Urban Poverty in East Africa: a comparative analysis of the trajectories of Nairobi and Kampala

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to document and explain the changing nature of urban poverty in East Africa since 1970, in particular in the two cities of Kampala and Nairobi. It will argue that the concept of proleterianization is helpful in understanding the changes in urban poverty and politics.

Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania make up the three countries referred to as East Africa. They are contiguous countries; are broadly culturally similar; have a common lingua franca in Kiswahali; share a common history as former British colonies –although Kenya's history of white European settlement is a crucial difference- and all achieved Independence in the early 1960s and formed the East African community until 1977. Given this background it has been a commonplace in development studies to compare and contrast their experience –this was most clear in the early 1980s- when Tanzania and Kenya were respectively icons of a Socialist and Capitalist models of development. It as hoped that this chapter will provide some background to the subsequent chapters on Kenya and Uganda.

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History of Proleterinization's significance to urban Poverty and politics

This section is concerned with showing how the process of proleterinization has influenced the nature of urban poverty and politics in a historical context[1].
In broad terms it is possible to assert that urban wages in Africa have tended to increase in real terms up until the mid 1970s and since then there have been a fairly steady decline (Amis,1989). The main argument .is that the flexibility and/or the irreversibility of the process of proleterianization greatly influences individuals' ability to survive and to sustain their living standard under this economic decline (Amis, 1986,p 2-3). It is helpful to see these trends within a wider historical context.

Thus the East African Royal Commission in 1954/56 –and as the colonial authorities response to the nationalist threat and the disruptions associated with Mau Mau- the labour policy was to intentionally drive up wages in order to create a stable middles class. (In other discourses this was often referred to as a labour aristocracy).

After independence in 1963 the Kenyan Government sought to continue this policy through manipulating the "minimum wage" which was closely linked with calculations of family subsistence in Nairobi. In the early 1970s the Kenya Government faced a trade off between the economics of a continued emphasis on labour stabilisation and the political necessity of employment creation. The Kenya Government –like the majority of government in SSAfrica- chose the latter and disassociated the minimum wage from calculations of subsistence. This is important as the declines in urban wages that were becoming appreciable in the 1980s were the result of a long run process rather as well as with Structural Adjustment Policies (Amis, 1989).

What were the strategies of the poor when faced with this onslaught?

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[1] The section is loosely based on a paper I wrote in 1986. This paper to some extent seeks to revisit that approach and ask whether it still provides us with any theoretical insights.

"there are two main strategies available in this situation: increase income via the informal sector..; or secondly, get resources from the rural sector. (Amis, 1986, p9)". Nevertheless the first strategy was somewhat limited and that the second was not open to all household. An analysis of the emerging problems of landlessness and/or excessive pressure on rural land in Kenya together with some survey data in Nairobi suggested that "perhaps say a third of Nairobi's urban working class might be in [a] situation of almost total dependence upon wage employment….Because of the specific nature of Kenya's political economy, there are elements of almost an "exposed" proletariat within Nairobi…such a group could in, a continuing downturn, potentially be in an extremely vulnerable position. (Amis, 1986,p11).

The story of Uganda by the mid 1980s was much more dramatic thus "the experience of urban Uganda is terrifying; few societies in history have come as close to complete social breakdown….Access to land in Uganda,…, is almost universal. Hence the option of returning to the rural areas and /or farming upon the urban fringes was possible as urban wages effectively reduced to zero….In the late 1970s and early 1980s, purchasing power was permanently being eroded as inflation verged towards Weimar Republic proportions. This "retreat into subsistence" may well have saved Uganda from an even worse fate; it is estimated that fully 90% of all Ugandans were involved in both subsistence and monetarised sectors(Amis, 1986,p19).

The key point was that it was access to land –both urban and rural- that allowed the urban population to survive in Uganda. Meanwhile it was the urban population's relative dependence upon wage labour that made it more exposed to the economic downturn in Nairobi.

1986-2002 Interpreting the divergent trends of Uganda and Kenya

The mid 1980s is an interesting divide as it marks the beginnings of a clear divergence in the experience of Uganda and Kenya. Museveni's National Resistance Movement first took power in Uganda in 1986 which has slowly but steadily resulted in a stabilisation and subsequent recovery of the Ugandan economy. There has also –with the important exception[2] of the North- been a substantial decline in insecurity and violence. Meanwhile the experience of Kenya has been one characterised by a slow economic decline accompanied by a series of political crisis –predominately associate with the succession question- and disputes with the international agencies associated with corruption. The Table below captures some of the divergent trends.

Table 1
Selected social and economic indicators for Kenya and Uganda

Indicator	Kenya	Uganda
Population (1999)	29 million	21 million
GNP per capita US $ (1999)	360	320
Infant Mortality rate per 1,000 (1970)	102	109

[2] In the present enthusiasm for Uganda as a success story in SSAfrica the still remaining security problem in the North remains a very important and often ignored caveat.

Infant Mortality rate per 1,000 (1980)	75	116
Infant Mortality rate per 1,000 (1997)	74	99
Life Expectancy at Birth (1980)	55	48
Life Expectancy at Birth (1990)	60	52
Life Expectancy at Birth (1997)	52	42
Urban Population % of pop (millions) 1980	16% (2.7milllion)	9 % (1.1million)
Urban Population % of pop (millions) 1997	30% (8.7million)	13% (2.7million)

By 2000/2001 despite their different paths both countries have approximately similar levels of GNP per capita; thus Kenya's GNP per capita in 1999 was 360 US $ while the figure for Uganda was $320. What this hides is the story of relative success in terms of economic growth in the 1990s in Uganda and relative decline/stagnation in Kenya; in the mid 1980s Kenya was clearly economically ahead. Between 1990 and 1997 Uganda's annual average GDP growth was over 7% and the second highest in SSAfrica while Kenya's equivalent figure was slightly over 2% (World Bank, 2001, p35).

The social indicators tell a slightly different story; Kenya remains ahead but the trend is one of stagnation and sometimes reverse. Meanwhile the figures for Uganda are poor but are surprisingly slowly –given the successful economic growth- improving[3]. Infant mortality in 1997 in Kenya was 74 (per 1,000) which is almost exactly the same as the 75 figure in 1980 but an improvement from the 1970 figure of 102. The IMR in Uganda worsens and then improves: thus the rate worsens from 109 in 1970 to 116 in 1980 and then improves to 99 in 1997. While the trend is in the right direction these are still -even in SSAfrica- very poor figures on infant mortality.

The Life expectancy figures for both countries are appalling and clearly show the devastating impact that HIV/AIDs is now having. In Kenya Life expectancy increases from 55 in 1980 to 60 in 1990 but then falls to 52 in 1997. The Ugandan story is even worse; thus Life expectancy is only 48 in 1980 –in a time of major social dislocation- then increases to 52 in 1990 and then collapses to 42 in 1997.

One of the major differences between Kenya and Uganda is the extent of urbanization and the access to land –mainly rural- that the population are able to enjoy. Kenya is much more urbanised: thus in 1997 fully 30% (or 8.7 million) of its population live in urban areas; while in Uganda in 1997 only 13% (or 2.7 million) of its population live in urban areas. This difference has increased since 1980 when 16% of Kenya's population and 9% of Uganda's were urban. This is somewhat surprising, as it might have been expected that the recovery of Uganda's economy and the increase in security in urban Uganda in the 1990s would have resulted in increased urban growth rates[4].

The figures on *arable land per capita* are also revealing; thus in Kenya in 1979/81 there were 0.23 hectares reducing to 0.14 in 1995/97. The position in Uganda is more accommodating thus there 0.32 hectares in 1979/81 and 0.26 hectares in 1995/97. (World Bank, 2001, pp288-289). It is clear that access to arable land is much more

[3] This failure of the growth in Uganda to lead to any improvements in Social indicators was the "problem" that lay behind the seminal "Do Budgets matter?" study. (See Ablo and Reinikka, 1998.) The conclusion of this study was to very strongly argue and convincingly show that resources in Health and Education were not getting through to the local and/or District levels.

[4] Neither WDR 1999/2000 and WDR 2000/2001 contain recent estimates of annual urban growth rates..

constrained in Kenya than in Uganda –both countries but more especially Kenya have large amounts of semi arid land in their Northern regions. Kenya is much more further down the road of a landless poverty than is Uganda. (see Illife, (1987) for the classic description of this process of the shift from poverty associated with a lack of land to that associated with insufficient reward for labour and/or unemployment)

Finally the World Bank (WDR2000/2001) reports on the incidence of poverty. The latest figure for Uganda is a national figure; in 1993 55 % of the population are below the national poverty line. For Kenya in 1992 the national figure is 42% of the population are below a national poverty line (29% for the urban population and 46% for the rural population). The final interesting statistics relate to inequality; the Gini index for Kenya in 1994 was 44.5 while the corresponding figure for Uganda in 1992/93 was 39.2. These are both very high figures by international standards. This is significant given the argument that high levels of inequality restrict the extent to which the benefits of economic growth can benefit all members of society; or put another way unequal societies have to grow even faster –than more equal societies- to allow the benefits to reach all members of a society (World Bank, 2001).

In conclusion the situation in relation to social indicators in Kenya is still better than in Uganda but their trajectories are different. Kenya's performance is poor but has declined from relatively satisfactory performance. The Uganda story is one of a positive upward trend from an appalling low position; it will unfortunately take a generation if not more to repair the damage that the period from the late 1960s to the mid 1980s did to Uganda's social and economic fabric.

There are lessons here, also for Kenya, in how profound the long run consequences of social and economic disturbances can be. It is so much easier to throw away advantage and/or your economy than to build it. An additional lesson is the slowness through which successful macro economic growth in Uganda has –by and large- not been translated into improvement in health and education provision.

Nairobi: Increasing poverty, overcrowding, and change

In this section to "set the scene" we shall discussing the findings of some recent participatory research before considering some of the long run trends in housing and poverty in Nairobi[5].

Nairobi evidence from recent participatory studies

[5] This is an update of an article published earlier (Amis, 1996)

The most recent Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) in Nairobi was carried out in 2001. The poor prioritised their problems in order as

- Unemployment/low wages
- Access to education
- Water and sanitation
- Housing/shelter
- Improved access to health care (AMREF, 2001,pp25-34)

The significance of unemployment and low wages as the main problem is not surprising: however the notion of "unemployment" as a category is interesting and implies a deepening of poverty and increasing dependence upon either self employment and/or wage work. The additional observation "that although their children had completed schooling, many had failed to secure meaningful employment" is particularly pertinent to Nici Nelson's chapter. The chapter on "coping strategies" was significant as the idea of utilizing rural resources and/or kin was simply not mentioned at all. Three main coping strategies were identified: namely withdrawal of children from school; and encouraging them to work; eating less or only once a day. The importance of alcohol and drug abuse were also vividly described –indeed drunken respondents became a series methodological problem-. Thus the "consumption of the local brew is a major coping mechanism especially among the male residents….women who resort to drinking because they have nothing to take home for their children….so they try to escape from the reality (AMREF, 2001,pp20-22).

The other four categories depict the increasing environmental problems in Nairobi in terms of water and sanitation and housing and shelter while education and health are identifying the increasing need for the payment (cost-sharing) of basic services in Kenya. In one of the settlements within Kibera the participants were asked to draw graphs on these problem/poverty trends. The result depicted was of a sharply increasing line for all the dimensions identified from 1985 to 2000(AMREF, 2001,p17). This is clearly not a rigorous exercise but does provide some insights.

The first Kenyan PPA written up in 1996 had a chapter on the situation of female-headed households in the Mathare Valley and Korogocho Slums. This painted a much harder picture of the conditions focusing of one of the most vulnerable groups. The first point was to note that the majority of women living in these two slums left their rural areas because of household stress: thus of the 60 women interviewed 17% migrated because of a break up on their marriage while 13% came because of abandonment and another 13% were widowed and that they "arrived in Nairobi virtually without assets of any kind." (Narayan and Nyamwaya, 1996,52)

When asked about the poverty their basic definition was "When people are poor, it means they do not have food and clothing for themselves and their children". (Narayan and Nyamwaya, 1996,52). In terms of livelihoods the majority were engaged in some form of hawking or casual labour from which it was reported that between Ksh 20 and Kshs 50 could be earnt a day.

The environmental and social services provision were almost non existent. The sewage and pit latrines were frequently overcrowded and often people used other sources.
On health the report noted "that the cost of food and rent were so high that the majority of slum residents simply could not afford to treat their sick". While there are some schools but only 50% of the eligible children are enrolled. (Narayan and Nyamwaya,

1996,54). Food is plentiful in the settlement but too expensive. There were generally eating "reject from the butcher" such as animal hoofs and heads of chickens ! While "85% reported they did not have enough food for the entire family"; while 73% only eat one or two meals a day; finally in a crisis fully 50% said they would starve. (Narayan and Nyamwaya, 1996,55). Health status was also terrible with a enormous range of childhood diseases including diarrhoea, Kwashiokor, TB, measles, and typhoid. While their parents suffered from high blood pressure, many STDs, TB and HIV/AIDs.

The picture that this study paints of households at the barest level of survival with no health and education facilities at all. Furthermore given the lack of education the intra generational transmission of poverty is likely to be very strong. This appalling situation is captured in the following:

"The very poor women households heads had no source of income, no husband nor any property. Their families were large and they usually had very young children . In order to eat, they squatted and begged food and clothing. The parents had tattered clothes; the children were malnourished. Those with some source of income could afford one meal a day, clothing and rent. However, they were not able to take family sick members to a hospital or pay school fees. Both the poor and the very poor said they rely on prayer to solve their immediate and long term problems" (Narayan and Nyamwaya, 1996,57).

However it must also be noted that this is a description of one of the most vulnerable groups in Nairobi. We shall now focus on the environmental conditions of Nairobi's unauthorized settlements.

The largest settlement in Nairobi Kibera has over the last twenty years increased from 62,000 in 1980 to 248,360 in 1992 and an estimated 500,000 in 1998. The estimated density at 2,000 people per Hectare is the highest in Africa and greatly exacerbated the settlements environmental problems. It is difficult to explain the transformation that this had on the settlement; the most striking is the physical density and the simply appalling environmental sanitation in the settlement. In 1980 Kibera could be described as a pleasant environment once you got use to it[6].

The problem put very simply is there is not enough physical space for any environment services –which means digging pit latrines and providing water. This is greatly exacerbated as inadequate pit latrines leads to excessive use of existing latrines and where "one pit latrine was said to be used by 100-150 people" Furthermore this has lead to the practice of "wrap and throw" or "flying toilets" which it was used by 55 out of 79 (or 70%) in a recent survey (Malombe and Kimanta, 1998,4). The health situation of this practice hardly needs emphasising; the same survey also noted that malaria and diarrhoea were by far the most frequently diseases reported (Malombe and Kimanta, 1998,56). Interestingly –and in sharp contract to Uganda- HIV/AIDs was not mentioned suggesting or implying its stigmatisation rather than its low level of incidence.

Water is slightly more problematic in Kibera. There is a truly bewildering collection of pipes running across the settlement to privately run Kiosks. The problem was more one of shortage or lack of water in the system than access; this is increasingly becoming a Nairobi wide phenomena. Water was expensive at 1Kshs a debe but this varies with availability and

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[6] I remember taking Aid officials around it quite often on familiarisation trips when I was attached to HRDU at the University of Nairobi and people would usually remark that it was "poor but better than they had expected". I simply can not image that comment today.

there is a facility to pay more for "express water". In some cases in was reported that individuals have had to walk up 2-5 km (??) to get water and there were dangers in collection. (Malombe and Kimanta, 1998,3). Another recent study suggested that average daily consumption was five litres a day (in 1998); the corresponding figure in 1980 was 20 litres (Amis, 1984)[7].

Nairobi's Informal housing market: Rents

The population of Nairobi has shown sustained growth since 1960; increasing to 509,286 in 1969, 827,775 in 1979, 1,346,00 in 1989 and reaching 2,143,354 in 1999. Table 4 provides estimates of the population of Nairobi's main unauthorized settlements since 1960.

Table 2 Population Estimates for Nairobi's major Unauthorised settlements 1960/1992

Year	Kibera	Mathare Valley	Dagoretti/ Kawangware	Korokocho
1960	3,000	n.a.	18,000	n.a.
1965	6,000	3,000	30,000	n.a.
1970	11,000	35,000	41,000	2,000
1975	20,000	65,000	65,000	5,000
1980	62,000	120,000	90,000	40,000
1992	248,360	58,960	186,250	56,580

Sources: HRDU, 1971; Temple, 1974; LCHSUS, 1976; Hake, 1977; Chege, 1981; Amis, 1984; Matrix, 1993

In terms of structures the growth of the unauthorised settlements has also been rapid increasing from only 500 units in 1962 to 22,000 units in 1972 (Chana and Morrison, 1973, 216). In 1979 a rough estimate would give 110,000 units, which accounts for approximately 40% of Nairobi's population. The 1993 Inventory provides the most accurate estimate of Nairobi's informal settlements; thus they estimate the population in such settlements at 748,991 which represents 55% of the total population (Alder, 1995, 100). As a measure of the inequality in urban land distribution this population accounts for only 5.8% of Nairobi's land area (Alder, 1995, 99). It is clear that informal settlements have grown faster than the total urban population in Nairobi. The decline in the population of Mathare Valley is explained by the replacement of unauthorised housing with formal structures built by Housing Companies.

The figures for Kibera and are the most reliable. The 1980 estimate was produced from an aerial photo as was the 1993 Inventory (Amis,1983; Matrix,1993). Between 1980 and 1992 the settlement grows from 62,000 to 248,360 at an average annual growth rate of 12%. In 1998 Kibera's population was estimated, again from aerial photos at 500,000; representing a

[7] The latter figure was seen at the time as scandalous; I remember an engineer asking me to check if I had miscalculated as it was so low!

simple growth of 17%.[8] The estimated density at 2,000 people per Hectare is the highest in Africa and greatly exacerbated the settlements environmental problems.

Table 2 below provides longitudinal data on monthly rents in Kenyan shillings (Kshs) for the main unauthorized areas of Nairobi. The first point to make is that -at least for this time period- unauthorized/informal rent levels do operate as a housing market. It is therefore realistic to compare rent levels both historically and spatially. Secondly studies have shown that rent levels do reflect location, the urban land market and the quality of the structure (Amis, 1983; Holin, 1987).

[8] This figure of 500,000 was derived from a survey carried out by GTZ and published in a 1998 Field Note (No 1) for the Third Nairobi Water Supply Project –Kibera Water Distribution Infilling Component. It was not possible to check the method. The roundness of the figure suggests to some extent that this is a ballpark figure..

Table 3 Monthly Rents Kshs in Nairobi 1980/1995

Year	Kibera	Mathare Valley	Dagoretti	Korokocho
1980	104	90	120	70
1981				
1982	200			70/100
1983	220			
1984				
1985	100/250		200	70/180
1986				
1987	180/225	161	152	148
1988	150/250			
1989	266		212	234
1990				
1991				
1992	340	200	80/250	150
1993				
1994				
1995		200/350		150/350

Sources: Amis,1983,167: Personal Estimates: Lee-Smith,1990,110: Personal Communication, Seeley: Kabagambe and Moughtin,1983,241:DPU,1985,45-71: Holin,1987,22: Ladu,1989,28: HRDU,1990,44: Matrix,1993,31-42: Matrix, 1995,23

The major housing difference in terms of quality is between mud and wattle, timber, mabati and stone or block. In 1987 the average cost of a one room unit in all the low income neighbourhoods by construction was 139 Kshs (mud and wattle), 148 Kshs (timber), 153 Kshs (mabati) and 339 Kshs (stone/block) (Holin, 1987,22).

Within Nairobi Kibera is the most expensive settlement on account of its inner city location and proximity to the Industrial area; a major area of employment. Korokocho and Dagoretti being peripheral are the cheapest. It is also important to appreciate that there are substantial variations within settlements.

Table 3 provides rent level for the four main settlements, the rents start at around 100 Kshs in 1980. The rents then almost double again to around 200 kshs in 1982 (the Kenyan economy was in a severe recession in the early 1980s). For the rest of the 1980s the increases were relatively modest; although in 1992 the rent level in Kibera is 340 kshs.

The figures above illustrates the trends in rents over time. It is apparent from them that in real terms there has been a significant decline in both informal rent levels and wages over the period since 1980. Thus the average rent level in 1992 is half of the 1980 figure (50 from a base of 100 in 1980); or put another way the rent has declined by 50% in real terms between 1980 and 1992. This is the reverse of what is usually expected. However both the minimum and the average wage levels also depict very similar trends. Thus the average wage, which is a more reliable figure, in index numbers is 67 in 1992 compared to a base of 100 in 1980. The evidence is clear that their is a decline in real terms in both wages and rent levels over the period. Indeed this is consistent with similar trends in wage levels from 1975 (Amis, 1990).

By the end of the 1990s the rents seem to have become more differiatiated according to quality and the latest figures for 1995 range from 150 Kshs to 350 Kshs. Indeed the diversity of the unauthorised housing market is making it harder to monitor rents in such a simple way as suggested earlier (Jones and Nelson,1999)

The importance of rents and rent levels in Nairobi in general were vividly illustrated by the "political/ethnic clashes" that took place in Kibera. Thus "in late November and early December 2001 violence –triggered by a feud between landlords and tenants over rents- rocked the area. Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi visited Kibera in October and directed the provincial administration to explore the ways of making landlords cut their rents. Fighting ensued, which resulted in the deaths of at least 12 people, the displacement of an estimated 3,000 and rendered many homeless"[9]. While the dispute was partly about rent levels there were also very clear signs of Kenya's ethnic/electoral politics also playing a substantial part in this conflict.

The result was a substantial amount of journalistic reporting[10] on informal rents in Nairobi but unfortunately little of it seemed to be based upon rigorous survey work[11]. Rent levels in Kibera have been reported at US $ 20 (Kshs 1,600) a month by a Voice of America correspondent. Others noted that they were around 1,000 Kshs in Majengo rising to 1,500 for a room with water and electricity and a toilet. Majengo is a very old unauthorised inner city settlement in inner city East Nairobi. It is in a good location so it is likely that it would command a high rent. One of the respondents in the 2001 PPA noted that his rent in Kibera was Kshs 1,000 a month. (AMREF, 2001,p41). Meanwhile the Baseline for DFID in Mukuru -which is a settlement on the extreme eastern periphery of Nairobi- noted that the average rent in the areas was Kshs 500 in 2000.

The picture from the mid 1990s is much less clear. The impression that increasing differentiation in unauthorised rent levels is confirmed [12] The very tentative data given above would imply a increase in real terms from the mid 1990s but frankly there is not sufficient evidence to make this statement. Whatever the precise trend there is no evidence that the "burden" of paying rent *has decreased* for low income households in Nairobi. The 2001 PPA noted that after food rent was the second largest item of expenditure and greater

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[9] From the IRIS website

[10] I had a quite substantial archive of this material which I lost when my bag was stolen from me while working for DFID in another unauthorised area in Nairobi. I have tried with some success to recreate the material via the Internet.

[11] Thus even the population of Kibera is being reported as around 500,000 to 750,000. I think the 500,000 estimate being based an Ariel pictures is the more reliable than journalistic exaggeration!

[12] This makes the exercise of asking whether rents are increasing or decreasing an increasingly problematic exercise.

than education. (AMREF, 2001,pp16). In the next section we shall consider indicators of urban poverty.

Poverty Indicators

Table 4 below provides an alternative measure, namely occupancy rates.

Table 4
Estimates of Persons a Room in Nairobi's
Unauthorised Settlements

Year	Estimate and Settlement	Source
1980	3.3 Kibera	Amis, 1983
1987	3.3 Mathare 3.1 Kawangware 3.4 Dagoretti 4.2 Kariobangi	Holin, 1987, 16
1989	3.4 Kibera 3.2 Kawangware 4.0 Dagoretti 4.6 Korogocho	HRDU, 1990, 26
1995	5/8 Gitari Marigu	Matrix, 1995,8,23

Table 4 suggests a surprising stability in the number of persons a room unit. Thus the persons per room are constant at around 3.2 to 4.6. This is consistent with a more recent observation that rooms "accommodate households of three to five people." (Lamda,1994, 169). The average number of persons per unit in the 1992 inventory were Kibera (5), Mathare (4), Korogocho (5) and Kawangware (5) (Matrix,1993).

There appears to be no discernible change indeed there is more variation between settlements than over time. This is of course consistent with stable and/or in real terms declining rents which will not encourage households to share. An alternative hypothesis is that the number of persons per room unit is already at 'saturation' point. However while the total number of persons a room remains constant there is evidence that as a result of increases in poverty that there may be changes in household structure and composition.

Table 5 below provides some estimates of average monthly incomes in Nairobi's unauthorised settlements since 1980. At the outset it is worth stating how difficult and problematic such data is. The data can only be indicative of trends; for example the 1989 figure for Kibera is 558 Kshs in 1980 prices which would represent a decline (26%) from the 756 Kshs 1980 estimate.

Table 5
Estimates of Average Monthly income levels
in Nairobi's unauthorized settlements

Year	Estimate (Kshs) and Settlement (Average Rent as % income)	Source
1980	756 Kibera (14)	Amis, 1984, 93
1987	1380 Mathare (12) 1690 Dagoretti(9)	Holin, 1987, 17
1989	1467 Kibera (18) 1547 Dagoretti(14) 1213 Korogocho(19)	HRDU, 1990, 26
1995	1500 Gitari Marigu (23)	Matrix, 1995, 26

In the 1992 Inventory the majority of households in informal settlements had monthly incomes of less than 2000Kshs in 1990 (Matrix, 1993, 14). This in 1980 prices would work out at 663 Kshs. There does seem to be evidence that on the average and in real terms incomes in unauthorised settlements have declined.

In conclusion therefore the poverty indicators discussed in this section suggest that the incidence of overcrowding is remaining stable, although perhaps its composition is changing; income levels are declining in real terms and that the incidence of urban poverty is increasing. This is also confirmed in the 2001 Nairobi PPA which noted that the "majority of urban participants felt that the poverty situation had worsened over the years….from 1990-2000…and that parents had to pay for all the services that were previously offered freely by the State such as health and education". (AMREF, 2001, p16-17)

Kampala: Rebuilding social capital

This section is concerned with the evolving nature of urban poverty in Uganda in general but more specifically in Kampala. In this context the economic background discussed in the earlier section is worth noting again. First since 1990s Uganda has experienced annual growth of GDP of over 7% with a significant stabilisation of its economy. This has been translated somewhat slowly into improvement in social indicators. The political system has stabilised –except in the North- although the Movement remains a de facto one party state. There has been a process where social capital has been to a large extent rebuilt. Finally Uganda has been a favoured destination for both multilateral and bilateral assistance; and in 1999 was the first country in Africa to receive debt relief under the HIPIC programme.

Evidence from Ugandan household surveys

Uganda it is claimed has one of the best household surveys in Africa[13]. The Govt of Uganda first began monitoring living standards and poverty through an Integrated Household Survey (IHS)in 1992. This was a large survey of 10,000 households, this has subsequently been followed up with five annual monitoring surveys(MS1-4). This data is now available for analysis (Appelton et al, 1999, 1).

The figures for Uganda as a whole are impressive: thus the proportion of households below this poverty line declines from 55.5% in 1992 to 44% in 1997/98. Meanwhile the figure for Urban Uganda declines over the same time period from 28.2% to 16.3% while the corresponding figure for the Central Urban category –which is effectively Kampala- has declined from 21.5% to 11.5%. These are substantial improvements over a five year period. Furthermore as Appelton notes "that poverty fell between the IHS and MS4 [same time period] is robust to the choice of poverty line." (Appelton et al, 1999, 18). In addition he notes that "the data on private consumption from the five recent Ugandan household surveys provide a picture of rising living standards in accordance with the macroeconomic data on growth. The finding that urban living standards have risen is unsurprising given the many indicators of strong performance of non agriculture sectors and the visible progress in the major towns."(Appelton et al, 1999, 23). While there all the usual caveats about quantitative research this does seem to be a strong finding from a good data set; furthermore the conclusion is consistent with the strong picture of rehabilitation in urban Uganda.

Evidence from Participatory studies

It is interesting to contrast this finding with the latest (2000) Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) that was carried out in four locations in Kampala.

The work on the perceptions of poverty produced the usual diverse range of statements and observations. The importance of a state of helpness linked to an inability in "getting by" in the urban environment was recognised as an important synthesis of different view point. (Republic of Uganda, 2000, p13). And that furthermore that this primarily involved having access to cash. Thus "Money is the underlying factor in what constitutes urban poverty. Everything in the urban centre, …is monetized hence survival revolves around money" (Republic of Uganda, 2000, pxvi).

On the indicators of poverty the following were mentioned: lack of money resulting in not being able to buy basic necessities (food, education, clothes, shelter and medical care); stress from helpness at not being able to solve his or her problems; inability to borrow from financial institutions [formal ?]; large families; poor latrines and garbage collection and lack of access to roads(Republic of Uganda, 2000, pxvi).

The causes of poverty were equally diverse and included: high taxes; lack of education/skills resulting in low paid jobs; ill health; limited or no land; poor planning and policy and excessive competition from the sale of the same commodity (Republic of Uganda, 2000, pxvii). This is again typical but the "high taxes" and "limited or no land" are worth commenting upon.

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[13] Personal Communication DFID statistical advisor Sept 2001

Uganda –through its Graduated tax- which is linked to an individuals ID card is a local "income tax" that is charged on almost all households –even those on very modest incomes. Kampala City Council (KCC) and its *askaris* often levy this through road blocks on any "caught" individual. While potentially a "buoyant" a source of revenue for Uganda local government; it collection is highly regressive and involves tax inspectors in a collection procedure method that is close to the levy of protection money or an arbitrary police bribe.

For our previous discussion the comments on land are particularly interesting. "Land was viewed by communities as the most important means of production and source of income, without which one is regarded as poor. Land has generally become unavailable and inaccessible in Kampala….has led to a thriving land market…Land for farming is no longer available in the urban areas such that people have to depend upon markets for their daily needs implying that whatever is earned is spent on purchasing food" (Republic of Uganda, 2000, p20). This indicates that the option of urban farming upon which the urban poor in the late 1980s and early 1990s depended upon are becoming both a) a harder option as urban land increasing has a commercial value but also perhaps b) that it is not as important as before.

Vulnerability was seen as "where a person, household or community may easily become worse off…" The entire community was susceptible to flooding as a shock; "they were all equally affected by the flooding problem during the rain season" (Republic of Uganda, 2000, p37). This problem of poor drainage and flooding was very strongly represented through the study as a major problem and/or issue. This is interesting as there is relatively little literature on the negative aspects of flooding in poor urban areas. Flooding is clearly a major problem to low income households in terms of hassel but also in terms of asset loss and increased spread of disease.

In terms of specific groups the following were identified: "widows with dependants especially orphans, AIDs victims, the elderly…, the disabled, unemployed youth, illiterate female youth and single mothers….These vulnerable groups usually have few very or no productive assets, lack vocational skills, are sometimes isolated and excluded, and lack guidance[14] and social support" (Republic of Uganda, 2000, xviii).

Finally the participatory work on trends in poverty was sharply contrasting with the quantitative household survey work noted earlier. Thus the PPA in it executive summary notes that "Communities in Kampala felt that poverty was increasing" (Republic of Uganda, 2000, xvi). And then explain them in terms of the following reasons

- Retrenchment and general lack of jobs
- Increased flooding
- Pressure from extended families
- High taxes
- Increasing disease incidence
- Flooding [Sic]
- Poor Sanitation

[14] The importance of moral dimensions to poverty were identified in participatory work quite strongly in the studies in Kenya and Uganda. Even the street children in Kenya had very strong moral interpretations of their position (reference in Nelson and Jones) It is worth noting that these were not outsiders stereo types but were views held by the poor themselves. However the two are clearly not unrelated.

- Essential commodities available but too expensive
- Low income but high cost of living
- Discrimination and nepotism
- Reduced farming and increased urbanisation

The executive summary is clearly written by a more analytical author than the rest of the report and generally does an excellent job in pulling together what are often very divergent statements. However in this case the statement that poverty is worsening is not clearly borne out by the text. This observation is also confirmed from recent research in Bwaise which confirms a general economic improvement over the last twenty years; although this is more at the level of households being better able to "survive" than in the past rather than major household improvement and/or development. (Gifford, 2001)

My interpretation is also to note that the reasons for this worsening poverty reflect a multi-dimensional view of poverty and that this multi dimensional poverty may be increasing alongside the overall improvement to the economic dimensions of poverty. The high emphasis on environmental factors –flooding and sanitation and disease- is significant. The contrast with similar exercises in India which were carried out in Indian slum projects *after* environmental improvements have been made is noteworthy: in these cases the environmental aspects of poverty were not frequently commented upon. (Kar, 1997: Amis, 2001).

The next simplistic observation is to note the tendency to assume in all cases that poverty is worsening. This is as true of the poor themselves and local aid interlocutors! There are always individuals for whom this is true alongside general improvements. The impact of such shocks –especially illness- has been well documented elsewhere (Pryer, 1996, Amis, 2001). Indeed the scale and extent of HIV/AIDS in Kampala is such as to make it more like a macro trend[15] than a simple shock. (Wallmann, 1996).

The final and important observation which we shall return to in the conclusion and which implicitly underlies this paper is the necessity of disaggregating shocks, short run developments and long run historical trends. Thus it is quite possible that the nature of poverty in Uganda (and Kenya) is changing in the way that Illife suggests; in terms of moving to a land scarce and labour plenty economy (or increasing proleterianization in a different discourse) alongside improvements –short or medium term- in economic activity.

It is therefore entirely consistent that participatory work may focus upon for example long run historical trends and individual shocks while household surveys tend to pick up the short run economic trends.

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[15] I am grateful to my Phd student Julie Gifford for this insight.

Summary

Summary of the two discourses

In this paper we have tried to show the contrasting stories of the urban poor in two cities in East Africa, namely Nairobi and Kampala. The Table below is a very simple attempt to capture the stories from 1955. I have replace the idea of *Proleterianization* with a rather looser notion of whether survival options were generally widening or lessening/narrowing.

Towards a typology of urban growth and survival option in Nairobi and Kampala from 1955 to 2000

	Lessen survival options	*Widen survival options*
Slow or non growth	*Nbi 1985-2000*	*Kla 1970-1985*
Fast growth	*Kla 1985-2000* *Nbi 1970-1985*	*Nbi 1955-1970* *Kla 1955-1970*

This is an attempt to capture the long run trends that Illife discusses in the changing nature of African economies. This I have juxtaposed with the dominant growth of the period. There are clearly some heroic assumptions here. Nevertheless I do think that this captures the changes that have taken place over the last forty years.

Thus the late colonial period and the 1960s both cities might be characterised by fast economic growth and a widening of survival options partly as the departing colonial power and the Independence process created many new openings. This is the era that lead to the high rates of urban growth and an "urban bias" that has been noted else where (Weeks and Jamal, 1988). Since then the two cities have diverged.

In the second period (1970-1985) Kampala was characterised by slow growth/or decline and (major political insecurity) but because of the availability of access to land and other factors the survival options did not narrow that much which allowed the population to survive an appalling economic onslaught. Meanwhile Nairobi was still benefiting from urban economic growth but the options especially in terms of an increasingly wage dependent workforce and the dramatic commercialization of unauthorised settlements were beginning to narrow. The final period (1985-2000) –which this paper had mainly been concerned with- is one of high growth but the beginning of a process of the narrowing of survival options in Kampala; while in the same period Nairobi has experienced both slow growth and an lessening of options. This I think accounts for the moderately positive story we have been telling about Kampala and the worsening story of urban poverty in Nairobi respectively. Nevertheless there is an overall process of convergence in poverty levels over the time period from very different routes. The major difference is the truly exceptional densities and environmental problems in the settlement of Kibera in Nairobi.

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