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identifying routes to social justice

ESID Working Paper No. 146

Carrot, stick and statute:
Elite strategies and contested dominance in Kampala

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June 2020

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Abstract

Although Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) has dominated Uganda's political scene for over three decades, the capital Kampala refuses to submit to the NRM's grip. As opposition activism in the city has become increasingly explosive, the ruling elite has developed a widening range of strategies to try and win urban support and constrain opposition. In this paper, we subject the NRM's strategies over the decade 2010-2020 to close scrutiny. We explore elite strategies pursued both from the 'top down', through legal and administrative manoeuvres and a ramping up of violent coercion, and from the 'bottom up', through attempts to build support among urban youth and infiltrate organisations in the urban informal transport sector. Although this evolving suite of strategies and tactics has met with some success in specific places and times, opposition has constantly resurfaced. Overall, efforts to entrench political dominance of the capital have repeatedly failed; yet challenges to the regime's dominance have also been unable to weaken it in any sustained way. We examine why each strategy for dominance has produced limited gains, arguing that together these strategies reproduced a situation of intensely contested control, in which no single group or elite can completely dominate the city.

1. Introduction

President Yoweri K. Museveni seized power in 1986, following a five-year protracted guerrilla war in Uganda. For his first decade in power, his stated commitment to democracy through a 'no-party' Movement system, in which anyone could stand for office, achieved wide international admiration. So, too, did an apparently deep system of political decentralisation aimed at transforming the system of 'resistance councils' that evolved during the civil war into a five-tier system of local government and, as donor resources flowed into Uganda, the country became internationally renowned for radical improvements in governance. By the late 1990s and early 2000s, perceptions of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government began to change. The 2001 and 2006 elections were marred by significant manipulation and violence, signalling a change in NRM politics and the sense that, having successfully established dominance in the first decade of its rule, the regime was seeking to maintain this order at all costs. Through a wide range of strategies and tactics, the NRM elite has maintained its dominance of the political scene in the face of an increasingly organised and youthful opposition. By 2020, having held power for 34 years, Museveni is among the longest standing current rulers in Africa, representing one of the most remarkable stories of continued dominance by a particular ruling elite in modern times (outside of communist one-party systems).

This undeniable dominance has, however, never fully extended to the capital city. Kampala has stubbornly resisted submitting to the NRM's political grip for over three decades, despite both overt and covert attempts to control it. The political and economic significance of Kampala, which is the administrative and political capital, as well as focal point of oppositional politics and youth organisation, cannot be overstated. As the city population has grown and Uganda gradually continued to urbanise, the NRM has shifted from largely ignoring the city – focusing instead on its rural heartlands – to a range of strategies and tactics to increase its influence and control in Kampala, and increasingly also in the surrounding Wakiso District (Kafeero 2017). Though present for over two decades now, threats to elite dominance in the city have become even more pronounced since 2017, with the emergence of Robert Kyagulani (aka Bobi Wine) as a major political figure with an urban support base.

Despite its failure to successfully dominate the city politically, the regime's challengers in Kampala have also never managed to weaken central control over urban governance and resources in any sustained way. In exploring the varying strategies that the ruling elite has used to try and dominate Kampala, this paper therefore considers why the city remains a space of continually contested – but not substantially weakened – central control. We explore three particular strategic approaches to analyse the regime's efforts to control the city, and how these have been responded to by urban populations, with a particular focus on the decade 2010-2020. The first involves a range of high-level efforts to co-opt and coerce opposition politicians, with growing attention to politicians whose key roles and support base are in the capital city. The second involves efforts to control the city by administrative means, deploying

legislative manoeuvres and institutional restructuring to do so. The third focuses on the co-option and manipulation of urban youth, using money and other incentives to try and engineer support for the NRM. We explore the underlying rationale for these strategies as they have evolved over time, and examine how and why each approach has only produced limited gains, ultimately reproducing a situation of intensely contested control, in which no single group or political force completely dominates the city.

This paper is part of a broader comparative study funded by the Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Centre, the conceptual framing for which is provided in the paper by Goodfellow and Jackman (2020). Our study used a combination of methods, including: (1) a review of relevant literature and policy and legal documents, including government bills and acts such as the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) Act, 2010 and subsequent 2015 amendments, and Court applications and judgements; (2) consulting both national and international print and electronic media, to understand the key underlying urban dynamics and political positions, interests, and contestations among key actors in the city; and (3) conducting key informant interviews with key actors and interest groups in the city. The interviews were conducted in 2018 and 2019 and included top political leaders in the city, such as members of parliament (Kampala City Parliamentary Caucus, Presidential Affairs Committee of Parliament, Shadow Minister for Local Government), the lord mayor, lord councillors, the Office of the Executive Director, the officer for the minister of Kampala and metropolitan affairs, Uganda police force, *boda-boda* (motorcycle taxi) drivers, and specific youth groups in Kampala City and surrounding municipalities that have caught the attention of the president and received cash or other favours. We also draw on some earlier interviews by the authors.

2. From democratic high hopes to entrenched dominance: the evolution of Uganda's national political settlement

2.1 A timeline of dominance

In his autobiography, *Sowing the Mustard Seed* (1997), Museveni contends that the NRM had only two fundamental roles on taking power in 1986: the first was to lay a firm foundation and prepare the ground for security and political stability; and the second was to ensure orderly succession of political authority. The security situation in Uganda improved dramatically after the NRM's victory, with Kampala, the central business centre and capital city, being the first to recover from the aftermath of the protracted bush war. The rest of the country took a little longer, particularly the Luweero Triangle that had been at the heart of the conflict between the Ugandan army and the National Resistance Army. Security in Northern Uganda was severely disrupted from 1989, with the emergence of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) resulting in a 20-year civil war in the North.

Despite the continuing conflict in the North, the establishment of security elsewhere meant that for the first decade of his rule, Museveni and the NRM were generally

popular, with the war-weary population both at home and abroad. His initial reconstruction programme – especially economic recovery measures, gender equality initiatives, education and the fight against HIV/AIDS – met with considerable success and approval. Several authors note that Museveni provided donors seeking an African success story with an intellectually sophisticated yet compliant partner (Hansen and Twaddle 1998; Kuteesa et al. 2010; Tripp 2010). His invention of a 'no-party' system that involved deep democratic principles, but without divisive party politics, was innovative and initially widely accepted as sensible, in the context of Uganda's violent recent past that had heightened ethnic, regional and religious divisions (Mugaju and Oloka-Onyango 2000; Carbone 2008). Meanwhile, the decision to reinstitute most of the ancient Kingdoms in 1993, albeit in a purely 'cultural' role, also ensured support in Central and Western Uganda.

By the mid-1990s, there were signs that the 'honeymoon' period was over, as discontent grew over the no-party system, land reform, and continuing instability in Northern Uganda. Despite evidence of democratic impulses, with the introduction of the country's new constitution in 1995 and increased assertiveness of the legislature and media (Nakamura and Johnson 2003; Keating 2011), democratic accountability was waning: NRM hegemony was now firmly entrenched, alongside corruption, clientelism and increased ethnic exclusion (Mwenda and Tangri 2005; Rubongoya 2007; Tripp 2010). The initially 'broad-based' nature of the NRM coalition, which involved significant ethnic diversity, demonstrably narrowed over time (Lindemann 2011). The decade 1995-2005 typifies the 'push and pull' of politics under Uganda's 'hybrid' regime (Tripp 2010), whereby growing democratic capacities in society and the enhancement of some formal democratic institutions were simultaneously responded to by new forms of authoritarian manipulation and exclusion (Goodfellow 2014).
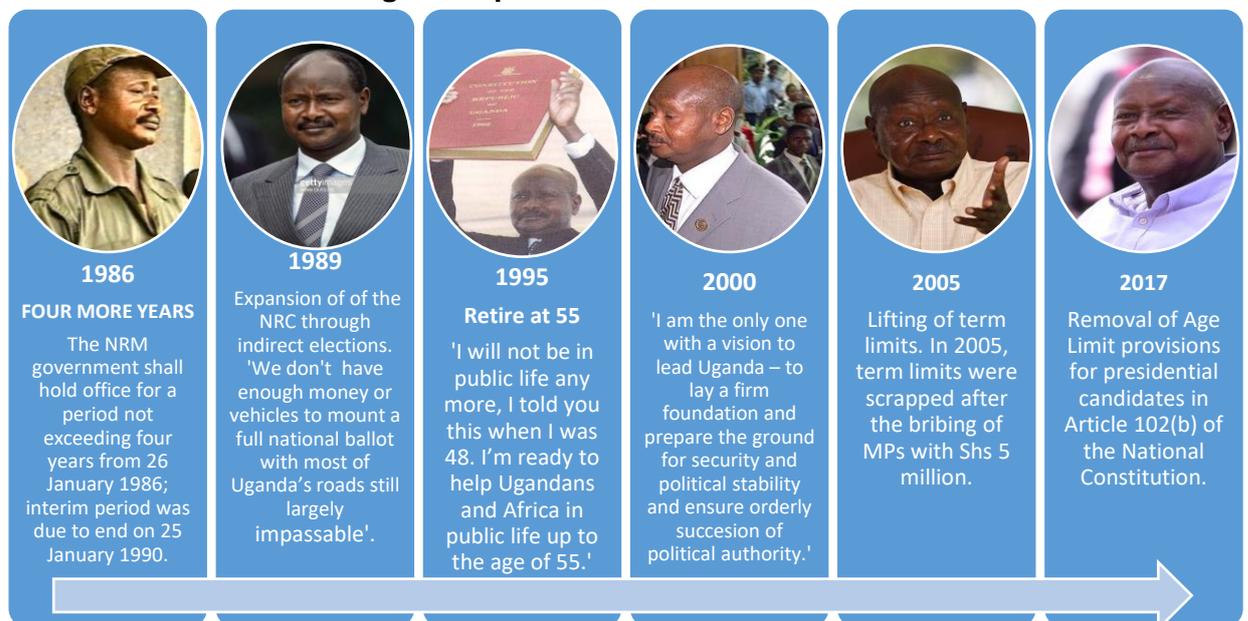
These tensions became even more apparent after 2005, when the opening up of party competition was used by Museveni as a bargaining chip to remove presidential term limits, to enable himself to stand for a third term in the 2006 elections. For many previous supporters, this was the ultimate betrayal of his early democratic promise (Kobusingye 2010) and seemed to confirm his intention to be 'president for life'. Museveni also found new ways to strengthen the hand of the executive, with parliamentary powers to vet ministerial appointments and censure ministers being reduced, and new presidential powers to dissolve parliament introduced (Kasfir and Twebaze, 2009; Keating, 2011). From 2005, Museveni's main opposition within the NRM then became the country's most powerful opposition force, in the form of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), led by his former ally Kizza Besigye. In an election marred by violence and intimidation (including the arrest and temporary imprisonment of Besigye on charges of treason and rape), Museveni secured 59 percent of the vote to Besigye's 37 percent.

In 2011, Museveni stood yet again and was re-elected by a landslide, gaining 68 percent of the vote against Besigye's 28 percent. Alongside the drop in the opposition's share of the vote – including in Kampala – was the significant (and unexpected) decrease in pre-election violence. This demonstrated that the dominance of

Museveni's ruling coalition was not only as strong as ever, but did not rely on coercion alone, and that the NRM continued to enjoy widespread support across wide parts of the country – even if much of this depended on rural 'vote-buying' (Mwenda 2011). Besigye launched a post-election campaign of demonstrations in Kampala – where he had won a majority of the votes, despite his decreased share, which evolved into a broader protest over food and fuel prices, known as the 'walk to work' protests. However, due to the lack of a clear overall political agenda on the part of the opposition, combined with an astute combination of 'carrot' and 'stick' tactics explored more below, these lost momentum and eventually fizzled out (Goodfellow 2013).

By the time of the 2016 elections, Museveni's ruling coalition was 'not even faking it any more' (Abrahamsen and Bareebe 2016), with his victory a foregone conclusion. Predictable patterns of intimidation and misconduct were associated with an election that closely mirrored the 2006 result, with Museveni winning 61 percent to Besigye's 35 percent. As in previous elections, the failure of the opposition to forge a sustained coalition contributed to its inability to dent the NRM's position (Beardsworth 2017). Following his 2016 election victory, Museveni wasted no time in moving to amend the constitution to remove the age limit of presidential candidates, paving the way to run for a sixth term in 2021. According to Article 105(2) of the 1995 Constitution, Museveni would have been able to run for a maximum of just two terms. Yet, as Figure 1 shows, he has repeatedly contradicted himself and, in engineering the 2005 amendment, provided for limitless presidential terms, at any age.

Figure 1: Different times, different messages: Contradictory messages from President Museveni to the general public

1986	1989	1995	2000	2005	2017
FOUR MORE YEARS The NRM government shall hold office for a period not exceeding four years from 26 January 1986; interim period was due to end on 25 January 1990.	Expansion of of the NRC through indirect elections. 'We don't have enough money or vehicles to mount a full national ballot with most of Uganda's roads still largely impassable'.	**Retire at 55** 'I will not be in public life any more, I told you this when I was 48. I'm ready to help Ugandans and Africa in public life up to the age of 55.'	'I am the only one with a vision to lead Uganda – to lay a firm foundation and prepare the ground for security and political stability and ensure orderly succesion of political authority.'	Lifting of term limits. In 2005, term limits were scrapped after the bribing of MPs with Shs 5 million.	Removal of Age Limit provisions for presidential candidates in Article 102(b) of the National Constitution.

The similarity in Museveni's vote share in 2006 and 2016 suggests that NRM dominance is deeply embedded, and that the political work of the ruling elite in achieving ongoing dominance is deep, highly sophisticated and always evolving. We

now examine the general processes underpinning this at the national level in more detail.

2.2 Underlying processes for the building, consolidation and maintenance of dominance

Establishing dominance has been a well-calculated strategy on the part of the government, which started with the creation of the local council system during the guerrilla war against the second Obote government. Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA) established resistance councils[1] (RCs), which were later renamed local councils (LCs) in the villages under its control and other similar structures in contested areas. Originally designed as support structures for the NRA fighters, the RCs grew into a model for what was viewed as 'popular democracy', when the NRA transitioned into the NRM on coming to power in 1986 (HRW, 1999).

In 1996, the Uganda Parliament initiated a process to have a number of non-elected parliamentary seats, reserved for the army and other government sectors and special interest groups, such as youth and persons with disabilities, as well elected seats specifically for women. These 'strong' affirmative actions, aimed at raising the profile of marginalised groups, have tended to produce members of parliament that are NRM-leaning. Appointed resident district commissioners (RDCs) also play an important role in many districts, controlling the electoral colleges representing these special interest groups, as well as administering the political mobilisers in each district and the party schools (HRW, 1999).

The Movement Act of 1997 created a second set of structures that duplicated the local council structures which exist at the village, parish, sub-county, division and district levels. In addition to these structures, the NRM has the National Movement Conference and a permanent secretariat. The Movement Act ensured that the NRM was represented at the lowest village levels, giving it a strong political advantage, which put it 'way ahead of the pack' when multi-party politics was reinstated in 2005. Alongside these measures, during its early years, the NRM party used *'Chaka-mchaka',* a political education and military science course, as an additional tool to increase its political control. The course, primarily aimed at civil servants and graduating high school students, was viewed by sceptics as political indoctrination that blamed political parties for Uganda's past political problems, further entrenching the 'no party' movement system, with long-term consequences for the legitimacy of political science education.

In addition, the NRM has used election processes itself to embed itself 'normatively and conceptually' as well as organisationally among the population at large, and to inculcate local cultures of securitisation that consciously or unconsciously remind people of the chaos preceding it (Vokes and Wilkins 2017: 582). Museveni employs a

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[1] These structures were loosely based on the neighbourhood committees organised in the 'liberated zones' of Mozambique by the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) in the late 1960s (HRW, 1999).

range of informal governance mechanisms and 'soft' forms of power, including his apparent personal responsiveness to popular concerns and his 'tours' of deprived areas, alongside relatively effective technocratic governance in some sectors. This interweaving of formal and informal governance mechanisms is, in Golooba-Mutebi and Hickey's (2017) analysis, central to keeping different constituencies onside and continuing to win elections. The president explicitly reminds his critics during rallies that, being a good politician, he should keep changing tactics to outmanoeuvre adversaries.[2]

Our question in this paper is how these different strategies and manoeuvres come together in the context of Kampala, where the ruling coalition faces growing challenges to its rule and a distinct political environment requiring different strategies from the rural NRM heartlands (Vokes and Wilkins 2017). In the next section, we consider Kampala's role within the national political context outlined above.

3. The role of Kampala

Although not the capital city during the colonial period (which was based in nearby Entebbe on Lake Victoria), Kampala was sited next to the historical capital of the Buganda Kingdom at Mengo and became the economic core of the Uganda Protectorate by the 1940s. In accordance with the 1900 Buganda Agreement, initiated under British colonialism, around half of the land in the Kingdom of Buganda was given as 'mailo' land (a form of freehold) to the Kabaka (king) and other Baganda landlords, with the rest being designated as 'crown land'.[3] Kampala became the capital city at Independence in 1962, and its boundaries were expanded substantially in 1967, to include Mengo municipality itself. The system of dual land ownership (with 'crown land' reconstituted as state land) persisted through the post-colonial period and into the NRM era. Under the NRM's celebrated decentralisation policy, Kampala was designated the only official 'city' in Uganda in administrative terms, with Kampala City Council (KCC) being equivalent to a District (LC5). As such, until the radical governance overhauls of 2011, KCC had substantial autonomy under Uganda's decentralised system. Under this framework, 80 percent of services were devolved to KCC; everything in the city except national roads, secondary and tertiary education were under its jurisdiction.

Kampala is the undisputed commercial and economic as well as administrative capital of Uganda. It was named the 13th fastest growing city on the planet, with an annual population growth rate of 4.03 percent for the period 2006-2020 (City Mayors, 2018). Greater Kampala boasts a population of 3.5 million and is growing fast, on account of both redevelopment within the city and expansion on the periphery (World Bank, 2015). If current patterns of growth continue, Kampala will become a megacity, with over 10 million inhabitants in the next 20 years (World Bank, 2015). While accurate data on the

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[2] Interview with one of the political commentators and journalist with one of Uganda's daily newspapers.
[3] See Nkurunziza (2006) and Goodfellow and Lindemann (2013) for discussions of land issues and associated conflicts in Buganda and Kampala.

distribution of economic activity in the city are not available, it is estimated that about 80 percent of the country's industrial and services sectors are located in the city. It also hosts an estimated 46 percent of all Uganda's formal employment. Seventy percent of the country's manufacturing plants are clustered in the city and it produces a third of Uganda's manufacturing GDP, as well as attracting a large national, regional and international community (Lall, Schroeder and Schmidt, 2009; Gore and Muwanga 2014).

Given Kampala's complex heritage, its location within the Buganda Kingdom and its economic centrality, its governance since the colonial times has been the focus of political contestation. The contestation has primarily involved three key poles of power: the national government, the opposition-dominated KCC (including a number of city mayors), and the governing authorities of the Kingdom of Buganda. Moreover, these tensions were compounded over several decades by a lack of attention to the city's needs and challenges. Historically, national support for large cities in Uganda has been limited; national poverty alleviation and development strategies have rarely mentioned cities, urban activities or urban contributions to economic development (Gore, 2009) – a phenomenon not uncommon in other African countries (Mitlin, 2004). In the case of Kampala, this was especially notable. While there was plenty of interest among politicians in Kampala's resources (including land), supporting the governance and infrastructure of the city was of little interest to the NRM until the 2000s. In the words of one political figure in 2009, Kampala was 'to put it crudely, the bastard child of nobody ... it's just an orphan that no-one quite wants to deal with properly' (Goodfellow 2010: 7).

By the late 2000s, Kampala was severely run down, its poor infrastructure and service delivery decried by the media on a daily basis. Some sources speculated that, in the post-2005 multi-party context, Kampala's neglect was part of a deliberate strategy to discredit the opposition-run city council, which was dominated by the Democratic Party [4] (Goodfellow 2010; Lambright 2014). Moreover, in 2005, MPs passed a government amendment to the constitution that provided for the central government to take a greater role in the administration of Kampala. This was initially put on hold, but as the 2000s wore on and the sense of crisis in the city deepened, plans were made to realise this increased central government role. In other words, having largely left Kampala to its own devices for several decades, in the 2010s there was a concerted effort by the ruling elite to take greater control of it, both politically and administratively. This did not go uncontested, and we explore below in some detail the ways in which opposition actors at the city level tried to resist and subvert the central government 'takeover' of Kampala.

It is, however, also worth noting that national-level resistance and contestation also played out to a significant extent in the city at this time. This was starkly illustrated by the 'walk to work' protests launched by Besigye after the 2011 election, through which

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[4] One of Uganda's oldest political parties, with a strong foothold in the Buganda region dating back to the late colonial period.

the city streets became the epicentre of a growing national protest against Museveni's rule in April-May of that year. Severe police brutality, resulting in at least eight deaths, and Besigye's repeated arrest and forcible restraint in front of television cameras, combined with an opposition agenda lacking a unified vision beyond the removal of Museveni, led to the fizzling out of this movement. However, the sense that Kampala was the epicentre of both control and resistance was further enhanced by this episode. In what follows, focusing particularly on the period from 2010 onwards, a series of overlapping strategies for dominance were pursued, meeting with limited success, as efforts to contain opposition in one area led to new forms of contestation in others.

4. Repression and co-optation of the opposition

Perhaps the most obvious way in which the ruling elite has sought to control the capital city is through the combination of high levels of repression and a strategy of political co-optation, picking off key opposition figures who pose a particular threat by making offers they find difficult to refuse. As in many regimes committed to maintaining dominance at all costs, these twin approaches have been central to the NRM's approach to cementing its position over several decades. In this section, we explore some of the ways in which coercion and co-optation are deployed by the NRM nationally, with attention to aspects that are particularly prominent in Kampala. When it comes to the capital, these strategies take on particular dimensions; but their limitations as tools for dominating the city are also apparent.

4.1 The iron fist: Persecution, suppression and containment of political dissent

As noted above, Uganda's system of government has shifted from a relatively broad-based and constitutional one, to one increasingly reliant on authoritarian power and patronage (Taylor, 2017). The NRM regime uses a mix of security forces including the regular police, the military, plainclothed security men and women, and unidentified male youth to crack down on at any sight of protest. These forces are in a state of constant flux in type, numbers and leadership. Yet Uganda's security architecture draws in an even wider array of players, through aspects of surveillance and financing. Overall, the ruling coalition thus relies on a wide and growing security enterprise linked to an array of intelligence outfits, prominent business personalities, print and electronic media outlets, Pentecostal pastors, and retired military personalities across the country.[5]

Any semblance of political opposition is treated with suspicion and, in many circumstances, the above security organs are deployed to quell it, including through the use of tear gas, sticks and guns.[6] Vigilantes and plainclothes militias, such as the Black Mamba, Kibooko Squad, Kalangala Action Plan (KAP), Popular Intelligence Network, Arrow Boys, Amuka Group, Labeca group, Crime Kifeesi Group, and several other groups, have been created at different times to perform this task, many of them centred on Kampala. At the hands of these groups, most of which operate through

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[5] Interview with Uganda Police Force official.
[6] Interview with a political scientist, columnist, student and teacher of politics and political development, with a focus on contemporary Africa.

highly informal processes, both opposition activists and people linked to civil society organisations (CSOs) engaged in political advocacy have been heavily surveilled, regularly detained and even killed (HRW 2015; Mugabe, 2018). In some cases, CSOs' work is rendered impossible by bank account closures, the confiscation of equipment or full closure. Until recently, a key figure in the organisation of violent repression and surveillance in Kampala was the inspector general of police (IGP), Gen Kale Kayihura. Under his command, the president's political opponents were in and out of jail and their public activities thwarted, often justified using the Uganda Public Order Management Act (2013). The aggressive crowd control tactics that police have frequently adopted earned Kayihura the nickname 'Mr Teargas'.

In the period since 2015, the most important group within this landscape of informal, overlapping organisations of violence specialists were the 'crime preventers'. Loosely based on community policing principles and organised in large groups, armed only with sticks, this organisation was hugely expanded from 2015, in advance of the 2016 election. While the Uganda police reportedly set a target of 1.6 million crime preventers, or around 30 in each of Uganda's 56,000 villages, specific details on their numbers and training are difficult to come by. The government itself reported recruiting over one million by the end of 2015 (Tapscott 2017). The methods of absorption and (re)deployment and rejection are also unclear, but they are civilian volunteers trained by the Ugandan police (sometimes referred to as a band of civilian vigilantes recruited by the government) for low-level community security. By some accounts, one of the means of recruiting crime preventers was on the promise that they would later be recruited in the conventional police force. Museveni also met large numbers of them in person at Lugogo in Kampala, to declare them a reserve force of the UPDF (Ugandan Army), commenting that his idea was to have a small army which is equipped but with a big reserve. Interestingly, however, the crime preventers were not used exclusively to mobilise violence. The rationale for creating this force was multifaceted. Tapscott (2017: 694) argues that at different moments, political authorities described crime preventers in different ways: as agents of state violence, as benevolent citizens, and even as entrepreneurial youth. This ambiguity about their role created uncertainty and a lack of accountability, and also benefited the NRM during elections, because it seemed to embody a promise to generate livelihood opportunities for large numbers of youth (Tapscott 2017).

The pattern in the torture and arrests by the police and other operatives suggests that people who are able to expose brutality, and those perceived to have political ambitions, are particularly targeted, with the aim of incapacitating any attempts to mobilise Ugandans around a change programme. Kalyegira (2018) provides a detailed list of potential challengers to Museveni and documents how these personalities have been subject to intimidation and harassment for years, even decades (The Atlantic, 2018). Museveni and his minister for security, General Elly Tumwine, regularly take the opportunity to 'remind' Ugandans that the regime's security activities 'ensure' the wider safety of society. Indeed, security as a central feature of the regime's legitimacy has been used to introduce an array of measures designed to prevent violent crimes and also heighten surveillance in the process. The re-registration of SIM cards and

installation of CCTV cameras across Kampala, the banning of hoodies, the recall and reassignment of crime preventers, and the revitalisation of heavily armed local defence units are just of some of the measures used to instil fear and maintain order, particularly in the capital, where the presence of armed security actors on the street has noticeably risen. It is alleged that there are over 40,000 armed men spread across Kampala overseeing ordinary people going about their business (Serunkuma, 2019).

The increasingly dramatic and aggressive measures to curb opposition outlined above have been used interchangeably with more subtle and trusted means for the NRM to try and dominate Kampala. As events such as the 'walk to work' protests demonstrate, repression alone is not enough to contain opposition – particularly in the capital. Hence, alongside such activities, options used to dominate the political landscape have included an ever-changing array of attempts to co-opt opposition.

4.2 'More NRM than the NRM': The co-optation, infiltration and dismantling of political opposition

The ability of the ruling elite to co-opt opposition figures can partly be explained by the aura of invincibility and permanence that Museveni has so effectively built around himself. Many NRM cadres were in the 'trenches' with Museveni during the civil war and earlier years of NRM rule, and dreamt of picking the baton of leadership from him, but have dropped their ambitions because age or other circumstances have come into play as Museveni stayed put. The often-repeated praises of party stalwarts and sycophants, suggesting that the country cannot exist without him, has emboldened Museveni and enhanced his cult-like status.[7] Having seen off potential challenges from within the NRM, in the form of generals like David Sejusa (alias Tinyefuza) and Henry Tumukunde, Museveni has worn out his ambitious former comrades, making it most likely that he will face a challenger who is younger than his own children (Sserunjogi, 2018).

Museveni has taken great care to keep influential figures in the city onside, including those from all the city's major religious institutions; he rarely misses important religious functions in Kampala. Yet even people within the official opposition have been continuously courted, in an attempt to co-opt them into the ruling coalition. Attempts to co-opt opposition members has taken many forms, including promises of cabinet positions and cash handouts. Reaching out to specifically cash-strapped opposition members has also helped to draw a wedge between opposition forces, to eliminate any possibility of unity and cohesion among opposition politicians.[8] At the national level, despite some political glitches, President Museveni has largely been successful in what appears to be a long-term mission to decimate the opposition, which he frequently refers to as 'useless'.

The list of leading opposition figures who are working with, or have worked with, the NRM government is long. Most significant, in terms of Kampala, when the president

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[7]Anonymous interview with one of the old guards in the National Resistance Movement.
[8] Interview with Ms Betty Nambooze; member of parliament and Democratic Party stalwart.

finally announced a new cabinet immediately after the 2016 elections, newly co-opted members included former opposition politicians from the capital, such as Beti Kamya of the Uganda Federal Alliance, who was made minister for Kampala and metropolitan affairs, and Florence Nakiwala Kiyingi, who was made minister of state for youth and children affairs. After her appointment as minister for Kampala, Beti Kamya, a former FDC insider, promised to reverse the NRM's especially poor performance in Kampala in 2016, by delivering them 80 percent of the city's vote by 2021. It was hoped that the deployment of Kamya, who had been a very high profile opposition figure and activist supporting the Buganda Kingdom, would bridge divides and heal the wounds that had led to historical lows in NRM support in Kampala. However, as we explore below, it is far from clear that this was a winning strategy.

The absence of a structured platform to engage opposition members has not stopped the opposition's willingness to work with the NRM government or the active co-optation strategy involving multiple offices headed by officials in the army, the party and State House, all armed with reasonable amounts of money to soften and recruit opposition politicians (Kaaya, 2017). According to an NRM insider, the opposition is a 'nursery bed', who are simply sketching an existence frequently 'hobnobbing' with the NRM party stalwarts and camouflaging under the cover of darkness before joining the party.[9] Meanwhile, the president has frequently referred to opposition politicians as 'political prostitutes' willing to sell themselves to willing buyers (Kaaya, 2017). Even the chief opposition whip has often complained about the way his colleagues are compromised, lamenting that many official members of the opposition appear to be two-faced, 'which has affected us in assigning them to committees. We have people who appear to be opposition, yet they are more NRM than the NRM MPs'.

The ruling elite's tactics change from time to time and, depending on the individuals being engaged, the NRM may use both the carrot and stick as an approach. For hardline opposition politicians, if repeated efforts at co-optation fail, then the government often opts to block their businesses and sources of income, as one prominent opposition politician notes:

> 'Carrots come in the form of job offers or cash, while the sticks include blocking access to jobs or businesses. In several cases, there have been cases where financial institutions have been forced to recall opposition politicians' loans, which forces them to run to Mr Museveni for help. If one hardens, they will use economic disempowerment or cripple one financially by making one either unemployable or, if one is in business, they will be handed unusual tax assessments, dismantle any franchise holdings and business territory or set inflexible sales targets. If one is in a partnership with others, they will make your partners start feeling uncomfortable working with you.'[10]

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[9]Interview with one NRM insider and political commentator for Makindye West constituency in Kampala City.
[10]Interview with the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) official.

In the case of Robert Kyagulanyi (aka Bobi Wine, whose rise in political popularity we explore more below) his continued mobilisation has led to over 124 planned concerts being blocked, suspended or cancelled altogether, in defiance of the directive made by the parliament of Uganda and the judiciary. Yet despite such ongoing efforts to cripple the opposition, the electoral outcome in Kampala in 2016, and the subsequent immense popularity of Robert Kyagulanyi, indicate that the tactics deployed have limited capacity to win over the population of Kampala. The history of opposition in the city is deep-rooted and complex. It involves specific aspects relating to the troubled relationship between the NRM government and the Buganda Kingdom, and the hardening of opposition sentiment in the face of continued repression – as well as following the more general trend of large cities with young populations becoming opposition hotspots. While co-optation of key opposition politicians and deployment of multiple security forces has enabled the NRM to maintain dominance across large swathes of rural Uganda, it has long been clear that it is not enough in Kampala. Moreover, these strategies and tactics can generate new forms of opposition, even as they try to repress it. Consequently, alongside the above activities, over the past decade the NRM has engaged in a sustained battle to take control of the key levers of governance in the city, in order to further constrain the opposition's breathing space and room for manoeuvre.
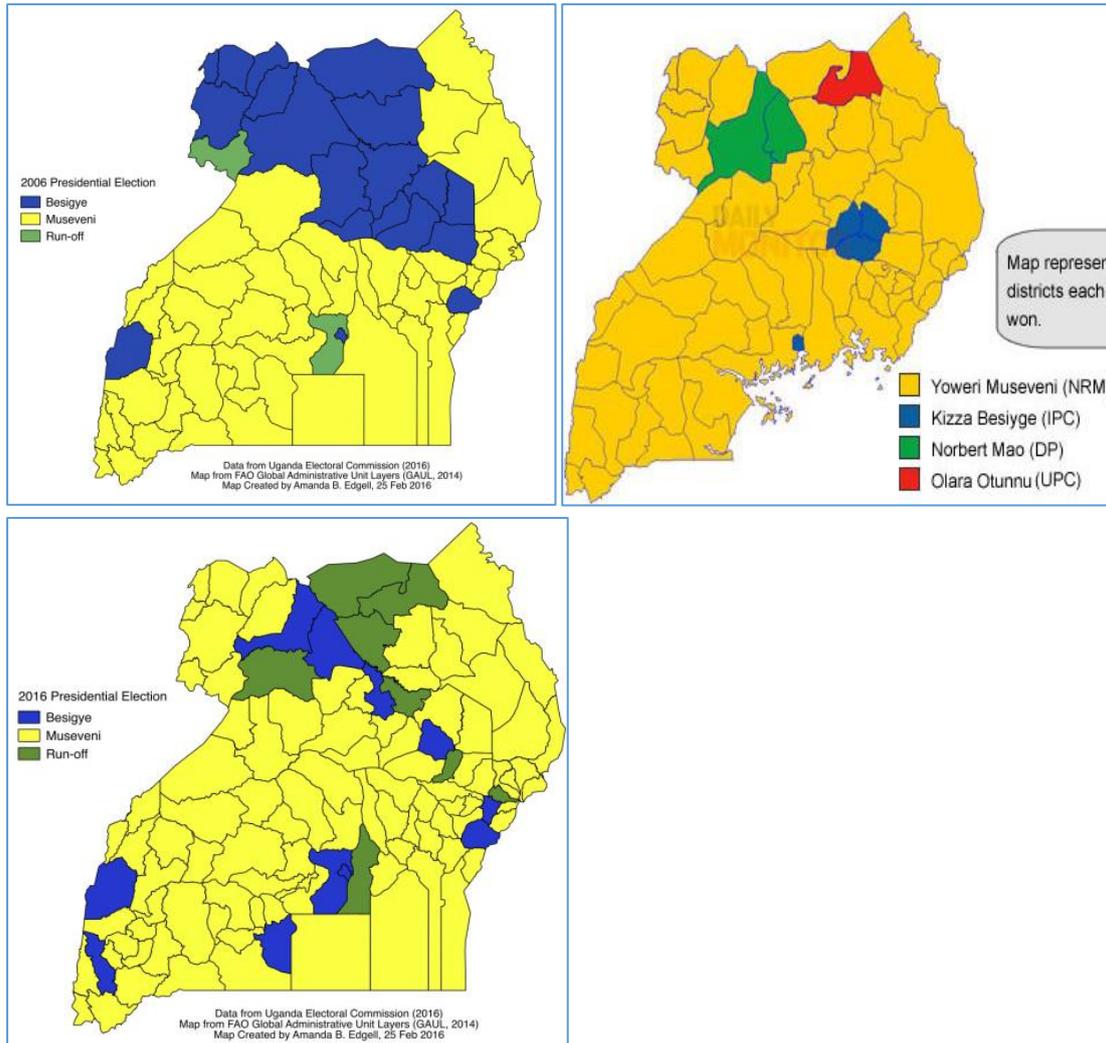
5. Legislative manoeuvres and capital city reforms

5.1 The Kampala Capital City Act and its dysfunctions

The NRM government has failed to win a majority in Kampala in all presidential elections since 1996 (see Figure 2), leading eventually to calculated effort to reclaim the city (Gore and Muwanga 2014). While the infrastructure and service delivery problems in the city were used as justification for recentralisation, these problems cannot be separated from the historical conflict between Kampala and the national government outlined above. In June 2009, building on the foundations set in place by the 2005 Constitutional amendment, the central government tabled the Kampala Capital City Bill, which was passed into law in 2010, amid huge controversy. This was a watershed moment for Kampala and an opportunity for central government to introduce significant reforms.

However, in practice, the reforms did not give the city administration autonomy over its resources or improve coordination among local authorities within and around the capital. Instead, it implemented a new national authority to oversee the administration of the city – the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) – effectively taking away administrative and decision-making authority from a popularly elected council and mayor and replacing it with a technocratic administration that owed its loyalty to the president. Under the new structure, the position of mayor was effectively abolished and replaced with that of a lord mayor, with far fewer executive powers, and the city was to be led by an executive director, supported by a team of ten directors appointed by the central government. The 2010 Act established KCCA as a central government agency, in an attempt to align the vertically divided authority that had plagued the city for so many years. The 2010 Act created two parallel structures (Figure 3): a political
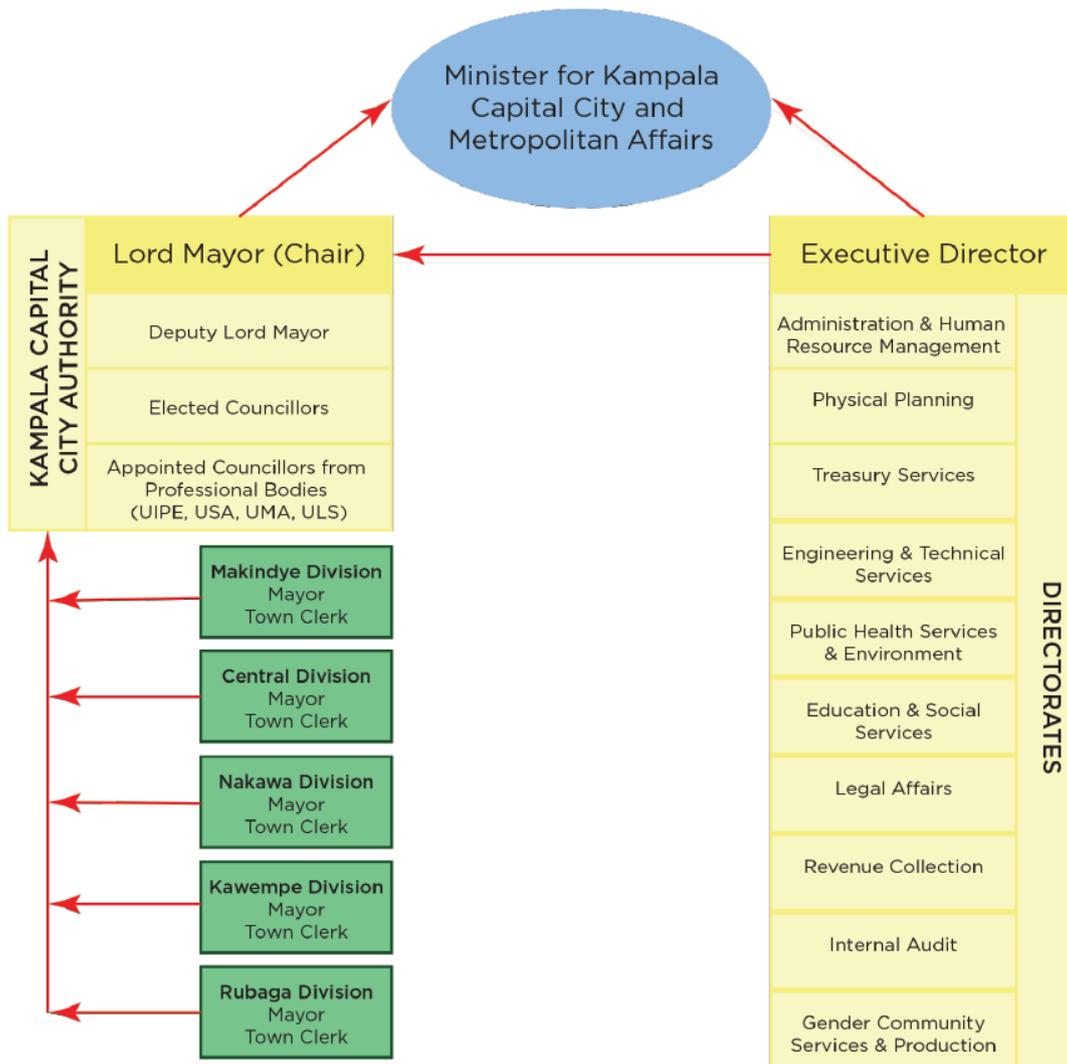
Figure 2: Results of the Uganda presidential elections 2006-2016

arm headed by the lord mayor and the technical wing headed by Executive Director Jennifer Musisi, who many saw as an urban reformer, known for her toughness during her tenure at the Uganda Revenue Authority. The creation of the Ministry of Kampala and Metropolitan Affairs with a substantive minister was further testimony of the shift in power away from the city to the central government.

KCCA was ostensibly created to resolve the inefficiencies of the former Kampala City Council. In reality, however, the provisions of the KCCA Act resulted in unclear institutional arrangements and poor policy coordination. The institutions involved frequently have overlapping interpretations of their responsibilities, and there is limited common understanding of which entity possesses the authority to carry out a given policy. For example, the 2010 Act does not clearly delineate hierarchy between the administrative and political wings of the authority, contributing to confusion over intended roles. Section 11(1) of the 2010 Act provides that the lord mayor shall be the political head of the capital city, while section 17(1) provides that the executive director shall be the chief executive of the authority; no clarification, however, is

Figure 3: Institutional structure of Kampala City

Source: UNAS (2017).

provided on the difference between the capital city and the authority. The ultimate result of this legislative dilemma has frequently been institutional paralysis, with the political and administrative wings of KCCA pulling in opposite directions.

It is important to note that despite the role of mayor being severely downgraded to that of lord mayor, Erias Lukwago – the opposition figure elected as lord mayor after the creation of KCCA in 2011 – ensured that opposition presence within KCCA remained strong. Although the opposition parties lost their dominance of the council itself to the NRM in the 2011 elections, Lukwago held onto his position, noting that 'I can proudly say that I have defeated President Museveni and the NRM rigging machinery, because it has been a battle between me and the state and not my opponents. Museveni did all he could to fail me but in vain'. (Kasozi and Ssenkabirwa 2011).

Lukwago's words and the post-2011 political setup had two ultimate outcomes. One was an open invitation to the president to join the ring, galvanising the presidency for

a long fight; and, secondly, the lord mayor's lack of central government political support and weakened authority under the KCCA Act 2010 effectively gave decision-making power over the city's future to the executive director. However, Lukwago strongly contested this interpretation of the KCCA act, frequently taking to the streets and mobilising his substantial popular support in protest. Lukwago justified his campaign of resistance and obstruction with reference to the KCCA Act, and the aforementioned differing interpretation in the roles and responsibilities of the lord mayor relative to the executive director. Frustrated by failure to pass any business legally, the NRM-dominated council eventually impeached Lukwago in 2013, citing incompetence, misconduct and abuse of office (Kafeero, 2013). On 25 November 2013, he was isolated and impeached by 29 of the 32 councillors, using the power given to them under section 12 of the KCCA Act.

Lukwago's removal was the subject of contestation in the courts of law and debate in parliament, media and other public fora. While the removal of the lord mayor is provided for in the KCCA law, there was no provision for how his/her functions would be performed in their absence. Consequently, while the court battles raged on, three years of legal deadlock ensued, during which KCCA ran without a lord mayor, until 2016, when fresh elections allowed Lukwago to stand – and win – again. However, an important development during his absence was that the government tabled an amendment to the KCCA Act 2010, with the stated aim of solving the underlying problems that led to the fallout between the lord mayor and the NRM-dominated KCCA (Kafeero 2013). The KCCA (Amendment) Bill 2015 was a key legal manoeuvre that is widely seen as a further move by the ruling coalition to consolidate control over the city.

5.2 Introduction of the KCCA (Amendment) Bill 2015

The KCCA Amendment Bill, introduced in the run-up to the 2016 elections, was again framed as necessary to strengthen and streamline the governance of the city, by drawing clear lines between roles of policy makers and administrators. The Bill provides for a metropolitan physical planning authority for better planning in the Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area; removal of the borrowing cap for KCCA, as long as such borrowing is compliant with the Public Finance Management Act; and removing ambiguity in the composition of the authority/council and nomenclature of institutions and offices.

The Bill's biggest controversy, however, relates to the proposed change to how the lord mayor is elected, and the transfer of the title of 'political head' of the city from the lord mayor to the minister of Kampala and metropolitan affairs. Previously, the lord mayor was elected by adult suffrage, a process to be changed under the provisions of the Bill to an internal vote in the council, in which the candidate had to secure two-thirds of the votes of all council members. In a situation, where the ruling NRM now dominated council membership, an opposition mayor would find it hard to gain the support of enough councillors for the seat. Not surprisingly, Lukwago heavily criticised the Bill as 'an underhand method designed to fight me out of office', adding that it was

a further move by the NRM regime to undermine him through legal means, 'because the ruling government knows they cannot beat us in Kampala' *(quoted in Semakula et al. 2017).*

Similar sentiments were raised in our interviews with other opposition figures, including the shadow minister for local government:

> 'The government brought a bill in bad faith to realign the leadership of Kampala City. Like in any other struggle for power, you cannot be taken to have successfully won when you have not captured the capital city. This thing keeps haunting Museveni, because he has never taken over Kampala politically. He has been trying everything to see that he chases the opposition out of the capital city. He wanted to do away with lord mayoral elections because of Erias Lukwago, a man he could neither defeat nor compromise.'[11]

Moreover, under the KCCA Structure proposed in the 2015 Bill, the minister for Kampala and metropolitan affairs would assume all the executive functions currently vested in the office of the lord mayor, with elected councillors effectively becoming an advisory board, whose core function would be to mobilise local revenue. In a highly political move, shortly after introducing the Bill, Museveni replaced Frank Tumwebaze as minister for Kampala with Beti Kamya – a recently co-opted former opposition figure perceived as popular in Kampala and Buganda more broadly, with a longstanding history of mobilisation around the Kingdom's political causes. This appointment turned the two-way power struggle between Musisi and Lukwago into three-way one between Musisi, Lukwago and Kamya, with little, if any, common ground between the three.

The manner in which the Bill was introduced was also controversial; it was initially tabled when the city council was not sitting, the office of the lord mayor was locked, and the chambers were locked, ensuring there was no input from Kampala's elected leadership. It therefore seems clear that one of the Bill's primary purposes is to transfer whatever executive powers currently remain with the lord mayor to the minister for Kampala and metropolitan affairs – a player whose role has grown in significance as the ruling elite has sought new ways to control the capital.

5.3 Rise of the minister of Kampala

In essence, the 2015 Bill proposed that Kampala be governed and administered by ministerial orders and decrees, which is inconsistent with the decentralisation framework embodied in the Local Government Act (1997). Aside from representing an attempt to further recentralise power over the city, the Bill assigns a key role to a minister who has no substantive ministry behind her. According to the former executive director of the National Planning Authority (NPA), Kisamba Mugerwa:

> 'Kampala Ministry can only exist politically, but in actual sense it's of no consequence when it comes to positively impacting on the lives of the people.

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[11] Interview with the shadow minister for local government, Ms Betty Bakireke Nambooze

> There is no work to necessitate the office of minister for Kampala. The NRM government only created that office to politically counter Lukwago after failing to get their own candidate win in Kampala. I am sure if the elected mayor was from the ruling NRM, that office of Kampala minister would not have been created. In fact, that will be encroaching on the mandate of the Ministry of Lands, which is responsible for urban planning and development. I now realise that's the ministry that should be in charge. […] How do you have two political heads for Kampala? You simply can't and this is why the clashes we have seen between Beti Kamya and the leaders at City Hall are simply inevitable' (quoted by Walakira 2018).

Given the many controversies affecting the Bill, significant backtracking has taken place and it was shelved a number of times: first, after it was introduced in 2015, and then again in 2017, amid fierce resistance from the lord mayor. The struggle between the lord mayor and the ruling coalition was given further fuel by the 2016 election, which once again strengthened the opposition relative to the NRM, both in terms of the balance of councillors and through Lukwago's return to the mayoralty. Despite all the central government's efforts to suppress turnout in Kampala, including the delayed opening of polling stations and calling the results before the counting was finalised for the metropolitan area, the NRM performed badly in the city – significantly worse than in 2011. The opposition won seven of Kampala's nine constituencies (the remainder being won by two opposition-leaning independents) and the majority of council seats in KCCA. Political observers intimated that with an FDC majority at City Hall, the lord mayor's reign would be smoother than his previous terms, when he faced continuous resistance from the majority NRM-leaning councillors. Moreover, for the first time, the opposition won outright in the surrounding District of Wakiso – a significant development that we discuss below.

It was this weakening of the NRM position in terms of elected seats in 2016 that led to the appointment of Kamya and a renewed push to control the city through her, rather than Musisi. Though initially well-supported by the president, Musisi's relationship with Museveni soured after 2016, with the president blaming her for the NRM's poor electoral performance in Kampala. He distanced himself from the KCCA urban renewal project, which had clearly proved unpopular with a majority of voters. This turn against Musisi led ultimately to the latter's resignation in October 2018, on the grounds that her work was being inadequately supported. Her resignation was also the culmination of increasingly contentious and tense relations with Kamya and Lukwago. While Lukwago expressed relief at Musisi's resignation, which he claimed would usher in a more conducive working environment, in reality, tensions in the city around governance did not dissipate. Musisi was replaced by a low-profile technocrat, and the key battleground became that between the lord mayor and the minister.

In 2018, the NRM government also introduced what it referred to as a 'watered-down' version of the original amendment bill. This revised version maintained citizens' right to vote for a lord mayor through universal adult suffrage, but still proposed transferring the title of political head of the city from the lord mayor to the minister. In the view of

the chairperson of the Kampala City parliamentary caucus, the proposed amendment would disenfranchise the people of Kampala, denying them the opportunity to fully participate in the affairs of Kampala City administration.[12] The lord mayor was, unsurprisingly, in agreement:

> 'The current minister for Kampala and metropolitan affairs is usurping my powers. She is posturing around as the political head of the city and there are litigations in court over the issue. Furthermore, stripping the powers of the lord mayor would disenfranchise and disempower the voters (the people of Kampala) and deny them a voice in the management and administration of the city. What took President Museveni to the bush was to return power to the people and democratic rule, but what is going on in Kampala shows that people shed their blood for nothing. Voters give an elected official the mandate and the political wing of the city is the representation of that mandate and not an appointed minister.'[13]

From the perspective of the Kampala City parliamentary caucus, the contention is over legitimacy and the right to rule. To transfer so many mayoral powers to a presidentially-appointed minister poses substantial problems of political accountability. A Parliamentary Committee on Presidential Affairs responsible for scrutinising the KCCA (Amendment) Bill also recommended that the proposition to make the minister 'political head' of the city be deleted – though others including the chair of this committee, contended that this dispute over the 'political head' was meaningless:

> 'The title of political head that is prevalent in the Act is irrelevant. It is very elaborate in the principal Act – the chain of command in the city stipulates that in the performance of his or her functions, the lord mayor is answerable to the council and the minister. However, the lord mayor and minister for Kampala and metropolitan affairs are bickering over a title that is useless because being a "political head" is not a function.'[14]

Although the Bill has been repeatedly delayed, in a manner highly reminiscent of earlier politically-charged bills relating to Kampala and Buganda more broadly (see Goodfellow 2014), the ruling coalition continued to try and popularise the idea of making the minister for Kampala the city's political head, including through inviting councillors to meet the president and to attend special 'refresher' courses at National Leadership Institute, without involving or gaining consent from the lord mayor.[15]

Things developed further in August 2019, when the KCCA (Amendment) Bill returned to parliament and was finally passed – though stripped of the part that would have abolished the election of the mayor by universal adult suffrage. This element of the Bill

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[12] Interview with the chairperson of the Kampala City parliamentary caucus,3 December 2018
[13]Interview with the Lord Mayor, 18 November 2018.
[14]Interview with the chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Presidential Affairs, 11October 2018.
[15] Interview with a political analyst/commentator and news reporter with Monitor Publications.

was rejected by MPs, presumably in part because, as elected representatives, the principle of popular election proved more powerful than party loyalty on this issue. Moreover, MPs also rejected the proposition to transfer the title of political head of the city to the minister, concurring with those who argued that this title is meaningless (Leni 2019). However, although the stripping down of this Bill might be seen as a victory for Lukwago, by February 2020 he was vowing to block its implementation, on the grounds that it contained further contradictions, for example in relation to who holds ultimate control over budgeting.

These events illustrate how, over a decade, the ruling elite has adopted and adapted its approach to controlling city governance since its decision in 2009 to dominate the city administratively. Yet this decade of 'legal manoeuvres' (Goodfellow and Jackman 2020) also clearly illustrates the limitations of this strategy. Creating new figureheads for the city, in the form of Musisi and Kamya, who were clearly accountable upwards to a regime seen as brutal and corrupt, rather than to the city population itself, ultimately backfired by bolstering Lukwago's popularity and the confidence of the opposition to shoot down key elements of the KCCA (Amendment) Bill. More generally, KCCA operates in a way that is largely detached from civil society, impeding the effectiveness of its reforms (Gore 2018). Nevertheless, the lord mayor's power remains highly constrained, with the opposition hemmed in by successive layers of legislation that exacerbate blurred lines of accountability and spheres of authority. These battles in the administrative arena played out alongside the carrot-and-stick strategies described earlier, as the government tried to intimidate and co-opt sufficient numbers of people to prevent urban political opposition from fundamentally threatening the regime. But in the face of growing resentment towards the NRM-sponsored urban renewal project under Musisi, and the vigorous political mobilisation by Lukwago, Besigye and (since 2017-2018) Bobi Wine, new strategies were also needed. Hence the ruling elite has opted to engage in a number of more targeted urban strategies, with a particular focus on Kampala's key constituency: the youth.

6. A youth compromised: Political manoeuvring with youth groups

Uganda has one of the youngest populations in the world and more than 70 percent of the country's citizens have never known a president other than Museveni (The Atlantic, 2018). According to the 2016 Uganda Youth Survey Report by the East African Institute, about 52 percent of youth are unemployed. A 2017 Sauti wa Wananchi ('Voices of Citizens') survey, conducted by the organisation Twaweza, indicated that 78 percent of Ugandans thought the government was not doing well at creating jobs. Thus, for many youths, the transfers down from previous generations are liabilities, not assets. They are better educated than their parents, but less likely to find a job. The absence of social safety nets and affordable basic services often means they have to support themselves, their children, and their parents (Kalinaki, 2018).

This has given rise to an upsurge of resentment, creating a sense of hopelessness among the youth that provides fertile ground for politicians of every hue to recruit demonstrators (Nantume, 2018). The Kampala metropolitan area has an estimated

population of 4 million people, making it a significant and growing constituency. As well as a youthful demographic, this voting block is also composed of significant interest groups, including market vendors, traders and 'informal' transport operators. The battle for these voters has intensified since the growing influence of the 'People Power' movement under Robert Kyagulanyi (Bobi Wine), particularly in Kampala where Kyagulanyi has long been associated with the Kamwokya suburb in which he grew up, and in Wakiso District, where he has been an MP since 2017.

The president's engagement with youth in Kampala goes as far back as the early 1990s, but the speed and magnitude of engagement increased after the 2001 presidential and parliamentary elections and has remained significant in every election since. In the run-up to 2016, Museveni decided to further intensify his reach-out to the young and increasingly desperate generation. The necessity of doing so was further highlighted by the growing popularity of Bobi Wine, whose 15-year pop career was associated with increasingly angry and politically charged music. In the face of this hostility within urban youth culture, in 2015 Museveni persuaded an impressive number of Uganda's leading pop stars to compose and record a song – 'Tubonga Nawe' ('We Are with You') praising him and urging people to vote NRM (Schneidermann 2015). This was, however, a misstep that ultimately backfired in an age of social media. Intense debate about the proper role of popstars in politics ensued, with the media profiling stars who refused to participate in Museveni's campaign song. Many young people, angered by the decisions of their favourite stars to participate in this stunt, responded by boycotting their music (Kagumire, 2018).

These developments ushered a new era in the relationship between popular music and politics and paved the way for Bobi Wine, one of the biggest stars to refuse to join the campaign song, to capitalise on this move when standing in the 2017 by-election. His victory and subsequent success in putting forward winning candidates in a number of by-elections, under the banner of a vague but emotive 'People Power' movement, has led to the president further stepping up efforts to win over urban youth – but this time primarily through cash and other influential personalities, rather than music, as well as parallel efforts to infiltrate and manipulate key informal economic sectors. While these strategies play out across the nation, they have particular significance in Kampala, as we highlight below.

6.1 Countering 'People Power' with cash

In this section, we explore two specific approaches through which the ruling coalition has tried to manipulate and buy support among youth groups in Kampala over the past decade: i) the distribution of cash among youth groups in selected areas of Kampala; and ii) courting and manipulating informal workers, with particular attention to *boda boda* motorcycle taxis. These case studies demonstrate the ways in which the regime has attempted to counteract some of the urban mobilisation strategies of the opposition. They also show how strategies relating to intimidation and the mobilisation of violence intersect with efforts to gain the support of urban youth through promises of cash and increased livelihood opportunities. However, we also argue that these

diverse and intersecting strategies and tactics among the urban youth are very limited in their effectiveness, generating at best very short-term support for the NRM, which may not yield electoral gains.

Cash is one of the biggest weapons in Museveni's armory, and it has become commonplace for him to carry bags of money and brown envelopes.[16] In the company of his ministers, State House controller, former KCCA executive director and many other government officials, the president regularly provides funds for youth, women and other groups in Kampala and surrounding urban councils. The source of the money is unclear, though reference is sometimes made to the State House community donations budget and the consolidated fund. Unconfirmed reports indicate that a State House commissioned 'Ghetto Fund' (equivalent to 1.8 billion shillings) has been set up to bribe youth into supporting the NRM. Speculation is widespread that such funds involve diversions from productive government projects, to ensure there is a steady supply (Khisa, 2018).

During campaign time, rather than rely on his lieutenants, Museveni has taken to handing out the cash himself. As well as helping him to directly endear himself to the public, some observers believe it actually helps to reduce financial malfeasance and corruption, with money for poverty reduction finally reaching the poor.[17] Some further suggest that these personalised handouts show the president's awareness that entrusting cash to formal channels of government, or specific officials for distribution, is a sure way to having much of the money pocketed along the way.[18] In other cases, State House and the Internal Security Organization (ISO) have enlisted obscure 'socialites'-turned-'philanthropists' as emissaries to divert urban youth from opposition politicians. These philanthropists appear and disappear mysteriously. A recent example is Brian White (Brian Kirumira), who has moved around the country under the guise of helping youth and women out of poverty. He has been seen handing bicycles, seeds, medicine and school equipment, as well as large amounts of cash. In many ways, these practices have underlined the increasing commercialisation of elections, where people expect 'something small' in exchange for their vote.

The emergence of Robert Kyagulanyi (Bobi Wine) as a youthful leader with an ear to the ground has clearly increased the pressure on the NRM to improve its appeal to urban youth. Kyagulanyi is explicit in stating that his appeal is providing a voice for the youth. In Kampala specifically, another way in which the NRM elite has sought to counter this threat is through the creation of large numbers of youth projects in various parts of Kampala Metropolitan region, organised through their own savings and credit cooperative societies (SACCOS). These have been visited by the president and State House handlers, including the Kyagulanyi's base in the Kamwokya suburb. Six 'ghetto

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[16] Interview with one of the members of Nakasero Market Vendors Association, 11 January 2019.
[17] Interview with one of the beneficiaries residing in Kamwokya and engaging in the collection of scrap metal and running a small retail shop.
[18]Interview with a political scientist, columnist, student and teacher of politics and political development with a focus on contemporary Africa.

youth groups' were promptly created in Kamwokya in 2018 and registered to receive funds from the president. It is, however, apparent that there are no consistent criteria used to select the beneficiaries, or determine how funds should be spent.[19] The government strongly denies the regular accusations that this constitutes an attempt to win over Bobi Wine supporters, claiming that it is just focusing on the 'most needy' people, wherever they may be.

An important point to note, in terms of the clearly political nature of these funds, is that they operate beyond the purview of the official Youth Livelihood Fund, overseen by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD). Many of the groups that have received the cash handouts in Kampala are not in the MGLSD database for the existing and registered youth groups. It is apparent that many such groups are hastily assembled, just for the purposes of receiving cash, and operate in parallel with the formal systems set up under the MGLSD. However, proposals for the 2019/20 financial year involve moving the Youth Fund from the MGLSD so that it is officially under State House. This has resulted in a Shs.130 billion State House Youth Livelihood Fund, reducing the MGLSD funding from Shs66.6 billion in the 2018/19 financial year to Shs.4.62 billion in the 2019/20 financial year (Daily Monitor, 2019a). This move, according to the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG), puts the fund at significant risk of mismanagement, given that State House lacks the required expertise to oversee the youth programme and, most importantly, it risks being politicised. State House operations are almost beyond public scrutiny, with limited parliamentary oversight. However, this ease of distribution, without the need for complex bureaucratic procedure, is precisely the reason given by those who defend placing this fund under direct presidential control. For example, the director of Uganda Media Centre argued that youth funds should be directly controlled by state house, because:

> 'the various government interventions cannot reach everybody and also because whenever the president is moving around, there are people who accost him with direct request, but he cannot tell them to go to various ministries or agencies for help. Therefore, Cabinet endorsed that this money should continue to be given to the president for those interventions.'[20]

The extent to which these activities have focused on Kampala is striking, with an NRM candidate from Arua in the north of the country (Nusura Tiperu) noting that 'in Kampala, money is being distributed like beans'.[21] Figures 4a to 4c provide some illustrations of these activities. Yet, despite these efforts to win the favour of Kampala's youth, it is far

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[19] Interview with one of the officials from the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and a regular columnist in one of Uganda's major newspapers.
[20] Quoted in Cabinet endorses Museveni's donation budget, *Daily Monitor,* 29 January 2019. Available at**:** https://mobile.monitor.co.ug/News/Cabinet-endorses-Museveni-donation-budget/2466686-4956718-format-xhtml-xg5rmbz/index.html, accessed 1 July 2019.
[21] Quoted in 'NRM Tiperu warned the ruling party against people power', InfoUganda, available at https://info256.com/nrm-tiperu-warned-the-ruling-party-against-people-power/, accessed 17 July 2019.

Figure 4a: President Museveni with Kampala youth leaders, after giving them Shs2.5 billion for their SACCOs at State House Entebbe in March 2019

Source: Wandera (2019).

Figure 4b: President Museveni hands over sewing machines to young female learners in Kampala City in 2017 under the Presidential Initiative on the Skilling of the Girl Programme

Figure 4c: In the company of the minister for Kampala and metropolitan affairs (Beti Kamya, far left) President Museveni presents a dummy check to Mulago Washing Bay SACCO in 2016

from clear that it will have the desired effect in terms of securing NRM votes. For one thing, the attention lavished on opposition-supporting areas such as Kamwokya have led former NRM supporters to complain of neglect.

Talking to some of the youths, on condition of anonymity, interviewed beneficiaries of youth funds in Kampala Central Division were greatly concerned:

> 'We are tired of being neglected. The habit of bypassing party structures must stop. We know Kampala and all the groups that work within the city. Why do you rely on State House officials who do not even know anything about the people of Kampala and leave out the NRM leaders?'

The president often likens his poverty reduction struggle in urban areas to the five-year protracted bush war he fought in an area known as the Luweero triangle to oust the Obote II regime. In a significant development, he has placed increasing emphasis on Wakiso, the District that almost entirely surrounds Kampala and which (as illustrated in Figure 2) was lost to the opposition for the first time in 2016. Even in advance of this election, he announced in 2015 that 'Wakiso District … is going to be my Luweero to liberate the urban poor from poverty. If we earmark this area and injected like 100m shs, this place can become paradise.'[22] In 2018, with Kyagulanyi now building momentum from his constituency in Wakiso District, the government unveiled a 'Wakiso Grand Plan', with promises that employment opportunities would follow.

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[22] Quoted in 'Museveni goes back to the bush', RadioSimba.ug. Available at https://www.radiosimba.ug/museveni-goes-back-to-the-bush/ (accessed 17 July 2019).

There are several other programmes, such as 'Entandikwa',[23] and the slew of other 'wealth creation' initiatives that have been started by the NRM government and implemented through Museveni's bags of cash. However, their long-term impact to beneficiary communities is unclear. Few, if any, of the beneficiary groups had immediate plans about how to use the donated money. Moreover, one Kamwokya-based youth group claims that the Shs100m given to youth clubs and SACCOs in the area had never reached them, but rather were diverted by officials who were not members of their car-washing business. They accused these leaders of diverting the money to paying school fees and finishing their houses, leading to the closure of the SACCO offices, while some recipients of the money just disappeared.[24] The group also accused officials of registering the wrong youth clubs. Far from creating satisfaction that could build support for the NRM, there is a sense that the allocation of funds is generating new forms of resentment and conflict. According to one association chairperson:

> 'We will indeed convene as an association to discuss what to do with the money that we received, although the 10 million that we received is so small for an association of 64 members. Instead, expect that this money is going to create chaos and divide us further.'

Similar views and complaints were recorded at Kisekka market in April 2019, on the grounds that funds pledged by the president during a personal visit the previous year had not materialised.[25] According to the chairperson of Kisekka Vendors, 40 new SACCOs were specifically created to 'receive' the money promised by the president in October 2018. The surge in number of SACCOS since October 2018 mainly involves the very young, who lack savings and are seeking opportunities to start and drive a business. Despite this, according to the deputy chairperson, 'Getting out of poverty not the target for most the kids who have joined SACCOS to get the presidential money. Most of them are idle 15–30-year-olds, who want to get rich quick or at worse use the money given to solve immediate problems'. A further concern is the 'hijacking' of the SACCOs by powerful elements within the market, in order to syphon off the funds provided by the president.

Currently, the anticipation in Kisekka market for the 500 million pledged by the president is very high, despite the fact that the money has delayed. Most vendors interviewed were very confident, as demonstrated by this comment from the deputy chairperson:

> 'Money will come we are confident of that. Why? Government knows what Kisekka market means – people here we think alike and act as one – you cannot lie to them; they are capable of being very, very disruptive. In this market people are very idle and disorderly and need to be kept busy'.

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[23] Fresh start.
[24] Interview with the current vice chairman of the Mulago Car Washers SACCOs.
[25] Chairman of the Kisekka market vendors, 18 April 2019.

This reference to the market's disruptive capacity is a clear allusion to the history of violent rioting in the market, and the vendors' confidence is rooted in their history of winning favours, due to their capacity to mobilise opposition. Yet the market's history is also one of violent factional struggles, and the likelihood of further conflict in this context seems heightened by the expectations and fears about how funds might be misallocated and misappropriated.[26] There is also no indication that the funds will increase support within the market for the NRM; as the former chairperson of the Market Vendors' Association pointed out, 'Yes, the NRM thinks it is coopting them, but the truth is [the youth] too have learnt to use the system to their advantage'.[27]

These findings raise questions about the extent to which those receiving funds see a direct relationship between the money and their political allegiance or, at the very least, a change in who they vote for. The president did win some favour in Kisekka by reversing an earlier decision to sell the market land to a private developer, thus 'saving them' from displacement. In this sense, one vendor representative notes that 'additional funding is a bonus, because many people here have nothing but praises for the president'. However, there is reason for scepticism about whether this will actually translate into votes, in an environment where political support is seen as being so readily available for hire. As the Kisekka Market Vendors' deputy chairperson notes:

> 'Boys here see this as a business – they're disrupters for hire. They went to Sembabule bought by the opposition to keep the ballot boxes. When elections come, this is an opportunity for them to earn. They don't do nonsense here, because they believe they were rescued, but they'll go elsewhere to act up and it doesn't matter who pays!'

6.2 Dominating mobile livelihoods: Infiltration and violence in the *boda-boda* sector

Another way in which the NRM have sought to gain dominance among urban youth in the city is through specific initiatives to control and gain support in the transport sector. Despite a number of efforts to expand the formal bus system over the last decade, urban public transport in Uganda remains overwhelmingly dominated by mini-bus taxis (*matatus)* and motorcycle-taxis (*boda-bodas*). The *matatu* sector itself has a long history of use by the NRM for political mobilisation through a monopolistic organisation, the Uganda Taxi Operators and Drivers Association (Goodfellow 2017). Although this organsation was dismembered by Musisi, in her drive to improve urban transport, *matatu*-based transport remains dominant in the city. Next on Musisi's list was to regain control over the *boda-bodas*, which had mushroomed in number, such that by 2014 a registration process identified 50,000 motorcycle taxis in Kampala alone.[28] This was widely considered to be an underestimate; the following year KCCA counted 120,000 registered motorcycles, 'most of which' were engaged in commercial activities (Daily

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[26] See Goodfellow (2013) for a discussion of earlier rioting and factional conflicts in Kisekka Market.
[27] Interview with former chairperson of Kisekka Market Vendors' Association.

[28] Interview with transport police official, June 2014.

Monitor 2019b). However, despite Musisi's initial support from the president, the sheer significance of *boda*-boda drivers as a (predominantly youthful) voting block meant that she was offered little support for activities to tax or regulate them; indeed, this was one of the issues that dogged her tenure as executive director and contributed to her decision to resign.

This failure to tax, regulate and limit numbers in the sector in the 2010s was the continuation of dynamics that emerged in the early 2000s. The repeated efforts by the (then opposition-dominated) city council to gain some control over the burgeoning numbers of *boda-bodas*, and the ways in which these efforts were frustrated by interventions from the president, are discussed in detail by Goodfellow and Titeca (2012) and Goodfellow (2015). Through such interventions, Museveni ensured that the council's repeated efforts to tax and limit numbers were unsuccessful, boosting his support among *boda-boda* drivers, while also drawing them into the strategy to undermine the opposition-led KCC. In theory, the capacity to control the sector should have improved since 2011 under the KCCA. However, the unclear mandates and broken chains of accountability discussed in Section 4 continued to provide incentives for informal political bargaining that weakened the city authority's enforcement capacity.

In fact, the KCCA period ushered in a new dynamic in the politicisation of the sector, which saw forms of organisation that were both more centralised and more violent. Prior to 2010, efforts to organise the sector under the banner of one association like UTODA repeatedly failed – again, partly due to constant political interventions. From 2006 to 2007, the police attempted to infiltrate the sector, through the creation of an organisation called Kuboca, designed to fight crime and monitor the sector's activities from within; but this failed, after it rapidly became associated with violent extortion. Moreover, its link to the NRM (including through the wearing of yellow T-shirts, a colour strongly associated with the ruling party) was damaging NRM support among riders. During the 'Buganda riots' in 2009, the presence of boda-boda drivers was widely noted, leading to growing concerns that the sector harboured opposition elements, despite the president's ongoing efforts to win favour by shielding them from regulatory control.

A new opportunity for the ruling elite to gain influence subsequently arose in the form of an organisation called Boda Boda 2010, which was initially a bottom-up organisation set up by drivers, with the intention of helping with emergency response.[29] Realising that they held a unique position of influence within the sector, some of the organisation's leaders capitalised on this by approaching the inspector general of police (IGP), Kale Kayihura, and other political figures. Through this process, an influential local NRM leader by the name of Abdallah Kitatta, who was openly critical of the police's previous approach to securitising the sector through Kuboca, managed to manoeuvre himself into the position of leader of Boda Boda 2010.

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[29] Interview with boda boda co-ordinator, June 2018.

Kitatta's rise to prominence coincided with Kizza Besigye's attempt to galvanise a street uprising through the 'walk to work' protests. As an NRM mobiliser, Kitatta had created an alternative grassroots network to diffuse the threat of street insurrections. This endeared him to the president and other senior government officials (Mutaizibwa, 2019). Kitatta thus became an increasingly powerful figure, widely feared by police themselves, due to his alleged close relationship with Kayihura. After 2011, he set about issuing 'stage cards' to riders to prevent stages (the specified areas in which boda-bodas are supposed to wait for customers) from being over-run with new drivers, and to facilitate surveillance within the sector. Through Boda Boda 2010, the sector achieved new levels of systematisation, such that Kitata's organisation was becoming a sort of 'proto UTODA'.[30] This was, however, achieved through violent enforcement and the politicisation of Boda Boda 2010, which was widely seen as a client organisation of Kayihura (a staunch Museveni loyalist), as well as a quasi-military agent of surveillance. In 2013 the organisation's agents blocked an early KCCA effort to register boda boda cyclists, allegedly beating up registration officials, while in 2017 its representatives attacked a group of schoolchildren, simply on the basis that they were wearing red ribbons – a symbol associated with protest against the lifting of the presidential age limit (Daily Monitor 2017).

By 2015, a further row erupted about how to deal with the boda boda sector, with Musisi wanting KCCA to regulate it directly, the lord mayor arguing that it should self-regulate, and Kayihura favouring deepened penetration by Boda Boda 2010. Kayihura's close relationship with the president meant that he prevailed – at least initially. However, ultimately Boda Boda 2010 was recreating the conditions that had prevailed under Kuboca, but on a greater scale, with the organisation becoming increasingly armed with weapons and terrorising its drivers, thereby sowing the seeds for an uprising in the sector.[31] Kitatta's downfall came when he was linked to the murder of an accountant in early 2018, providing Henry Tumukunde, the minister of national security and long-term NRM rival of Kayihura, with an opportunity to investigate Boda Boda 2010. This led to Kitatta's arrest and imprisonment, after which drivers stormed the organisation's offices, and the dominance of Boda Boda 2010 was over.

As of 2019, nothing similar had yet emerged to take the organisation's place. Rather, the most significant dynamic in the sector is its progressive urbanization, through organisations such as Safe Boda, Taxify and UberBoda, as well as organisations like Tugende that provide training and hire-purchase services to enable drivers to gain financial security. It is hard to predict how repeated efforts to politically control the sector might be affected by these initiatives. However, it remains clear that the sector is too unruly to submit easily to domination without resorting to levels of violence that undermine the NRM's position. As larger numbers of university graduates end up as boda boda drivers and more entrepreneurs enter the sector offering 'premium' services, the difficulty in politically controlling it is only likely to increase.

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[30] Ibid.
[31] Interview with boda boda co-ordinator, June 2018.

The NRM's efforts to dominate the sector show how attempts to win over urban constituencies through shielding informal workers from taxation and regulation were ultimately insufficient for sustained support, leading to deepening efforts to also surveil and coerce drivers. These dual strategies have generated conflicting dynamics within the sector: on the one hand, the ruling coalition actively facilitated the growth of a large interest group that it purports to protect; but, on the other, it has indirectly terrorised them. In this sense, the strategy in the sector could be seen as a specific form of 'coercive distribution' (Goodfellow and Jackman 2020), in which drivers are offered a form of protection from state regulation, but through processes that are highly coercive – a strategy that ultimately over-reached itself and collapsed. This dual impetus towards livelihood creation and violent securitisation, evident also in the 'Crime Preventers' programme, creates a highly volatile and unpredictable landscape of urban youth politics in the run-up to the 2021 elections.
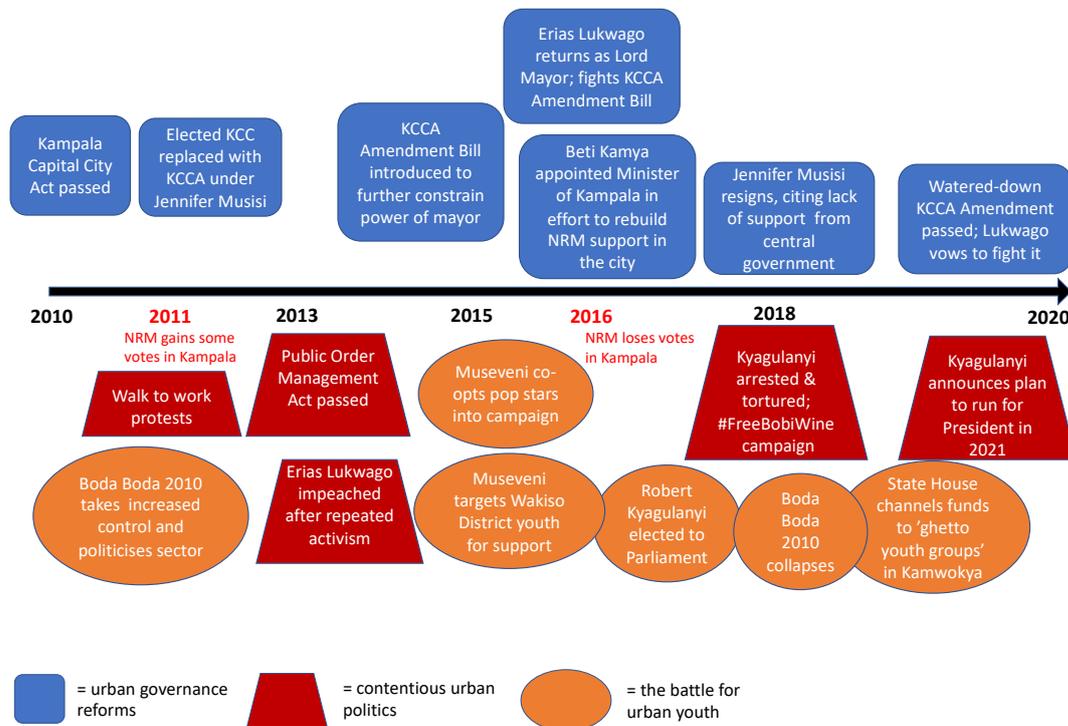
7. Conclusion

This paper has explored how Uganda's ruling coalition used a combination of violent coercion, co-optation and legal-institutional manoeuvres to try and enhance its political dominance of the city, drawing on a diverse range of instruments in the toolbox of urban control presented by Goodfellow and Jackman (2020). From initially neglecting urban constituencies during its early decades of rule, the question of urban opposition became an increasing concern in the first decade of the new millennium. After the split with Besigye and the evidence of growing opposition in Kampala in the 2001 and 2006 elections, Museveni stepped up efforts to gain favour with urban groups in the late 2000s, including through persistent efforts to scupper the city council's attempts to regulate informal trade and transport. The combination of a populist anti-regulation message, the smearing and active weakening of the council and a range of strategies and tactics to manage the Buganda Kingdom relationship meant that the NRM succeeded in regaining some support in Kampala in 2011. But this was inadequate and short-lived, with Besigye relentlessly mobilising opposition on the streets and offering himself as a martyr in front of the media.

In this paper, we have subjected the NRM's strategies over the subsequent decade to close scrutiny. By the start of the decade, it was clear that the tried and tested strategies of repression and elite co-optation were insufficient to keep opposition from exploding on the streets of the capital, necessitating new approaches to urban control. These were pursued both from the 'top down', through legal and administrative manoeuvres, and from the 'bottom up', by attempting to build support among urban youth and more deeply infiltrate organisations in the urban informal economy. The urban modernisation project under Jennifer Musisi's KCCA, which put enormous effort into branding and generating civic pride, in the hope of bolstering urban middle-class support, initially yielded some rewards for the NRM elite. However, the effort to rid the streets of vendors and regulate many urban dwellers out of existence soon grated with a city population accustomed to a highly permissive urban environment (Young 2017). In the 2016 election, NRM support in Kampala and surrounding areas dipped to new

lows. In consequence, the past four years have seen the ruling elite reinvent the strategy to centralise the governance of the city, alongside continued repression and a host of new street-level strategies to try and win over urban youth, the need for which has been amplified by the rise of Robert Kyagulanyi.

Figure 5: A timeline of the pursuit of dominance, 2010-2020

A decade of pursuing this suite of strategies and tactics, which involve what Goodfellow and Jackman (2020) term 'generative' and 'repressive' interventions, in equal measure, has only reproduced the situation of contested control in the city. This decade has underscored the intense difficulty that both the government and opposition encounter in trying to assert urban dominance. Alongside continuing to exercise highly visible violence against opponents, the ruling elite's overall approach has involved a central contradiction in its attempt to centralise power away from the city population while *simultaneously* championing popular urban groups. This approach fans the flames of opposition, even as it binds opposition figures' hands. Figure 5 illustrates the interplay of these strategies (and responses to them) across the course of the decade.

In the final analysis, the suite of strategies deployed is clearly not enough to secure NRM dominance, particularly in a city where opposition has long been strong and where politics is highly informalised; yet it does provide the ruling elite with further levers to limit the opposition's capacity to successfully contest dominance. The result is a continued impasse: the regime may rapidly be running out of options in its quest to fully dominate the capital, but time and again it has shown it can do enough to prevent urban opposition from becoming transformative or threatening the regime's power and legitimacy nationally. Whether this can change in 2021 depends partly on

whether opposition leaders can unify around a winning set of messages and counter-strategies. Yet is also depends on whether the key demographic in the struggle for change – the urban youth – have both the numbers and the nerve needed to face off the NRM's overflowing armoury of political weapons.

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