

**NEW METROPOLITAN SITES OF POLICY INNOVATION AND RESILIENCE:
CIVIC IMAGINATION IN KIBERA SLUM IN KENYA**

by

John Mucina Wambui

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Urban Affairs and Public Policy

Winter, 2020

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John Mucina Wambui

Approved: _____
Maria P. Aristigueta, Ph.D.
Director of Joseph R. Biden, Jr. School of Public Policy and Administration

Approved: _____
John A. Pelesko, Ph.D.
Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences

Approved: _____
Douglas J. Doren, Ph.D.
Interim Vice Provost for Graduate & Professional Education and Dean of
the Graduate College

I certify that I have read this dissertation and that in my opinion, it meets the academic and professional standards required by the University as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Signed:

Minion K C Morrison, Ph.D.
Professor in charge of the dissertation

I certify that I have read this dissertation and that in my opinion, it meets the academic and professional standards required by the University as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Signed:

Dan Rich, Ph.D.
Member of the dissertation committee

I certify that I have read this dissertation and that in my opinion, it meets the academic and professional standards required by the University as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Signed:

John McNutt, Ph.D., MSW
Member of the dissertation committee

I certify that I have read this dissertation and that in my opinion, it meets the academic and professional standards required by the University as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Signed:

Joseph Wholey, Ph.D.
Member of the dissertation committee

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DEDICATIONS

Dedicated to My Mother Esther Wambui and for My Daughter Esther Wambui and My Son Douglas Wambui. To My Mother for teaching me how to be a Son and to My Children for teaching me how to be a Father. To My Mother for giving me a reason to start this journey and to My Children for inspiring me to finish it. To My Mother for blessing me with the gift of life and to my Children for instilling purpose in it. For you, this has been! For you, this is! For you, this will always be!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF IMAGES.....	xi
ABSTRACT.....	xiii
PREFACE.....	xv
Chapter	
1 THE CITY AND THE SLUM.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 The Purpose of this Study.....	8
1.3 Conceptualization of a Slum in this Study.....	8
1.4 The Geographic Setting of the Study.....	10
1.5 Required Analysis.....	11
1.6 Research Significance.....	12
1.7 Concluding Summary	13
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	14
2.1 Introduction.....	14
2.2 The History of the Slum.....	15
2.3 The History of Slum: <i>A Shift from West to East</i>	19
2.4 The Theories of Slums.....	23
2.5 Re-theorizing Slums.....	32
2.6 Concluding Summary	34
3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	35
3.1 Introduction.....	35
3.2 Research Questions.....	36
3.3 The Setting of the Study: <i>Kibera Slum</i>	38
3.4 Research Design: <i>A Qualitative Approach</i>	41

3.5	Data Sources and Collection Procedures	42
3.6	Sampling and Sample Size.....	46
3.7	Data Coding and Analysis Procedures.....	47
3.8	Data Analysis: <i>Thematic Analysis</i>	49
3.9	Data Quality and Credibility	50
3.10	Adjustment Based on Ground Realities.....	50
3.11	Concluding Summary	51
4	CIVIC IMAGINATION	52
4.1	Introduction.....	52
4.2	‘A Cosmopolitan Ghetto’.....	53
4.3	State of Grassroots Organizations.....	62
4.4	Strengths from Broken Places.....	66
4.5	Concluding Summary	67
5	STRENGTH FROM BROKEN PLACES	69
5.1	Introduction.....	69
5.2	Revisiting Civic Imagination.....	70
5.3	Studying Civic Imagination.....	72
5.4	Data Gathering and Presentation	73
5.5	Findings.....	75
5.5.1	Sociological Imagination	76
5.5.2	A Tale of Four Heroes	77
	<i>The story of Ms. Adhiambo</i>	77
	<i>The story of Ms. Pascalia</i>	80
	<i>The story of Mr. Joshwa</i>	83
	<i>The story of Mr. Joseph</i>	86
5.5.3	Spatial Imagination	91
5.6	Concluding Summary	104
6	ORGANIZATIONS GROWTH AND EXPANSION	105
6.1	Introduction.....	105
6.2	Organizations Growth and Expansion	109

6.3	Findings.....	110
6.3.1	Resources	111
	<i>Personal resourcefulness</i>	112
	<i>Leveraging social capital</i>	116
	<i>Harnessing Environmental Resources</i>	118
6.3.2	Mobilization.....	122
	<i>Participatory Narrative Framing</i>	124
	<i>Participatory Planning</i>	127
	<i>Participatory Governance</i>	130
6.3.3	Sustainability.....	132
	<i>Maintaining a value-based approach</i>	133
	<i>Diversifying sources of income/resources</i>	134
	<i>Increasing membership base/social capital</i>	134
	<i>Maintaining autonomy from external support</i>	134
6.4	Concluding Summary	135
7	SCALING-UP GRASSROOTS INNOVATIONS	137
7.1	Introduction.....	137
7.2	Scaling-up grassroots innovations and effectiveness.....	140
	Grassroots Enablers	142
	<i>Internal Enablers</i>	143
	<i>External Enablers</i>	145
	Barriers to Scaling-up	149
	<i>Internal Barriers</i>	150
	<i>External Barriers</i>	152
7.3	Concluding Summary	154
8	RE-IMAGINING URBAN SLUMS.....	156

8.1	Introduction.....	156
8.2	Re-Imagining Slums: <i>The New Sites of Metropolitan Innovations</i>	159
8.3	Research Questions & Methodology Summary.....	162
8.4	General Findings Summary	164
	Social Resilience.....	167
	Community Attachment.....	168
	Community Ingenuity	170
	Self-Organization.....	171
	Autonomy and Self-Determination.....	172
8.5	General Lessons and Implications	173
8.6	Policy Recommendations.....	179
8.7	General Conclusion.....	182
8.8	Moving Forward	185
	REFERENCES.....	194
	Appendix	
A	IRB APPROVAL LETTER.....	198
B	HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTOCOL.....	199
C	RECRUITMENT EMAIL	210
D	INTRODUCTORY PROTOCOL	212
E	INFORMED CONSENT	213
F	INTERVIEW PROTOCOL	215

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Share of Urban Population living in slums in Africa (Urban Dynamics: Facts and Figures, 2015 p45)	4
Figure 2: Descriptive Map of London Poverty (Charles Booth, 1889-90).....	17
Figure 3: Slums Timeline: From West to East (Wambui, J., 2015)	22
Figure 4: Iterative Data Collection Process	42
Figure 5: Documents Review Process	44
Figure 6: Interview Process	44
Figure 7: Distribution and number of schools in Kibera (Openschoolskenya.org).....	45
Figure 8: Interviews Recruitment Process.....	47
Figure 9: Grounded Theory Procedures (Charmaz, K.,2017)	49
Figure 10: Data Coding and Analysis Process	50
Figure 11: Circles show the number, date, and types of sports events in Kibera and their specific locations (Kibera News Network)	56
Figure 12: Schools Map (MapKibera.org)	59
Figure 13: Impact of Recent Demolitions in Kibera (www.mapkibera.org/blog/)	60
Figure 14: Organizations' Mission Statements Analysis using Wordcloud.com	64
Figure 15: The 3Ps Mobilization Framework	124
Figure 16: Grassroots Enablers	142
Figure 17: Barriers to Organizations' Scaling-Up	149

LIST OF IMAGES

Image 1: Kibera Slum (Wambui, J., 2018).....	XV
Image 2: Kibera (http://www.apsaidal.com/anwa-junior-academy-kounkuey-design-initiative-kdi/).....	38
Image 3: Left: Water ATM in Mathare Slum (UNFCC/Chris McMorrow); Top right: Aerial water system in Kibera (Daniel Wesangula); Bottom right: Water ATM in Mathare Slum (Grundofs).....	57
Image 4: A Kibera resident's home during my field visit (Edwin, O., 2018).....	65
Image 5: People engaging in various local businesses	66
Image 6: Top left: two gentle transporting about 250kg bags of cement; top right, a woman selling peanuts and candies; bottom left, a marketplace along a railroad, bottom right, school children playing	67
Image 7: Handmade artifacts for sale at Adhiambo’s HIV/AIDs Support Initiative	78
Image 8: Ms. Pascalia’s Rescue Center.....	82
Image 9: Lemule Rd. Kibera, June 2018.....	86
Image 10: Mr. Joseph’s office and Computer College along Lemule Rd. Kibera	87
Image 11: Left to right: Mr. Andrew at the maternity room and then at an overnight inpatient room at his medical center.....	106
Image 12: From top to bottom left, Mr. Andrew pointing at the shanty where his organization started and standing in front of the building at the bottom. From the top right to bottom right, the location of the current clinic opposite the old one at the back.	108
Image 13: People going on with their daily routines in Kibera.....	111
Image 14: The Superheroes of Kibera. https://www.facebook.com/groups/superheroesofkibera/).....	119
Image 15: Shoes from recycled trash by K Shoes, a shoes company based in Kibera. 120	

Image 16: Sites of demolition in Kibera on June 21, 2018138

ABSTRACT

Today, slums have become prominent features of urban inequalities in developing nations. According to statistics, over half of the urban population in Africa resides in slums. This proportion is projected to reach 1.3 billion people by 2050. In Sub-Saharan Africa, two-thirds of the urban population live in slums (UN-Habitat, 2011; UN-Habitat, 2015). In Asia, 30% of urban residents dwell in slums while in Latin America and the Caribbean region, about 24% (United Nations, 2015). By 2050, the proportion of the urban population living in slums globally is projected to reach 3 billion people (UN-Habitat, 2003; UN-Habitat, 2013). Scholars and policy actors alike agree that left unaddressed, slums will continue to expand, posing a greater risk to urban sustainability, particularly in developing nations. In this work, I present an analysis demonstrating how independent, internal efforts within an Africa slum, Kibera in Kenya are responsive to some of the presumed deficits of institutionalized slums. I demonstrate how radical innovations can evolve, with excellent benefits in resource-constrained environments (Gupta, 2016; Pansera, 2013; Thieme, 2017). The work presented in this dissertation is a practical re-imagining of slums as new sites of metropolitan policy innovations and resilience. Using narratives from key informant interviews coupled with field observations and document reviews, this study demonstrates how social resilience, practicality, collectivity, and agility in Kibera Slum compose skillsets that enable Kibera residents to navigate diverse pressures presented by their environment

without external support. The findings underscore the importance of urban informality to the contemporary investigation of urban struggles in global south metropolitans. The assemblage of social experimentation presented in this work provides important lessons to urban development theories and policies seeking to build on community capabilities and resilience.

PREFACE



Image 1: Kibera Slum (Wambui, J., 2018)

On a raised platform at an informal high school in Kibera on June 26, 2018, at exactly 10:11 am, I took this picture with my phone. I had just finished an interview with the school's founder. He was also the head principal and someone I had grown up with in this community about two decades ago. It was a bright beautiful Tuesday morning. From where I stood, I saw the vast slum spread-out with its corroded tin rooftops absorbing the glistering morning sun. I heard calming joyful music coming from a nearby shanty and the sound of children from a close-by elementary school

echoing through the morning air. I smelled the aroma of deep-fried fish and donuts coming from several nearby roadside kiosks. The images of broken sewers intersecting through the shanties and the hills of garbage along the trails were still freshly imprinted in my mind. Amidst the taste-buds arousing aroma of fried fish and donuts, I could still smell the repugnant stink of broken sewer systems and overflowing latrines.

Even though I had grown up in this community two decades ago before moving to the U.S for higher education, like any other outsider, I felt I was a stranger in this community. I felt insecure and terrified as I navigated the shanties, jumping over cesspools and weaving among hills of garbage. Although I knew that I was safe, I could not help but wonder what if I got mugged? What if the youths seated idly by the barbershops or selling donuts by the roadside robbed or attacked me? What would I do? Would the people around me come to my rescue? Even though I had one of my best friends whom I had grown up with in Kibera guiding me through the slum, my terror of being attacked, robbed, or even getting sick from the repugnant smell of broken sewers only got amplified the deeper we went into the heart of the slum.

I was here, back in Kibera, my former home, to gather data for my dissertation research project as a fourth-year doctoral candidate. The interview with the school's founder and the principal was one of many other interviews I was conducting with locally founded organizations in Kibera with the intention of understanding local creativity and innovation in the face of deprivation. I asked my interviewee that morning how he would describe Kibera Community. From my vantage point, though I had grown up here, I assumed that his response would be nothing less than a confirmation of my rather skewed negative imagery of Kibera now deeply imprinted in my mind. I thought he would highlight the pronounced deficiencies and the civil struggles that are often the standard upon which marginal communities like Kibera are

understood. After all, the current theoretical and practical assumptions about slum life are composed of exclusively apocalyptic scenarios of social struggles and disorders.

However, he offered an astoundingly inspirational description of Kibera. In his description, he exposed the deeply prejudiced approach in which the whole premise of my dissertation was founded upon, the idea that I understood this community intimately because I am a product of this environment. It was then that I realized that I am a part of the problem that I was trying to solve. I am a part of the society that implicitly and explicitly views slums as places of chaos and metropolitan decay. This is how my interviewee described the community that to me seemed so chaotic and precarious:

“Kibera is a very industrious community in terms of creativity and innovation. The environment inspires people to be creative and innovative to meet their strengths. It is an entrepreneurial community. It is a one-stop community where you can find everything and anything you want. For me, I see a very beautiful, creative, and talented community whereby if it is harnessed, it can upscale development and it can create real change. It is a community blended with strength and unity. It is a generous community where people share whatever little they have. The community has organized itself to provide security and to watch over others. I love this community”

When I took the above picture, all I saw was chaos, disenfranchisement, discontent, threats, and social struggles. The brownness of the rusty roofs, the stench of the sewers and overflowing latrines, and the sheer frugality illustrated by the cheaply built mud shanties blew away the very possibilities that such an environment could be a breeding place for creativity and innovation. It overshadowed the social energy which was being amplified by the beauty of the soft calming music and the sound of children playing right in the middle of this chaotic environment. With that, I lost the very possibility of conceptualizing this environment as a thriving community with generative potentials emerging from everyday experimentations and contestations. The very

alluring aromas of deep-fried fish and donuts that highlighted the entrepreneurial spirit and the faint sound of a blacksmith's gong that amplified local innovation and civic imagination¹ faded into my neoliberal conceptualization of this community as nothing but a pronounced and recurring 'vector of growth and decay'² that needed to be eliminated.

However, upon contemplating on my interviewee response later that day, it became clear to me that in my evaluation of Kibera community, I, like some of my predecessors in the field of urban theories and policies, was using the same old customary lenses which characterize urban informality as homogenous precarious experiences of social struggles, uncertainties, disenfranchisement, and illegitimate social experimentations (Agynei-Mensah & Lund, 2008; Gilbert, 2007; Roy, 2011). As Davis underscores, there is no doubt that the precariousness of urban informality does offer a convincing image of arrested development devoid of any hope (Davis, 2006a). However, the fixation on the chaos and deformities of such environments hinders us from realizing that the assemblage of everyday human experiences and social enterprises is at the core of the informal lifestyle (Simone, 2010). Gerald D Suttles captures my experience after spending five weeks navigating through the paradoxical juxtaposition of immense desperation and inspirations in Kibera when he states:

“When observing from a great distance, one is apt to invent all sorts of irrational mental mechanisms to account for the behavior of slum residents. When observing close at hand, we are made all the more aware

¹ Civic imagination is the “capacity to imagine alternatives to current social, political, or economic conditions” (Jenkins et. al, 2016 pg. 300). It is the “ways in which people individually and collectively envision better political, social, and civic environment” (Baiocchi et al., 2014 pg.54).

² Abdoumalique, S. (2010): *City Life from Jakarta to Dakai: Movements at the Crossroads*.

of how our own ideals have blinded us to the practicality of the slum residents” (Suttles, 1968 p12).

This articulation enlarges Whyte’s assertion that while to an outsider a slum may represent chaos and disorder, to an insider, it represents a highly organized and integrated social system functioning in a coherent manner (Whyte, 1943).

When I undertook the task of executing my dissertation research in Kibera, my understanding of the problem was informed and founded upon my theoretical interpretation of urban slum-hood. At the time, I believed that my prior experiences living in this slum situated me in a better position to articulate the day to day processes of informal experimentations that accounts for the emergence of frugal innovations in the face of uncertainties. However, after spending five weeks in the field, I came to the realization that such presumptions of credibility based on prior experiences and proximity to social problems do not often translate into an accurate conceptual and practical presentation of social reality. What I found out was that the contours of urban struggles are better articulated and interpreted by those who practically [not conceptually] deal intimately with these struggles on a daily basis. This is not to say that prior experiences and proximity to social problems are irrelevant in our articulation and interpretation of such problems, rather, it is an admission that social problems are always in a state of flux. The slum that I lived in two decades ago has evolved, ushering in new and complex challenges as well as new and creative ways of addressing those challenges. It would, therefore, be both a theoretical and practical mistake for me to conceptualize the challenges facing Kibera today with yesterday's lenses. The best lenses to capture current social dilemmas in Kibera are on the eyes of those who presently and actively deal with these dilemmas, that is, the residents of Kibera!

I present this work which examines urban marginality from the perspective of grassroots movements in the slums. Social movements arise in response to both existing and emerging common grievances (Foweraker, 1995 p 15). This study examines the emergence of grassroots movements in urban marginalized communities not only as indicators of collective responses to shared grievances but also as indicators of frugal creativity and innovation that emerge in the presence of precarity. Such an undertaking is guided by three research questions that form the core of this presentation. These questions are:

1. How do the building block organizations of an autonomous civil society in the slums emerge?
2. Through what mechanism, channels, and [or] processes do these building block organizations mature?
3. In what ways do state and local actors either block or encourage the broadening and strengthening of these building block organizations?

I lay down the task at hand upon the following structure. The first chapter presents a general introduction and overview of the problem being examined and why it is relevant to examine it in this context. The second chapter places this issue in a historical context and examines its development over time. This chapter further examines slums through different theoretical conceptualizations and underpinnings. The third chapter provides a sequence of methodological steps that were taken to practically examine the problem underlined. The proceeding chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 outlines the findings of this study and how such findings correlate to what is already known about the current problem. And the concluding chapter offers a brief discussion and reflection from the findings and their implications to social policy and theory.

One of the questions that I asked my interviewees was how they would have wanted me to accurately present the information they shared with me to the outside world. The advice they offered me was to present this information as truthfully and as honestly as they had presented it to me. When I undertook this task, I was on a quest to find the truth from the lion's mouth. Thus charged, I must present this truth as unfiltered as it was presented to me. Aware of my own prejudices now, I undertake the task of presenting factual evidence as provided to me by people whose interactions and experiences in Kibera has inspired them to initiate movements to address local issues from within. These are the people who, inspired by the contents of their discontents, have undertaken the task of not only addressing the local issues using local approaches but also the task of dispelling the conceptual and practical mis-conceptualization of urban slums. The factual evidence I provide in this work comes from diverse in-depth interviews, detailed field imageries captured through still images, and analysis of existing documents that highlight the complex yet vibrant life in Kibera.

I begin this work by first presenting the problem that inspired this quest and the implication of such a problem to current urban theory and policy. However, before delving into the first chapter, I must first define several key terms that will be used throughout this study to enhance the readers' understanding of those terms in the context of this work.

- The term slum/s will be used synonymously with the terms informal settlements, urban informality, and urban marginality.
- The term building block organizations will be used synonymously with the terms grassroots organizations, social movements, and social capital infrastructure. Building block organizations refer to various social movements/networks and institutions that facilitate community participation,

mobilization, and collective action (Coleman, 1990; Fox, 1996a; Putnam, 2000). For the purpose of this discourse, the term building block organizations will be specifically limited to grassroots organizations particularly those emerging in response to shared grievances.

- The term collective action will be used to refer to the processes through which people work collaboratively to achieve some common objectives (Dowding, 2017; Olson, 1965; Henslin, 2008). Indicators of collective action can range from collective formation of grassroots movements in response to common threats to collaborative actions or activities such as cleaning up the streets by the youth groups, attending group meetings, community patrol by local community policing groups, or diverse sport activities that bring social awareness such as local soccer organizations, etc.
- The term mobilization refers to the processes through which social, economic, and political resources are organized, transferred, and acquired, through community activation/collective action (Coleman, 1990; Fox, 1996a; Morrison, 1987; Putnam, 2000). The term will be used in three contexts. 1.) Social mobilization will refer to processes through which individuals mobilize to effect social change. Indicators of social mobilization include various social networks in the community and membership to those networks. 2.) Resource mobilization will refer to the processes through which public goods and services are distributed to the local communities. Indicators of resource mobilization are social capital outcomes such as various physical infrastructure i.e. streetlights, security posts, healthcare centers, schools, public bathrooms, water taps, etc. and social resources such as social ties, connections, and diverse relationships that emerge from social mobilization. 3.) Information mobilization will refer to

processes through which knowledge, awareness, and information about local issues are spread across different channels, actors, and community sectors. Indicators of information mobilization include local media networks, social media groups; established channels of communication between and among different actors and groups; and, organized information forum sessions, group meetings, health awareness, sports tournaments, etc.

Chapter 1

THE CITY AND THE SLUM

A Shifting Urban Geography

1.1 Introduction

It has become customary, when conceptualizing twenty-first-century urban landscapes, to describe them as existing in two states. On the one state, many scholars of modern metropolises conceptualize them as new expressive articulations of emerging global social, economic, and political identity. Scholarly consensus holds that these geographies and their growth are implicitly and explicitly linked to major social, economic, political, and ecological stability (United Nations, 2016). Their growth is an integral part of the development which is connected to the three pillars of sustainable development i.e. economic development, social development, and environmental protection (United Nations, 2014).

The development of cities provides myriads of socio-economic benefits. Through the agglomeration process - (concentration of people, resources, and investments), cities heighten the possibilities for economic development, innovation, and social interaction (UN/DESA, 2013). They concentrate key infrastructure assets which provide opportunities for diversified investments and labor provision thus improving the quality

of life. The aesthetic values linked to the image of cities have modified the social rhythm through the transformation of social ideals, ties, lifestyles, and aspirations (Harvey, 2008). Cities are central to political stability. Harvey, for example, argues that no country has attained stability without experiencing urban growth. The growth of the cities not only provides a promise for achieving global social, economic, political, and ecological stability, but it also offers a promise for social transformation (Harvey, 2008). This promise is however increasingly becoming overshadowed by the second state in which cities exist.

While the growth of the cities offers a promissory note for social, economic, political, and ecological redemption, their rapid growth brings with it multitudes of challenges. One of the defining elements of the twenty-first-century urban development is the movement of rural populations to the cities. Urbanization, “the gradual shift in the residence of human population from rural to urban areas,” has become the most transformative development trend in the twenty-first century, especially in the global south (United Nations, 2016; United Nations, 2018). Statistics indicate that 55% of the world’s population lives in urban areas today and this proportion is expected to increase to 68% by 2050 (United Nations, 2018). Approximately 90% of this increase is projected to take place in low and middle-income countries (LMICs), particularly in Africa and Asia. Studies indicate that the urban population in these regions has been increasing at a rate of almost 70 million persons per year (PSUP, 2016). This shift demonstrates the impact that urban development has on the reorganization of the global social order. This has resulted in concerns among urban scholars about the sustainability of the cities. These scholars view the current uncontrolled and unplanned trend in urban growth as being socially, economically, and environmentally unsustainable.

Concerns about the sustainability of the cities are enlarged by the growing research on slum³. This research highlights slums as symbolizing the many facets of poverty, inequality, and deprivation in cities especially in LMICs today (World Bank Group, 2016). Studies indicate that slums have been growing steadily and consistently in the last few decades. For example, in 1990, an estimated 689 million people lived in slums in developing nations. Today, the UN estimates this population to be around 1 billion people accounting for 1 in 8 people (PSUP, 2016).⁴ Since 2000, the global slum population has been growing by an average of six million people per year. Sub-Saharan Africa alone accounts for 56% of the total increase in the number of slum dwellers among the developing regions (PSUP, 2016; World Bank Group, 2016).

In developing nations, particularly in Africa, slums have become the contemporary image of the city. The presentation of everyday experiences in slums provide accounts of social struggles, disenfranchisement, and disintegrating ecological structure against a backdrop of institutional failures and scarcity of the resource. Slums have been equated with increased rates of urban crimes, poor health and nutrition outcomes, low literacy achievement, high unemployment rates, poor sanitation, and overall lack of access to reliable and decent human settlements. With more than half of the urban population in African metropolises residing in slums (see figure 1 below), the image of the slum is a harsh contrast to the glittering illusion of urban promises held out but denied. The precariousness of the urban slums as highlighted by the growing body of

³ UN Habitat defines a slum as a “contiguous settlement that lacks one or more of the following five conditions: access to clean water, access to improved sanitation, sufficient living area that is not overcrowded, durable housing and secure tenure” (World Bank Group, 2016)

⁴ PSUP-Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme

research on urban poverty offers the image of slums as a globalized allegory of failed modernization, especially in the global south.

Almost ½ of Africa's urban population live in slums

Share of urban population living in slums, 2014 (%)

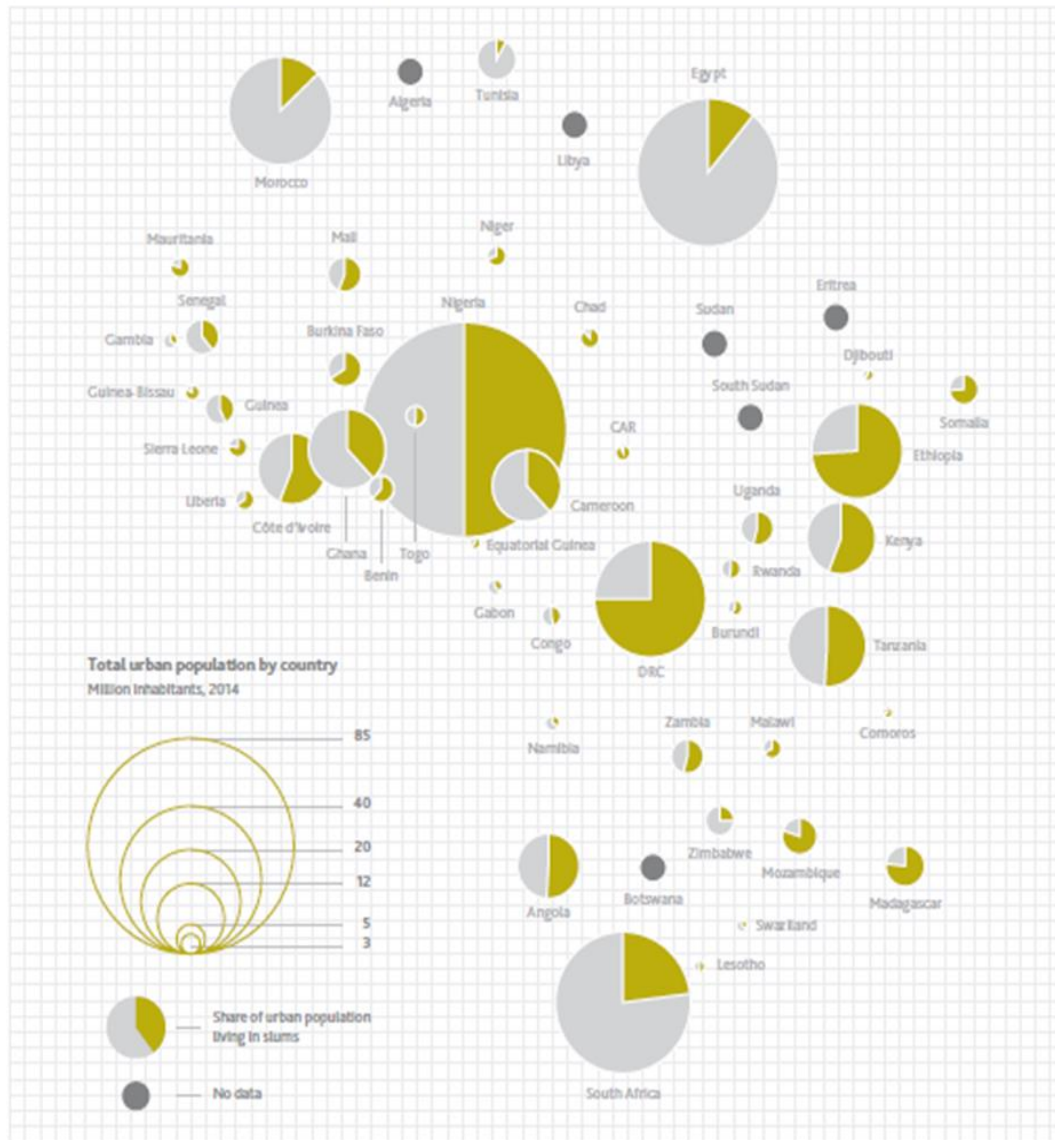


Figure 1: Share of Urban Population living in slums in Africa (Urban Dynamics: Facts and Figures, 2015 p45)

Slums are not a new phenomenon in modern cities. Their accounts have been articulated well in the historical literature of the Western metropolises predating the industrial revolution. Two dominant views of slums have governed this literature. The first is the traditional neoliberal view which conceptualizes slums as geographies of urban decay. This articulation regards slums as urban human petri-dish where social, economic, political, and environmental misery ferments. Scholars who use this construct perceive slums as interesting only if they affirm the ideas of disenfranchisement, precariousness, and social marginalization (Dovey, 2012; Gilbert, 2007; Holston & Caldeira, 2008). Both the theoretical and practical discussions focus attention on slums as symbols corresponding to chaos, disorder, and social and spatial illegitimacy.

Viewed within this framework, slums have been interpreted as decaying urban environments that do not correspond with the mainstream image of a city. This view of slums has generated what Jane Jacobs calls a paternalistic approach to policy responses (Jacobs, 1992 p271). The urban renewal theories and policies which have emanated from this paternalistic narrative have often focused on eliminating slums through strategies such as forced eviction, clearance, resettlements, and slum upgrading projects (Dupont, Jordhus-Lier, Sutherland, & Braathen, 2016; Kayizzi-Mugerwa, Shimeles, & Yameogo, 2014). These methods have failed or have had limited success (PSUP, 2016). At best, they have succeeded in shifting “slums from here to there, adding its own tincture of extra hardship and disruption. At worst, it destroys neighborhoods where constructive and improving communities exist and where the situation calls for encouragement rather than destruction.” (Jacobs, 1992 pp. 270-71).

Parallel to the neoliberal view, an emerging group of scholars has formed what I term the contemporary view of slums. This perspective conceptualizes the development of the slum as a process of social construction and reconstruction. Through this process,

the urban marginalized populations compete for and appropriate resources and opportunities which are otherwise unavailable or inaccessible to them. The contemporary urban theorists view slums as forms of instant urbanity that highlight alternative ways of self-organization among the marginalized communities (Zappulla, Suau, & Fikfak, 2014). They view them as places in which generative possibilities emerge out of desperation and deprivation. Informality which is a defining characteristic of the identity of slums is conceived as an ‘organizing logic, a system of norms that governs the process of urban transformation itself’ (Heitzman, 2005). By highlighting the generative dynamism and vibrancy of the social and spatial alchemy of slums, contemporary urban theorists argue that informality offers an alternative structure of urban governance outside the formal structures (AbdouMaliq, 2004; Dovey, 2012; Gilbert, 2007; Holston & Caldeira, 2008; Neuwirth, 2006; Roy, 2011; Tavares & Brosseau, 2013; United Nations, 2014; Whyte, 1981; Yiftachel, 2009a). This informal structure highlights the daily informal social experimentations which are marked by incremental adaptation and improvisation in the face of uncertainties (Thieme, 2017).

While these two perspectives differ in the way they theorize slums and ultimately in how they practically respond to their existence, they nevertheless face the same conceptual and practical dilemma. Modern slums are not only growing in size parallel to the growth of the cities, but they are also growing in their population density. By 2030, the slum population is projected to reach about 3 billion people. It is worth emphasizing that much of this growth in slums has been projected to take place in Africa, especially Sub-Sahara Africa. The question that has been problematic to both the neoliberal and the contemporary urban theorists is how, given the scarcity of means and resources, to successfully manage the threats and challenges that slums present to the sustainability of the cities.

Neoliberal scholars stick with the grand old ideas that the only logical way of addressing the challenges of slums is by eliminating them. Contemporary scholars on the other hand, while they acknowledge the obvious juxtaposition of social, economic, political, and ecological challenges which are characteristic of many slums, emphasize the need to embrace slums as new forms of social identity and alternative human settlements in modern metropolises (Harvey, 2008; Neuwirth, 2006; Roy, 2011; UN-Habitat, 2003). This is by no means to say that the precariousness of the slums should be condoned or normalized. What the contemporary theorists assert is that given the current trends in both the growth of the city and the persistence of slums, it is imperative to embrace the idea that slums are increasingly becoming part and parcel of the new urban identity particularly in LMICs. Therefore, there is a need to recognize them as places in which residents use their ingenuity to create connections, adaptations, and survival strategies in modern metropolises where they are disenfranchised (Bayat, 2007; Holston & Caldeira, 2008; Holston, 2008; Jacobs, 1992; Whyte, 1943). To overcome slums, contemporary thinkers postulate that

“...we must regard slum dwellers as people capable of understanding and acting upon their own self-interests, which they certainly are. We need to discern, respect and build upon the forces for regeneration that exist in slums themselves, and that demonstrably work in real cities. This is far from trying to patronize people into a better life, and it is far from what is done today” (Jacobs, 1992 pp. 270-71)

This analysis invites the examination of different ways in which the residents of slums creatively and innovatively navigate the contours of urban struggles. However, while there is a dense body of research in existence which examines the complexities of life in slums, little research exists which offers an in-depth investigation of how the residents of slums' individually and collectively creatively respond to their struggles. Furthermore, there is even less research proposing any factual evidence on how civic

imagination in the slums emerges from the daily social experimentations despite deprivation. This study is an attempt to bridge this gap.

1.2 The Purpose of this Study

The goal of this study is to challenge both the theoretical and practical depictions of slums which tend to focus on what is lacking while undermining the very generative possibilities arising from every day social experimentations and contestations. Building upon the contemporary views of slums, this study undertakes the task of theorizing slums as a new form of urban practice that is increasingly becoming part of urban identity. The study examines how day-to-day individual and collective experiences inspire creativity and innovations which become vital to the sustainability of life in the slums. The goal is to emphasize the cardinal importance of urban informality to contemporary geographical thinking and practice in urban studies. It is important to underscore the fundamental roles that urban poor play to alleviate their conditions given the state of their depravity. I am calling for a radical reconsideration of urban informality. I believe that the assemblage of human enterprise within this informality provides unique opportunities to examine new theoretical and practical approaches when investigating the geographies of urban struggles.

1.3 Conceptualization of a Slum in this Study

In this study, a slum is conceptualized as a community that exists outside the formal social, economic, and political norms and recognition. A community is a group of people who are linked by their social ties, shared perspectives, a sense of social and cultural coherence, and engage in collective action in a given geographic location or setting (MacQueen et al., 2001). In this definition, three contextual characteristics of a community emerge i.e. Place, Interest, and Communion (Smith, 2001 nd). Place refers to

the physical location which people occupy where they share some common perspectives and interact with each other. Interest refers to the shared characteristics that link different people and groups together in any given place. Factors such as religious belief, occupation, ethnic origin, cultural values, and attitudes, shared norms and habits and shared economic and political status are some examples of shared interests that characterize a coherent community. The third element is the communion among different people in any given place. Communion refers to the reciprocal exchange of information, thoughts, ideas, values, goods, and services; plus, the formal or informal social contracts among actors in a given place. Note that no single element stands alone; the three elements overlap to form a coherent community.

Conceptualizing a slum as a community provides an important framework to investigate the collective social processes which inspire creativity and innovation without obscuring the complex juxtaposition of socio-spatial irregularities that are characteristics of many informal settlements. By viewing a slum as a community, I can emphasize the complex systems and structures of interactions and adaptations which sustain the rhythm of daily communal living. This enlarges Whyte's assertion that there is a need to understand slums from a social theory perspective by examining their structural and relational organization and arrangements (Whyte, 1993). Furthermore, he spells out how such organizations and arrangements function as regenerative forces that sustain the livelihood in the slums outside the formal systems of governance. Set against this conceptual backdrop, the purpose of this study is to investigate the following research question⁵:

⁵ The Questions are partly informed and may include modification of prior work by Fox in his study of civil society organizations in rural Mexico (Fox, 1996a).

1. How do the building block organizations of an autonomous civil society in the slums emerge?
2. Through what mechanisms, channels, and [or] processes do these building block organizations mature?
3. In what ways do state and local actors either block or encourage the broadening and strengthening of these building block organizations?

According to scholars of social movements, social organizations emerge as responses to the shared grievance (Foweraker, 1995). Additionally, social groups are also indicators of collective action, civic imagination, and collective capacity. They can also act as alternative structures to provide public goods and services especially when resources are scarce or non-existence. The portfolio of social groups referred to in this study as the building block organizations or grassroots movements in the slums represents an image that diverges from the traditional negative portrait of slums. These groups paint an image of a functioning community capable of meeting its needs through collective endeavors, creativity, and innovation. Thus, this study offers an examination of how local ideals, efforts, and imagination transcend the social, economic, and political barriers that correspond to life in slums.

1.4 The Geographic Setting of the Study

Due to time, resources, and capacity constraints, this study took place in Kibera Slum. I chose this location for several reasons. First, many urban theorists have used Kibera as a testing ground for development policies. Second, the diversity of the social infrastructure and multiplicity of social movements within this community provides opportunities to examine creativity and innovation from different perspectives. Third, as someone who grew up in Kibera, the location is both known and easily accessible. My

social, as well as spatial connection with Kibera, compensate for the lack of resources that would otherwise be required if the study was to take place in a different setting. A detailed description of this geographical setting will be outlined in the methodological chapter later.

1.5 Required Analysis

The questions under investigation seek to understand how community organizations in marginalized areas emerge and grow, and what factors impact them. Community organizations are vital in facilitating community participation, mobilization, and engagement in collective actions (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 2000). These organizations are particularly important in providing public goods and services especially in communities where the formal systems of governance have failed to provide such services. Community organizations fall under four different intersecting categories namely government agencies, private market systems, non-governmental agencies (NGOs), and community-based organizations or grassroots movements including self-help groups.

This study focused on grassroots organizations in Kibera. While there are multitudes of these types of organizations, this dissertation only focused on those networks that have been founded and established by individuals who reside in Kibera. To answer the proposed research questions, I analyzed information from diverse sources such as related documents, local media, online aggregate data, and in-depth key informants' interviews. These sources and necessary procedures of data collection are discussed in detail in the methodological chapter.

1.6 Research Significance

The inherent resources necessary for ‘unslumming’ the slum exist within the slum (Jacobs, 1992). Unslumming does not mean bulldozing of the slum or relocating it elsewhere, as seen with the present upgrading mega-projects. Rather it means improving it using the resources embedded within it. Successful ‘unslumming’ hinges on the quality and quantity of the existing regenerative forces often inherent in the social infrastructure (Boo, 2012; Gilbert, 2007; Jacobs, 1992; Neuwirth, 2006; Roy, 2011). This requires an understanding of the structural and relational arrangements of the existing social infrastructure. Attention to its capacity to absorb the present and emerging social, economic, political, and environmental shocks is important. Given the limited scholarly work attempting to analyze the transforming nature of the social infrastructure in the slums in the last decade, this work has several important implications in both the epistemological and policy arenas.

In terms of theory, this research develops qualitative evidence to support and to further the emerging theoretical narrative that the creativity, resilience, ingenuity, and social capacity in the slums are potential tools for ‘unslumming’ the slums (Bayat, 2007; Coleman, 1990; Field, 2003; Holston & Caldeira, 2008; Jacobs, 1992; Putnam, 2000; Whyte, 1943). As it relates to policy, this study has significant implications for making policies that rest on a bottom-up development approach. This work also offers an opportunity for understanding the structural and relational social arrangements and organizations that sustain slums outside the formal structures of government. Finally, the study hopes to advance urban development policy design and evaluation frameworks that seek to alleviate urban poverty.

In addition to having theoretical and policy value, this study has a personal significance. As someone who grew up in a slum in Kenya, this study positions me to

bring my special lens to bear in the academic marketplace to address the global slum crises. As such, I have both an insider and an outsider perspective that situates me to be a good, sensitive analyst for the development of policies on slums. While this study specifically focuses on a slum in Kenya, I believe the ideas, concepts, and propositions presented here are relevant to any marginalized community anywhere. Therefore, given my background in psychology, social work, and social policy, this study provides me with an opportunity to not only examine but also to contribute to the existing literature related to urban development policies and theories.

1.7 Concluding Summary

This focus of this chapter was to introduce the problem statement and to define the parameters of this study. It has also introduced the research questions and their theoretical and policy significance. Chapter 2 will focus primarily on examining this problem through a historical kaleidoscope.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

“The slum is as old as civilization...Rome had its walls, as New York has its rivers, and they played a like part in penning up the crowds. Within space became scarce and dear, and when there was no longer room to build in rows where the poor lived, they put the houses on top of one another. That is the first chapter of the story of tenement everywhere.” (Riis, 1902, pp. 1-11)

“Slum, semi-slum, and super-slum, to this has come the evolution of cities.” (Patrick Geddes in Lewis Mumford, 1961 p464)

2.1 Introduction

These twin quotes offer two important insights on the problem that this study seeks to address, that is, the issue of slums. The first point is that the slum has been with us from time immemorial. The very development of the medieval village was not without slums (Mumford, 1961a). The second point and perhaps the most relevant to this work is that the evolution of cities is rooted in the development of slums and vice versa. The slum, Mumford notes, has historically been one of the main elements of the city

(Mumford, 1961a p458). Thus, to understand it today, it is imperative to look at where it has been and how it has transformed over time.

This chapter has three major goals. The first is to briefly examine the historical development of slums. The second is to explore some of the theoretical perspectives that have governed this development and their policy orientation which this study is grounded on. And the third is to re-theorize slums within what I will call a contemporary social theory. The ultimate agenda is to first demonstrate that both the development of the slum and that of the city have often gone parallel to each other. And, the way the society has responded to the issue of slums has been a determining factor on the effectiveness and success of such responses.

2.2 The History of the Slum

The narrative of the slum is as old as civilization itself (Riis, 1964). Its portrait has been documented and its challenges underscored in literature predating the industrial revolution (Booth, 1970; Dickens, 2009; Mumford, 1934; Mumford, 1961a; New York Times, 1855; Riis, 1914; Riis, 1964; The New York Times, 1897; Wiseman, 1850). From the medieval village, Mumford notes, came the factory, and from the factory came the city and the slum. The main elements of the new urban complex, he asserts, were the factory, railroad, and the slum (Mumford, 1961b p. 458-482). The factory, a prominent feature of the industrial economy created a revolution. It was a magnet, the pull factor attracting multitudes into the cities. The basic advantage of the factory and thus the industrial economy was to improve efficiency, production, and profits (Marx, 1967 pp 430-467).

While the development of the factories offered a promissory note to those who migrated and settled near them to supply them with the labor force, the eventual

mechanization of labor shifted work from man to machine (Marx, 1967 pp 430-467). This shifting of labor led to decreased wages for workers. With an industrial economy founded on a capitalistic model that seeks to maximize profits and minimize expenses, the workers from the factories worked under horrid conditions with meager wages. This resulted in poverty build-up around the factories' peripheries where many workers resided.

As the villages along the industrial area were transforming into urban areas, the land became more profitable. As a result, the workers were pushed further away into the periphery of the cities and the factories, mostly in the wastelands where land was infertile and un-marketable for the booming urban economy of the time. Mumford describes the villages that the factory workers settled into as places plagued by housing shortages, congestion, and use of "unsanitary barracks to serve as substitutes for decent human shelter" (Mumford, 1934 p192). The history of the slum has been well documented by renowned writers and social reformers extending back to the nineteenth century. For example, in 'A December Vision' Charles Dickens captures the conditions of the poor working class in nineteenth-century England as follows;

"I saw a poisoned air, in which life drooped. I saw disease, arrayed in all its store of hideous aspects and appalling shapes, triumphant in every alley, bye-way, court, back-street, and poor abode, in every place where human beings congregated-in the proudest and most boastful places, most of all. I saw innumerable hosts, fore-doomed to darkness, dirt, pestilence obscenity, misery, and early death" (Dickens, 2013).

In his renowned novel ‘Oliver Twist’, Dickens proceeds to highlight the ubiquitous poverty resulting from industrialism in the streets of London. His work is complemented by Charles Booth, another prominent social reformer in the nineteenth century. In the ‘Life and Labor of the People of London’⁶, Booth captures both the social and spatial characteristics of urban poverty using cartographical maps (see figures below 2). He extensively outlines the social and spatial structure of urban poverty, paying attention to class differences even among the poor.

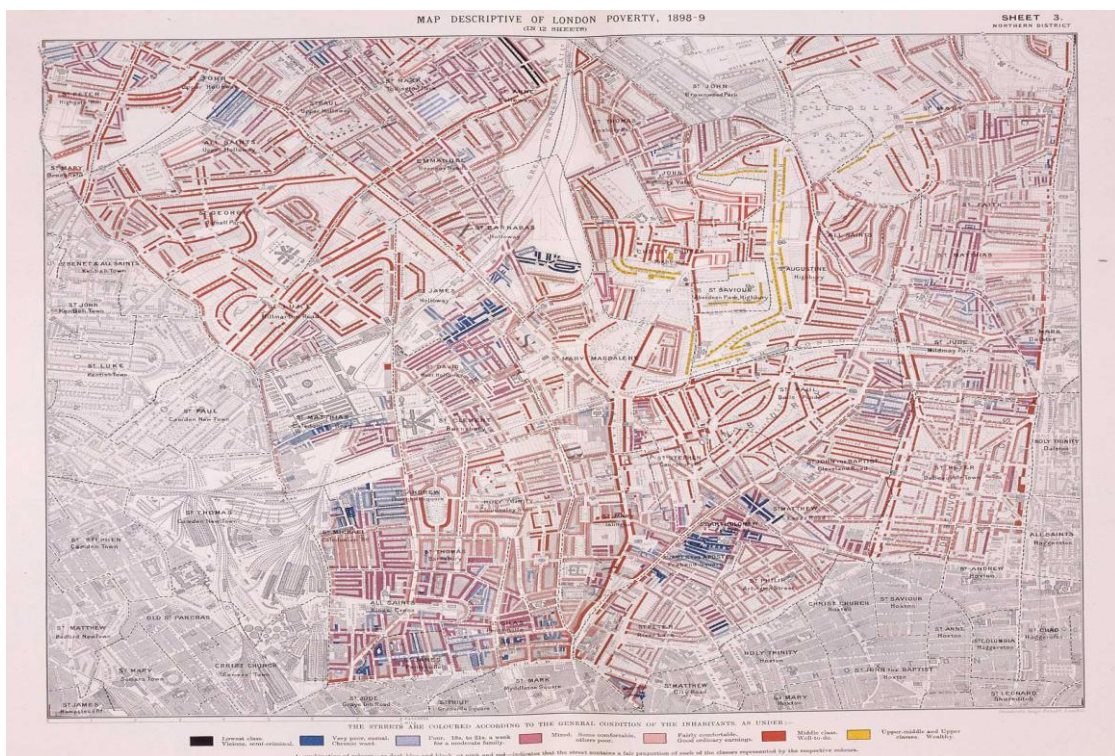


Figure 2: Descriptive Map of London Poverty (Charles Booth, 1889-90)

In ‘Horrible London’ George Sims writes the following about a slum in London, “we enter a narrow court, picking our way with caution over the nameless filth and garbage and the decaying vegetable matter that flung originally in heaps outside the

⁶ Charles Booth (1889-1903): *ibid*: <http://booth.lse.ac.uk/static/a/3.html>

doors, has been trodden about by the feet of the inhabitants until the broken flags are almost indiscernible beneath a thick paste of indescribable filth” (Sims, 1984 p119). In another excerpt, Cardinal Wiseman of Westminster in England describes, with grim imagery, the pervasive poverty that spread in the streets of Westminster. His description not only expands what other social reformers like Dickens, Booth, and Sims had pointed out but also paints a sharp contrast between the imagination of a city and the actual reality. Cardinal Wiseman is credited for using the term ‘slum’ first to describe both the social and spatial conditions of the urban poor. In his description, he wrote;

“Yet this splendid monument, its treasures of art, and it’s fitting endowments, form not the part of Westminster which will concern me. For there is another part which stands in frightful contrast, though in immediate contact, with this magnificence. In ancient times, the existence of an Abbey on any spot, with a large staff of clergy, and ample revenues, would have sufficed to create around it a little paradise of comfort, cheerfulness, and ease. This, however, is not now the case. Close under the Abbey of Westminster there lie concealed labyrinths of lanes and courts, and alleys and slums, nests of ignorance, vice depravity, and crime, as well as of squalor, wretchedness, and disease; whose atmosphere is typhus, whose ventilation is cholera; in which swarms a huge and almost countless population, in great measure, nominally at least, Catholic; haunts of filth, which no sewage committee can reach-dark corners, which no lighting-board can brighten” (Wiseman, 1850 p. 30).

Following this description, the term ‘slum’ became a catch-all phrase to describe the state of the most deprived and destitute parts and populations of the cities in the Western world. The New York Times articulated it this way in 1855:

“Philologos sends us a communication to say that he thinks that the word “slums,” which cannot be found in Webster’s Dictionary, is a very proper and forcible word, as applied to the streets of a city in which the poor and vicious part of the population resides and advises its adoption. Cardinal Wiseman has used it in one of his publications, it seems, and we see no objection to its use, as we have no word which expresses its meaning. Though a low cockney coinage, and a stranger to the parlor and the pulpit,

there is nothing essentially coarse or vulgar in it, any more than in plums or thumbs. By all means let us have slums” (New York Times, 1855).

The very first condition fitting the description of slums in the United States dates as far back as 1850. It was described as a place of endless drudgery, appalling sanitation plagued by cholera, measles, diphtheria, and typhus that struck hardest at children and infants (Baker, 2001). From 1886-97, The New York Times published articles describing the conditions of slums in the U.S and Europe (The New York Times, 1886; The New York Times, 1894; The New York Times, 1897). In these segments, it underscored the disparities in both the social composition as well as the economic structure of slums. While the narrative of the slums at this period was concentrated in the West, in the twentieth century, it started to shift towards the global south in Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

2.3 **The History of Slum: A *Shift from West to East***

The story of slums in the early eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was concentrated in the West because of the industrial revolution (Marx, 1967; Mumford, 1934; Mumford, 1961a). However, in the early twentieth century, the narrative started to shift towards the global south, particularly in Latin America, Asia, and Africa (Abrams, 1964; Desai & Devadas, 1970). Unlike in the west, the development of slums in the global south was and has been largely attributed to a juxtaposition of many factors. Some of these factors include natural population growth, rural-urban migration, industrialization, local and international policy flaws, civil wars, and perhaps more importantly in Sub-Saharan Africa, the colonial legacy (Briceson & Potts, 2006; Davis, 2006b).

Unlike most cities in the West which developed as economic hubs due to the development of the factories, most cities in the global south, particularly in Africa, were

designed and structured to benefit the colonial systems. Migration to urban areas which was a key element of the industrial revolution in the West was strictly discouraged in many African countries by their colonizers. For example, under colonial rule, the city and municipal governments restricted Africans from residing in the cities through the establishment of strict rural-urban migration (Davis, 2006b). The urban housings were designed to accommodate single African males who were considered a key source of urban labor (Briceson & Potts, 2006). Land ownership in urban areas was also largely restricted to colonial settlers (Briceson & Potts, 2006; Davis, 2006b). Thus, strict land ownership and rural-urban migration policies ensured that most Africans resided in the countryside.

However, the birth of independence unleashed an unprecedented rate of rural-urban migration, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Unrestricted by colonial rules that restrained social mobility, many Africans, lured by the promise of a better life that cities offered, migrated to urban areas. This unrestricted rural-urban migration coupled with high birth rates due to better medical facilities led to a burst in the urban population. For example, in 1950, only 32 million Africans resided in urban areas, in 2015, that population had multiplied to 472 million and was projected to reach 1.3 billion by 2050 (African Urban Dynamics, 2015 p12).⁷

The independence, instead of ushering in growth and prosperity, created a new era of capitalism mirroring that which had governed the metropolises of the Western nations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The social, political, and economic fragmentations resulting from the colonial legacy in Africa, for example, made it difficult for many African states to establish stable urban development policies to curb increasing

⁷ African Urban Dynamics: Facts & Figures (2015 p12)

urban population and poverty (Davis, 2006b). This coupled with other sets of pressures among them being civil wars, rapid and unplanned urbanization, unstable housing markets, and the negative effects of the structural adjustment programs in the 1980s made it difficult for those migrating to the cities to obtain a decent livelihood. Thus, the new urban migrants needed alternative forms of housing and livelihoods which they could only find in improvised areas. This led to the growth and persistence of slums in much of the LMICs (Briceson & Potts, 2006; UN-Habitat, 2003; UN-Habitat, 2013).

Indeed, historical evidence, both from the west and from the east, affirms Riis's assertion that the slum is as old as civilization itself (Riis, 1964 pp 1-11). It would, therefore, be a mistake to conclude that the accounts offered here tell the whole story of slums across the world. The development of the slum, just as that of the city, is as complex as civilization itself. To capture this entire narrative is to capture the tale of human civilization. Such a task would require volumes of books. To better articulate, this narrative in a precise form, the figure on the next page briefly offers a summary of the development of the slums from the west to the east. It outlines an overview of the development of slums using three dimensions of place, space, and time. Place refers to the geographical regions; space refers to the localities within a given geographic region where slums were emerging i.e. along the railroads or factories' peripheries. The time dimension refers to a given epoch when slums were emerging in a given geographic region.

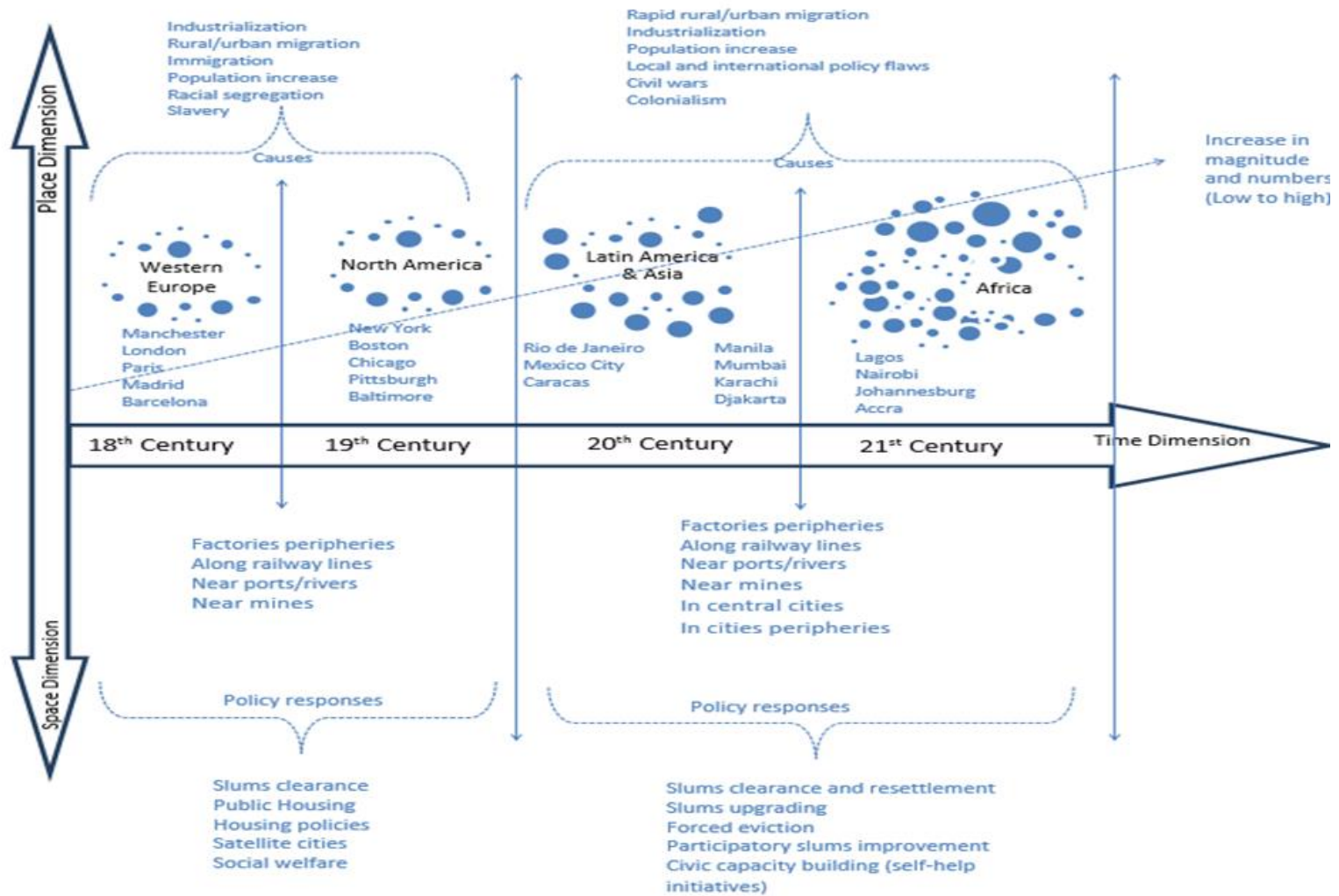


Figure 3: Slums Timeline: From West to East (Wambui, J., 2015)

The slums in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries developed differently from those in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in terms of time, place, and space. This not only influenced how they were theorized but also how the challenges they presented were addressed. In the next section, I will briefly examine how the narrative of slums has historically been theorized and how such theorization has eventually influenced the social and political perspectives about their causes and solutions.

2.4 The Theories of Slums

For centuries, the slum has captured the imagination of popular media, the arts, and literary work. They have conceptualized it as an expressive articulation of social, economic, political, and ecological shortcomings that have haunted society throughout history. While the existence of the slum itself, just like that of the city, has been a constant and dominant factor in human civilization, its conceptualization has shifted from time to time. From the early eighteenth century when the moral laxities defined the slums to the late nineteenth century when ecological deficiency became their dominant constituent, the narrative of slums has been shifting constantly. Three theoretical perspectives have captured this shift. The first and the earliest one is the moral perspective.

The moral perspective is better captured by John Knox in his publication on the conditions of residents of slums in Great Britain in 1857. In this publication⁸, he wrote the following:

“When we look at this great city, with all its pomp and splendor-its wealth, power, and greatness-its palaces, cathedrals, and mansions-its courts of justice, academics of science, and institutions of philanthropy,

⁸ Knox, J. (1857). *The masses without!: A pamphlet for the times, on the sanatory, social, moral and heathen condition of the masses, who inhabit the alleys, courts, wynds, garrets, cellars, lodging-houses, dens, and hovels of Great Britain, with an appeal for open-air preaching, and other extraordinary efforts to reach the perishing masses of society.* London: Judd & Glass.

surely we mourn that such a city has so much wickedness, degradation, infidelity, heathenism, and profligacy...The swarms of wretched, filthy, haggard, dissolute, profligate, care-worn, outcast masses who inhabit the dingy courts, dingy cellars, and miserable garrets of our great towns, call loudly upon us to go and carry the message of peace to their benighted homes...Christians! Arouse yourself to work! Thrust in the sickle and reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe” (Knox, 1857 pp 5-30).

He continued to describe the unsettling conditions of the urban poor in London and surrounding cities. He argued that the urban poor, who were living in filthy and sordid environments, were morally and spiritually deprived and thus, they required spiritual cleansing. He asserted that it was the responsibility of the Christian community to spread the gospel to the “swarms of wretched, filthy, haggard, dissolute, profligate, care-worn, outcast masses” who needed spiritual redemption. This view of the poor as being morally and spiritually ill was not something new, particularly in the Victorian slum. For much of the early Victorian period, slums were perceived and defined from a moralistic approach. It was a common assumption that where slums existed, they represented moral depravity and inevitable consequence of ‘grave personal failures’ and bad character (Wohl, 1977 p8).

The conditions under which the slum dwellers were living in, attributed to the failure of character, were often viewed as a stain not only to civilization but also to the very moral and spiritual fabric upon which the society rested on. The very idea that cleanliness is next to godliness was taken both literary and practically. The filthy conditions of the slums, its poverty and other social transactions that took place there were typified as moral degeneration and thus ungodly. “Go to their dwellings,” Grant writes, “...and the very sight of them will make you sad. In the great majority of cases, the scenes of wretchedness which occur in the families of lower classes, are the result of intemperate and improvident habits” (Grant, 1985 p 314).

The thesis by Grant that moral and human character deficiencies were to be blamed for the widespread poverty led to the action-step that moral and spiritual redemption was necessary to lift the poor off their misery. In 'The Great Metropolis', Grant asserts that the "first efforts of Christian philanthropy ought to be brought to bear on the vast mass of moral ignorance and depravity which is constantly exhibited to our view in the poorer districts of London" (Grant, 1985 pp 310: 314). Knox (1857) reiterates this argument for moral reformation among the poor in his call for a moral awakening among the Christian philanthropists and Christian community at large.

The moral perspective on poverty shifted the responsibility of addressing social problems from the state to the church. This led to massive moral and spiritual crusades which were based on the idea that the poverty of the slums and all resultant evils disrupted the social and spiritual order. Thus, these crusades undertook the task of converting the poor from their self-inflicted, immoral, and savage lifestyles to a more civilized religious life believed to be essential for material success. As Wohl (1977) points out, the deep reverence attached to moral uprightness ensured that character building and moral improvement were the core policy approaches for the eradication of slums and their poverty.

However, after the 1850s, a significant shift in social philosophy started to take place (Wohl, 1977). Although this shift only slightly altered the moralistic perspective to poverty, its orientation towards a more environmental approach refocused the theoretical conceptualization of slums from moral to spatial characteristics. This gradual shift towards an environmental or spatial approach rested on the idea that the environment was a critical determinant of moral and spiritual uprightness. To address the moral and spiritual aspects of the poor, it was imperative to improve the physical conditions of the environment in which they were residing in. Charles Dickens' novels were the most

significant in reshaping public awareness on the environmental conditions of the slums. Other social activists such as Jacob Riis⁹ and Charles Booth¹⁰ reinforced Dickens' work by extending the importance of the environment on social well-being. As Gandal assert, in the course of 1890s;

“the slum emerged as a spectacle in the popular arts of representation: the urban poor were discovered as a fresh topic by police reporters, novelists, photographers...and social reformers, some of whom were expressly challenging traditional moral descriptions as well as moralistic analysis that attributed poverty to individual vice” (Gandal, 1997 p8).

Jacob Riis's masterpiece on 'How the Other Half Lives' in 1890 was one of the first to offer an intimate look at the conditions under which the poor lived (Riis, 1914). His photographic portrayal of slums in New York not only linked poverty to environmental causes, but it also underscored the psychological impact of environmental poverty on social well-being. Riis offered detailed visual accounts of life in the slums of New York¹¹. His work later became vital in the creation of public housing policies in the U.S. By the early twentieth century, the issues of overcrowding, sanitation, health, and environmental decay had become the main elements of discussions in the narrative of slums. Many social reformers such as Riis undertook the task of advocating for environmental improvement policies particularly provision of improved housing, water, and sanitation.

⁹ Jacob Riis (1901): The Battle with the Slum

¹⁰ Charles Booth (1889): Life and Labour of the People of London

¹¹ See Riis photographic work at: <https://collections.mcnyc.org/Explore/Highlights/Jacob%20A.%20Riis/>

Following the publication of 'How the Other Half Lives' by Riis and his other notable publications¹², many cities in the U.S and Europe established new housing policies and building codes. These policies mandated improved sanitary conditions, fire escapes, and access to ventilation and light (History.com Editors, 2010). By the late 1920s, a vital shift in the responsibility of addressing social problems from the religious community to the state had taken place. Many slums across the U.S were demolished and replaced with large privately subsidized apartment projects. The implementation of the New Deal by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the U.S would eventually usher in massive projects of clearing slums and replacing them with public housing (History.com Editors, 2010).

However, while these policies and social reforms were seen as effective strategies to eliminate slums in the Western metropolises, other challenges emerged that challenged the spatial perspective approach towards the problem of slums. First, as Jacobs (1992) observed, the strategies of clearing slums and relocating them via public housing projects only created other forms of slums. At best, Jacobs argued, these projects only succeeded in shifting slums from one location to another (Jacobs, 1992). Providing housing alone without ensuring access to other basic necessities such as employment, health facilities, etc. only turned the new public housing projects into new centers of delinquency, vandalism, and social hopelessness far worse than the slums they were replacing (Dreier, Mollenkopf, & Swanstrom, 2001; Jacobs, 1992; Riis, 1964). Other scholars such as Whyte (1943) emphasized the social structure of the slums and argued that the processes of clearing slums without considering the social structure and transactions taking place within them were detrimental to the whole social order in the slums. For Whyte,

¹² The Children of the Poor (1892), The Battle with the Slum (1902)

understanding the day-to-day patterns of life, social dynamics, and transactions in slums was key to establishing better policies.

Thus, the unintended negative consequences of the public housing policies and the new realization that environmental reforms devoid of social reforms only resulted in failure led to a third paradigm shift in the thinking of slums. This shift was taking place at a critical juncture when the narrative of slums was spreading from the western metropolises to the cities of the developing nations. As previously highlighted in section 2.3 above, the geography of slums started to shift to the global south in the mid-twentieth century when many of the developing nations were now gaining independence from their former colonizers. Faced by the scarcity of means and resources, many of these countries did not have the capacity to replicate the western strategies of mass production of housing for their rapidly growing urban populations. This challenge was further exacerbated by the politics of land, emerging civil unrest, governmental incapability, and corruption, increasing urban divide, and the heterogeneity and expansion of slums in the global south. This led to a demand for a more aggressive theoretical framework among urban scholars to address the increasing threats that slums presented to cities, especially in the global south. These scholars demanded attention to the relationship between the residents of slums with their environment. They emphasized the need to understand how such relationships create opportunities for the emergence of frugal innovations which are paramount to daily life in the slums. The socio-spatial perspective emerged as a promising theory because of its capacity to capture the relationships between people and their environment.

Proponents of socio-spatial perspective believe that slums in the global south have become the new expressive articulations of urban struggle [that] emerge and shape unlikely but important experiments (Thieme, 2017). Slums, as Abrams (1964) observed,

are not always a ‘symbol of retrogression’, they, in fact, may constitute what Thieme (2017) terms as alternative structures of opportunity outside the formal structures. The view of slums as providing alternative modes of lifestyles is not something new. In his seminal book¹³, Whyte observed that while a slum may symbolize chaos and disorder, the assemblage of human experimentations taking place within it reveals a complex yet highly organized and integrated social system functioning in a coherent manner. He was particularly critical of the relationship between people and places. He argued that the street corners in Cornerville, an Italian slum in Boston, were not just physical demarcations that distinguished geographic places; rather they were also an extension of social identity among many youths (Whyte, 1943). In his analysis, he found that street corners were both spaces of social transactions as well as places where social identity was constantly being constructed and reconstructed.

Whyte’s emphasis on social and spatial relationships was an extension of earlier work by Simmel (1903). Simmel argued that the development of a person’s identity is a function of all the relationships between that person and the environment in which s/he occupies at a given time. The way we shape our places and spaces, the way we move around them, and the thoughts and interpretations associated with them influence not only our vector but also our identity (Wise, 2000). In addition, it also influences the identity we ascribe to those places and spaces as we move around them.

In recent decades, massive literature founded on Simmel's (1903) premise has spelled out the importance of understanding the relationship between people and places (Bourdieu, 1984; Gilbert, 2007; Pred, 1985; Simmel, 1903; Soja, 1980). This body of literature postulates that given the complexity of modern slums, their sizes and

¹³ Whyte (1943) Street corner society: The social structure of an Italian Slum

heterogeneity, and their geographical position, there is a need for an alternative theory that incorporates both their human and spatial dimensions. In addition, and perhaps the most important, many contemporary urban scholars have identified a level of resilience, creativity, and innovation never before observed or linked to the livelihood in the slums (Dovey, 2012; Holston & Caldeira, 2008). This observation has been particularly critical in informing the contemporary slum argument which re-conceptualizes slums as places of metropolitan innovation instead of decay (Holston & Caldeira, 2008). Many contemporary scholars examining urban poverty argue that to effectively and successfully address the twenty-first-century slums, it is imperative to view them as places in which the day-to-day social and spatial transactions produce discourses that inform both the social and spatial trajectories in modern cities (AbdouMaliq, 2004; Dovey, 2012; Harvey, 2008; Holston & Caldeira, 2008; Holston, 2008; Neuwirth, 2006; Nuissl & Heinrichs, 2013; Roy, 2011; UN-Habitat, 2003; Yiftachel, 2009b).

This view has ushered in the socio-spatial perspective which is underpinned on the idea that human experiences are indispensable when dissecting the politics of places (Jacobs, 1992; Simmel, 1903; Trancik, 1986). Thus articulated, the socio-spatial perspective has come to offer an alternative approach to the challenges of slums, especially in the global south mega-cities. There is a consensus among many urban scholars that given the current state of slums, there is a need to not only embrace them as new forms of social identities but also understand the way they function in relationship to the broader urban geography. These scholars contend that understanding how the residents of slums relate to their environment is imperative to finding solutions to the myriad challenges that they face. The socio-spatial perspective has introduced important theoretical and policy reformation in the narrative of slums. For example, it has highlighted the cardinal importance of human relationships with their environment and

how such relationships inspire frugal yet vital innovations, particularly in marginalized areas. It has also led to important policies such as participatory planning and bottom-up approaches which acknowledge and embrace the creativity and practicality of the urban poor, particularly in the slums.

However, this perspective has not been without challenges. For example, one of the challenges that have restricted the full realization of the policies emanating from the socio-spatial perspective is that there has been limited practical evidence documented from the slums to inform development policies. This has been exacerbated by the fact that socio-spatial perspective has only been restricted to examining the relationships between slum dwellers and their environment. It has not effectively explored the day to day social relationships and experiences among the slum dwellers which are equally central to the holistic understanding of how the slums function. As Wohl notes, “the slum cannot be understood solely in terms of its morbid pathology and physical attributes...” to get a balanced view of its complete social reality, he proceeds, we have to also understand its “inner workings, values, sense of itself and social history” (Wohl, 1977 p 108). Jacobs strengthen this observation by asserting that “to overcome slums, we must regard slum dwellers as people capable of understanding and acting upon their own self-interests.” This requires discerning, respecting, and building upon the forces for regeneration that exist in slums themselves (Jacobs, 1992 pp. 270-71). To do so, there is a need to go beyond just the social and spatial accounts to understand how everyday personal and collective experiences and transactions inspire civic imagination among the urban poor. This is particularly important given the current projections on the increasing growth of slums and their myriad challenges.

2.5 Re-theorizing Slums

In 2003, UN-Habitat published a ground-breaking report on the nature and conditions of human settlements with a focus on slums (UN-Habitat, 2003). In this report, UN-Habitat noted that while slums continue to present challenges to the sustainability of the cities, they also present new opportunities to embrace frugal innovations emerging from the practicality of their residents (UN-Habitat, 2003). This report conceptualized slums as the new forms of urban realities. It urged the urban scholars to embrace the regenerative forces emerging from the collective experimentations of slum dwellers as a potential source of sustainable development policies.

After its release, many urban scholars started to describe the often unseen dimension of slums which involves social relationships, creativity, and resilience (AbdouMaliq, 2004; Holston, 2008; Nuissl & Heinrichs, 2013; Roy, 2011; UN-Habitat, 2003; Yiftachel, 2009b). These scholars argued that to effectively address the challenges presented by slums, there is a need to understand them from the views of those who reside in them. There was a strong consensus among them that the solutions to the challenges presented by modern slums will come from the daily experimentations of their residents. What this means is that there is a need to examine and understand the recursive social, spatial, and political relationships and experiences which embody the daily life in the slums from the views of those who live it day in day out.

In addition, there is an urgent need to examine how these individual and collective transactions inspire the slum dwellers to imagine and to create alternative solutions to address their individual and collective needs. This requires a comprehensive re-theorization of slums emphasizing the practical and factual evidence that demonstrates the practicality of the slum dwellers.

Using a social theory framework, the purpose of this dissertation is to bridge the existing gap in knowledge on the existence and impact of frugal innovations that emerge from the daily informal social experiments in the slums. The dissertation build further on the socio-spatial perspective by acknowledging the cardinal importance of the human-environment interactions and how they (1) shapes the views and identities of the residents of the slums in relationship to their environment, (2) influence how slum dwellers forge innovative adaptation strategies by either modifying their environment or by creating new alternatives to address existing and prevailing challenges (civic imagination), and (3) how, using this civic imagination, they eventually adapt to their environment and ensure incremental sustainability independent of external support.

The social theory refers to ideas, arguments, concepts, and processes of studying social life (Henslin, 2008; Lyon & Parkins, 2013; Harrington, 2005). It encompasses ideas and speculations of how society and its different elements emerge, develop, and change over time (Harrington, 2005). One defining characteristic of social theory is that it arises from everyday life and interactions between ordinary people at given places (Harrington, 2005 p 6). Its capacity to synthesize the social, spatial, and institutional dimensions of slums¹⁴ has made it a better theoretical framework to capture the dynamism and complexity of the modern urban slums. By employing a social theory approach, this dissertation highlights the recursive cycles of interaction between and among diverse social, spatial, and institutional factors that inspire the emergence of civic imagination in the slums. Using Kibera slum as a focal point, this study uses a tripartite investigative process with the goal of understanding three things:

¹⁴ According to Nuissl and Heinrichs (2013), slums have three dimensions namely material, social, and institutional.

1. The factors that contribute to the activation of civic imagination in the slums i.e. *how do the building-block organizations of an autonomous civil society in the slums emerge?*
2. How these social responses are collectively understood and mobilized i.e. *through what mechanism, channels, and [or] processes do these building-block organizations mature?*
3. What factors either contribute to or hinder the success of these mobilized and institutionalized social responses i.e. *in what ways do state and local actors either block or encourage the broadening and strengthening of these building-block organizations?*

2.6 Concluding Summary

Chapter one examined the duality of modern metropolises and identified slums as the modern expressive articulation of global south cities. Chapter two has delved into the issue of slums. In this chapter, I have examined both the historical narrative and theoretical shifts that have informed our understanding of the slums. I have also briefly argued for the urgent need to re-theorize slums to reflect their current social, spatial, and institutional realities. I have concluded it by reiterating the purpose of this study. In the next chapter, I will discuss both the design and methodology that I employed for this study. The research questions will be revisited in detail and their key elements will be examined. Then, the chapter will contextualize this study within its geographical setting before outlining the key steps taken to investigate the proposed research questions.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

“You must involve the community, talk to the people, get to know them, know their real, not felt needs. This will lead to a lasting program. As people get to embrace this program, they will own it, which gives the program life and a long-term sustainability” (Advice from an Interviewee)

3.1 Introduction

One of the questions I asked the participants during the interviews was, “Based on your experiences in Kibera, what kind of recommendation would you give to anyone looking to start a new program here?” One of the respondents provided the response quoted above which was strongly resounded by other participants in different ways. In this quote, several points emerge which strengthen the design and methodology used in this study. First, the quote emphasizes community engagement. To fully comprehend the needs of the community, the interviewee asserted, we “must involve the community”. We must immerse ourselves in the community to capture and understand the real stories and realities on the ground. Second, the quote stresses the need to create clear communication channels with the public to understand the local reality. The interviewee accentuated the need to “talk to the people, [and to] get to know them”. By talking to them, not only do

we get to know their personal experiences, but we also get to understand how these experiences shape their daily processes of experimentations as well as their sense of social and spatial identity.

Lastly, we need to understand the “real, not felt needs” of the community. This point was particularly reinforced by many other interviewees who were frustrated with the incapacity of the state and other external organizations to fully comprehend the real needs of the people in Kibera. Distinguishing between the ‘real needs’ i.e., evidenced needs and ‘felt needs’ i.e., ascribed needs requires engaging those victimized in identifying and formulating possible solutions. This process requires mapping out local problems from a local perspective. To do that, one must be immersed in the community. The idea of community immersion was paramount to the design and methodology used in this study.

This chapter introduces the research design and methodological approach employed in this dissertation. The chapter will first reintroduce the research questions and the attendant elements that were examined. Then, I will briefly contextualize these questions within the geographic setting of Kibera. This will be followed by a step by step breakdown of the procedure employed during the execution of this study. The processes used to identify and determine the sample size; gather and record needed data; analyze and interpret the gathered information and ensure data quality and validity will be highlighted. The last goal of the chapter is to highlight some of the challenges that were encountered in the field and how they reshaped this study.

3.2 Research Questions

As identified in chapter one, there is a knowledge gap in both theory and practice in understanding the practicality of the residents of slums, particularly as it relates to their

creativity. The purpose of this research was to bridge this gap by examining how the urban slum dwellers navigate prevailing social, economic, political, and environmental vulnerabilities through individual or collective actions. The overall intent was to highlight how frugal creativity, collectivity, resilience, and adaptability compose skill-sets that enable households in slums to navigate diverse pressures that they face daily. Of importance is how people collectively organize to address these vulnerabilities. Using local grassroots networks as proxies for local imagination and collective ideology, the study was guided by the following three research questions.

1. How do the building-block organizations of an autonomous civil society in the slums emerge?
2. Through what mechanism, channels, and [or] processes do these building-block organizations mature?
3. In what ways do state and local actors either block or encourage the broadening and strengthening of these building-block organizations?

These research questions build upon each other to capture innovative processes, experimentations, and transactions that emerge out of the dire need to prevail in the face of depravity. The first question was an examination of the different factors and [or] opportunities that inspire creativity and collectiveness or what this study refers to as civic imagination. Civic imagination is “the capacity to imagine alternatives to current social, political, or economic conditions” (Jenkins, Sangita, Lian, & Neta, 2016 p300). It is the

“Ways in which people individually and collectively envision better political, social, and civic environment. Civic imaginations underpin processes of identifying problems and solutions, envisioning better societies and environments, and developing a plan to make those visions of a better future into reality” (Baiocchi, Bennett, Cordner, Klein, & Savell, 2014 p 54).

The second question was exploring how individual/s or groups creatively and collectively mobilize this civic imagination. The question was also an examination of how the rest of the community responds to these new ideas and solutions from local actors. The third question simply explored the diverse challenges that either strengthen or impede the creativity of the residents of slums.

3.3 The Setting of the Study: *Kibera Slum*

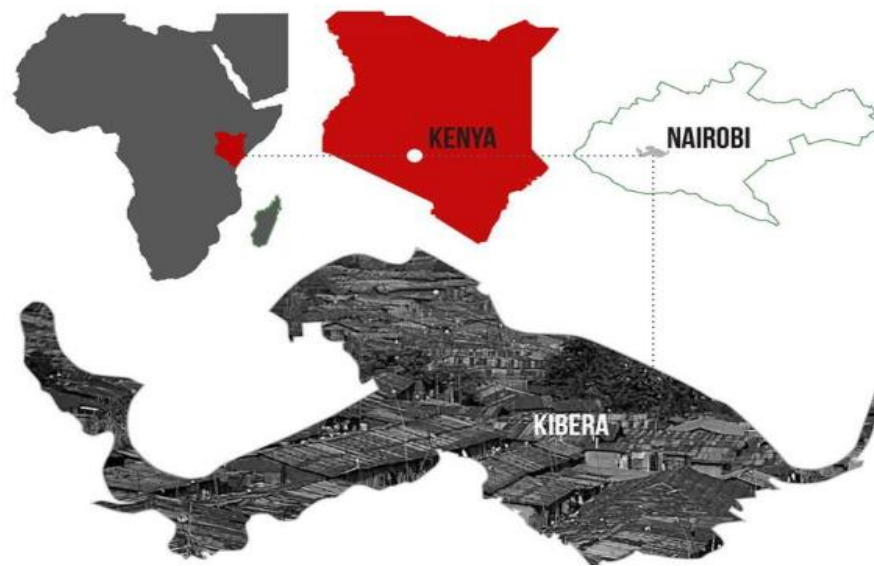


Image 2: Kibera (<http://www.apsaidal.com/anwa-junior-academy-kounkuey-design-initiative-kdi/>)

This study was actualized in Kibera Slum situated in Kenya. Kenya is a mid-sized country located on the Eastside of Africa with an estimated population of 45,546, 000 people.¹⁵ Of the total population, 25.2% is estimated to be residing in urban areas. Of the population residing in urban areas, 56% have been projected to be dwelling in slums. With the current estimated urbanization rate of 4.34%, both the urban population and the population residing in the slum are projected to increase in the coming decades.

¹⁵ Slum Almanac (2015/16): Tackling Improvement in the Lives of Slum Dwellers

Kibera Slum is one of the largest and most recognized slums in Kenya located approximately 5 kilometers away from Nairobi (Mutisya & Yarime, 2011). Occupying a land approximated at 2.5 kilometers in size, Kibera is made up of 14 villages with varying population density (Mutisya & Yarime, 2011). It has a colonial history dating as far back as 1912 when the returning Nubian soldiers after World War I were settled there by the colonial government. After independence in 1963, the rapid rural-urban migration ushered in a boom in the population of Kibera leading to the Kenyan government declaring the settlement illegal (Mutisya & Yarime, 2011). This meant that the government took little interest in addressing the challenges facing this settlement.

The policy responses towards Kibera often followed the traditional paternalistic approaches such as clearance, relocation and resettlement, and forced eviction. As Kibera continued to grow, the policy responses shifted to other approaches such as site and services, slum upgrading strategies, and participatory slum planning approaches (PSUP, 2016; UN-Habitat, 2003). However, the magnitude of the challenges presented by this slum, the scarcity of means and resources, and the increasing population size rendered these alleviation strategies ineffective. At best, these strategies only succeeded in forcing one segment of the slum from one location to another (PSUP, 2016). Statistical estimates indicate that the population of Kibera increased from 6,000 people in 1965 (Mutisya & Yarime, 2011) to current 170, 000 and 270, 000 as current estimates noted by MapKibera.org¹⁶. Other sources estimate the current population to be as high as 950, 000 (Mutisya & Yarime, 2011). It is not necessary to resolve this conflict to execute this study.

¹⁶ <http://www.mapkibera.org/blog/2010/09/05/kiberas-census-population-politics-precision/>

Kibera has been the focus of many research and local and international policy debates in Sub-Saharan Africa. These debates have often revolved around six core vulnerabilities associated with any other major slum. In fact, these vulnerabilities are core to the current definition of a 'slum'. They are sanitation, healthcare, employment, education, housing, and security. There are four principal strategies that have been used to respond to these vulnerabilities. First, there has been the state response through national policies and projects such as the Kenya Slum Upgrading Program (KENSUP) and the Participatory Slum Upgrading (PSUP). These projects have been executed in collaboration with international organizations such as UN-Habitat with the goal of relocating and resettling the local community (PSUP, 2016; UN-Habitat, 2003). The second strategy has come from the National and International NGOs. It has often focused on providing basic goods and services such as sanitation, healthcare, education, etc. The third response has been from the private market systems such as informal real estate brokers (who provide housing), and/or private individuals (who provide basic public goods and services, etc.). The fourth response has come from local grassroots organizations such as self-help groups, religious institutions, community-based organizations, sports groups, and other social networks. The grassroots movements have often used frugal innovations to meet local needs through the provision of basic goods and services. The focus of this study is on the grassroots movements and how they reflect the local vitality under pressure.

3.4 Research Design: A *Qualitative Approach*

This study employed a qualitative research design. This design was significant in this study because it aligned with the social theory¹⁷ upon which this study is underpinned. Qualitative design typically refers to a range of data collecting and analytic approaches that offer insights on how society functions. These approaches are important in studying individual/s, groups, and systems because they allow the unpacking of diverse perspectives within and among individual/s, groups, and systems (Dudwick, Kuehnast, Jones, & Woolcock, 2006). Among the qualitative approaches commonly used in qualitative research designs, this study employed a Grounded Theory approach. Grounded Theory approach is an inductive social inquiry process in which the development of a theory is informed by data grounded on the experiences and knowledge of participants in research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It uses iterative processes i.e. frequent review and refinement of data to draw out emerging patterns, themes, and relationships that inform how different elements work or relate to each other within the study group (Dudwick et al., 2006). The Grounded theory approach seeks not only to uncover relevant conditions but also to determine and understand how society responds to changing conditions and the consequences of their actions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Guided by this approach, this study took an interpretive orientation focusing on the analytical generalization of the main themes, processes, and patterns, rather than producing statistical generalization. The study was approved by the University of Delaware Institutional Review Board (IRB)-see Appendices A through F for materials approved by the IRB.

¹⁷ Social theory refers to ideas, arguments, concepts, and processes of studying social life (Henslin, 2008; Lyon & Parkins, 2013; Harrington, 2005). It encompasses ideas and speculations of how the society and its different elements emerge, develop, and change over time (Harrington, 2005). One defining characteristics of social theory is that it arises from everyday life and interactions between ordinary people at given places (Harrington, 2005, p6).

3.5 Data Sources and Collection Procedures

As in other qualitative approaches, the data for a grounded theory comes from diverse sources such as interviews, field observations, and other sources such as documents, videotapes, newspapers, letters, and books, etc. (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Dudwick et al., 2006). Using an iterative data triangulation process, (see figure 4 below), this study utilized face to face in-depth interviews, document reviews¹⁸, and enumerated data¹⁹ from various online platforms as the main sources of information. A combination of data from these sources provided a holistic understanding of the phenomena this study was investigating. It also established data reliability, credibility, and validity.

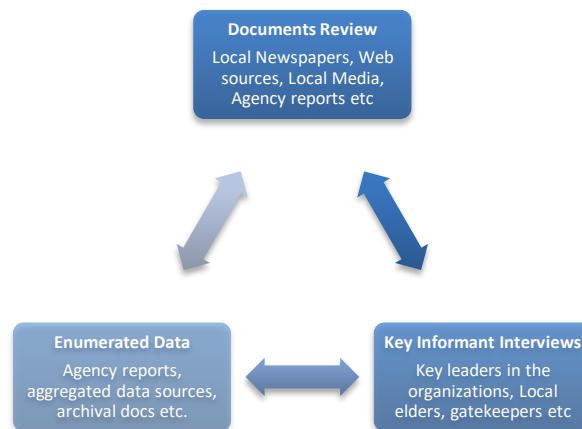


Figure 4: Iterative Data Collection Process

The data collection process followed a two-phase strategy. First, I reviewed the existing documents for preliminary information about existing grassroots organizations in Kibera and how they reflect local creativity and innovation. Documents review was vital

¹⁸ Documents review refers to the use of existing records i.e. newspapers, peer reviewed articles, organizations records etc. to understand the ideas and intentions behind certain social actions or inactions as well as the history and thinking motivating such actions or inactions (Riles, 2006).

¹⁹ Enumerated data involves examination of aggregated data such as demographic statistics, program services etc. The study relied heavily on aggregated data from MapKibera.org and OpenSchoolsKenya.org. These two sources were selected because the information on them is provided by the citizens of Kibera which enhances the credibility and legitimacy of this information.

in (1) mapping out the aggregate of social capital networks in Kibera, (2) providing preliminary information on the ideas, intentions, and history behind the development and functioning of existing organizations in Kibera, (3) assessing the contribution of these grassroots organizations to the local community, (4) assessing the factors that strengthen or impede grassroots movements in Kibera, and (5) in providing vital information necessary for constructing the interview questionnaire.

It is worthwhile to note that while I expected to utilize a wide variety of documents from the identified organizations, the reality is that many organizations did not keep records or documents of their activities. Many of them simply lacked the resources or capacity to keep records. In addition, many of these organizations functioned through informal structures that placed emphasis on delivery rather than documentation. As a result, this study was limited to a few documents²⁰ that were relevant to the investigation. It is imperative to emphasize that this limitation did not have any detrimental impact on the credibility and legitimacy of this study.

²⁰ Documents reviewed included (1) Online records such as organizations' websites which provide relevant information such as mission statements, objectives, goals, achievements etc., (2) Peer reviewed literature, (3) Policy briefs (whenever available), (4) Local media records such as the African Slums Journal (an online video diary of local experiences) and certified YouTube video clips, (5) Online publications and reports mostly from MapKibera.org, and OpenSchoolsKenya.org., and (6) Photos taken during the field visits

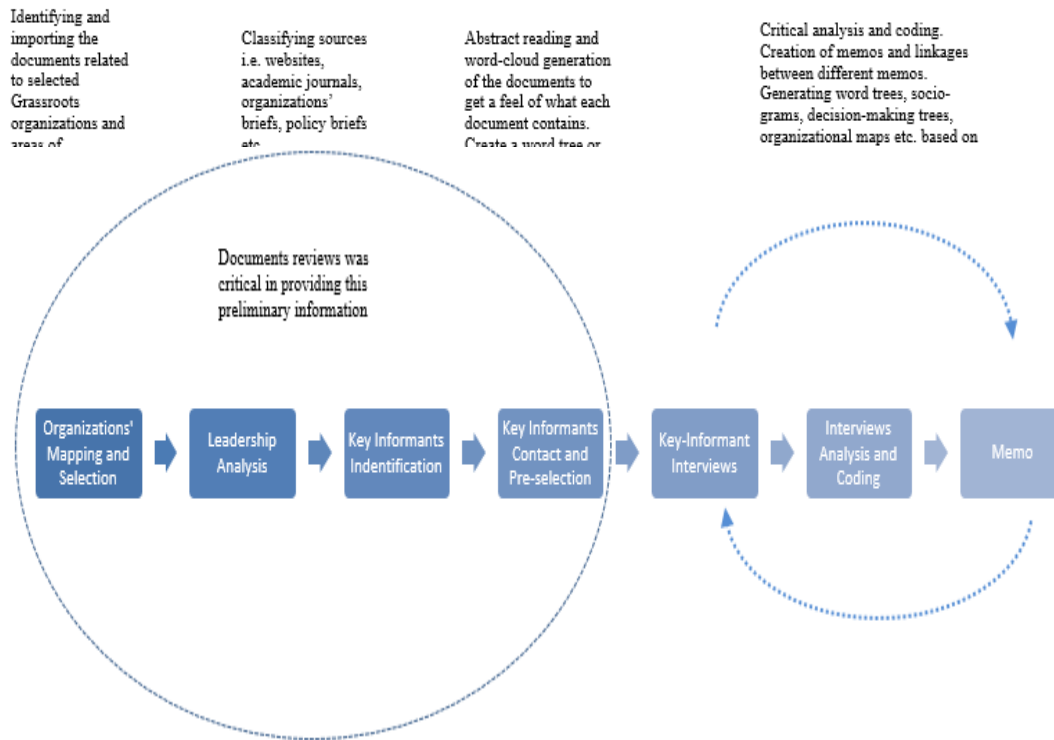


Figure 6: Interview Process

The second phase of data collection was face to face interviews. This study utilized key informant interviews as the primary data source. Interviews provided critical information on the history, nature, characteristics, capacity, and impact of the local grassroots movements. To participate, the selected grassroots had to (1) be locally based and founded by resident/s of Kibera, (2) have valid contact information, and (3) and be proactively engaged in addressing local social, economic, political, or environmental problems. Documents and online sources were particularly important in providing this preliminary information. In general, a review of available literature and aggregate data identified over 80 organizations working in Kibera including their contacts list and key leaders. Participants for the initial recruitment process were reached via emails or available communication channels. The sample of the email sent to the participants is provided in Appendix C.

In addition to document reviews and key informant interviews, this study also utilized enumerated data derived from aggregated online platforms such as MapKibera.org and OpenschoolsKenya.org. This source was critical in mapping-out local resources as part of the initial data collection process. This information included numerical data such as the number of schools, healthcare facilities, vocational and career training facilities, sanitation centers, community policing groups, etc. at work in Kibera. This information was vital in supplementing and strengthening both the documents and interview data. It provided (1) a rich portfolio of existing social capital infrastructure or what has been termed as building block organizations and (2) a review of the effectiveness of local grassroots in addressing local needs. For example, figure 7 below retrieved from openschools.org shows the number and distribution of schools in Kibera. This is an example of enumerated data used.

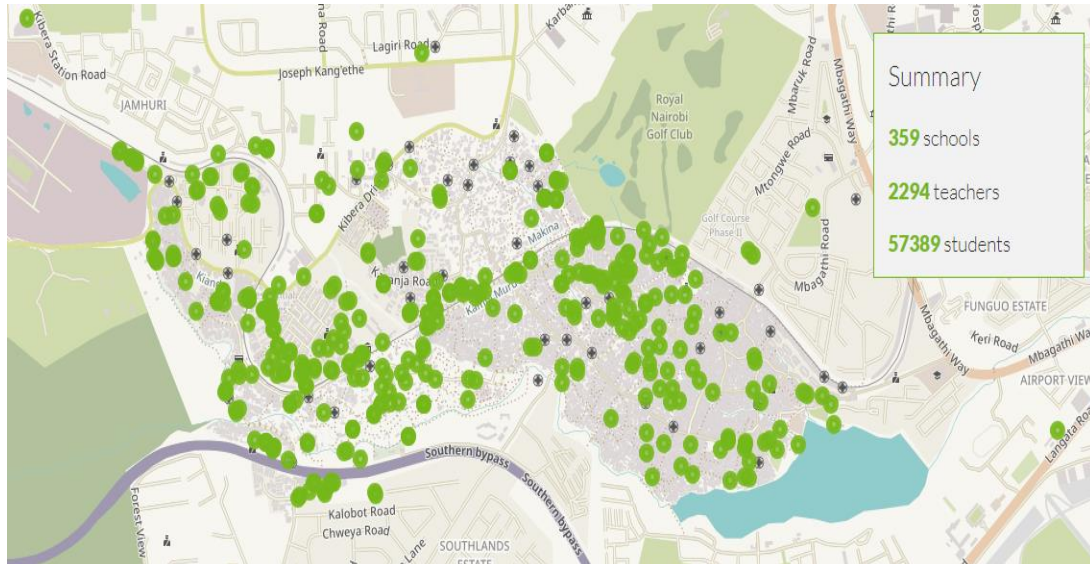


Figure 7: Distribution and number of schools in Kibera (Openschoolskenya.org)

3.6 Sampling and Sample Size

This study employed a purposeful sampling technique to select the sample size. In addition, the chain referral technique was also useful in identifying new sources during field visits. It helped meet the challenges of some scheduled interviewees who did not show up, or outwardly refused to participate despite the previous agreement. As for the sample size, different studies recommend varying sample sizes for qualitative interviews i.e. 20-30 interviews (Creswell, 1998 p. 64), 30-50 interviews (Morse, 2000 p. 225), and 30-60 interviews (Bernard, 2000 p. 178). In this study, the sample size was 37. This was determined by summing up the average of the lowest recommended numbers of interviews by Creswell, Morse, and Bernard with the average of the highest recommended numbers divided by two i.e.

$$\text{Sample Size (n)} = \frac{\left[\frac{20 + 30 + 30}{3}\right] + \left[\frac{30 + 50 + 60}{3}\right]}{2} = 37 \text{ interviews}$$

The interviews ranged from 45 to 75 minutes. They were guided by an interview protocol comprising of open-ended questions. Using open-ended questions allowed the flexibility to modify some questions based on the direction of the conversations as well as to use follow-up questions to gain further insights. While the interviews were structured to take a formal approach, the ground realities were more conducive to an informal approach than it was anticipated. In hindsight, this was an advantage because it allowed for a deeper and intimate understanding of the respondents' perspectives in their environment. Appendix F provides a copy of the official interview protocol.

The interviews were recorded using a cellphone then transcribed into a textual format using an online paid self-transcription software accessed at <https://transcribe.wreally.com/>. Except for a few instances when respondents used both Kiswahili and English to respond to questions, the majority used English. The use of mixed language did not have any detrimental impact on the quality of the interview²¹.

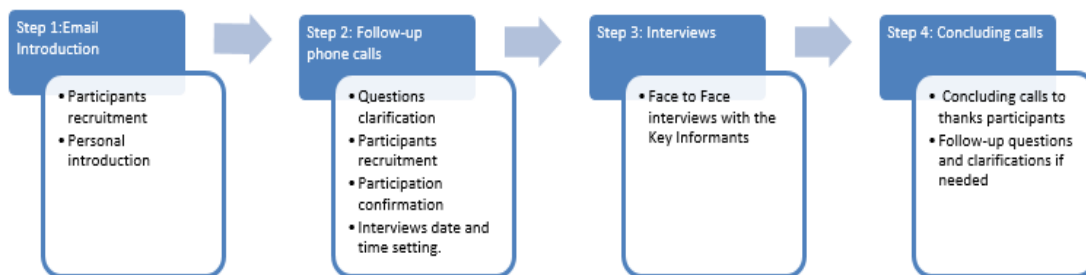


Figure 8: Interviews Recruitment Process

3.7 Data Coding and Analysis Procedures

In the grounded theory, data collection and analysis are interrelated processes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The analysis begins as soon as the first set of data is collected. It follows an iterative process where data from one source is constantly compared interactively and iteratively with data from another to direct and inform subsequent steps in qualitative research (Charmaz, 2006). The first step in data analysis is data coding²². Coding helps in breaking down bulk data into small segments for analysis and synthesis. It shapes the analytic framework which guides the analysis process that not only explains

²¹ I am fluent in both languages. As a matter of fact, the use of both languages created an intimate environment as it revealed some commonality between the researcher and the participants, thus increasing trust. The audio-recording of the interviews preserved and ensured credibility of the participants' response-authenticity.

²² "Coding means categorizing segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarizes and accounts for each piece of data" (Charmaz, 2006, p⁴³).

but also directs the consequent procedures in the research process. In the grounded theory approach where data are gathered from multiple sources such as documents, interviews, newspapers, videos, etc., each of these sources can be coded in the same way (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This means that a similar standardized coding framework can be used to code these sources and still maintain data credibility and validity.

According to Charmaz (2006), grounded theory coding consists of two phases: initial and focused coding. The initial coding²³ involves studying fragments of data closely to identify relevant information for further analysis. Focused coding²⁴, on the other hand, means “using most significant/or frequent earlier codes [initial codes] to sift through a large amount of data” (Charmaz, 2006 p 57). It is a directive, selective, and conceptual process that moves beyond initial coding to identify which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorize the data incisively and completely (Charmaz, 2006). During the initial and focused coding process, the study utilized two types of codes namely in-vivo and descriptive codes. In-Vivo codes refer to the participants’ own words, terms, phrases, and statements quoted as they were said. It helps in preserving the participants’ meanings of their experiences, views, and actions (Charmaz, 2006; Saldaña, 2016). Descriptive codes, on the other hand, provide a summary of the participants’ primary statements (Saldaña, 2016). This can be a single word or phrase condensing a sentence or paragraph/s to summarize the main topic of the excerpt.

²³ Initial coding can involve naming each word, line, or segments to mine early data for analytical ideas which can guide either further data collection or analysis. It helps in identifying preliminary themes and categories which can further be developed during advanced data analysis. It also helps in identifying gaps that exist within the data therefore advancing data collection to fill those gaps

²⁴ Focus coding on the other hand is an iterative process that requires comparing data to data and data to codes to refine them for further synthesis.

Data collection, coding, and analysis in this study followed Charmaz (2006) grounded theory framework summarized in figure 9 below.

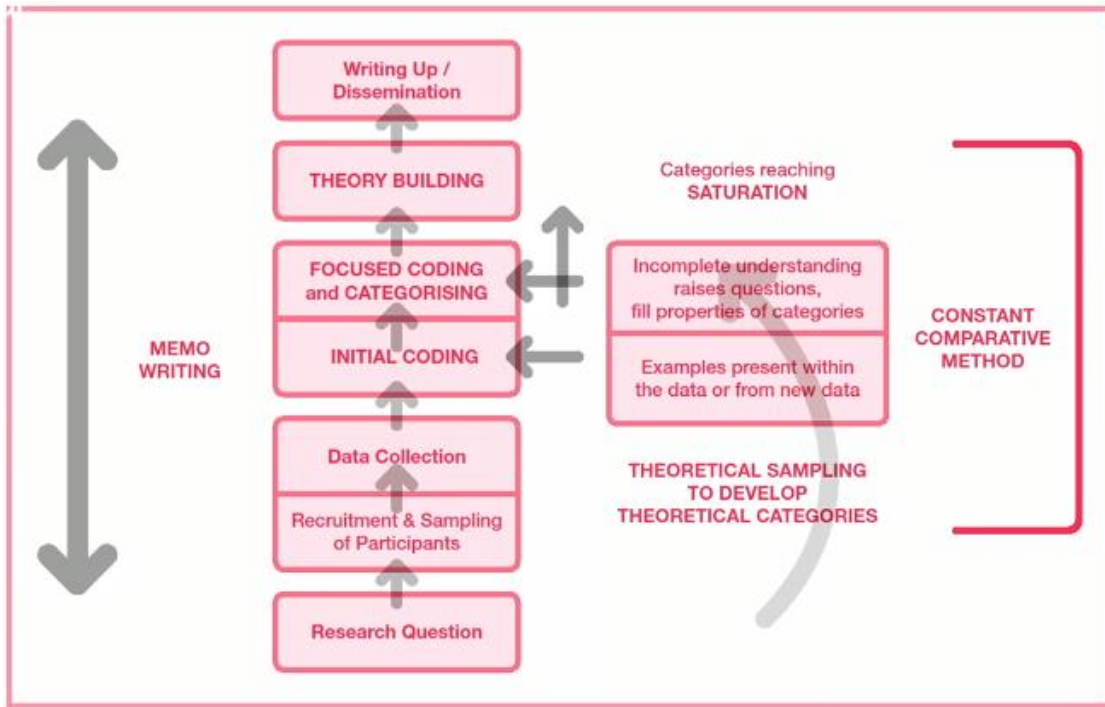


Figure 9: Grounded Theory Procedures (Charmaz, K.,2017)

3.8 Data Analysis: *Thematic Analysis*

This study employed a thematic analysis approach to analyze and synthesize data. This involved identifying common themes, patterns, and processes between data sets and between data and codes. The themes, patterns, and processes that emerged formed the framework for scripting analytical memos for data synthesis and interpretation. Figure 10 below offers a visual rendering of the data coding and analysis process.

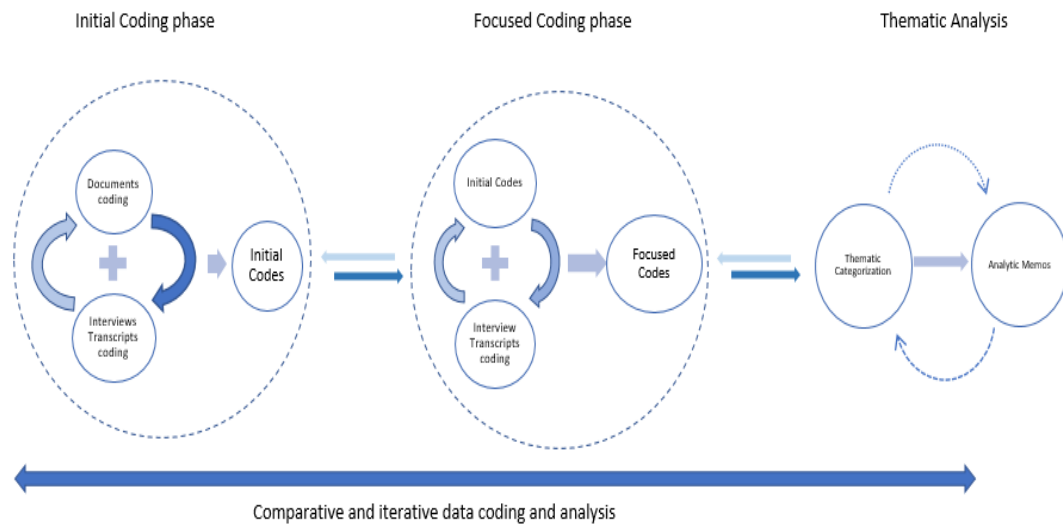


Figure 10: Data Coding and Analysis Process

3.9 Data Quality and Credibility

I used several measures to ensure data quality and credibility. First, I utilized a standardized interview protocol and coding instrument to improve credibility by ensuring consistency in information gathering and coding (Dupont et al., 2016). Second, I used a grounded theory approach which allowed constant interaction with data throughout the research process, therefore, assuring quality through constant revision and update of data. In addition, I also utilized a triangulation approach that involved gathering and comparing evidence from multiple sources (Yin, 2009). Lastly, whenever possible, I used the social validation technique to verify that the evidence gathered from the participants was correctly understood and interpreted. This involved checking for accuracy through follow-up questions with the interviewees whenever necessary.

3.10 Adjustment Based on Ground Realities

While this study anticipated conducting 37 in-depth interviews, the ground realities allowed only for 26. Two factors contributed to this discrepancy. First, the study

used the saturation point principle to determine the point at which further interviews would have resulted in no new information. This point was reached in the 20th interview. Saturation point in grounded theory is the point in data collection and analysis where gathering more data does not lead to new information or revelation relating to the phenomena under investigation. This point was determined on the basis that similar information kept emerging repeatedly among the interviewees and further interviews were more likely to provide similar information.

The second factor explaining the discrepancy was related to time and resources limitation. Some of the anticipated interviewees were not reachable once the study started. This significantly impacted the time and resources that were designated to this study because it required finding new participants. This was time and resource consuming. In addition, as a researcher, I had to deal with unexpected health issues which significantly reduced the amount of time that was designated to this study from 6 to 5 weeks.

3.11 Concluding Summary

This chapter has focused on outlining the steps taken in this study. It has detailed the research design, the data collection and analysis methods, and the means taken to ensure data quality and credibility. It has also outlined some of the challenges encountered in the field and how they were managed. The following chapters will focus on providing the findings from this study. Each of the remaining chapters will provide findings corresponding to each research question that this study was examining. The findings will then be woven together in a concluding chapter leading to policy recommendations and areas for further study.

Chapter 4

CIVIC IMAGINATION

Creativities and Collectivities in Urban Slum Culture

“I can describe Kibera as this: there are people who are born in Kibera. At the same time, there those who come to the city in search of jobs and they find themselves in Kibera. So, there is this story that when one comes from the countryside to Kibera, Kibera becomes his or her home. Kibera is like a community even though we are all different with different experiences. I can say Kibera is a 'cosmopolitan ghetto' that comprises diversity. To someone like me, there is something called 'urban slum culture' which is here in Kibera. It is the way people live. When you go outside, you perceive as if Kibera residents are struggling but these people have their jobs. That is what makes Kibera unique to me” (Mr. Otieno, research participant).

4.1 Introduction

Civic imagination is the “capacity to imagine alternatives to current social, political, or economic conditions” (Jenkins et al., 2016 p 300). It is the “ways in which people individually and collectively envision better political, social, and civic environment” (Baiocchi et al., 2014 p 54). It is a collective of human processes, activities, adaptations, and innovations which arise as enactments of alternative ways of living in

response to existing social realities. Using Kibera slum as a case study, this chapter focuses on underscoring a set of human activities that highlight civic imagination in a place otherwise understood by its social, economic, political, and environmental disillusionments. I will utilize both my personal accounts and evidence obtained from various documents and field visits to portray a set of well-crafted activities and frugal innovations that exemplify civic imagination in Kibera. This portfolio of human experiments will set the ground for addressing the main research questions set forth in this dissertation.

4.2 ‘A Cosmopolitan Ghetto’

About two decades ago in 1997, I was a third-grade pupil at Christ the King primary school. The school was situated deep in the heart of Kibera, about thirty minutes’ walk from the homeless shelter for children where I was residing. The shelter was located in the slum. To get to and from school, the other boys from the shelter and I had to wake up at 5 am and start the trek by 5:30 to be in school no later than 6:15 am. I dreaded these morning treks for so many reasons! First, it was always dark which made it very difficult to see where and what we were stepping into. The hike to and from school involved traversing lowly built shanties, jumping over cesspools and climbing over garbage hills. We always had to be very careful because any miscalculation meant wading into an open sewer and spending the rest of the day in school stinking like a septic tank.

The second reason I dreaded these walks, especially the morning ones was because of the infamous ‘flying toilets’. There were very few public and private toilets in Kibera. To compensate for this, people used plastic or polythene bags to relieve themselves before throwing them away into the street or onto the roofs of nearby shanties. They were dubbed ‘flying toilets’ because, on any given moment, a plastic bag

filled with fecal waste could come flying through the air like a meteorite on a clear blue night sky. We had to be very careful walking to school in the wee hours of the morning lest we stepped on one of them or even worse, one came flying and landing on our heads.

The third reason these morning walks terrified me was for security reasons. It was all too common that on our way to school in the morning, we might encounter a mutilated dead body dumped along the narrow dirt trails meandering through the shanties. I recall many times we had to jump over the murder victims stretched across the trails with our eyes closed because we were too scared to look at them. Most of these corpses were the victims of violent robberies. As a result, I was always scared to travel in the dark anywhere in the slum and that is why we always traveled in groups. The fourth reason I despised the long treks to school was when it rained. The rain turned the dirt roads into a long stretch of thick stinking nasty sludge. It was a nightmare plodding in this mess to school during rainy days!

In early 2001, I graduated from Christ the King primary school, one of the few schools that served Kibera. After my graduation, I was accepted to an all-boys seminary for my high school education. I packed the few belongings I had and left the homeless shelter and Kibera with no intention of returning. Forward 15 years later. In 2015, after spending 10 years in the United States pursuing higher education, I finally returned to Kenya to visit my family. One of the priorities I had after reuniting with my family was to visit Kibera again partly to see how the place had changed since the last time I was there in early 2000 and partly to explore the state of the 'flying toilets'. I was starting my first year of a doctoral degree at the University of Delaware at the time and was struggling to put my thoughts together on what I really wanted to do. While my orientation was towards exploring issues related to urban poverty and collective

creativity, I had no sense of direction. So, my visit to Kibera was also to search for ideas worthy of dissertation research.

A few days after my arrival in Kenya, I found myself tucked in between five passengers on a squeaking back seat of a matatu (minibus) headed to Kibera. The bleak memories of my early life there were still fresh in my mind. I had an image of Kibera in which I was expecting to see a protracted line of ‘flying toilets’ spreading across and along the dirt trails. In preparation for such occurrence, I had put on heavy tall boots. I was not carrying anything of value because I was afraid that I was going to get mugged, just like the old days.

However, when I got to Kibera, instead of a prolonged line of ‘flying toilets’ along the dirt roads traversing the corroded shanties, I discovered dozens of public and community-sponsored toilets and bathrooms spread across the slum. I found dozens of community-operated bio-centers. These are sanitary blocks that use bio-digester systems to treat waste to produce biogas that the community then uses for various purposes. The community had found innovative ways of transforming human waste into gas for energy and fertilizer for various purposes, and liquid waste into treated clean water as one person explained to me. These bio-centers served multiple purposes beyond treating human waste. They created opportunities for economic stability through employment, environmental sustainability through waste clearance, and social and political stability by providing venues for various social activities that brought the community together.

In places where I was expecting to be robbed or attacked, I found an established network of digital policing. People had found a way to use the widely available and accessible mobile phone technology to create an online platform of information detailing the security of various locations in Kibera. The community constantly updated this system thus providing accurate security information to the public. The system also served



Image 3: Left: Water ATM in Mathare Slum (UNFCC/Chris McMorro); Top right: Aerial water system in Kibera (Daniel Wesangula); Bottom right: Water ATM in Mathare Slum (Grundofs)

Another discovery I found was extensive community mapping. For a long time, Kibera as a community was not recognized in the official government maps. This meant that when the government was planning and distributing public goods and services, Kibera was left out of these benefits. As some of the individuals I interviewed noted, Kibera was considered a blank space in the official government maps which only became important during political seasons due to its rich repertoire of young energetic voters. However, in late 2009, a group of youths from Kibera, realizing that their community was considered a blank spot on official maps, undertook the task of mapping their community. Utilizing freely accessible technology such as the Openstreet Mapping System, they created the first free and open digital map of their community²⁵. Using feedback from the residents, the group aggregated various resources available in Kibera

²⁵ <http://mapkibera.org/>

in one open free interactive system that the locals could access. This system has now become a vital information and awareness mobilization tool for the inhabitants of Kibera.

Additionally, the residents have also created a plethora of social organizations that focus on mobilizing information. Organizations such as Habari Kibera²⁶, Voice of Kibera, Humans of Kibera²⁷, Pamoja FM²⁸, and MapKibera among others focus on mobilizing awareness of local issues that impact the community's social, economic, political, and environmental development. The two images below are examples of the efforts of the community to mobilize information. The first image shows the distribution of schools in Kibera based on their location, type, and sponsorship type. The second image shows the impact of recent demolitions in Kibera on local schools. It highlights which schools were relocated and where they were relocated to as a result of these demolitions. The information in these images is gathered and aggregated by the community itself in an effort to document and share the available resources as well as how the community is changing.

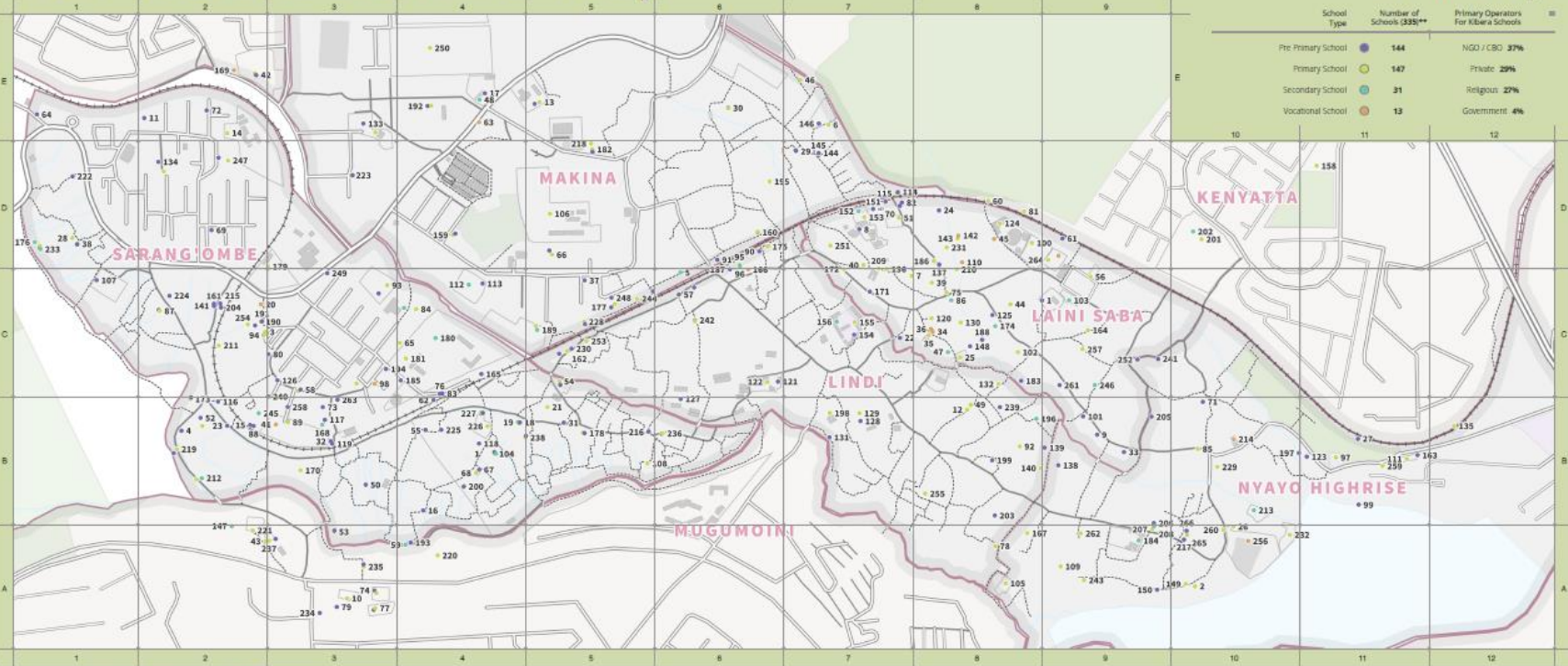
²⁶ <http://habarikibra.co.ke/>

²⁷ <http://humansofkibera.tumblr.com/>

²⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/pamojafm/>

MAP KIBERA KIBERA Schools Map

www.openschoolskenya.org
Nairobi, Kenya



School Type	Number of Schools (2018)**	Primary Operators For Kibera Schools
Pre Primary School	144	NGO / CBO 37%
Primary School	147	Private 29%
Secondary School	31	Religious 27%
Vocational School	13	Government 4%

This map was produced by Map Kibera Trust in a citizen-led survey of schools. It was developed in collaboration with a website containing up-to-date school information in much higher detail than could be included in this version. Please see www.openschoolskenya.org.

The map creation process started with research conducted with parents, teachers, school administrators and officials. The team then went door-to-door to each school speaking to school leaders and teachers and collecting photographs, survey data, and GPS locations of each school. This data is based on school self-reporting. We hope this map will serve as the beginning of a discussion on improving education in Kibera among all stakeholders. The website also contains schools data from other sources for comparison (both an Open Data Kit map, and an extensive additional data set to include. Above all this is an open community resource.

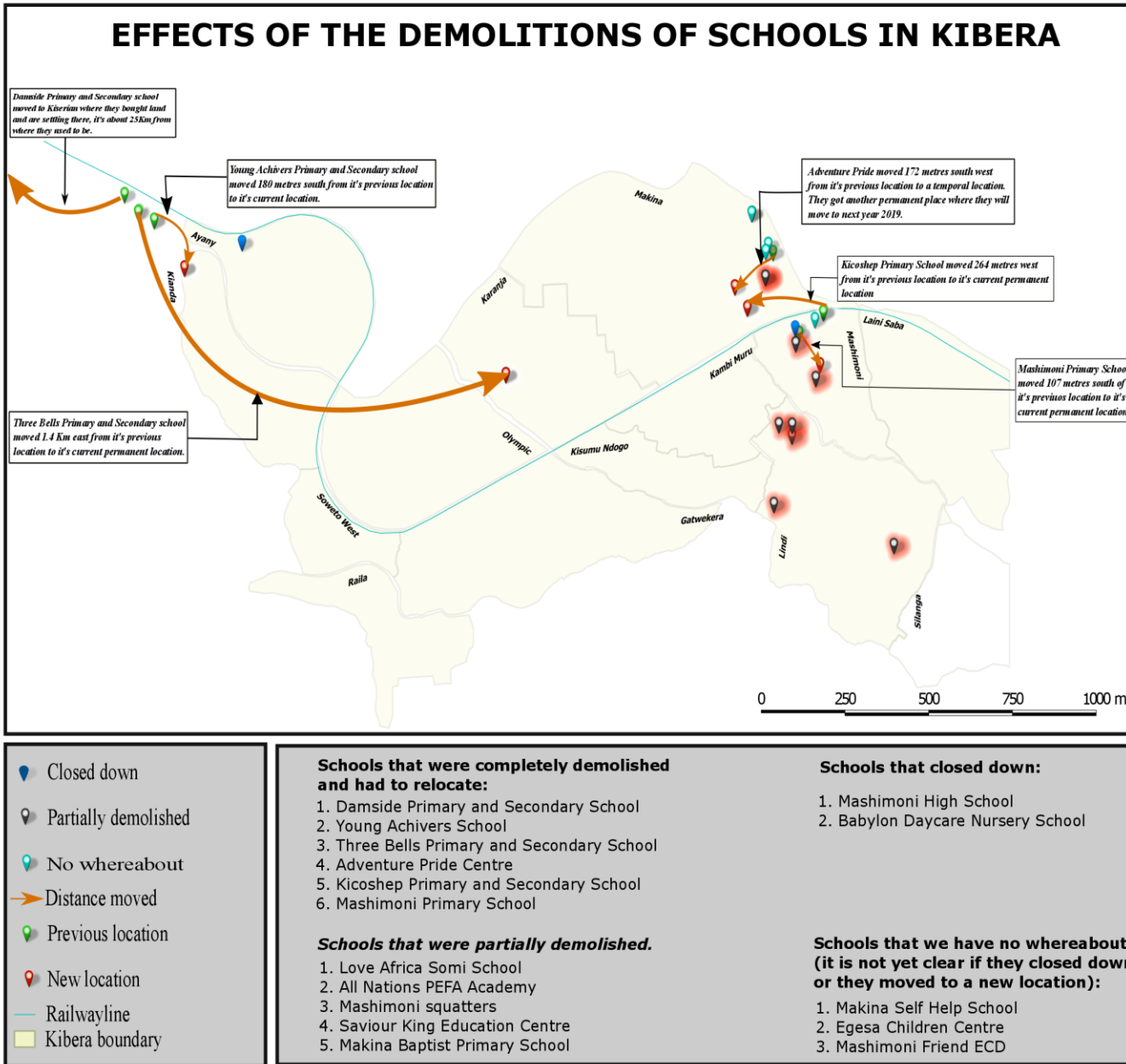
With the advent of Free Primary Education in Kenya, public schools in the areas were reported to have become overcrowded. This project found that the four public primary schools within the borders of the Kibera slum average 100 students per teacher. School leaders and teachers at other schools in Kibera noted that they address this overflow averaging 20 students per teacher, but they often operate without resources other than school fees charges. Many parents are unable to pay these fees, however, leading to a shortage of basic supplies and textbooks.

Total number of students in Kibera 34,840*
Students attending government schools 27%*
% of schools considered informal 81%
Average school size 179 students
Schools with reliable electricity 28%

* Includes informal schools outside the boundaries of Kibera, leaving both side and surrounding areas.
 ** Includes all schools in Kibera, including government primary, secondary, and other schools, as well as informal schools, even if they are not open.
 *** Includes all schools in Kibera, including government primary, secondary, and other schools, as well as informal schools, even if they are not open.
 **** Includes all schools in Kibera, including government primary, secondary, and other schools, as well as informal schools, even if they are not open.

PRE PRIMARY SCHOOLS				PRIMARY SCHOOLS				SECONDARY SCHOOLS				VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS			
1 ABC Academy	2 ABC Academy	3 ABC Academy	4 ABC Academy	1 ABC Academy	2 ABC Academy	3 ABC Academy	4 ABC Academy	1 ABC Academy	2 ABC Academy	3 ABC Academy	4 ABC Academy	1 ABC Academy	2 ABC Academy	3 ABC Academy	4 ABC Academy

Figure 12: Schools Map (MapKibera.org)



<http://www.mapkibera.org/>

More stories:
 Kibera Residents wake up to Demolitions
https://youtu.be/dN3Z_frX4Q
 More Affected Residents Speak Over Demolition
<https://youtu.be/bSulUnVwxUk>
 Railway Demolition-Kibera
<https://youtu.be/WC6OnYjHMo>
 Kibera Road Link: Three months after demolitions
https://youtu.be/pr_usRujZsQ
<http://blog.voiceofkibera.org/?p=801>
 Videos and blog courtesy of Kibera News Network and Voice of Kibera

Map produced by Map Kibera Trust
 Map design by Zacharia Muindi
 Created: 07/11/2018
 Data: OpenStreetMap contributors, ODBL
 Contact: contact@mapkibera.org

Figure 13: Impact of Recent Demolitions in Kibera (www.mapkibera.org/blog/)

My return to Kibera was filled with anticipations of the bleak images of struggle and despair just as I had left it. Even though I had done some research before traveling back just to see how the slum I used to know had transformed within a period of two decades, much of the information I gathered had portrayed Kibera as a labyrinth of social, economic, political, and environmental decay. Therefore, I was not expecting too much other than what the YouTube videos, tourists' blogs, and newspapers' reports had painted into my mind; eye-searing misery. Instead, what I found became a source of remarkable inspiration to me! The creative social enterprise emerging and thriving in such vulnerabilities aroused my curiosity to want to learn more about what has inspired such unique social experimentations. This became part of my dissertation endeavors to unearth the untold truth about human resilience coming from the most broken of places!

The examples of innovative adaptations highlighted above exemplify what this dissertation terms as civic imagination, a set of creative alternatives that individuals or groups employ to address common threats in the face of precarity. A review of existing documents cataloging these innovations in Kibera revealed that local grassroots organizations have been at the core of these innovative adaptations and experimentations. For example, an analysis of aggregate data from OpenschoolsKenya.org detailed that currently, there are about 359 formal and informal schools in Kibera providing primary, secondary, and vocational education. Compared to early 2000 when I was last in Kibera, this number of academic institutions had more than quadrupled in a period of fewer than two decades.

Further analysis of this data exposed even more surprising news. Of the 359 schools in Kibera, 99 of them are sponsored and operated by local community-based organizations (CBOs), 96 of them are run by local religious institutions, and 92 are privately operated. The table below dissects this analysis. What is even more interesting

is the level of government involvement in the provision of education in Kibera. Of the 359 schools, only 13 of them are government-sponsored and about 3 are operated by international NGOs according to reviewed data.

Sponsors	Numbers of Schools	Number of Students	Number of Teachers
Religious Institutions	96	12065	579
Community-Based Organizations	99	15374	664
NGOs	17	1685	95
Government	13	14260	328
International NGOs	3	732	22
NGO/CBO	3	762	38
Private	92	8200	394
Unknown	8	9	167

A review of another dataset from MapKibera.org²⁹ revealed that there are at least 216 healthcare institutions spread across Kibera. These institutions include hospitals, pharmacies, and dispensaries. In early 2000, the number of healthcare facilities in Kibera was less than half this number.

This combined set of data underscores one major point that Suttles (1968) makes: when viewed from outside, the residents of the slums appear disorganized and in dire need of aid. However, when seen from inside, they are intricately organized according to their own standards and are fairly insistent on finding inventive ways to create alternatives to the realities presented by their unforgiving environment.

4.3 State of Grassroots Organizations

There is a scholarly consensus among the scholars of social movements that social organizations are vital instruments in ensuring and enhancing the stability and

²⁹ <http://mapkibera.org/theme>

sustainability of a community (Coleman, 1990; Fox, 1996a; Putnam, 2000). Social movements emerge for all sorts of reasons and purposes. For example, they can arise for one or all of the following reasons

1. To stimulate mass arousal in response to social, political, and economic disillusionment.
2. To either advance, protect, or protest certain social order such as class identity.
3. To mobilize certain beliefs and ideologies such as religious or political agendas.
4. To transform society through changing social values and developing alternative lifestyles (Scott, 1990).

Less underscored however is the idea that social groups are also an expressive articulation of individual and collective ingenuity particularly in places of marginalization. They highlight how individual/s creatively envision, conceive, and model solutions to their common threats by forming collectivities. Between 2000 and 2010, the total number of grassroots organizations in Kibera more than doubled from 31% to 69%. Different studies conducted in Kibera revealed that there are at least over 100 grassroots organizations working in Kibera (Ochieng' & Matheka, 2009). Most of these groups are hybrid organizations pioneered by residents to provide diversified services and resources.

There is a consensus that stable and reliable housing as a basic human need is a critical element for social stability. However, what the observations in this study exposed is that the elements that constitute stable and reliable housing are not universal. While to the mainstream society the housing conditions in the slums present an image contrary to what is considered as stable and reliable, in the case of Kibera, the data analyzed revealed that while housing was a concern, it was not on the top of the list. For example, the photo below is a home of one of the residents of Kibera seen during the field visits. As I was observing the single room mud shack that the respondent shared with her husband, daughter, and granddaughter, all I saw was dire desperation. There was only one bed for four people which also served as a storage for clothes. Much of the belongings were hanging on the wall to create room for movement. My assumption as an outsider was that she needed a bigger house and I expected her to acknowledge this as she was discussing some of her challenges. However, after forty minutes of conversation, housing was not part of her problems. She had myriad challenges ranging from health to economic issues, but not housing.



Image 4: A Kibera resident's home during my field visit (Edwin, O., 2018)

4.4 Strengths from Broken Places

It is customary to assume that places like Kibera are breeding environments for social, economic, political, and environmental vices. While there is undeniable evidence of the human struggle for survival, there is also an overwhelming proof of alternative adaptations that have surfaced out of human ingenuity and creativity. A closer look at the day to day life of Kibera residents reveals a society that is in a constant reconstruction for betterment as images below pinpoint. It is easy to dismiss this creative reconstruction when we look at a place like Kibera from afar through the neoliberal telescopes. However, when we zoom in and look at life through the kaleidoscope of those living it, we are “made all the more aware of how our own ideals have blinded us to the practicality of the slum residents” (Suttles, 1968 p 12).



Image 5: People engaging in various local businesses



Image 6: Top left: two gentle transporting about 250kg bags of cement; top right, a woman selling peanuts and candies; bottom left, a marketplace along a railroad, bottom right, school children playing

The diverse creative scenarios presented above epitomize civic imagination, the practicality of the residents of slums to imagine and to create alternative adaptations in the face of desperation. Civic imagination is a central concept in the first research question which examines how this level of creativity and innovation surface in such broken places. To put it another way, the question at hand is an examination of how the building blocks organizations of an autonomous civil society in the slum emerge to highlight the practicality of the urban poor. It is imperative at this point to reiterate earlier notations that this study considers grassroots organizations as indicators of civic imagination. Thus noted, the question examines how the plethora of social organizations in Kibera emerged to exemplify individual/s and collective creativity, innovation, and resilience. The next chapter will solely focus on addressing this query.

4.5 Concluding Summary

The goal of this chapter was to briefly introduce and define the concept of civic imagination which is central to the first research question. It has also provided a plethora

of activities and transactions which demonstrate the existence of civic imagination in Kibera. I have utilized evidence from available documents and data gathered during my field visits to illustrate a repertoire of creative enterprises at the center of social reconstruction in Kibera. The goal was to provide evidence of human practicalities that arise from living in disenfranchised environments. Having done so, the next task is to examine numerous factors which have facilitated the advent of this set of alternative experimentations in Kibera. I reserve this task for the next chapter.

Chapter 5

STRENGTH FROM BROKEN PLACES

Understanding Civic Imagination in Urban Slum Culture

“Basically, I am a slum boy. I describe myself as a slum boy. That is what defines me” (Mr. Joshua, Interviewee).

“So, living in Kibera has given me power and the ability and happiness to strive and thrive and to look forward” (Mr. David, Interviewee).

“By understanding your environment, you can live with it, without understanding it, you cannot live with it” (Mr. Otieno, Interviewee).

5.1 Introduction

There is a strong theoretical and practical agreement among scholars that autonomous civil society organizations are critical to community development (Coleman, 1990; Fox, 1996a; Morrison, 1987; Putnam, 2000). However, little is known about how these movements arise and grow in marginalized places like Kibera. Focusing on evidence provided by individuals who have pioneered diverse social organizations, this chapter provides detailed accounts of diverse factors that facilitate the advent of autonomous civil society movements in disenfranchised communities. The set of

evidence presented below comes from various interviews and interactions with multiple grassroots organizations in Kibera.

This chapter responds to the first research question outlined in the table below. This question is accompanied by other exploratory queries that assisted in obtaining relevant information from the interviewees. In addition to the central question, I also highlight other relevant queries which although I considered them inconsequential during the data collection process, became vitally significant when I analyzed their responses in relation to the core query.

Research Question	Exploratory Question	Interview Questions	Concept examined
RQ 1: How do the building-block organizations of an autonomous civil society in the slums emerge?	<i>What factors facilitated the advent of these autonomous civil society organizations in Kibera?</i>	Can you briefly describe this organization? When was it formed? Why was it informed? Where did the inspiration to form this organization come from? In general, how would you describe this organization's mission, goals, objectives, and targets?	<i>Civic Imagination</i>
Other Relevant Questions			
People have different views about this community. In your own opinion as a resident, how would you describe this community?		In general, if you were given an opportunity to vacate Kibera for a better place, would you take the chance? Why or why not?	

5.2 Revisiting Civic Imagination

In chapter four, I introduced ‘civic imagination’³¹ as the central concept in the first research question. Civic imagination encompasses the individual/s and collective processes of (1) identifying common social problems and their solutions, (2) envisioning

³¹ “Civic imagination refers to the various mechanisms by which groups and individuals conceptualize the process of political change and civic transformation, including how they model what a better future might look like and the process by which change might take place, how they conceptualize themselves as agents capable of changing the world and often how they imagine equality before they have directly experienced it, how they develop social links within a larger collective/community and how they develop empathy for people whose experiences and perspectives are different than their own” (IHC, *ibid*).

better societies and environments, and (3) developing plans to turn those visions of a better future into a reality (Baiocchi et al., 2014; Jenkins et al., 2016). According to Jenkins, civic imagination is inspired by shared narratives and experiences of struggles, traumas, and sacrifices charged with the desire to take action toward change (Jenkins, 2016). It gives its possessor the capacity to envision a better society by transforming one's own experiences, struggles, and traumas into prospective thinking. An example of shared narratives of struggles that have inspired civic imagination is from a group of women I met shortly after visiting Kibera when conducting this study. These women are part of a community-based organization fighting the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS affected/infected families in Kibera since 2004. I will call this organization 'The Power Group'.

The Power Group is a hybrid organization that focuses on generating and sharing information related to HIV/AIDS, promoting economic empowerment, and providing holistic psychosocial support to women infected with HIV. The group was born out of desperation resulting from broad discrimination and stigmatization against the HIV/AIDS infected individuals in Kibera. Inspired by their collective experiences of struggles and traumas, these women were able to imagine a better alternative to their predicaments and those of others. In so doing, they were also able to not only conceive and model a solution to their situation, but also for the community in which they are a part of.

“The reason we started this group is because we were suffering as women with our children. When we started in 2004, no one wanted to associate with anyone with HIV. You had to deal with the stigma on your own with your family. That is why we decided to form this group. We wanted to educate people that being HIV infected is not the end of life. Life has to go on. We wanted people who have HIV or who have relatives with HIV to learn how to deal with it and how to show love to them. We wanted them to know that they did not have to run away from relatives with HIV, they just needed to show them passion and treat them with respect” (Group Member).

In addition to providing support to each other, they also reached out to educate the community about what it means to live with HIV/AIDs by sharing information about the disease to families around Kibera. Furthermore, they opened a daycare center for children and a tailoring school for girls who drop out of school early to empower them with self-sustaining skills. The members, in addition to empathizing with each other, they also empathized with those whose experiences are different from theirs, therefore, resounding a statement by Jenkins that to possess civic imagination, “You often have to have a sense of collectivity with the community you are part of. And you often have to have a sense of empathy for people whose experiences are different from your own” (Jenkins, 2016).

The story of The Power Group and other similar anecdotes that will be presented throughout this chapter highlight various processes and mechanisms by which individuals and groups conceptualize and model civic transformation in marginalized areas. These accounts typify civic imagination at work.

5.3 Studying Civic Imagination

To study civic imagination, scholars have often turned to social groups as points of reference³². For example, Baiocchi et al., point out that “civic imaginations come alive in groups. Voluntary groups are often explicitly inspired by the shared civic imaginations of their founders, and their mission statements, rules, and norms are themselves direct expressions of these imaginations (Baiocchi et al., 2014 p 23). Following this proposition, I used grassroots organizations as proxies for civic imagination in this study. The remainder of this chapter will solely focus on examining the sources of these movements and therefore the roots of civic imagination in Kibera. The chapter is guided by the following research question: How do the building-block organizations of an autonomous

³² See: (Baiocchi et al., 2014; Fox, 1996b; Krasny, Marianne E., Tidball, Keith G., 2015)

civil society in the slums emerge? To respond to this question, I primarily used data collected from in-depth interviews with people from Kibera who have pioneered local grassroots organizations. In addition, I utilized available documents³³ cataloging the state of grassroots organizations in Kibera as secondary sources of data.

5.4 Data Gathering and Presentation

To gather interview data, I spoke to various senior management level individuals from these organizations. A total of 26 (70%) of the projected 37 grassroots organizations participated in the process. The interviews took between 35 to 90 minutes. Because each of the 26 organizations which participated in this study engaged in diverse areas of service, I will utilize the term ‘hybrid grassroots organizations’ to capture the diversity in their service provision. In general, after reviewing their mission statements, their websites whenever available, and relevant articles and reports highlighting the impact of local organizations, I found that all these groups were involved in providing services and resources in two or more of the following areas; health and wellness, social and economic empowerment, environmental sustainability, education development, water and sanitation, and information mobilization.

To obtain the necessary information, I used a standardized protocol. It consisted of four main parts corresponding to each research question. The first part titled ‘General Information’ consisted of questions gathering the general demographic information of the participants. The purpose of this part was to create a rapport with the participants, situate

³³ A study conducted by Ochieng and Matheka in 2009 that provided a comprehensive record of organizations in Kibera (Ochieng and Matheka, 2009); Aggregate data from MapKibera.org and OpenschoolsKenya.org providing demographic information on grassroots movements in Kibera (MapKibera.org; Openschoolkenya.org); A review of local monthly online newspaper called Ghetto Mirror (Ghettomirror.co.ke) and other social media platforms such as Voice of Kibera (Voiceofkibera.org), Habari Kibera (Habarikibra.co.ke), Humans of Kibera, and Stories from Kibera (kiberastories.com).

them within the local context, and to understand their views of the local community and environment. The second part titled ‘Development of Local Grassroots Organizations’ was intended to gather information related to how local movements emerge and grow. This part corresponded with the first and second research questions and thus was critical in producing information needed to respond to these queries. The third section titled ‘Organizations Capacity and Stability’ corresponded to both the second and third research questions. The purpose of this section was to assess the sustainability of these movements and factors that either strengthen or weakens their ability. The fourth and last segment was for policy recommendations from the participants based on their experiences and local knowledge.

As I was gathering stories from various people in Kibera, it occurred to me that some of the stories these individuals were sharing with me were beyond what I had expected or prepared for in my framework for this study. Therefore, at the end of the interviews, I asked for recommendations from my interviewees about how to correctly and candidly present their stories and those of Kibera to the outside world. The recommendations I received from various respondents sum up to the following;

“We have seen many organizations and people coming here and getting information from us and then when they report it out there, they twist it to fit their narrative. Then others use those biased and misrepresented stories to judge us, to make policies that do not fit us. These are our stories! These are our experiences! You are here because you want to know about them. When you share them, tell them as we tell them to you”.

Following this advice, the findings presented here and henceforth in this study will rely heavily on the direct statements and anecdotes from the participants to preserve the true meanings of their experiences, views, and actions. I will later reconcile and articulate them within the theoretical principles guiding this study in the discussion section. Towards that end, I now shift to presenting the findings to the main research

question guiding this chapter. For the sake of confidentiality of the participants, I will only use their first or second names. In addition, I will use pseudonyms in lieu of the real names of their organizations.

5.5 Findings

After spending five weeks in Kibera studying factors that inspire civic imagination and therefore facilitate the advent of local grassroots movements, I found that these factors fall under two intersecting spectrums. On one spectrum, I found that people's awareness of the relationship between their personal experiences and other social experiences in society has been a critical driver to the emergence of many grassroots movements in Kibera. I will use the term 'sociological imagination'³⁴ to refer to this awareness. On the other spectrum, I found that individuals' awareness and understanding of their relationship with the physical environment in which they live has also contributed tremendously towards the development of local grassroots collectivities. I will use the term 'spatial imagination'³⁵ to refer to this awareness. It is worth to note that in this work, I use the terms 'sociological imagination' and 'spatial imagination' as simple concepts to summarize my observations. I do not use them as theoretical propositions or arguments as they have been used in other works particularly in the fields of sociology and geography.

To be precise, I summarize my observations as follows: Civic imagination (C^I) which embodies a collection of human processes, activities, adaptations, and innovations that surface as enactments of alternative ways of living in response to existing social

³⁴ Mills, C. W. (1967). *The sociological imagination*. London; New York: Oxford University Press.

³⁵ Gieseking, J. J., Mangold, W., Katz, C., Low, S. M., & Saegert, S. (2014). *The people, place, and space reader*

realities, is a function of both the sociological imagination (Soⁱ) and spatial imaginations (Spⁱ). I have grouped the findings into two categories reflecting these two spectrums of imaginations.

5.5.1 Sociological Imagination

The sociological imagination is the awareness of the relationship between personal experiences and the broader collective experiences of a society (Mills, 1967). It allows individuals to compare personal biographies to larger social situations and histories and to connect “personal troubles to public issues” (Gieseeking, Mangold, Katz, Low, & Saegert, 2014 pp 357-360). In other words, it is the capacity to shift from and between individuals’ crises to comparative assessment of broader social issues. The sociological imagination is a conceptual tool that allows individuals to make sense of their own experiences parallel to those of others and in so doing, they acquire new ways of thinking, knowing, and acting (Mills, 1967 pp 1-5).

In this study, I discovered that many local organizations that I interviewed were grounded on individuals’ personal experiences in relation to societal biographies. When I asked the interviewees, what inspired or motivated them to form their organizations, there was a common theme showing that these groups emerged because of the capacity of their pioneers to compare and to find connections between and among their personal accounts with those of the wider society. Below I present four tales that typify this comparative gesture which is central to sociological imagination and consequently activation of civic imagination.

5.5.2 A Tale of Four Heroes

The story of Ms. Adhiambo

I start this part with the story of Ms. Adhiambo. She is the founder of a community-based organization that I will call Adhiambo's HIV/AIDS Support Initiative. This is a grassroots movement that supports women infected with HIV/AIDS in Kibera. It was established in 2005 with the aim of promoting a positive living through behavior change communication among HIV infected/ affected women living in the Kibera community. It is a hybrid organization that provides holistic psychosocial support to women diagnosed with HIV/AIDS and their children. The organization offers psychological and emotional support, health and nutrition awareness, and economic empowerment. The group also advocates for the rights as well as easy and equal access to affordable treatment for those diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.

When I met Ms. Adhiambo at her office on June 26, 2018, she was sitting quietly in a slightly dark corner munching her lunch. It was a mildly hot day with the remnants of showers from the previous week still lingering in the afternoon air. Adjacent to her office were few kiosks and a hair salon from which loud music echoed through the still afternoon air. Normally, I was nervous every time I was meeting my interviewees, and this was no exception. However, the welcoming smile on her face and her soft response when my field contact and I greeted her assured me that I was in a friendly environment. There was something comforting in her smile that put me at ease! From the look around in her office which also served as a kiosk for artifacts handmade from beads, wood, and leather, I wondered what impact such a small organization really has in such a large slum as Kibera. However, as the old saying goes, do not judge a book!



Image 7: Handmade artifacts for sale at Adhiambo's HIV/AIDS Support Initiative

After my contact introduced me and I presented my objectives to Ms. Adhiambo, she agreed to participate in the interview with a condition that I present her story as truthfully and as candidly as she had presented it to me. I asked her to share with me what inspired her to start her organization. This is what she had to say;

“Talking through experience, I am a single mother. I was once married then divorced immediately after we came to know our HIV status. When I found out that I was HIV infected, I had already lost two children through HIV without knowing. Then life became too tough for me. The battle was too tough trying to figure out things at the same time my marriage was not peaceful. I was a very confused woman then because I am an orphan, and here I was now with a condition that is scary.

I was reflecting on our lives and then I reminded myself that I am an orphan, I don't have anywhere to run to, anyone to run to. It is all about me. Despite all the challenges I am facing, it's only me and me alone. The children are here. They are not schooling. I am supposed to take care of my health; I don't know how! I am jobless. So, I told myself that if it is about medication, I will take action to get on treatment right away if that is what can make me live. It was until one day I lost my last born. We buried the boy. Then I came back to start life afresh because he [her husband] had already abandoned us, and I was a single mother.

I then joined a psycho-social support group where women like me who were HIV positive were meeting. From there I enrolled to go for training in a group presentation and then advocacy training. By the time I was completing this training, it was when I felt the urge to start something that might target women who were suffering lonely like I was. So, that is how I started Kibera HIV/AIDS Support Initiative Programme”.

Ms. Adhiambo went on to describe her traumatic experiences as a single mother struggling to raise her two girls and two boys in Kibera single-handedly. She did not have a job; but through a friend, she was able to obtain 200 Kenyan shillings (\$ 2) to start a small grocery business from which she saved little by little to take her children back to school. There was great sadness behind her glittering eyes as she softly but candidly shared her story with me. The intriguing thing was that this was the kind of sadness that propels rather than dispel. The gentle smile on her face between the deep breaths as she was talking about her pains and losses highlighted the strength of her triumph! Ms. Adhiambo started her organization to create an environment for women like her to talk and share their experiences. She notes, “this is a kind of support group where people with a common goal meet together to share their life experiences and challenges in life in order to come up with coping strategies and positive living”.

Through her intimate experiences as someone living with HIV/AIDS in Kibera, she knew and understood the cultural, social, and economic struggles that people with her condition especially women and children go through daily. She was able to look at her own struggles in relation to those of others in the community who were in the same predicament as she was and by doing so, she was able to understand the community in which she was living in. This understanding motivated and inspired her to start an organization to support individuals suffering from a similar condition. “I felt the urge to start something that might target women who were suffering lonely like I was”, she said. Ms. Adhiambo used her painful experiences as a conceptual framework which allowed

her to make sense of the experiences of other people parallel to her own. By so doing, she acquired a new way of thinking, knowing, and acting. This gave her an opportunity to view her crisis as an opportunity to “start afresh” and to think of alternative ways of addressing the issues she was facing as well as those of the community she is part of.

The story of Ms. Pascalia

The first thing I noticed when I asked Ms. Pascalia what motivated her to start her organization which I will call Pascalia’s Rescue Center for children in Kibera was the soft bitterness in her voice. Between her pauses and deep breaths, I could see the pain drawn on her face as she struggled to narrate her experiences. In her eyes, I saw the fragments of her past pain still lingering but restrained by the passion shining through the rest of her face. Even though she tried to be strong and to hold back her emotions throughout the interview, she eventually broke down in tears. As she began talking about her struggles raising her own children prior to her starting this organization. And through the silvery teardrops that carried so much of her memories, I saw her resilience so vividly pronounced between the fine lines of hope gracing her face.

Ms. Pascalia started her organization in 2000 with the purpose of providing shelter, basic education, and food to vulnerable children in Kibera. The organization serves over 138 youngsters from various backgrounds and ages and focuses on providing a stable environment for holistic development. When I asked her, what inspired her to start this organization, her response was;

“I really love children. My passion for children came through what my children went through. I can say my children went through so much. Their rights were abused even when I was married. It was so difficult for me to be a stable mother. But it all came through when my husband died, and I had to bring my children up by myself. They went through so much. It forced me to have an interest in learning more about children’s rights.

When I started this organization, it was just because of my children. I had that bitterness. All my children were suffering while other children seemed to be okay. My children were not going to school. I was struggling to support my family single-handedly. At the time, I was more like a street woman³⁶ with my children. I was collecting food from the garbage to feed my children. It was so miserable for me [sobbing]. We lived like that. But then I started seeing myself as being a product of God. I could now imagine my children going to school. I started appreciating things that God can do and how things can turn out to be. When I realized that I was no longer suffering like I was before, I started asking God why other children should suffer. At that time, I did not have much to give my own children and they were asking me why I should give to other children. However, for me, I knew that God had given me passion.

I just started to feel compelled to be with children, to help them in the least way I could even though I had limited resources. I realized that I was committed to helping them. And when I was going down because of this burden to help children who were suffering, at that moment, I remembered every garbage area where these children were getting their food from and how much waste matter was in those garbage areas. Sometimes there was a dead body of a child dumped in these garbage areas. It reminded me that I started like that, collecting food from garbage areas. Soon, I found myself working with children. So, I started like that and I remember in 2000, I was still working with children. In 2003, I realized that I wanted to register this group”.

This was a very difficult interview for me because it was also a story of my life! I could relate to her accounts in every aspect. Her story, just like that of Ms. Adhiambo above, is an account of victory amidst struggles and pain. Like Ms. Adhiambo, Ms. Pascalia's personal encounters gave her the ability and the courage to relate to others in similar predicaments. Having been homeless herself and having fed her own children from garbage leftovers, she was able to intimately understand the situation of many homeless children in Kibera. It was this understanding which aroused her passion to turn her bitterness into a movement that would transform the lives of over 138 desperate

³⁶ Street-woman is a common phrase used to refer to homeless women

children which her organization has been able to serve to date. “When I started this school, I started with children who were not going to school. Children who I knew that there were no people taking care of them. I started with them. I started a daycare also. I worked with young girls who were giving birth at an early age. I would take care of their children and they would go to work”.

Ms. Pascalia provides education, nutrition, and shelter to desperate children in Kibera. She also provides child daycare services for girls who give birth at an early age. In addition to these services, her organization also advocates for the rights of local children through a partnership with local authorities and other community organizations. As she points out above, she started her organization to take care of the needy and desperate children of Kibera. Indeed, from the bright faces of many children she has and is still transforming (as the photos below demonstrate), I could see her work shining through!



Image 8: Ms. Pascalia's Rescue Center

The story of Mr. Joshwa

A common question I asked my interviewees was how they would describe Kibera as residents of this community. With my mind shaped by much of the mainstream media and literature that articulate slums as places of social, political, economic, and environmental discontentment, I assumed that Mr. Joshwa, my first interviewee, would affirm the image of slums as places of decay through his response. However, when I asked him to describe Kibera, his response enthralled me!

“I see this community as very industrious in terms of creativity and innovation because you know when you live in an environment where you lack something, you create a new way of meeting that need. So, I think the environment has pushed people, especially young people to move out of their comfort zone to find a way to survive. For instance, if your house lacks electricity, how can you build houses that are well lit and that can provide you with enough light? Or perhaps you lack water, how do you take advantage of handcarts to distribute water to the families in Kibera? So, this has led to building an entrepreneurial community. It is a place that I would say is a one-store community. In as much as people associate Kibera with crime and other negativities, I see a very beautiful, creative, talented, and inventive community whereby if it is harnessed, it can upscale the development and it can create a real source of change”.

The idea of a slum arouses many bleak images, but the image of creativity and innovation is not a common one. This has led to the typical assumptions that the residents of slums are regressive uncreative illiterates wallowing in a deep miasma of despair. However, Mr. Joshwa offers an account contrary to this traditional one. Pushed by the harsh reality of growing up in a slum, he had nothing left but his wits, guts, and imagination to guide him through the complex juxtaposition of his early childhood traumas. He grew up in a 12 by 10 shanty in Kibera with his mother and seven siblings. The room, as he puts it, acted as the living room, kitchen, and bedroom. However, such limitations did not deter him from nurturing his inspiration and aspiration of becoming an

entrepreneur giving back to the community. In describing his childhood experiences, Mr. Joshwa, in his gentle but timid voice told me this;

“It had challenges, but I think it is also full of beautiful memories because growing up in a big family and living with limitations creates family bonding because you learn the art of sharing whatever little you have. You see, the rooms in Kibera are single rooms. You have a family of seven living in a 12 by 10 single room that was acting as the bedroom, the living room, and the kitchen. I would say that kind of environment was inconvenient, but it also brought us together as a family. If you look at the surrounding, we had playfields but sometimes there were trash or broken bottles or pieces of metals which were harmful and sometimes you would get into accidents. But I think we were so much into that environment that it never seemed like we were missing anything. We would go to the nearby river to wash our clothes and you would find someone on the other side of the river peeing into the river.

Today, I look at what we used to be, and I am surprised. We never got sick because we washed our clothes in a polluted river or because we drank contaminated water! The environment was not that conducive; however, we were very happy. So, I would say living in Kibera had a lot of challenges. As you know, it is an overcrowded place, lacks water and sanitation, no lights, and sometimes no food. But in the long run, I think we lived a very satisfying life with what we had because we had lots of fun playing together and going to Sunday school and singing together”.

Mr. Joshwa is the founder of a local hybrid organization that I will call Joshwa’s Community Empowerment Project. It works with youths and women in Kibera to promote social, economic, and environmental development and sustainability. Its main aim is to create a platform for sustainable development in the community and to harness talents and locally available resources to generate opportunities for economic empowerment. In addition to promoting development in the community, the group also offers educational scholarships to promote literacy among children and youths. This organization began in 2007 as a waste collection movement to create employment opportunities. Using their talents and skills, the members would then turn the collected

waste into products and artifacts for sale to generate income for members as well as for the community through various academic scholarships and business seed capital. The group has three major programs focusing on education promotion, environmental sustainability, and economic empowerment.

When I asked Mr. Joshwa, what inspired him to start this organization, he responded as follows;

“I think all these are my childhood inspiration. I really struggled to go to school. I can’t remember how many times I missed school, exams, and school events because my parents could not afford it. How many times I had no shoes to wear during Christmas. I had my first pair of shoes at 11 or 12 years old. I experienced a hard time growing up in Kibera. Most of my age-mates today are dead and most of the females are frustrated. So, because I got an opportunity to get a quality education, I wanted to go and give back to my community. I wanted to do something that can create sustainable development”.

The story of Mr. Joshwa differs from both the stories of Ms. Adhiambo and Ms. Pascalia. However, like both women, Mr. Joshwa desire and inspiration to start his organization were rooted in his capacity to compare his own experiences with those of his age mates. His experiences growing up with limited means and resources allowed him to see the needs in the community. This motivated him to strive towards creating innovative opportunities to access the resources that he lacked growing up in Kibera. Like Ms. Adhiambo and Ms. Pascalia, Mr. Joshwa’s personal experiences living in poverty became his conceptual framework through which he was able to compare his experiences with those of others and in so doing, he found a new way to address the broader social issues through his organization.

The story of Mr. Joseph

It was on a Tuesday morning at 11:15 am in June of 2018 when I found myself reminiscing on the good old times. I was standing next to a heap of sand for sale supporting myself against an electric pole next to Olympic primary school, one of the few government schools serving Kibera. I was waiting for Mr. Joseph, one of my interviewees to meet me for an interview. We had spoken over the phone thirty minutes earlier and he had directed me to meet him next to Olympic Primary School's gate at 11 am. We had not met each other in person before, so, I had no idea who I was meeting or what he looked like. I was also certain that he was in the same predicament. I kept glancing at my phone while taking in the hectic street-life going on around me. I could not believe that over two decades ago, I was a young, pot-bellied, bow-legged little rascal residing in a homeless shelter just a block from where I was standing that morning. This brought back a lot of memories of my younger life playing soccer across the streets that back then, were nothing but deserted dirt roads with no promise of future pavement. However, a little over two decades later, much had changed! The streets that were once dirt roads dotted with mud shanties were now well-crafted roads bustling with businesses and lives of their own!



Image 9: Lemule Rd. Kibera, June 2018

It was around 11:30 am when Mr. Joseph approached me and after a brief introduction, he directed me to follow him to his office which was just a few steps from where I was standing. His office was a small room with several old dusty computers lined up on plywood desks pressed against the wall, a small bookshelf stacked with books, with his desk facing the door. “When I started this organization, I had only one computer and this desk,” he said proudly placing his hands gently on his desk after giving me a chair to sit opposite him. After giving me an analytical look with his sharp but curious eyes, he welcomed me to his office which, as he would later tell me, was also a computer college that was bridging the internet divide in Kibera. The college, which I will refer to as Joseph’s Computer College was providing basic computer skills and job training for students and youths in Kibera who were aspiring to seek employment in the formal sector or who were intending to start their own businesses.



Image 10: Mr. Joseph’s office and Computer College along Lemule Rd. Kibera

Mr. Joseph, just like many residents of Kibera, moved to Nairobi from his rural home in Nyanza Province, Western Kenya in search of green pasture in the city.

However, upon arriving in Nairobi, he found out that the scintillating image of a city of opportunities was nothing but an illusion. With his dreams shattered by the harsh realities in the city, he found himself traversing the mud shanties in Kibera, a place that would become his home. Despite having the option to go back to the countryside, he opted to stay in Kibera instead because he saw the potential that this community exhibited. While he acknowledged that life in Kibera was not an easy one, he was quick to point out that it was his struggles living in Kibera and the struggles of other people he met here which inspired him to start his organization.

“I came to Kibera in 1990 to look for a green pasture in Nairobi but when I came here, everything was just the same - people were suffering. I wondered what I could do to improve not only my life but also those of others. I was struggling, and I thought of an organization, a movement to mobilize people so that they could change their lives. There was a lot of frustration from people here. So, I resigned from my job and started this organization. I spoke to and engaged with few like-minded people who had a vision like me and we started this program first as a community-based organization and a year later we upgraded it into an NGO. As a community-based organization (CBO) you only cater to a small region, but we thought that we needed to have a larger impact not only in Kibera but also outside Kibera. So, we sat down to look for a project to alleviate poverty.

Some of the projects we started were information and communication technology (ICT) training because we wanted to bridge the digital divide between Kibera and the outside world because the people of Kibera are very bright people. In fact, this is where you find the brightest people in Kenya. People are frustrated with life here, however, upstairs - [referring to mental creativity] - they are ok. So, we wanted to help them make a change not to see themselves as helpless Kibereans. We wanted them to believe that they can rise above the poverty and negative stereotypes associated with Kibera. We have other projects that train people on jewelry making out of bones and then we look for internal and external markets for them. This helps them plan and feed their families. We also take care of women with HIV/AIDs. We empower them to start income-generating projects to support themselves. Some of our graduates have their own businesses here and others have gotten employment”.

Mr. Joseph founded Joseph's Computer College in 2007 to promote social and economic empowerment in Kibera. Its primary goal is to bridge the information gap by providing training to residents on how to access and use the internet and computers. Mr. Joseph believed that by training residents on how to access the internet, they would be able to connect with the outside world as well as access information resources that otherwise would be unavailable to them! "Kibera people have a lot of potentials! Out of training here, many can now access the internet and communicate with their friends everywhere. At first, we thought that because we are people from the slum, the rest of the world had moved on and left us behind. But now, people are able to communicate with the external world here."

One thing I noticed while conversing with Mr. Joseph was that besides his compassion for transforming the community through his organization, he had a strong sense of commitment to his project. He was not shy to point out that he has been struggling to sustain this organization due to his limited resources, but this has not stopped him from wanting to make Kibera a better place. "My account has nothing, but I am struggling to make a change for the people because I don't want them to be the same way I used to be when I was growing up and I don't want my children to be that way either". Today, his computer college, a single room less than 12 by 12 in size equipped with old dusty computers has been operating for more than 10 years with limited resources and without external funding. This organization has produced local business owners, college students, and has created a social and economic empowerment platform for women diagnosed with HIV/AIDs. On average, the college serves 15 students a day in the rotation due to its limited space and equipment. The program engages in other self-employment activities oriented towards ensuring self-reliance and economic sustainability. From an outside view, this organization may seem ineffectual, but from

inside, just like many other small organizations in Kibera, it is a force not to be underestimated!

Contextualizing Sociological Imagination

The anecdotes presented above typify different scenarios of sociological imagination at work in a place otherwise defined by its vulnerabilities. These remarkable tales of resilience amplify many others that I encountered in Kibera as the following responses from other interviewees reveal.

"I started this organization to make a change and to fight for children because they are vulnerable and are unable to fight for themselves. My step dad was very cruel to my mom. So, I did not want to see other kids growing up and turning up like my dad."
"I was brought up in a very poor family without a father around. My mother brought me up very poorly. So, I knew struggles when I was growing up. And now that I was a grown up, I was seeing it happening to many other children. They were going through what I went through. So I decided to make it like a call for me to help them"
"Growing up was tough. So, having grown up lacking the basic needs, I was inspired to start a project that will help me give back to my community and thank God for enabling me to go through my struggles and come out strong."
"Our inspiration to start this organization was based on the challenges that we had gone through here in Kibera and we could not wait for an outsider to come and solve our problems. We saw that we can sit down and tackle these problems ourselves."
"When I dropped out of school, I was so stressed because all my friends were going to school and I was left home. All the money my mom was making was enough only for food and our necessities. I started dancing to express how I feel and what I was going through. I started by writing lyrics down. I later created Chopper Dance Group so that we could make some money through dancing but also to express ourselves."

The emerging theme among all the interviewees was that personal experiences played a critical role in their desire to form organizations that would address issues similar to what they were or had gone through. For example, one respondent noted that “having grown up in a tough environment with a lot of challenges, I felt it was only good for me not to allow others to go through the same experiences that I went through”. Another one reinforced this by saying that “after going through the same issues myself, I

could understand what they were going through so that is why I started something like this. I wanted to do something about it. I wanted to leave a legacy behind”.

Mills (1959) points out that sociological imagination gives individuals the capacity to realize the cultural meaning of their individual experiences through a comparative gesture with those of others. The general theme emerging from the above anecdotes illustrate that individual/s’ awareness of the relationship between personal biographies and the broader social experiences was an influential factor in their decisions to form local organizations. This aligns with the argument presented by scholars of civic imagination that individual and collective experiences are one source through which civic imagination is activated. Jenkins points out that for civic imagination to be activated, people have to have a sense of community and a sense of collectivity around shared narratives. The narratives above not only capture a powerful sense of collectivity around these shared biographies but also a collective desire for civic transformation. Therefore, the embodiment of prospective thinking rooted in personal struggles illustrated in the anecdotes above exemplifies one source of civic imagination. Sociological imagination has been a strong predictor of civic imagination and thus the arrival of grassroots groups in Kibera.

The second source of civic imagination that emerged in this study is what I termed as ‘spatial imagination’. The following section examines how spatial imagination has facilitated the growth of grassroots organizations in Kibera.

5.5.3 Spatial Imagination

Spatial imagination is the awareness and understanding of the relationships and intersections between and among daily social routines and spatial experiences. Spatial in allows individuals to take notice of their “roles and implications in making, remaking,

and being made by the geographies in which we live, work, and play” (Giesecking et al., 2014 p 357). It embodies the ideas we have about the history of a place that form the political, economic, environmental, and social experiences of the present and imagined future. The way we imagine spaces and places draw upon our actual experiences of, with, and in those places and spaces (Giesecking et al., 2014 p 357). There is a general agreement among urban scholars that our views of places guide both the manner in which we allocate different spatial functions and activities to places and how we practically move, use, and inhabit the resulting spatialization (AbdouMaliq, 2004; Anikó Khademi-Vidra, 2015; Simmel, 1903). They agree that our conceptual and practical understanding and interpretation of places is influenced by (1) the social ties we have in those places (social attachment) and (2) the ties we have with the physical environment in those places (environmental attachment) (Brehm, Eisenhauer, & Krannich, 2006; Pradhananga & Davenport, 2017). They conclude that social and environmental attachments to places are critical predictors of how people engage in collective actions and civic life in particular places (Fatima & Palma-Oliveira, 2016; Greif, 2009; Rising, 2013).

Drawing from this thesis, I included two questions in my interviews that solely sought to understand how the residents of Kibera (1) view and understand their community and (2) what had made them stay in Kibera and whether they could leave if they had the option. I was asking these questions to get an understanding of the views of the residents about their environment compared to the mainstream perceptions of slums. The responses I received revealed a complex relationship between people and places. When I analyzed them parallel to the question of what inspired people to start local organizations, I found an interesting intersection between how people view their environment and the kind of actions they take to preserve it. Consistent with prior findings i.e., Pradhananga and Davenport (2017) and Anton and Lawrence (2014), the

responses to the following questions indicate a strong relationship between the residents of Kibera attachment to their environment and the emergence of local grassroots organizations oriented towards protecting the social and environmental characteristics of this community. The questions I asked the respondents were:

1. People have different views about this community. In your own opinion as a resident, how would you describe this community?
2. In general, if you were given an opportunity to vacate Kibera for a better place, would you take the chance? Why or why not?

Below, I first present a set of select replies I received to these questions followed by some of the answers I received when I asked these individuals what inspired them to start their organizations.

Question	Responses
<p style="text-align: center;">People have different views about this community. In your own opinion as a resident, how would you describe this community?</p>	<p>“Kibera is a great place. It is a place like other places. I tend to believe that the challenges we are facing here in Kibera are the same challenges other places are facing. Yes, we face many problems but nevertheless, Kibera has a lot of love! There is a lot of sharing around here. We respect the rights of everyone. So, there is a lot of love here. Here, we decided to tell positive stories of Kibera through arts.”</p>
	<p>“Kibera is a safe community to live in. People here are like family; they help each other when they have problems. I really like Kibera because we create our own community policies. There are challenges with outside perceptions, but this is a safe place. People should not feel sorry for us. Instead, they should share their ideas and we can work together to implement those ideas. The only way to help is to empower people with entrepreneurial skills, education, and information. If people are empowered, they can change their lives and transform Kibera.”</p>
	<p>“I would say Kibera is a good place. It is a good place to have experience and learn a lot of things about life. It is not as bad as people try to portray it out there. Just like any other place, we have our own challenges.”</p>
	<p>“It is a place that is vibrant. The people are very energetic. They have a very positive attitude. Most of them are very happy to be living here. But also, most of them want a happy life. For someone who does not live in Kibera, [s/he] will portray us in a negative way but when [s/he] come here and get to talk to people and interact with them, [s/he] get a different picture.”</p>
	<p>“I see this community as very industrious in terms of creativity and innovation because you know when you live in an environment where you lack something, you create a new way of meeting that need. So, I think the environment has pushed people especially young people to move out of their comfort zone to find a way of surviving. So, this has led to building an entrepreneurial community. It is a community that I would say is a one store community, you come to Kibera and you find will find all sorts of services. I also see a very beautiful, creative, talented, and inventive community whereby if it is harnessed it upscale the development and it can create a real source of change.</p>
	<p>“Kibera community is a potential place to succeed. It is a very potential place! The only thing is that the people in Kibera needs some empowerment and some direction. There are a lot of people who are educated in Kibera, a lot. There are a lot of small groups and organizations that are doing great things. The only thing that this community need is recognition and direction. For example, you find that youth groups are doing very good, but nobody is recognizing them. If these groups are recognized and given direction, there is nothing wrong in Kibera. When people are given recognition, they feel appreciated.”</p>
	<p>“Kibera is a very nice place different from what people think and what the media convey out there as Kibera being a negative place. Kibera is a very good community where people live as a family. There is a lot of togetherness, there is a lot of sharing both difficult situations and easy ones. Generally, Kibera is good a community. Although there are a lot of challenges, still people are great. That is how I would describe Kibera.”</p>
	<p>“I think Kibera is a beautiful place to live in. It is like any other place. If you look at the place that you live in, you can see the beauty in that place. Like for me, it is very hard to go to a different place and feel comfortable. I feel comfortable here because I love the place regardless of all the misconceptions. Being a part of this community, I feel like this is my life and it keeps me moving on and loving the place and the environment and I feel safe. However, for me, I feel it is just we make it as beautiful as it is. You get talents here in Kibera. People are friendly! There are resources here. Here we live in unity and that is why I love the place. It is a welcoming place.”</p>
	<p>“Kibera is my home. That’s where I was raised and learned how to fight.”</p>
	<p>“I can describe Kibera as this: there are people who are born in Kibera. At the same time, there those who come to the city in search of jobs and they find themselves in Kibera. There is this story that when one comes from the countryside to Kibera, Kibera becomes his or her home. Kibera is like a community even though we are all different with different experiences. I can say Kibera is a ‘Cosmopolitan Ghetto’ and the ghetto that comprises diversity. To someone like me, there is something called ‘Urban Slum Culture’ which is here in Kibera. It is the way people live. When you go outside, you perceive as if Kibera residents are struggling but these people have their jobs-informal or formal. That is what makes Kibera unique to me.”</p>
<p>“There are a lot of positive things going on here. We might be living in mud and rusty houses, but our minds are not rusty. We have kids who have excelled, have talents, and all they need is a lifting hand. We are trying to do what we can.”</p>	

	“Kibera has hardworking people trying to make their lives successful. I am a success story from Kibera.”
Question	Responses
In general, if you were given an opportunity to vacate Kibera for a better place, would you take the chance? Why or why not?	“I think the best answer I can find for that is that for someone who has lived in the ghetto, for someone who has passed through that process, you can get the kid out of the hood, but you can’t get the hood out of the kid. And for one, that place made the person who you are right now. So even for us if we leave, east or west home is the best.”
	“For me, I say I was born and bred in Kibera but Kibera was not born and bred in me. But I just like Kibera, it is my passion. From when I was young, I look at the things that have happened, I thank God because there is a lot of changes. That positive change is there. You can run away from problems but that will not solve them. We want to be part of the change because some of us were born here, we have memories here, we have friends here, and we have people we have gone to school with here. We just want to make a change.”
	“I just want to make sure that when I go out of Kibera I have something like an academy something to look back and say yeah, I did this in Kibera. I want to leave a legacy!”
	“I think I have had several opportunities to leave. I have had opportunities to leave but I think I am attached to this place. This is a place you can find anything you need. And I feel that all I need is there. Now we have better schools that you can take your child to. So, I think it is more convenient for me to live in Kibera and that is why I have chosen to live here today.”
	“Well, I have stayed because this is home. I was born here. The project, the school that I am running is where I was born. I have a lot of connections in Kibera. I don't think I want to leave anytime soon because this is my home. This is where I was born, and I want to have a history here. I want to build a big school that will be a memorial for my family because my mom and my grandmother are all here. So, it is a big heritage for me, and I want to turn it into the best thing I can. So, I don't think I will be leaving Kibera any time soon.”
	“I want to inspire people who are behind me because I was shown the path. They need someone to inspire them and I don’t want to leave anyone behind. I want to prove to them that anything is possible. I want to give them hope because I, being there, they can see me and relate to me because we have grown up together and gone through the same experiences.”
	“I think the need to do more for the community, the feeling that I have not completed the task involved in making Kibera a better place has made me stay. Many people use Kibera as a steppingstone by selling the narrative that they are from Kibera to get sympathy. However, the challenges we face here are supposed to make us. I can be in a hurry to leave Kibera but what have I achieved, have people benefited from my work here? Have children benefited from my work, do they understand their environment better? By understanding your environment, you can live with it, without understanding it, you cannot live with it. Therefore, one of the tools to live in Kibera is art and if this organization is removed from Kibera, there will be a gap left. There are children in the program whom we would want to make sure they know themselves as they grow.”
	“I recently resigned from my well-paying job to come and focus on this Foundation in Kibera. I think about the legacy, what kind of legacy do I want to leave behind, how do I want to be remembered? I feel that I am obliged to do something in my community. I know that there is potential for people like me to come and change this community. In other words, I am always moved by the legacy that I want to leave behind. To use the resources that I have to give back to the community that raised me and took me to school, taught me how to be a man, and how to think about being a good citizen.”

The first table above highlights some of the views from the respondents about their environment. There was a generally positive view of the community among all the interviewees. They all associated Kibera with phrases such as “a great place”, “a safe community”, “a potential place”, “a beautiful, creative, talented, and inventive community” and “a vibrant and energetic place”. While they recognized and acknowledged the challenges that face their environment, they were more likely than not to focus on the positive side of their community. There was a strong consensus among the participants that Kibera is like any other neighborhood and it is their responsibility to transform. One respondent remarked, “You can run away from problems but that will not solve them. We want to be part of the change because some of us were born here, we have memories here, we have friends here, and we have people we have gone to school with here. We just want to make a change”.

The second table underscores the reasons the participants chose to stay in Kibera. In their responses, they portrayed a powerful sense of social and environmental attachment to their community. These attachments were more linked to their individual and collective experiences living in Kibera as one interviewee pointed out;

“Kibera is my home. That’s where I was raised and learned how to fight. I want to inspire people who are behind me because I was shown the path. They need someone to inspire them and I don’t want to leave anyone behind. I want to prove to them that anything is possible. I want to give them hope because I, being there, they can see me and relate to me because we have grown up together and gone through the same experiences”.

These answers were consistent with prior studies of community attachment which suggests that the attachments and commitments that people have to their homes is linked to their experiences in those places and may only become apparent in times of loss and hardship and that experiencing hardship could strengthen attachment to places (Anton &

Lawrence, 2014). For example, Taylor and Townsend as cited in Anton and Lawrence (2014) postulated that one-third of respondents in their study attributed their feelings for where they live to previous hardships in that environment. They discovered that people who had previously gone through tough times in their place of the dwelling were most attached to those places (Taylor and Townsend cited in Anton & Lawrence, 2014). These individuals were also more likely to engage in collective actions and civic life oriented towards the protection of both the social and environmental identity of their community (Pradhananga & Davenport, 2017). This point was particularly prominent in this study when I asked the interviewees what inspired them to form their organizations. The responses to this question when compared to the answers in the two tables above exemplified a strong relationship between the perception of participants to their environment, their reasons for staying in that environment, and the reasons they pioneered their organizations. In other words, the attachment of respondents to Kibera was a strong predictor of the emergence of many local grassroots organizations as some of the following anecdotes demonstrate.

How would you describe Kibera as a resident?	What inspired you to start this organization?
<p>“Kibera is a great place! It is a place like other places. I tend to believe that the challenges we are facing here in Kibera are the same challenges other places are facing. Challenges such as unemployment and poverty are universal problems. Yes, we face many problems but nevertheless, Kibera has a lot of love! There is a lot of sharing around here. We respect the rights of everyone. We are not dying from HIV/AIDs as so many people have put it out there. There are many organizations coming here only because they have read negative stories about Kibera and they go back and tell the same stories. Here, we decided to tell positive stories of Kibera through arts.”</p>	<p>“Our inspiration to start this organization was based on the challenges that we had gone through here in Kibera and we could not wait for an outsider to come and solve our problems. We saw that we can sit down and tackle these problems by ourselves. At the time, this place was not as developed as it is now. There were no roads, no electricity, and there were so many cases of violence. We saw that it was in our best interest to address these issues particularly the issue of unemployment. With high unemployment in the community, many youths were involved in crimes. Some of them died young. We wondered what we could do as residents. By then, there were so many organizations here that were receiving so much funding and were only highlighting the negative things in the community, but they were not helping in any way. For us, we decided that we needed to do something. Many of us were artists. Some of us were musicians, comedians, and artists. We were interested in this art and we decided to use it to empower the community and to create employment.”</p>
<p>“Kibera is a safe community to live in. People here are like a family; they help each other when they have problems. I really like Kibera because we create our own community policies. There are challenges with outside perceptions, but this is a safe place. People should not feel sorry for us. Instead, they should share their ideas and we can work together to implement those ideas. The only way to help is to empower people with entrepreneurial skills, education, and information. If people are empowered, they can change their lives and transform Kibera.”</p>	<p>“I know many people who have left Kibera because they do not want to be associated with the slum. But I said we are the people who are supposed to be transforming Kibera. We want to leave it better than the way we found it. That is why we are here. I am a product of Kibera. I want to transform the lives of the people and that is why we have this organization here.”</p>
<p>“Kibera is like a community even though we are all different with different experiences. I can say Kibera is a 'Cosmopolitan Ghetto'. And the ghetto that comprises diversity. To someone like me, there is something called 'Urban Slum Culture' here in Kibera. It is the way people live. When you go outside, you perceive as if Kibera residents are struggling but these people have their jobs-informal or formal. That is what makes Kibera unique to me.”</p>	<p>“Our story was to show that there is a positive side of Kibera. The question was - can a good thing come of Kibera? People perceived Kibera as a very negative place. So, when we started this organization, our mission was to show that there is room for visual art in Kibera other than stories of violence and other crimes. We wanted to portray our stories through the arts.”</p>
<p>“Kibera has vision minded people. When you look at the rooftops of the houses, they are brown and dirty but that does not mean that our minds are dirty. There is something cool that can come out of Kibera. And I believe it can only happen when we lay a foundation. We have great people who have come from Kibera.”</p>	<p>“We started this school because we wanted to give back to the community. We believed that with a good education, we can build a bright future for the youths in Kibera. I believed that through the provision of reliable and sustainable education, we can transform lives in Kibera. I was inspired by the transformation that I saw among children who go to school.”</p>
<p>“Kibera is a place with many challenges i.e. insecurity, poor health, housing, sanitation, etc. I don't like the fact that when people see Kibera, this is the picture they see. The program like Touch Kibera demystifies that. Kibera is a place of convenience because it is a low-income community with people living on a dollar a day. But we have people who have been successful in their fields and moved to work in government organizations, but that success is not highlighted because of the negative view of Kibera by others.”</p>	<p>“After graduating from university, I did not want to move out of Kibera. I wanted to give back to the kids and the community that I grew up in. This is how I came up with the idea of starting the Touch Kibera Foundation with the purpose of transforming the lives of children in Kibera.”</p>
<p>“It is a place that is vibrant. The people are very energetic and hard-working. They have a very positive attitude. Most of them are very happy to be living here. But also, most of them want a happy life. Most people would want a better life but most of them prefer to live in Kibera because it is cheap and convenient. It is a better and vibrant community.”</p>	<p>“We started this organization because we wanted to bridge the information gap in Kibera through investigative journalism. We wanted to tell the stories of Kibera from Kiberians' perspectives. We wanted to empower the people to discuss local problems and to find solutions to those problems together. Kibera is a vibrant place with</p>

<p>Someone who does not live in Kibera will portray us in a negative way but when you come here, and you get to talk to people and interact with them, you get a different picture.”</p>	<p>energetic and positive people. We wanted to focus on investigative analytical journalism to tell the stories so that when the audience was listening or reading these stories, they were thinking of solutions to some of the issues facing this community.</p>
<p>“Kibera is a very nice place different from what people think and what the media convey out there as Kibera being a negative place. Kibera is a very good community where people live as a family. There is a lot of togetherness, there is a lot of sharing both difficult situations and easy ones. Even though there are a lot of challenges, still people are great and Kibera is good a community! That is how I would describe it.”</p>	<p>“We wanted to give people a chance to tell their stories in their own perspectives using video formats. We wanted to use readily available social media platforms to amplify these stories. We wanted to document things that were happening around Kibera. We collaborated with a group from the OpenStreet map because we realized we had a problem and they had a solution. We realized that Kibera was a blank spot in the government map. It was shown as a blank space. This was a shock and a shame to us!”</p>

The table above reveals the views of the respondents about their environment parallel to the reasons they pioneered their organizations. The illustrations of their home portray a strong positive attachment and sense of belonging. There was an accord among all participants in this study that Kibera is a “safe and vibrant community with talented people”. Even when they noted the vices in their community, they were quick to point out that Kibera is like any other community. For example, one interviewee noted that “Kibera is a great place! It is a place like other places. I tend to believe that the challenges we are facing here are the same challenges other places are facing. Challenges such as unemployment and poverty are universal problems”.

When I examined the reasons why the participants started their organizations, there was a strong relationship between their views of their environment and the reasons they formed their movements. Some participants pointed out that they started their groups because they wanted to highlight the positive side of their community. For example, one interviewee noted that “our story was to show that there is a positive side of Kibera”. Others asserted that they wanted to “give back to the community”, “leave a legacy”, or “tackle and address” local problems such as “unemployment”. Still, there are those that started their groups because they “want to leave it [the community] better than the way we found it”.

As previously noted, spatial imagination allows individuals to take notice of their roles in transforming as well as being transformed by the environment in which they live (Gieseking et al., 2014, p357). The responses above typify the social-spatial relationships at the core of social and environmental transformation in Kibera. These illustrations demonstrate the individuals’ realizations that they are being made by their environment in as much as they are making it. Phrases such as “I am a ghetto boy” or “I am a slum boy” not only indicate the participants’ realization and acknowledgment that they are part of

the environment in which they reside, they also underscore their awareness that this environment is also part of their identity. It is this awareness and understanding of the relationship between and among social and spatial life that Giesecking et al., (2014, 357-360) describes as “spatial imagination.” This kind of imagination, as the findings above indicate, has contributed not only to the development of strong socio-spatial attachments but also to the development of institutions that typify civic imagination at work.

Contextualizing Spatial Imagination

The qualitative judgment of how well a place is structured is derived not only from its functional meaning but also from its capacity to accommodate the social needs both in its physical elements as well as in its design (Trancik, 1986). The structure, design, and organization of any place demarcate the way human beings appropriate, contest, and establish relationships with spaces at any given time. Many scholars, particularly those examining the urban geographies, have often conceded that the development of individual/s identities is linked to the development of places and vice versa (Tavares & Brosseau, 2013; Taylor, 1998; Trancik, 1986). These scholars postulate that places represent the human product and involve appropriation and transformation of space and nature that is inseparable from the reproduction and formation of society at a given time in history (Pred, 1985).

In ‘Finding Lost Space: Theories of Urban Design’, Trancik asserts that the meticulous arrangement of lampposts, bollards, trellises, fences, detachable canopies, cobblestones, lush landscaping, and the tree gardens in cities highlight the manner in which the “physical space has become an expression of the society and particular lifestyles of people” (Trancik, 1986 p 218). He concludes that people structure their environment in a manner that represents and communicate their desires, values, and identity. In order to understand places and the totality of their physical and psychological

constructs, he notes, we must (1) consider the meaning of places or spaces based on their use and purpose as defined by both the psychological and the social needs of the individuals contesting and appropriating them, and (2) consider the relationship among the temporal, spatial, and the social biographies and how they interact to create opportunities for development (Trancik, 1986). One prominent question that emerges here is how we might articulate these socio-spatial relationships and their possibilities for social and spatial transformation.

Spatial imagination provides the most effective way of foregrounding both the practical and theoretical possibilities that these socio-spatial relationships present. It offers a framework to understand (1) how individuals conceive, understand, and articulate their relationship to the environment in which they live in, and (2) how this environment, in turn, shape the relationships, attitudes, responses, and ideals that people develop towards it. For example, in chapter six, I presented a rich repertoire of organizations that Kibera residents have sculpted to address the socio-spatial crises facing their neighborhood. These organizations, as we have seen in the responses presented by the respondents above, were inspired by (1) the attachment of people in Kibera to their environment and their desire to make this milieu better (environmental attachment), and (2) their sense of collective identity resulting from their awareness and understanding of the relationship they have with each other (social attachment). In addition to predicting the emergence of civic groups in Kibera, these two attachments are also powerful determinants of why the participants have chosen to stay in Kibera in lieu of leaving.

These attachments, as the responses above, illustrate, develop within the margins of shared social and spatial experiences that are charged with the collective imagination of possibilities for transformation. The participants point out strongly that their inspiration to pioneer their organizations was largely driven by their own experiences

growing up in Kibera and their desire to give back to their community by leaving behind a positive legacy. Despite their acknowledgment of the social and spatial challenges that characterize Kibera, the respondents chose to focus on the positives by reimagining their community as “a potential place to succeed.” One participant described Kibera as a one-stop-shop where you can find anything you want. Another one described it as a “cosmopolitan ghetto” that embodies diversity. There was also a strong sense of responsibility among the participants that it is their duty to create a better community as one interviewee noted as one respondent noted when I asked him why he chose to stay in Kibera instead of leaving, “I think the need to do more for the community. The feeling that I have not completed the task involved in making Kibera a better place has made me stay”.

Both social and environmental attachment predicate how well individuals conceive interprets, and model both their social and spatial environments. These two attachments are important components of spatial imagination. From the views of the respondents about their environment and the reasons they have formed social collectivities, it is clear that their awareness and understanding of their shared narratives, values, and ideals have inspired them to reimagine their community and to embrace their roles in engineering a positive social and spatial transformation. This prospective thinking and practical modeling of better alternatives to existing social and spatial dilemmas is an embodiment of civic imagination. And from the assessment of the answers presented above by the respondents, it is clear that both social and spatial imaginations have predicated civic imagination.

5.6 Concluding Summary

In this chapter, I have focused on presenting the findings relating to the first research question that examines how the building-block organizations of an autonomous civil society in the slums emerge. I have presented two sets of observations under the terms sociological and spatial imaginations. Under sociological imagination, I have highlighted various anecdotes that show how personal and interpersonal relationships have influenced the emergence of grassroots organizations in Kibera. One of the emerging themes in this section was that personal and collective experiences, especially those of struggles, have been critical to the development of local organizations. Under spatial imagination, I have presented diverse cases that show how the relationships that people have with their environment influence them to form movements to protect both their social and spatial identities. I have explored both the social and the environmental attachments which are core to spatial imagination. The findings show that the level of social and environmental attachment is a strong predictor of the local grassroots formation.

This chapter was examining the concept of civic imagination. Civic imagination has been defined as a collection of human processes, activities, adaptations, and innovations which arise as enactments of alternative ways of living in response to existing social and spatial realities. This includes the formation of grassroots groups to address common threats as well as to highlight individuals' ingenuity. Thus posted, I can summarize my findings for the first research question as follows: civic imagination (C^I) is a function of both the sociological imagination (So^i) and spatial imaginations (Sp^i) or simply $C^I \propto So^i + Sp^i$. The next chapter will build further on this chapter by examining how grassroots mobilize once they are formed.

Chapter 6

ORGANIZATIONS GROWTH AND EXPANSION

Resources, Mobilization, and Sustainability

“Unless we build on the resources in which poor people are rich, the development process will not be dignified and a mutually respectful and learning culture will not be reinforced in society” Anil K. Gupta³⁷.

6.1 Introduction

After our interview, Mr. Andrew, the founder of a local medical center that I will call Andrew’s Community Health Center offered to give me a tour of his clinic. The first place he showed me was a maternity room. This was a small cubicle, less than 12 by 12 in size at the back of his health center. There were two beds on each side of the room pressed against the partially tiled plastered yellow walls with a small wooden table and a stool placed between them. The room was impeccably clean. At the center of the room between the two beds, there was a partially opened window that allowed the midday sun to light up the cubicle. After ushering me to take a snapshot of the room with my phone, Mr. Andrew, standing a few inches away from a loosely hanging fluorescent light

³⁷ Anil K. Gupta (2013) Tapping the entrepreneurial potential of grassroots innovation

proceeded to say: “this is our maternity room. It is where women deliver. It is also where we perform minor surgeries. During 2007/8 post-election violence, we treated over three hundred people who came here with various wounds. At some point, we ran out of medicine”.

I recall looking around the room and pondering how many health and safety violations I could count. Besides the two buckets beneath one of the beds, there was no other equipment in the room. This made me wonder how the clinic executed the minor surgeries and treatments or the delivery process for “many pregnant women who came here because they could not afford to go to the bigger hospitals” as Mr. Andrew articulated it. After giving me a tour of the maternity room, he then took me to an adjacent room which he told me was a resting place for women after delivering or for patients who visit the clinic and have no place to go back to. In other words, it was an overnight inpatient room.



Image 11: Left to right: Mr. Andrew at the maternity room and then at an overnight inpatient room at his medical center.

Later that afternoon, he gave me a tour of a home for children that he was also running as part of his organization. Like many other organizations I encountered in Kibera, this is a hybrid community-based organization geared towards social and

economic empowerment. The group focuses on improving the capacity of residents of Kibera through health care provision, HIV/Aids intervention, environmental sanitation, and economic and academic empowerment. Founded in 1999, Andrew's Community Health Center has several programs including a health clinic, a laboratory and testing center, a home-based HIV/Aids care program, a home for orphans, and a football team for local youths.

Since its foundation, this organization has been involved in many community transformative activities particularly in youths and information mobilization during political seasons. For example, during the post-election crisis that crippled the country in 2007/8, it was among the most engaged local organizations that mobilized youths toward community reconstruction as Mr. Andrew noted;

“In 2007/8 post-election violence, I transformed more than 400 youths through engagement and empowerment. We rebuilt the Toy market and reserved a section for the youths and Jua-Cali. We brought together the youths involved in the destruction of the market and engaged them in rebuilding the market. Before the market was burned down, the number of kiosks was 1774. We built 2563 stores and distributed some of these stores to local youths. We trained them and gave them loans to start their business. In 2013, there was no much violence in Kibera because youths were working, and the politicians could not get a hold of them. This rehabilitation project became the pilot concept for other projects across the country”.

Despite its tremendous achievements today, it has a very humble beginning. Born and raised in Kibera, Mr. Andrew started operating this organization from a mud shanty. He was kind enough to give me a tour of where the organization initially started and where it is now as shown in the pictures below. “This is where I started in that room”, he said, pointing at the shanty right behind his current medical center.



Image 12: From top to bottom left, Mr. Andrew pointing at the shanty where his organization started and standing in front of the building at the bottom. From the top right to bottom right, the location of the current clinic opposite the old one at the back.

I could not help but wonder how and what it took for this organization to grow from a mud shanty to its current position. Where did Mr. Andrew get the resources from to expand his organization this much? How did he engage the community to get their support and trust? How has he been able to sustain this organization for so long given the scarcity of resources? Building on the findings from the previous chapter on the emergence of civic imagination and grassroots development, this chapter examines the growth and expansion of local grassroots and the processes and channels in which they

have taken towards that path. While chapter seven has focused on the first research question that examines how the building blocks organizations of an autonomous civil society in the slums emerge, this chapter responds to the second research question governing this study which is outlined below:

RQ 2: Through what mechanism, channels, and [or] processes do these building-block organizations mature?

6.2 Organizations Growth and Expansion

To understand how the local grassroots such as the one illustrated above have been able to expand despite their limited resources, I asked my interviewees three questions. First, I asked them to describe how they came up with the resources needed to start their organizations. The goal here was to get insights on the creative ways that individuals use to navigate the challenges presented by the scarcity of means and resources. Second, I asked them to describe (1) how they managed to win the support and trust from the community during the initial phase of their organizations' formation, and (2) How they engage the community in the day to day operations and governance practices of their organizations. I wanted to understand how these organizations mobilized their initial ideas to the community and how well they engaged and continue to involve the community in the operations and decision-making processes of the movements. The third question I asked the respondents was for them to describe how they have been able to ensure both current and future stability and sustainability of their organizations. I wanted to get insights on how, given their limited means and resources, these organizations have been able to sustain themselves so far. The table below outlines the actual interview questions parallel to the research question.

RQ	Interview Question/s	Concepts
Through what mechanism, channels, and [or] processes do these building-block organizations mature?	Often, when starting an organization, you need resources to lay down a strong foundation. How did you come up with the initial resources needed to start this organization?	<i>Resources</i>
	Whenever an organization is starting, one of the biggest risks or challenges that it faces is to win people's trust and support. This can be a challenge in a place like Kibera where there are so many organizations. How did you win the community's trust and have them support your organization?	<i>Mobilization</i>
	How do you engage the community around and how do you get their input?	
	So, I see you talked about having limited resources, but your work surpasses anything I have seen so far. The question I have is given the limited resource that you have, how have you been able to sustain yourself and how have you been able to have such a big impact in the community so far?	<i>Sustainability</i>

6.3 Findings

In resource-constrained environments, generating the seed capital required to start and sustain an autonomous civic organization can be a daunting challenge particularly for pioneers with limited means. Existing literature on organizations growth and expansion recognize that both the financial capacity and the ability of organizations to create supportive networks with both the public and private sector is critical in ensuring effectiveness, efficiency, stability, and sustainability of civic groups (Coleman, 1990; Fox, 1996a; Putnam, 2000). This means that without enough financial resources and supportive social networks or what many scholars³⁸ call social capital, many grassroots movements in resources-drained environments are doomed to fail. Yet, during my investigation of grassroots organizations in Kibera, I found dozens of groups that have prospered despite their limited resources. Some of these organizations started from very humble beginnings yet, without reliable sources of external support, they have been able to establish themselves in the community, some for more than a decade. How have they been able to do so?

³⁸ See: (Bourdieu, 1984; Coleman, 1990; Loury, 1977; Putnam, 2000)

Using select anecdotes, I present some of the ways in which the interviewees in this study generated the capital they needed not only to establish their movements but also to ensure long term stability and sustainability. I will first present the sources and the means they used to secure the seed capital needed for the establishment of their organizations followed by how they engaged the community. Then I will conclude by highlighting how they have ensured continued effectiveness, efficiency, stability, and sustainability of their organizations.

6.3.1 Resources

“It is a community that I would say is a one-store community. You go to Kibera and you will find all sorts of services”. This is how one interviewee described Kibera. Another respondent used the terms “cosmopolitan ghetto” and “urban slum culture” to highlight “the way people live” in Kibera. He noted that in the absence of formal employment opportunities, people use whatever skills they possess to make a living. This was reflective of the first image I saw as soon as I entered Kibera. It was an image of people harnessing whatever resources and talents they have to meet their needs.



Image 13: People going on with their daily routines in Kibera

When faced with the scarcity of means and resources, people leverage whatever skillsets and capitals they must ensure their survivor. This is particularly so in marginalized communities like Kibera where government support is not readily available and the possibilities for formal employment are scarce. To generate the capital needed for survival in such environments, people rely heavily on several channels such as (1) personal resourcefulness, (2) social capital, and (3) leveraging the readily available resources in their immediate environment. These three channels of capital generation emerged as dominant strategies employed by the respondents in this study when I asked them to describe how they secured their resources not only to sustain themselves but also to start their organizations.

Personal resourcefulness

When I asked Mr. David, what inspired him to start his clothing company in Kibera, he said that he started it as a campaign project to

“Change the negative image of Kibera into something positive by showing people that something good can come from Kibera and reach the global market. I was showing people that clothes can be made from Kibera and reach the global market. I wanted to create a brand for the people of Kibera, a brand that everyone in the world can wear to show that they are proud of the features that come from Kibera. So, I started this campaign”.

Mr. David is a successful self-made entrepreneur who uses his passion and skills in fashion and design to produce garments and clothes that reflect “the everyday beauty I see in Kibera”. During our interview, he was quick to note that he is a product of Kibera; and, without Kibera, he would not be where he is today. His skills and passion which he considers to be his greatest asset, have been inspired by everything he has seen around his neighborhood. He holds a certificate in fashion and design, and he is currently pursuing a diploma in the same field. When I asked Mr. David what resources he required to start his

clothing company, he emphasized his passion and skillsets which he learned growing up in Kibera. He also noted that he was able to save some money after performing in local events as a dancer. He used his savings to buy a sewing machine and some linens to start his company.

When he is not busy sewing garments, he is a member of a stellar group of young dancers in Kibera. I will refer to this group as Mario and Crews Dance Group. This dance group was pioneered by local youths in 2012 to mobilize the positive image of their community. The main goal of the group was to use thematic dancing techniques as a tool to address issues facing their community. Through music and dances, they invite the public to engage in positive conversations while at the same time educating them about the challenges impacting their neighborhood. This group is particularly keen on creating a conducive environment for youngsters whom they believe are the key to transforming the community. As one of the dancers emphasized, the group “wants to leave a positive legacy for the children. For us, we can’t live forever. At some point, we will stop dancing, so we have to leave it to the young ones”.

Like many other grassroots organizations I interacted with in Kibera, Mario and Crews dance group started as a remedy for social and economic hardship the members were facing. They wanted to create an organization that will allow them to make good use of their time. In addition, they wanted to create economic stability for themselves and others while at the same time, mobilizing the public through positive conversations voiced in their music and dances. When I asked the members, what inspired them to start their organization, there was a consensus among them all that they started it because they felt it was their duty to tackle the challenges facing their home. When I asked the members of this dance group which Mr. David co-founded the source of their initial seed capital, there was an agreement among the members that the greatest asset they needed

was “the talent in us”. And to capitalize on this talent, they only needed a “radio and a place for us to practice. So, when we were starting, we just started by clearing things from one of us’ room and then we would put the radio on and start dancing. Sometimes we would do research on the internet trying to get the latest dance moves to add on to what we had”.

The stories of Mr. David and Mario and Crews Dance Group are not different from other narratives I encountered in Kibera such as that of Ms. Pascalia who is the founder of Pascalia’s Rescue Center. Ms. Pascalia started her organization to help homeless and orphaned children after experiencing homelessness herself. To generate the seed capital that she needed to initiate her organization, she worked as a “water seller walking around the community carrying a 20 liters jerry can of water asking people if they wanted to buy it”. In addition to that, she noted that she also “had to wash clothes for people. Even though this was very hard, but I could find something for these children”. This is a similar story to another story of a creative arts group that I will name Geoffrey’s Creative Arts which I interviewed.

Geoffrey’s Creative Arts is a hybrid community-based organization that was founded in 2006 by a group of young artists in Kibera. The organization started with the aim of empowering Kibera residents through the arts. Its main focus was reducing existing socio-political stigmas and barriers to economic access. The group members believed that “art is the reflection of the community” and through it, they could promote the features that define their neighborhood such as “solidarity, strength, generosity, adaptability, beauty, perseverance, and entrepreneurial innovation”. The group has created four programs to address local issues such as unemployment, health and wellness, and environmental sustainability among others. These programs are (1) mentorship program which provides a platform for youths psychosocial counseling and

talents mentorships, (2) performing arts program that promotes local artists by providing resources and opportunity for them not only to harness their skills but also to use them to earn a living, (3) music production program which provide a platform for local artists to create and produce their music and videos, and (4) arts and craft program that equips local youths with skills needed to produce and sell various forms of artwork such as bags, sandals, and accessories made from readily available resources in the community.

When I asked the members of Geoffrey's Creative Arts how they generated the capital required to start their organization, their collective response was that they started a small business of selling water. This enabled them to raise the capital needed to buy music production equipment and to rent a room where they could meet. Once they were established, they started using their skills to perform in local events thus enabling them to generate more capital which they invested back to the organization. It is a similar narrative to that of Mr. Joseph who started his computer college simply by investing his 8000 Kenya schillings (\$80) savings on an old used computer and a desk to start a computer training school.

These simple accounts of incremental inventiveness are part of wider social experimentations that are transforming Kibera. While they often appear invisible to the mainstream society, they represent the resourcefulness of Kibera residents and their ability not only to imagine the alternatives to existing realities but also to transform that imagination into creative resources without any external support. These kinds of creative experimentations that emerge from individuals' inventiveness hold significant theoretical and policy implications to the studies of development in resource-constrained environments like Kibera.

Leveraging social capital

Another source of capital besides individual inventiveness is support from social networks or what many scholars call social capital. Social capital refers to the network of relationships that develop among people in a given environment and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from such connections (Coleman, 1990/94; Putnam; 2000). The basic tenet in social capital theory is that strong social relationships and networks are critical determinants of neighborhood stability and social wellness. The norms of reciprocity that develop when people are connected with and to each other open new pathways through which resources are shared among the members. In this study, the participants expressed a strong sense of social connectivity and collectivity when I asked them to describe their community. For example, one respondent described Kibera as “a safe community to live in”. He continued to note that “people here are like a family; they help each other when they have problems”. Another participant noted that Kibera is a

“Community that is blended with strong energy and unity. I have never seen someone going hungry and the neighbor has extra food that they throw away. There is this art of sharing and the art of living as one community even though we are from different tribes. A Kikuyu will not go hungry if a Luo neighbor has potatoes! So, the act of living as a community and sharing whatever little we have makes this community more unique for me”.

Social capital can emerge from many sources. It can develop from connections to and with other social networks/organizations, from the community, and [or] from individuals who share the same beliefs about a given cause even if they are not part of an organized group. In this study, the greatest source of social capital was from the community and from people who share the same beliefs as the participants. For example, when I asked some respondents how they obtained their capital to start their organizations, one participant said that “the greatest asset is the community itself because we have teachers, we have chefs, cleaners, and they come from the community. I would

not say I give them a salary, but I try to give them small tokens, but they have been the biggest asset I see because they run the day to day affairs of this school”. Another interviewee responded with this;

“What we wanted was the will of the people who wanted to do this kind of community work. We invested in training and capacity building. We tried to engage with local organizations to train some of us in leadership training. That is where we have been able to mass our strength together because we did not look for just money but also to build on ourselves and to engage the members of the community to help us start”.

For many participants in this study, volunteerism from community members was particularly critical in their organizational growth and expansion. There was a strong consensus among all the respondents that without volunteers and community support, their organizations would not be where they are now. One interviewee noted that one of the most important resources for the stability of any local organization “the ability to work with the strength of your volunteers and local resources”. Besides volunteerism and support from the community, family members, friends, and well-wishers also played an important role in providing resources for the organizations. For instance, some participants asserted that they reached out for support from families, friends, and well-wishers who shared their beliefs. Some relied on membership fees, savings from the group, and percentages of returns from product sales. For example, one participant said that she “started engaging the parents and asking them to come and take ownership of the organization. We formed a group saving where the women gave 20 shillings and would borrow it with interest, and they became interested in their children's well-being”.

While another interviewee said that

“When we started last year, we used to have a training program. Students used to pay about 2000 shillings per month. It was our seed fund program and we had 10 students who paid 2000 per month. And then someone gave us some capital which we were able to buy the cameras from the U.S

through Amazon and someone brought them to us. We also bought two recorders. In terms of resources that all we had as part of the seed capital. We still have the saving from the students' fee paid last year in the bank”.

In a rare case, one organization reported receiving some additional support from the local government such as free vaccines, record books, and contraceptives. Another one gave credits to the local chief for mediating in locating land for the organization to build a school and carrying out fundraising for the group.

In general, connectivity to and collectivity with the local community emerged as a dominant source of social capital for the respondents. The relationships and reciprocities that developed between the participants and the community members shaped not only the direction but also the structure and mission of the grassroots organizations that I interviewed. As one interviewee summed it up;

“Kibera is a community. And a community is a group of people living together who share resources and address the same challenges that they face. The unity of the people is a strength. Most people are passionate about wanting to live. They want to see security exist and safe housing. So, they engage in community development programs”.

This quote is particularly important because it is consistent with the definition of a community introduced in chapter one of this dissertation. The quote is also consistent with studies of social capital that postulate that one critical element of social capital is the unity and communion among the members of a group (Coleman, 1990; Fox, 1996a; Putnam, 2000).

Harnessing Environmental Resources

The last source of capital indicated by the respondents was from the resource readily available in or on the environment. For example, one of the places I visited in Kibera while conducting this study was a collective art group that I will call Otieno's Collective Arts. This is an organization that was founded in early 2001 by local artists

who wanted to “show that there is a positive side in Kibera”. According to Mr. Otieno, one of the co-founders, the organization started with a simple question which was “can something good come out of Kibera?”

Using their artistic skills, the members of Otieno’s Collective Art started recycling readily available trash into visual artworks representing the day to day life of Kibera residents. Through their arts, they strived to mobilize the community by highlighting the most pressing issues facing their neighborhood and engaging the residents in transformative conversations around those issues. For example, through one of their initiative dubbed as ‘Superheroes of Kibera’, the group help children reimagine themselves as local superheroes who solve the day to day problems facing their community. Using recycled materials from local wastes, children create their own locally relevant superheroes as an expressive articulation of their dreams and those of their community. By taking the persona of a superhero, children are empowered to see themselves as local heroes who identify local issues while engaging in problem-solving dialogues. The organization also endeavors to “identify and to nurture talents” by creating a platform where local artists can share their ideas as well as skills.



Image 14: The Superheroes of Kibera. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/superheroesofkibera/>

Like Otieno’s Collective Arts, Joshwa’s Community Empowerment Organization, another movement that I interviewed has leveraged the readily available trash as a resource to sustain itself. Pioneered by Mr. Joshwa, the group started as a waste collection agency around Kibera to create employment opportunities for its youthful members while cleaning the environment. However, the members realized that they could use their skills to recycle the trash and turn it into wearable items such as shoes to sell to the community. It was then that the group formed an initiative that makes shoes from a spectrum of materials easily available in and on the environment.



Image 15: Shoes from recycled trash by K Shoes, a shoes company based in Kibera.

In describing how the group was able to generate the seed capital needed to start, Mr. Joshwa asserted this;

“I get people wondering how we were able to start. But as I said we asked ourselves, which resources do we have here? For example, we have so much trash here, how can it become one of the resources? So, when we started collecting it from the households, we could see trash reducing and people started appreciating living in a clean environment and every

weekend families subscribed to our program. We charged 30 shillings per week for trash collection which is how we generated money for our organization. We would dump it in a nice place where we would then separate the trash from recyclable things like metals and plastics which we would sell for extra income. So, I would say our recycling program was a huge resource we had because there was trash everywhere and it was free to have it”.

The cases presented above represent many other grassroots in Kibera that turn readily available waste into treasure. For example, besides trash, one major challenge that was facing Kibera was a lack of public toilets. In chapter five, I talked about ‘flying toilets’ -the bags of human fecal waste that once were scattered across Kibera. I highlighted how the local social organizations have addressed this issue by establishing bio-centers that serve as public toilets and shower-rooms, bio-digesters that turn human fecal waste into biogas for cooking and lighting, and into fertilizers for planting. The unique element common among these groups is that they all harness resources that are readily available in their environment. Given the amount of trash present in Kibera and the lack of government interventions in garbage collection, it was not surprising to find out that nearly every organization that I interviewed had a program that focused on waste recycling as a source of income.

In conclusion, this section has focused solely on responding to the question of how participants in this study obtained their initial capital to start their organizations. This was a two-pronged question which was examining (1) civic imagination and (2) creativity. On civic imagination, the question was exploring the individuals’ capacity to imagine alternatives to existing crises. For example, one of the common crises among the organizations in this study was securing initial starting capital. This prompted the founders to think of possible alternatives to securing resources without depending on external support. The very capacity to turn imagination and ideas into tangible and intangible capital demonstrate individuals and group creativity. This was evidenced

among all the participants in this study. The very capacity to turn trash into a pair of shoes or to harness the fecal waste to produce gas for cooking and lighting exemplifies creativity. It is the proof of frugal innovations emerging in a place where at best, we think of it as a place of metropolitan decay, and at worst, we advocate for its decimation.

6.3.2 Mobilization

Besides resources, one major hindrance to the growth and expansion of an organization is the community that an organization represents. Both the effectiveness and stability of any organization is shaped by how well the community it represents embrace the ideas that such a movement presents. One of the factors that shape the possibilities of mobilizing and sustaining grassroots movements is how well the organization frames its work (Woliver, 1996). Woliver notes that social organizations provide a common language to frame and to describe existing social injustices in a given public. This means that when a movement emerges, it becomes the voice of the people and, as Woliver asserts, it allows individuals to believe in the potential for future change. This determines not only the perception and conception that the community develop towards such a movement, but also how they envision their roles in the organization's endeavors toward civic transformation.

One way in which emerging organizations capture the attention and imagination of the community is through innovative mobilization strategies. Successful mobilization, particularly in the early phases of the development of a movement, has beneficial impacts on its growth and expansion. For example, it can lead to an increased membership base which has the potential to increase its resources through social capital development. This, in turn, can lead to the stability and sustainability of the organization particularly when its connection with its members is based on the reciprocity of trust. Trust is a vital ingredient

in the development of strong social capital (Coleman, 1990; Fox, 1996a; Putnam, 2000). Before a social movement can be fully accepted into the community, people must feel that it represents their best interests. Thus, it is the task of the organizations to convince its consistency that they can trust it and the ideals that it represents. This is often attained through the mobilization of its ideas and principles. Such a task can be demanding especially for grassroots groups that are constrained by their limited resources. It is even more challenging in a multi-ethnic environment like Kibera which is prone to ethnic instability.

In this study, I sought to understand how grassroots movements in Kibera bypassed the ethnic divisions to establish themselves as trusted representatives of a multi-cultural community. I also sought to examine how they have been able to maintain and to sustain that trust and relationship with the community for the duration that they have been active. In this regard, I asked the interviewees to (1) describe how they gained the trust and support of the community, and (2) how they engage the community in the day to day operations of the organizations. The responses to these questions revealed that (1) the success of any grassroots movement hinges on community involvement to that organization as one respondent noted;

“From my experience working in this community, the community plays a very important role in the success or failure of any organization because they become part and are stakeholders to the programs that are within that community. Getting the involvement of the community and other stakeholders are very vital in the stability and sustainability of any organization”.

And (2), public engagement in a grassroots organization depends on how effectively the organization mobilizes to its constituents. In response to the above interview questions, participants in this study identified three key effective mechanisms they used to win and maintain the community trust and support. These three mechanisms can be articulated in

what I will term as 3Ps Mobilization Framework standing for (1) **P**articipatory Narrative Framing, (2) **P**articipatory Planning, and (3) **P**articipatory Governance.

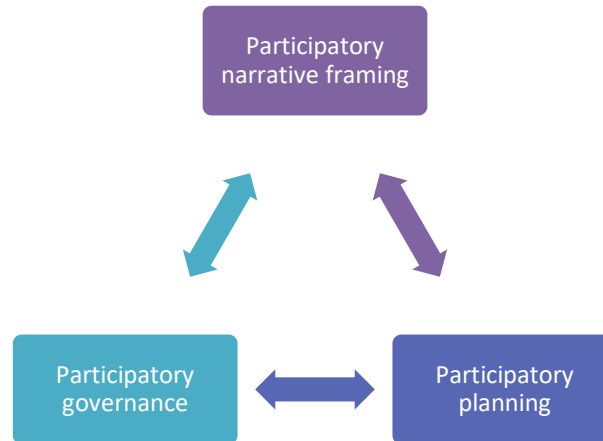


Figure 15: The 3Ps Mobilization Framework

Participatory Narrative Framing

One of the questions I asked the interviewees was based on their experiences working in Kibera, what advice they would give to any other organization intending to establish itself there. Their responses captured a common theme which reflected the importance of engaging the community particularly during the initial formation stages of an organization. “I can tell them when they come to Kibera to make sure they work with the locals. They are the one who knows Kibera. If you want to work with artists, work with those who live in Kibera because they have knowledge of the area”, one participant responded. Another one reinforced this by saying, “they need to be relevant to the community here. They need to do a problem analysis based on people's needs and priorities”. And still another respondent was critical of organizations which he referred to as ‘briefcase organizations’. These are organizations that come with “well-packaged stories about Kibera but those stories do not represent the practical realities in Kibera”. According to this participant, any organization that wants to come and be effective in

Kibera “needs to come to the ground and get the practical reality because for us we are growing from our experiences. We are the community. We are growing the life we have lived in. It is a practical thing. Unlike someone who has read about Kibera and wants to open an organization here, it doesn't work that way. This is not a syllabus thing”.

These statements identify community engagement as a vital first step when formulating a framework for grassroots movements. To reiterate Woliver (1996), social organizations provide a common language to frame and to describe existing social injustices in a community. This means that the ideology of the movement which is often presented in its founding principles, mission statements, and agendas should reflect the values, interests, concerns, expectations, and collective priorities of the public. To effectively achieve this, the community must be actively involved in constructing and framing the organization as the participants above have pointed out. This is particularly important because it ensures that (1) the ideology, missions, and intentions of the organization align with the “real, not felt needs” of the community, (2) the public voice is incorporated in the agendas and frameworks of the organization, and (3) the public is empowered to take ownership in the movement. The respondents in this study achieved this through what I refer to as a participatory narrative framing mobilization technique.

I define participatory narrative framing as the process of engaging the community in creating, shaping and organizing the philosophies, missions, and agendas of the organizations. Participatory narrative framing has more to do with framing the views and intentions of an organization to reflect the collective experiences of its constituency. This is especially vital in multi-ethnic neighborhoods where differences in cultural values present the possibilities of having divergences in views and perceptions among the people about both the problems and priorities of their community. In such environments, forging a movement that represents everyone’s voice can be a challenge. Participatory narrative

framing provides a platform where the public is actively involved in creating a unifying narrative for the organization through productive discussions. This is achieved by creating a continuous feedback loop for the public to provide inputs and suggestions about common issues. These inputs are then incorporated into the mission statements, agendas, and long-term goals that govern the movement.

In this study, participatory narrative framing emerged as a common mobilization practice among all the respondents. This practice was particularly critical in winning and maintaining the public's trust in the early stages of the organization's formation. For example, one organization noted that two weeks after its formations;

“We hosted a community meeting which was all about how best we can have an organization that will bring and represent all the young people in Kibera. Many community members welcomed the organization and made recommendations on how to make the organization better like electing a community representative. The following year we developed a constitution and registered the organization supported by community members. This is an organization supported by people of Kibera”.

Another organization started by training a group of youths from the community on how to use technology to map out their neighborhood and identify common problems and resources. The youths were able to produce a digital map of their neighborhood. However, the information on the map was too congested for the public to make any sense out of it. Therefore, the group decided to organize it into themes. But before doing so, they actively consulted and engaged the community in the whole process as the organization leader pointed out below;

“So, we decided to arrange the information we gathered into themes. But before we did that, we wanted to engage other community members in the process. We started holding forums for community members in different villages to get community views. People were very excited to see the first map because they could point out where they were on the map. It gave them the identity of existence. Therefore, we decided to make it easier for people to read and understand it in themes. We asked people what they

wanted to see on the map. People gave us a long list which we broke down into four themes. We ended up having water and sanitation, health, education, and security. So, we went ahead and started mapping these topics. We started distributing the maps to the people and people were engaging with it”.

One key element of participatory narrative framing is that it allows the mutual exchange of information between grassroots movements and the public. As one interviewee noted, “you can only win people’s trust if you share the same values with them”. And in a place like Kibera where people are skeptic of new movements because of prior experiences of exploitation by other organizations as participants pointed out, winning the trust and support of the people requires “sharing the right information” as one respondent asserted, and maintaining “honesty, transparency, and accountability, but more-so honesty” as another postulated. In addition to the increasing solidarity among the public when unified by the same values and desire for civic transformation, when effectively practiced, participatory narrative framing leads to participatory planning.

Participatory Planning

Participatory planning simply refers to a process whereby an organization mobilizes by engaging its membership base in its routine activities, strategic planning, and management procedures. Some community planning advocates use the term ‘community-based planning’ i.e. Shack/Slum Dweller International (SDI) (Ibid)³⁹ while others use the phrase community-based participatory planning i.e. World Food Programme (2014 *ibid*)⁴⁰ instead. Contrary to participatory narrative framing which involves framing the narrative and ideology of the organization, participatory planning

³⁹ <https://www.sasdialliance.org.za/what-we-do/community-based-planning/>

⁴⁰ <https://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/communications/wfp264473.pdf>

involves collectively setting activities, procedures, action plans, initiatives, and [or] interventions that lead to a comprehensive and effective development plan.

Participatory planning emerged as another mobilization technique that grassroots in Kibera employed to gain and maintain trust and support from the community. For example, one participant noted that one way that his organization won the public trust and support was by inviting the people for “community development forums and seminars to address and find solutions for local needs”. Another one asserted that his group gained the trust and acceptance of the community

“Through the projects that we are doing like engaging and involving the community. When you engage in the community, they start knowing what you are doing. At first, they used to say those are two madmen walking on the street with Maasai clothing and beads. So, it was through working with children in our project. Children communicated to their parents about what we were doing, and parents started getting engaged. Through that, we developed trust with the community”.

In another instance, an interviewee pointed out that to attract the attention of the public, she was sharing her organization’s plans and agendas on a monthly basis with her staff and community members. This was consistent with another woman who emphasized the need for participatory planning by postulating that the public has “to get involved otherwise we wouldn't want to appear like dictators or deciding for them. So, what we normally do is we have meetings with the parents or guidance, we consult them, then we reach a conclusion”. Her claim was corroborated by a second respondent who emphasized the importance of community participation in ensuring the stability and sustainability of an organization by pointing out that

“Getting the involvement of the community and other stakeholders is very vital in the stability and sustainability of any organization. We have monthly meetings with our parents. We also do home visits. The parents have to support what their kids are doing here. If the community is not

involved in everything that we do here, then, the program will fail. So, they have to be involved”.

Participatory planning empowers the residents and sets up possibilities for ‘co-producing’ collaborative approaches oriented towards civic transformation (SID, *ibid*)⁴¹. For example, after realizing it did not have enough manpower to map the entire community, one organization which was involved in mapping Kibera decided to train and engage the community in the mapping process to increase its capacity.

“Kibera is a big area and there were very few of us. So why don't we get people from each of the 13 villages in Kibera to represent each village of Kibera so that it can be easy for us to map because when you are mapping your own village it is easy because you understand it! You understand the challenges there and how to navigate them, and you know what is missing there. So, we had 16 youths who were thoroughly trained on how to map and produce a map of Kibera”.

An important element of participatory planning is that it helps to align the mission and agendas of an organization with practical realities in the community. For example, after engaging the public in mapping Kibera, the organization above decided to use technology to mobilize information that they found from the mapping project to the people. They utilized the widely available cellphone messaging platform and other social networks to engage the community in information sharing. What they found was that while using technology as a mobilization tool was easy and faster, not everyone could access it. Therefore, they recalibrated the approach to accommodate this reality.

“We realized that Kibera people were not so much on the internet. So, we thought of how we could make them consume these stories. We started burning videos on DVDs and would take them to the local video halls and for about 30 minutes, people would watch the DVDs and after that, we would hold brief discussion forums where they would share with us and find solutions to some of the issues addressed in the DVDs. We would also host a community screening of these DVDs in local public grounds

⁴¹ Shack/Slum Dweller International (SDI): <https://www.sasdialliance.org.za/what-we-do/community-based-planning/>

from village to village. Recently we introduced the Humans of Kibera so that Kibera people can have an opportunity and platform to tell their own stories even the most intimate ones. It is an outlet for them to share their stories. People are so happy to see people they know featured on the stories and that makes them want to be featured too. This also helps address the often misconceptions and negativities associated with Kibera”.

Participatory Governance

The last mobilization strategy identified by the respondents was participatory governance. Participatory governance simply means actively engaging the citizens in the leadership and decision-making process in an organization. In this study, the participants revealed having a participatory governance structure in their organizations as part of maintaining and sustaining public trust and participation. This structure commonly comprised of a board of directors, staff members, selected community representatives, and volunteers. For example, one respondent described her organization as having a “board of directors who are all professionals from Kibera. We have accountants, pastors, doctors, engineers, etc. We also have lawyers from Kibera on board. We make the decisions as a board and come to conclusions based on our collective agreements. We have volunteers who are also involved”. Another interviewee noted the following about his academic institution

“Leadership is key. As a leader and the founder, I cannot work alone. We have a board of directors in school and then we have parent-teacher-association (PTA) with an organized governing structure. From there we have a principal, vice-principal, staff, students, and the community. We have given room for well-wishers in the governance process. We engage everyone in the planning process and target setting. When it comes to decision making, we involve almost everyone. All parents are updated and engaged in what is taking place. Parents have fund-raised, friends have contributed and gotten involved in constructing the structures that you see”.

And in response to a similar question on governance, two other respondents indicated the following about their respective institutions

“Our organogram is we have the board, the chair representing Pillars of Kibera. We have Friends of Kibera also representing Pillars of Kibera. We have a committee that governs the program. We also have community representation to lead Pillars of Kibera. We have a structure that is diverse and inclusive. We don't elect people from one region, we elect people from different villages to make it representative. We give youths opportunities to vie for leadership. We observe gender and cultural issues to ensure an equal representative”.

And

“I would say we have a board that oversees the running of the school. We have people from churches and a few people from the village. Then we have family members. We have three family members, one from the church and one from the community making it 5 people. That is the board that oversees the running of the school and makes day to day decisions about the school's operations. I am here all the time. We meet once a month to see whatever challenges are there and how best we can deal with them. If we have community projects, we engage schools, churches, women groups, etc”.

Participatory governance has important implications for both the institutions that practice it and the community they represent. For example, studies show that it increases institutions' transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to social needs (Speer, 2012). In addition to this, it serves as a unifying force among different stakeholders. This is especially important in heterogeneous societies like Kibera. In this study, participatory governance also served as a source of capital for the organization as one interviewee asserted “sustainability is very important. We involve parents because no matter how little they contribute; we depend on them”.

However, while there was a high recognition for the value of participatory governance practices among the respondents, it seemed less developed compared to the other two participatory processes described above. There was a recurring theme among the interviewees that their governance structure was not stable due to a lack of resources and committed members. “Our organization is well structured, is just that at the moment,

the positions are not occupied because of the resources that we may not have”, one interviewee asserted. “Our organization is still not that big. There are 5 board members of which some are active and others not. I play the role of secretary, accountant, and director because I have limited resources to hire extra staff”, another one pointed out. Moreover, regardless of this limitation, there was a strong consensus among the interviewees that involving the citizens in the decision-making process increased the public’s trust towards local institutions. “We are here today but tomorrow we might be somewhere else. We involved parents in decision making. At last, they learned what we are doing and started trusting us. The chief also gave us assurance and confirmation to do what we are doing”.

6.3.3 Sustainability

One common characteristic that emerged among all organizations that participated in this study is that they were all functioning under limited resources. There was a consensus among the participants that financial instability and lack of space to expand were among the top challenges facing their organizations. However, despite facing these challenges, more than 65% of the institutions that I interviewed reported as having been working in Kibera for more than 10 years with the highest reporting 22 years of service. Of the remaining 35%, only one organization reported as being active for less than 5 years i.e. 3 years. One question that emerges from these statistics is given their limited resources, how have these organizations managed to sustain themselves for that long. I examined this question by asking the participants the following question;

1. So, I see you talked about having limited resources, but your work surpasses anything I have seen so far. The question I have is, given the limited resource that you have, how have you been able to sustain yourself and how have you been able to have such a big impact in the community so far?

In response, the respondents identified four main strategies that they have used to sustain their organizations. These strategies are (1) maintaining a value-based approach to

organization management, (2) diversifying sources of income/resources, (3) increasing their membership base (social capital), and (4) maintaining autonomy from external support.

Maintaining a value-based approach

Value-based approach as used here simply refers to the application of certain personal and [or] shared core beliefs, values, and principles in the management of an organization. One of the most common core values that participants cited as being important to the sustainability of their organizations was “compassion”. For example, one respondent noted that “I did not think that I was going to make it this far, but I had the compassion”. Another value that emerged consistently was ‘passion’ as one interviewee asserted, “we have seen many art organizations being sponsored by churches, etc. but after a while, and those organizations fail because they were in for the money. So, for us, money was not the main focus. People are the resources first. Passion is a resource because, without passion, the organization is not there”. This assertion was corroborated by another respondent who noted that

“When you are talking about resources to start an organization, most people think that you need to have like a million dollars in your account. We started with only a soccer ball and a passion to work with young people. We had an empty space to play and kids would come. After playing kids would talk about the things they were going through. Over time, we have been able to understand our children's needs. Resources are variable. The resource can be our volunteers, donations we get from a well-wisher. We also get donations when people come and say we can help with this aspect. It is just about what you are passionate about and for how long you can sustain your passion”.

Other values such as honesty, transparency, and accountability were commonly cited by the interviewees throughout as contributing to the stability and sustainability of their institutions.

Diversifying sources of income/resources

Throughout this presentation, I have used the term ‘hybrid organization’ to refer to the institutions that engaged in this research. This is because all of them participated in more than one area of service provision. In doing so, they also ensured that their sources of capital were diversified. All the participants reported that their organizations pulled in their resources from multiple sources such as membership fees, service fees, well-wishers’ gifts, and group’s monthly savings. In addition, others engaged in extra incoming generating activities such as beads making, trash collection and recycling, tailoring, and performing arts. Diversifying sources of capital ensured that if one source failed or was insufficient, the other sources compensated for that. This guaranteed the groups’ sustainability.

Increasing membership base/social capital

Social capital was also reported as a critical contributor to the stability and sustainability of local grassroots movements. There was a strong consensus among the participants that community support such as volunteerism was imperative not only to the sustainability of their organizations but also to their growth and expansion. I have addressed this factor in detail in the ‘leveraging social capital’ section in this chapter.

Maintaining autonomy from external support

There was a general recognition among the respondents that external sources of funding can boost both the stability and sustainability of local organizations. However, many of them were fearful of the impact that donors’ funding can have on their groups if it suddenly stops. Therefore, they strived to maintain a high level of autonomy from external support as two interviewees indicated about their respective institutions.

“As an organization, we saw that it was not good to depend so much on external donations. So, we decided to find ways of sustaining ourselves.

We agreed it was good to have many social projects to bring extra income to sustain our organization so that with or without external donors, we have funds to facilitate our organization activities. We decided to start small businesses here and there related to our organization's activities. We are trying to come up with other resource projects to sustain ourselves so that we are not depending on external donors”.

And

“With time, those who were paying fees, I used that to add some more computers. As time went on, the little I got I invested in this. So, we are where we are, and we have not relied on any external donors so far because that is what I never wanted. I wanted to create our own capital base from the people themselves because we wanted to self-sustain without relying on external donors”.

Maintaining autonomy did not necessarily mean that these organizations were not seeking external funds or what they termed as ‘well-wishers gifts and donations’. It only meant that external sources of capital such as government support or funding from philanthropies were not their priority. While they sought to create relationships with external institutions, they minimized soliciting for funding from them. Instead, they left an open-door funding policy where if an external agency wanted to donate or give gifts to these organizations, they could do so freely.

6.4 Concluding Summary

The search for inclusive development within the urban development policy must begin by first acknowledging, embracing, and leveraging innovative ideas and frugal innovations that emerge within the marginalized communities. Instead of treating the urban poor as a “sink of public aid, assistance advice, and corporate goods and services, we should treat them as a source of ideas, innovations, and institutional arrangements with which formal public and private institutions can engage” (Gupta, 2013 p 18). The goal for this chapter has been to examine the innovative mechanism, channels, and [or] processes that organizations in resource-constrained environments like Kibera use to

ensure their growth, expansion, and sustainability. Of importance has been the questions of how they generate their initial resources, how they mobilize for growth and expansion, and ultimately how they ensure their long-term sustainability.

This chapter has underscored various creative processes and mechanisms that these organizations have used not only to warrant their survivor but also to ensure that they are bringing a positive impact on their community. In addition to highlighting these processes, this chapter has also stressed Gupta (2013) point that we should indeed view and treat marginalized communities like Kibera as a “source of ideas, innovations, and institutional arrangements with which formal public and private institutions can engage” (Gupta, 2013 p18). In the next chapter, I will examine some of the barriers that these organizations face in their endeavors to bring civic transformation in Kibera.

Chapter 7

SCALING-UP GRASSROOTS INNOVATIONS

Enablers and Barriers

7.1 Introduction

It was around 9:45 am on June 21, 2018. That morning, before I took a minibus to the first interview of the day, I had checked the weather status on my phone, and I was certain that it was going to be a beautiful sunny day in Kibera. I was dressed up lightly, anticipating a hot day, just like the previous day. However, when I got there, the air around was filled with a thin layer of smog that made the day look dull with possibilities of rain. After mumbling to myself and cursing the weather, I got off the minibus just a few steps away from the Olympic bus terminal where I was supposed to get off. With my interview scheduled for 10:30 am, I figured I had plenty of time to find a restaurant and get myself a cup of coffee.

As soon as I got off the minibus, my eyes got teary and itchy. I was not certain why until I overheard the minibus conductor telling his colleague that the police had been firing tear-gas the entire morning trying to disperse a rioting crowd. The crowd was

protesting the ongoing demolitions of settlements in Kianda village. Looking around, the streets were busy with displaced women carrying their mattresses on top of their heads and men carrying furniture heading away from the demolition site. I could see the police still mobilizing towards the demolition location. As I would learn, later, the Kenya Railways had ordered the clearing of shanties along the railroad in Kibera. The residents had been given an hour's notice to evacuate the place before the demolitions took place in the early hours that morning.⁴²



Image 16: Sites of demolition in Kibera on June 21, 2018

I contemplated canceling or rescheduling my interviews that day for security reasons. However, when I contacted my interviewees, they still wanted to proceed with the interviews as planned. Apparently, the ongoing bulldozing of shanties had been a part of daily life in Kibera to the extent that the residents had gotten accustomed to it. For those unaffected by the forced eviction that morning, life was going on smoothly just like

⁴² See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WCeOnYjiHMo>;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3qrQ9DRfhs>

any other day. One interviewee I had met the previous week had described another anticipated bulldozing to create the way for a by-pass highway cutting across Kibera. “They are getting rid of Kibera slowly” he had said in despair. This sentiment was shared by a few other interviewees who disapproved of the strategies the government was using to address local issues particularly those related to resettlements.

My interview that morning was with Mr. Mbugua who was born and raised in Kibera. He founded a school that I will call Mbugua’s Academy, a community-based school that started as a feeding center to improve nutrition for children. Through support from friends, churches, and well-wishers, the center scaled-up to a hybrid school providing primary level education through eighth grade. In addition, the school continued to serve meals for children through its nutrition program. Mr. Mbugua started this school because he was moved by the challenges that he was witnessing children in his neighborhood going through, some of which he could relate to on a personal level. He wanted to give back to his community and to leave a legacy behind him. He emphasized that leaving behind a legacy in the form of a school was important because providing education to young minds was the only way to usher in social, economic, and political reforms in Kibera. His passion for Kibera, a place he considered his home, was one of his strongest drives to invest back in this community. “This is home”, he said, “I have a lot of connections with Kibera because this is where I was born. I want to build a memorial here, a big school!”

Like other respondents in this study, Mr. Mbugua had a vision for his school. He wanted it to expand in order to serve more children in Kibera. However, he was facing many limitations that not only restricted the impact and effectiveness of his organization but also its capacity to grow to the level that he envisioned. When I asked him to describe some of the major barriers which restrict the growth, impact, and effectiveness of his

organization, his responses resounded familiar concerns that were widely shared among all the participants in this study. This chapter has two brief objectives. The first is to highlight some of the factors that have strengthened the growth, impact, and effectiveness of grassroots movements in Kibera. The second objective is to illuminate the barriers that have hindered the further expansion of these organizations. The chapter responds to the third research question outlined below.

RQ 3: In what ways have the state and local actors either blocked or encouraged the broadening and strengthening of these building-block organizations?

7.2 Scaling-up grassroots innovations and effectiveness

In chapter six, I examined the processes of growth and expansion of grassroots movements in Kibera. According to some scholars, this process in which organizations grow and expand is called the scaling-up process (Uvin, 1995). There are four pathways through which organizations can scale-up according to Uvin. First, they can scale-up organizationally. This is achieved when organizations increase their strength in order to improve their effectiveness, efficiency, capacity, and sustainability. It can be realized financially by (1) diversifying sources of income or subsidies, (2) by increasing the degree of self-financing through income-generating activities, and (3) by enacting public legislations earmarking entitlements within the annual budget (Uvin, 1995). It can also be achieved institutionally by creating links with other organizations and actors in both the public and the private sector in addition to improving the management and the capacity of the organizations (Uvin, 1995). In this study, the grassroots movements scaled-up organizationally by diversifying their sources of income or subsidies and increasing their financial autonomy. They also did so by creating links with some local institutions both governmental and non-governmental.

Second, social movements can scale-up functionally by expanding and diversifying their activities (Uvin, 1995). For example, in this study, all the grassroots that I interviewed engaged in multiple activities such as health and nutrition, literacy, economic development, information mobilization, and environmental sustainability projects among others. This enabled them not only to reach out to a wider population and address a range of needs but also to exploit diverse sources of capital generation. I used the term ‘hybrid organizations’ to capture this scale-up type.

Third, organizations can scale-up politically. This refers to “participatory organizations moving beyond service delivery and towards empowerment and change in the structural causes of underdevelopment” (Uvin, 1995 p498). According to Uvin, political scaling-up involves active political involvement and relations development with state and other organizations be it local or international. While the groups that I interviewed strongly expressed that they were non-political in nature, they nevertheless did portray strong political participation through their activities such as community engagement and reconciliation during and after political seasons.

The fourth and last scale-up pathway occurs quantitatively. This is when a group expands in size through increasing its membership base (Uvin 1995). In this study, I examined how the participating grassroots scaled-up quantitatively by exploring their mobilization strategies. Three critical mobilization tactics emerged as dominant pathways through which these organizations took to expand and grow. These pathways are participatory narrative framing, participatory planning, and participatory governance which are discussed in chapter six. Through these mobilization conduits, they were able to increase their membership base by creating strong ties not only with the local community but also with other NGOs. A few organizations were also able to develop ties with local police and government administrations.

In general, there was a consensus among all the participants that the challenges facing their community are increasingly becoming more diverse and complex. This realization brought with it the urgency to create stronger local institutions and thus the need to scale-up organizationally, functionally, quantitatively, and politically. In chapter six, I underscored various ways in which movements in Kibera were striving to attain this goal. In the remaining part of this chapter, I will highlight the factors that have both contributed and restricted these efforts. I will use the terms ‘enablers’⁴³ and ‘barriers’⁴⁴ respectively to refer to these factors.

Grassroots Enablers

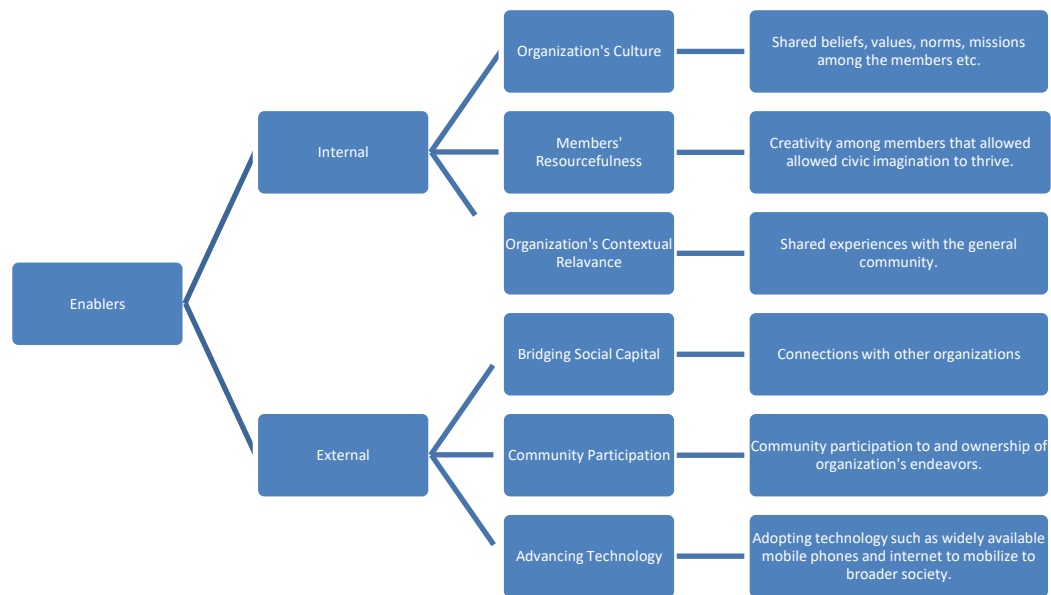


Figure 16: Grassroots Enablers

⁴³ Enablers are factors that strengthen the growth and expansion of organizations.

⁴⁴ Barriers are the factors that limit the growth and expansion of organizations

The figure above summarizes some of the enablers that have allowed the grassroots movements I interviewed to expand their sphere of influence in Kibera. They are divided into internal and external enablers.

Internal Enablers

Internal enablers are the factors that emerged within the organizations that allowed their growth and expansion. There were three major factors that emerged as critical to the growth and expansion of these organizations. The first factor was the organization's culture. This comprises a set of beliefs, norms, attitudes, values, missions, goals, and principles that are shared among members of a social movement. It not only influences how members relate and interact with each other but also how they frame their organization to articulate those relationships, values, and concerns that emerge among members. More importantly, the culture of the organization also shapes its approach and response to broader social issues. For example, after examining the mission statements, core values and principles, and goals of the organizations I interviewed, it was clear that the issues that these organizations were addressing were not only reflecting shared experiences among their members, but also those shared by the community itself. This not only influenced how these movements engaged their members within their internal operations but also the external activities in the community.

One of the key indicators of a strong organization's culture that emerged among the interviewees was their participatory approach in their organizations' narrative framing, planning, and governance. There was a strong consensus among all the participants that membership engagement in decision-making was a critical process in ensuring that all voices were heard and accommodated. In addition, this involvement allowed the organizations to identify and tap into different skills and knowledge of their

members to strengthen and broaden their influence. For example, many creative art groups that I interviewed expanded in part because of their ability to tap into the collective creativity of their members and in part because of the shared beliefs and desire for civic transformation. As described in detail in chapter six on the mobilization section, organizational culture expressed through the participatory approach was critical in ensuring the growth and expansion of grassroots in Kibera.

The second internal factor that was critical for the growth of these organizations was the resourcefulness of their members. For example, when I asked the participants how they have been able to thrive despite their limited resources, there was a strong accord among them that this has been made possible by the ability of their members to innovate alternative sources of capital. Many groups that I interviewed have thrived because of their capacity to invent new ways to mobilize their message. For example, after realizing that the information they were providing through the internet was not easily accessible to the public due to low internet accessibility, the members of one local news agency devised a way of spreading their message using the readily available and accessible mobile phone messaging system. When this did not work effectively, they started recording and producing DVDs relating to local issues which they would then play in local movie theatres or in public screenings. After each public screening, they would engage the community in productive solution findings dialogue. This not only allowed them to reach out to a broader audience but also strengthened their bonds with the community.

The third internal factor that emerged as a critical contributor to grassroots growth and expansion was what I called the organizations' contextual relevance. One unifying characteristic among all the organizations that I interviewed is that they were all founded by people who grew up in Kibera and went through the same issues their groups were

addressing. This, as many interviewees pointed out, made their movements more relevant to the community because of their shared socio-spatial experiences. This was particularly well highlighted when I asked them how they were able to win the trust and support from the community. There was an accord that one of the reasons the community trusted and supported them was because of the commonality in both their lived experiences and their collective desire for community transformation.

While the three factors outlined above offer just a general theme of many of the internal factors that facilitated the growth of local organizations, there were other external factors that strengthened this process. The following section illuminates these factors which are referred to as external enablers.

External Enablers

While the internal enablers comprise of factors inside the organizations, the external enablers are factors outside the structure of the organization that facilitated their growth and expansion. There were three major external enablers that emerged. The first one was the existence of strong bridging social capital. According to Putnam, bridging social capital refers to reciprocal relationships and ties that develop between different social groups. It allows them to share and exchange information, ideas, and innovation⁴⁵ thus widening their social capital radius. It also allows them to tap into each other's resources thus hastening their scaling-up process. In this study, there was a general agreement among the participants that relationships with other social movements were vital to the scaling-up process and sustainability of their organizations. In fact, some of them acknowledged that their existence was in part due to the support they received from

⁴⁵ <https://blogs.worldbank.org/publicsphere/bonding-and-bridging>

other organizations including local government administration. One interviewee noted the following:

“We got funding from the Gates Foundation and other donors and partnered with other organizations. We have sustained ourselves from donors’ funding and job contracts from other organizations. We have worked with local organizations like Carolina for Kibera and we have partnered with organizations like Umande Trust and Shofco⁴⁶”.

Another one asserted

“The chief was impressed with what I was doing and having the support of the local authority assured me that I was doing something good. It was like I had the government with me. I remember the area chief conducting a Harambee [fundraising] which enabled me to buy some books for the children”.

Others harnessed their relationships with other organizations to strengthen their capacity as one participant noted below;

“We try to engage with local NGOs and other organizations to train some of us in leadership training. That is where we have been able to mass our strength together because we did not look for just money but also to build on ourselves and to engage the members of the community to help Pillar of Kibera to start”.

There are others that relied on other institutions for the referral of clients. For example, when I asked the participants how they recruit their clients into their services, one interviewee noted, “We get them from the community or either referred by chief or community”. Another one described the importance of networking as follows

“Like you know in organizations you cannot work alone and achieve anything. When we talk about HIV, it is very broad. There are services you can offer and there are services you cannot offer. With the services you cannot offer, you need to refer to those cases. And within that networking system, you create partners. It is also how you get members through the networking system. When we have activities like community

⁴⁶ Shining Hope for Communities (Shofco)

outreach, we work with other health facilities to reach out to the community with information. This helps them [the community] come-out to seek support in these health facilities and to us too”.

Thus, bridging social capital was not only an important enabler in the scaling-up process of these organizations, but it was also a strong predictor of their sustainability. Many participants agreed that given their limited resources, neither of their organizations could successfully and effectively operate on their own. They needed support from others be it in the form of information and knowledge, referral of clients, or material resources such as HIV/Aids medication and other medical equipment.

The second external enabler was community participation. This was one of the most vital factors necessary for these organizations to scale-up effectively. It provided a strong base for social capital and other material resources critical to their growth and sustainability. I have detailed the cardinal significance of community participation in chapter six on ‘leveraging social capital’.

The third and last external enabler that emerged as important to the scaling-up process was technological advancement in Kibera. One of the most astounding revelations I faced while conducting this study was how deeply technology has become part of the community fabric in Kibera. For example, in chapter five, I discussed how local organizations have been able to address security issues using internet tools such as GIS and Open Street mapping software. In addition, I also highlighted some of the ways in which these organizations have been trying to ensure that Kibera is no longer a forgotten blank space on the government maps. The point here is that all the organizations that I interviewed were using technology in one form or the other to advance their cause. Some relayed their information to the public through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Others such as MapKibera, Voice of Kibera, Habari Kibera, Humans of Kibera, Kibera News Network, and Pamoja FM

utilized a variety of technological tools to mobilize. As one interviewee noted, “at first, we thought that because we are Kibera People, the rest of the world has moved on and left us. But now people are able to community with the external world here. Many people in Kibera can now access the internet and communicate with their friends everywhere”.

The importance of technology here is that it allowed these organizations to easily mobilize and engage the public in discourses relating to local issues. This enabled them to amass credibility within the community which amounted to increased community participation in the organization's activities thus allowing these movements to scale-up functionally, organizationally, and quantitatively.

In general, while these organizations have managed to scale-up because of various internal and external enablers outlined above, one unique characteristic that accelerated their growth is their organizational agility. They all portrayed a strong ability to smoothly and effectively adopt and adapt to emerging social, economic, political, and environmental shifts. This was particularly expressed in their capacity to overcome and to thrive through the many politically induced crises that have impacted Kibera starting with the post-election violence in 2007/8. Kibera is a multi-ethnic community with a strong commitment to tribal politics. Many politicians have exploited this vulnerability during political seasons to amass political victories from the loyalty that people have to their tribal politics. In fact, in describing some of the barriers impacting the growth and effectiveness of their organizations, two respondents noted that political tensions are among their major hindrances. “I would say the political instability in Kenya and in Kibera has been acting as a barrier towards achieving our goals because sometimes we have to close down our space. We can't produce shoes for our consumers when there is political unrest in Kenya and in Kibera and that has really affected us”, one of them said. The other reinforced this by asserting that “during political times, there tends to be a lot

of tensions and conflict, but this is just during the election times. Sometimes it happens when the politicians incite people and give youths money to cause chaos”.

However, despite these impediments, more than 65% of the organizations interviewed have been in service for more than 10 years and the remaining no less than 3 years. This not only exemplifies their resilience but also their capacity to absorb shocks and continue to thrive. While this has been a tremendous achievement for organizations that operate on minimum resources, there are barriers that have nevertheless persisted that restrict their further growth. The next section outlines these barriers.

Barriers to Scaling-up

One question I asked the respondents was for them to describe some of the challenges that have impacted the growth, impact, and effectiveness of their organizations. The figure below summarizes some of the barriers that emerged from their responses. They are divided into internal and external barriers.

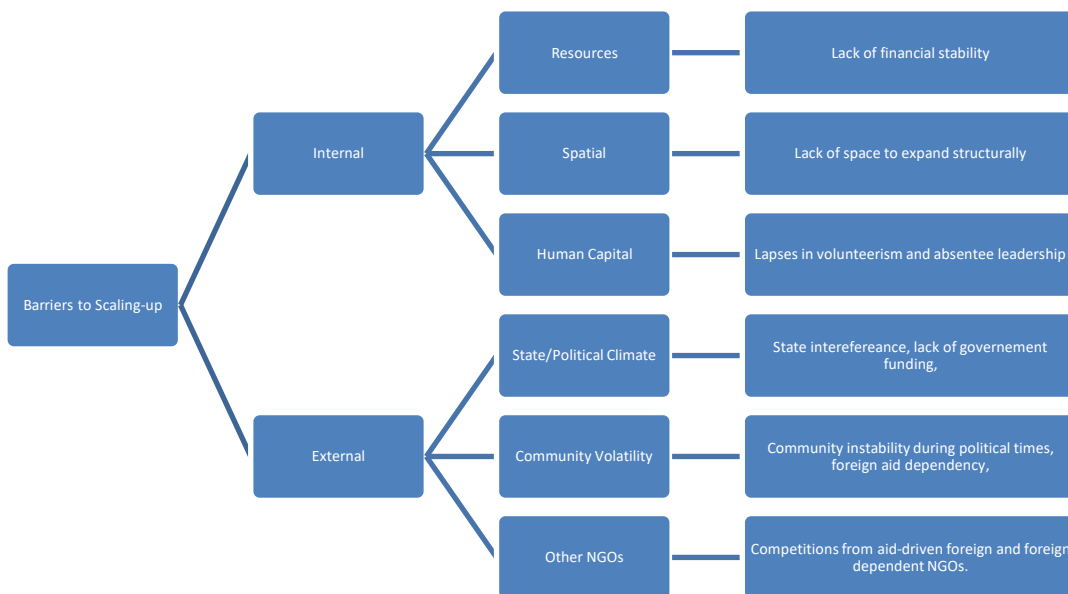


Figure 17: Barriers to Organizations' Scaling-Up

Internal Barriers

The internal barriers comprise of factors inside the organizations that restrict their functioning capacity. The respondents in this study identified three sets of internal barriers. The first one is the scarcity of resources and specifically financial resources. This is particularly striking because it revealed that while these organizations had a great wealth of social capital, it did not necessarily translate into a financial resource. While many of these organizations have diversified their sources of financial capital to ensure their sustainability, these sources only generate enough money to run the day to day operations. For major long-term projects, they turn into other unreliable sources such as government grants and funding from foreign institutions. Due to corruption and favoritism towards foreign NGOs by local government, the local grassroots have faced a stiff challenge in their attempts to secure financial support from both the government and foreign institutions. For example, one interviewee described her ordeal while trying to secure a grant from the National Government Affirmative Fund as follow;

“I have been following up about this fund with the area representative and it has been very difficult to reach her to sell what we do here. It was until last week when I met with her to get an application. It was a challenge even to get the application form from her. I found out that the forms were already distributed even before the funds came out. They had distributed the forms to non-existing organizations. That is an area that the government is doing very poorly. We have all the qualifications, but we don't get consideration when these funds come out because of corruption. This is a challenge for us people on the ground especially when we realize that the funds, we are supposed to get are just given to wrong people. There are organizations in Kibera that have done a lot and are transforming the lives of people in Kibera. And then there are those briefcase organizations which are not doing anything on the ground and are being funded”.

The second external factor that emerged as posing restricting the capacity of the local organizations was lack of space. All the respondents noted that they lacked enough

space to build permanent structures. Some of them had to rent small rooms which could not accommodate large events as one interviewee pointed in the excerpt below;

“Another main challenge is the challenge of space. We do a lot of activities, but we don't have enough space. We have rented three places, but all these places cannot accommodate all our activities. So, what we are trying to look for is space. There is a hospital down here that we talked to and they allowed us to use their hall for our activities from 6 pm to 8 pm after the hospital closes. We believe that if we could have a bigger space, it would be easier to implement all these activities”.

Spatial limitation not only impacted their capacity to expand structurally, but it also threatened their financial sustainability. For organizations already struggling financially, renting was a major concern for many of them. Many respondents were concerned about what would happen to their organizations if they were unable to come up with rent. For them, having a space of their own not only guaranteed financial stability, but also the growth and sustainability of their organizations. Unfortunately, in a place like Kibera where space is limited, it seems like spatial limitation will continue to be a great hindrance for these groups.

The third and last internal barrier to organization growth is the lapses in human capital. This was more pronounced when it came to volunteerism and absentee leadership. Many of these organizations relied on seasonal volunteers for help in running the day to day operations. While this has been a great resource for these grassroots, lack of consistency among the volunteers has been a critical barrier to their growth. For example, one participant noted that one challenge his organization face is when volunteers transition out of the organization. This means that he must search and train a new set of volunteers which is not only costly financially, but also time-wise. It also leads to lapses in service provision by the organization. This was coupled with absentee leadership. While many of these organizations had an established governance and

management structure, some of the leaders in these structures are rarely involved in the organization's daily operations. Others had what I will call 'consultation-only-leaders' in their top management position. These are leaders who live in other countries who are rarely involved in the daily operations of the organizations unless consulted for advice or donations.

External Barriers

Parallel to internal barriers, there were other external ones that presented a risk to the scaling-up process of the participating organizations. The respondents identified three particular ones. The first one is the state. Many of the participants cited state and political interference as a barrier to the growth of their organizations. For example, a lack of government funding was a crucial constraint in their financial sustainability. Even when funding for local grassroots was available through government initiatives such as the National Government Affirmative Fund, corruption ensured that these organizations were not funded. There was also political interference with local grassroots functioning as one participant pointed out below;

“The bigger problem is caused by politicians who when they see that we are doing big things, they see it as a political revolution, and they are afraid of us. Politicians want us to endorse them, but we are non-political and non-religious. Politicians have their organizations here which sometimes create conflicts because they do not want us to grow”.

The second external barrier that emerged is community volatility, especially during political periods. One strength that the participants identified about their organizations and the community, in general, is the social diversity which they often narrowed down to tribal co-existence. During political seasons when tribal politics are at peak, political conflicts have broken down staining this peaceful co-existence. This has led to these grassroots shutting down due to various threats. When they re-emerge, they

must start from scratch again. The reconstruction is a long and time and resource-consuming process which not only impacts their growth but also their sustainability. Realizing the detrimental impact that tribal politics pose to their organizations, the respondents have now become more politically involved. While they maintain that they are non-political in nature, they relentlessly engage the community in debates and conversations geared towards reducing political violence.

The third and last external barrier noted comes from competition from other NGOs, especially the foreign ones. There were mixed feelings about foreign NGOs among the participants. There are those who viewed these organizations as contributing positively to the community and therefore making the work of local grassroots manageable. There are others who viewed them as exploiting the local vulnerabilities for profit henceforth glorifying the culture of poverty in Kibera. Others argued that while these institutions have a chance to transform the community, the approach they are using is only exacerbating the problem they are trying to address. For example, there was a consensus among the participants that many Kibera residents had developed an aid-dependency syndrome. This made them unwilling to participate in organizations that were not providing aids especially monetary aids which happens to be most of the local grassroots. While many local grassroots have been focusing on long term individuals and community empowerment and development, the foreign institutions have been focusing on short term aid provisions. This has created tension between the local community and local organizations which are not able to adequately provide short term financial bail-outs to their members. This has led to membership shift towards wealthy foreign NGOs as one interviewee pointed out here;

“Kibera community has been reduced to be a hand-out city. We have so many NGOs in Kibera. There are so many international organizations coming with aids in Kibera and making people believe that it is their right,

we should be given money, and we should be given entitlements. For example, you will find potential talented people that can be key drivers in your organization, but they are not willing to sacrifice because there is an NGO that provides free clothing, food, etc. So, this handout thing has really affected us. Many people believe that if you want to run a successful organization, you need to be a handout organization and people will praise and appreciate you. But if you were to tell them to come and work in your workshop and earn money, they don't agree to that”.

In general, the list of barriers outlined above is not exhaustive. There were other factors that emerged as impeding the effectiveness of local groups. For example, forced evictions and demolitions incapacitated many thriving small local organizations whose structures are constantly destroyed or relocated to other places. There were also issues with constant fire outbreak which often lead to the decimation of properties and loss of lives. This is exacerbated by the lack of public infrastructure such as fire stations to fight the fires that are now becoming part of life in Kibera. Lastly, as one interviewee noted, there have been attempts by the government to tax local non-profit organizations. In addition, there have been restrictive and politically driven practices by local authorities to deny licensing to local organizations that are trying to scaling-up. One participant noted that she chose to remain at a community-based level serving a limited number of clients because she was afraid that if she tried to expand, the cost would be too high due to the corruption among the state officials who must certify her organization.

7.3 Concluding Summary

In conclusion, this chapter has outlined some of the factors that either strengthen or impede the growth, impact, stability and sustainability of local grassroots in Kibera. One unique characteristic that has allowed these groups to thrive despite the myriad

barriers they face is their organizational agility. This has enabled them to swiftly and effectively adapt to both expected and unexpected shifts in social, economic, political, and environmental systems. This has been made possible by the ability of the members to not only imagine but also to quickly adopt new strategies and alternatives in times of crisis. This ability to imagine and create alternatives to existing and emerging social realities is what has been termed as civic imagination in this dissertation.

Chapter 8

RE-IMAGINING URBAN SLUMS

The New Sites of Metropolitan Innovations and Resilience

“We proved that we are still a people capable of doing big things and tackling our biggest challenges”, Former U.S President, Barack Obama.

8.1 Introduction

In the last few decades, scholars within the field of urban studies have been struggling with how to break away from the old paradigms and regulations that have dominated both the theoretical and practical understanding of urbanization. The reigning neoliberal theories on the urbanization process have traditionally operated on the idea that cities everywhere follow a similar basic standardized template of development (Murray, 2017). This belief has resulted in a global scale impulsive replications of urban development practices that are rooted in the generic caricatured portrait of cities as glittering centers of social, economic, political, and environmental stability and sustainability. While this utopian image of the cities has dominated the public imagination in the last century, in the last few decades, it has come into sharp contrast with the hardened realities that are now defining the metropolitan experiences and lifestyles. This is particularly true in the expanding megalopolises of the global south that

have been subjected to the twin pressures of uncontrolled population growth and an unprecedented rate of urban inequality.

While the traditional image of the city has often offered a comforting assurance of social, economic, and political success, convenience, and privilege, the increasing rate of urban marginalization is now unsettling this promise. This is particularly true in the cities of developing nations where more than half of the urban populations reside in slums⁴⁷. Initially seen as a “transitory phenomenon expected to fade away with economic growth and modernization, slums have not only failed to disappear, but they have grown in size, and density in land occupation, becoming the rule, rather than the exception, for the city growth” (Smolka & Larangeira, 2008). A dense body of urban scholarship shows that as urbanization increases in low- and middle-income countries, so does the urban inequality and the growth of slums (United Nations, 2016).

It is becoming increasingly clear that slums are now part and parcel of the urban development process. In 2003, UN-Habitat called for cities in the global south to start embracing slums as the new forms of human settlements (UN-Habitat, 2003). In this call, the UN-Habitat argued that while slums continued to present many challenges, it was becoming apparently clear that their growth and persistence were inevitable. It was, therefore, necessary not only to re-conceptualize but also to find ways of integrating them into the overall urban development framework.

Integrating slums into the urban development framework requires the urban scholars to adopt a new language, one that is different from the traditional view of slums as petri-dishes of human misery that need to be eliminated. The work that this

⁴⁷ African Urban Dynamics (2015, p45). Facts & Figures. Ibrahim Mo Foundation Retrieved from: <https://www.tralac.org/images/docs/8549/ibrahim-forum-2015-facts-and-figures-african-urban-dynamics.pdf>

dissertation has presented is part of an ongoing search for this new language. It is a continuation of the existing body of contemporary scholarship⁴⁸ that views slums as places where the residents use frugal yet radical innovations to navigate the harsh realities presented by their environment.

Using diverse micro-stories and field observations, I have unpacked and exposed dynamic and creative innovations and transactions that are at the core of the livelihood in Kibera slum. The ultimate purpose was to further debunk the traditional rags-to-rags narrative of slums by providing practical evidence of creative reconstruction that is taking place there. By placing human experiences at the center of the discussion, I have used a social theory framework to expose the various ways in which the DIY (do-it-yourself) innovations in Kibera are compensating for the lack of formal service delivery institutions. The set of frugal experimentations captured in various interviews and field observations in this work symbolize what I have termed as the civic imagination⁴⁹ in Kibera slum. These experimentations, I have argued, offer a strong rebuke to the neoliberal conceptualization of slums as places of ‘metropolitan decay’. They instead confirm the thesis of this dissertation and other contemporary propositions that view slums as places of metropolitan innovations and resilience.

In the last four chapters, I have produced a rich repertoire of DIY practices that are transforming lives in Kibera. The goal of this concluding chapter is to offer an executive summary of this study by (1) recontextualizing the significance of this study to the urban development theories and policies, (2) rearticulating the methodological

⁴⁸ See Jacobs (1992); Neuwirth (2006), Gilbert (2007); Holston and Caldeira (2008); Roy (2011); Dovey (2012); Kayizzi-Mugerwa, Shimeles, & Yameogo (2014) etc.

⁴⁹ Civic imagination is the “capacity to imagine alternatives to current social, political, or economic conditions” (Jenkins et al., 2016 p 300). It is the “ways in which people individually and collectively envision better political, social, and civic environment” (Baiocchi et al., 2014 p 54).

processes used to gather and analyze the data, (3) providing an executive summary of the findings, (4) reflecting on these findings and what they mean to the theories and policies of urban development, and (5) laying down the steps for moving forward. My ultimate goal is to re-imagine slums as the new sites of metropolitan innovations and resilience. I argue that the practicality and inventiveness of the slum dwellers present new opportunities and generative possibilities from which important lessons can be derived to inform new urban development policies and practices.

8.2 **Re-Imagining Slums: *The New Sites of Metropolitan Innovations***

Achieving the vision of the cities without slums will require rethinking our views and understanding of slums and their relationship to the development of the cities in the twenty-first century global south. Studies show that about 90% of the global urban growth is taking place in developing nations with an estimated 70 million new residents being added to the cities every year (United Nations, 2015). In Africa, statistics indicate that over half of the urban population (61.7%) resides in slums and by 2050, this population is projected to reach about 1.3 billion people. In Sub-Saharan Africa alone where a projected 10 million people are added into the urban population every year, two-thirds of the urban population live in slums (UN-Habitat, 2011; UN-Habitat, 2015). In Asia, about 30% of urban residents dwell in slums while in Latin America and the Caribbean region, that population is estimated to be around 24% (United Nations, 2015). While national governments, local, and international organizations have worked collaboratively to reduce if not to stop the growth and expansion of slums in the last decade, the population of slum dwellers has been increasing progressively since 1990 (United Nations, 2015). In 2015, the global urban slum population was estimated to be around 1 billion people accounting for 1 in 8 people (PSUP, 2016).

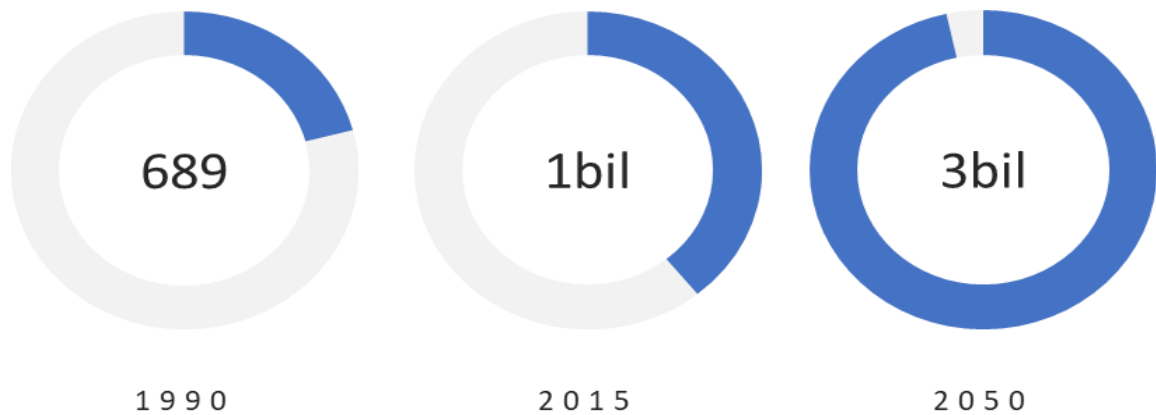


Figure 18: Trend in Global Slum Population (United Nations 2015; PSUP, 2016; World Bank, 2016).

Today, slums are spontaneously emerging as dominant and distinct forms of human settlements in the cities of the developing nations (UN-Habitat, 2003; United Nations, 2015; UN-Habitat, 2015). And while contemporary urban scholars are now coming to terms with the idea of embracing them as the new features of the urbanization process, they are increasingly challenged by the question of how to integrate them into the urban development theories and policies. This challenge is exacerbated by the very fact that nearly all the previously attempted policies and strategies to eradicate them have failed or have had trivial success (Smolka and Larangeira, 2008). For example, in Latin America, practices such as forced eviction and resettlement, upgrading programs, and

massive titling approaches while unsuccessful have been the most radical responses to the slums (Smolka and Larangeira, 2008).

In Kenya where I conducted this study, the Government has ineffectively employed similar tactics in addition to site and services schemes to ameliorate the challenges of slums. In early 2001 for example, the Government of Kenya in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and the UN-Habitat set up one of the most progressive upgrading programs for slums with a total budget of 884 billion Kenya Shillings (USD 13 billion) (UN-Habitat, 2008). The Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme (KENSUP) was meant to improve the livelihoods of people living in urban slums through the provision of security of tenure, improved physical and social infrastructure, as well as opportunities for housing improvement and economic development by the year 2020 (UN-Habitat, 2008). While this project was highly publicized and seen as a potential solution to the challenge of slums in Kenya, today, it has barely gone past the initial phase and has been considered ineffective. UN-Habitat noted that:

“Many existing good practices for shelter and services delivery can rarely get past the demonstration or pilot phase and tend not to be replicable. The main reasons for this are the lack of clear institutional linkages, the lack of economic sustainability and a failure to reinvest. New initiatives are often perceived as threats to existing structures in local administrations. Internal resistance to change is exacerbated by turf-wars and failure to share information among stakeholders within the administration” (UN-Habitat, 2002 p 5).

Despite these policy setbacks, many contemporary urban scholars have remained optimistic about the future of slums. Placing their faith in the spontaneity and innovativeness of the slum dwellers, these scholars have theorized that the solutions to the challenges of slums will come from their residents. As a practical extension of this theorization, this dissertation has provided extensive evidence of how slum dwellers in Kibera are participating in finding sustainable solutions to innumerable problems that

they face. The ingenious processes of constructing effective, efficient, sustainable, and adaptable solutions to their most urgent needs with little means and resources resound the pressing need to reverse our neoliberal perception of the urban poor.

This work has been strongly informed by the emerging school of thought that views the practicality and inventiveness of slum dwellers as presenting practical possibilities to resolve the growing urban slum crises⁵⁰. In his seminal book⁵¹, Anil Gupta asserts that the ‘minds on the margin are not marginal minds’ (Gupta, 2016). He expounds this by bringing to light a set of creative innovations developed frugally by marginalized groups independent of external support in their endeavors to meet their daily needs. He stresses that to address the most enduring social problems in the world, we must look towards the ordinary innovations that spring from the sheer practicality and everyday social experimentations of the poor. We must build on the resources that poor people are rich at. This study fortifies this proposition by providing strong evidence of the richness and progressive dynamism that has emanated from the day to day social experimentation in Kibera Slum. The study provides new lenses through which to analyze urban slums by focusing on the practicality and inventiveness of their residents and the possibilities they offer to the urban development policies and practices.

8.3 Research Questions & Methodology Summary

Using local grassroots organizations as proxies to capture the ongoing resilience, adaptability, and collective practicality of Kibera residents, this dissertation sought to respond to the following broad research questions (1) how do the building-block

⁵⁰ See Jacobs (1992); Neuwirth (2006), Gilbert (2007); Holston and Caldeira (2008); Roy (2011); Dovey (2012); Kayizzi-Mugerwa, Shimeles, & Yameogo (2014) etc.

⁵¹ Gupta (2016). Grass roots innovation: Minds on the margin are not marginal minds

organizations⁵² of an autonomous civil society in the slums emerge?, (2) through what mechanism, channels, and [or] processes do these building-block organizations mature?, and (3) in what ways do state and local actors either block or encourage the broadening and strengthening of these building-block organizations? To respond to these questions, the study took a qualitative design with a grounded theory approach with primary data coming from key informant interviews and field visits and observations. In addition, the study utilized secondary data from document reviews and media analysis. In total, 35 individual participants representing 26⁵³ local grassroots organizations participated in the interviews. These 26 organizations accounted for 70% of the initial sample size of 37 organizations. The sample was selected using purposeful and chain referral sampling techniques.

The interviews ranged between 45 to 90 minutes guided by an interview protocol⁵⁴ comprising of open-ended questions corresponding to each core research question. The interviews took place either at the participants' office or at an agreed-upon local cafe. The field data came from intense field observations while the secondary data came from the review of existing scholarly literature, local newspaper clips, local databases such as Map Kibera and Open-Schools Kenya. The analysis, synthesis, and

⁵² The term 'building-block organizations' has been used synonymously with the terms grassroots movements/organizations/groups throughout this study.

⁵³ Two organizations had five and six participants consecutively participating in the interview process. In other words, of the total 26 movements interviewed, two of them participated in the interviews as groups, one with five and the other with six participating members. This brought the total number of participants to 35 individuals representing 26 local organizations.

⁵⁴ See the sample section of the methodology section for details on the interview process. See Appendix F for a copy of official interview protocol.

interpretation of data followed a grounded theory framework focusing on identifying emerging themes, patterns, and processes⁵⁵.

8.4 General Findings Summary

For many, the aerial image of Kibera Slum, like many other slums, offers a scathing image of urban decay and inequalities. The densely congested shanties whose rusty rooftops pop up when one searches Kibera in Google Earth highlights what many have considered as Dickens' and Upton Sinclair's imagination of urban misery and insalubrity. And as one zooms in closer, this image becomes even more pronounced. The contours of struggle start to become sharper as the rusty brown rooftops become clearer to the observing eyes. A further look reveals more disturbing geography of poverty enmeshed within the chaotically constructed mud houses. From the malodorous streams of open sewers meandering across the slum to the eye soaring hills of garbage raising behind the crumbling shanties, the brewing distress and impoverishment deeply ingrained in the social and ecological fabric in Kibera epitomizes an urban crisis that has come to define the metropolitan experiences in many cities in developing nations. The inhumane conditions of living in slums like Kibera and the plight of their residents as they navigate the abject poverty has traditionally been the focus of heavy scrutiny and documentation both in scholarly work and in the mainstream media. And much of this scrutiny has often reinforced the neoliberal narrative of slums as places of social, economic, political, and ecological decay.

What is not evidence however in this traditional narrative is that behind these scenes of struggles, there is a subtle reconstruction that is taking place from within. A closer look into the daily life of Kibera residents reveals a certain order that contradicts

⁵⁵ See chapter 3 for a detailed analysis.

the chaotic image that one sees from above. While one sees a collection of haphazardly built crumbling mud shanties with corroded rooftops from above, the ground realities reveal meticulously organized interspaces that serve both as residential spaces and spaces for social and economic production. From the neatly organized fruit kiosks stretching toward the narrow dirt trails in front of the shanties to the movie theaters that transform into residential dwellings at night to the stretch of women selling deep-fried fish and donuts in front of their mud houses, this complex blending of functions offers a stunning rebuke to the mainstream view of Kibera as just a place of chaos and decay. From the sound of music from local barbershops to the screams of children from a multitude of schools tucked in between the shanties to the laughter from local youths selling shoes alongside the compact shanties, the lively spirit of Kibera residents outshines the rags-to-rags narrative that has traditionally defined their lives in the mainstream media. As one of my interviewees noted, besides the obvious chaos that captures the imagination of the mainstream society about this slum, Kibera “is a place that is vibrant. The people are very energetic. They have a very positive attitude. Most of them are very happy to be living here because they feel it is convenient and safe.”

In this dissertation, I have shown how the residents of Kibera, a place otherwise understood by its social, economic, political, and environmental disillusionments, use their resilience, practicality, collectivity, and agility to compose frugal yet radical innovations that enable them to navigate diverse pressures presented by their environment. In chapter four, for example, I have presented a rich repertoire of creative activities and innovations that are currently transforming lives in Kibera. This repertoire includes over 216 healthcare institutions (hospitals, pharmacies, and dispensaries)⁵⁶

⁵⁶ MapKibera.org

founded by local residents to address health issues and over 350 schools providing formal and informal education for over 50,000 students and employment to over 2000 teachers⁵⁷. In addition, I have presented detailed accounts of how locally founded grassroots organizations are addressing diverse community-related problems ranging from early childhood homelessness, nutrition, and literacy to water and sanitation problems to other social, economic, and political crises. Through their collective endeavors, these organizations have established;

- (1) Dozens of community-operated public toilets and bathrooms to address sanitation problems. This has resulted in a sharp decline in health problems emanating from poor sanitation.
- (2) A network of community-operated water ATMs that have increased accessibility to clean water at an affordable cost.
- (3) Information sharing channels and platforms that are now fostering cultural and political unity in a place once torn apart by tribal conflicts.
- (4) And a community policing network that fosters public safety through information sharing via the readily accessible mobile technology, social media platforms, and local news media networks such as local newspapers and radio stations.

In a place often seen as socially disorganized, I have illustrated that as a matter of fact, the residents of Kibera are incredibly organized as demonstrated by the growing number of local grassroots organizations. The creative assemblage of social experimentations presented in chapters four through seven offer strong evidence of the organization as well as the inventiveness of Kibera residents. In examining the various

⁵⁷ <http://openschoolskenya.org/>

factors that have inspired and continue to sustain these creative enterprises in a place otherwise scathed by the scarcity of means and resources, I have uncovered several unique factors that characterize the Kibera community. These factors not only stand in sharp contrast to the mainstream view of Kibera as a place of metropolitan decay and insalubrity, but they offer important lenses through which to reimagine this slum both theoretically and practically. These factors are summarized under the following themes (1) Social Resilience, (2) Community Attachment, (3) Community Ingenuity, (4) Self-Organization, and (5) Autonomy and Self-Determination.

Social Resilience

Social resilience is the individual and collective ability and capacity to tolerate, cope with, adapt to, and thrive in adversities. It is the ineffable agility that allows individuals and groups to absorb and adjust to existing and emerging social, political, economic, and environmental shocks and threats. The findings in this work offer indisputable evidence of resilience among the participants. The personal accounts presented in chapter five are all stitched together by experiences of loss, pain, struggles, perseverance, and progressive hope which have inspired the participants to be creative in order to overcome their adversities. This ability and capacity by the participants to go through traumatic experiences and be able not only to overcome but to remain hopeful and optimistic is what defines resilience. One unique attribute of resilience that emerged among the participants is their ability to compare their own personal experiences with those of others through a comparative gesture that chapter five referred to as sociological imagination.

Sociological imagination allows individuals to make sense of their own experiences in relation to those of others (Mills, 1967 pp 1-5). It gives individuals the

capacity and ability to compare personal experiences to broader social situations and histories and to connect “personal troubles to public issues” (Gieseeking et al., 2014 pp 357-360). It is through this comparative process that similarly disposed groups develop a sense of community and collectivity. In Kibera, this collectivity that has emerged from shared experiences, charged with collective desire for transformation and prospective thinking that is rooted in personal struggles and resilience has been instrumental in sparking the upspring of a rich portfolio of innovations that exemplify what I have called civic imagination among Kibera residents.

Community Attachment

Community attachment refers to the emotive and experiential bond that people develop with their community. One stunning observation I made from the findings in this study is that through socio-spatial experiences, Kibera residents have developed a strong attachment to their community. While describing their experiences and perceptions of Kibera, the interviewees painted Kibera as both their home and a symbol of their collective identity. One respondent noted that he sees Kibera not only as his home but also as an extension of himself and his identity and therefore, he feels obliged to make sure that Kibera reflects the best of himself. In another interview, the participant noted that Kibera is not just a place, it is a culture. It is a way of living that reflects people’s resilience and aspirations as they navigate the harsh realities in their environment.

Kibera symbolizes what another respondent called the “urban slum society”, or “a way of life” that reflects “our identity”, “our struggles”, “our strengths”, and ultimately, “our resilience” and “our ability to thrive no matter what”. This feeling was mutual among other participants that I interviewed who described their experiences of struggles growing up in Kibera as the main reasons why they chose to stay in this community so

they can bring the necessary change. Phrases such as “this is our home”, “my motherland”, and “I am a Kiberean” from the participants provide a deeper perspective and understanding of the socio-spatial relationships that Kibera residents have established with their community. While there was a strong acknowledgment among the participants of the inconveniences that accompany the lifestyle in Kibera, these inconveniences, according to the respondents, have strengthened rather than weakened the attachments that they have with their environment and with each other. Instead of becoming a source of desperation, these inconveniences have rather become sources of inspiration, aspiration, and pride.

The strong attachment that the residents have developed with their community, as described in chapter five, has made them more aware of their roles and responsibilities in the process of making, remaking, and being made by their community. I used the term spatial imagination⁵⁸ to describe this awareness that has resulted from emotive and experiential attachments to the community. This awareness and understanding, scholars have noted, is a critical predictor of how people proactively engage in collective actions that are geared toward making those places better (Fatima & Palma-Oliveira, 2016; Greif, 2009; Rising, 2013). In this study, the evidence confirms that Kibera residents have developed a strong sense of attachment to their community. And because of this attachment, they have proactively and progressively pioneered innovations and activities that are changing their way of life without external support.

⁵⁸ Spatial imagination is the awareness and understanding of the roles and responsibilities that people have in the process of making, remaking, and being made by the environment in which they live, work, and play (Gieseeking et al., 2014 p 357).

Community Ingenuity

According to the Oxford Compact English Dictionary⁵⁹, ingenuity is “the quality of being clever, original, and inventive”. Community ingenuity, therefore, refers to the cleverness, practicality, and inventiveness of residents in a given community. The findings presented in this study are consistent with this dissertation's initial proposition that Kibera residents are as a matter of fact incredibly ingenious and practical. The findings unequivocally demonstrate the ability and capacity of Kibera residents to create means out of no means by tapping on their innate skillsets, leveraging their unique ties to one another, and harnessing the readily available resources in their environment i.e. recycling trash into income-generating artifacts and [or] tapping on technology to address water hygiene through water ATMs.

Through frugal innovations and practicality, Kibera residents have created for themselves a stable community infrastructure that comprises of diverse service delivery systems, facilities, and institutions. This infrastructure reflects the participants' ingenious ability to imagine and enact alternative solutions to their problems without external support. The practical inventions presented in chapter four and five align with an observation by contemporary urban scholars that while places like Kibera exist outside the margins of what constitutes normal in development theories and policies, these places nevertheless do emerge as sources of new ideas, innovations, and institutional arrangements with which formal public and private institutions can engage (Gupta, 2013 p18). The practicality of Kibera residents confirms existing scholarly consensus that when observed from afar, slums often seem chaotic, impractical, and uninventive. However, as evidenced in this study, when we look closer at the daily social life in a slum

⁵⁹ Soanes, C., & Hawker, S. (2005). *Compact Oxford English Dictionary of Current English* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

like Kibera, we are “made all the more aware of how our own ideals have blinded us to the practicality of the slum residents” (Suttles, 1968 p 12).

Self-Organization

Self-organization is simply the ability of a group or community to organize itself and to create coherence and stability within itself without relying on external guidance and support. One of the founding propositions guiding this study theorized that contrary to the mainstream presentation of slums as chaotic and disorderly places, Kibera is a highly organized and integrated community functioning in a coherent manner. The evidence in this work supports this proposition. Using local grassroots organizations as proxies for self-organization, the evidence has illustrated that Kibera residents have increasingly become more organized as they strive to address common threats. This is evidenced by the growing number of local movements that are striving to unite Kibera residents along their common social, political, economic, and environmental concerns.

In a place that lacks formal institutions of governance, the data from the participants coupled with field observations illustrate how Kibera residents have uniquely organized their community to accommodate the social and spatial functions critical to community coherence, stability, and continuity. The meticulous blending of social and spatial functions in Kibera is better captured by the two-story shanties that act as economic production spaces by day and dwelling places by night or by the complex system of kiosks intermingled with schools, community centers, local pharmacies and dispensaries all of which reflect the progressive dynamism in Kibera. The informal governing mechanisms within the organizations that I interviewed also articulate how local groups are organized to address common problems. This self-organization extends to the community itself which has been able to overcome tribal and political conflicts by

establishing local organizations to resolve public conflicts. Indeed, a closer look at the daily life in Kibera affirmed what scholars have already observed that even without formal institutions of governance, slum residents are evidently highly organized and structured (Whyte, 1943; Suttles, 1968). This self-organization provides crucial theoretical and practical opportunities to explore the possibilities that the informal governing apparatus from the slums present to the overall urban governing infrastructure. These possibilities are particularly critical in informing the contemporary urban sustainability discourse.

Autonomy and Self-Determination

Finally, while the mainstream perceptions of slums have often portrayed their residents as overly dependent on external aid for their livelihood by nature, the findings in this work illustrate that Kibera residents are uniquely autonomous and self-reliant. For example, when I asked the participants how they have been able to sustain their organizations and livelihood given their limited resources, their responses demonstrated various self-driven strategies meant to maintain and sustain their autonomy from external support. Some of these strategies include for example relying on their collective inventiveness and practicality, diversifying their income-generating activities by harnessing the readily available resources in the environment, and leveraging the rich social capital in Kibera.

A strong consensus emerged among the participants that their autonomy has enabled them to be more creative, practical, and sustainable. In fact, all the respondents, while acknowledging the importance of external support, said they have intentionally chosen to rely on their own abilities because they want to maintain their autonomy from external influence. This autonomy, as some participants emphasized, has allowed them to

define their own destiny and direction based on existing and emerging local realities. It has also allowed them to be more inventive and agile in finding ways to deal with unexpected social, economic, political, and environmental shocks. The findings revealed that by maintaining their autonomy from external agencies, the participants have become more responsible and accountable in determining the direction of their lives and their community. This autonomy has enabled them to fight negative stigmas and stereotypes that are traditionally associated with living in a disenfranchised environment like Kibera which is often seen as a dumping ground for foreign aids.

8.5 General Lessons and Implications

There are two stories that define Kibera residents. The first story is that of fear, struggles, pain, and loss. It is a story of deprivation, marginalization, and isolation from mainstream privileges and luxuries. It is a tale of a people forgotten, ignored, misunderstood, and misrepresented. It is a rags-to-rags narrative of a people stigmatized by their own existence; a people whose ‘otherness’ precludes them from realizing their full rights to the city and her privileges. It is a narrative of a people with uncertain futures, a people petrified by the very institutions that are supposed to represent and protect them. They are often understood from their lacking and described by their worst moments. Peace to them is defined by the moments spent without a fire decimating their only livelihood or a government bulldozer prowling through their frugally but well-crafted shanties. From the mainstream perceptions, the story of Kibera residents is a tale eclipsed by hopelessness and helplessness. It is a narrative of what Antonio Gramsci called the ‘subaltern class’, a people denied the rights to participate in their social, political, economic, and spatial determinations.

The second story as this dissertation has revealed is the story of a resilient people, a resilient place. It is a tale of a people who through their daily experimentations, make ways out of no ways. As the findings in this study have shown, it is a narrative of aspirations, hope, and pride springing from collective experiences of struggles, pain, loss, and eventual triumph. It is a narrative of a place where people, using frugal means and innovations, are constantly contesting for their rights to the city and her privileges. It is a story of a creative reconstruction that is taking place outside the margins of what constitutes normal development in the mainstream theories and politics. While the normal development discourse constitutes formal negotiations and practices, in Kibera, development is defined by informal practices, relationships, connections, and negotiations.

As the various accounts presented in this work have illustrated, this second story of Kibera is a tale of an inventive community where the residents are constantly using ingenious means to create identities that correspond to their own collective experiences while pushing back against the mainstream mischaracterization. It is a narrative of self-determination emerging from autonomous social and spatial experimentations as residents strive to transform their community. The findings in this study have demonstrated that Kibera residents are practical and inventive, they are organized and coherent, they are autonomous and self-determining, they are compellingly connected to their environment emotionally and experientially, and more importantly, they are a resilient people. And in the words of Richard Florida⁶⁰, they are evidently the ‘Creative Class’ of the global south cities.

⁶⁰ Florida, R. (2002). *The rise of the creative class: And how it's transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

During my field visits and observations in Kibera, I visited places that plainly affirmed these twin narratives concurrently. I witnessed the residents petrified by the government bulldozing of their shanties without any notice while at the same time, I saw the same residents proudly picking up the leftovers from the bulldozers and rebuilding their shanties again from the ground up. I saw the residents who had lost hope after their only livelihood had been decimated by fires but instead of caving in into their hopelessness, I witnessed them come together to rebuild and to help each other get back on feet. All around Kibera, there was no doubt to me that despite the residents' endeavors to make their community better, there was still a severe shortage of formal basic service provision agencies such as garbage collections and sanitation and sewage institutions. But this lack did not deter the residents from inventing their own agencies to meet these needs as evidenced by the dozens of community-operated sanitation blocks and other local organizations cleaning up Kibera. It was clear to me that the residents, precluded from the formal economic benefits from the vast growing city of Nairobi, are struggling to make do with the little they have. But this preclusion and lacking, according to many interviewees, has only enabled them to be more practical and inventive in creating alternative economies to meet their most urgent needs.

Indeed, in the diverse anecdotes presented in this study, there is a compelling story of pain, struggles, fear, and loss taking place concurrently with a tale of triumph, ingeniousness, collectivity, and more importantly, resilience. The questions that remain now are (1) What theoretical and practical lessons emerge from this complex juxtaposition of human experiences in Kibera? and (2) What implications do these lessons hold to the contemporary urban development theories and policies, especially those examining the global south metropolitan experiences?

There are several lessons that emerge from the findings in this study. First, the findings align with Vasudevan conceptualization of informality and squatting as existing in a state of duality where on the one hand, “it speaks to unjust structures of dispossession, exclusion, and violence that define and shape the experiences of many of the world’s urban dwellers”, and on the other hand, it “points to the possibilities – complex, makeshift and experimental – for extending, improving, and sustaining life in settings of pervasive marginality” (Vasudevan, 2015 p17). Indeed, the evidence generated in this study does confirm the struggles that Kibera residents go through every day, but within these struggles, there are counter-narratives which emphasize “the urgency of everyday economic survival with aspirational urban identities anchored in making the everyday struggle meaningful and culturally significant” (Thieme, 2017). In other words, the findings illuminate the humanistic nature of slums without dismissing their dispossessions. By making the human experiences and experimentations the hallmark of the narrative of Kibera, this study offers a convincing case for re-imagining slums not as places of poverty and insalubrity, but as places where human encounters and relationships cultivate new forms of ideas, knowledge, identities, adaptations, and self-organizations. This provides important lenses to examine how disenfranchised communities like Kibera are fighting for their rights to the cities and their privileges through self-reconstruction.

The second lesson from the findings in this study confirms what this dissertation had theorized that Kibera residents, though living in marginalization, are in fact very practical and inventive in finding ways to meet their daily needs. This practicality and inventiveness, I had proposed, offer an important theoretical and practical framework to re-imagine urban informality, especially in global south cities. As evidenced in chapter four, Kibera is a rich reservoir for frugal yet radical innovations emerging from everyday

social experimentations. This, as Gupta points out, provides opportunities to engage with the urban poor. Instead of seeing them as dormant consumers of public and private aids, the evidence in this study suggests that we should see them as sources of new ideas, innovations, and institutional arrangements with which formal public and private institutions can engage with (Gupta, 2013 p18). This study practically and factually fortify the theoretical consensus among some scholars of urban geographies that the inherent resources necessary for ‘unslumming’⁶¹ the slum exist within the slums themselves (Bayat, 2007; Coleman, 1990; Field, 2003; Holston & Caldeira, 2008; Jacobs, 1992; Putnam, 2000; Whyte, 1943).

The third lesson illuminates the organization of the urban poor. There is a scholarly consensus that in addition to being indicators of a community’s social capital stock, grassroots movements are also an expressive articulation of community ability and capacity to self-organize (Coleman, 1990; Fox, 1996a; Putnam, 2000). Statistics in this study demonstrate that the number of grassroots organizations in Kibera increased by more than 50% between 2000 and 2010. According to the evidence presented, these organizations have proactively engaged in transformative activities and projects in Kibera. In addition, despite their limited resources, they have remained sustainable for decades by (1) relying on the resourcefulness of their members, (2) leveraging community resources and participation such as volunteerism, and (3) progressively engaging the public in their daily operations through participatory narrative framing, planning, and inclusive governance. This ability of Kibera residents to organize and to develop autonomous agencies to address their collective problems provides opportunities

⁶¹ Jane Jacobs use the concept to refer to the process of alleviating slums by strengthening their capacity from within. See Jacobs, J. (1992). *The death and life of great American cities* (Vintage books ed.). New York: Vintage Books.

for engaging community revitalization policies that promote inclusive development. In particular, this self-organization capacity provides an important framework for institutions such as the United Nations, World Bank, UN-Habitat among others that seek to engage the urban poor in their endeavors to achieve sustainable urban development.

The fourth lesson bolsters what this study had theorized that Kibera residents' attachment to their community has inspired them to participate in their community's reconstruction endeavors. In fact, the finding shows that one of the factors that explain the upspring of various innovations and organizations in Kibera is community attachment. This is consistent with scholarly consensus that when people are attached to their community, they are more likely than not to proactively engage in activities and organizations geared toward making that community better (Anton & Lawrence, 2014; Fatima & Palma-Oliveira, 2016; Greif, 2009; Rising, 2013; Tsaur, Sheng-Hsiung, Liang, Ying-Wen, Weng, Szu-Chun, 2014). It is also in alignment with scholarly observations that the sense of place which develops as people become more attached to their community not only shapes the way they "implicitly and explicitly bound environmental concerns" but it is also "shaped by the nature and extent of one's experience with a place" (Zia, Norton, Metcalf, Hirsch, & Hannon, 2014).

While the findings in this study illustrate that community attachment has led to the rise of transformative innovations in Kibera, this attachment has also produced adverse effects on slum policies that focus on demolition or relocation and resettlement strategies. In fact, community attachment best explains why the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme, a slum relocation and resettlement project by the government of Kenya in conjunction with the UN-Habitat had minimal effect. When I asked the participants to comment on this project, there was an agreement that this project failed partly because the residents opted to stay in Kibera than relocate. Those who were relocated, eventually

returned to Kibera months after because they wanted to be close to what they called their “familiar environment” or “home”. These strong attachments that Kibera residents have developed with their community provide important opportunities to explore the applicability of place-based and asset-based development theories and policies to the slum discourse. They also provide important lenses to explore the functional meaning of slums as built environments and their significance in the development of a wide range of competing practices and identities that exemplify the urban informality.

In general, this study delivers important opportunities for policy institutions to learn and to harness the wisdom, knowledge, and experiences of the urban poor. The significance of the practices illuminated in this study is that they are frugal, sustainable, adaptable, and scalable through better investment. They are owned by the community. And, they address the real needs of the people based on their experiences. By scaling-up these types of practices through investment, they have the potential to provide durable civic transformation in the slums of the developing nations and elsewhere where slums exist.

8.6 Policy Recommendations

One question I asked the participants in this study was for them, based on their experiences in Kibera, to describe some of the policy recommendations that they would give to policymakers and other institutions seeking to alleviate poverty in their community. Their collective responses coupled with other findings in this study emphasized a fundamental desire for autonomy and self-determination, local accountability and responsibility, and respect for local knowledge, wisdom, and practicality. The findings demonstrate that community engagement and empowerment are preconditions to any successful development framework. In addition to emphasizing the

importance of a bottom-up community-driven participatory approach towards local development, the participants stressed that a successful policy framework will need to;

1. **Be informed by local knowledge, ideas, and principles.** This, according to one participant, can be achieved through the process of ‘community insertion’. This process requires the policymakers to spend time in this community in order to understand the local needs, actors, and ideals. This, the respondents stressed, is important because it gives policy actors an understanding of the ground realities, the priorities of the people based on these realities, and an understanding of how local experiences have shaped the way people respond to these realities.
2. **Be participatory in nature with local actors taking the lead.** Many participants noted that the reason many well-intended policies have failed or have had minimal success in addressing Kibera problems is because they have left the local actors out of the whole policymaking process. A successful policy framework will, therefore, need to be inclusive and participatory in nature. Such a policy framework will need to actively engage local actors from problem identification and definition to policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation.
3. **Be grounded on practical research, not theoretical presumptions.** Any good policy needs to be based on local research and evidence. Participants stressed the importance of doing a community analysis in order to “understand the structure of the community first [and] identify what the community has and what it needs according to local realities”. Doing a community analysis will allow the policy actors to understand both the root causes of existing problems as well as how the past responses to these problems have shaped the perception of local residents toward policies in general. For example, the participants noted that many people in Kibera feel like they are being used as guinea pigs to test new drugs by

pharmaceuticals or to test new projects that they never benefit from. This has made people less willing to engage with policy institutions and even when they do engage, they want to be paid in advance for such engagements. Doing a community analysis first and engaging people through the whole process will help the policymakers understand these deeply rooted genuine fears.

4. **Avoid brief-case solutions.** These, according to the participants, are preconceived solutions to local issues that are based on theoretical assumptions about places like Kibera. For example, one participant pointed out that because of the mischaracterization of Kibera in the media, many policymakers come with the “savior mentality”. This mentality focuses on providing aids to the people based on the presumption that people in the slums are helpless. This aid-oriented approach, according to the participants, is a misinformed short-term solution to local problems which has created other problems such as “aid dependency” among some residents. To create a successful policy framework, it is therefore imperative to ensure that this framework is informed and founded on local realities and needs and not on some packaged theoretical presumptions from a third-floor glass tower office outside Kibera.
5. **Identify, strengthen, and scale-up local inventions.** The findings in this dissertation have shown that even though Kibera is highly disenfranchised, residents have generated a set of well-crafted inventions that are transforming lives independent of external support. Participants highly recommended that any new policy framework should prioritize strengthening and scaling up these inventions. This can be done by (1) providing the residents with financial capital to scale-up these inventions, (2) providing the technical assistance such as further training and guidance, (3) creating opportunities to external markets for locally

produced goods such as arts and crafts, and (4) being cognizant of the possibilities these inventions present and creating policies that supplement these efforts instead of suppressing them.

6. Lastly, **ensure accountability, transparency, honesty, responsibility, and relevance to local values**. Lack of accountability and transparency among the external policy actors has left a distasteful feeling among Kibera residents towards external agencies. Many participants expressed skepticism of external institutions which they believed exploit local situations for their own profit gains. Some expressed strong distrust towards the government and state actors whom they believed only come to Kibera during election periods and make empty promises and disappear after elections. Others were critical of ‘brief-case solutions’ which though well-intended, are incompatible with local values and priorities. According to these participants, a successful policy framework will need to be grounded on fundamental values of transparency, accountability, responsibility, honesty, and local relevance. These values are preconditions for policy success.

8.7 General Conclusion

In concluding this work, I would like to reiterate some statistical accounts that illuminate the cardinal significance of this dissertation to the contemporary urban development theory and practice. According to statistics, over half of the urban population in Africa resides in slums. By 2050, data indicate that the proportion of the urban population residing in slums in Africa will reach about 1.3 billion people. In Sub-Saharan Africa alone, two-thirds of the urban population live in slums (UN-Habitat, 2011; UN-Habitat, 2015). In Asia, United Nations estimate that about 30% of urban residents dwell in slums while in Latin America and the Caribbean region, this population is

projected to be about 24% (United Nations, 2015). By 2050, the proportion of the urban population living in slums globally is projected to reach about 3 billion people (UN Habitat, 2013; UN-Habitat, 2003; UN-Habitat, 2013).

Slums are now seen as prominent features of the increasing urban divide. Scholars and policy actors alike have continuously agreed that left unaddressed, slums will continue to expand, posing a greater risk to urban sustainability particularly in developing nations which lack the resources to deal with problems resulting from the development of slums. Indeed, during the Habitat III in Quito in 2016, the United Nations set forth a new urban agenda which recognized that to achieve global urban sustainable development, there is an urgent need to address the problem of slums wherever they may exist. This new urban agenda stressed the increasing demand for innovative policy ideas to match up the realities defining the modern slums particularly those in the global south. Scholars agree that to achieve sustainable development and thus the vision set forth by this new urban agenda, it will require re-imagining slums by seeing them as sources of these new innovative policy ideas rather than the inactive beneficiaries of policy actions. Slums, scholars have argued, presents a unique context to examine and demonstrate how innovation evolves in resource-constrained environments (Gupta, 2016; Pansera, 2013; Thieme, 2017).

The work that this dissertation has presented is a practical extension of this call for new policy ideas to deal with the challenges of slums. Grounded on the theoretical assertion that slums present unique environment from which frugal, yet radical innovation emerge that hold significant implications to contemporary urban theory and policy, this study has illuminated various practical inventions that have emerged out of the practicality of the slum dwellers in Kibera. Using various personal narratives coupled with other evidence from field observations and document reviews, I have demonstrated

how personal, social, and spatial experiences have inspired diverse innovations and institutions that are not only transforming lives but also incrementally contributing toward achieving the visions set forth in the new urban agenda. These experimentations present important opportunities to re-theorize slums as the new urban frontiers in global south cities from which important policy lessons emerge which have the “potential to resist, escape, and rework hegemonic structures of power in incremental ways in the everyday city, and travel across localities to inspire new shared solidarities” (Thieme, 2017 p14).

The narrative of the slum is often told from the perspective of what they lack than what they possess. In fact, the globally accepted definition of slums by the UN-Habitat⁶² stresses deprivation as the defining characteristic of slums. From this perspective, slums have often been understood as dormant recipients rather than producers of many theoretical and practical knowledge related to their problems. While slums are indeed severely deprived of vital institutions, infrastructure, and resources, the findings in this study prove that slums are in fact places of social resilience, ingenuity, collectivity, and self-organization. Through self-determination and self-reliance, the study has shown that slum dwellers have the capacity and propensity to produce important ideas and inventions from which the formal politics of development can engage with in the search for innovative policy ideas critical to achieving sustainable urban development. This study reiterates Anil Gupta’s observation that to solve the most enduring social problems facing the global metropolises, we will need to look towards the ordinary innovations that arise from the sheer practicality and everyday social experimentations of the poor (Gupta, 2013; Gupta, 2016).

⁶² http://mirror.unhabitat.org/documents/media_centre/sowcr2006/SOWCR%205.pdf

As the search for new urban policies to address the problem of slums continues, the findings in this work provide a practical framework to guide this search. While the study of slums is not new, this dissertation is unique because while previous work has placed economic, political, and spatial factors at the center of exploration, this dissertation has made human experiences the focus of the slum narrative. In so doing, I have shown how human resilience, agility, and practicality foster creativity in the most distressed environments like Kibera. The strength of this study is that it has not just presented data, rather, it has presented stories of lived experiences of the participants. Instead of focusing on the disillusionments that define lives in slums, this study has centered on flashing out the humanistic nature of slums as narrated to me by the participants. The stories presented offer compelling practical evidence upon which to formulate policies that are cognizant of the lived experiences of the people and that seek to build upon these experiences from a strength-based and an asset-based perspective.

8.8 Moving Forward

Moving forward, it is important to acknowledge a vital limitation in this study. Slums are heterogeneous and experiences in one slum can and indeed are different from another. This study has focused on a single slum in Kenya thus making it difficult to generalize the findings to other slums elsewhere. There is, therefore, a need for a comparative examination of how spontaneous and unconventional innovations and ideas emerge in slums elsewhere and their implications to global slum theory and policy. This comparative examination should, as this study has done, place human experiences at the center of the narrative while paying particular attention to the social, economic, political, and geographic differences across slums.

In conclusion, as someone who grew up in Kibera, I believe that through this study, my colleagues in the slums and I have “proved that we are still a people capable of doing big things and tackling our biggest challenges”⁶³. I hope that this proof of our practicality will inspire opportunities and policies that will harness our experiences, knowledge, wisdom, and abilities and empower us to be part of the change, not dispensable observers.

⁶³ Former U.S President, Barack Obama

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Appendix A
IRB APPROVAL LETTER



RESEARCH OFFICE

210 Hullihen Hall
University of Delaware
Newark, Delaware 19716-1551
Ph: 302/831-2136
Fax: 302/831-2828

DATE: September 19, 2017

TO: John Wambui, PhD
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [1119085-1] The Emergence and the Role of Autonomous Civil Society Organizations in Urban Marginal Communities. An Assessment of Grassroots Organizations in Kibera

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: September 19, 2017

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # (3)

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will put a copy of this correspondence on file in our office. Please remember to notify us if you make any substantial changes to the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Farnese-McFarlane at (302) 831-1119 or nicolefm@udel.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

Appendix B

HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTOCOL

Protocol Title: The emergence and the role of autonomous civil society organizations in urban marginal communities. *An assessment of Grassroots Organizations in Kibera.*

Principal Investigator

Name: John M. Wambui
Department/Center: Urban Affairs and Public Policy
Contact Phone Number: 973-883 5403
Email Address: wambuij@udel.edu

Advisor (if student PI):

Name: Minion K C Morrison, PhD
Contact Phone Number: 302-831-8564
Email Address: minion@udel.edu

Other Investigators: None

Investigator Assurance:

By submitting this protocol, I acknowledge that this project will be conducted in strict accordance with the procedures described. I will not make any modifications to this protocol without prior approval by the IRB. Should any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects occur during this project, including breaches of guaranteed confidentiality or departures from any procedures specified in approved study documents, I will report such events to the Chair, Institutional Review Board immediately.

1. **Is this project externally funded?** YES **NO**

Not externally funded

2. **Research Site(s)**

Kibera Slum, Kenya

Is UD the study lead? **YES** NO

3. **Project Staff**

Please list all personnel, including students, who will be working with human subjects on this protocol (insert additional rows as needed):

NAME	ROLE	HS TRAINING COMPLETE?
John M. Wambui	PI	Yes

4. **Special Populations**

Does this project involve any of the following:

Research on Children? **NO**

Research with Prisoners? **NO**

If yes, complete the Prisoners in Research Form and upload to IRBNet as supporting documentation

Research with Pregnant Women? **NO**

Research with any other vulnerable population (e.g. cognitively impaired, economically disadvantaged, etc.)?

YES

I am investigating how local grassroots organizations emerge and grow in urban marginalized communities in the slums. The study will focus on interviewing public figures such as local organizations leaders who have knowledge about the local communities.

5. **RESEARCH ABSTRACT:** Please provide a brief description in LAY language (understandable to an 8th-grade student) of the aims of this project.

The focus of the study is to investigate how the local grassroots organizations emerge and grow in marginalized communities, particularly in the slums. The study will focus on interviewing public figures who are the leaders of the local organizations in Kibera Slum, Kenya to understand how local organizations develop, what roles they play in promoting local development and stability, and some of the challenges these organizations face internally and externally. The goal is to use these organizations and their development processes to highlight the existing local creativity and innovation among the marginalized communities.

6. **PROCEDURES:** Describe all procedures involving human subjects for this protocol. Include copies of all surveys and research measures.

The study will involve interviewing the local organizations' leaders such as the organizations' presidents, managers, and secretaries. In addition, the study will involve interviewing the local religious leaders who are involved in community

development. The interviewees will be identified and recruited for this study through two strategies. First, they will be identified through publicly available contact lists identifying local organizations, their leadership, and contacts. Second, they will be identified through the referral process where I will ask one contact to refer me to another.

The interviewees will be initially contacted via email for introduction purposes. The email will include information related to the purpose of the study, the individuals and institutions involved in this study, contact information, the participants' information, the benefit of the study to the organizations involved and to the community in general. See Appendix C attached for the email recruitment sample.

A follow-up phone call will follow the email introduction in which the PI will clarify any questions the selected sample may have. During this phone call, specific dates and times will be set for the interviews with those individuals who will be willing to participate in the study. The study will use one of the following modes of data collection techniques: Skype Interviews, Phone Interviews, Face to Face Interviews, or Emails Correspondences depending on the interviewees' choice.

Before the interviews, the interviewees will be provided with an "Introductory Protocol" providing brief information on confidentiality and audio recording see Appendix D followed by a detailed informed consent on the nature of the study see Appendix C attached. The informed consent will provide information about the nature of the study, the duration of the interview, confidentiality information, and the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without any

repercussions from the researcher. The consent form will also provide PI contact information. See Appendix E attached to the Informed Consent Form.

Lastly, the interviewees will be provided with an Interview Protocol. The interview protocol will include information related to why the interviewee was selected to participate in this study and the interview questions that the interviewee will be asked. See Appendix attached F for the Interview Protocol.

7. STUDY POPULATION AND RECRUITMENT

Describe who and how many subjects will be invited to participate. Include age, gender, and other pertinent information.

The study is looking to interview a minimum of 37 interviewees. The study will focus on interviewing local leaders from local grassroots organizations. The interviewees must be at least 18 years of age and participate in leadership positions in locally-based organizations in Kibera Slum. Both male and female leaders will be involved in this study.

Attach all recruitment fliers, letters, or other recruitment materials to be used. If verbal recruitment will be used, please attach a script.

See Appendix C attached for the recruitment email.

Describe what exclusionary criteria, if any will be applied.

Individuals under the age of 18 years old will be excluded from this study. The selected interviewees must be engaged in any leadership position in one or more of the local grassroots organizations. The organizations must be currently active and involved in promoting local development in Kibera Slum in one or more of the following areas: sanitation, education, employment, and health promotion.

Describe what (if any) conditions will result in PI termination of subject participation.

If the subject is found to be under the age of 18 years old, PI reserves the right to terminate such a subject's participation in the study. While there is no foreseeable danger presented by this study to the subject, in the event that the PI determines that unforeseeable events may present harm to the participants, the PI reserves the rights and privilege to terminate the participants' participation in this study. Should that happen, the participants will be informed of the reasons for their termination.

8. RISKS AND BENEFITS

List all potential physical, psychological, social, financial or legal risks to subjects (risks listed here should be included on the consent form).

Risks are minimal.

In your opinion, are risks listed above minimal* or more than minimal? If more than minimal, please justify why risks are reasonable in relation to anticipated direct or future benefits.

Risks are minimal.

*(*Minimal risk means the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests)*

What steps will be taken to minimize risks?

While the risks presented by this study are minimal, the participants will be informed of such risks in advance.

If in the course of the study the risk changes from the minimal level, the PI will consult with the participants and with his advisor and the IRB department to determine the subjects' termination process.

Describe any potential direct benefits to participants.

The findings of this research will be shared with the participants. This will allow the participants to gain a deeper understanding of the local organizations. In addition, the participants, as leaders of the local organizations, will gain awareness of existing opportunities to work and collaborate with other institutions as well as the local community.

Describe any potential future benefits to this class of participants, others, or society.

The information gathered in this study has a broader impact on other communities as it will be highlighting the existing local creativity and innovation within the marginalized communities. The study will provide credible information and awareness to policymakers, social researchers, and community developers who aim at promoting social, economic, and political development in marginalized communities.

If there is a Data Monitoring Committee (DMC) in place for this project, please describe when and how often it meets.

No

9. COMPENSATION

Will participants be compensated for participation?

NO

10. DATA

Will subjects be anonymous to the researcher? NO

If subjects are identifiable, will their identities be kept confidential? (If yes, please specify how)

YES

Participants' identities will be kept confidential and only known to the researcher. Their names and contact information will not appear in any reporting of the study's findings. Rather, they will be referred to as "Interviewee 1, 2, 3, etc."

How will data be stored and kept secure (specify data storage plans for both paper and electronic files. For guidance see

<http://www.udel.edu/research/preparing/datastorage.html>)

Once the recorded interviews have been transcribed electronically, the audios will be permanently deleted after transcription. The transcribed data will be stored in both electronic and paper formats. The electronic format will be saved in a password encrypted computer accessible only to the PI. The hard copies will be stored in a password encrypted save box accessible only to the PI. Identifying information will be stripped from all material.

How long will data be stored?

Unless otherwise advised by the principal advisor and the school department, the estimated storage time for data in this study is up to a period of 3 years after the full completion of the research project.

Will data be destroyed? **YES** NO (if yes, please specify how the data will be destroyed)

The paper copies will be shredded. The electronic copies will be permanently deleted using UD approved technology.

Will the data be shared with anyone outside of the research team? **YES** NO (if yes, please list the person(s), organization(s) and/or institution(s) and specify plans for secure data transfer)

Data may be shared with the participants. However, the shared data will not include any identifying information. Data sharing will only take place through established formal means of communication such as through official organization emails and mailing contacts. In cases of mailed copies of the data, certified mails will be used with official signatures required from the recipient as proof of delivery.

How will data be analyzed and reported?

Data analysis will follow an inductive approach in which patterns, processes, and themes emerging from gathered data will be identified using software such as excel worksheet, hyper-transcribe, word cloud, word trees, etc. The data will be reported using diagrams such as word cloud, word trees, decision-making trees, written text, and verbal reporting.

11. CONFIDENTIALITY

Will participants be audiotaped, photographed or videotaped during this study?

Yes

The participants will be audiotaped.

How will the subject identity be protected?

The audiotapes will only be accessible to the PI. They will be stored in a password-encrypted computer. After transcription, the audiotapes will be permanently deleted. No identifiable information such as names will be used during transcription. The interviewees will only be referred by generic names such as interviewee 1, 2, 3, etc.

Is there a Certificate of Confidentiality in place for this project? (If so, please provide a copy).

NO

12. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

(For information on disclosure reporting see:

<http://www.udel.edu/research/preparing/conflict.html>)

Do you have a current conflict of interest disclosure form on file through UD Webforms?

YES

Does this project involve a potential conflict of interest*?

NO

* As defined in the [University of Delaware's Policies and Procedures](#) ,a potential conflict of interest (COI) occurs when there is a divergence between an individual's private interests and his or her professional obligations, such that an independent observer might reasonably question whether the individual's professional judgment, commitment, actions, or decisions could be influenced by considerations of personal gain, financial or otherwise.

If yes, please describe the nature of the interest:

13. CONSENT and ASSENT

Yes Consent forms will be used and are attached for review (see Consent Template under Forms and Templates in IRBNet)

NO Additionally, child assent forms will be used and are attached.

NO Waiver of Documentation of Consent (attach a consent script/information sheet with the signature block removed).

NO Waiver of Consent (Justify request for the waiver)

14. Other IRB Approval

Has this protocol been submitted to any other IRBs?

NO

If so, please list along with protocol title, number, and expiration date.

15. Supporting Documentation

Please list all additional documents uploaded to IRBNet in support of this application.

1. Recruitment Email Document
2. Introductory Protocol Form
3. Informed Consent Form
4. Interview Protocol Form

Appendix C
RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Greetings Sir/Madam:

My name is John M. Wambui. I am a former resident of Kibera and currently a doctorate student at the University of Delaware in the United States. I am conducting research seeking to understand how the local community in Kibera navigate local vulnerabilities through collective creativity and innovation. In particular, I am investigating how the local grassroots organizations emerge and grow as representatives of local creativity and innovation. This study provides an opportunity to understand and to highlight how the local community uses collective creativity and innovation to sustain local social, economic, and political development. This is particularly important in policy development to ensure that such creativity and innovation are accounted for when developing policies that impact this community.

My research focuses on interviewing community leaders who have knowledge of the local community like yourself. As a leader of a local organization, I am contacting you to ask if you would be willing to participate in this research. Participation in this

research is completely voluntary. Any information that you will share is kept anonymous and confidential.

If you are interested in participating in this research, please respond to this email at wambuij@udel.edu or contact me via my direct cell phone at +1973 883 5403. If you need further clarification about this project, please feel free to contact me and I will provide such clarification. I will be following up on this email with a phone call in a week or two to respond to any questions or concerns you might have regarding this research.

Thank you so much for your time. And thank you in advance for your participation in this research project.

Sincerely

Wambui, John M. MSW, MA UAPP

Doctorate Candidate

University of Delaware, U. S

Appendix D

INTRODUCTORY PROTOCOL

To ensure that all the information and conversations during this interview are well understood and documented, I would like to audiotape our conversations in addition to my note-taking during this interview. By signing the attached release form, you agree to be audiotaped during this entire interview. Please sign the release form attached [See Appendix B]. Only designated researcher/s on this project will have access to the content of the tapes, which will be destroyed after they are transcribed. In addition to signing the release, you are required to also sign a consent form in fulfillment of human subject requirements. This form indicates that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary, and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) there is no known direct or indirect harm presented by this interview. Please sign the attached form [See Appendix C] as your consent to be interviewed.

The interview process is planned to last between 45 minutes to 60 minutes. During this time, I will cover diverse questions relating to your organization's genesis, structure, demographics, as well as strengths and weaknesses. I will try to be on schedule but if time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research.

Appendix E
INFORMED CONSENT

I am conducting research to find out how the local community collectively responds to and navigates local vulnerabilities through the formation of grassroots organizations. The main agenda in this research is to examine how local grassroots organizations emerge and grow, how they mobilize information, goods, and services; and, to understand other factors that affect their functioning. You have been chosen to participate in this research because of your experiences as a leader of your organization and as a community member. As a participant, you will be involved in an interview that will take approximately 45-60 minutes of your time.

During the interview process, your responses will be recorded and stored in an audio format for future references during the course of the study. Once the study is complete, the audio recordings will be transcribed into the textual format and once the transcripts are checked for accuracy, the original tapes will be erased. Transcripts of your interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products that result from this study. Neither your name nor any other identifying

information (such as your voice or picture) will be used or linked to you directly or indirectly during presentations or in written products resulting from the study.

You may refuse to answer any question or stop the interview at any time. Withdrawing from the project will not result in any negative consequences for you. Essentially your participation poses no risks to you. The benefits will accrue to the institutions and communities that are the subject of this interview. If you have questions about this research, you may contact John Mucina Wambui at +1 973 883 5403 or wambuij@udel.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant, you may contact the IRB Chair, the University of Delaware at 302 831-2137.

Do you wish to participate? If you do, please provide your signature in the spaces below.

By providing your signature below, you agree to participate in the study. You will be given a copy of this form.

Participant signature _____ Date _____

Project Director _____ Date _____

Appendix F

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Organization Name: _____

Organization Type: _____

Interviewee (Title and Name): _____

Interviewer: _____

Date of the Interview: _____

Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

Introduction

You have been selected to be interviewed today because you have been identified as someone who has a great understanding and knowledge of the local community based on your current position in this organization. My research project focuses on understanding how the local community responds to the current and emerging vulnerabilities, independent of any state or outside help. In this respect, the research seeks to understand how the local grassroots organizations emerge and grow, how they mobilize to address collective needs, and what factors promote or hinder their success. The goal for this study is to learn more about the organization's genesis and what this can tell us about local creativity, resilience, and capacity for local sustainability.

A. Interviewee Background

This section provides an overview of the interviewee's general information and experiences. The questions are meant to situate the interviewee within the organization and within the local community.

A.1: General Information

1. Gender _____
2. Resident Status: Resident _____ Non-Resident _____ (*If non-resident, skip question 1 please*).
1. How long have you been a resident of this community?
2. Would you mind telling me how and why you got involved in this community?
3. How long have you been: _____ in your present position? _____ at this organization?

A.2: Academic Background

1. How much schooling do you have?
2. What is your highest degree?

3. What is your field of study?

A.3: Current Involvement

1. How would you describe your current involvement in this organization?
Probe 1: Can you please describe how you got involved in this organization?
Probe 2: Prior to joining this organization, can you describe how you learned?

B. Organization's Characteristics

The organization's characteristics questions focus on understanding the mission, goals, and objectives of the local grassroots organizations. These questions are meant to provide a general overview of the organization, its activities, services, and contextual relevance.

1. In general, how would you describe this organization?
Probe 1: How would you describe its overall mission, goals, and objectives?
Probe 2: How would you describe its overall accomplishment?

Probe 3: Can you identify the goods and services does the organization provide?

And to who?

Probe 4: Can you describe how these goods and services are acquired by the residents? Are they free or is there a fee? What is the fee?

Probe 4: How would you describe the attributes/characteristics of the community that this organization serves?

C. Organization's Genesis [Research Question 1 and 2]

The organization's genesis questions underscore the historical development of the local grassroots organizations. These questions are meant to elicit information relating to the ideas, factors, and concepts that inspired the emergence of the local social groups. The questions also examine how the ideas behind these organizations were initially mobilized to both the pioneer members and the local communities. Key issues measured include the idea of collective action, mobilization techniques, collective creativity, and innovation.

1. Can you describe how this organization was formed? [*Organization's Conceptualization*]

Probe 1: Can you please identify factors that inspired the formation of this organization?

Probe 2: Can you please identify the key pioneers?

Probe 3: Can you identify when most people began to recognize and accept this organization?

2. How were the initial ideas, information, and knowledge about this organization shared among the founding members?
3. Can you describe how this information was also shared with the local community? [*Information Mobilization*]

Probe 1: How would you describe the processes used to recruit members by this organization during its initial formation phase? [*Local engagement techniques, collective creativity, and innovation*]

4. What resources were initially required to form this organization and where did those resources come from? [*Collective Action/Response*]
5. In general, how would you describe the transformation journey that this organization has gone through to be where it is now? And who or what would you attribute the successes or the failures (if any) to?

D: Organization's Arrangements [Research Question 2]

These sets of questions explore various elements of the local grassroots organizations including power structure and dynamics, decision-making process, and patterns of community engagement. Key ideas examined include concepts such as collective action, information and resource mobilization, vertical and horizontal relationships, organization's density and stability, and community co-production.

1. How would you describe the structure of this organization?

Probe 1: In other words, can you describe how you manage the business from day to day/daily activities?

Probe 2: Can you describe how decisions relating to the functioning of this organization are made? Who is involved in this decision-making process?

Probe 3: Can you describe how decisions about the local needs are made? Who is involved in this decision-making process? [*Power structure and Influence*]

Probe 4: Can you describe how local members of the community participate in daily activities/daily decisions/routine business decisions/activities relating to this organization? [*Collective action*]

Probe 5: Can you describe how leadership generates participation/engagement from average community citizens?
[*Organization's mobilization strategies*]

2. I have a list of other local grassroots organizations here; would you be willing to have a look at it and identify which of these organizations your organization works with?

Probe 1: How would you describe the relationship between your organization and these other organizations?

Probe 2: Can you explain how these relationships help you carry out the work you do in your organization?

3. In general, how would you describe the relationship between this organization and the local community?

Probe 1: How is it perceived by the local community?

Probe 2: How does the organization perceive the local community?

E. Organization's Capacity and Stability [Research Question 3]

The questions in this section unearth both the internal and external factors that affect the functioning of the local grassroots organizations. The questions also examine the existing opportunities for broadening and strengthening both the local organizations and the local community.

1. In general, what would you say are the greatest factors that affect the functioning of this organization?

Probe 1: Can you identify the external and internal barriers that this organization faces?

Probe 2: Can you describe the impacts that these barriers have on the long-term sustainability of this organization?

Probe 3: Can you please describe how these barriers are navigated by this organization?

Probe 4: In your own opinion, can you identify the best ways to ensure long-term sustainability in this organization?

2. In your own opinion, can you describe the opportunities that exist in the local community that could make this organization more effective?

Probe 1: How can these opportunities be maximized?

Probe 2: Can you identify some policies you deem desirable to promote local development and sustainability?

F. Additional Information

1. Given your experiences in this organization, is there anything else that you can share that would help in understanding this organization?

Probe 1: In your own opinion, are there things that could be done to make this organization more effective and efficient in what it does?

2. Given your involvement in this community, is there something you would like to highlight about this community in general?

Probe 2: In your own opinion, are there things that you think could be done to make this community more stable and sustainable?