratransit services.

Over the past three years, Kampala's transport sector has undergone a meaningful transformation, producing both institutional shifts and tangible outputs:

- **Inclusive decision-making:** Informal operators, once excluded, now sit alongside policymakers in shaping urban mobility. This represents a shift from top-down planning toward co-governance, where diverse voices influence priorities and strategies.
- **Institutionalization:** Efforts are underway to formalize leadership structures into an apex body, harmonize regulations, and designate terminals/stages. This process not only strengthens organizational coherence but also creates pathways for informal actors to be recognized as legitimate stakeholders in urban governance.
- **Collective power:** Associations such as the Uganda Taxi Operators Federation and Kampala's boda-boda leadership are building the capacity to advocate for workers' rights, safety, recognition, and meaningful participation in transport planning, transforming fragmented voices into organized power.
- **Gender-responsive planning:** Female operators have

been integrated into leadership structures and formed the Kampala Central Female Boda-boda Operators' Co-operative, ensuring women's mobility needs are reflected in transport design and policy.

2.4 Next Steps

- **Strengthening collective voices in public transport:** Building strong, representative trade unions and transport associations that are free from political interference will give voice to drivers, conductors, and passengers alike. These organizations can champion fair working conditions and ensure that reforms reflect the realities of those who keep the city moving.
- **Integrated urban transport framework:** Kampala needs a concerted vision that integrates both informal and formal modes of transport. The boda-boda rider, the mata-tu driver, and the bus operator are all part of the same ecosystem. A future transport plan must recognize this diversity, weaving together these modes into a system that is coherent, efficient, and inclusive.
- **Mobility Justice to Pedestrians:** The city must prioritize non-motorized transport infrastructure. Safe sidewalks, cycling lanes, and pedestrian crossings are not luxuries, they are lifelines. By investing in these, Kampala acknowledges the dignity of those who rely on their own feet to navigate the city.
- **Equity in Transport Governance:** Establish clear mandates and coordination mechanisms among ministries and agencies will reduce duplication and competition, replacing fragmented efforts with unified action. Anchoring these reforms in Just City Principles equity, inclusion, and recognition of diverse mobility needs ensures that the transformation is not only efficient but also just.
- **Aligning External Support with Local Priorities:** Finally, development partners such as the World Bank, ADB, and AFD must be engaged not merely as financiers but as allies in justice. Their support should emphasize fairness and accessibility, not just efficiency and speed. By aligning external resources with local priorities, Kampala can build a transport system that serves all its citizens.

3. Equitable Access to Public Goods and Services to Informal Settlements in Kitwe

3.1 Background

Kitwe, situated in Zambia's Copperbelt Province, covers approximately 777 square kilometres and is the country's second most populated district as well as the most inhabited in the province. With a population of 661,901, the city has grown rapidly over 30% since the 2010 census, when it recorded 517,543 residents. This demographic surge has elevated Kitwe's status to a category 2 town in Zambia's urban hierarchy, underscoring its strategic importance as one of the nation's fastest-growing urban centres.

The city's expansion is closely tied to its role as a mining hub and the economic opportunities that attract rural-to-urban migrants. Nationally, Zambia's urban growth rate averages 4.2% annually, and Kitwe exemplifies this trend with its dynamic population increase. More than 60% of its residents live in informal settlements, reflecting the city's evolving urban landscape and the diverse ways communities adapt to rapid urbanization. These settlements, alongside more formal neighbourhoods, highlight Kitwe's dual character as both a centre of economic opportunity and a space of ongoing social transformation.

Kitwe's trajectory mirrors broader patterns of urban growth across sub-Saharan Africa, where cities are expanding quickly and reshaping national economies. Its position as a major mining and industrial hub makes it central to Zambia's development, while its demographic momentum signals both the promise and complexity of urbanization in the region. As Kitwe continues to grow, it stands as a critical example of how urban centres can drive national progress while shaping the future of inclusive and sustainable city development.

3.2 Challenges and Conflict

Kitwe's rapid urban growth has created a city of contrasts, where formal neighborhoods enjoy relatively stable services while informal settlements remain marginalized. The most pressing challenges are as listed below:

→ **Overburdened infrastructure and unequal service distribution:** Public services such as water supply, sanitation, healthcare, and education are stretched far beyond capacity, leaving informal communities underserved and vulnerable. This imbalance is compounded by unequal service distribution, where wealthier areas benefit from

better facilities while poorer, peripheral settlements are neglected. The preferential treatment of wealthier areas perpetuates systemic inequality, undermining social cohesion and reinforcing patterns of exclusion that hinder inclusive growth and resilience.

- **Land tenure insecurity:** Many residents in informal settlements occupy land without formal recognition, which not only limits their access to public services but also prevents them from securing housing finance or investing confidently in their homes. This insecurity perpetuates instability and hinders long-term development.
- **Limited government capacity:** Local authorities in Kitwe face significant constraints that hinder their ability to deliver equitable services. Resources are often insufficient to match the pace of urban growth, leaving critical infrastructure projects underfunded or delayed. Beyond financial limitations, governance challenges such as corruption, mismanagement, and political interference further weaken institutional effectiveness.
- **Ecological degradation:** The physical expansion of settlements into environmentally sensitive areas has led to environmental degradation, with pollution and unsafe living conditions threatening health and quality of life. These risks are particularly acute in places like Luyando, where proximity to mining land and dump sites exposes residents to hazards.
- **Social invisibility:** Marginalized groups including women, youth, and persons with disabilities are often excluded from urban planning and decision-making processes. Their voices remain unheard, and their needs overlooked, reinforcing the perception of informal settlers as "urban invisibles."

3.3 Solutions and Approach

In response to the mounting pressures of rapid urbanization, Kitwe has embraced a **multi-stakeholder approach** through the establishment of the **Kitwe Urban Development Forum**. This platform brings together diverse actors such as local government, NGOs, academia, unions, and community representatives to foster dialogue, inclusivity, and advocacy for equitable service delivery. By uniting these voices, the forum ensures that the needs of marginalized communities are not overlooked but instead placed at the center of urban development discussions. Key ac-

tions include:

- **Community engagement:** Residents, particularly women, have actively appealed for improvements in water access, sanitation facilities, and waste collection points. Their participation underscores the importance of grassroots involvement in shaping solutions that directly respond to lived realities.
- **Policy advocacy:** Regular meetings with Kitwe City Council provided opportunities to address pressing infrastructure concerns such as drainage systems, bridges, and market shelters. By fostering consistent dialogue, civil society and community representatives can ensure that local authorities remain accountable, transparent, and responsive to citizen needs.
- **Legalization efforts:** Advocacy efforts aimed to secure formal recognition for communities like Luyando, enabled them to access public services and gain legitimacy within the city's planning framework. Alongside this, capacity building initiatives including workshops and training sessions equipped stakeholders with the skills and knowledge needed to engage meaningfully with policymakers, strengthening their ability to influence urban governance.
- **Collaborative partnerships:** Through sustained engagement with NGOs, the private sector, and international partners such as Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and UN-Habitat, local initiatives benefit from mobilized resources, technical expertise, and exposure to global best practices. As a result, communities gain access to improved infrastructure, innovative solutions, and capacity-building opportunities.

3.4 Next Steps

To achieve a Just City in Kitwe's informal settlements, the following actions are needed:

- **Improved Urban Planning:** The urban planning must integrate informal settlements into the city's development framework, ensuring that essential services such as water, sanitation, electricity, and transportation are extended to all residents. This requires not only technical planning but also political will to recognize informal communities as legitimate parts of the urban fabric.
- **Land Tenure Security:** Providing formal titles or long-term leases will empower residents with stability, unlock access to housing finance, and encourage investment in durable housing. Secure tenure also strengthens community identity and reduces vulnerability to displacement.
- **Infrastructure Investment:** This should prioritize upgrades in underserved areas, focusing on water supply, electricity, roads, and waste management. Such invest-

ments not only improve living conditions but also stimulate local economic activity and reduce health risks.

- **Community Participation:** Ensure residents are embedded in decision-making processes. Residents should not be passive recipients of development but active partners in shaping solutions. This ensures that interventions reflect local needs and enhances sustainability by fostering ownership.
- **Policy Reform:** This is crucial to support affordable housing, equitable service delivery, and the protection of vulnerable groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities. Stronger governance frameworks can reduce corruption and ensure resources are directed where they are most needed.
- **Innovation and PPPs:** Encourage sustainable building methods, public-private partnerships, and technology-driven urban planning.

Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that the so-called "urban invisibles" are no longer excluded but recognized as full citizens entitled to equitable access to public goods and services. By embedding inclusivity, sustainability, and innovation into urban governance, Kitwe can serve as a model for equitable city development across Zambia and sub-Saharan Africa.

4. Urban Life and Informal Economy in Bulawayo

4.1 Background

Zimbabwe's cities face significant challenges in achieving urban justice, with much of the inequity rooted in long-standing policy and planning deficiencies. Urban planning in Zimbabwe has historically been shaped by colonial legacies and, more recently, by the political crisis, economic instability, rapid urbanization, and inadequate public infrastructure. The policy frameworks and planning practices in cities often fall short of accommodating the needs of the diverse groups and interests of urban residents, particularly the marginalized groups, the majority of which constitute the informal sector and women.

The city has a vibrant informal sector that employs a significant portion of the population, providing livelihoods in an environment of economic hardship and limited formal employment opportunities. According to Zimbabwe's National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT), about 76% of Zimbabwe's working population is employed in the informal sector. Women continue to dominate the sector and represent around 64% of informal street vendors.

There is a significant disconnect between informal workers lived realities, needs, and expectations on the one hand and the city authorities' policy, planning, and capacity in the delivery of public goods on the other. Informal sector workers often lack a unified voice, and their participation and inclusion in the policy discourse and decision-making platforms are limited. There is limited dialogue between the two actors as well as with other key stakeholders which results in discord, conflict and ineffective solutions.

The vending sites/markets and working conditions are gender insensitive, and street vendors are subjected to gender injustice, including sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is a pervasive problem within Bulawayo's informal sector, disproportionately affecting women, who comprise a large percentage of street vendors. Harassment often comes from multiple directions, including customers, other vendors, and municipal authorities. This harassment is a barrier to women's safety and economic participation, creating a hostile working environment that discourages many women from fully engaging in informal work.

FES Zimbabwe partners with the Bulawayo Informal Sector Working Group, the Bulawayo Vendors and Traders Association, and the Bulawayo City Council to create a conducive

environment for street vendors to participate democratically in local urban governance that delivers just, inclusive, and dignified public goods in the informal sector. This includes advocacy for evidence-based and inclusive urban informal policy and planning making, Informal Sector Dialogue, and Anti-sexual Harassment Strategy.

4.2 Challenges and Conflict

Informal workers often operate in precarious conditions that expose them to multiple challenges and conflicts as listed below:

- **Disconnect between lived realities and policy:** Informal workers' needs are not reflected in city authorities' planning and delivery of public goods. Policies often prioritize formal economic actors, leaving informal workers without adequate infrastructure, recognition, or protection. This disconnect perpetuates inequities and undermines the sector's contribution to the city's economy.
- **Limited participation:** Informal workers lack a unified voice and are excluded from decision-making platforms. Without a unified voice, their perspectives are sidelined, resulting in policies that fail to address their realities. This exclusion reinforces power imbalances between authorities and marginalized groups.
- **Gender injustice:** Women vendors face harassment from customers, fellow vendors, and municipal authorities, creating unsafe and hostile work environments. These injustices not only threaten women's dignity and safety but also limit their economic participation and mobility.
- **Conflict and discord:** Weak dialogue between authorities, informal workers, and other stakeholders leads to ineffective solutions and mistrust. The absence of sustained, inclusive platforms for negotiation leads to mistrust, fragmented interventions, and adversarial relationships rather than collaborative problem-solving.

4.3 Solutions and Approach

Through its partnership with the Bulawayo Informal Sector Working Group, the Bulawayo Vendors and Traders Association, and the Bulawayo City Council, **FES Zimbabwe has fostered a more enabling environment for street vendors to participate democratically in local urban governance.**

This collaboration has led to the introduction of **anti-sexual harassment guidelines** in vending spaces, alongside **awareness campaigns that challenge the stigma of informality**. In addition, gender-sensitive infrastructure has been developed to affirm that every worker deserves respect, dignity, and safe working conditions.

The partnership has also driven advocacy campaigns and the development of policy briefs that promote the formal recognition of informal workers. These efforts ensure that principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion are embedded within the informal economy, strengthening the role of vendors as essential contributors to the city's social and economic fabric.

As a **benchmark of FES Zimbabwe's efforts**, the City of Bulawayo passed **a full council resolution to develop a comprehensive MSME Policy with a strong focus on the informal sector**. This milestone was achieved through FES-led studies, policy briefs, and dialogue meetings that underscored the sector's critical role in the local economy.

Recognizing the value of these contributions, the City Council invited FES to facilitate the policy development process, setting a precedent for democratic, participatory, and inclusive policymaking in Bulawayo. This collaboration not only elevated the voices of informal workers but also institutionalized their role in shaping urban economic policy.

4.4 Next Steps

Informal workers are central to Bulawayo's economy, yet they remain excluded from many policy processes. To ensure their livelihoods are dignified, recognized, and sustainable, the following next steps are essential.

- **Unify and amplify voices:** Informal workers must be given platforms to collectively represent their interests. Strengthening associations and unions ensures their perspectives shape policy dialogues, transforming them from passive recipients of decisions into active co-creators of urban futures.
- **Build alliances and partnerships:** Collaboration between city councils, NGOs, the private sector, and grassroots community groups creates a network of support. These alliances can pool resources, share expertise, and coordinate efforts, ensuring that initiatives are not fragmented but mutually reinforcing.
- **Establish inclusive dialogue platforms:** Sustained participation of marginalized groups is essential. Dialogue platforms must go beyond token representation, ensuring that women, youth, informal traders, and other vulnerable groups are consistently engaged in co-creating solutions.
- **Equip city authorities with resources:** Provide training,

research, and financial support to implement just city policies effectively. Empowered institutions are better positioned to translate vision into tangible outcomes

- **Develop replicable models:** Showcase successful, context-sensitive strategies that can inspire confidence and be adapted across other cities. Success in Bulawayo can inspire confidence across Zimbabwe and beyond. Replicable models allow other cities to adapt lessons while tailoring them to their own realities.

5. Urban Life and Waste Management Reform in Bertoua and Kribi

5.1 Background

Africa's population is set to double by 2050, with two-thirds of the population being absorbed by cities, representing 950 million new urban dwellers (OECD/CSAO, 2020). In Cameroon, this rapid urbanization has already taken a disordered form. Douala and Yaoundé, the country's two largest cities, have grown without adequate planning, leaving residents struggling to access essential services such as education, healthcare, clean water, housing, transport, energy, and sanitation.

The waste crisis illustrates the scale of the challenge. Each year, Cameroon produces around six million tons of waste, yet less than 40 percent is collected. Plastic and fermentable waste dominate, while hotel waste almost entirely recoverable remains largely untapped. With municipalities under-resourced, informal collectors and recyclers have stepped in to fill the gaps, but they operate under unsafe conditions, without protective equipment, training, or social security.

Although Cameroon has established legal frameworks for environmental management such as Law No. 96/12 of 1996 and Order No. 001/MINEPDED of 2012, the reality is that administrative hurdles, high costs, and the absence of financial or tax incentives prevent many actors, especially young entrepreneurs and associations, from participating effectively in the sector.

The consequences of this mismanagement are profound. Waste accumulation undermines urban health, deepens inequalities, and threatens sustainability. These realities make the waste sector not only a pressing urban challenge but also a strategic entry point for the **Just City Project in Cameroon**, which seeks to embed principles of justice, equity, and sustainability into the country's urban future.

5.2 Challenges and Conflict

The waste sector in Cameroon is marked by deep inequities and persistent conflicts that affect both those who work within it and the communities meant to benefit from sanitation services.

→ **Lack of safety equipment, training, and social security:** For workers, the daily reality is one of vulnerability and neglect. Many operate without basic safety equip-

ment, training, or social security, exposing themselves to health risks and insecurity. The absence of structured training means they often lack knowledge of safe handling practices, proper waste sorting, or awareness of their rights as workers. Without social security or health coverage, accidents, injuries, or illnesses can push them deeper into poverty.

→ **Poor wages, irregular payments, and corruption in contract awards** Many workers receive low and inconsistent pay. Their wages are often low and irregular, while corruption and favoritism in the awarding of contracts distort fair competition, rewarding connections over merit.

→ **Marginalization and lack of recognition by authorities:** Waste workers are often stigmatized and excluded from social recognition, despite their essential role in maintaining urban health and sanitation. This lack of recognition not only diminishes their dignity but also perpetuates social hierarchies that undervalue essential labor.

→ **Unfair competition and abusive invoicing practices** Informal and formal actors clash, with some exploiting loopholes to overcharge or obstruct others, creating instability in the sector.

→ **Exclusion and Inequities in Waste Management Services.** Households and communities often face irregular and inadequate waste collection, resulting in the accumulation of garbage in streets and public spaces. This inconsistency undermines public health and urban cleanliness. At the same time, vulnerable groups such as the elderly and persons with disabilities are marginalized, with limited or unequal access to sanitation services. Their exclusion deepens existing social inequalities, leaving disadvantaged populations more exposed to environmental hazards and reinforcing systemic inequities in urban service delivery.

Together, these challenges reveal a cycle of neglect, mismanagement, and mistrust that undermines both the dignity of workers and the well-being of communities. Breaking this cycle requires not only infrastructure and resources but also a reimagining of waste management as a space for justice, equity, and shared responsibility.

5.3 Solutions and Approach

Guided by the **Just City Principles**, interventions in Bertoua are designed to transform waste management into a system that is inclusive, dignified, and sustainable. The city was chosen for its active operators, administrative openness, and growing sanitation awareness, making it fertile ground for progressive change.

In the immediate strategy, the focus is on empowering people, strengthening institutions, and raising awareness.

- **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI):** Youth and women will be trained in waste recovery, opening pathways to employment and entrepreneurship. Research will be published on waste management practices and workers' conditions, while assessments of human impacts will ensure that policies reflect lived realities.
- **Dignity:** Waste workers will receive training on labor law and social security, equipping them with knowledge of their rights. Advocacy will push for improved working conditions and formal recognition of their essential contributions.
- **Democracy:** Worker unions will be strengthened to amplify representation and collective bargaining power. Transparency in contract awards will be championed to dismantle corruption and favoritism.
- **Public Safety:** Awareness campaigns will promote sustainable waste management practices, while households will be trained in waste sorting, fostering community responsibility and healthier environments.
- **Sustainability:** Training in green entrepreneurship and sustainable practices will encourage innovation. Environmental costs, such as greenhouse gas emissions from incineration, will be assessed to guide eco-friendly decision-making.

5.4 Solutions and Approach

As Bertoua moves into the next phase of transformation, the vision is to achieve **structural resilience and systemic change** in waste management. The following are envisaged next steps that are crucial in realization of a just waste management in Bertoua, Cameroon.

- **Strengthen International and Development Partnerships:** to engage multilateral organizations, international NGOs, and donor agencies as partners in environmental protection, urban justice, and human rights.
- **Deepen State and Private-Sector Involvement:** to mobilize private sector actors such as construction firms, recycling industries, and logistics companies to co-invest in infrastructure and innovation.

- **Foster Decentralized Cooperation:** to build partnerships between municipalities in Cameroon and local authorities in northern countries with proven urban justice models and to encourage joint projects in areas such as waste management, green mobility, and inclusive urban planning.

- **Create Frameworks for Mobility and Knowledge Sharing:** to establish a regional platform for experience-sharing among cities participating in the Just City Project. To organize regular forums, workshops, and study tours to promote cross-learning and innovation.

- **Hackathon and grassroots innovation:** to organize waste hackathons that generate practical, scalable solutions for recycling, upcycling, and circular economy models. These events should not only bring together entrepreneurs, engineers, and policymakers but also target schools, universities, and local communities to spark grassroots creativity.

6. Urban Life and the Informal Transport in Dar es Salaam

6.1 Background

Across Africa, the registered number of motorcycles has risen from an estimated 5 million in 2010 to 27 million in 2022, of which 80 percent are used as taxis or for deliveries (Bishop and Courtright 2022, 5). In Tanzania, two- and three-wheeler motorcycle-taxis—popularly known as *boda boda* and *bajaj*—started appearing only two decades ago. Yet as of 2020, there were an estimated 1,493,250 motorcycles operating countrywide (Bishop and Courtright 2022, 108). Although estimates for Dar es Salaam vary, association leaders and local authority officials suggest there are over 200,000 motorcycle-taxis operating across the city (Key Informant Interviews, 20 November 2023).

Amidst rapid urbanization, the supply of motorcycle-taxi drivers—and the demand for transport—will increase, likely irrespective of public transport projects like Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) (Chiu 2022; World Population Review 2024). There is also substantial new capital investment in motorcycles, be it in importation, assembly, finance, or various motorcycle-related businesses, notably new fintech ventures (Collord 2024a; Pollio, Cirolia, and Ong’iro Odeo 2023). In 2022, Tanzania’s motorcycle market reached US\$260 million, and annual growth is projected at four percent in coming years (TechSci 2023).

As the motorcycle-taxi sector grows, inequalities within it are also becoming more apparent, and require attention. There is the challenge of unequally distributed incomes between formal, larger-scale investors in the sector and drivers, operating largely informally (Diaz Olvera, Plat, and Pochet 2020; Collord 2024a). There are also inequalities among drivers themselves. Differences persist, for instance, between association leaders and ordinary drivers as well as between a majority male workforce and the small but growing number of women operating alongside (Mukwaya et al. 2022). Apart from the general challenges mentioned above, there are specific challenges confronting women drivers. They face various forms of discrimination, which often turn into gender-based and sexual violence.

In a nutshell, the political economy of Dar es Salaam’s motorcycle-taxi sector is characterised by a mix of informalization and labor precarity, gender-based and sexual violence, safety concerns, lack of coherent regulatory frameworks, women underrepresentation (including social stigma), and rapid urban growth. While the sector is rapidly

growing and plays a crucial role in providing affordable transportation and employment, a question on how can the motorcycle-taxi drivers be part of a just city vision is still pertinent.

On the side of *daladalas* which also contribute to the significant portion of transport in Dar es Salaam the prevalent problems or main criticism are poor safety standards, overcrowding, inconsistency in service provision, affordability and contribution to traffic congestions in the city – which leads to increased travel time and higher transportation costs. Apparently, enforcement of safety standards such as vehicle inspections, seatbelts etc has always been lax.

On the other hand, a political focus on ensuring that *daladala* transport is affordable to urban poor is always encountered by the challenge of balancing affordability with the need to ensure the financial sustainability of *daladalas* operators and maintain quality services.

Therefore, the political reality of *Daladala* in Dar es Salaam is a mixture of informality, economic necessity and political influence.

Addressing the above-mentioned realities, several coordinated actions must be undertaken by multiple stakeholders, including the government, motorcycle-taxi associations, drivers, private sector actors, and civil society organizations.

The FES Tanzania in collaboration with COTWU-T have jointly organized various initiatives to mobilise workers in the formal economy (motorcycle-taxi drivers) in a drive to ensure that their voices, perspectives and experiences are incorporated in urban planning and implementation.

6.2 Conflict and Challenges

Why and how is urban growth in transport sector in Dar es Salaam currently producing (more) injustices in motorcycle-taxis sector, and for whom?

Despite the fact that the urban growth in Dar es Salaam transport sector has managed to provide economic opportunities, it has also produced significant injustices particularly for motorcycle-taxi driver as well as marginalized groups such as women.

Due to the informal nature of the sector, there are safety concerns for passengers and drivers, unsafe working conditions, gender inequality and lack of labor rights. No written contracts, low wages that doesn't reflect the working hours, women working as drivers are underrepresented, women passengers feel unsafe when using the bodaboda due to harassment etc.

What are the political realities our partners in the sector face?

Despite the government efforts to formally regulate the motorcycle-taxi transport sector, operationally it is kind of a self-regulating sector (informality, gender inequality, safety concerns etc), there is poor coordination and organizational fragmentation within the sector. It suffices to declare that all the efforts by the Government to formally regulate the sector were or are not driven by the quest to see the sector thrive but rather gaining political mileage – bodaboda drivers is an important group to win over.

What needs to change?

The sector is characterized by labor precarity, gender-based and sexual violence, safety concerns, lack of coherent regulatory frameworks and women underrepresentation (including social stigma). Addressing the above-mentioned realities, requires an integrated approach that involves the government (local and central), motorcycle-taxi associations, drivers and civil society organizations - more importantly, the good political will from the Government's side is crucial!

6.3. Anchoring the principles of just city

The approach to just transport

The joint efforts between FES Tanzania and Communication and Transport Workers Union of Tanzania (COTWU-T) were geared towards ensuring that motorcycle-taxi drivers are part of a just city vision. Their voices, perspectives and experiences are incorporated in urban planning and implementation strategies.

On the other hand, it was also the aspiration of FES and COTWU (T) to contribute in ensuring that the motorcycle-taxi drivers are respected, valued and treated fairly given the important role they play in urban mobility.

In a drive to achieve the above-mentioned goals, COTWU (T) was deliberately capacitated with strategies on recruiting and organizing the informal sector workers to fight for their rights. A series of local and international strategic capacity building workshops were conducted for that course which were then followed up by COTWU (T) continuous engagements with informal sector workers.

In addition to that, FES can play a critical role by fostering dialogues and strategic empowering the bodaboda sector

players to advocate for inclusive policies. FES can also make use of its long history of working with the trade unions to promote workers right. In collaboration with COTWU (T), FES can support the advocacy for better working condition for informal transport operators including labor right protection and social security benefits.

As opposed to previous practises, the municipals (Ilala City Council and Kinondoni Municipal) are currently involving the drivers in the planning of new parking areas. The presence of organized motorcycle-taxi drivers has kind of necessitated the municipalities, to involve the drivers in the planning of new parking areas, notably in the CBD where there were previously very few parking areas. In contrast to some past planning attempts, there is now wider recognition of the need to register parking areas 'where there are people'. In the past, the parking areas were decided by authorities without consultations with drivers.

Putting the just city principles put into practice in transport sector in Dar es Salaam?

In the quest to map and formalise the parking areas for motorcycle-taxis drivers in CBD, the municipals consulted and engaged a wide range of stakeholders. The meetings included the chairpersons of individual parking areas as well as street chairpersons, street and ward executive officers, municipal business officers, and police. The mapping and formalisation process were grounded in the idea that the motorcycle drivers have a stake and the right to participate in the decision making regarding the parking areas – the drivers had a say in where the parking areas should be placed. This is a clear manifestation of **inclusion and participation** in decision making.

On the other hand, the operators (drivers) are respected and the sector in general is now valued as a source of livelihoods and as a convenient form of transport as opposed to the previous notion. The respectful nature, fair interactions among bodaboda drivers and passengers and the recognition of the sector's worth regardless of the informal nature of the service symbolises **dignity** – it implies respect for and recognizing others (informal economy actors) as equal citizens.

Lastly, there are ongoing efforts of improving security and safety for both passengers and drivers in the motorcycle-taxis transport sector.

Despite the above-mentioned milestones, yet it is premature to declare that the public transport in Dar es Salaam is just. Making it more just is an ongoing process that requires continuous efforts to address complex and evolving issues such as fairness, regulations, affordability, safety, gender inequality, social protection etc.

How is the motorcycle-taxis sector in Dar es Salaam becoming more just?

There are increased efforts to formalize the sector and make it more professional in-service delivery and registering parking spaces to avoid evictions by municipal authorities. Improving women participation in the sector is another aspect which showcases how the sector is gradually evolving and becoming more just. Lastly, there is a growing trend in which the players in the motorcycle-taxis transport sector have been involved in consultations with the authorities whenever there are concerns over their welfares.

Steps towards more just urban transport in Dar es Salaam

Which action – and by whom – is needed to permanently bring about a just city in motorcycle-taxis transport sector in Dar es Salaam?

In order to permanently bring justice in motorcycle-taxi transport in Dar es Salaam, there is an urgent need to improve regulations, ensure driver's representation, fair wages and economic justice, safety, and political engagement of all players in the transport sector. This can be done through:

- **Conduct Research:** In recognition of the fact that researched information is essential for making informed decisions, FES in collaboration with COTWU (T) have conducted a research on the motorcycle-taxi transport sector in Dar es Salaam in a drive to understand the dynamics and complexities of the sector and how it can be managed sustainably and equitably in order to make the sector part of the just city vision. The findings will be disseminated to relevant stakeholders for further actions to contribute to socially just public transport.
- **Advocate for fair wages and economic justice:** Many motorcycle-taxi drivers in urban areas particularly in Dar es Salaam face exploitative pay structures especially those who work on contractual basis, therefore establishing fair compensation practises is crucial for economic justice. The FES in collaboration with COTWU (T) can support the creation of workers union or cooperatives for bodaboda drivers where they can advocate for better wages, benefits and good working conditions. However, this is a daunting challenge considering the fragmented nature of the sector where drivers work under informal/non-unionized arrangement.
- **Institutional co-ordination and local government agency:** While various state actors have led on promising reform initiatives, there is a need for improved intra-governmental coordination on the issue of motorcycle-transport at all levels. Within Dar es Salaam, there is then a need for better city-wide coordination. Ilala Municipality currently doubles as the Dar es Salaam City Council since the latter was disbanded in 2021, but it

does not appear to be serving a coordination function, at least as regards regulation of the motorcycle-taxi sector.

It is reported that the Government is underway to reinstate the former structure of the city authority with one apex body (Dar es Salaam City Council) overseeing the rest of the municipals, this could be helpful to improve the coordination.

- **Support for women drivers:** A growing number of women are entering the motorcycle-taxi sector and require targeted support, along with other women operating in the informal economy. Priorities include support for women's organisation—either within existing associations or through their own, all-women groups—and measures to tackle the urgent issue of gender-based violence. More generally, it is important to develop tailored policy and legislation to protect the rights of informal economy workers, with specific provisions for motorcycle-taxi drivers and for women. FES and other stakeholders stand a better chance to raise awareness and challenge stereotypes and prejudices that women shouldn't work in certain sectors particularly those seen as male-dominated.
- **Regulation of asset-financing and platform companies:** Private sector actors entering the motorcycle-taxi sector can have both a positive impact and a potentially negative one. Where they contribute to sustainability, e.g. by promoting electrification, these efforts can be encouraged with supportive policies. However, greater attention should be paid to private sector activities that contribute to rapid growth in motorcycle-taxis but without clear social benefits. Regulatory efforts frequently target motorcycle-taxi drivers but could also consider the contribution of actors higher up the value chain, for instance, through stronger regulation of asset-finance and platform companies, the interest rates and commissions that they are allowed to charge, and any potential misinformation of drivers.
- **Assembling a reform coalition:** Among state actors, civil society, and donors, there are various actors committed to more participatory transport planning. Land Transport Regulatory Authority (LATRA) and many Local Government Authorities (LGAs) have elements of a participatory vision, regardless of certain challenges. In addition to that, various NGOs and advocacy organisations focus on road safety issues as well as supporting livelihoods in the informal economy, including with an emphasis on women can be brought on board. These actors could convene, alongside representatives from a range of drivers' groups, to build a shared vision and strategy for championing a just motorcycle-taxi sector in Dar es Salaam.

The FES role in this regard is to strategically build the capacity of its partners who are potential participants of these consultation meetings in order to meaningfully en-

gage and make positive impacts.

How to incentivize innovation?

The research which was conducted has provided the evidence, insights, action points and relevant stakeholders who are essential in a drive to make the motorcycle-taxi transport sector part of the just city vision. This serves as the foundation or guidance for innovative solutions.

Towards the Just City in Africa: The Narrative

As Africa's cities grow at an unprecedented pace, millions of people are currently moving into “unjust” cities: cities that are designed by and run for the few, and not the many. The rapid urban expansion presents immense opportunities for economic development and improved access to public services. Meanwhile, unaddressed socioeconomic and urban governance challenges are becoming more severe. These challenges deepen existing inequalities, expand informal and precarious living and working conditions, and undermine social cohesion. **The need for a just urbanization that is people-centered, inclusive, participatory and sustainable is more urgent than ever.**

Urbanization discourses and pundits must prioritize the voices and needs of the most vulnerable-urban poor, women, informal workers, and marginalized communities, reveal the economic and social costs of exclusion and highlight the limitations of top-down planning or exclusively market driven approaches. **The call for a “Just City” is a call for democratization and inclusivity: for urban planning that is participatory, transparent, and responsive to those who use and shape the city every day,** recognizing African cities as complex political ecosystems shaped by colonial histories, business and elite interests and contemporary realities, moving beyond technocratic and Euro- or Sinocentric models of urban development such as ‘smart’, ‘green’, ‘new’ or ‘prosperous’ cities.

Principles of the Just Cities

For FES and its partners, the just city in Africa is built on six key principles: **Democracy and Participation; Dignity; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Accessibility and Affordability; Sustainability and Public Safety.** The adherence to these principles contributes to all residents - irrespective of their background - having access to public goods and services such as decent housing, transport, clean water and sanitation, health care, education, and opportunities for participation in decision-making and shaping the cities they want. What is truly needed is efficient and just urban governance, grassroots pressure that challenges top-down approaches and fundamentally reorients them towards co-creation and public service provision. Only by doing so can we ensure that the majority of people gain equitable access to the benefits of urban life.

When urban planning and policy making prioritize these principles, cities can empower their citizen, strengthening women, the elderly, youth, children and people with disa-

bilities. Urbanization in Africa has the potential to drive economic development, create jobs, and improve access to services like healthcare and education. Surveys show that people in Africa are moving to cities in the expectation of significant improvement of their living conditions and public services. However, their hopes are currently being dashed as cities exacerbate existing inequalities.

People-Centered, Participatory and Democratic Urbanization

For an inclusive urban development, transparent, well-equipped, and accountable states capable of delivering just urban infrastructure and public services are strongly needed. In a context of social cleavages, distrust towards the state and disappointment of elite leadership, cities have become sides of democratic struggle as well as of political apathy. Cities that embrace participation and democracy play a crucial role in countering the spread of authoritarianism and autocratic rule. Involving citizens in shaping their cities leads to concrete outcomes that help rebuild public confidence in democratic systems.

Therefore, democratic participation must be guaranteed not only through elections, but also in the inclusive development and implementation of urban projects. Thus, African cities, municipalities and national governments must develop and implement their own inclusively-elaborated strategies that balance formal and informal economies and long-term planning vs. short-term political interests and allow for more efficient bottom-up processes. Furthermore, in order to reclaim public goods for all and protect the interests of marginalized groups, gender justice must be at the core of urban planning, as it is especially women and marginalized groups that suffer from exclusion and informality.

Financing the Just Urbanization

Especially in the African context, **funding for infrastructure**, whether from national or international sources, **must consistently prioritize the needs of the poor and marginalized**, emphasizing the provision of public goods and enhancing access to them. At the expense of dignity, equality, and democratic participation, states have increasingly shifted responsibilities for urban infrastructure financing to the private sector and financial markets. To counter this trend, a renewed focus on embedding social justice values at the core of financing urban infrastructure is essential.

To achieve this, the state and democratically-legitimated local stakeholders must assume a greater role in the planning, financing, and management of urban infrastructure projects.

Towards a just City

Building a just city requires to renegotiate the relationship between the state, civil society, and local communities, activism and policy makers; and channeling the transformative power of younger generations and informal workers. It requires to make urban justice central to Africa's future development, to learn from ongoing struggles and experiences on the continent, and to continuously adapt strategies of democratic transformation to local contexts. **Cities will only be just if they achieve good and measurable progress in: (1) in democracy and inclusivity through effective and meaningful public participation, (2) in governance, management and planning, as well as (3) in equitable access to the benefits of public services and urban life.** This requires ongoing activism, political engagement, and innovative partnerships to build cities where everyone can thrive.

As **urban justice cannot be separated from the wider struggles for democracy, sustainability, and economic prosperity**, building alliances with like-minded partners, leveraging regional networks, and engaging in multilateral forums are essential to defend progressive urban agendas.

Africa Through the Just City Lens: African Case Studies on the Just City

The Just City Project showcases compelling stories of urban transformation across African cities, illustrating how communities, local governments, and civil society are working together to build more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable urban spaces. Through case studies from Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia, the project captures diverse urban realities and innovative responses emerging from rapidly changing city contexts.

Each case study follows a clear journey from challenge to change, examining the forces shaping each city, the key urban issues and affected communities, and the strategies used to address them. By highlighting outcomes, lessons learned, and links to wider regional and global agendas, the collection offers practical insights and inspiration for advancing just urban development across Africa and beyond.

Further information on this topic can be found here:

➔ justcity.fes.de