ORGANIZING GRASSROOTS INFRASTRUCTURE FOR MORE INCLUSIVE AND RESILIENT CITIES: THE (IN)VISIBLE WORK OF ORGANIZATIONAL ‘INCOMPLETENESS’

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HTTPS://GRASSROOTSFINANCIALINNOVATION.ORG FUNDDED BY DANISH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY AND THE SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR LOCAL DEMOCRACY ICLD
Growth in the word’s urban population by region from 1960 to 2020 and projected to 2040 (IIEDD, 2020)
AIM
To examine the collective actions of grassroots organisations in creating and governing these infrastructures in the context of informal settlements

THEORY
It builds on organization studies and urban infrastructure literature

METHOD
Informed by the case of resident associations providing critical services and infrastructure in informal settlements in Kisumu, Kenya
## KISUMU AND ITS INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task forces</th>
<th>When created</th>
<th>activities</th>
<th>service coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Solid Waste Management Task Force        | 2009         | - Waste Collection  
                      |                                           | - Clean ups  
                      |                                           | 15% - Waste Collection  
                      |                                           | 5% - Clean ups            |
| Sanitation                               | 2009         | - Sanitation champions fighting open defecation  | 20% - Sanitation                             |
| Renewable Energy                         | 2009         | Promotion of solar lighting and solar cookers.    | 5%                                            |
| Urban Agriculture                        | 2009         | New technology in farming eg sack gardens.      | 5%                                            |
| Housing                                  | 2009         | Advocacy for improvement of housing             | 5%                                            |
| Health                                   | 2009         | Promotion of community health volunteers to improve health at household levels and prevent maternal deaths | 40%                                           |

Obunga Resident Association
Grassroots infrastructures are characterized by:

1. **Shaping a partial organization** but creating the illusion of a formal and complete organization

2. **Crafting critical** (and often hidden) material and organisational infrastructures for the subsistence of dormant (and visible) structures; and

3. **Moulding nested** infrastructure that shelters layers of **floating** and autonomous groups
1. Partial organizations creating the illusion of complete organizations

- Apparently a ‘true organisation’ (Brunsson, 2006), but rather responds to the concept of partial organisation (Ahrne and Brunsson, 2011), with the ‘minimum sets of elements’ (Simone, 2004)
- RA as a legitimate organisational form as it covers a broad territory
- Recruiting existing organisations: boda boda, table banking

“RA are not reliable, never elections…RA are very amorphous” County officer

Task forces, formal organization, Obunga RA
2. Critical (hidden) infrastructures for the subsistence of dormant (visible) infrastructures

- Fluctuating (dormant) infrastructures, that are quickly articulated when resources arrive
- Operative because of the critical infrastructure, providing the minimum activity to keep the cohesion of this loose organisation
- Members of dormant groups move to other active ones. Knowledge & competences remain in the RA
- Or 'dormant or disappeared' groups are called back if necessary under the RA

Visitor pointing out to a ‘dormant’ but visible task force, Obunga RA
2. Critical (hidden) infrastructures for the subsistence of dormant (visible) infrastructures

- Critical material infrastructures sustain life in informal settlements: ”Water is the mother of others, water is life” ”Money matters”
- Providing social and organizational infrastructures: cohesion, sense of belonging, stability and continuity
- Remain invisible for outsiders (Start 1999), to the untrained eye of the foreigner (Hyden, 1983)
3. Nested (Ostrom, 1990) and floating infrastructure (Melucci, 1996)

Task forces, Obunga
Nested infrastructure

Table banking Manyatta
Floating infrastructure
CONCLUSIONS

1. The hidden power of organizational ‘incompleteness’
2. Grassroots infrastructure, through partial organizing (incompleteness), can successfully govern common resources and infrastructures in resource-poor environments
3. Grassroots infrastructure constantly engage in rendering their partial infrastructures visible, mobilizing a wide register of (in)visibility approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invisible</th>
<th>Visible</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical</td>
<td>Dormant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floating</td>
<td>Nested</td>
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