Urban Africa; key words

(Article begins on next page)

04 August 2020

URBAN AFRICA: KEY WORDS

Recent urbanisation
Border definition
Development cooperation
Creativity
INDEPENDENCE: cultural and social rebirth

Music
Football
Urban gating
DATA reliability
Big change big chance
Village model in an urban space
Climate change
Global garbage dump
Reuse
Mineral resources
Africa failing
New colonialism

Time concept
Inventiveness
Distribution of wealth
Poverty

Mobile phone revolution

CHALLENGES
Fast-growing cities
Preconception
Cities ETEROGENEOUSNESS
Food safety
Crime

Huge continent: different "Africas"
Formal and informal
Big infrastructures

Poverty reduction (causes?)
MIssing social united awarness
Contradictory images

Fragmentation
Debts
Infrastructure in exchange for resources

Gated communities
Removal of poverty
Rapid urban GROWTH

Family and community support
Informal economy
without economic development

Financial DEPENDENCE
Economic coexistence
Political instability
Ingovernable chaos perception

China's influence
Colonial influence
Services and infrastructure scarsity
Bidonville confines (physical, social, moral?)

Traditional values
Optimism vs pessimism

Community vs society
Growing gap between rich and poor

Agriculture
Multidisciplinary approach

Violence
Slum
Woman's liberation
Natural resources
Corruption

Flexibility
Extreme climates
Land

Great green wall
No confidence

Africa rising
Insecurity
Water

Incomplete DATA
Young population

External point of view

Missing urban identity

Microcredit
Urban innovation
MEDIA's role
Internet infrastructure
Island cities
Mutual support
Balance with nature
INEQUALITY
Globalization
Oil
Justice

Land grabbing

Imported models
Words' importance

Benchmarking

New towns

Growth Rate
<1%
1-3%
3-5%
5% +

City Population
500 - 750 thousand
750 - 1000 thousand
1-5 million
5-10 million
10 million or more

The state of the art of contemporary urban Africa is the focus of this poster. Africa is no longer a continent of villages and towns, and it is only now that both the size and importance of urban Africa are becoming widely apparent. A global reflection of the rapid urban growth happening in the African continent is necessary, especially in architectural and urban studies. Africa covers a huge area, with great differences within its borders; therefore the risk of generalising is high. To analyse the urban spaces, the socio-economic context has to be considered. Nevertheless, some recurring features occur when discussing urbanisation in Africa. This bibliographical research concentrates on the combination and the repetition of concepts in scientific books and articles dealing with urban Africa. This led to the identification of the key words, as shown above. The diagram simplifies the real complexity of the continent, but nevertheless it provides a framework of the essential issues involved.

The use of the map of Africa together with key words and images is a deliberate choice. It refers to a common approach when presenting issues related to emerging countries, where the visual message is often more important than the content itself. Putting together the positive and pessimistic points of view generates a fragmented and uneven perception, that is probably closer to the real stratified and intricate situation. The bigger the key words are in the diagram, the more relevant or repetitive the concept appears in urban African bibliography. Some words are coloured; and the colour itself creates a link to the reference pictures. This is a fundamental step towards research into the African context, especially from a foreign point of view. Within this context, one of the most interesting topics is the understanding of the limit between formal and informal spaces, as a means of interpreting contemporary African cities.

Miriam Bodino - PhD student - XXX cicle - DASP - Politecnico di Torino