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# **From urban catastrophe to ‘model’ city?**

## **Politics, security and development in post-conflict Kigali**

**Tom Goodfellow and Alyson Smith**

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### **Abstract**

*In the years immediately after the 1994 genocide, Kigali was a site of continuing crisis amid extraordinary levels of urban population growth, as refugees returned to Rwanda in their millions. Yet unlike many post-conflict cities that spiral into endemic crime and instability, it was rapidly securitised in the context of political consolidation and large amounts of foreign aid, and hailed by the UN as a ‘model, modern city’. This paper analyses the government’s approach to securitising Kigali, interrogating how its rapid trajectory from epicentre of conflict to carefully planned showcase for development has been achieved. We argue that Kigali bears the weight of many of Rwanda’s development aspirations and keeping it secure and orderly is viewed as critical by the government. After examining the national and local processes through which the government has aimed to achieve ‘secure urbanisation’, we consider the potential longer-term implications of its urban development strategy.*

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## **Introduction**

Few cities in history have undergone such rapid population growth and socio-economic change as Kigali since 1994. The statistics are astonishing: Kigali's population approximately trebled between 1991 and 2001 (Oz Architecture *et al.*, 2007, KC, 2009a) despite the death of around one million Rwandans in the civil war and genocide during that period. The country's urban population growth rate soared to 18 per cent in the 1995–2000 period immediately following the genocide (UNPD, 2009), a rate that is virtually unprecedented anywhere in the world in the last 60 years.<sup>1</sup> These rates of change would put states with even the most robust institutions under strain. In a very poor country where infrastructure, bureaucratic state capacity and social fabric have all been ravaged by genocide and war, the challenge of coping with this degree of demographic and socio-economic change is almost unimaginable.

As the introductory article and other papers in this collection demonstrate, cities often become sites of violence following civil war. Given the demographic pressures, poverty and social dislocation faced by city dwellers in Kigali – alongside growing inequality<sup>2</sup> – one would expect it to be a prime candidate for this phenomenon. It was indeed characterised by strife and violence for several years after the genocide, while the country at large was still suffering from pervasive instability. However, after a few very difficult years Kigali swiftly became a regional anomaly characterised by orderly urbanisation and low levels of crime, rather than becoming a space of endemic violence as might be expected given the circumstances. In fact, a recent study of policing in Rwanda noted that the vast majority of Rwandans – city dwellers included – feel secure (Baker, 2007, p. 348). This is all the more remarkable given that, in the words of a senior Rwandan policeman, 'Getting armed here is not hard considering our neighbouring countries!' (Baker, 2007, p. 349).

This paper explores the question of why Kigali has come to be characterised by the conspicuous absence of violent conflict and disorder. We argue that urban policing is an insufficient explanation; a much broader and more contextualised analysis is needed. This should take into account the consolidation of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) as a political organisation, the politics of its development agenda and relationship with the international community, and how these factors translate into urban change on the ground. Ultimately the government's overriding concern with national security issues, combined with its need for legitimacy, has led to sustained efforts to create a city that is tightly controlled through a range of strategies that project it as a 'model' space, both domestically and internationally. This has been facilitated by the dominance of RPF control in most spheres of life and the constriction of political space, which may have less positive implications for urban stability over the long term.

Methodologically, the article therefore explores Kigali as a 'deviant case' (Gerring 2007) in relation to post-conflict cities in the developing world more broadly. The narrative we provide of Kigali as a unique post-conflict space since 1994 is based on semi-structured interviews with politicians, bureaucrats, international donors, foreign investors, ordinary residents and civic associations, as well as observation of urban activities and processes and analysis of government statistics and donor literature. This research was undertaken at various points from January 2009 – December 2011. Due to the difficulty of undertaking research in Rwanda's rather restrictive political environment (Swedlund, Loyle and Smith 2012), it was not possible to delve deeply into certain issues, particularly relating to the city's current ethnic geography, and we have had to anonymise many interview sources.<sup>3</sup>

The paper is structured as follows. First, we present a basic introductory framework, drawing on the literature on cities, security and conflict to illustrate why Kigali constitutes an important anomalous case. We then provide some historical background and highlight the

severity of the challenges facing the city immediately after the 1994 genocide. Following this we place the city in international and national context, highlighting the role of international aid in Kigali's reconstruction before turning to the way in which the RPF consolidated political power and reframed state structures once the initial period of stabilisation was over. Against this backdrop we then focus on dynamics at the urban level, highlighting the role of the city Master Plan, the quest for urban investment and some of the local-level processes that have worked to securitise the city. This leads us into a final section that evaluates the government's approach to managing conflict in the city and beyond, and what the implications of this might be for future stability.

### **Cities, violence and the urbanisation of security**

As the world urbanises, cities and their distinct socio-spatial characteristics are moving centre stage in discourses on conflict and post-war reconstruction (Graham 2004; Abrahamsen et al 2009). Political conflict has been tentatively linked to urbanisation trends (Auvinen 1997; Goldstone 2002) and, in the words of Martin Coward, 'a reciprocal dynamic of urban securitisation is under way in which the security agenda is urbanised and urbanity is – insofar as it induces insecurity and vulnerability – securitised' (Coward 2009: 400). Cities are sites of critical infrastructure, making them pre-eminent strategic targets in inter-state warfare (Coward 2009, Graham 2004). Meanwhile, even outside of war zones the prevalence of crime and social violence in many developing country cities is giving rise to new policing technologies and perceptions of urban risk (Brennan-Galvin, 2002).

This is not to say that cities are intrinsically violent spaces, and most long-term and large scale civil conflicts are fought in rural areas (Auvinen 1997), rendering cities havens of relative stability in civil war. Yet as this Special Issue has demonstrated, it is common for

cities to become sites of enduring violence after war has ended. Consequently it is no surprise that urban security is seen as requiring explicit attention in post-conflict peacebuilding (Hills 2008). The fact that violence in urban areas can persist or even increase the wake of resolution to a national conflict has been observed in contexts such as Guatemala, el Salvador and Nicaragua (Pearce 1998; Rodgers 2009), as well as some of the cases in this Special Issue.

For a number of reasons one might expect Kigali to have taken this path too. The city was devastated by the war and genocide, and in the aftermath was subject to intense socioeconomic pressures and a severe shortage of housing and employment. As Goldstone (2002) notes, the risks of violent conflict are very high when population growth rates between different ethnic groups are unequal, and when urbanisation exceeds economic growth. Indeed the risk of political crisis is almost double in countries with above average levels of urbanisation but below average levels of GDP/capita (Goldstone 2002: 10). According to all these criteria, after 1994 Kigali was a city ripe for further conflict. However, after the initial period of stabilisation this outcome was largely avoided, for reasons that the subsequent sections aim to explain. First, we provide some background on the genocide and its impacts on the city.

### **The Rwandan genocide and its aftermath in Kigali**

Present-day Rwanda has its roots in one of the ancient, hierarchically structured kingdoms of Africa's Great Lakes Region. Over several centuries, a distinction between Hutu agriculturalists and Tutsi cattle keepers evolved within the kingdom, becoming a rigid feature of social life in the Belgian colonial period.<sup>4</sup> Having supported the Tutsi-dominated monarchy through colonialism, at independence the Belgians shifted their support to the

Hutus, who with 85 per cent of the population, were a clear majority (Reyntjens, 1985, Mamdani, 2001). This ushered in a period of Hutu dominance, from the violent upheaval of 1959 – in which Tutsis were widely persecuted and many fled – to 1990, when a group of Tutsis who had been forced to spend their lives in exile launched a civil war from across the Ugandan border (Prunier, 1995, Waugh, 2004).

The invading force, the Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA), took control of part of the country's territory, instilling panic and fear among the ruling Hutu elite. These circumstances played into the hands of a radical clique within the Hutu Power movement known as the *akazu* ('little house'), who favoured the extermination of all Tutsis in Rwanda as a way of targeting the 'enemy within'. Eventually, despite a UN presence hampered by a very limited mandate (Melvern, 2000, Dallaire, 2003), in April 1994 a campaign of genocide was unleashed that resulted in the slaughter of at least 500,000 Tutsis, and tens of thousands of moderate Hutus, in less than 100 days. It was only brought to a close when the RPA, led by Major-General Paul Kagame, finally won the civil war, taking Kigali on 8 July. Much has been written on these tragic events and their underlying causes elsewhere (Prunier, 1995, Gourevitch, 1998, Uvin, 1998, Des Forges, 1999, Mamdani, 2001, Jefremovas, 2002, Straus, 2006).

Little has been written about the specific role of Kigali in Rwanda's history. Under Belgian colonialism the city played a fairly minor role, and it was only with independence in 1962 that Kigali became Rwanda's capital, after which it grew at a steady pace, its population reaching around 200,000 by 1990 (KC, 2009a, UNPD, 2009). Even by then, however, it consisted largely of informal, densely packed shanty housing. In retrospect, people now often speak of Kigali before 1994 as being 'really like a big village',<sup>5</sup> despite the many thousands of people there and the fact that it was the seat of government.

In the final days of the battle for Kigali in summer 1994, the notorious RTLM radio station

urged all Hutus to flee the city, amid claims that on arrival the RPA would exterminate them. Many followed the remnants of the former government into Eastern Zaire (now DRC) (Gourevitch, 1998, Chrétien, 2003). Consequently, when the RPA did march into the city they found a wasteland. Rose Kabuye, a senior military officer who became Kigali's mayor immediately after the RPF took control, explains that 'the city was deserted. When Kigali fell the streets were empty. The houses were empty apart from the survivors and the bodies and the dogs'.<sup>6</sup> The genocide and closing months of the civil war had also left the city's buildings and infrastructure devastated.

### **Kigali and the 'old caseload' returnees**

The emptiness did not last long. Survivors soon came out of hiding and populated the city as did large numbers of Tutsis who had been living in exile since the early anti-Tutsi pogroms of 1959–1964, or who had been born in exile, often persecuted and dreaming of a 'home' they had never seen (Newbury, 2005). People arrived within weeks in vast numbers from neighbouring countries, occupying the empty houses they found. As Kabuye notes, it was 'like random settlement. People would just open a house and go in, and stay in. Because there was nowhere else you could put them'.<sup>7</sup> Approximately 700,000 former exiles, often termed 'old caseload' refugees, returned to Rwanda at this time (Newbury, 2005, p. 277). Many came to Kigali, which was considered a site of security when many parts of the country were still unstable. Kigali in late 1994 was thus a city inhabited largely by traumatised genocide survivors and people who had hardly set foot in the country until that year, the majority of whom were living in the houses of unknown city dwellers who had died or fled.

Individuals associated with the RPA were a logical human resource pool for reconstruction efforts and although a multi-party Government of National Unity was established, the informal networks of the RPF – the political manifestation of the RPA – were central to how



the government functioned in reality (Prunier, 1995, p. 369). As well as having privileged access to government positions, many 'old caseload' returnees brought with them economic resources to establish businesses in Kigali.<sup>8</sup> English-speakers who had come from Uganda were particularly well-placed to engage with the international donor agencies and NGOs that flooded the city.

Despite the vast challenges faced in the first year or so after the genocide, Kigali was soon to face even greater problems. Debates began over how to handle the problem of having up to a third of Rwanda's population – two million people – sitting in refugee camps outside Rwanda's borders, mainly in the Goma region of the DRC. The enormous problems associated with these camps – and the international community's failure to demilitarise them – have been well documented (Gourevitch, 1998, Uvin, 1998, Pottier, 1996, 2002, Chrétien, 2003, Rugumamu and Gbla, 2003, Prunier, 2008). Scaremongering among Hutu Power leaders in the camps militated against refugees returning voluntarily (Gourevitch, 1998), resulting in the RPF's decision to invade the camps in the DRC and pursue a strategy of forced repatriation on a massive scale in late 1996 (Newbury, 2005).

### **The challenge of integrating the survivors and 'new caseload' refugees**

The return of approximately two million 'new caseload' refugees at this time was another tectonic shift in a deeply traumatised country. For the Hutus who fled in 1994, their forced return two years later was to a country in which they were now tainted by a presumed association with genocide. Many chose to head to Kigali due to the relative anonymity afforded by the large-city context,<sup>9</sup> or to reclaim properties they rightfully owned, even though these were now being inhabited by other people – many of whom were genocide survivors. This proved one of the greatest challenges of the mid-to-late 1990s. When the owners returned, and the government instituted rules of restitution of properties for returnees,

the survivors were (unsurprisingly) ‘not happy with the message’ they were getting:

They were saying ‘these people killed us, destroyed our property, and you are telling me to get out of his house?’ Those were some of the arguments, and the arguments were pertinent... It took three to five years to completely sort it out. This was a bad period for Rwanda.<sup>10</sup>

If the house in question was big enough, the returning owners agreed to share with the current inhabitants, which was of course far from ideal.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, the government faced repeated crises of legitimacy and security. From 1995 onwards high-profile sackings of ministers occurred in the face of disputes over how to deal with incursions from the DRC, internal security issues and the violent closure of refugee camps within Rwanda (Prunier, 1995, Des Forges, 1999, Reyntjens, 2004).<sup>12</sup> Instability from 1996-98, marked by gunshots and crime related to property disputes, was largely handled through the use of aggressive community-based policing, given the absence of a coherent police force (Baker, 2007, Prunier, 2008).

By 2000, Kigali was no longer in any sense like a ‘village’. Both its population and its built-up geographical area were over three times larger than in the mid-1980s (Oz Architecture *et al.*, 2007, KC, 2009a). As well as its increased size, the other characteristic qualities of ‘urbanism’ – density and heterogeneity (Wirth, 1938) – were omnipresent, sometimes in an extreme form that literally meant the sharing of houses by genocide perpetrators and genocide survivors. Moreover, by the end of the decade tensions were also evident between genocide survivors and Tutsi returnees, due to feelings of exclusion and lack of redress on the part of the former (Reyntjens, 2004). In all, there was little to hold the social fabric of the city together and plenty of reason to expect persistent violent civic conflict, to characterise Kigali in the early twenty-first century.

Yet, against the odds, Kigali took a rather different path. Early in the 2000s the police were

consolidated into a professional, disciplined and remarkably small force – only 800 for a city of a million inhabitants (Baker, 2007) – and the use of overt violence by the government substantially reduced. In this period Kigali rapidly cemented a reputation as one of the safest cities in the region and in 2008 was awarded a UN-HABITAT Scroll of Honour Award for ‘many innovations in building a model, modern city’ accompanied by a substantial reduction in crime.<sup>13</sup> High levels of civic order have therefore been effectively maintained in the absence of an overwhelming police presence. In attempting to explain this, we now turn to the question of how state power under the RPF has been reconstituted, with the support of international donors, before looking at Kigali’s central role in this process.

### **City of aid: post-genocide Kigali as a hub for international resource inflows**

Donor guilt over failure to intervene and prevent the genocide contributed to an outpouring of funding from the international community once the RPF took power (Hayman, 2007, Beswick, 2010). Between April and December 1994 US\$1.4 billion in emergency assistance was targeted at Rwanda and approximately 200 NGOs were involved at this time, working in Rwanda, Tanzania and the refugee camps in eastern DRC (RRN, 1996, p. 3). For a long time, far more foreign aid – around US\$1 million *per day* even a year-and-a-half after the genocide (RRN, 1996, p. 13) – was directed to these camps than to Rwanda, creating major tensions between donors and the RPF (Rugumamu and Gbla, 2003, Hayman, 2009). As it became evident that the donor community was indirectly funding elements associated with the genocidal former regime via the camps, the RPF-led government began gaining the moral imperative, which laid the foundations for Rwanda’s subsequent strategy in its engagement with donors over the longer term.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s the RPF achieved a new credibility internationally and

donors began to target increasing amounts of financial resources directly at the government, with the UK leading the way by providing general budget support from 2000 (Purcell *et al.*, 2006). The RPF was able to utilise what some observers term ‘genocide credit’ (Reyntjens, 2004) to exert considerable influence, skilfully appealing to the donor community’s need both to atone for their failures in 1994 and to find an aid-supported ‘African success story’. Improvement on development indicators, such as female representation in government or increased health and education coverage, helped convey to the development community that the RPF was taking positive steps to improve Rwanda’s future.

The RPF’s increasing leverage is evident, for example, in relation to housing policies. In the late 1990s the government instituted a villagisation programme, ‘*imidugudu*’, in order to ensure security and the productive use of land throughout the country, as well as addressing housing shortages including in the areas around Kigali.<sup>14</sup> At this time donors were heavily financing housing refurbishment, but the government was able to persuade many that *imidugudu* was a greater priority, suggesting that donors were increasingly open to taking direction from the government (Human Rights Watch, 2001, p. 15). Meanwhile ambitious statements of developmental intent such as *Rwanda Vision 2020* were published (RoR Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, 2000), which envisaged a leading role for Kigali in the development of sectors such as financial services and ICT.

Aid to Rwanda reached almost US\$1 billion annually in 2010 (MINECOFIN, 2010, p. 1) and the government’s relative competence in financial management and combating corruption has ensured that levels remain very high even compared to other conflict-afflicted countries (OECD, 2010, p. 65). From 1999-2009 aid as a percentage of GNI was among the highest in Africa at around 19 per cent (OECD DAC, 2010). Over time, increasing amounts of aid were provided in the form of general budget support, which comprised 34 per cent of Rwanda’s total aid by 2004 (Purcell *et al.*, 2006, p. 14) and was aimed at supporting ‘the Government’s

own policy issues' (DFID, 2000). This makes it difficult to track, especially given the problem of aid fungibility.<sup>15</sup>

There are a number of reasons why all this matters in terms of the trajectory of Kigali as a city. While most aid is not targeted specifically towards urban issues, it is impossible to understand Kigali's evolution without due attention to the vast sums of foreign money flowing through the city. Aid played a direct role in the early reconstruction of Kigali, when urban infrastructure accounted for up to 40 per cent of capital expenditure (Uvin, 1998, p. 149). Donors such as the World Bank also funded major infrastructure projects in the 2000s such as the \$23.7m Urban Infrastructure and City Management Project (*Projet D'Infrastructure et de Gestion Urbaine*, or 'PIGU'), much of which was focused on local roads and drainage in some low income areas of Kigali.<sup>16</sup>

However, the real significance of aid for Kigali relates not to programme expenditure but to more indirect and intangible effects. First, through providing substantial budget support and international legitimacy it has arguably strengthened the hold of the RPF on the political arena and indirectly supported the deep penetration of society by party structures; something that has enabled it to exert control over the city in ways that are explored further below. Second and related, the resources flowing into Kigali have surely helped bolster its status as elite space that stands out from the rest of the country in socioeconomic terms. Kigali's poverty headcount stood at just 13% in 2006 compared with 57% nationally. This relatively low figure was not simply a matter of 'urban bias' but specific to Kigali: Rwanda's other major urban centres, Gitarama and Butare, had remarkably high poverty headcounts at 56.5% and 70% respectively (RoR, 2007). Moreover, analysis of data on vehicle ownership from 2009 shows that 66% of private vehicles in the country were registered to people in Kigali despite the fact the city constituted only 10% of the population; and of the 33,544 vehicles registered in the city it is telling that almost half were large 'jeeps' or 'pickups'.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, the volume of aid has also resulted in the heavy presence of the international community in the city, in the form of NGO and aid workers, something discussed further below. In sum, aid has arguably helped consolidate RPF rule and cemented the status of Kigali as a space for both domestic and international elites, all of which has important implications for Kigali's securitisation. We now turn to the arena of domestic political consolidation, before expanding further on some of the ways both national and international dynamics have impacted at the city level.

### **The consolidation of RPF power in the domestic political arena**

2000 was something of a turning point in Rwanda. Internal rifts within the government came to a head, resulting in multiple resignations by frontline politicians including the titular President, Pasteur Bizimungu, and the ascent of Kagame to the presidency (Reyntjens, 2004, Lemarchand, 2007). In many ways, this set the stage for Rwanda's future political context. With many internal rivals gone, the government's clarity of vision further crystallised, enabling it to push forward with a number of changes in the sphere of governance and politics alongside its development agenda. Among the changes at the political level has been the proliferation of legislation on 'divisionism' and 'genocide ideology' since 2001, which is interpreted with considerable flexibility and has expanded the government's legal powers to constrain criticism (Human Rights Watch, 2008). These measures have led to tight restrictions on political dissent resulting in a process of political consolidation that has granted the RPF significant power. The negative implications for political space and freedom of expression have been widely noted (Reyntjens, 2004, 2010, Lemarchand, 2007, Beswick, 2010; Straus and Waldorf 2011). Moreover, with particular relevance to the securitisation of Kigali, this has helped to inculcate a culture of community 'self-policing' as part of a wider

anxiety about staying on the right side of the law (Baker, 2007, Beswick, 2010).

Around the same time, the government began to implement its decentralisation programme, which – framed largely in technical terms – was welcomed and supported by donors. Decentralisation in Rwanda was designed as a three-phase project starting in 2000. The second phase of decentralisation from 2005 began with a re-districting exercise: Rwanda now has just five provinces – one of which is the Kigali City (KC) – and thirty districts, three of which are in KC. In turn, the three districts are divided into 32 *sectors*, which are divided into 161 *cells*, which in turn are subdivided into 1,061 *imidugudu*<sup>18</sup> (KC, 2009a). Each *umudugudu*, the smallest formal unit of government, consists of around 100 households, below which an informal ‘*nyumbacumi*’ position also exists, consisting of an individual responsible for overseeing 10 households (Human Rights Watch, 2008, p. 20). This remarkable level of societal penetration by the state has long historical antecedents in Rwanda (Mamdani, 2001, Chrétien, 2003, Straus, 2006). However, decentralisation has resulted in the formal transfer of certain resources and powers downwards, giving the administrative arrangement both new strengths and a new legitimacy.

Rwandan officials note that a central aim of decentralisation was to move away from the ‘culture of obedience’ that was prevalent under the previous regime.<sup>19</sup> The extent to which this is actually happening is, however, uncertain. In lower tiers of government and society alike a strong tendency to defer to authority remains deeply ingrained and it is not clear that decentralisation is changing this. The fact that RPF party structures closely mirror those of the state, with the boundaries between the two sometimes being blurred (Purdeková, 2011) contributes to this. In contrast to the above claim of increased local autonomy, people working at the city level and below make statements to the effect that Rwanda’s progress ‘all comes from high office’, ‘when government decides, we follow’ and ‘if they say, you obey’.<sup>20</sup>

Decentralisation thus often functions as a way to administer governmental mandates to citizens and supervise local activity. This is epitomised by the *'imihigo'*, which are 'traditional' performance contracts between tiers of government whereby local leaders commit to delivering certain results in a given period (KC, 2009b). More generally, the prevalence of 'sensitisation' – a term used repeatedly by interviewees of all kinds to describe how community members learn about policy directives from the government – has been central to how decentralisation functions in practice (see also Purdeková, 2011). With regard to Kigali specifically, a 2006 law effectively re-established the city government as an arm of the *central* state at the city level, coordinating the three districts within it rather than forming a distinct decentralised tier in its own right (Law No. 10/2006).<sup>21</sup> The city's leadership is generally drawn from the inner circles of the RPF, something evident since the time of Rose Kabuye but also in relation to her successors James Musoni and Theoneste Mutsindashyaka, who have also been frontline ministers in the national cabinet.

In all, it appears that decentralisation has ultimately strengthened the RPF and expanded its room for manoeuvre in the city, particularly given the restrictions on local-level campaigning by political parties.<sup>22</sup> In this respect there are few political obstacles to the RPF elite promoting and implementing its desired vision for the capital. It is to this that we now turn, considering first the role of the city Master Plan in promoting a particular model of urban development, and second the drive towards highly structured forms of social organisation in the city. The government's deep commitment to both these issues has proved potent in relation to Kigali's securitisation.



## The ‘model city’ as developmental and political project

### The Master Plan and the city as a haven for investment

Kigali is central to the government’s aspirations of Rwanda becoming an ICT, financial services and logistics hub for the East/Central African region, and thereby moving beyond aid dependency. In 2007 the government published the city’s Conceptual Master Plan, designed by consultants from the USA and Singapore at a cost of US\$1.7 million (Oz Architecture *et al.*). The Master Plan embodies the government’s emphasis over the past decade on the creation of a city that is a paragon of environmental conservation, public order and social harmony and – related to this – an ideal site for investors. The plan wields enormous influence: one interviewee even commented that ‘[we] are all impaled on the Master Plan.’<sup>23</sup>

The Plan is explicitly geared towards transforming Kigali into a sort of ‘model’ city to attract those seeking a safe investment in East and Central Africa. This transformation is already under way, with wetland clearances and proposed business districts motivating large-scale expropriations of informal settlements, the inhabitants of which have in many cases had to relocate to *imidugudu* settlements outside the city due to a lack of formal housing in Kigali.<sup>24</sup> Illustrating the severity of the housing shortage in the face of urban growth, the Rwandan Development Board has indicated that there is demand for an estimated 8,000-10,000 housing units in Kigali annually.<sup>25</sup> These targets are nowhere near being met, particularly when it comes to low-income housing.

The donor community has not been directly involved with the implementation of the Master Plan and the plan itself was purportedly paid for entirely with the government’s own resources.<sup>26</sup> However, it is difficult to identify whether resources facilitating the plan’s implementation originate from tax collection or general budget support from donors. Some donors and other sources working for international organisations in the city expressed overt

scepticism about the plan, suggesting it was an elite-driven project with little clear relevance for poverty reduction.<sup>27</sup> This in part reflects on-going tension between donors and the government about whether they should focus more on agricultural productivity than on grand, urban-based projects, although – in the words of a Rwandan minister remarking on this disagreement – ‘we don’t listen to them anyway; that is the beauty of Rwanda’.<sup>28</sup>

Even though implementation of the plan is only in its early stages, the drive to attract investment is a powerful motivation for the government to create a secure environment with the appearance of minimal risk. In sectors such as tourism, finance, energy and telecommunications, the government is making headway in attracting investment from countries ranging from Canada to the UAE to China (IPAR 2011). The commitment to a secure and planned city, along with anti-corruption agendas, also provides a very appealing environment for donors to operate in. An expatriate presence composed of both investors and donors increases the market for upscale properties, restaurants, cafés and shops, which in turn are appealing to potential investors in services.

It is, however, important to note that much of the investment in property and construction that is reshaping Kigali comes from domestic rather than foreign sources. Indeed 73% of registered investment from the top ten domestic investors in 2006-10 was in property/real estate or construction (IPAR 2011). This has been financed in part by the national pension programme,<sup>29</sup> as well as by the controversial RPF-owned investor Crystal Ventures Ltd (formerly Tri-Star), Horizon Group (which emerged directly from the Ministry of Defence) and the Rwanda Investment Group, all of which are explicitly involved in construction.<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile certain parts of the city that were just ‘bush’ prior to 1994 are now highly developed and reputedly largely populated by elites; one neighbourhood in particular is referred to by some expatriates as ‘Tutsi town’ or, in the more guarded words of an ordinary

Kigali resident, there are ‘no enemies’ there, it being a place where ‘people support each other’ and ‘people look the same’.<sup>31</sup> The development of these areas, often far from the city centre, has also had the effect of de-densifying the city even as its population grows (Oz Architecture 2007: 19), heightening socioeconomic segregation. These major investments in property by domestic elites in the city – considered by some observers to be financed through dealings in the neighbouring DRC<sup>32</sup> – provides yet further incentives to keep the city secure. Indeed the RPF’s very public drive to attract foreign investment and its more private imperative to protect ongoing domestic investments work together to incentivise urban securitisation.

### **Engineering ‘secure urbanisation’ against the odds**

The government has found a number of ways to achieve the secure and orderly development it considers so central to its development objectives and political survival. There is little doubt that this is a priority, with one minister acknowledging ‘a big danger if the future if the question [of urban settlements] is not addressed’, due to the potential for ‘social and economic insecurity.’<sup>33</sup> As previously noted, the nature of policing underlines the puzzle of Kigali’s low levels of crime, given the small size of the force and its total in 2006 of just 12 patrol vehicles (Baker, 2007, p. 352). They are backed by Kigali’s District Defence Force, which numbers around a thousand and supports the police through such activities as rounding up street hawkers, but this force has strictly limited powers.<sup>34</sup>

Various informal security arrangements also exist, whereby residents pay a small fee to their *umudugudu* and local youths patrol the area at night.<sup>35</sup> Yet securitisation runs deeper, pervading everyday economic life. The state’s approach to the conscious organisation of urban social and economic activity has been critical here, particularly given the large numbers of unemployed youth present in the city after the genocide.<sup>36</sup> ‘Mobilising’ those

working in the urban informal economy into cooperatives and associations has resulted in such a dramatic decrease in visible informal actors in Kigali's streets over the past decade that 'donors have been hunting to see where they are gone', explains one cabinet minister.<sup>37</sup> Also important has been the voluntary public works day, *umuganda*, which all citizens are strongly encouraged to attend and which plays an important role both in relation to the government's local development plans and also facilitates security through knowledge-sharing and 'checking on one's neighbour'.<sup>38</sup>

The emphasis on order and urban reorganisation to some degree parallels the rural social engineering discussed elsewhere (see e.g. Ansoms (2008); Straus and Waldorf (2011)). The functioning of Kigali's urban associations is clearly linked to security and ultimately to political imperatives. All urban cooperatives have within them a strict hierarchy and a city-wide security architecture, which is largely geared towards internal discipline and which, according to one such security officer, is effectively 'under police control' despite a degree of autonomy.<sup>39</sup> These forms of association effectively limit the capacity for urban groups to organise in ways that might be politically more threatening to the government. They partly account for the absence of overt state-society conflict, but also reflect the constraints on civil society in Kigali.

The urban transport sector provides a particularly striking example. In the 1990s and 2000s the '*taxi-moto*' (motorcycle taxi) industry grew apace in Kigali, and this soon became associated with theft, drugs and 'disorganisation' among urban youth. The government responded by introducing strict regulations and a security department within the *taxi-moto* association itself, as well as encouraging them to undertake 'voluntary' work such as planting trees and building houses for genocide survivors.<sup>40</sup> A problematic industry was thus turned to the government's advantage, incorporating the motorcyclists into city surveillance mechanisms and local development plans. This approach taken towards many other areas of

urban informal activity is similar. Informal street trade and informal settlements are considered ‘security issues’.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, having ushered in this urban stability, the motivation for sustaining it is powerful: Kigali’s status as a successful post-conflict development story is itself a political resource that the government draws on for legitimacy and credibility at home and abroad.

### **Tensions beneath the surface of a fragile urban order**

There are of course dissenting voices when it comes to the government’s vision for Kigali and the manner of its implementation. The expropriations in the name of the Master Plan discussed earlier have proved highly controversial, and the relative absence of social violence in the city should not obscure the use of actual or threatened violence by the state in relation to these kinds of state-society interactions.<sup>42</sup> By 2011 the government had decided to temporarily halt the process until the desired investment to develop the already-expropriated areas was in place, for fear of stimulating discontent.<sup>43</sup> There is little doubt that life is already very difficult for the urban poor due to the strict constraints on informal economic activity; one non-government source claimed that ‘the way the plan is moving, poor people are being eliminated’ from the city,<sup>44</sup> and even a government minister conceded that many poor people leave because ‘life is almost impossible for low earners in Kigali’.<sup>45</sup>

Moreover, despite the securitisation of the city there are clear reasons to believe that divisions continue to characterise Rwandan society. Bitter disputes over the ownership of plots of land in Kigali still persist, which according to one local politician are by far the most challenging aspect of the job.<sup>46</sup> Evidence also indicates that genocide survivors feel neglected by the state.<sup>47</sup> It is also important not to suggest that the relative absence of violent crime and conflict in the public sphere translates into the private; levels of rape and sexual violence

remain very high (Baker, 2007, p. 349). Meanwhile, the on-going process of trying genocide perpetrators through the controversial *gacaca* community courts reveals the depth of continuing ethnic divisions, and reconciliation between perpetrators and survivors is a long way off even according to observers who generally view the trials favourably (Clark 2010).

That social divisions should still run deep is hardly surprising. Yet they are only aired in certain circumscribed fora such as *gacaca*, which was designed to deal with past grievances and not present concerns; discussion of ethnicity is only acceptable in relation to the past, if at all. The government's discourses about unity, order and appropriate 'mindsets'<sup>48</sup> – combined of course with strict laws on divisionism – have imposed clear and controversial constraints on public debate about Rwanda's present (Beswick, 2010). This raises the question of how the more everyday conflicts and antagonisms that form part of urban life are to be aired. The limited space for debate could be driving both social antagonisms and grievances against the state under the surface rather than channelling them upwards in way that offer the potential to fuel social development. After all, urban transformation ultimately requires 'dissensus' – 'focused disagreement on how best to allocate public resources across space...and time' (Pieterse 2008: 156).

Adversarial political engagement represents a threat to the order the state has so effectively established, and a threat to order is seen as a threat to security. Given Rwanda's history, these concerns are understandable. However, the implications of such constraints in an urban setting merit consideration: social conflict does not simply evaporate, especially in diverse and highly unequal cities. The strong belief in Rwanda that 'things have to go well in the city first',<sup>49</sup> due to Kigali's visibility and its demonstration effect for the broader country, 'overdetermines' the city (Esser, this volume) in an unusual sense. The government's determination that Kigali should be a model of peaceful development could have dubious implications for future stability if adequate channels for civic engagement are not in place.

Research presented elsewhere in this volume indicates that things can also often go *badly* in the city first, especially in post-conflict settings.

The possibility that conflicts beneath the surface of Kigali's fragile security and order are simply being suppressed or 'deferred' rather than addressed, due to the lack of adequate channels for expression of grievances, should therefore not be discounted. The series of grenade attacks in Kigali prior to the 2010 election, and more sporadically in 2011 and 2012, would seem to suggest this possibility.<sup>50</sup> Social conflicts can sometimes dissipate over time, particularly with rising prosperity and development; but this usually takes generations. Given the short time frames Rwanda is working with and the nature of the political environment, the possibility of deferral rather than dissipation is difficult to ignore.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has analysed Kigali's transformation from a space of post-conflict trauma and instability to an internationally acclaimed 'model' of orderly and peaceful development; a trajectory that has differed widely from most post-conflict urban settings. We have argued that the consolidation of political control by the RPF both nationally and locally, alongside a developmental agenda predicated on attracting investment and integrating the population into the re-ordering of the city socially and economically, transformed urban security in ways that exceeded expectations for post-conflict cities. Both donor relations and domestic politics have allowed the country's leaders to operate in a relatively unconstrained manner in designing and implementing an urban vision of their choosing. In other countries, where opposition parties are in power at the city level and/or governments have less leverage *vis-à-vis* donors, institutional conflict and fragmentation can hinder this kind of radical urban reorganisation and often leave the city as a site of enduring violence after war, as other

articles in this volume suggest.

However, while Kigali has largely served as a post-conflict urban anomaly up to this point in time, there is no guarantee that this dynamic is necessarily sustainable. On the one hand, the city's trajectory represents a remarkable success story: Kigali's experience has demonstrated how centralised policy-making and implementation, political determination and donor support can help to ensure security and urban modernisation to take place in an extremely complex post-genocidal context. The city's progress on these fronts is an internal symbol of national regeneration as well as a sign to the international community of the country's progress and its suitability as a site for much needed foreign resources. Yet the chosen political mode for overcoming a history of catastrophic interpersonal violence has not been without problems of its own, and may be obstructing certain critical conversations relating to past grievances and present demands. The question remains whether Kigali really is a 'model' of development broadly conceived, rather than just a model of order. Indeed, while security and planning are important preconditions for development, a country facing Rwanda's population pressure and urbanisation trajectory needs cities that can also include people politically and provide substantial new economic opportunities for the poor. So long as a fundamental fragility underpins the political system and the development vision for the city offers little for those on low incomes, the sustainability of Kigali's impressive levels of security and stability should not be taken for granted.



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<sup>1</sup> According to UN statistics, the only time a (marginally) higher growth rate has been seen anywhere since 1950 was in Western Sahara in the late 1970s (UNPD, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Rwanda's Gini coefficient increased from 0.47 around the turn of the millennium to 0.51 in 2006 (RoR, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> While ethnicity remains a critical factor in contemporary Rwanda, overt discussion of it in public is very limited. Newbury and Baldwin for example highlighted this as an issue back in 2000 (Newbury and Baldwin: 5) and more recent legal frameworks in Rwanda which criminalize 'divisionism' have made research on ethnicity even more difficult. While the law is vague regarding the exact parameters of 'divisionism' (Amnesty International: 15), in practice, it means that people are reticent to speak overtly about the subject. Statistical data on ethnic factors are also significantly more limited now than in the past as indicated by a lack of ethnicity indicators in recent census or Demographic and Health Survey reports (for example see NISR 2010). Given these limitations, it was not possible to delve into issues of ethnicity within the confines of this research, beyond some anecdotal evidence presented later in the paper.

<sup>4</sup> Note that the question of when exactly this distinction first appeared, and the degree to which it was introduced by the Belgians, is a subject of much debate (Mamdani, 2001, Chrétien, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Rose Kabuye, 12 February 2010. Other interviewees gave similar characterisation of the city.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Rose Kabuye, 12 February 2010. Kabuye is reputed to have been close to Kagame during the war years (Prunier, 2008, p. 44), and along with other leading women such as Aloisea Inyamba is also something of a symbol of the important role women played in the RPF struggle (Powley, 2006, p. 5).

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Rose Kabuye, 12 February 2010.

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- <sup>8</sup> Interview with government official 13 February 2009.
- <sup>9</sup> Interview with local government official, 25 February 2009.
- <sup>10</sup> Interview with Rose Kabuye, 12 February 2010.
- <sup>11</sup> Interview with Rose Kabuye, 12 February 2010.
- <sup>12</sup> Much has been written on the massacre of thousands that accompanied the closure of the Kibeho camp in 1995 (Gourevitch, 1998, Prunier, 2008), causing some donors to temporarily withhold aid (Hayman, 2007, p. 13).
- <sup>13</sup> <http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?typeid=19&catid=564&cid=5666>, accessed 27 April 2011.
- <sup>14</sup> For critical perspectives on this policy see Ansoms (2008) and various chapters in Straus and Waldorf (2011).
- <sup>15</sup> Fungibility relates to the basic question of whether recipients allocate aid in the way donors intended (McGillivray and Morrissey, 2000). If the aid is funding something that the government would have paid for anyway, then it allows the government to divert the resources it would have used for that purpose to other ends.
- <sup>16</sup> Notes from attendance by one of the authors in the closing workshop of PIGU, 14 December 2009.
- <sup>17</sup> Figures obtained on vehicle registration from the Rwanda Revenue Authority, February 2009.
- <sup>18</sup> This term refers to the village level of governance. ‘*Umudugudu*’ is the singular and ‘*imidugudu*’ the plural.
- <sup>19</sup> Interview, 19 February 2009. The idea that such a ‘culture’ has characterised Rwanda since pre-colonial times has been widely discussed (Prunier, 1995, Gourevitch, 1998, Mamdani, 2001, Straus, 2006).
- <sup>20</sup> Interviews with local government sources, 16–17 February 2009.
- <sup>21</sup> Law No. 10/2006 of 03/03/2006, Determining the Structure, Organization, and the Functioning of the City of Kigali.
- <sup>22</sup> These restrictions are enshrined in the 2003 Constitution. They were formally lifted in 2007, but this does not seem to have changed much in practice (Beswick, 2010, p. 234).
- <sup>23</sup> Interview with government official, 19 February 2009.
- <sup>24</sup> See Goodfellow (2012a) for a fuller discussion of the expropriations.
- <sup>25</sup> RDB Website <http://www.rdb.rw/rdb/real-estate.html>, accessed 29 May 2012.
- <sup>26</sup> Interview with KC official, 15 February 2009.
- <sup>27</sup> Interview with UN advisors, 4 February 2010; interview with donor representative, 14 December 2009
- <sup>28</sup> Interview with government minister, 9 December 2009.
- <sup>29</sup> Interview with Fred Rwihunda, Director of Real Estate, *Caisse Sociale de Rwanda*, 2 February 2010.
- <sup>30</sup> For a discussion of the role of these investors in Rwanda’s development see Booth and Golooba-Mutebi (2011)
- <sup>31</sup> Interview with former RPA soldier and street hawker, 8 February 2010.
- <sup>32</sup> Interviews with foreign investors, November 2009-February 2010.
- <sup>33</sup> Interview with Vincent Karega, Minister of Infrastructure, 9 December 2009
- <sup>34</sup> Interview with KC official, February 2010.
- <sup>35</sup> Interview with Kigali residents and local finance official, December 2011.
- <sup>36</sup> Note that in Rwanda ‘youth’ is a broad category encompassing people aged 14–35.
- <sup>37</sup> Interview with Vincent Karega, Minister of Infrastructure, 9 December 2009.
- <sup>38</sup> Interview with a Rwandan researcher, 18 November 2009.
- <sup>39</sup> Interview with security officer from a transport cooperative, 7 December 2009.



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<sup>40</sup> See Goodfellow (2012b) for a further discussion of this sector.

<sup>41</sup> Various interviews with KC officials, November-December 2009.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with land specialist, 24 February 2009; interview with civil society source, 3 February 2010.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with city planner, 6 December 2011.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with civil society source, 3 February 2010.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Vincent Karega, Minister of Infrastructure, 9 December 2009.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with former local politician, 15 December 2009.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with local civil society organisation, 11 December 2009.

<sup>48</sup> One government advisor noted in an informal conversation that ‘transforming mindsets’ was of concern to the President.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with government official, 9 February 2009.

<sup>50</sup> Responsibility for these attacks has not been resolved.