

Planning for action – actions of planning

Two field studies in Kampala, Uganda

Executive summaries

**These executive summaries are based on reports from the course AAR4525
Urban Ecological Planning, NTNU autumn 2009**



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This book is on what students can achieve

It is about what a group of international students went on to do in Kampala, Uganda during the autumn months of 2009.

The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) is a UN-Habitat partner university which i.a. runs a 2-year international MSc course in Urban Ecological Planning (UEP) focusing on the urban challenges of the Global South. Our approach, like that of so many others of today, takes the resources of in the slums as a point of departure. In order to uncover these and identify the prevalent power structures and thus be able to act strategically, our students collaborated with local geography students from Makerere University and ACTogether, the 'secretariat NGO' of the Slum Dwellers International (SDI), Uganda. Together they entered two slum settlements in Kampala to learn and ultimately help energize the forces for positive change already present. This was not a regular 'student exercise', nor was it proper 'research'. It certainly was no traditional 'development project'. It was a learning experience derived through, and driven by, action. Their simple mission was to find out 'what made these communities tick' – and devise and implement small intervention projects in line with the energy already present.

I am convinced that the complexity of the deprived areas in cities in the Global South cannot be grasped at all without getting your hands dirty. i.e. by genuinely entering that reality. Certainly not if one has the slightest aspirations of contributing towards improving the conditions. And it is also my view that without such an agenda one should refrain from entering. The most fruitful and efficient way of learning to make a useful difference – is by trying to do just that: make a difference. I feel relieved in that these assumptions were fully confirmed by the works of the students. Supported by some the small project funds from UN-Habitat, the students tried to identify strategically 'rich', multilayered projects that i.a. carried the capacity to run independently of external support once started. And the students did it all. What little we as teachers did besides dealing with boring organizational and financial chores, was merely to organize lectures by local scholars and practitioners, call for decent behavior, respect for others and for leaving the cameras behind the first week. We were there to 'represent', but not to teach. As for project proposals we posited, however, that no funds were to be released if not an equal contribution was forthcoming from the community in question. But they were.

What the students actually did and what they learnt, you may read about in the coming pages.

What I as a teacher learnt was first of all that the students through the very fact that they are young have access to the agents of change in the settlements, i.e. the young, in a way that we as the old guard do not. Thus the students represent a genuine resource for change both by their capacity as (almost) architects-planners, and by their access to the change makers. Secondly the real money at the students' disposal proved decisive in accessing the settlement population. This made the students work carry real life consequences, thus contributing substantially to their learning. Furthermore collaborating with the local agents (students & ACTogether) proved crucial in establishing the trust necessary to make meaningful interventions. Our experience thus implies that such a horizontal partnership with local institutions must be mandatory for any external student group. This again points towards the ultimate objective in introducing Northern students to the often 'exotic' world of the urban South: That of contributing towards local self sufficiency in terms of insights, skills – and academic approach.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to all the students. It has been the most rewarding year of my teaching career. Furthermore thanks to ass.lecturer Anna Skibeveag for her whole-hearted contributions. Also to Kasaije Peter and Were Andrew – as well as to Lutwama Muhammed of ACTogether and Dr Lwasa Schuaib and all the others at Makerere University. Thanks, not least, to the Global Division of UN-Habitat. Without you, there would have been nothing to write about.

This book itself is also the students' work. The only contribution from the parent institution is my writing this, - and our paying the printers.

Hans Skotte, MArch. PhD Assc. Professor , NTNU, Course Executive



Understanding Urban Challenges in the Global South

Cities have been steadily growing the last 50 years and in the next 20 years, population growth will merely take place in the cities of low- and middle-income countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. (UN-Habitat, 2009) One big difference of this rapid urban growth to similar historical experiences in industrializing Europe is how the growth in population is relating to the economical development. Particularly in African countries, 'urbanization appears to have become partially decoupled from economic development' (Cohen, 2004: 27).

It can appear as if authorities in many developing countries have come to a point where they have given up on some of their tasks. Here, there commonly exist 'a deep ambivalence towards urbanity and the reluctance by many leaders and governments to recognize the realities of city life in shaping the identity and politics of their subjects' (Parnell et al., 2009) and urban planning is often somewhat detached from the governance system. When planning not only needs to be reinforced but also changed in these countries, it is because the planning practice in most cases is adopted from early 20th century western planning.

'The most obvious problem with master planning and urban modernism is that they completely fail to accommodate the way of life of majority of the inhabitants in rapidly growing, largely poor and informal cities and thus, directly contribute to social and spatial marginalization. The possibility that people living in such circumstances could comply with zoning ordinances designed for relatively wealthy European towns is extremely unlikely.'

(UN-Habitat, 2009)

The unprecedented rate of urbanisation in the Global South has seen a parallel growth in research on this urban phenomenon and its consequences. In a bid to understand and meet the constantly evolving, seemingly insurmountable challenges of this rapid urbanization, there is an expanding global network of individuals and organisations engaged in various studies that advocate various theories. But somehow the global pool of intellect and good intentions has so far fallen short of arresting the negative fallout of the urban population explosion. For more than 50 per cent of the urban population in developing countries, life in the city is characterized by little or no access to shelter, water, and sanitation, education or health services (UN Habitat Mission Statement). The fallout for us as urban planners is that we are stuck in a curious paradox of planning ahead for the future while falling spectacularly short of coping with the present realities.

Planning has come to be perceived as many things; what planning theory claims, what planners themselves claim, what they implement and what they cannot manage to implement. As students of Urban Ecological Planning in NTNU, Trondheim, Norway we were introduced to the intentions of the course (AAR4525, AAR4816 & AAR4820 Autumn 2009)

"This study is tailor-made to help students in taking the course to:

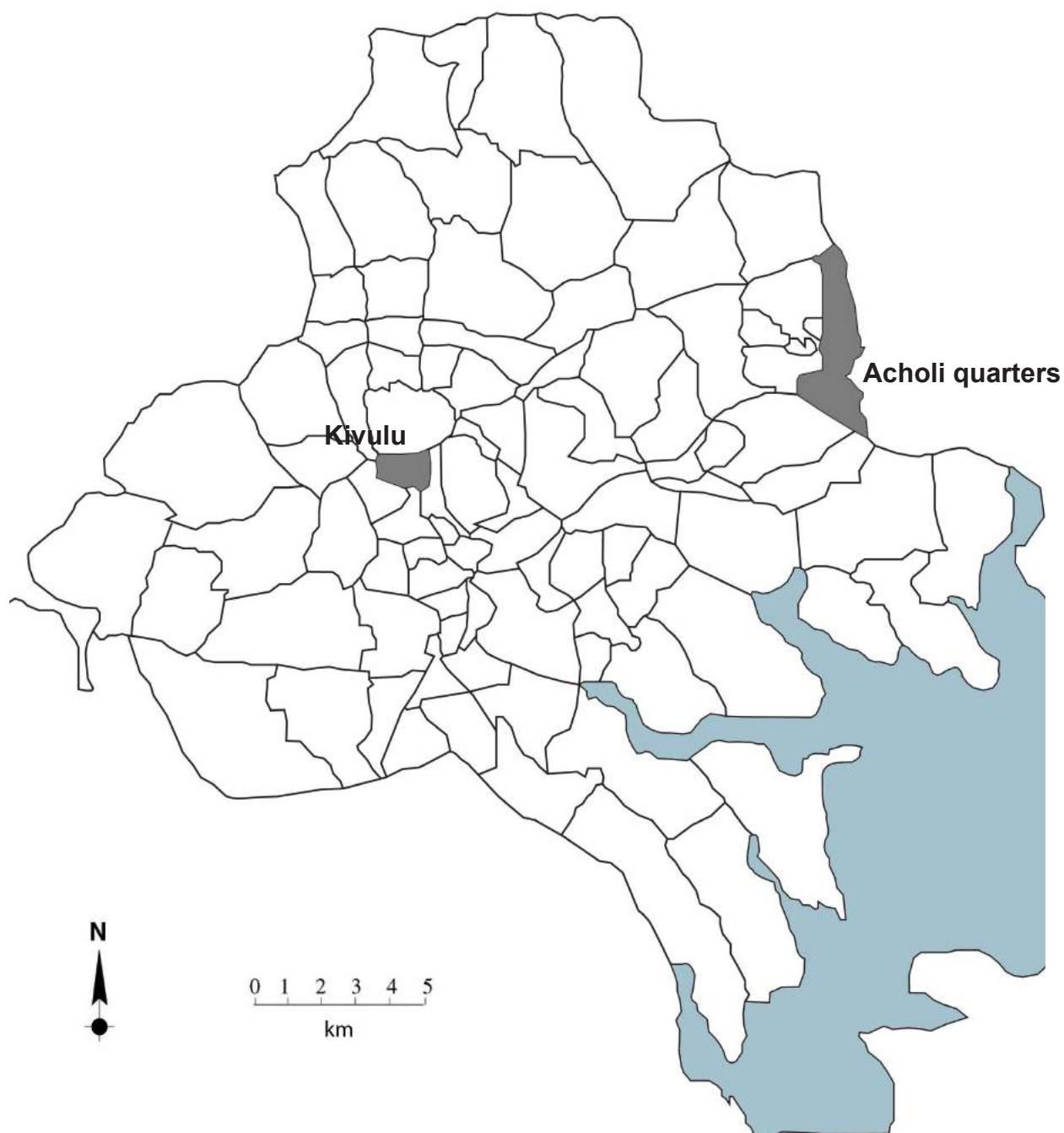
- 1) Understand the asset base and the dynamics of a territorially defined area, e.g. a neighbourhood, through interacting with its inhabitants, local authorities and other stakeholders.
- 2) Be able to propose physical or organizational intervention based on their newly acquired understanding of the dynamics of the community in question and do it in such a way that it will generate subsequent benefit."

With this in mind we commenced on our field study in Kampala, Uganda. Through our stay we got an opportunity to experience up close the possibilities and frustrations of being planners in what might be called an overwhelming and challenging context. This document is a summary of our experiences gained over the two months of field work.



Introduction to Kampala

Kampala, the capital city of Uganda and by far its primary urban centre, provided the context to our field work. It is a dynamic, growing, bustling and chaotic city. Kampala is characterized by many features which are in common with the fast expanding cities of the Global South, such as the oft documented problems of unplanned growth, proliferation of informal settlements and decline in living conditions. Kampala has had a master plan since the 1960s which was most recently revised in 1994 but its implementation has been ad hoc due to lack of resources, complicated land tenure systems and pressures of rapid urban growth. Close to 44 percentage of the population lives in slums and informal settlements with limited access to clean water, sanitation facilities and basic urban infrastructure. .



The Fieldwork Research

We were aware at the onset that our field research would interact directly with its context in two ways. Firstly, the Kampala City Council was in the process of creating the new Master Plan for the city. Our research findings would contribute to the body of knowledge on Kampala's informal settlements for the authorities involved in the Master Planning process. Secondly, a fund of 5000 dollars by UN-Habitat had been made available to the study to be utilized towards community development initiatives in our field area. The process for arriving at these outcomes however was uncharted and therein lay our challenge. We grappled continuously with how and where all the information we were generating could be relevantly applied in order to contribute to positive change in the community. The question that kept arising was - what is our role as planners in this context?

Once in Kampala we were introduced to our fellow students from Makerere University with whom we would be working closely over the next two months. Their understanding of the local context proved crucial in our access to the field and the necessary institutions. As all the students came from vastly different backgrounds the interaction amongst us itself helped us look at the situations emerging in the field from new perspectives.

We were to study two informal settlements of Kampala, namely, Acholi Quarters and Kivulu as two groups. The settlements shared many similar challenges but by virtue of their location and history each had its unique characteristics.

Acholi Quarters lies on the eastern fringe of Kampala. It evolved as a result of migration from Northern Uganda in the 1960s. The early settlers were Acholis who, like the Buganda, are one of the many ethnic groups in Uganda. Around this nucleus more people were attracted, drawn to economic opportunities in Kampala. These were mostly linked to the first settlers through family or community ties. In the 1980s the civil strife in Northern Uganda led to a great increase in the number of migrants. Therefore Acholi quarters growth is perceived more closely with this phase by the Kampala citizens. This is a departure from other settlements in Kampala which are usually perceived as ethnically diverse.

Kivulu is centrally located in Kampala close to both the city centre and Makerere University. In the 1960's there were only few and small buildings in Kivulu, the majority being bars. Today we see a variety of businesses like a washing bay, student hostels, markets and small shops and production of different goods. Also different public facilities like clinics, churches and schools are located in Kivulu. Its proximity to the city centre makes it a desirable place for people coming to Kampala city seeking work opportunities. At the same time it makes Kivulu more threatened by evictions due to the pressures of land economics.



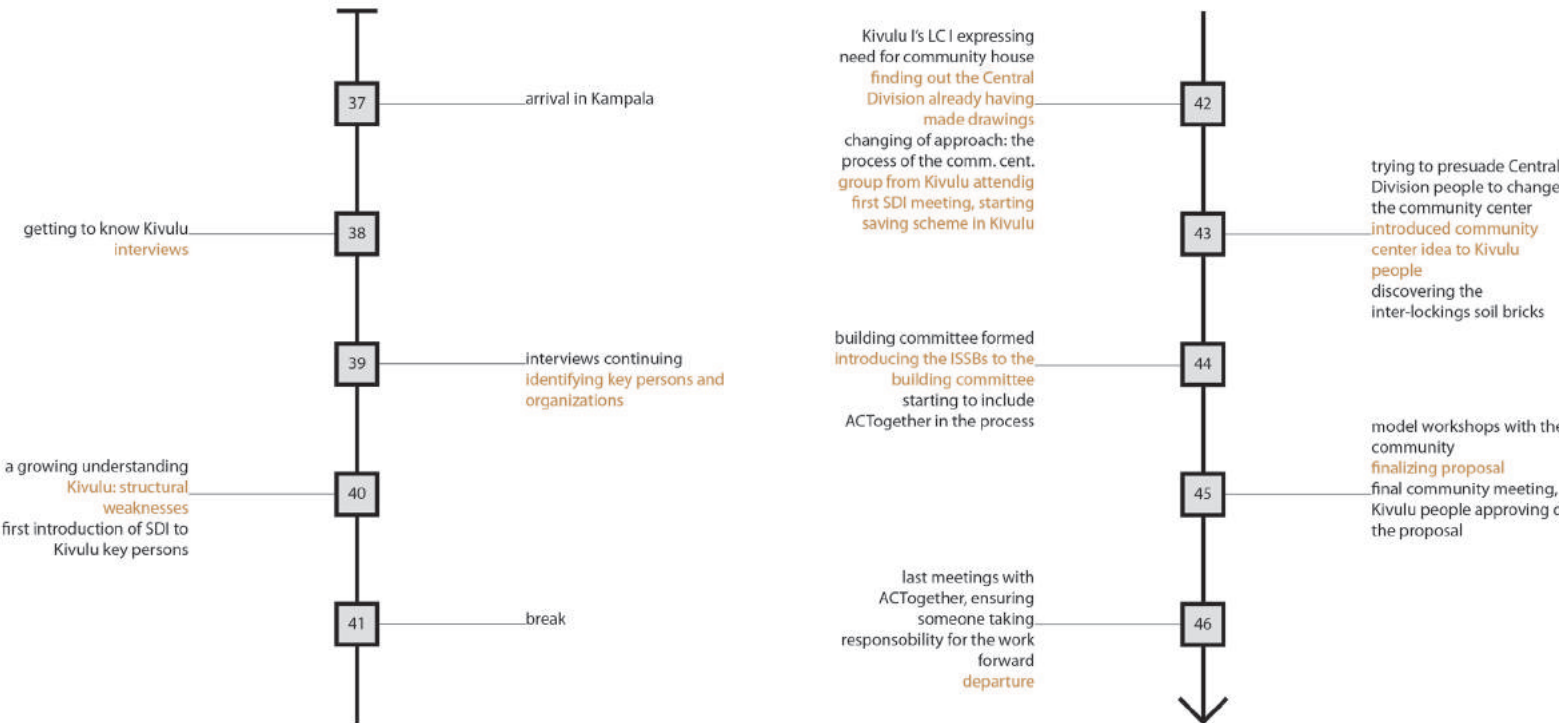




Kivulu. Process and Project

Executive summary

ANDRÉ ALMEIDA
SI CONG LIU
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GURO KRISTINE VENGEN
ZAHRA KYOBUTUNGI



Introduction

Kivulu is regarded as an illegal settlement and as Kampala City Centre is growing from a rapid increase in the urban population the pressure on land increases. Due to a complex system of land tenure the citizens of Kivulu are left with weak rights facing the threat of evictions that naturally follows from this development.

We saw that the way these issues were being dealt with from the government's side is not adequate. At the same time facing a poorly organized community, the prospects of dealing with the problems becomes even more meagre. A new approach is needed. The purpose of this fieldwork has been to explore the possibilities implicated in this need. By gaining knowledge to the all the aspects, be it social, organizational or physical of Kivulu, we would explore proposals for physical and/or organizational interventions that could be implemented in order to bring about positive change.

The fieldwork research

Conducting field work was a new experience for all of us. Also being in a slum like Kivulu was something we were not used to. We were strongly affected by the things we saw and heard. The idea of the field researcher being able to receive and process information in a neutral and unbiased way is, at least in this case, remote.

It is easy to for instance claim that an interviewee did not want to open herself because she found the setting of being interviewed unfamiliar and awkward. The fact is that in most cases it was we as outsiders that were most affected. In the beginning we believed that the field had to get used to us. As time passed we realized that it had to do with us getting used to the field.

With time, however, we would get more and more accustomed to the new setting and we would reach a stage where we would feel that we had created a network of contacts within Kivulu creating an environment where conversations would flow unrestrained, making information surface naturally.

After each day notes from the field were processed. This work consisted of mainly reading through what had been written and writing it again in a more structured way. Missing information or contradictions would now also be discovered. This could in turn be taken back to the respective interviewees for clarification.

However, not all contradictions would be possible to clear out as they were not the result of errors or misinformation at any level. These were actual contradictions showing us that some things are simply perceived and understood in different ways by different people. Such cases would add to our understanding of each informant having her own unique story to tell, which would contribute to the faceted picture we saw appearing of Kivulu.

We were also able to conduct triangulations on the gathered information. By doing this we could not only determine the validity and accuracy of information, we also got the opportunity see the information in different contexts leading to a more complete picture.

The interviews played a key role when it came to gathering information about Kivulu. In turn this led to a better understanding of the place, and which areas we had to research more deeply into became apparent; the interviews led us to the key stake holders in the area

PAX BARBING CENTRE



Understanding Kivulu

It is easy to point out challenges that should be dealt with while walking through Kivulu. Speaking only of what meets the eye, the list can still seem overwhelming: clogged drains, accumulation of garbage, sub-standard housing, poor roads and so on. However, these problems and issues of its like are in our opinion merely superficial. Saying so should not in any way be considered a devaluation of the impact these problems have on people's lives. What we mean is that such issues are to be viewed as signs of structural weaknesses within the community or the governance of it.

Such a society demands a different approach from anyone intervening in it compared to an intervention in a institutionally sound society. A number of considerations have to be made, regarding processes that might run automatically in a more formal one. Considering the weak governmental apparatus in many places and the conditions people might live under, this being as illegal settlers, in illiteracy or in general with little knowledge to the legal framework within which interventions are made, community processes to raise awareness and understanding are needed.

In Kivulu, we did not see this happen; the initiatives coming from Kampala Central Division were implemented as if all the necessary formal ways of securing people's rights and giving information were present. After talking to different city council officials, this impression was strengthened; the way both decision making processes and implementation of physical projects was made sounded like a very healthy one when ignoring the context it had to work in. With other words: the frames might have functioned perfectly well in a formalized society. Facing the reality of for instance Kivulu, with all its informality, they collapsed.

Acting in Kivulu

As we got more involved in with the community and built our network we discovered that there was an ongoing initiative to build a community hall. The community leaders showed interest in having us involved in the process. We saw this as an opportunity for us to contribute with our skills in architecture. A community centre would be something which would have a big social relevance as it could help institutionalize and formalize the community and stand as a symbol of their aspirations and capacities.

Later on, through leaders at a higher level, we got information on how far this process had actually gone; a design for the centre had already been made. This discovery was key for us towards understanding how the process of formal interventions was being run. It revealed weak communication between the leaders at different levels: The one high in the hierarchy had not disseminated information to the ones at a lower level and they, in turn, had not passed through what they knew to the community.

With other words: The decision for building a community hall in the beginning came from the need for a physical structure to accommodate community meetings and offices for the local leaders. Still, the decision was made solely by the leaders at a high level and dealt with high in the hierarchy. Involvement of the community was not part of the process..



Implementation within such a template would fail its stated objectives given exclusion of the community from the planning process. Instead the building would suit the interests solely of the entrenched elite. .

Another aspect we saw as a risk to the successful realisation of the project was when leaders are solely responsible for the projects, the processes could get politicized. The indication of success for this way of intervening would then not be the impact it made in a community. It will instead be measured by the built structure in itself, this standing as an image for “development”, spread in poor settlements and the corridors of the government to benefit a political or personal agenda.

There was no point for us to intervene under these preconditions. It would only be a part of the same approach that had failed earlier and even though we would manage to give a more appropriate design solution, the potential to make a social contribution and to drive social change would not be utilized.

However, this proved to be an even bigger opportunity; the focus was shifting from the implementation in itself to the way of implementing. We needed a new process and a catalytic action to trigger it and put it into practice. This would work both ways: the design of the community centre as a generator for a new process of implementation and the new process as a means to design and implement the community centre.

In order to be able to do this, a revision of our strategy was made with the advice of ACTogether, which is the secretariat of Slum Dwellers International (SDI) in Uganda and which we had been introduced to early in our stay. Through the collaboration with ACTogether a new understanding of how to approach the leaders in Kivulu was created: We would deal with them vertically and accept the hierarchy. Consequently, we would keep them informed on the progress and work closely together with the community. From Medi, our initial contact in ACTogether we have the following quotation:

“When we work with communities, we don’t go to the leaders, we mobilize the community and then we get them [the leaders] involved as a part of it. We don’t bring politics to this process; we go straight to the poorest of the poor”

ACTogether’s basis for all the work they do is a saving scheme. This also works to create an entry point in a community. Through a mobilization in Kivulu, made possible by the assistance of members of Slum Dwellers Federation from the slum Kisenyi, Kampala, such a saving scheme was established also in Kivulu. With this organization created, also we would be able to use it as an entry point to communicate our general assessment on the process of implementing to the community and present our findings around the community centre to the community.

The design for the community centre made by Kampala Central Division was shown and explained to the community by us. Also, we gave our assessment both on how the process had been handled by the leadership and on the quality of the design. Furthermore, we stressed the need of a new process and a new design.

As people now were aware of how the process had been put into practice so far and the results of it, they wanted to partake, resulting in the forming of a building committee for the community center. The discussion now started to centre on how to build a new process and what roles the different parties should have in it. We, as architecture students, made a new design responsive to local wishes and needs. We were also using the access we had amongst the authorities to help link the committee to those we considered being strategically important to the process. By



AGENDA

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1. PRAYER / RULES OF THE MEETING
2. INTRODUCTION
- 3.

creating such a network, the capacity of the community to manage the process themselves increased.

Being slum dwellers, the people in Kivulu have always been their own planners and architects. As our intervention came to be architectural, this triggered reflections and different opinions about the social role of the architect. How should the actual design process be conducted? To what extent should the community be directly involved in the actual design of the building?

The basis for our work was that the ability that a community has to sustain a project by itself is largely influenced by their level of participation in the decision making process. Still, we had some specific skills in this field which people in Kivulu did not have. Our approach became to make people aware of the possibilities they had. We were standing for the actual design but it would be based on the community's direct input. The way we made this happen was by arranging workshops and brainstorming sessions. Based on this we came up with a design which we brought back to the community for revision.

After our departure, ACTogether is continuing their cooperation with the saving scheme groups. Also an enumeration is planned to take place in the near future. This is a process where the community will be gone through by a team, consisting both of people from Kivulu and external SDI-members, mapping property limits, conveying household surveys and informing about the Federation's work and the saving scheme. The result of this will be data on both the physical and social conditions in the community, as well as a community properly informed. The latest information we have on the enumeration is that people from Makerere University will participate with competence in GIS. In this way the community mapping will be accurate enough to give proper documentation on property boundaries, which in turn can be used to give people in Kivulu an address.

Having the community conducting this work themselves, they will gain access to information about themselves and their own conditions, leaving them better suited to actually plan for their own future. Properly informed, they will also stand as a stronger part in negotiations with for instance the Local Government.

We considered it to appropriate to provide some incentives to make the community centre project going. We had established a network between our contact at Makerere University, who had experience with the proposed building material, ACTogether/ slum Dwellers Federation, who knew how to work in communities and also had experience in community participation in building and the building committee in Kivulu. In addition money we had gotten from UN-HABITAT was decided to finance a brick making machine for ACTogether. If things go according to the plan, this machine will be used in building the community centre in Kivulu, leading to people acquiring new skills. Also, the machine will be used in other communities and on other building projects.

Before we left, plans were laid for people from Kivulu to take the initiative for a meeting with Kampala Central Division about the community centre. We consider it important that meeting happened: As said, the community centre process was already ongoing, so making Central Division acknowledge that a new process has started in Kivulu will be the first step towards changing the course of the project. Besides having this instrumental function, the meeting will hopefully also open up a dialogue between Central Division and Kivulu that can continue.

Lastly, letting the meeting happen under the initiative from the building committee in Kivulu we deem important as it adds credibility to the new process.



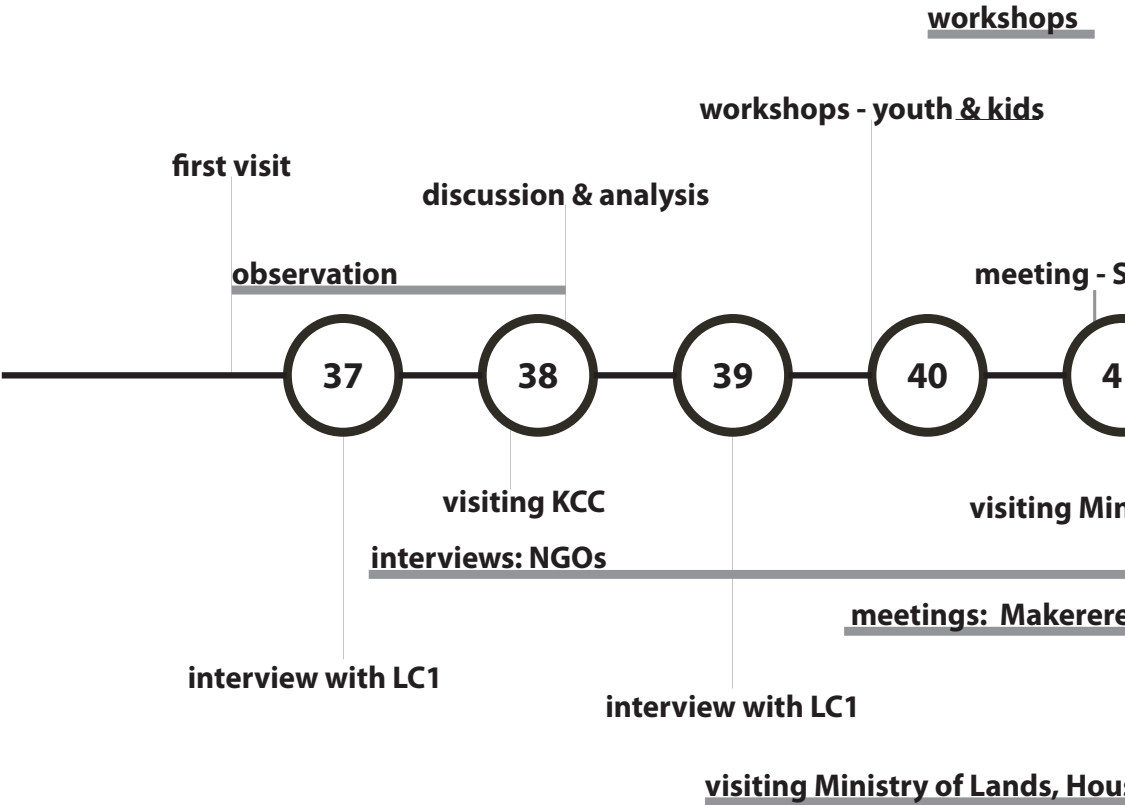


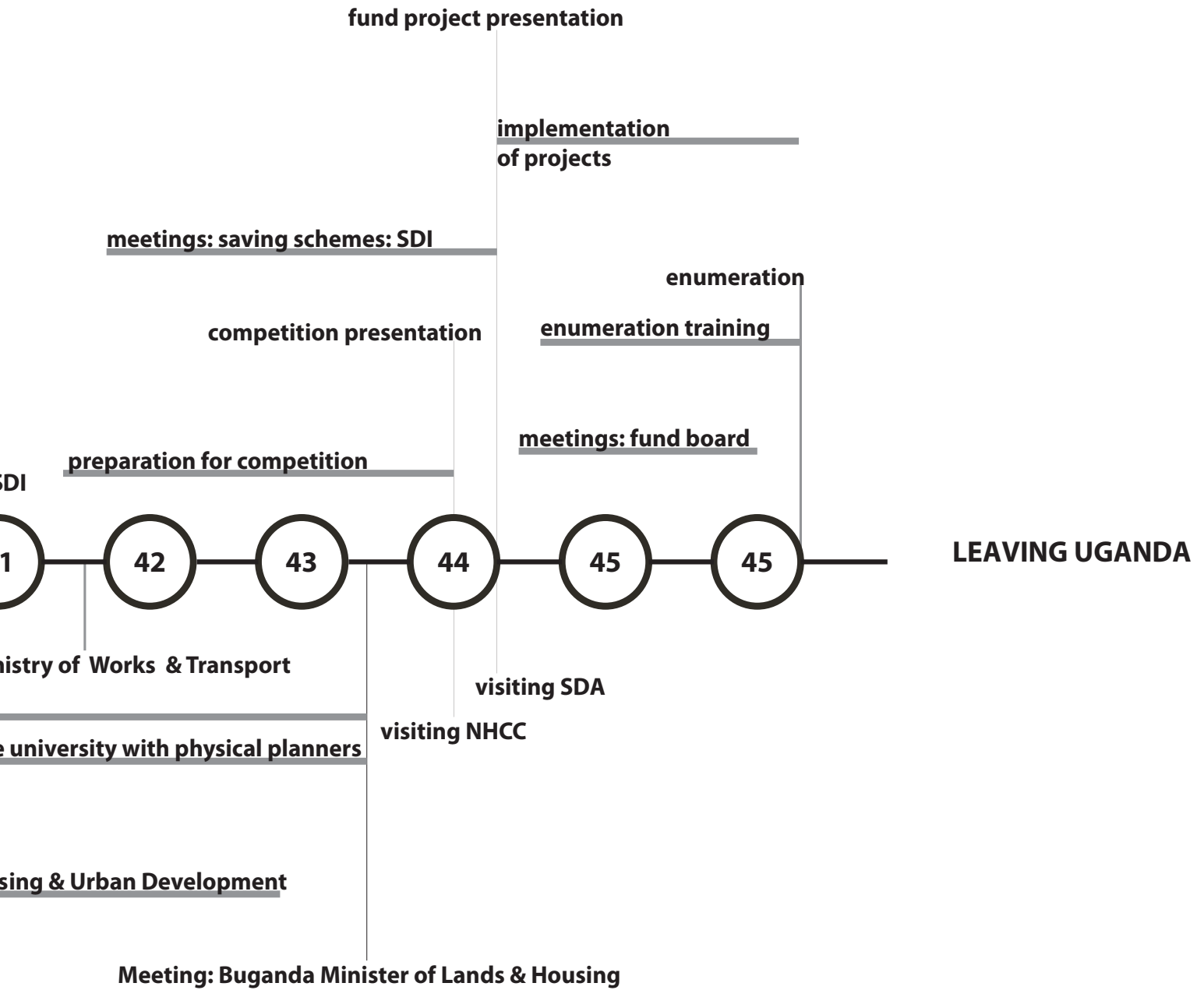
Ideas for Acholi Quarters

Executive summary

Elena Archipovaitė
Amritha Ballal
Bisirikirwa Matia
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Asbjørn Syverhuset

COMING TO UGANDA







Development is that stage you reach when you are secure enough in yourself individually or collectively to become interdependent. When 'I' can emerge as 'we' and when 'we' is inclusive of 'them'.

Excerpts from Nabeel Hamdis 'Small Change: About the art of Practise and the limits of Planning in Cities'

Participating in Change

In various lectures and discussions initiating this field work, it was stressed that, the traditional planning methods in Kampala were not efficient enough to handle the complexity and continuously evolving issues of the fast growing city. Our approach to the field work at Acholi quarters was therefore informed by the principles of Action Planning as a point of departure. The method consists of using simple, but well thought through, interventions as generators for continuous development. Crucial for the success, are the participation, the feeling of ownership and the will to sustain the project by the local population. To obtain this, as planners we had to enter and work in the field with the community as partners in the process.

The people in Acholi Quarters were well used to outsiders wanting to 'help'. Due to the presence of a large number of foreign aid organisations most people had learned to associate a group of foreigners with the possibility of support. Therefore, they were keen to interact with us. Whereas, in comparison, in Kivulu (a slum in Kagugube parish) area some people were almost aggressive when we entered, wondering if we were investors speculating on their eviction. But this receptiveness to outsiders in Acholi Quarters had its own set of problems as most interactions with us were prompted by the expectation of some returns or benefits.

One possible way of gaining access to a community like Acholi Quarters was to do semi-structured interviews. Interviews were a means to know the place, gather information and start making contacts. Even though everyone wanted to speak to us in Acholi Quarters it was very difficult to actually have any real communication with people. We were unable to trust the authenticity of the information being generated through this method because expectations of possible aid by the correspondents biased their responses. One may speculate on how much this was a result of all the different organizations that have initiated various schemes at different times in Acholi Quarters. Maybe, it was just a necessary effect of people coming together from such different worlds. Perhaps, it was connected to our own lack of experience. Given the limited time we had, chances of the right planning interventions coming out of this method felt remote. We had to come up with better alternatives. At the same time we continued with this method as a means to interact with people and create contacts within the community. The semi structured interviews also continued to be the main form of interaction with the formal stakeholders like the various governments and non governmental agencies where this format worked much better at generating relevant information.

If we were to achieve the all important aspects of real participation, feeling of ownership and will to sustain the project, we needed to build dialogues and process over time. It was an advantage that it was relatively easy to mobilise people for informal interaction in Acholi Quarters. What we needed were better ways of gathering information and engaging people over time to actually participate with something personal. To identify an appropriate community development initiative the community and the students had to work together as a team. Additionally, even basic factual information and relevant planning related data was hard to come by. This led to great ambiguity on various important issues concerning governance, legal status, population figures, maps, area boundaries, geographical area coverage, future

**S.D.A LAND
NOT FOR
SALE**

plans and different land matters. In this uncertain scenario planning for future interventions would prove difficult. To get a clearer picture of Acholi Quarters and the large scale, long term issues affecting it therefore required us to trace out and track various different sources of information.

Out of this, three primary focus areas for further process emerged. To understand the external context of Acholi Quarters we had to seek out the different stakeholders in the formal urban framework. This included the administration offices, organizations, landowners and government agencies. The goal was to gather information, both on the area and on the different policies that had impact on it. We wanted to know if there was a potential for linkage between Acholi Quarters and the formal sector that could be mutually beneficial. Our initial understanding of the governance system in Kampala had lead us to believe that informal settlements like Acholi Quarters usually fell outside the purview of most formal organisations. Thus the second part of the research was to discover possible key institutions that could foster links between the community and its outer context. A key organisation proved to be Slum Dwellers Federation, the Ugandan chapter of Slum Dwellers International (SDI) whose work was introduced to us in a lecture by their representative Lutwama Muhammed during our first week in Kampala.

The third area of focus was inside the settlement. In a bid to start a continuous process of dialogue we started organizing selected people from the community that we felt could contribute towards both generating information as well as the interventions. To be able to get the communities involvement, ideas, time and feeling of responsibility, we had to create a group of people that we would follow throughout the process. This way we hoped to overcome being viewed as intrusive newcomers by building relationships that became more involved and more equal over time. As we got to know more about the community at Acholi Quarters we hoped just as importantly, they got to know more about us. This way we could also discuss different subjects and start thinking about solutions, not just problems.

The idea of working in a group like this was not so much to remove subjectivity from the participants, but to ensure that certain opinions do not dominate the discourse without being challenged adequately. For this, we needed a process which encouraged as much public debate and discussion as possible. In this way, the multiplicity of narratives would themselves act as the mutual checks and balances, thus ensuring a greater degree of authenticity. We wanted to shift the focus in all three threads of our research from enumerating problems to finding solutions. Based on our discussions and observations so far we were working on a premise that in the light of limited resources the best solutions would come from innovative use of existing resources rather than the injecting new resources in the hope of solving problems temporarily. Small but critical observations had triggered this thread of thought. For example, many people in Acholi quarters are engaged in making and selling beads from recycled beads for a living. We noticed that there was a very small variety of bead styles. Even though it was known that the market was over saturated with these styles there had been little change in design in years. Additionally, we observed and were told that changes mainly occur when induced from the outside, for example through NGO's (like "Beads for Life"). This was interpreted by some as "A different style of beads will only be produced if a NGO will introduce it and train people to produce it." This triggered the germ of an idea for a competition focusing on innovation.

These observations lead to a lot of debate on the role of innovation in the development of communities, especially in the context of poor communities. We wanted to understand how the vulnerability of poverty could effect perceptions of resources and whether innovation was perceived as risk taking. We felt examples of lacking individual innovation may symbolize how poverty is perpetuated through a certain mindset. It seemed our possible intervention could emerge from a process focused on identifying existing resources and innovatively optimising them with the community. We



Competition members. From the top left: Aicha Shivan, Mulaya Tom, Ochora Robert, Akello Margret, Okeny Margret, Okot Sekondo, Adung Filda, Aporo Beatrice, Anena Christine, Okot Moses, Akello Esther, Kiko Mary, Oyat Jimmy, Anena Beatrice, Achiro Santina, Onen Simon Peter, “Grandma” Esther, Kyomugisha Rita, Atim Mary Goretti, Oyugi George, Ashaba Doreen, Ochan John Paul, Arachi Faith, Oyopo Bonny, Ouma Bosco, Oloya Joseph, Adung Katty, Kiboma Richard, Pido Joyce, Bahati Nathan, Bwambale Moses, Akol Helen



felt a workshop model would be a good starting point as it was easy to mobilise people to gather for a while in the community. The problem was to sustain enthusiasm for the process over time. We wanted the community to drive this process as much as possible through their own initiative. This would require incentives and motivation. A combination of the competition for ideas through evolving workshops over a period of time seemed like an effective way to incentivise innovation and build on ideas incrementally.

Securing continuity

The method of action planning calls for simple interventions which can have larger positive effects. For this to be obtained the interventions and the processes surrounding them must be let to develop over time. The interventions should not be planned to end at a certain point. They should rather be planned as a continuous process with an accumulation of positive outcomes over time that self generate newer processes. The students and the different participants knew from the beginning that we were in Acholi Quarters for a mere two months. The challenge was always to come up with interventions that would not leave with us. We had heard too many stories of many NGO projects failing in exactly the same way. To ensure lasting effects out of our interventions, we planned for continuity on several levels. Most importantly we tried to keep our process transparent and participatory. Information we found out in different meetings was forwarded to the community, we involved Actogether in the process to provide organizational support in our absence and throughout the competition we supported the participants in taking ownership of the process. The competition process created a team of informed people and organizations which was the network from which the interventions could emerge from and be nurtured. Organizational and educational interventions are under considerable threat in the initial phase though. There was a need for securing and increasing the lasting effect. One of the challenges in doing so was that generating initiative and ideas through the competition may not result in too much if there was no entitlement to actually start something new. This may even be connected to the reason that there is a lack of endogenous start-up projects. It seemed like there is a general gap between the time it would take to get a project running and the time within which an investor would like, or need, to see the results. To continue to support innovation, to bridge this gap and to make it worth more for people to co-operate, we started the process of The Idea Fund. The fund aimed for sustaining and building on the process and initiatives that the competition generated. The community would be given the opportunity to give loans to groups wanting to develop a project but who were still lacking initial funding. The primary custodians of the fund board were the 32 members of the competition, who had been through an intensive process of linking personal initiatives to community benefit to arrive at practically grounded initiatives. According to our rationale, this would increase the opportunity for future locally rooted projects to manage through the difficult initial phase. Another important aspect was that as only members belonging to savings schemes would be eligible for the fund, it linked up the fund to another crucial ongoing process in the community, that of the Slum Dweller Federation savings schemes initiated through Act Together. The fund therefore would foster both the development of networks, savings and innovative initiatives.

Another important challenge in the continuity of development in Acholi Quarters concerned the presence of NGO's and the absence of government activity. The challenge was the general lack of factual information on the settlement. Proper information is necessary for the community to present their needs and for institutions to allocate resources in the right areas. The Slum Dwellers Federation got experience in conducting enumeration processes where the community itself collect this data about their settlement. With this information they would stand stronger when it comes to being heard. It tackled our important point of helping the community to organize and be able to present itself with a stronger voice. This might become crucial if their fear of getting evicted comes true.



When the time came to implement interventions through the UN Habitat fund, the process itself had generated networks of people and organisations that became the social capital which could support the interventions. This could enhance and safeguard the external investments into the community through the community managed fund. Due to the multiplicity of interpretations of roles and capacities, it became possible to find the most efficient combination of people and organisations to deliver on specific interventions. For example the fund board was embedded with representatives of the local administration, community members as well as Slum Dwellers International(SDI) which gave it credibility, community ownership as well as access to external knowledge sources and networks. Both the fund and the enumeration are this way both linked to Actogether, who will follow it up after our departure. The tremendous progress we had made would not have been possible without the flexibility and accessible network of SDF-Actogether. This was greatly enhanced by the drive, commitment and in depth insights of the members of the organization in accommodating projects that had not been part of their plans. This reflected a deep commitment to the objective of making the Federation grow and take root for the development of newer communities. We also chose to engage one of the local students who had been working with us in Kampala with Actogether. Her position within Actogether will be funded for one year out of the UN-Habitat support. This way we can pull out more gradually and have the opportunity to help if necessary before the projects have grown strong enough to sustain themselves.

Why we did What we did

Every interaction has the power to affect change. Choices are embedded in the course of interactions that result in the nature and the degree of the change. For us to act appropriately the process of defining the nature of change and its implementation had to be rooted in reality. Over sixty days we eight students interacted closely with almost 100 people and around 20 different organizations. These interactions included the community of Acholi Quarters, government and administrative frameworks, universities, international donor agencies, non governmental organizations and community based organizations. In the existing paradigm the opportunities for interaction between these entities are restricted by the formal and perceived definitions of their roles and scope. We found to our surprise that our field research process itself had become a conduit for the flow of ideas and information within as well as in between these entities. This flow of information helped us identify new resources and opportunities. It also helped identify possible approaches to take advantage of these opportunities. In the normal course of the research it would have stopped at this observation and identification. In the present context the scope of our field work enabled us to observe as well as participate in the process of 'planning'. As the field research process had generated networks, approaches and ideas that had the capability to deliver positive change we had the possibility to support its realization. We did so by helping initiate the Ideas Fund and supporting the Slum Dwellers Federations engagement in the community.

The process of the competition enabled us to engage with the community simultaneously on various levels in order to arrive at suitable interventions. In essence it became an experimental ground for the community to test certain ideas and push boundaries. The process of interaction fostered new, real links and built on existing ones both within the competition group as well as with their advisors, friends and families outside the groups. A critical freedom the competition process afforded the participants was the freedom to fail and to learn from the failures. This was very important in the high degree vulnerability of their everyday lives which leaves very little room for the risks associated with experimentation and innovation. But within the competition process the participants could engage in hypothetical scenarios and come up with imaginative solutions. Therefore the competition process acted as an incubator for ideas that could then tentatively find their feet in real conditions.



There was also a shift in viewing the 'outsiders' as potential partners rather than just patrons. As the competition process clarified the opportunities as well as the constraints within the community it became more evident how we as external actors could contribute more effectively and efficiently. In the light of our temporary presence in Kampala, our redundancy had to be factored into the processes we had initiated. It was very interesting to see that we did not have to force this but that this emerged naturally through the process. During the initial workshops outside interventions were seen as a solution to almost every problem. As the process evolved the expressions of the need for outside support became more specific, more nuanced and more precise. This enabled us to identify areas where various external and internal agencies could contribute in a relevant manner pooling their resources with the communities own. Unfortunately government mechanisms are rarely fast moving nor flexible enough to readily adapt to such capacity building from individual communities. Our research on existing formal delivery mechanisms showed that they tended to be top down, cost intensive, resource inefficient and inflexible. Besides sharing information with relevant authorities we were unable to find ways within the existing system where a fruitful collaboration could be initiated. A shift in attitude would require policy change which requires grass roots mobilization on a much vaster scale. Alongside looking at their individual aspirations and short term goals, investing in this long term mobilization seemed essential to securing the interests of Acholi Quarters community. The work of the Slum Dwellers Federation covers both ends of this spectrum; working as an adviser to the Uganda Government and at the same time mobilizing communities through savings schemes, enumeration and other processes. This created tremendous synergy between the work of the Federation, our research findings and the needs of the settlement. The recognition within the settlement of the need to secure their long term interests was evident in the enthusiasm with which people volunteered their time for voluntary processes like enumeration to generate factual information on the community. The fact that community ownership was integral to the working model of SDF made its integration into existing savings schemes as well as the fund that much easier. It helped anchor both the short term and the long term community driven process.

It is daunting as students to come in to an unfamiliar setting and over two months presume to understand a place, its people and it's problems enough to propose interventions for improvement. It gets far more daunting when the possibility to implement these interventions suddenly overturns the observer-object equation. Being a student participating in the planning process is different from being both a student studying the planning process and a professional engaged in the planning process. Being a student gives you greater access to key stakeholders and greater ability to interact laterally with the community. At the same time you are limited by time, knowledge and resources that define the scope of your involvement. Due to the built-in transient nature of our direct involvement it is imperative that checks and balances are integrated into our process of engagement. Forging partnerships keeping this in mind was critical. Working hand in hand with the community and with organizations such as Act Together in collaborative frameworks ensured that our deficiencies were complemented and our strengths capitalized on. Their questions, corrections, expectations and trust informed us as much as ours contributed to their work. Along the way we learned that taking cognizance of our strengths, weaknesses and subjective prejudices. The teaming up of students from NTNU with the local students at Makere University also aided this process greatly. The Makere students had greater familiarity with the local context and their presence helped the NTNU students gain access into the Acholi community. The local students on the other hand through this field work explored alternative approaches and experienced new interpretations of familiar issues. Most importantly the partnership with the local students facilitated through a local university anchored the field work in its regional context and enabled it to contribute to the locally existing body of knowledge on the issues it covered.

Was it Planning?

At the end of two months more than 100 members Acholi Quarters had through the savings schemes and enumeration exercises linked to a network of more than 3000 people in similar communities through Slum Dwellers Federation Uganda. Through them this linked Acholi Quarters further on one hand with almost two million slum dwellers through Slum Dwellers International in more than 20 countries. The four members of Competition Group three had proposed a community managed Poultry Farm and won the competition. Their Poultry Farm cooperative now had close to 40 Members. The Ideas for Acholi Fund enabled the 32 original members of the competition to sustainably support community initiatives that could potentially involve and benefit any of the 5000 people in Acholi quarters. The process in Acholi Quarters developed because, as the collective got stronger, it compensated for individual deficiencies and built on strengths. It gave room for individual aspirations to expand and include the community as a resource as well as beneficiary. This made the eventual contribution of the process more than a sum of its parts. The more the distinctions dissolved and roles blended, the more productive the process became. This flexibility encouraged lateral thinking and unconventional solutions contributing to the recognition of latent resources. And **isn't increasing the efficiency of resources and processes the key to a successful intervention?**

With certain stakeholders, strict definitions and a narrow understanding of their 'roles' limited the potential of our interactions. This was more evident in interactions with organizations rather than with individuals. The lack of coordination between various community development projects in Acholi Quarters was indicative of how formal urban organizations accord low priority to collaborative processes even if it is evident this might increase efficiency. The lack of flexibility in government mechanisms to deliver on basic urban infrastructure in informal settlements similarly makes it difficult for them to utilise community resources as a means of delivering development. The inflexibility and tendency to stick to defined roles kept increasing as we went up the 'formality' graph. Existing formal delivery mechanisms in Kampala tended to be top down, cost intensive, resource inefficient and inflexible.

Two months of research into Acholi Quarters, its internal issues and external context clarified for us to some degree the question – 'what is the role of the planner?' After what we experienced the question itself in its search for a generalised definition seems to promote the traditional top-down assumption in the role of a planner. Our brief study of urban conditions in one informal settlement amongst hundreds in Kampala raised for us many such questions – What is the role of the government in meeting the emerging urban challenges? What is the role of the NGOs? What is the role of Universities? What is the role of urban communities and of civic action? In the face of the daunting challenges all these stakeholders can be seen potential resources. The competition process illustrated how interaction and collective action optimises resources even in the most deprived settings. What we saw in Acholi Quarters makes us feel that it might be imperative that the processes that address specific urban issues require partnerships that are flexible, inclusive, and incremental. These are partnerships that allow and promote participants to pool resources and skills to seamlessly deliver not just according their specific 'roles' but as per the specific "goals". Having said this, keeping an open mind and setting the direction instead of the pre-deciding the destination might have been the best thing we did.





Reflections

And the strange part of this is that people understand that **things are not working**, but they have **no power** or capacity to change something in that system at all. I learnt how it is really different just to go to the field and see slums and to think that they are the poorest people and need help. But then you see it real from ministry and authority's point of view on a national level and it is just a small problem in a big system that has a big box of problems.

And of course sometimes people with a lot of **good intentions** can make a lot of **damage**. It is really important that these organisations working within the urban areas co-operate between each other and share information about what is going on the ground. Probably they do not do it on purpose, but because of misunderstandings, competition or politics.

Elena Archipovaite

I soon discovered that the physical environment and the lives of the people are extremely **complexly linked**. The experience from Kampala, and Acholi quarter, is therefore largely about trying to work as an architect in an uncertain, and for me, shifting context.

The need for practical experiences seems much stronger than the need for a stronger theoretical base. I think I have learned and experienced a lot due to the fact that we got this strong belief in and responsibility for our own project. If I to a larger extent had felt I was told what to do, I believe it would not been as motivating to explore the possibilities in the process as it was.

It is important for me that whatever single intervention we do, our **approach should be justified** as a whole.

Ola Sendstad

Many questions passed into me (may be because I was black amidst many white students) such as; "Are you part of them? Are you representing a Ugandan or an outsider? Every where you would find kids playing many games while bare footed. This reminded me of my childhood way back in in late 1980s in my village, Mityana district Uganda. Simple to complex, local to national issues, are all connected to "orders from above". It seemed to me, that the

independence of some government institutions is in doubt. I was left wondering; why some departments do exist if their decisions are challenged by **orders from above** who or what is it giving those orders?

Bisiriki Matia

In my life as a student at Makerere University, working on a project (no matter how good) and seeing it actually manifest on ground I could say was a very rare occurrence.

Interestingly, the **informality** to the interviews is what enabled us to obtain **genuine information** as opposed to getting a lot of information most of which is false.

Working with the NTNU team made me realize that the learning process knows **no educational boundaries**. My **contribution** was regarded as important as any one else's in the group.

Fiona Nishimwere

To start with, it was important to experience first hand how we, as urban planners, have to be

multi-disciplinary. Once faced with a neighbourhood (Acholi), which has a government involvement close to none, one discovers that a planner can also be a social worker, for example.

The experience was of immeasurable value for me. However, the feeling is that only the tip of the iceberg of the local complexities was uncovered. We were in a privileged position of only being student who can see things from the outside and being only **accountable** for ourselves, but this also a source of frustration.

David Rubinstein

Experiencing a universe where the planning doesn't apply to the reality, and seeing how it has an impact on people's lives was a wake up call for me. This makes me **appreciate the systems** in my own country more. On the other hand, I've also seen people getting **something out of nothing**. It was impressing to me, because I don't see too much of that in Norway.

My concept of normal, difficult, opportunity has widened and I think I can use that to see possibilities where I previously did not.

Asbjorn Syverhuset

There is a critical balance to the advantage and disadvantage of being an **outsider**. As an outsider it becomes easier to see things in a **fresher perspective**. The deficiencies of the system might not seem as insurmountable to an outsider as they might seem to local communities whose daily struggle with it might have left them exhausted and cynical. For reasons not always justifiable or logical it might afford you the privilege of access to sources not open to the local people. You bring in your own knowledge to add to the existing information on ground. All this can contribute towards positive change. At the same time our lack of information makes us oblivious to our own **blind spots**, be quick to judge and prone to oversimplify. The key is the **partnerships** we forge. The people that we chose work with will be our first and foremost checks and balances

Amritha Ballal

On a more personal level, the thing that has changed the most is my **attitude against aid**. As many other Norwegians with socialistic values, I have earlier had a very clear opinion on aid as something with good sides to it only/entirely good. When coming to Uganda, with time I got the feeling that there are other sides to it as well. Apart from the aspect of encouraging corruption, I many times experienced people expecting us to help them in a way I was not comfortable with. In one way, it seems like people do help each other out, and can count on others helping them in a whole different way than we are used to. But at the same time, I often felt that when people asked for our help, it was more of seeing an opportunity than of desperate need, which is not so difficult to understand. However, helping people that can **seek other ways** out, seems in the long perspective to me like making them unable to do anything for themselves. This feels like a terrible thing to say. We met people who asked for our support, but after a long conversation, where we explained that we did not have that opportunity, and tried to talk about other ways out, we got the answer: "But then I would have to work really hard!" It seems to me that the difference between rich and poor in Uganda is so unbelievably big that there really isn't a logical coherence between the two, and many first seek easy ways of getting money. I don't know if one can say for sure that the way many organizations worked in Uganda, is supporting this way of thinking, but I certainly do believe that it is called for different kinds of approaches that take communities and their people's way of life seriously, both in aid and planning.

Guro Kristine Vengen

From the papers presented during our study, it was evident that the Planning team (including Physical Planners, Architects, Surveyors etc) knew the "inside out" of the different challenges in the planning process. For example, the development of slums, traffic congestion, pollution, among others. The planning team was able to discuss, examine and analyse the different challenges. However, in general, **little effort** had been put to **solve** these challenges.

During the research study, several challenges had been identified. In this case, local people were advised and supported to take action in relation to these challenges. For example, the local people and us (the research team from Kivulu), worked hand in hand to identify workable projects. This may be seen as a small contribution, however, if these actions are further encouraged, I feel that they can result into big innovations. Therefore I learnt that it is important to **take action**, however small (or big) it may look.

Luck Nansereko

...the community had grown weary of receiving research teams which had carried out site studies and failed to implement what they promised. Following the growing understanding of Kivulu, I understand that they need short **time strategy** and that the project can be established in short time

Sicong Liu

It became clear to me that communities in slums (and I believe elsewhere) are more **willing to learn** from people who are faced with similar challenges as them. When members of the Federation of Slum Dwellers, Uganda from Kisenyi III came to share the idea of saving schemes as a way of improving their livelihoods, securing their tenure and building a sense of community; the community readily welcomed it because they could easily identify with fellow slum dwellers.

Nothing can ever be achieved single-handedly and therefore there is always a need to work as a **team**; and the involvement of everyone should be paramount. All the work that we did could not have been successful hadn't we involved as many stakeholders as possible; these include the local leaders, the community and local CBOs and NGOs among others. In addition, the success was due to the fact that all the students worked as a team despite the numerous **differences** that existed amongst us.

Frederick Jay Mugisa

Apart from the personal enrichment due to the involvement with other peoples and customs, this course allowed the **involvement** with basic urban realities (we could even say minimal) providing a deep reflection exercise on what is essential. It also gave me the opportunity to see firsthand how an urban process takes place in a poor settlement. By working closely with Slum Dwellers International and ACTogether, I soon realized that sustainability is all about the **process** of doing things.

The lesson I draw from this is that an enabling environment can be created by architecture with its role on creating scopes and frames on which society is going to set, this is why this exposure in Kivulu was so important, in order not to forget what is really **fundamental**.

André Freire de Almeida

Actions happen in real time. There is no chance to foresee and little time to review. As one incident is over, half or fully, another one takes over, this one being a reaction or something completely aside of the prior. Getting a complete picture, to fully assess **possibilities** and **consequences**, is impossible. One can sit down on the side of it and describe what happens, or one has to take part.

In the latter case the actions one takes will to a large degree be based only on what feels **right there** and then. This is in a way how it felt like to work in the field. And I believe that this is what I have learned the most from.

Styrkaar Hustveit



"I wanted to go to the city where there are opportunities and where I can be someone in the world."

-Bob Katinga

I learned a lot. I faced a few challenges like addressing the congregation of people and it boosted my confidence

Aporo Beatrice

"We live a life of destitution and despair"

Kiboma Richards

"Through the savings scheme I believe we are getting the people together! People were fed up with trust. When we are together we are strong and solid enough, and we can fight for our land. Togetherness is what? Power!"

-Hassan Kulubya

"My only regret, about this project, is that I did not start it before.
This could have paid for many school fees"

Nathan Bahati, about his poultry farm cooperative

"By co-incidence or capability I have gotten where I am"

Gabriel Bongomin

**A CASE STUDY OF THE IDEAS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT
OF ACHOLI QUARTERS IN KIREKA UGANDA**



BY

**KIREKA POULTRY FARMERS MULTIPURPOSE
COOPERATIVE SOCIETY**

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**CONSTITUTION MADE BY KIREKA POULTRY FARMERS
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MOTTO:

**COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES INVOLVES
CORPERATE RESPONSIBILITIES
FOR COMMERCIAL PERFORMANCE
AND SUSTAINABILITY**

Epilogue

When we left Kampala in November 2009 I had no idea when we would be back. It so happened I was back as soon as January 2010 on another student project this time in rural Kampala. The internet speed in Kampala had trebled in three months. As travel and connectivity become more and more accessible maybe the nature of field work will itself change. I used this chance to catch up with my friends in Kampala. Fiona, our fellow student from Makerere had graduated and was now working as a planning professional in Act Together continuing the work we had initiated in Acholi Quarters together. This arrangement had been facilitated through NTNU and UN Habitat. Frederic similarly was busy at Kivulu through Act Together working with the Kivulu community on the community centre project. The savings scheme seemed well rooted in the community. Visiting Acholi Quarters it was revealing to see the fund and enumeration process moving slowly but steadily. There had been some unforeseen delays but some of the projects that had been initiated in our presence had taken root grown and evolved. The Acholi Ideas Fund had materialised with its own constitution. The competition winner Nathan had started implementing his winning project of the poultry farm co-operative buying his first chickens. It was a wonderful surprise to see everyone again. But it was a greater pleasure and very educative to some of the eventual scenarios we had discussed take root.

Amritha Ballal

Working with communities with the NTNU/ Makerere Students

ACTogether Uganda had a good working experience with the NTNU-Makerere students in the two communities of Kivulu and Acholi quarters. No person had thought about how far we would go with the students but it became so amazing and interesting how things worked out in a very short time. It had never happened for external people to introduce SDI/ACTogether to the communities in Uganda but the students did it and they enabled us to break new grounds in both Kivulu and Acholi quarters. We used our vast experiences in community mobilisation to bring together the slum dwellers in these communities and this created a positive impact on the initiatives that were identified i.e. enumerations, community centre and the Community development Fund.

It should be noted that the integration of the students in the communities was achieved mainly because of age of the students and skills.

The interaction did not only enable SDI/ACTogether and the Federation mobilise two saving schemes in these communities, it also helped us understand more the perceptions of the planners and architects in handling the challenges of urbanisation and urban poverty. The wider knowledge base of the students in addition to the SDI tools such as Enumerations, House modelling and Savings helped to groom the working relation. This gave a signal of how important it is for SDI/ACTogether and the Universities to work together in supporting slum dwellers in breaking the cycle of urban poverty in Uganda.

ACTogether is supporting the two communities and the process of conducting enumerations which will help them know each other, understand their priorities for them to be in position to negotiate with stakeholders on provision of basic services.

SDI/ACTogether and the Federation of Uganda slum dwellers are looking forward to working with the students in 2010.

Lutwama Muhammed ACTogether



ALL SEASONS
EARTH'S PRIDE

Deep down
refreshment

PENATOR
Club

Cold sold here
Coca-Cola

the Coke side of life

the Coke side of life
Coca-Cola

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