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A disruptive (de)growth repository of spatial practices across sub-Saharan Africa

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A disruptive (de)growth repository of spatial practices across sub-Saharan Africa / Berlanda, T., de Klerk, K., Lloyd, S., Amoros Elorduy, N., Viking, S., Klitzner, T.. - In: SCROOPE. - ISSN 0966-1026. - 29:(2020), pp. 78-85.

*Availability:*

This version is available at: 11583/2980365 since: 2023-09-11T07:48:28Z

*Publisher:*

Cambridge

*Published*

DOI:

*Terms of use:*

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## SCROOPE

Est. 1989

Scroope is an annual journal edited and compiled by students of the Architecture Department at the University of Cambridge, UK.

SCROOPE: Cambridge  
Architecture Journal  
Department of  
Architecture  
1-5 Scroope Terrace  
Cambridge CB2 1PX  
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The Martin Centre for  
Architectural and Urban  
Studies



## DETAILS

### PUBLISHED:

ISSN 0966.1029v  
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### PRINTING:

SIQP, St. Ives, UK

### TYPOGRAPHY:

BENTON SANS  
Source Serif Pro

### SUPPORT:

The printing of this publication would not have been possible without the financial assistance of The Martin Centre for Architectural and Urban Studies at the Department of Architecture, University of Cambridge.

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Cover: Manifesto, Sam Aitkenhead.

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Manifesto

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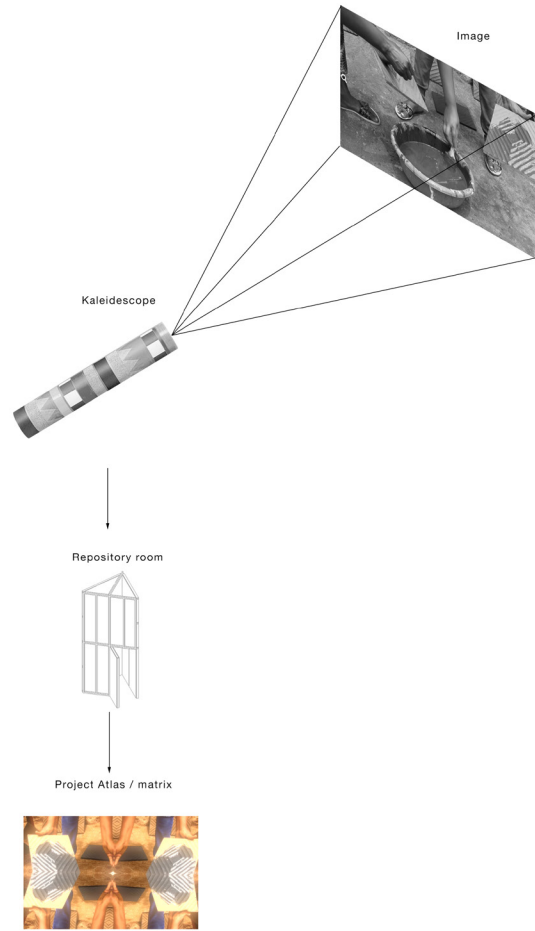
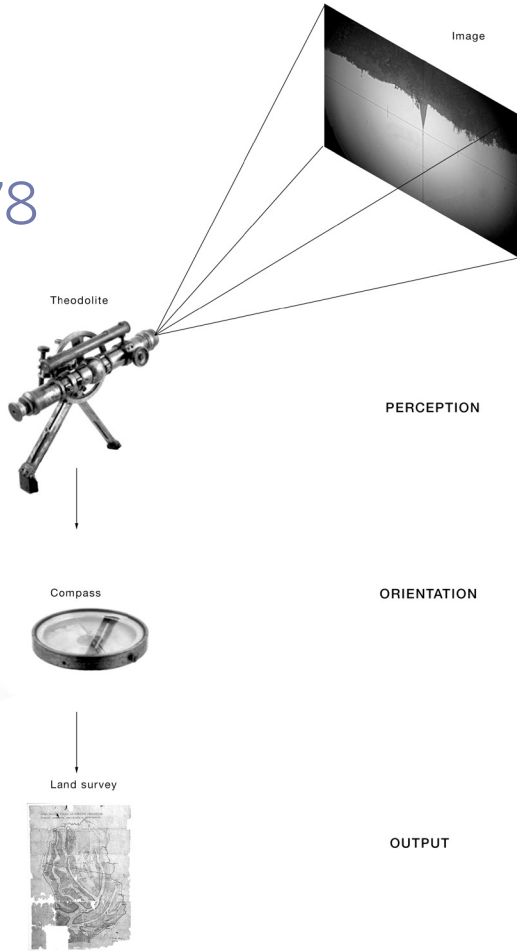
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# Project by Hunguta Collective

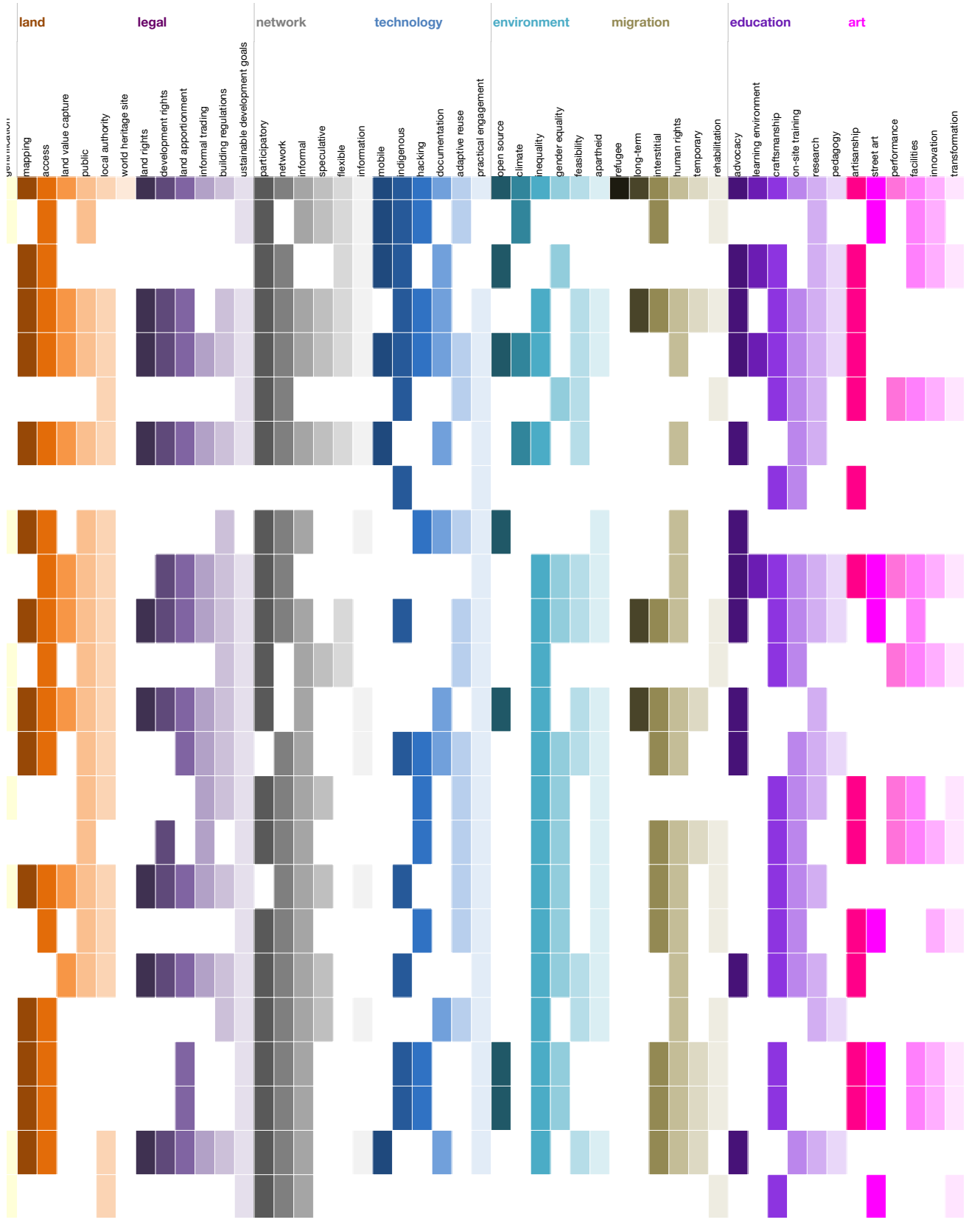
(Maxwell Mutanda, Khensani de Klerk, Tomà Berlanda, Nerea Amorós Elorduy, Scott Lloyd, Sunniva Viking, Tao Klitzner) originally displayed at the 2019 Oslo Triennale

# A disruptive (de)growth repository of spatial practices across sub- Saharan Africa

By challenging the reading of the South – established through the current divisive lens of the colonial theodolite – the project presents a living atlas, an immersive learning tool that subverts established modes of conceiving degrowth as an easily transported, translated or imposed paradigm. A manifesto for sustainability: The inherent flux and malleability of the Global South needs new perspectives and new mediums to advance the dynamic archive of spatial knowledge and truly express the transferable values of its emerging practices.

Is (de)growth an absolute term?





## society

*Space conditions, and is in turn conditioned by, society and culture (...) architecture can create the potential for social action and activity. (Peter Barber Architects)*

	community					
<p>The Anthropocene – human activity’s dominant influence on climate and the environment – echoes in the innovative spatial practices of Sub-Saharan Africa through the dominance of community activity and engagement. Activist, civic and private interventions all navigate the complexities of community networks defined more by citizenry than regulatory authorities.</p>	<p><b>citizen-driven</b> Spatial practices that represent the full and/or direct participation of members of the group(s) affected by any intervention.</p>	<p><b>social activism</b> Socio-spatial practices that advocate intentional action with the goal of bringing about inclusionary, participatory social change.</p>	<p><b>civic society</b> The aggregate of individuals and organizations that voluntarily or systematically work with the aim to represent the needs of a local community independent of governmental or corporate agencies.</p>	<p><b>peer-to-peer</b> The social process of networking shared skills and knowledge that are distributed in a community.</p>	<p><b>grassroots</b> The participatory actions by members of the group(s) within specific districts, region, or community to collectively effect change from the local level.</p>	<p><b>academic</b> Any community-based spatial practice that is influenced by theoretical interest and/or relating to education and research.</p>
<p>The Sub-Saharan African dwelling traditionally described the social hierarchy and cultural norms in communities. The built environment is not only the venue for private desire but also for public expression and innovation. The promise and challenges of the twenty-first century highlight the conflicts presented by the inherited structures of colonialism, post-independence aspirations and indigenous values.</p>	<p><b>shack</b> A small dwelling often built using reclaimed, repurposed or refuse material that is endemic to poor urban settlements.</p>	<p><b>hostel</b> A relic of colonialism, common in major African cities, that was designed as single occupancy, single-sex lodgings for male migrant workers.</p>	<p><b>affordable housing</b> A formal dwelling that is priced to meet an adequate household expenditure allocation.</p>	<p><b>localisation</b> Emphasis on adapting practices to harness local materials, social capital and community members to develop socially engaged built environments.</p>	<p><b>mixed use</b> Spatial practices that provide residential, commercial, cultural, institutional, and/or entertainment uses in a community. This variety of flexible types of land uses incorporates multi-family, mixed-use as well as mixed-income housing development.</p>	<p><b>well-being</b> A holistic approach to the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy in the built environment taking into consideration physical or ecological conditions, such as access to healthy food, as well as other social and psychological factors.</p>

## settlement

*Africa’s urban population has been growing at a very high rate, i.e. from about 27% in 1950 to 40% in 2015 and projected to reach 60% by 2050. (UNDESA)*

	rural					
<p>Rural communities are particularly underserved in regards to service allocation and infrastructural investment. The socio-economic needs of rural communities require developing sustainable communities that take into consideration local materials, environmental impact and accessibility into design, planning, and building. Spatial practices therefore are defined by lack of infrastructure, remoteness and a reliance on autonomous systems.</p>	<p><b>sustainability</b> Rural sustainability is the constant development, maintenance and improvement of robust built environments that respond to the long-term economic, social, cultural, political and environmental requirements of rural communities.</p>	<p><b>ecology</b> Managed conservation defined by the symbiotic relationship between natural resources, rural spatial practices and community members.</p>	<p><b>small-scale agriculture</b> Strategies against the exploitation of land-intensive agricultural or natural resource based development.</p>	<p><b>economy</b> Spatial practices in a rural community have the potential to contribute significantly to sustainable development and economic growth.</p>	<p><b>utilities</b> Rural distributed utilities that consider decentralized power generation or autonomous off-grid systems that produce and consume electric energy or water without any connection to external systems.</p>	<p><b>resilience</b> Resilience, as defined by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) is the ability of communities to absorb, recover and prepare for future shocks (economic, environmental, social institutional).</p>
<p>Urban centres generate economic mobility and social opportunities. The demise of rural subsistence and urban ambitions in the later half of the C20, have resulted in Sub-Saharan cities growing at an unprecedented rate. Globally, more people live in urban than rural areas. In 2018, about 55 per cent of the world’s population was urban, compared with only 30 per cent in 1950.</p>	<p><b>informal settlement</b> Informal, spontaneous improvised/ low-income communities lacking in adequate basic social and civil services that usually develops on the periphery of urban settlements.</p>	<p><b>urban upgrading</b> Improvement to the physical structures, public spaces, and basic services in low-income urban communities that includes but is not limited to responses to the challenges of providing health, nutrition, education and economic opportunities to the community.</p>	<p><b>violence prevention</b> A comprehensive social intervention designed to improve the spatial quality and experience of members of the group(s) in a community by developing safe, sustainable and integrated strategies.</p>	<p><b>service delivery</b> Addressing the inadequate distribution and maintenance of basic resources like water, electricity, sanitation infrastructure, land, and housing within a community.</p>	<p><b>social housing</b> Government allocated housing. Every day 40,000 people move to a city in Africa, adding to the existing deficit for new and affordable urban housing.</p>	<p><b>gentrification</b> Increased commodity value of urban environments due to direct investment in urban development. Generally resulting in the rise of rental and sales prices, and financially destabilising remaining communities.</p>

## land tenure

*The indigenous African concept of land conflicted sharply with the Eurocentric view (...) Not a commodity that can be sold or exchanged on the market. (Carlos Nunes Silva)*

	land					
<p>Africa, all 30,221 million km2 of its land, is greater in size than the entire continental United States, China, the Indian sub-continent, Japan and most of Europe combined. In spite of this, economic and environmental factors have concentrated populations in large urban agglomerations. The battle for land is hard-fought both in highly densified urban areas and isolated rural settlements.</p>	<p><b>mapping</b> Mapping is the use of cartographic based methods to visualise data on human settlements. These practices include community driven demographic enumeration and settlement mapping using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to survey community data.</p>	<p><b>access</b> An easement is a non-possessory right-of-way onto the real property of another without ownership. This use and/or passage of land is the basis of the right to access of communities in Sub-Saharan Africa.</p>	<p><b>land value capture (LVC)</b> Land Value Capture is a policy approach that enables communities to recover and reinvest land value increases that result from public investment and other government actions. Also known as “value sharing,” it’s rooted in the notion that public action should generate public benefit (Lincoln Institute of Land Policy).</p>	<p><b>public</b> The use and access to public land is exacerbated by the history of colonialism, in particular the dispossession of communal land rights. In this regard, communities in Sub-Saharan Africa are in conflict with state as well as private organisations.</p>	<p><b>local authority</b> A formal local authority is a governmental organization responsible for the good of the population in regards to public services and infrastructure.</p>	<p><b>world heritage site</b> A landmark or area deemed as a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is legally protected by international treaties and recognised as having cultural, historical, scientific or other form of significance.</p>
<p>Land ownership in Sub-Saharan Africa is defined by many official and informal systems. Beyond just ordinary leasehold or freehold tenure, most countries have a legacy of indigenous communal land rights that have been amalgamated into colonial land appropriation misdeeds as well as continuing post-colonial land related displacement, discrimination and containment of communities. Today many work to develop access to basic services, land, tenure rights and affordable housing through various spatial practices and restorative justice.</p>	<p><b>land rights</b> The rights of indigenous peoples and local communities to land, either individually or collectively provides land and resource-related rights that are fundamental in securing land with cultural or religious significance as well as self-determination, identity, and economic benefits.</p>	<p><b>development rights</b> Commercial development rights are a legal mechanism for managing land-use planning and zoning for a more pre-defined urban growth and land conservation model used by local authorities, that often come into conflict with the needs and desires of local communities. Dev. rights can also be awarded to registered occupiers of land.</p>	<p><b>land apportionment</b> Colonial Land Acts were segregationist measures that governed land allocation and acquisition prior to independence in African states. These laws discriminated against indigenous communities in urban settlements, by designated towns as white areas and delegated the majority black citizens to faraway townships.</p>	<p><b>informal trading</b> Small-scale traders utilising markets, public spaces and streets to trade. Municipal by-laws in progressive cities recognise that such trade practices promote social and economic development.</p>	<p><b>building regulations</b> Building Regulations are a set of legal guidelines that determine the form and standards of the built environment. However, such regulations are unreachable to the vast majority of populations in Sub-Saharan Africa, causing a rethink as to how more appropriate regulations could be developed to serve the lived experience.</p>	<p><b>sustainable development goal</b> In 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development officially came into force. The SDGs universally apply to all countries to mobilise efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that “no one is left behind.”</p>

**connectivity**

*no program is an island unto of itself, every program is a piece of the solution, a part of the team. (john coyne)*

<p><b>network</b></p> <p>By definition an ecosystem is a network of interconnecting and interacting parts. Spatial practices on the continent are therefore usually a sequence of (in)-voluntary aggregations of responses to the challenges of providing shelter, health, nutrition, education and economic opportunities to the community. The apparently causal relationship between parts, results in the intense exploration and limits of the built environment.</p>	<p><b>participatory</b></p> <p>Community-based participatory spatial practices emphasize co-production, communal learning, collaborative inquiry, and experimentation through design.</p>	<p><b>network</b></p> <p>Network interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa disrupt the built environment using inter-connected socio-spatial practices to accelerate change or improve conditions in a community.</p>	<p><b>informal</b></p> <p>Informal networks of vernacular spatial practices, that develop in an unregulated environment, present the embedded knowledge of appropriate built structures within a community.</p>	<p><b>speculative</b></p> <p>Speculative interventions are the basis for experimentation in community-oriented design practices.</p>	<p><b>flexible</b></p> <p>Disruptive spatial practices are often defined by their ability to interact and adapt quickly and often to change.</p>	<p><b>information</b></p> <p>Community-led qualitative and quantitative information gathering networks enables communities to leverage their own resources, to develop appropriate solutions and also to better position themselves to solicit institutional engagement from local municipal authorities.</p>
	<p><b>technology</b></p> <p>Modernisation – in particular, the advent of mobile telephony – as apposed to traditional indigenous technogenesis redefining “spatiality” in Sub-Saharan Africa. Whether in isolated rural areas or low-income urban centres, technology is shaping the built environment through new relational possibilities.</p>					

<p><b>mobile</b></p> <p>Advances in mobile technology enables consistent, standardised data collection in surveying, mapping &amp; GIS fieldwork, as well as quick and effective communication of ideas with social media.</p>	<p><b>indigenous</b></p> <p>Local and indigenous knowledge refers to the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings (UNESCO).</p>	<p><b>urban hacking</b></p> <p>Disruptive spatial practices that utilise vernacular technology to adapt prevalent standards through ad hoc techniques that are better suited to the incremental development of low-income urban settlements.</p>	<p><b>documentation</b></p> <p>Information gathered either for academic research, broadcast or digital media or construction documentation that becomes the principle form of evidence to advocate for participatory spatial justice.</p>	<p><b>adaptive reuse</b></p> <p>Adaptive reuse refers to the process of reusing an existing built structure for a purpose other than which it was originally built or designed for.</p>	<p><b>practical engagement</b></p> <p>Participatory action in communities whereby residents work together to map their assets, identify needs, mobilize resources and set in motion a community-based development process (Global Communities).</p>
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**demography**

*Sub-Saharan Africa hosts more than 26 per cent of the world's refugee population, over 18 million people. (UNHCR)*

<p><b>environment</b></p> <p>The socio-political context has a direct influence on the development of the built environment. Political power is increasingly consolidated in the urban centres causing new ecologies. Demographically, Sub-Saharan Africa is faced with a youthful population – 77% of Africans are younger than thirty-five years old – which corresponds with the need for healthcare and education facilities.</p>	<p><b>open source</b></p> <p>Project or system developed to intentionally produce open content and forms of open collaboration within a community.</p>	<p><b>climate</b></p> <p>The consequences of climate change, such as environmental migration, soil erosion, disaster displacement and droughts, have a direct impact on human settlement.</p>	<p><b>inequality</b></p> <p>Participatory spatial practices can target the uneven distribution and access of resources due to social, economic and wealth inequality in a community.</p>	<p><b>gender equality</b></p> <p>Disruptive spatial practices can promote gender equality and women's empowerment, and address the physical and emotional consequences of gender-based violence (GBV).</p>	<p><b>feasibility</b></p> <p>The socio-economic realities of Sub-Saharan Africa determine that long-term and financial feasibility is the objective of proposed projects or systems.</p>	<p><b>apartheid</b></p> <p>The history of forced displacement and spatial segregation in South Africa is not in question – apartheid after all, is the Afrikaans word for separateness.</p>
	<p><b>migration</b></p> <p>The built environment is essential to improving the lives of nearly a quarter of the world's displaced population living in Sub-Saharan Africa, mainly in isolated containment in so-called temporary environments. On the continent disruptive spatial practices are influenced and defined by migration.</p>					

<p><b>refugee</b></p> <p>The refugee population reflects the global changes in urbanisation, both in terms of the regions from which refugees originate and the areas to which they move in countries of asylum. Most refugees are now based in urban areas (UNHCR).</p>	<p><b>long-term</b></p> <p>It is currently estimated that approximately 40% of refugees displaced by conflict worldwide have been living in exile for more than 20 years (www.mappingrefugeespaces.com).</p>	<p><b>interstitial</b></p> <p>The intermedie open spaces situated between built structures in a settlement.</p>	<p><b>human rights</b></p> <p>The UN define human rights as the rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status.</p>	<p><b>temporary</b></p> <p>Refugee camps in Eastern Africa are rarely dismantled, with the majority of the planned 'temporary' solutions resulting in permanent settlements (www.mappingrefugeespaces.com).</p>	<p><b>rehabilitation</b></p> <p>Rehabilitation is the spatial practice of enhancing community through the repair, alteration, and addition to the built environment while selectively preserving original features that convey historical, cultural, or architectural values.</p>
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**culture**

*Learning from the existing landscape is a way of being revolutionary for an architect (...) in a more tolerant way; that is, to question how we look at things. (Venturi Scott Brown)*

<p><b>education</b></p> <p>Participatory action in institutionalised learning environments, or informal peer-to-peer skills exchange and casual community-based knowledge production influence the spatial practices and development of Sub-Saharan Africa. Education is a non-western, non-stereotypical communal combination of indigenous knowledge systems, experimental regulatory frameworks and innovative international practices.</p>	<p><b>advocacy</b></p> <p>Participatory projects and systems that work together with communities to end the injustice of poverty through their public support for and/or recommendation of a particular cause or policy.</p>	<p><b>learning environment</b></p> <p>A humanitarian-led or NGO-managed formal/informal early childhood development centre (ECDD) or pre-primary school in a refugee community.</p>	<p><b>craftsmanship</b></p> <p>The skills and knowledge of traditional craftsmanship that can be passed onto others, particularly within a community is impacted by competition from large multinational corporations or environmental and climatic pressures.</p>	<p><b>on-site training</b></p> <p>On-site training maximises participatory community engagement in a development project to increase up-skilling, community acceptance, and local salary distribution.</p>	<p><b>research</b></p> <p>Design research methodology applies intellectual ideas – drawings, models and analysis – with community-engaged cultural insights to develop new spatial practices.</p>	<p><b>pedagogy</b></p> <p>Spatial practices in Sub-Saharan Africa challenge conventional knowledge systems with reflective teaching practices as well as community-based critical thinking and design methods.</p>
	<p><b>art</b></p> <p>Art and cultural practices in Sub-Saharan Africa based in contemporary and indigenous traditions determine community driven spatial practices that emphasize development through creative enterprise and cultural capital. Often these transformative public interventions in low-income, under-resourced communities present the first steps towards improvements to the built environment.</p>					

<p><b>artisanship</b></p> <p>The cultural heritage of traditional artisanship can be used to produce projects or systems and develop into an economically viable cottage industry.</p>	<p><b>street art</b></p> <p>Visual art created and displayed in public locations in a community is artwork that fosters social change in urban settlements.</p>	<p><b>performance</b></p> <p>Physical artistic practices, such as dance or music, promote well-being and security by engaging the community and activating spaces.</p>	<p><b>facilities</b></p> <p>Public spaces designated to accommodate the creative economy promote gender equality, youth engagement and safe spaces in a community.</p>	<p><b>innovation</b></p> <p>New media can become unconventional assets to drive innovative spatial practices.</p>	<p><b>transformation</b></p> <p>Visual art is an accessible, cost effective strategy to engender change, participatory action or aesthetics transformation in a community's built environment.</p>
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## References

1. Kaleidoscope drawing: “Disruptive (De)Growth Repository Of Southern Ecosystems”, Hunguta, Matthew Dalziel, Interrobang, 2019
2. Kaleidoscope photograph: “Disruptive (De)Growth Repository Of Southern Ecosystems”, Hunguta, The Library, The National Museum. Photo: OAT / Istvan Virag, 2019

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Ian Erickson is an M.Arch candidate at the Harvard Graduate School of Design and an Editorial Assistant of the Pavilion of Turkey at the 2021 Venice Biennale of Architecture curated by Neyran Turan. His research has been published and presented internationally in outlets including PLAT, Paprika, Vestoj, the Bartlett, and the ACSA.

## Will Fu

Will Fu is currently pursuing an M.Arch at Princeton University and has a Bachelors of Architectural Studies from the University of Waterloo. He has recently been published in POOL, FreshMeat, and Scapegoat. His Instagram handle is “fukitecture” where audiences can digest square photos, drawings, and short videos of buildings.

## MK Harb

MK Harb is an anthropologist and writer. He received his Master of Arts in Middle Eastern Studies from Harvard University, and his research focuses on spaces of leisure and escapist consumer culture in the Levant. His work has been published in Columbia University’s Journal of Politics and Society, Hyperallergic, Art Review Asia and Reorient Magazine.

## Hunguta Collective

Hunguta design is collaborative assembly of architects, designers and multidisciplinary artists loosely centred between Cape Town, Harare, Kampala, Johannesburg and Zurich. Team: Tomà Berlanda, Nerea Amoròs Elorduy, Khensani de Klerk, Tao Klitzner, Scott Lloyd, Maxwell Mutanda, Sunniva Viking.