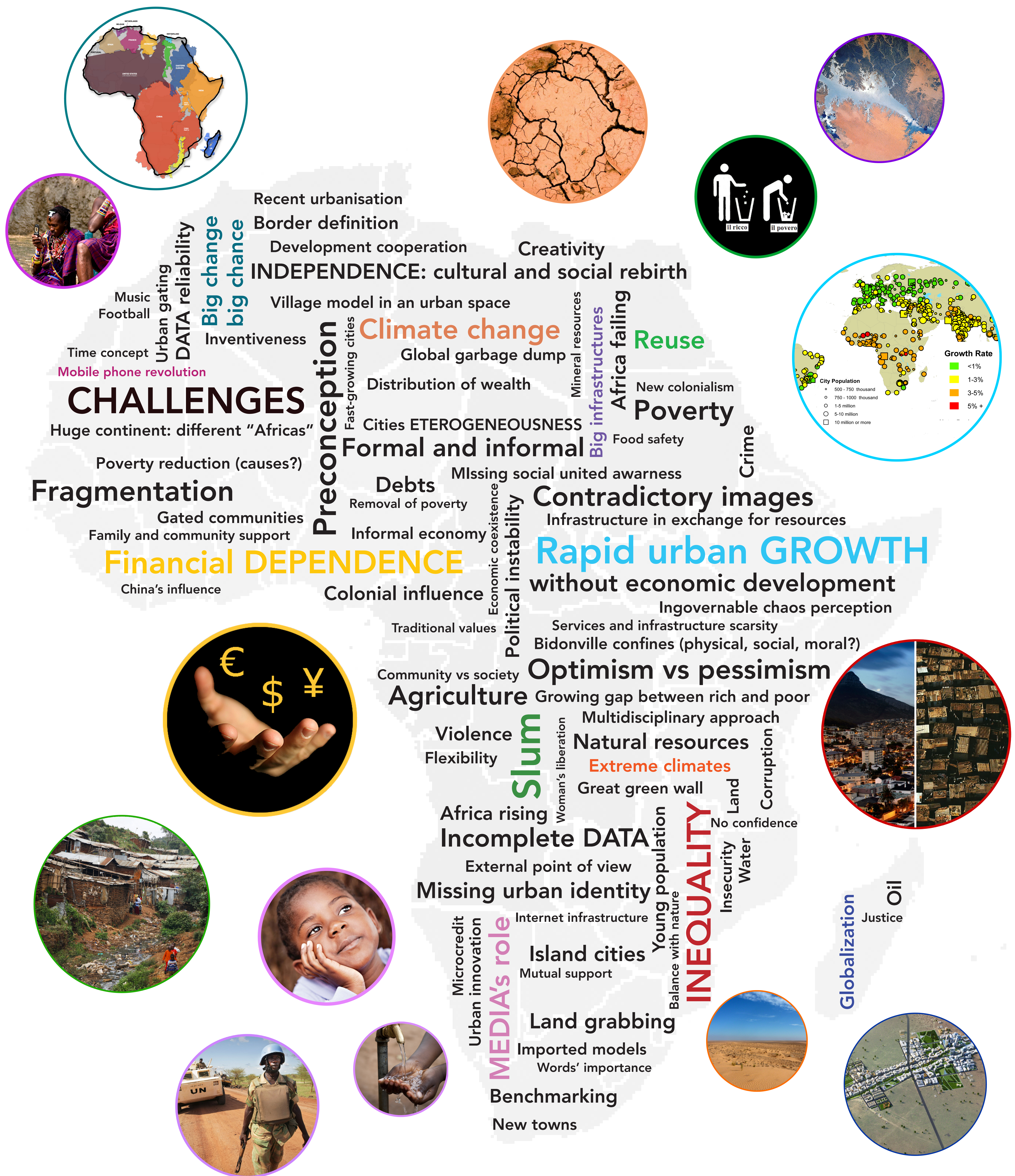


URBAN AFRICA: KEYWORDS



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

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