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Diversity, justice and slum upgrading: An intersectional approach to urban development

Andrea Rigon

Bartlett Development Planning Unit, University College London, UK

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ABSTRACT

Slum upgrading interventions often assume that all residents have similar aspirations and needs. However, these neighbourhoods rank among the most unequal settlements, and interventions can create winners and losers. Different dimensions of diversity have to be taken into consideration in planning such interventions to ensure a just outcome. Through the analysis of specific examples of slum upgrading processes in Nairobi, the paper identifies three interlinked aspects of diversity that need to be considered. These relate to Fraser's dimensions of social justice and to the pillars of the right to the city. We find that slum upgrading projects assume that all residents aspire to better housing and are willing to invest their savings and effort to achieve this. However, this is not a priority for everyone living in informal settlements. For many, the informal settlement is a relatively cheap housing option located close to good educational and economic opportunities, allowing parents to save for children's education. Interventions in informal settlements seldom consider the impact of market dynamics on different groups of residents. In informal settlements with some rental housing, improved infrastructures can lead to sudden increases in rent, displacing the most vulnerable residents of the settlement. Attempts to take diversity into account in participatory processes with local residents generally only recognise a limited number of dimensions of identity. They tend to divide people based on one dimension only, as if there were no others. However, people have multiple identities and some can be more salient than others when it comes to slum upgrading. This paper argues for an intersectional and relational approach, focusing on the relations between residents, and between different groups of residents.

1. Introduction

Improving the living conditions in informal settlements[1] is a major global development objective at the core of the Sustainable Development Goals, and slum upgrading remains "the most financially and socially appropriate approach to addressing the challenge of existing slums" (UN-Habitat, 2014, p. 15). A narrow definition of slum upgrading refers to improvements in housing and/or basic infrastructure in slum areas, but it can refer to a broader set of physical, social, economic, and environmental improvements (UN-Habitat, 2014). Most slum upgrading interventions assume that all residents have similar aspirations, but these neighbourhoods can be some of the most unequal settlement examples. Not all their residents are poor. For example, there are investors in slum housing making good profits from renting out their portfolio (Amis, 1984, 1996; Gulyani & Talukdar, 2008; Scheba & Turok, 2020). There are successful business people enjoying the benefits of fewer regulatory constraints in the informal sector. At the same time, there are tenants with few rights and unstable livelihoods, or foreign migrants with no access to the benefits of social policy. In this unequal context, slum upgrading interventions create winners and losers. This reality is in stark contrast to narratives of "harmonious cities" (UN-Habitat, 2008a).

Literature on slum upgrading largely focuses on the physical implementation steps or the institutional arrangements between different levels of government, NGOs, and the community. Certain literature problematises the effects that upgrading may have in terms of gentrification and land speculation in these low-income neighbourhoods (Huchzermeyer, 2008). However, policy and academic literature has given less attention to the importance of addressing internal diversity

E-mail address: andrea.rigon@ucl.ac.uk.

[1] This paper prefers the term 'informal settlement', but uses both slum and informal settlement interchangeably. We are aware of the contentious politics around these terminologies and that sometimes they are used to indicate different types of settlements. The term 'slum' can also have derogatory connotations. However, it is a difficult term to avoid. It is embraced and reclaimed positively by residents and their organisations, and used by the United Nations which also means that available global statistics refer to slums.

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regarding slum upgrading, although there has been increased acknowledgement of the importance of gender. This paper takes this conversation forward by demonstrating the ways in which residents' diversity matters in slum upgrading. It analyses specific examples of slum upgrading processes in Kenya and discusses their relevance for Sub-Saharan Africa, the region with the highest proportion of its urban population living in slums.

This paper argues for the need to consider the complex ways in which different aspects of residents' identities intersect and how these internal social relations matter to slum upgrading. Such aspects include gender, class, race and ethnicity, citizenship status, age, ability, and sexuality. Residents' identities can also shape the way in which interventions interact with external processes, obtaining different outcomes for different people. The paper concludes by advocating the adoption of an intersectional and relational approach in the design and implementation of slum upgrading processes, focusing on recognising the different needs and aspirations of slum residents, ensuring fair distribution of benefits, and enabling all residents to meaningfully participate in decision-making.

Satterthwaite (2012) identifies three types of slum upgrading initiatives: upgrading driven by individual/household investment; upgrading driven by community/neighbourhood investment and upgrading driven by external programmes. This paper mostly refers to upgrading driven by external programmes, but its insights are also relevant for policy makers and organisations promoting other types, particularly given that, in reality, these are often intertwined.

Following a review of slum upgrading and different ways of conceptualising slum-dwellers, the paper introduces debates around socially constructed identities, intersectionality and relational approaches, and their links with community participation. The paper then presents a three-dimensional framework which links different aspects of diversity to social justice and the right to the city, in order to assess slum upgrading. Each of these dimensions is discussed using examples in which *class* is used as an entry point to explore how it intersects with other dimensions. The conclusion suggests principles for an intersectional and relational slum upgrading approach.

2. Literature review

2.1. Slum upgrading

The percentage of the urban population living in 'slums' has decreased in all regions over the past three decades,[2] declining by 20% between 2000 and 2014. More recently, this trend has been reversed. In absolute terms more than one billion people now live in slums; about a quarter of them in Sub-Saharan Africa.[3] This indicates that the pace of urbanization and population growth is exceeding the construction of adequate and affordable housing, highlighting the importance of slum upgrading programmes.

In many Sub-Saharan African countries, government responses to informal settlements have changed over time. Many newly independent countries initially tolerated informal settlements, as they were regarded as a temporary phenomenon linked to rural-urban migration that would naturally disappear with economic growth (UN-Habitat, 2003). They were also seen as spaces of transition, having forms similar to the traditional rural villages soon to be absorbed by the city (Njoh, 2003). However, few formal houses were built; they had high standards and were unaffordable to low-income groups. In the 1970s, the policy was often one of *slum clearance* through demolitions and evictions, which only led to a proliferation of new slums. The introduction of *site and services* schemes, principally funded by the World Bank, represented a new response to the issue of slums (Bassett & Jacobs, 1997). These schemes were intended to relocate slum-dwellers to different areas and provide them with basic urban services such as roads, water, and electricity. They also provided financing for housing construction. Construction was started by the site and services projects, but often the housing units had to be completed by the beneficiaries. These projects succeeded in partially addressing the demand for housing; however the target groups were generally not consulted in the planning process and corruption occurred during the allocation of plots (Syagga, Mitullah, & Karirah-Gitau, 2001). Many programmes were conceived according to middle class standards and were not economically sustainable for the target group, leading to gentrification (Campbell, 1990; Huchzermeyer, 2008; Mayo & Gross, 1987; Rakodi, 2001, p. 213; Syagga et al., 2001; Wakely, 2016).[4]

More recently, several governments have recognised that, in cooperation with their residents, slums can be upgraded *in situ*. This acknowledgement was also the result of campaigning for urban land rights and activism led by NGOs in the housing rights sector (Huchzermeyer, 2008), and the widespread awareness that urbanisation is irreversible and that only appropriate policies targeting the slums can make urbanisation sustainable. In situ slum upgrading became the main internationally promoted policy to deal with informal settlements (Gulyani & Bassett, 2007). Such a change in policy was influenced by the prominent, progressive work of John Turner (1970, 1977; 1972), who argued that if governments could improve some basic infrastructures such as sanitation, then residents themselves could improve their houses incrementally, especially if provided with security of tenure and finance.

Reviewing slum upgrading in Sub-Saharan Africa, Gulyani and Bassett (2007) noted how interventions have shifted from an exclusively housing focus to access to infrastructure and services. However, they found that earlier ambitious multi-sectoral projects have been replaced by more modest ones. Project approaches with short timescales, little participation from beneficiaries, and relatively low levels of investment have been factors limiting the effectiveness of slum upgrading in the region (Arimah, 2011).

Over the last 20 years, the global initiative Cities Alliance 'Cities Without Slums' has recognised that informal settlements are the manifestations of urban poverty and thus slum upgrading must centre around poverty reduction measures (Cities Alliance, 2012). This emphasises the importance of interventions going beyond housing.

The shift to a slum upgrading approach was also accompanied by the recognition of slum-dwellers as citizens with rights. Although evictions are still a reality for many residents of informal settlements, international policy and commitments recognise that they should be avoided. These considerations tended to establish collective rights but also to categorise slum-dwellers as a homogenous category. Even in detailed guidelines about slum upgrading (UN-Habitat, 2014), the only reference to residents' diversity is a reminder of the importance of gender awareness which does not further examine differences within the category of 'women'.

Although not the focus of this paper, an important set of slum-upgrading approaches emerged from self-organised slum dwellers with the help of NGOs. They are collecting data about their settlements and needs, raising important financial resources and negotiating with public authorities for their recognition and infrastructural interventions, effectively co-producing upgrading (Patel, Arputham, Burra, & Savchuk, 2009; Patel, Baptist, & D'Cruz, 2012). These approaches rely on constructing a strong settlement's collective identity. Different African countries are also developing slightly different approaches to slum upgrading responding to different aspects of their specific context, including broader housing policies, the characteristics of the housing market, the financial capacity, and the level of prioritisation of the issue

[2] Data available at: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/2017/66&Lang=E.

[3] https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/goal-11/.

[4] For a detailed discussion of the impact of these projects, see Rakodi (1991) and Campbell (1990).

(see for example, Cirolia, Görgens, Smit, & Drimie, 2016; Cities Alliance, 2021; Tomlinson, 2017).

Since its origins, slum upgrading has had a progressive history of responding to the residents of informal settlements and including them in the city, albeit seldom dealing with the unjust land distribution across the city (de Castro Mazarro, Sikder, & Pedro, 2022). Even if outcomes, especially in the Sub-Saharan African region, have been mixed, slum upgrading continues to evolve to be more inclusive. It recognises more and more the importance of addressing urban poverty and putting residents' participation at the centre (Cities Alliance, 2021). A number of national and subnational actors in Sub-Saharan Africa have developed specific approaches with some differences in the way in which they deal with residents' diversity. This paper contributes to this policy-oriented debate by showing how addressing the complexity of social diversity is key to the outcomes of slum upgrading.

2.2. *Portraying slum-dwellers*

The development discourse around informal settlements often views slums as communities with relatively homogeneous populations. Often, internal diversity is simply approached by dividing people in basic categories such as gender or age. This way of approaching diversity is problematic because it does not consider the way in which different dimensions of identities intersect within the same person and which dimensions of identities become salient in specific contexts and processes.

Policy papers offer normative descriptions of residents, presenting their socio-economic characteristics and designing a profile of an ideal type of slum-dweller often characterised by what they lack (slum-dwellers lack …). UN reports may sometimes distinguish slum-dwellers by gender or age, through the categories of women or youth (youth living in the slums are …) and often, slum-dwellers are broken down by areas (in Sub-Saharan Africa, slum-dwellers are …). Studies of slum households generally consider all residents as being poor. Some more refined studies establish the incidence of poor households, generally the majority, by establishing an expenditure-based threshold. For instance, Gulyani and Talukdar (2008) found that 73% of Nairobi slum households were poor.

However, there is little work that tries to shine some light on the complex social stratification of the slums, how different livelihood strategies are influenced by the life projects of their residents, and how these personal projects are affected by development interventions (Ghosh, 2008). Some research looks at how households should build and diversify their asset bases to be more resilient when facing crises. Increasingly more work, especially at policy level, is dedicated to the role of youth and their strategies, and to the threat of urban unemployed youth (Enria, 2018; Finn, 2018; Thieme, 2018). There is work on specific groups who are deemed to be more vulnerable than others but do not necessarily focus on how to take this into consideration in processes of slum upgrading (Chant & McIlwaine, 2016; Ramalho & Chant, 2021; Walker, Frediani, & Trani, 2013). Moreover, work looking at intra-settlement diversity has not impacted on slum upgrading practice.

However, in some policy documents there is an increased awareness of the importance of a more complex understanding of slum-dwellers. For example, UN-Habitat states that "A gendered awareness is vital for the understanding of how urban societies function as gender divisions are found at every level of any society … However, gender relations do not exist in a vacuum, but they intersect with other social relations, such as class, ethnicity, age and race … For our purpose, if our interventions are to be successful, they must cater for the different needs and interests of both, men and women" (2008b, p. 33). More recently, the New Urban Agenda (United Nations, 2017) has led to an important policy shift with a vision of cities for all and UN-Habitat considering the concept of the right to the city, which as discussed in the framework below, incorporates important dimensions of diversity.

3. Diversity and intersectionality

3.1. *Socially constructed identities, intersectionality and a relational approach*

Over the past 30 years, social scientists working on gender, race and identity have gained a deeper understanding of how our identities shape life chances. In the seminal collection *Development and Social Diversity*, Eade (1996, p. 5) summarises this insight: "The recognition that our needs, our perspectives, and our aspirations are shaped both by who we are — and by how we relate to others, and they to us". People have multiple simultaneous identities, such as gender, class, race and ethnicity, age, ability, citizenship status, and sexuality. They can be individual or collective, they are fluid and in constant change (Bauman, 2000; Hall, 1992), shape different experiences, needs and aspirations, and play a major role in social processes. The concept of *intersectionality* helps us to understand these dynamics. It refers to how the combination of multiple dimensions of identity creates unique experiences, especially of oppression and discrimination (Bastia, 2014). Such relationships between identities are interweaved with power. There are consolidated hierarchies and power relations amongst these identities which make them relational: These includes relations between men and women, black and white people, etc. (Rigon & Castán Broto, 2021). The unequal relations between identities shape inequalities and marginalisation processes. These identities and the relationships between them change in different contexts and over time, which means they are *socially constructed,* and thus can be socially deconstructed (Castán Broto & Neves Alves, 2018). Therefore, addressing these inequalities requires a relational, contextual and intersectional approach focused on transforming the power relations embedded in social identities, making the recognition of diversity a political process (Beall, 1997).

Intersectionality is not about summing up different identities. It explores how the multiple oppressions of individuals and groups are shaped by how simultaneous identities position them in an imaged social map (Kabeer, 2016). Collective categories such as 'indigenous women' cannot be homogenised into a single narrative, as they depend on other factors such as income, age, marital status, citizenship, etc. Moreover, these identities are dynamic, reflecting both changes in people and in how others relate to them (B. Watson & Ratna, 2011). Intersectionality helps understand how systems of oppression co-produce injustices "structurally, materially and discursively" (Sultana, 2022, p. 1). Millstein (2017) argues for further analysis of the implications of different identities for how political claims are understood and produced. For example, she shows how housing policies in Cape Town are intertwined with racial identities, residential status, and different understandings of belonging to the community.

More recent work looking at the socio-materiality of infrastructure suggests considering the gendered, racialised, classed and aged bodies as infrastructure to reveal the embodied labour embedded in urban infrastructure and practices (Truelove & Ruszczyk, 2022). This builds on work exploring how urban development is made in the everyday and how it is unevenly experienced. The everyday activities of bodies in space reveal how subjectivities are produced out of the multiple and intersecting power relations (Nightingale, 2011). When adding a

perspective of the body as infrastructure, this work can also reveal the intersectionality of the slow infrastructural violence (Truelove & Ruszczyk, 2022). An intersectional approach also requires moving beyond the epistemologies of those in position of privilege and give priority to the knowledge of those of gender, class, race identities that are oppressed because such knowledge is more likely to capture these complex realities (Oldfield, 2015).

Drawing on feminist political ecology, Mohanty shows how the "micropolitics of context, subjectivity, and struggle'' enables to link everyday practices and local ideologies to larger scale structures and processes (2003, p. 225). These daily practices linked to the use of urban infrastructure and services contribute to patterns of social differentiation and the formation of identities such as gender and class (Truelove, 2011).

As we discuss below, development processes are often the result of collective action with communities acting to improve their situation directly, or by making collective claims. This requires accepting a level of simplification and homogenisation in order to agree collectively on a course of action. In this context, intersectionality pushes us into constant reflection about exclusion and oppression in these community processes, so as to manage this tension between the necessary homogenisation of collective claims and the diversity of individual aspirations.

3.2. *Community participation*

Since the 1980s, the failure of top-down development approaches has accelerated a much-needed debate on participatory development. Nowadays, there is agreement on the need for some degree of residents' participation. There is now recognition of the fundamental role of communities in development interventions, and of the importance of treating beneficiaries as active agents and experts about their own social reality. However, participatory approaches adopted in development largely rely on an idealised view of harmonious communities, ignoring their internal power structures (Guijt & Kaul Shah, 1998).

The community is increasingly considered an active and essential partner of government and development agencies. An independent actor that offers democratic legitimacy and ensures effective implementation, by making beneficiaries compliant. However, rather than adopting an intersectional approach to working with internal diversity and the conflicts that are a constitutive part of urban realities, community participation often overlooks these complexities. For example, the narrative of 'harmonious cities' represented in the homonymous flagship UN-Habitat report (2008a) seems to suggest social harmony as a goal.

Community participation approaches have often reproduced and sometimes solidified previous inequalities (Anonymous 2014, Mosse, 2005) because participation is an outcome of a political process. Such process is influenced by participants' differing accesses to resources and power based on their intersecting identities (Mayoux, 1995). These participatory processes are often captured by local elites who are able to present their interests as those of the entire community (Mansuri & Rao, 2013). At the same time, the literature has explored insurgent and organic forms of participation in urban planning (Holston, 2008) and the everyday practices of planning that poor urban residents deploy to appropriate their settlements and resist exclusionary, if not repressive, government policies (Bénit-Gbaffou & Oldfield, 2011; V. Watson, 2009). As discussed above, some of these grassroots planning practices are channelled through collective action processes of slum upgrading from below (Patel et al., 2012; Satterthwaite, 2008).

An important way to interrogate internal inequalities is to explore the implications of internal diversity through an intersectional and relational lens. This requires considering different scales and the interactions between them, as well as unpacking the view of an informal settlement being one community, and looking at its different groups and their relations. Often, key data to determine key social characteristics and project beneficiaries is collected using households as units of analysis, overlooking inequalities *within* regarding access to and control of assets, particularly depending on gender and age. Thus, it is important to explore the complexity of individual experiences and how these are aggregated in collective processes.

Table 1
Framework showing the interlinked dimensions of Fraser's social justice, right to the city, and dimensions of diversity in slum upgrading. Author elaboration.

Dimensions of Social Justice (Fraser)	Pillars of the right to the city (Habitat III)	Dimensions of diversity in slum upgrading
Recognition	Social, economic and cultural diversity	Diversity of needs and aspirations requiring different interventions
Redistribution	Spatially just resource distribution	The diversity of impacts of slum upgrading on different groups and individuals
Participation	Political agency (inclusive governance)	Diversity in participation to decision-making

4. Methodology

This article draws upon primary research conducted in Kenya's informal settlements between 2008 and 2015. This was preceded by two years (2005–2007) of work as a project manager and then as a country coordinator for an international NGO working to support the rights of informal settlement dwellers. During a substantial part of this period, I lived in two informal areas of Nairobi (Kabiria in the West and Korogocho in the North-East). The author was also supporting the work of the Kutoka Network, a network of parishes in informal settlements conducting a number of advocacy campaigns, for example, regarding anti-eviction, land regularisation, the health impacts of the Dandora dumpsite. Through this work, I gained personal knowledge of dozens of households living in informal settlements, their aspirations and their personal and collective trajectories. This network was then fundamental when I started my doctoral research in 2008 in Nairobi's informal settlements and when I worked as a consultant for UN-Habitat (2009-10). In this second phase, I have captured these aspirations and trajectories through interviews and life histories. I also benefited from my time as a research associate at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Nairobi (2009–2011). After my doctoral research, I remained in touch with these households and came back twice for further fieldwork in these settlements (last comprehensive stint in 2015 but last visit to the settlements was in 2019) to follow up on the urban transformations and especially the progress of the Korogocho Slum Upgrading Programme, which was the outcome of advocacy work I had conducted since 2005. In total, I have lived in Nairobi for almost four years, in addition to shorter periods of field research in subsequent years. The paper also draws on my involvement as a cofounder of the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre in Freetown, where I conducted primary research between 2015 and 2017 but where I have visited and worked with informal settlement residents regularly until just before the COVID pandemic. The paper is informed by other research and professional travel to Uganda, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Liberia, Nigeria and South Africa. This includes a visit together with Sierra Leonean colleagues, focused on slum upgrading and housing in Cape Town, which involved the city council and Western Cape governments, and the following organisations: the African Centre for Cities, DAG, ISANDLA, CORC and VPUU. Finally, the paper is based on substantial secondary literature, and many conversations and presentations at conferences. A number of methods were employed in this research, including participant observation, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, participatory workshops, and life histories. For example, Anne and Mary (see below) participated in long semi-structured interviews where we went through their life history, they were shadowed on multiple days in their activities, and I undertook participant observations in many meetings in which they were involved. I also got to know their families personally.

5. Social justice, diversity, and the right to the city

As discussed earlier, diversity is a political process and the analysis in this paper emerges from concerns about equality and justice. Therefore, a normative framework for this analysis is proposed, building on Nancy Fraser's work (1998, 2000, 2005) on social justice (See Table 1). She proposes three dimensions of justice/injustice which broadly coincide with three intertwined aspects of diversity relevant to slum upgrading.[5] These also match quite well the three pillars of the right to the city as presented in the Habitat III policy paper on the subject (United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, 2017). This is particularly relevant as the right to the city, albeit often framed as cities for all, is part of the New Urban Agenda guiding global urban development policy and, particularly, the work of UN-Habitat.[6]

- *Recognition. Diversity of needs and aspirations requiring different interventions:* slum-dwellers are diverse and reside in unequal settlements. Slum upgrading programmes differ greatly in their capacity to recognise and address the diversity of residents' needs and aspirations.
- *Redistribution. The diversity of impacts of slum upgrading on different groups and individuals:* slum upgrading programmes have profoundly different impacts on different groups and individuals residing in the city. Analyses of existing slum upgrading interventions counter narratives of win-win projects benefiting all community members and present a more complex and nuanced perspective on who gains from what intervention. Such analyses highlight the political choices about which individuals and groups to prioritise inherent in any slum upgrading interventions.
- *Participation. Diversity in participation to decision-making:* local governance structures often reflect unequal power relations at settlement level, making it difficult to ensure that they adequately represent the diversity of interests, particularly of the most marginalised people.

The following discussion will dedicate most space to the issue of recognition, because it is the most important argument for demonstrating that diversity matters in slum upgrading, but the author has published separately about participation (Rigon, 2014) and redistribution (Rigon, 2017, Rigon, Walker, & Koroma, 2020).

6. Discussion

6.1. Recognition: diversity of needs and aspirations requiring different interventions

The failure to recognise the diversity of needs and aspirations comes from not understanding a diversity of conceptualisations of housing, including what constitutes housing, its purpose, the importance of location, and how housing intersects with other aspirations. This diversity in residents' identities, and their resulting social positioning, means that they have different needs and aspirations when it comes to slum upgrading. This section builds on examples from Nairobi, Kenya's capital, to illustrate some of the complexities around this. While the specificities of Nairobi's informal settlements are not generalisable, the main argument that residents have diverse needs and aspirations linked to their intersectional identities, including socio-economic conditions, is more broadly relevant, renewing our call to recognise such diversity in slum upgrading.

A discussion around some key priorities for residents in informal settlements based on original research will be followed by examples that show residents' diversity regarding such priorities. In particular, this section will explore the following of Nairobi's slum-dwellers' priorities: proximity to livelihoods and good education; cheap rent; saving to invest in human capital; saving to invest 'back home' for migrants with connections to the place they or their parents came from. The presented findings regarding residents' aspirations and priorities are consistent with findings from previous and larger scale research in Nairobi (Mwau, Sverdlik, & Makau, 2020; Syagga et al., 2001; Syagga, Mitullah, & Karirah-Gitau, 2002; Weru, 2004).

In Nairobi, the needs and aspirations for slum upgrading are linked to specific aspects of diversity. One of the most important is class, which will be used as an entry point into the discussion. Many informal settlements are located on public land. However, some people have built structures to rent out, creating an important class division between structure owners (rather than landlords given they do not own the land) and tenants. Amongst the tenants, there are those with incomes that allow them some level of household investments, for example, in children's education or in their areas of origins. There are also very poor tenants struggling to meet their basic food needs. Another important difference is tenants' relationship with their areas of origins. Intersecting and shaping these, gender, age, ethnicity and ability play a crucial role.

Nairobi concentrates a significant part of the country's wealth, offering important livelihoods opportunities. Informal settlements offer a cheaper housing option to those working in the city. It also creates important opportunities within the settlements for those providing products and services to other residents, such as vending stalls, small eateries, barber's shops, etc (Githiri, Ngugi, Njoroge, & Sverdlik, 2016). The relative proximity to livelihood opportunities is of a great importance to residents.

6.1.1. Tenants

Tenants may differ by mobility/length of stay, sometimes have low and erratic informal earnings, and have other investment priorities besides urban housing (e.g. education, rural upcountry areas). In 1988, a study conducted in Korogocho (a large informal settlement in the North-East of Nairobi) by Wangaruro found that 94% of the residents were born in rural areas, and more than half arrived in Korogocho directly from rural areas.[7] Cheap rent was the reason given by more than 60% of these migrants for choosing Korogocho (Wangaruro, 1988). Over two decades later, the Socio-Economic Survey conducted prior to a slum upgrading programme in the same settlement found out that, “Cheap rent accounted for almost three fifths of the respondents' reasons for living in Korogocho” (UN-Habitat, 2010, p. 13).

A large section of the residents had less interest in slum upgrading programmes, and did not want to be involved with such programmes if it involved investing their savings and time. Such residents have other priorities, especially their children's education and investment in their rural area of origin; or, for the poorer residents, getting enough to eat. Moreover, there is a low level of trust in the 'community', and residents do not want to put their savings into a risky undertaking, the success of which depends upon cooperation, including inter-ethnic cooperation. Ethnicity is an important dimension of diversity in many Nairobi's

[5] I have been using Nancy Fraser's work to analyse development projects in informal settlements since 2012; and used this analysis in my course: Social Diversity, Inequality and Poverty. This framework was adapted from anonymised (2021). With some conceptual difference, it was also adopted by my MSc dissertation student, Vivian Yeboah, who has published it here (2021).

[6] I am aware that the debate on the right to the city is richer than the contested and limited notion adopted by Habitat III. I also acknowledge that the debate on the right to the city has brought important insights on social diversity (see for example, Blokland, Hentschel, Holm, Lebuhn, & Margalit, 2015; Global Platform for the Right to the City, 2020; Grigolo, 2019). However, the purpose of linking the framework to this notion of the right to the city is to show that there is already provision within mainstream urban policy to incorporate the three dimensions of diversity suggested in the framework presented.

[7] The sample was quite limited. However, even if there were an error, the trend would not change.

informal settlements, which plays an important political role going back to Colonial times (Rigon, 2013). For example, ethnic-conflict fuelled by contested presidential elections in 2007 led to inter-ethnic violence and killings which had one of their epicentres in Nairobi's informal settlements (De Smedt, 2009). Also in some settlements, there is a correlation between ethnicity and class, with people from specific ethnic groups being largely structure owners and people from other being predominantly tenants.

Some of these residents may have been living in the city for a long time, but they are still not willing to invest their savings and time in a programme that, in the long term, may transform them into homeowners. One of the former residents of Korogocho, who is now the director of one of the most important NGOs in the Kenyan housing sector, explains this view: "Many of us did not grow up in a stone house, we grew up in shacks and the priority for our parents was that we go to school" (Interview, 02/09/2010). This reflects the behaviour of another household.

Anne[8] is the oldest of seven children. With their parents they were living in two rooms of poor quality. Her father was doing some tailoring work from home, while her mother was selling vegetables at the side of the road a few metres away. They strongly believed in educating their children, and used all their savings to pay for the primary and secondary schooling of their children and the considerable related costs (books, uniform, etc.). Through the help of the church they attended, their older daughter was awarded a scholarship to study journalism at university, and afterwards got a relatively well-paid job as a journalist. She did not move from her parents' shack, and used her salary to pay for her siblings' secondary school. She largely sponsored the degree of one of her sisters, and managed to find a scholarship for a college diploma for another sister. She only moved out when she got pregnant with her boyfriend. They have relatives in the rural areas and try to visit them once every one or two years, but they own no valuable property there and their entire livelihood project is centred on Nairobi. Despite their significant increase in household income, they did not spend on improving their very poor housing conditions. Housing was not their priority, but also they would not invest in an area where they risked a lot during the 2007 post-election violence when, due to their ethnicity, they feared that their dwelling could have been burnt and they might have been forced to leave.

Beside children's education, there is another investment that some slum tenants prefer for their savings above urban housing. While this is changing with a new generation of Nairobi-born Kenyans, most people would still indicate their rural area of origin as their *home*. Many slum residents came into the city with the project of getting a job, providing an education to their children, and saving something to invest back in their rural home in order to have a nice place and valuable land to retire to. There is still a widely spread conception that Nairobi – and in particular the slums – is not the place to base one's identity, let alone the right place in which to invest. There is not only the issue of difficult access to urban land due to institutional constraints; many prefer to invest back in their rural areas among 'their people'. Even the middle class tends to build a house in their native place before buying one in Nairobi where they live (of course, this is also shaped by the lack of affordable urban housing supply).

It is far from certain how many slum tenants aspiring to a retired life in the countryside back 'home' will actually end up retiring there. This may be more likely to be part of a rural nostalgia omnipresent in the discourse of Nairobi residents, and discussed in the literature of rural migrants in urban areas in Sub-Saharan Africa (Posel, 2004; Victor, 2008). While this remains a fundamental question for policy makers, for the purpose of this paper it is not important to know whether these migrants will eventually return to their area of origins. What is important is that, under the current conditions, they are not willing to invest their savings and time to improve housing conditions in the informal settlements where they currently live.[9]

Moreover, most slum upgrading programmes increasingly require cooperation amongst the residents. Residents are often unwilling to invest their savings in a project where success depends on cooperation with their neighbours, particularly in mixed ethnic areas. Land scarcity implies that in most cases, rather than providing each household with an individual and independent plot to develop, residents will have to cooperate with other households, and finally own a flat within a building. Such cooperation also must occur in an area where insecurity and violence are a persistent presence. These projects are managed by government, and residents have experienced political patronage and corruption in the allocation of benefits in the past. This lack of trust shapes their strategies and aspirations (xx, 2014).

For example, in Korogocho, Floris (2006) found that 42% of residents trusted parents/family, 21% trusted 'nobody or myself', 25% trusted their religious leader, 7% trusted God and only 5% trusted the elders/community. When the same questions were asked again four months later, after some significant episodes of violence, the percentage of those who said that they only trusted their parents went up to 70%. The increase in violence had caused people to retreat into their primary relationships (pp. 67–68). Similarly, a UN-Habitat survey in the Nairobi's informal settlement of Kibera, where another major slum upgrading programme is ongoing, found that 31% of the 250 families interviewed were fearful that they would not benefit from the project due to corruption in the allocation of housing. 27% feared not being able to pay for the new house, 17% feared the lengthy and obscure process and, finally, 17% expressed their desire to build their own homes rather than being relocated (Flores Fernandez & Calas, 2011).

6.1.2. *Poor tenants*

Poor tenants represent a large category. They have no savings capacity and are not even able to afford sufficient food. According to the Socio-Economic Survey conducted to inform the slum upgrading programme in Korogocho, 64% of the residents answered that their household did not have enough food. 68% coped with the situation by skipping meals, while 25% reduced food quantities (KSUP, 2010, p. 145). The average household size is relatively small, about 3.2 people (programme enumeration data), and this has been explained by the presence of numerous single men living alone, and a large presence of young single mothers with one or two children.

Location and insecurity are important dimensions of spatial inequality within informal settlements, where rent and property values differ significantly depending on the security level and characteristics such as overcrowding and access to infrastructure and services. Many poor tenants stay in Korogocho for the relatively cheap rent and tend to live in the cheaper areas. They live on *kibarua* (casual employment) that they find within the settlement, or outside in factories or construction sites. Women tend to work selling vegetables or food in the settlement, or by undertaking domestic work in richer neighbourhoods. The Socio-Economic Survey revealed that prostitution, illegal breweries, and criminal activities were also important income-generating activities. In the most dangerous and overcrowded areas of the settlement, where rent prices were particularly low, there was a presence of people who lived by begging in the city. For example a community of Tanzanians affected by leprosy, or the many alcoholics and youth working informally at the dumping site nearby.

Poor tenants would not be able to take part in a slum upgrading programme or raise contributions that are normally requested from the beneficiaries. For people without enough daily food, it would not only

[8] Pseudonym.

[9] Potts (2012) argues that, in Sub-Saharan African, the phenomenon of circular migration – migrants to cities who return to rural areas after some time – has significantly increased and the average number of years spent in urban areas has shortened.

be very difficult to contribute financially, but also time-wise, as the lengthy participatory process involves many meetings and thus a trade-off between participation and livelihood and care work. This issue of time-poverty is important because it often has a gendered dimension with female-headed household have less time to participate in, shape, and benefit from development programmes (Walker, 2013). Moreover, even if the house were provided to them free of charge, they would still struggle to pay for electricity and water, and would promote gentrification by informally selling or renting the allocated flat and moving to another slum. This has been the case in several projects (Flores Fernandez & Calas, 2011; Otiso, 2003).

While tenants have very complex long-term projects as described in the previous section, very poor tenants have often been described in terms of their short-term vision based on the daily struggle to fulfil basic needs (Floris, 2006). A local missionary observed that the people thought short-term, because "life is short-term in a settlement where water prices change daily" (Interview 5/5/2015). An official working on the slum upgrading in Korogocho mentioned the short-term approach of some residents as a major constraint that led to selfishness and desire of immediate personal gains, in contrast with the slum upgrading programme perceived as a long and difficult process that requires sacrifices for the benefit of residents' children. Slum upgrading requires an investment, and to invest you need to save and renounce a present consumption for a future one. This is difficult for poor tenants in a slum context. A telling example repeated by the programme implementers involved groups of youths stealing newly installed water pipes to resell as scrap metal. The other residents were happy to enjoy the free water from the running pipes, instead of realising that the following day their children would not have water at their school.

6.1.3. Structure owners

Structure owners have different aspirations and incentives, and make up a very diverse group. An important element of diversity is the number of structures they own, the nature of the political settlement providing security of tenure for their structures, whether or not they live in the settlement (resident vs absentee structure owners), how many years they have lived in the settlement, and their relationship with a rural area (Amis, 1984; Mwau et al., 2020). All these dimensions also intersect with gender and ethnicity.

One example is Mary, who moved to the settlement with her mother in 1978 when she was still in primary school, after being evicted from another settlement of Nairobi. She describes Korogocho at that time as an open land that was accurately measured, subdivided, and distributed by their councillor. Since then she has been living in the settlement, engaging in community activities and has become a community leader of her area. In the plot allocated to her mother upon their arrival, they progressively expanded the original structure and rented extra rooms. Her income is derived from rent income, and from allowances and salaries for her involvement in all the development activities underway in the settlement. She has also been helping the local Chief in settling personal disputes, getting a share of the informal fee that is usually paid for the Chief's intervention. She lives in the settlement, has no links with her rural area of origin, and is very involved with the upgrading programme from which she expects to get the legal title for a plot to develop, the rent of which will provide income for her future.

In conclusion, some residents have an exclusive urban presence and are very interested in a slum upgrading. Others are not interested and would rather invest in their home rural areas. Still others have no savings capacity and would not be able to comply with the requirements of tenant-purchasing schemes, or other even more complex systems of acquiring land and building structures, unless their income changed. When offered a slum upgrading programme, many tenants are not necessarily interested, and quite rightly fear that their livelihoods are threatened.

6.1.4. Housing beyond the house

An important dimension of recognition of the intersectional needs of diverse residents is made visible through the analysis of differences in the conceptualization of housing. In many policy documents on slum upgrading, housing is understood as the units provided to the residents with related access to services such as water, sanitation and electricity. The rationale is that slum-dwellers live in overcrowded conditions, often with large families in a single 9sqm room made of temporary building materials and substandard sanitation, no piped water and illegal and unsafe electricity connections. Housing is conceived as the space within the four walls, which is too little and has poor services. Thus, the focus is to increase such space, in some cases through multi-storey buildings.

However, for many residents housing is conceived as a complex system of settings, involving multiple spaces, relationships and functions (Rapoport, 2000). This resonates with academic debates that are increasingly recognising housing as multi-dimensional, for example highlighting how gender, disability, and age intersect to shape housing (Jones & Reed, 2005; Madden & Marcuse, 2016; Walker et al., 2013). However, often these debates do not translate into slum upgrading programmes that take sufficiently into account these multiple dimensions and how they interact with each other. The work of Truelove and Ruszczyk (2022) is useful because it shows how embodied daily activities such as building social networks or doing gendered care work form core infrastructures through which urban dwellers access and exchange resources.

An example repeatedly discussed by various residents and NGOs staff in Kibera concerned one woman who used to sell vegetables outside her house, who had been relocated to the top floor of a new multi-storey building. She had a better and more expensive flat, but her livelihood was negatively affected. She used to leave her children with multiple neighbours keeping an eye on them while she went to the main market to purchase vegetables to resell. Moreover, she lived side-by-side with her customers who often bought from her, particularly when they knew she was facing financial difficulties. She could take care of her children while attending her stall and use the space between structures to cook and wash.

Therefore, while the actual room was small, her understanding of housing and inhabiting practices extended to other public spaces, where she cultivated social relationships that were key for the success of her livelihood, caring work, and overall wellbeing. On the top floor she could not leave her children alone with her only neighbour who she did not know, and certainly she could not reach her customers from there. Renting a vending stall in a different location from her apartment would increase her costs and would not make her complex livelihood viable. While situations are different, a large proportion of these multi-storey flats in Kibera ended up sub-let to university students and other higher income groups, with beneficiaries finding alternative shacks (Flores Fernandez & Calas, 2011). The movement back from upgraded housing to informal settlements has been documented across different contexts (see for example, Debnath, Bardhan, & Sunikka-Blank, 2019).

In contrast, by working on housing aspirations with their partners, residents of Kambimoto village in Huruma – an informal settlement on the other side of Nairobi – identified an incremental design that could progressively offer more space to residents, while maintaining pre-existing social relationships and addressing more effectively needs based on the intersection of gender, class, age, and others.

Normally, mud-walled and iron sheeted roof structures in informal settlements are made of six to eight rooms and the layouts look similar to Fig. 1, albeit without necessarily such regular shapes. Normally in each room lives a different family and thus neighbours can interact easily as they also use the space outside their doors to sit, wash, and cook. In Huruma, residents and their partners developed a design (Fig. 2) where the doors of different dwellings would remain next to each other at ground floor level but each flat would develop two extra floors on top, when they had money for it. This allowed for the maintaining of the social relations, while increasing the quality and quantity of the indoor

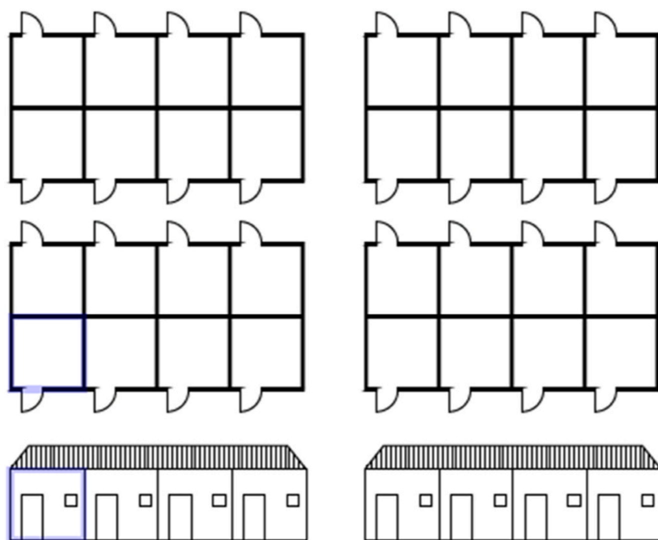

Fig. 1. Typical layout of Nairobi informal settlement.

space (Lines et al., 2020, pp. 2020–2042).

Planners behind upgrading programmes often assume that all residents need better and larger housing and argue that better living conditions can be achieved in high density areas through multi-storey buildings or by relocating residents to less central areas of the city. In Nairobi's informal settlements, housing often has a double function of both dwelling and shop (Rigon, 2012). Therefore, multi-storey arrangements negatively affect livelihoods because a window shop only works if the dwelling is at street level. What appears to the planners to be a very small dwelling is adequate for a family given that they can also use the public space outside for important activities. Moreover, in the existing arrangements, residents can, for instance, leave their children under the supervision of neighbours and build systems of mutual support that are more difficult in housing types that do not include shared spaces. Such relationships, built over the course of many years, can be easily disrupted by relocations to new housing (Rigon, Walker, & Koroma, 2020). These findings relate to the work of Montedoro (2022) in peri-urban Maputo where residents understand their housing also as a very important source of food security and complementary income through urban agriculture, and so attributing particular importance to their outdoor space.

To conclude, some upgrading programmes do not take into sufficient account the needs that are satisfied by current housing arrangements. Many slum-dwellers choose their housing for its proximity to livelihood and education opportunities. The poor housing conditions mean relatively cheaper rent, thus allowing them to make more valued investments in the education of their children, which is rightly seen as their best chance of social mobility as we have seen in the case of Anne. Many tenants are therefore not interested in investing their savings and time into a complex risky process to own a flat in an ethnically mixed area. At the same time, there are residents like Mary, who seek to further secure their rental income and thus are committed to ensure that a slum upgrading project grants them land titles and better infrastructures.

This aspect of recognition involves understanding what functions slums play in the lives of different residents, and how their life projects shaped by the intersection of their multiple identities such as class, gender, ethnicity, age, could be affected by slum upgrading. While policy makers often emphasise the primary function of informal settlements as shelter/housing, for many residents the main functions are economic opportunities, education for children, creation of social relations, mutual systems of social protection, and housing arrangements which allow them to save for more important objectives. If a core concern is livelihoods, provision of housing decoupled from efforts to strengthen livelihoods is unlikely to provide a long-term solutions to residents' needs (Majale, 2008; Mpembamoto, Nchito, Siame, & Wragg, 2017).

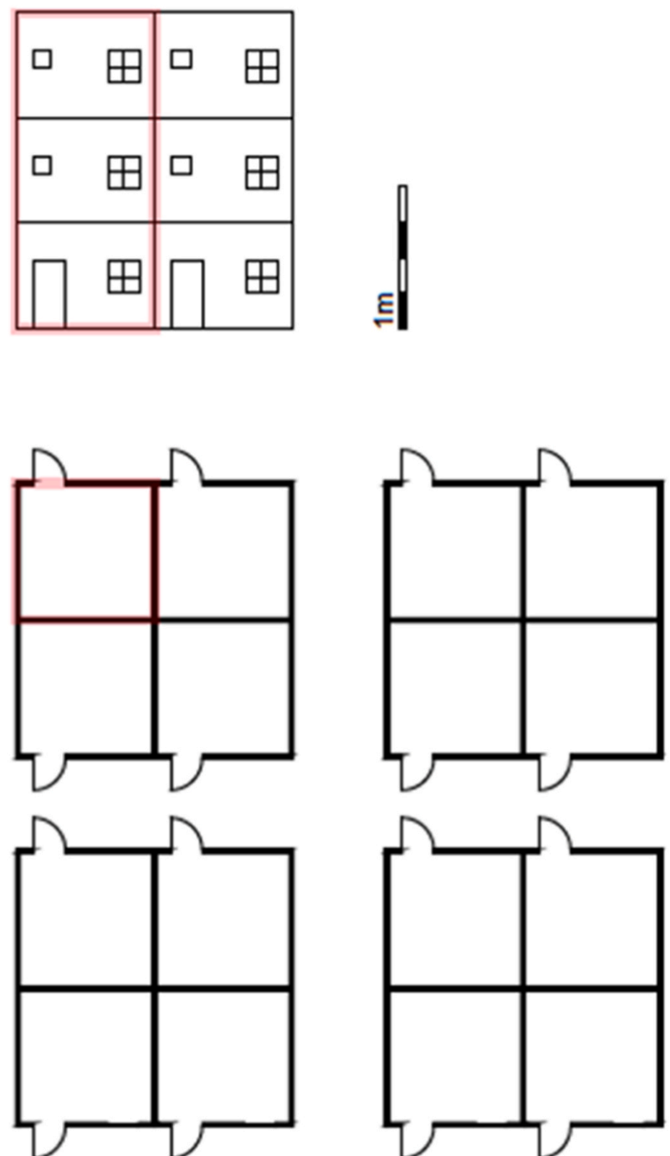

Fig. 2. Layout after upgrading in Kambimoto, Huruma.

The dominant policy discourse agrees about the importance of informal settlement communities' participation in slum upgrading, but there is very little unpacking of who these communities are and how the diversity of needs and aspirations are taken into account. Some of the failures in recognising diversity have a disproportionate gender impact as women's livelihoods tend to be less flexible and they may be less able to move due to caring responsibilities (Chant & McIlwaine, 2016). In some UN-Habitat documents there is a recognition of the importance of gender and how women and men experience the city differently, as well as how gender intersects with other social relations. The fact that such social relations are context specific is also acknowledged with a clear message that interventions "have to cater for the different needs and interests of both, men and women" because different roles translate into different needs (UN-Habitat, 2008b, p. 33). However, putting this intersectional awareness into practice is more complex, as we discuss below in relation to the impacts of slum upgrading interventions.

6.2. Distribution: diversity of impacts of interventions on different groups and individuals

Foreseeing the diversity of impacts of projects on different groups is complex. Informal settlements are not separate independent systems and these impacts are linked to broader processes, including the housing, land and employment markets, and the provision of infrastructure and services. In her work on Nairobi, Huchzermeyer connects slum upgrading with housing and basic services markets. This is how she frames the core issues of this section:

> "It is impossible to understand from the outside the complexity of economic interests linked to the slum environment. These interests range from exploitative to entrepreneurial to survivalist. Given this complexity, one cannot accurately foresee from outside how an intervention will impact on communities, households and individuals, their income generation and their access to basic services. Yet, in the context of deprivation, vulnerability and fragile livelihoods, it is important to predict the impact an intervention will have" (2008, p. 22).

Not only are some predictions needed, but this section argues that they need to disaggregate the potential impact on different individuals and groups. Accurate predictions are difficult but the questions need to be raised and policy designed with a bias towards the most marginalised to protect them from powerful dispossession processes that can be unleashed by slum upgrading. From this perspective, this section analyses provision of formal housing, land titles, infrastructures and the failure to consider gender relations in beneficiary identification.

The post-Apartheid South African government prioritised housing provision. In the first ten years of democracy, it aimed at delivering one million houses. The focus was on achieving high numbers of units, but this overlooked other aspects, including the quality of housing and, importantly, their location. The scheme unwittingly ended up reproducing Apartheid's spatial injustice patterns (Forster & Gardner, 2014). Households with incomes below R3,500 (USD290), many of which were in informal settlements, could access a subsidy towards a house. This came without other livelihood support. The amount received could only afford units located further away from the household's source of livelihood. For example, in Cape Town, transportation can cost a third of income. As a result some households may sell the new house after the first shock, or rent it out and move back into a shack. However, at least in major South African cities, there is an expensive but relatively efficient transportation system. In Freetown, there have been proposals to relocate informal settlements to areas without livelihood opportunities at the margins of the city, which have only inefficient and costly transport options. In Kibera, as we discussed above, a significant number of beneficiaries moved out and sub-let their allocated new housing units to higher income groups, often university students, because of the costs of rent and utilities and how this type of housing radically changed social relations and livelihood activities.

From Cape Town to Nairobi, beneficiaries renting out or even selling their new formal housing and returning to informal dwellings is occurring when programmes are not designed to meet residents' needs in the multiple dimensions of housing. These behaviours demonstrate people's agency and capacity to reorient social policy. People were given housing when they needed livelihoods, and so they turned housing into livelihoods. This example shows the limitations of a standard social policy offering the same to every resident.

Upgrading programmes involving relocations[10] may need to consider how residents may be supporting themselves in the new area or what transport infrastructure is available. If the aim of better housing is improving the well-being of residents, then it is important to analyse the trade-offs in terms of time and disposable income. If a large proportion of time and income is spent on a much longer and expensive commute, this may counter the benefits of the intervention.

Many slum upgrading programmes focus on individual land titles and individual ownership of housing (Rigon, 2016). This is particularly problematic in contexts with a high proportion of renters. As titles are provided to those with an ownership claim, in markets with an undersupply of housing, rent can rapidly rise and become unaffordable to low-income tenants.

In Cairo, Payne (2001) documented how an outcome of land titling was higher rents which led to the displacement of 21% of low-income tenants who could no longer afford to live there. Often, richer groups benefit from land titling projects thus increasing, rather than reducing, urban inequalities. Similarly, Briggs' (2011) analysis in Dar Es Salaam found that poorer groups were happy with the existing de facto security of tenure and did not see the added value of long, costly and complex formalisation processes. In some cases, formalised land can make property more vulnerable to repossessions by banks; and in rapidly developing urban areas interesting to larger investors, local residents can be bought out. At the same time, there is little evidence of title deeds opening access to formal credit, one of the most cited developmental benefits of titling (Payne, Durand-Lasserve, & Rakodi, 2009).

Another key aspect of slum upgrading is the improvement of infrastructures. These interventions are often presented as win-win solutions, benefiting all residents. A discourse often repeated by staff in government ministries and development donors is that, while land ownership may be more complex and contested, better roads, lighting, water and sanitation benefit all owners and tenants, avoiding conflict and significantly improving the lives of all residents.

In Korogocho, at the beginning of the slum upgrading programme over 80% of residents were tenant households. A process of land titling and improvement in transport infrastructure led to significant increases in rent, mostly captured by structure owners living outside the settlement, who own 55% of the structures (Rigon, 2014). The upgrading project started with the aim of improving infrastructure and providing security of tenure. In the first years of the programme, the main intervention was to expand and tarmac internal roads. In 2008, before the intervention, the average room in a particular area of the settlement was rented out at around KES250-400, in 2015 it reached KES2,000–2500. Notably, this increase took place with no improvement in the quality of the rooms. The roads allowed the passage of cars and informal public transport into the settlement, further increasing demand and thus making it easy to replace tenants who could not pay higher rents. At the same time, the prospect of land formalisation increased the value of informal plots of land from KES50,000–200,000 to about KES1,000,000 (Rigon, Dabaj, & Baumann, 2019).

While some tenants may have also benefited from the new road infrastructure, there is no doubt that the value of the intervention was captured by structure owners. Tenants who could afford paying significantly higher rents and remaining in the settlement had to pay a lot for the new infrastructure via their rents. Yet the infrastructures were meant to benefit them and were funded by public and donor money aimed at

[10] A characteristic of slum upgrading is that improvements are generally *in situ*. However, many of these programmes involve some kind of relocation. For example, the density may be too high and thus some residents have to be moved somewhere else to allow for better housing and infrastructure, or some land is judged unsuitable for housing due to flooding or landslide risk. Some programmes move people within the area, permanently or temporarily, while housing is constructed where relocated residents used to live.

improving living conditions for all residents, especially the most marginalised.

Tenants who could not afford the new rents had to leave the settlement, losing their social relations, often disrupting their livelihoods, and losing the prospect of any benefit from the upgrading programme. Some of these tenants had been living in the settlement for decades. The most affected tended to also be young single mothers, households whose members had a disability, including chronic illness, and elderly residents with limited family support, indicating the intersection between class and income with other dimensions of residents' identity. However, upgraded infrastructure can be made more equitable by using mechanisms like subsidies, incremental approaches, simplified sewerage or other adjusted standards (see for example, Sverdlik et al., 2020).

The way in which residents of informal settlements are identified as beneficiaries of slum upgrading programmes, and how these records are kept, are key factors in the distribution of project benefits (Rigon, 2017). This generally takes place through enumerations: effectively, local censuses to collect information on residents at a particular point in time. An example of the failure to consider the local power relation is how, in both Kibera and Korogocho, enumerations only collected the names of heads of households (Flores Fernandez & Calas, 2011; Rigon, 2017). When a couple with a man and a woman is present in the household, men are generally considered to be the head. In case of separation, which is quite common given high instability of unions in Nairobi informal settlements (Flores Fernandez & Calas, 2011 Rigon, 2017), the man continues to be included in the list of those entitled to the project's benefits, such as land and housing, while the woman, and often her children, lose all benefits and risk being displaced from the settlement. Such a situation further skews the gender imbalance of power within households, potentially forcing women to endure violent and exploitative relationships to avoid losing the right to continue living in a settlement.

It is important to understand how interventions shape the complex intersections of local power relations between different identities, including gender and class, and the ways these local power relations, and the intervention itself, interact with external macro processes such as the housing and service markets (see Fig. 3 for a graphic illustration). There are political choices inherent to any slum upgrading intervention. Ignoring internal diversity, and adopting a narrative of win-win solutions benefiting all without analysis into how interventions may shape existing markets, involves clear decisions about which individuals and groups to prioritise. Such analysis of micro-level dynamics at multiple scales from the household to the settlement, and how the dynamic of social stratification in a settlement intersects with broader urban land and housing markets, is fundamental.

Sub-Saharan cities face a chronic shortage of adequate housing. In this context, processes of market-led displacement, land speculation and gentrification are important elements which shape the outcomes of slum upgrading interventions. Those in charge of these interventions should also consider how different groups may be differently affected by these processes. Leaving this analysis implicit almost always leads to exclusionary outcomes. This is even more important for slum upgrading. In many development interventions, the exclusion of the most marginalised from the benefits simply leaves them in the same situation. However, in the case of slum upgrading, such exclusion often leads to negative impacts such as displacement, worsening their condition.

6.3. *Representation: diversity in participation to decision-making*

A focus on diversity is not only important in terms of offering different options that recognise the diversity of needs and aspirations, and for working towards a fair distribution of benefits. It is also fundamental in the management of the intervention to ensure the representation of different groups of residents in their design and implementation. This section explores diversity in residents' participation in decision-making regarding slum upgrading.

Residents' participation is invoked in an increasing number of policy documents on slum upgrading (UN-Habitat, 2014). However, there is less discussion around what this means in practice. The discourse of giving power to the community is seldom followed by an adequate discussion about governance structures within the community, and what processes are needed to ensure the diversity of residents' interests are represented. This is often framed in terms of partnership approaches which consider 'the community' to be part of the process in partnership with NGOs and various government authorities, without much interrogation into *who* within the community is part of such participatory structures.

By using the election of the residents' committee of the Korogocho Slum Upgrading Programme as an example, this section highlights the importance of diversity in participation. For each of the eight areas making up Korogocho, two structure-owners, one tenant, one youth, one woman and one elder were supposed to form the elected residents' committee. However, as the woman, elder and youth were also either structure owners or tenants, the committee ended up being dominated by structure owners because they had more power to influence voters. Voters had to queue in front of their chosen candidate while an official was counting who had the longest queue and declaring them elected. Given structure owners' right to evict without motivation, it would have been difficult for tenants to go against their structure owners, even if tenants made up more than 80% of the residents (Rigon, 2014; Rigon, Dabaj, & Baumann, 2019). The way in which officials designed participation failed to recognise the multiple simultaneous intersectional identities of residents, and the power relations between them. Taking into account diversity does not intend to divide people into different groups on the basis of one dimension of their identity and assume that within the groups similar needs and aspirations are shared. Collective forms of participation often hide internal power relations which prevent some from fully participating.

Another important aspect, partially discussed above, is that participation is costly. Multiple meetings involve a trade-off between project participation and livelihood activities, disproportionately affecting the poorest and those with dependants. This often means that young single mothers, an important household types in informal settlements and one of the most vulnerable, are systematically excluded from decision making processes. Moreover, as discussed in the section on recognition, the slum upgrading programme may not be a priority for some residents. Yet, a project cannot have a disproportionately negative impact on some residents just because they do not have the time and resources to invest. Finally, the proper management of an inclusive process of residents' participation is costly for the project's implementers too. Often there is "pressure to deliver on targets, which forces municipalities to compromise on process" (Western Cape Town informal settlement strategic framework 2016, p. 17).

There is wide literature around the constraints to the participation of the most disadvantaged (Dill, 2009; Rigon, 2014). For example, they will think carefully before making statements challenging powerful people and their interests, since they have realistic assumptions about the long-term character of power structures (Corbridge, Williams, Srivastava, & Véron, 2005). Therefore, the *presence* of the marginalised in an urban development process does not necessarily imply *voice* (Rigon & Castán Broto, 2021). Women, who do not hold power due to their relation to powerful men or source of wealth, are particularly excluded

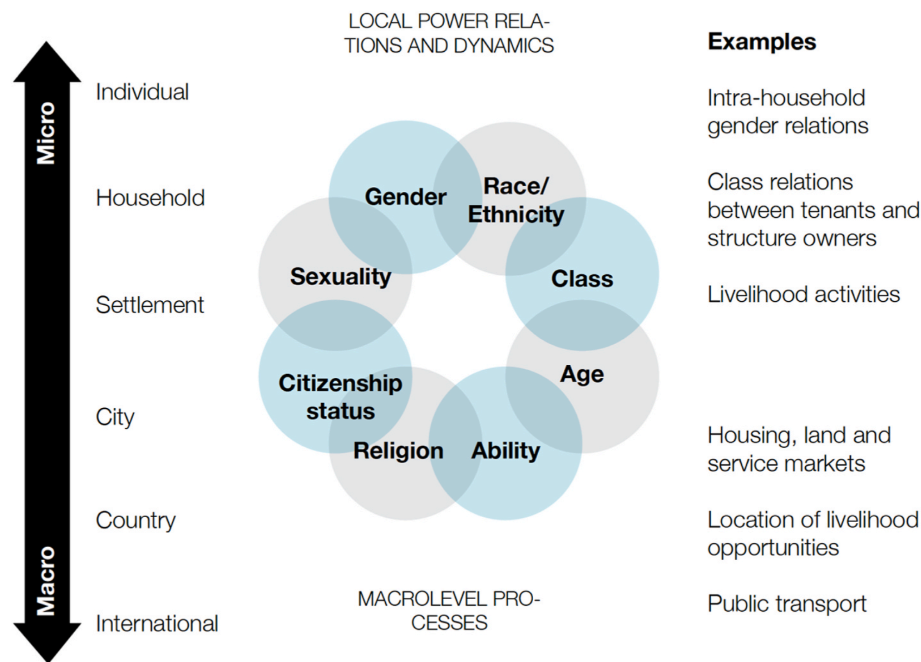

Fig. 3. Factors shaping differential impacts of slum upgrading interventions on different residents.

showing how oppressive power structures play out at the intersection between gender, class, relationship status, and age.

Participation in local governance structures often reflects the unequal power relations at the settlement level, making it difficult for slum upgrading projects to uphold the diversity of interests, particularly of the most marginalised. It is important to design participatory processes that acknowledge the main social divisions in each context, and build processes that take these into account from an intersectional perspective. This involves participatory processes focusing on the relationships between residents and between different groups of residents, and going beyond physical interventions to transform these unequal relationships. This may involve dealing with conflicts around diverse interests which require additional resources to negotiate. Moreover, empowering participatory processes at settlement level contribute to building a participatory urban citizenship with the potential of democratising broader urban governance processes and changing the relationship between citizens and government (Cornwall & Coelho, 2006; Mitlin, 2021).

7. Conclusion

Diversity matters. A first step is its recognition, going beyond simplified and homogenising approaches to the residents of informal settlements. When slum upgrading targets a settlement, often the assumption is that most residents have the same interest in remaining in the settlement and in participating in the project. This is not the case. Different residents within the same slum are there for different reasons. Slums perform different functions in residents' livelihoods, and more broadly in their life strategies.[11] When internal settlement diversity is approached, this is often done by merely dividing up residents on the basis of one dimension of their identities. This fails to recognise the power relations between these simultaneous and multiple identities, and how they intersects to produce unique ways in which residents experience their urban environment and formulate their aspirations.

This paper contributes to ongoing efforts by international development agencies and governments to realise the New Urban Agenda's vision of *cities for all* through more inclusive strategies for informal settlements. This paper argues that an intersectional approach can contribute to inclusive slum upgrading by revealing how the micro-politics of different identities (power relations) within a settlement intersect with broader processes affecting the recognition of needs and aspirations, distribution of benefits, and participation of various individuals and groups in the slum upgrading process. Such an approach contributes by identifying multiple options that respond to different needs and aspirations by understanding what different individuals and groups want; and why they are living in informal settlements. It also enables the development of strategies to protect residents' ability to continue living in their settlements and prevent market-based displacement.

Reflecting on how different dimensions of diversity intersect with each other implies focusing on the relationships between residents and between different groups of residents. It also implies that interventions may need to transform some of these unequal relationships. But as these unequal relationships are deeply entrenched, transforming them will face resistance because it takes power away from local elites, often the very same local elites used by implementers to provide community

[11] A recognition of the role of informal settlements in the lives of residents is partially taking place at government level. The Western Cape Informal Settlement Strategic Framework acknowledges that "informal settlements play a critical role in responding to people's shelter and livelihood needs – informal settlements offer people an important foothold into towns and cities, and in many instances this is a medium-to long-term reality, rather than a temporary solution" (2016, p. 21). However, there is no reference to a diversity of needs and aspirations within the settlements and the impact these have on project design and implementation, except for a vague principle of safeguarding the rights of vulnerable groups.

legitimacy to the intervention. This process of countering elite capture is complex and takes time.

The proposed intersectional approach to recognise different needs and aspirations within community organisations often needs curated and external facilitation, creating an important role for NGOs. This is because unequal power relations may be entrenched and community leadership may often represents specific interests. However, it is possible to set up reflexive processes whereby communities discuss explicitly internal relations and whose is set to benefit by specific interventions and the way they are managed. Such processes can lead to upgrading pathways that address a broad range of diversity issues.

Well-intentioned slum upgrading and housing programmes targeting the urban poor will not provide sustainable solutions unless diversity is taken into account. This may imply slower processes where housing may come at a later stage because other priorities need to be addressed first (e.g. livelihoods). Therefore this may not appeal to governments who think in terms of the number of housing units delivered.

To address the 'problem' of slums, it is also important to recognise that slums are also the 'solution' to the certain needs: for example, the need for cheap labour in urban economies; politicians' need for reservoirs of votes; the need of urban tenants to spend little on housing in order to invest in children's education or in their rural place of origin where they plan to retire; and the need of economic returns that substitute pension schemes for the owners of slum structures. The internal complexity of residents' identities should always be analysed at the intersections with broader external processes.

If slum upgrading is to respond to slum-dwellers' needs – which in many cities in Sub-Saharan Africa are the majority of the urban population – such projects should also push for a rethinking, from an intersectional and relational perspective, of urban economies, land policies, housing and land markets, building codes and the role of the state as service provider in a neoliberal era. The livelihoods of slum residents are built upon the current arrangements including the opportunities offered by the slums in terms of cheap accommodation or rental investment. Without a tailored approach, these livelihoods may be undermined by slum upgrading programmes.

Insights from this article are relevant beyond slum upgrading and can inform policy and programmes to provide housing for low-income groups: a sector in which a number of middle-income countries including Brazil and South Africa have heavily invested. This article calls for a more holistic understanding of the complex diversity and life paths of slum-dwellers in order to devise interventions that adequately respond to their needs. The article demonstrates why many diversity dimensions need to be considered in slum upgrading and housing programmes for the urban poor. These three dimensions are very similar to the pillars of the right to the city, meaning that governments and development actors already have the mandate to act.

However, the article does not prescribe an alternative diversity-sensitive intersectional and relational approach to slum upgrading. This is a collective endeavour, an agenda for academics and practitioners. This call complements similar arguments for the integration of a relational view to improve health equity in slum upgrading (Corburn & Sverdlik, 2017) and for the inclusion of social diversity as one of ten elements for participatory slum upgrading (Cities Alliance et al., 2020). The author and their team have worked with communities to incorporate diversity in their participatory planning practice, but this is an open learning process of experimental methodologies. What we can offer are some of the principles that such an approach should have, explained in more detail here (Rigon & Castán Broto, 2021).

An intersectional and relational approach acknowledges that the way in which social practice is structured empowers or disempowers specific individuals and groups based on such identities. It recognises different interests within groups and communities, and works to counter barriers to the meaningful participation of all members. It also recognises that diversity may imply conflict and differing preferences, thereby acknowledging that a proposal may not be equally desirable by all members of a community. In terms of practice, such an approach recognises the rights of different people and groups with different social identities. It involves different people and groups with different social identities, ensuring that no one is excluded. Intersectional and relational practice is not a one-off analysis but a continuous collective effort in an evolving context, where identities are fluid and power relations change.

Author statement

Andrea Rigon is the sole author and responsible for: Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Resources, Data Curation, Writing - Original Draft, Review & Editing, Visualization, Supervision, Project administration, Funding acquisition.

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