Transcript of Governance Uncovered Episode 47: A conversation with Prince Guma, Astrid Haas, and Patience Mususa on urban Africa Ep.167: A conversation with Prince Guma, Astrid Haas, and Patience Mususa on urban Africa.

Hello and welcome to Governance Uncovered, a podcast by the Governance and Local Developmnet Institute, at the University of Gothenburg. This podcast is supported by the Swedish research Council.

This episode is a special one. It's a podcast mash-up with Ufahamu Africa. Ufahamu Africa is a podcast about life and politics on the African continent, and is hosted by Kim Yi Dionne and Rachel Beatty Ridel.

GLD's Jeffrey Paller joined the show to talk about urbanization in Africa, together with the three experts Prince Guma, Astrid Hass, and Patience Mususa. Kim and rachel will do a great job in giving you a more in-depth presentation of this episode in a second, but before that, we want to thank the team at Ufahamu Africa for doing this mash-up with us. And, we hope that you enjoy the episode!

Welcome to Ufahamu Africa, a podcast about life and politics on the African continent. I'm Kim Yi Dionne, one of your hosts, and I'm joined by my co-host, Rachel Beatty Ridel. Hi, Rachel!

Hi, Kim and hello to our listeners, we have a really great episode this week. We have one of our favorite things, a podcast mash-up with Governance Uncovered, which is run out of the Governance and Local Development Institute at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. And the episode was really inspired by Jeffrey Pallers *This Week in Africa* post, which was five trends that will shape urban Africa in 2023.

So let me lay out here for our listeners what those five trends are. One is innovative forms of affordable housing, another is gentrifying neighborhood. 3rd is heightened focus on emerging cities, right, cities that are coming out of what used to be categorized as rural places and become because they're growing so quickly, they become cities, right, and 4th is confronting flooding. Here we, you know, we're really key on this and the 5th is impact of big tech. Right. So that combination of how do we identify trends one through four with tech and innovation? And or politics and social cooperation. Right. So not thinking them of them as substitutes, but how they go together and not relying overly on technological solutions without taking account of the social, behavioral, and political context that shape how tech is used and for whom. Right.

So it's a really great conversation and to answer these questions or to reflect on these five trends, we are joined by three expert panelists and one is Ugandan based economist and expert of all things urban Astrid Haas, who has written extensively on African urbanization, informality, housing, municipal finance and public transport, also with us in the panel is environmental anthropology, anthropologist, and senior researcher at the Nordic Africa Institute, Patience Mususa, who's author of the recently published books *There used to be order: Life on the Copperbelt after privatization of the Zambian consolidated Copper mines.* And a second book, *The practice and politics of DIY urbanism in African cities*. So really, really fantastic work. And finally, our third panelist in this conversation is Prince Guma, an expert on urban infrastructure city making and smart urbanism,

who's currently a postdoctoral research associate at Sheffield University's Urban institute. So we have the right people around the table. These are all experts with really specific knowledge but also awareness of these broad patterns. And so we hope you enjoy the conversation.

This is a really wonderful podcast mash-up with Governance Uncovered, which is run out of the Governance and Local Development Institute at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

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Welcome to Ufahamu Africa and a podcast mash-up with Governance Uncovered here with myself, Rachel Beatty Riedel and Governance uncovered co-host Jeffrey Paller.

We're especially excited to have this episode because we have gathered together a set of experts on urbanization and, building from Jeffrey Pollers this week in Africa's recent Post "5 trends that will shape urban Africa in 2023", we're going to dive into a conversation around these themes of and conversation around governance urbanization, informality, housing, finance, etc. that help us to understand these broader demographic, social political trends that are shaping the continent.

We have 3 esteemed guests with us here today, Prince Guma.

Yes, thank you. I'm happy to be here.

Astrid Haas.

Thanks, Rachel. I look forward to the discussion.

And Patience Mususa.

Hello, hi. Great to be here.

Thanks so much to each of these experts for joining us. And I'm going to hand it over to Jeffrey for our first question.

Yes, thank you. Astrid, you have written extensively on the housing shortage facing African cities as well as the opportunity it provides for African governments and businesses. You are a leading voice among economists and policymakers who take informality seriously. The first trend that I outlined is that governments will search for innovative forms of affordable housing. Governments realize that this is important to take care of their populations as well as a really important political issue. How can African cities build more affordable housing for its residents? And, as you recently wrote about, how can we do informal housing better?

Thanks Jeffrey I think part of the issue is the the the word innovative. Governments like to look outside the box, they like to not deal with the challenges that are actually within their own systems, and I think particularly when it comes to housing, one of the major challenges is inappropriate regulations, inappropriate building regulations, inappropriate standards that just don't match what the cities need. In part, these are still inherited from colonial times. And in part it's because they try to imagine a city that our cities are not. So, you know, having structures that or providing standards for structures that just cannot be built. The second thing I would say is, and and this goes to your point about doing informal housing better, is that governments don't necessarily need to do it all themselves, nor can they do it all themselves. But there is actually a booming micro private sector, who granted are not providing quality housing, because that's a lot in the informal settlements. But they do understand what the demand is for this housing, and they are building quickly and they are building at scale. So how can we incentivize them to do that better at a higher quality without governments having to take on the full weight of this challenge themselves?

And Astrid, do you, can you give us a sense of how big this challenge really is?

I think it's not only the challenge today, Jeffrey. I think it's the fact that we are we are behind the curve already and urbanizing at an extreme speed, which means that already being behind the curve means that we're already going to not be able to catch up in the near future. I think you just have to go to to most African cities, if not all, and see how quickly informal settlements are proliferating to know that we are missing affordable quality housing.

Some recent data from the United Nations suggests that more than 50% of the African urban population live in slum like conditions. Another interesting statistic is that more more than 60% of the urban population, are youth. So we have a lot of young people who are living in this type of environment. Now Patience, you've written a lot about how residents cannot wait for their governments to fix their cities. And I think Astrid has made this point as well, you suggest that residents are actually doing things on their own. You call this DIY urbanism. Can you tell us what this is and how you see it playing a role in the search for more affordable housing?

Yes, I mean just to kind of you know, step off from asteroid I mean, people are in a hurry to provide themselves housing. Other than in many, in some African countries, I mean some housing was being provided by the state in the kind of immediate post independence period. But protracted economic crisis in many places and also kind of structural adjustment policies effectively, austerity policies effectively means that the states are quite, you know, in quite tight financial situations to do that. So this do-it-yourself and we're calling it kind of do it yourself as an analytical frame to look at what people are actually doing includes both kind of as a form of auto construction that includes effectively kind of creating makeshift infrastructure such as housing, roads, drainages, and, you know, retrofitting kind of energy systems or hijacking it. But it also is connected to how people are organizing service within the city, so one could see it, almost the kind of a a kind of placemaking, a way in which people are actually making places. They're making infrastructure, but they're also creating urban services and in that process also creating new governance systems in the absence of, of state capacity.

Excellent. Prince, let's turn to you. A second trend facing African cities is the role of big tech. Twitter has arrived in Ghana, Google continues to invest across the continent, and tech hubs are sprouting up in many African cities. How do you see technology shaping the development of African cities?

Yes, I think one of the impacts that can be realized right now is that we are already observing in many African countries rise of a kind of state laid smart city projects that I imagine right now and these projects are often, you know, unless they often tend to be muddled along, you know, kind of the silicon Valley, ubiquity of, you know, a kind of transferable policy as well as I think with these kinds of policies also arise of new investment landscapes that are emerging in many African countries. And these are often, at least, they often tend to be hubs of innovation, smart city style quarters. And is, in a way, at least trying to replicate or at least to promote external representations of smartness, a kind of smartness that is, you know, sort of reflected in a lot of the cities in the Global North. And so they echo a particular set of rationalities that are premised upon the ubiquitous role and logics of additional technological solutions in shaping urban futures. Africa's urban futures. And they also transpire in a form of large scale, top down projects shipped by internationally circulating ideas and ideals and models of what a smart city is or what it should look like. But they also prominently rooted within different countries you know. You know, capitals and government offices. And so they're mostly driven by, you know, international developers, you know, spread of global consultants, you know, like clincy and others and they are financed by, you know,

very big money situations, but also really shocked by these very hegemonic ideals of what are what Class City, what class smart City really is or what it should look like, and so they dictate well within this wider sort of like hyper modern and hyper network experiments and other techniques. And so they tend to be really, I think the idea of what a smart city is is very speculative in nature. It's very future oriented, but those is it, It is also very awkward looking, so it very rarely you know fits the narrative of the you know, actual realities of the African cities. And so one of the stuck, you know, realities when you, you know, just go into any African city like Nairobi or Kampala or Lagos, a lot of what you tend to actually find on the ground, a kind of ubiquitous, you know, test money transfer banking, you know, systems and services, where people, you know, at least transact their daily operations through the mobile phone. They also kind of targeted E payment technologies, digital media and app based platforms, incremental metering projects and hybrid ICT based infrastructure and housing projects, as well as small and, and scale farms and startups. And so you can really very clearly see a very distinct, you know, difference in terms of what ideas, you know, thrown out in terms of what a smart city should be versus what is actually happening on the ground.

And said so, fascinating, and I, you know, when I think about big tech and what you've just said, I often see this tension between, you know, capacity right to map and to bring new innovative solutions. And yet we also see the potential of what I think back to in in James Scott's iconic work in terms of like a surveillance state or the ability of the government and the state bureaucracy to know deep, more deeply, you know, the contours of people's social, political and economic lives. And so I think that this is, you know, tech has so many aspects to it. When we think about urban spaces in particular, and there, there, there's the the kind of pro Social, Pro governance and then there might be the flip side of that coin as well so, I just wanted to open this up to Astrid and Patience to think about how you see the role of big tech and urbanism today?

Maybe if if, you'll allow me, I'll go first because I feel very strongly about this question and about the the issue of smart cities. And and the reason is, I there's there's three major challenges I see with it. One, it's again, you know similar to my answer in housing, it's governments trying to just sort of leapfrog and not deal with the challenges they have. And the assumption that they can just build something new and somewhere else. However, the second issue is it's very expensive and that speaks partly to what Prince was talking about is that it's a very nebulous term, and so, you know, I've seen anything be sold under the the concept of a smart city and everyone wants to be a smart, smart city now. And so they spend their their money on this. And the third thing is it in in and I don't know of any case where this is not the case, then correct me if I'm wrong, but they drive inequality because they are not made for the poor, so they are not building that large amount of affordable housing that we need and everything else. So I wanted to say, you know, Africa is urbanizing in a resource constrained environment. We know that, right? However, we also have the opportunity that we do have a lot of data, which is where Big Tech plays a role. Because we see where our new cities are going to be, we know where people are moving. We can predict this. We can model this. And actually what we should be doing is taking these scarce resources and trying to get ahead of the curve and investing in these new spaces rather than trying to recreate, you know, or or create spaces that are driving inequality. And also you know, we haven't really figured out what makes cities tick because cities is not just about the infrastructure. They are very nuanced parts about social networks, you know, cultural networks, and no government is going to recreate that from the start. So it's a very risky gamble. It's a very expensive, risky gamble, and it takes away from the sort of actual areas where we know people are moving and making those investments.

So yeah, if I could step in actually it's a very interesting debate because there's kind of almost kind of two, there's kind of two tensions that occur. One is the idea that kind of occurs and African kind of planners can kind of imagine a future that's kind of that if they can materialize it much quicker than anybody else. And then on the other hand, there's also this need to kind of know the city. So for some planners kind of working within this field, it's how can tech and technology provide them a database to actually know what is going on in the city. Who is who and how are people kind of working? And so I kind of remember one discussion back in Zambia and it was this question about addressing how do you know where people live, when you have a reasonable degree of mobility. How do you know where to send particular, you know, the tax bill or, you know, the electricity bill or all this kind of like government services, If you do not have a proper physical address due to some of the kind of planning challenges that you, you know, you don't have a proper Postal Service anymore. And so then the mobile phone becomes, you know, to some extent a kind of addressing system, but also a way in which to kind of collect data. I think one of the big challenges too, you know kind of adding into this kind of complexity is then what is what is done with this data, who is having access to it and to what extent do you know kind of urban citizens have a say in directing, kind of, how the state is used, but also where resources you know are invested, you know, can both of you mentioned that it's really very expensive. So what what say do people actually have or are they just being kind of minds for kind of interesting data so that they can kind of figure out a way to track people to get them to pay and electricity bill kind of make money out of them.

I can say I agree with you. And that's especially in the context of increasingly, in some in some places, increasing the authoritarian states, right? Where, where that could not only be used to track someone for their electricity bill. But for for other purposes as well.

This is really fascinating and I want to turn it back to you, Prince, because you wrote a book called Rethinking Smart Urbanism, and I'm wondering if you could tell us what you mean by that and perhaps provide some insights into how cities actually can use this technology in a smart way?

Yes, I thank you and thanks for the kind words about the book. Yeah, but I think this fits well into, you know, the arguments that Astrid and Patience are also trying to make about the, you know the complexities around the smart city. And and for me, in the book I try, I'm trying to, understand or examine the multiple ways through which cities and infrastructures are constructed and reconstructed through ICT, innovation and appropriation, and how digital infrastructures are facilitate utility companies and different kinds of organizations and ambitions of extending centralized networks or infrastructure in at least in the case of utility companies to new territories, which often tend to be informal settlements, the slums and so on. And and so by so doing, shaking different kinds of city making processes and part of my interest in the book is trying to understand the place best, articulations our smart city making and urban featuring and and so with the concept of urbanism. For me it was very important to try and understand, I mean, it's a, broad broader field within urban studies that deals with as it implies a particular set of rationalities that embody the ubiquitous for of new technology. And this includes a smart devices Internet of Things and big data approaches to deliver sustainable, prosperous and inclusive urban futures. And for me it was very great analytical approach for examining contemporary developments of digital, of the digital age in

terms of how the digital age offers innovative solutions to urban developments, service delivery and governance challenges. But of course, like Astrid and Patience mentioned, the concept itself, or at least the analytical framework, has its own limitations and part of the critique of the concept has been that it tends to be, you know, quite deterministic. In a way you know hegemonism, hegemonism upon walls and cities where when we talk about what a smart city is or what a smart city should look like. We often tend to have an idea of what you should do, and yet, as I've mentioned in the case of many African citites, the reality often tends to be quite different.

I think what this conversation brings us to this question of who is the city for. And, what we're noticing is the rise, a lot of these cities are becoming more and more unequal, which brings me to a trend that I discussed in the post, which is the rise of gentrifying neighborhoods. So neighborhoods in cities like Johannesburg, Dakar, Nairobi, Lagos, even Kampala, face rising housing costs, leading to the displacement of many current residents. African cities are at the forefront of some very exciting global movements. The global food fashion, music trends, but much of the effects are felt in the very urban neighborhoods where these creative forces are taking place. And I think this tension is something that many of these larger African cities are facing.

Astrid, do you see gentrification as a serious challenge to African cities, and if so, what can governments do to deal with the rising housing costs and this increasing inequality?

So I think, you know, speaking from my own experience here, having now lived in Kampala for more than a decade and being from Kampala, you know, in some ways it's very exciting. I think it shows what African cities can do, what African cities have to offer and that, like many successful cities around the world, they drive, you know, innovation because they bring together people from different backgrounds. And so that's where you see the trends. You know the fashion, the music that you mentioned, Jeffrey. I think the challenges is that the focus right now is very much on that consumer or that what they call the growing middle class and the growing consumer class because it paints a very rosy picture. And again, it's easier to to to put that picture out and to sort of cater for that echelon rather than deal with the majority. I think we need to make sure that we, you know, look very closely, for example, to the Latin America urbanization experience that drove inequality very high and try and avoid that. However, for that to happen, I think the rhetoric around how we deal with inequality so right now the informal is somehow equated with with with the everything that's bad about the city, even though it's the majority of the economic activity, it's the majority of the transport system and it's the majority of the housing system. So to get to your point about gentrification, you know it's it's a problem in a place where we're not on the other side working on trying to to to create enough affordable housing because it's what drives inequality. But it's not a problem in and of itself if we could be managing the city better. And to do that, we cannot just focus on that one part and ignore the other.

Prince, do you notice that many of these new infrastructure developments that are coming with increased, that are coming with increased development of these cities and new infrastructure projects, Do you see this leading to massive displacements of people in the cities that you work?

Yes, certainly. And I think one thing that is highly synonymous with a lot of city plans in many African cities is that this the the policy and planning tends to be, unless designed around, you know this idea of, you know, neoliberal, you know, at least around the aspect of the liberal situations. And so they continue to design aggressive control measures that impose a kind of order by eliminating those that they perceive to be obstructive obstacles to this idea of development and so a lot of the informal, and informal constructions, you know you can talk about kiosks and you know these other different kinds of installations like stalls and shops and shanties, they often tend to be perceived as being obstructed to, you know, obstructive obstacles to the idea of urbanization and modernity. And so planning and engineering departments often tend to consider these constructions and even informal areas as not fitting within cities. And so they're, you know, expressly, often and excluded off stage and even sometimes, you know, outlawed as settlements that don't belong within cities. And so one trend that is, you know that often tends to follow these infrastructural development projects is you know an aspect of a slum clearance and demolition where you know this actually tends to constitute a kind of refactor of politics as group as you know, has argued, and in this case there is often a tendency of using bulldozers as a central planning policy tool, and so we, you know, these kinds of processes then increasingly, you know, heightening the aspect of inequality. And so I think the problem really becomes highly distinct when one considers the kinds of plans that are associated with the current Urban Development in many African cities and how they approach how they view these informal settlements and informal constructions within cities.

Patience, I wanted to ask you how much you think this deepening inequality is a new phenomenon, or is it something that is rooted in history? Another way to think about this is how important is kind of history in this story.

Yeah, that's a good question because it's it's key. I mean, kind of both Astrid and Prince kind of mentioned, you know, Prince mentioned particular policies of slum clearance based on these kind of plans, you know and kind of you know and and and the sort of colonial planning history and Astrid mentioned kind of this building regulations earlier that kind of end up shaping how kind of cities form and it's quite interesting that actually when you look at the kind of granular aspects of how people also kind of try to come out of the kind of straight jackets that they've been kind of placed in, they are adopting some of those kind of historically formed planning regimes that might have kind of kept them in equal and kind of responding to them by they're planning themselves and creating the roadways and the kind of various infrastructure to try and avoid their neighborhoods from being raised or, you know, being raised to the ground. But also kind of like a separate trend that's that's kind of core to this. It's kind of very much looking at the kind of political economy of cities, you know, like sitting here in Sweden, for example, right, where you have a state very present in... and the kind of municipal level governance and kind of raising resources from a tax base and even the kind of inequalities are, you know, are present everywhere. The the whole idea of the provision of public services, you know. So in thinking about some of these kind of structured inequalities, things like access to good schools, healthcare, are they being invested in these particular neighbourhoods and kind of and and and settlements to effectively allow some level of social mobility. But as Astrid mentioned, I think we've shifted the political economy of African states, you know, has moved, I would say in a quite a number of cities to this kind of more spectacular consumption. I show that I'm doing OK, but even though the structural conditions actually on the basis are not necessary. The OK. And then people are kind of improvising and sort of trying to make do find a Health Center, find education, set up a small little classroom in somebody's home to try

and fill in these in these gaps. And I think that is effectively partly to do with the retreat of the state that, in an African context, so you know the the implementation of their structural adjustment policies was extremely harsh. I don't think anywhere in the world there would have been implemented to that level of severity and that I think kind of informed some of the processes that have urban processes that we see today.

Great. I think it's important to note that most of the urban growth is actually happening in smaller cities, those with less than 1,000,000 people. Cities Alliance estimates that there are 885 secondary or intermediate cities of this size, and this is where over 40% of the urban growth. Is actually occurring. So these cities are closer to urban populations and provide important markets for agriculture and other goods. Some of them are boom towns or regional capitals. Others are college towns and satellite cities. We highlight the focus on emerging cities as our 4th trend, and I want to ask you, Patience, you've written extensively about these cities in the copper belt in southern Africa. What is notable about how smaller cities can approach develop development and what have you learned from the experience in the Zambian copper belt that might be applicable elsewhere?

I mean, what is it? I mean, the Zambian Copperbelt town where established around mining industries, kind of extractive local. So then you've got settlements occurring around there and and when you have these kinds of trends, you have kind of boom and bust, you know, so when the economy is OK and then when it's bad and kind of workers like gets, you know, laid off. And then they kind of have to figure out kind of new modes of livelihoods and how to kind of cope with life. And I think what's really interesting, at least, you know, kind of if if planners or you know kind of state municipal planners would take up is that, when when people go off in these small areas and small towns that are making either kind of agricultural livelihoods, trade or working kind of or new kind of makeshift kind of, you know, where this brick building and a whole range of other things, there's really not much invested. Investment being put in these areas, so there's no kind of, you know, earlier Astrid mentioned this kind of micro interventions. There's no investment in kind of small irrigation systems even that would kind of allow an upscaling of economy and support to these to these areas, so that they're increasingly central to how actually I would say kind of African countries work in terms of also where the urbanization dynamics are occurring. But they're kind of neglected in terms of the potential investments that might be directed to them, and in particular being attentive to what people are actually doing and how one might then be able to support that. This is scaffolding for the different kinds of cities that actually take into account, you know, what African lives are like and how African economies are being formed with that because they don't have some of them, you know, bought the kind of older towns that are being regenerated by the new ones. Do not necessarily carry that colonial baggage.

Astrid, do you want to jump in on that?

Yeah, you know, I just was reflecting then. It's very interesting because Patience, you know, talked about cities being established in the 80s as being secondary cities. Uganda is pretty much the opposite case. Up until July 2020, we had one city and then overnight we created 10 more. And now we have 11 cities. And what what's interesting about that is that it reflects sort of a waking up that.

Because sort of no longer a rural continent, which is great because it means national policy is starting to take cities seriously the challenge is it it. It also reflects a little bit this this tension and this this misunderstanding about what a city is and that one can sort of wake up and, and declare a city. I think just to, to build a little bit on on, on, on Patience's point, I think the lack of investment is is. Is again is, is is a key challenge because the lack of investment also comes from the lack of money. Because the the economies of these cities, as as Jeffrey you mentioned, you know very much based on on agriculture and agricultural goods and and so even though the investments should be done before people settle and in other in other countries and secondary cities are, as you know, growing extensively and we know people are going to settle there. There's no money, right? Now to make those investments and unfortunately, you know, particularly, you know, political cycles mean that you're not going to invest for people who may vote for you 10 years or 15 years from now, you're going to invest in things that are going to bring you the votes today and that's often in primary urban areas, or alternatively rural areas, but not very much the secondary city. So we still need to figure out how we start having sort of longer term thinking and this is not just an African challenge, I think politicians across the world deals with this challenge, but the the differences on the African urbanization is the speed and the scale that we're urbanizing at is that we don't have a lot of window of opportunity to get this right. So we need to to figure this out pretty pretty quick.

OK. That's so, so important to think about the political logics that you bring in, Astrid, because of course, as you know, Jeffrey's work has showed, and you know, some of my recent work with Amanda Robinson in terms of thinking about the ways in which even citizens who are in these secondary cities or primary cities, the extent to which their political logics are rooted in, in potentially you know the urban space and you know, governing the urban urban space and or potentially they're also drawn back, you know, to rural constituencies and the ways in which you know, MP's want people to be voting back in, in the rural sometimes. And so how those things contribute to the politics of the urban right, starting from the ability to mobilize voters around different priority areas and what what short term strategies politicians have to, to cultivate those. And I wanted to jump to the 5th trend, which is about climate change and the ways in which African cities are confronting and combating climate change from top down urban strategies and from bottom up strategies. We know that flooding is a major phenomenon across the world, and certainly and you know in in major cities across the continent and floods are are a leading cause of of displacement. Some, in some cases death. So how do we see cities combatting climate change, how do we see people kind of living in dense settings? How does that contribute to the potential to combat climate change, or how are they impacted by climate change? How are they adapting their strategies of urban life in the face of of climate change let me just open that up first to print, and then we'll we'll move around the panel.

Yes, I think you are. No, I completely agree. This is a very important issue. And I think at the governance. Level, I mean there has been. I think a lot of the work has been more incremental in terms of, you know, wind range of different kinds of infrastructure improvements and and change such as you know where some examples of you know where drainage systems are being, you know installed. Or Windows 8. Western soils, you know, to increase the capacity of, you know, for water flow and so on are being installed. But a lot of the work I think has been more even the aspect of physical infrastructure and policies, but also at the level of Community engagement. You know the development of a floodplain, you know, maps and zoning regulations are being put in place. In other cases, of course, where different kinds of digital technologies and attitudes have been used to

provide more sustainable, and you know more practical solutions. But I think a lot of. The infrastructure solutions that have been put in place in many African cities. Been more in terms of renewable energy infrastructure. Energy storage infrastructure as well as you know, electric vehicles in Uganda for instance there you know some government initiatives to sort of like develop electric vehicles and motorcycles as well. And with a lot of the smart city. Kinds of plans, a lot of the drive behind these plans is the urge to develop green, you know buildings and sustainable. Infrastructure kinds of solutions as well as resilience infrastructure. But for me what has been very talking in terms of, you know, approaches to climate change has been in particular, the role of young people, the young folks, the youth who have been. Engaging in different ways, you know prosecuting different forms of organization. Often we are sometimes even St. level kinds of organization offering models of social participation that go beyond idealized forms of, you know, collective action. So there are many examples where. For instance. Young folks organizing in schools, in social gatherings in order to create awareness of climate change, and, you know, advocate for planning, planting more trees and protesting against plastic trash, polythene bags and and emissions. And and what is really interesting about these kinds of? Engagement is how these young folks really, you know, use these, you know, sort of like everyday social media platforms like, you know, Twitter and Facebook, but with really, really significant impact. And I think there is so much to learn from how young folks are responding to, you know this. Issue of climate change, and especially in terms of how we design how our policies are designed from the top down. But also how these other hegemonic institutions are sort of approaching the as the issue of climate change. I think there is so much potential in our PM folks are doing and there's so much that could actually be learned in terms of how to sort of approach climate change in the way that is actually addresses the problem. And whether it addresses the problem, but also I realize is, you know, a kind of social justice where everybody actually benefits from the kind of politics policies. That are put in place.

And Astrid, how do you see it?

It's a fascinating question because like, I literally came from having worked in one of Uganda's new new secondary cities actually addressing this question. With the city officials. And you know, I think the the interesting part is I think in this these parts of the world, people understand climate change. More than anywhere. Else because it. Is actually affecting them on the day-to-day basis. They see the impacts, they see the increased heat, they see the different rainfall patterns and everything. Now, however, when it comes to sort of the agenda setting in the urban and this is what you know, this is the. Discussion we were. Having it's not for them. They don't see as the most pressing issue because they have so many other needs, particularly, you know, just meeting the day-to-day livelihood needs of of everyone else, of everyone living in the city. And, you know, even trying to incorporate sort of adaptation into that. Even is is is difficult because they they. They are adapting already. They have to because they see the sort of differences in rainfall patterns. They don't see that as as something. That they they need to necessarily focus on. And it comes back to that same question as that, you know, what are we planning for? And I think particularly in secondary. Cities that are new and that have perhaps even poorer populations than in some other cities, the media. It is often takes precedence over the sort of longer term and climate change. You know, we we can, we can argue here or there. But I think in, in, in in a lot of their thinking, climate change is. In the medium to longer term rather. Than sort of competing, so I think. It's how we get that. That narrative to also reflect that it's actually in many cases, what they're already doing. And it can be done without so much extra cost, but it can and it will create savings not only in terms of financial costs, but in terms of social social costs like displacement and and everything. Else into the future. So I think you know those are the. Conversations that we need to. Be be having more and we need to be doing a lot more of the listening. As well, rather than the preaching, because I feel particularly on

the climate agenda. It's become a very sort of preachy topic or or the way it's perceived as like, you know, the West is preaching to us. Yet the West created the problem. So who are they to tell us what? We're supposed to do so, I think. We just we. We need to shift that conversation a little bit more and and be a bit more effusive on that.

Yeah, absolutely on all points. You know, right, completely and patient.

Yeah, I agree with. I agree with kind of both of you and I think the challenge is, I mean there's kind of. For some of the the big infrastructure developments that we do see on the continents, in cities like highways and. And that sort of thing like roads, I think, which are usually actually also kind of largely donor driven. I think there's also kind of lack of voice or agency from the perspective of African urban city planners in terms of. Retrofitting that such that it is adapt, you know it is suitable for the kind of challenges. So you do get this kind of new roads without kind of proper drainage and there's a certain amount of kind of financing that is kind of place there, but it's not really responsive effectively to to the challenges that we face. Now and in the future. And so then you have that side the kind of like big infrastructure that you know kind of highways into like usually going to a mine. Or something like that. That could be planned better and in a much more kind of responsive way, and there's not much going on there. And I think a lot more should be done there. And then there's the kind of for the everyday people who are actually, you know, kind of for people kind of growing, relying on kind of urban agriculture for a livelihood. They're kind of very, very aware of this. They're very well aware from a. Practical perspective around kind of issues of kind of sanitation and access to water. If you're relying on kind of shallow wells and the kind of variability around that. So it becomes part of a kind of everyday challenge and I. Think the key? The the key challenge I think within these very, very constrained settings is that what then can residents themselves do and what can the state do and what can the municipality do. And there's some kind of scope for kind of grassroots driven effort. But to scale them up. Such that they do have. Some impact. Some of it is kind of financial, you know, kind of needing some resources, but a lot of it actually is about coordination in terms of. How you you know, kind of climate proof, particular kinds of landscapes for people who have been forced to build on vulnerable land because. The contacts US land anywhere else. So if you say that, OK, this is what practical. What people are practically doing within cities, and how do you coordinate those efforts to effectively make these particular landscapes, you know, less disaster prone? And I think we need to start taking a much more pragmatic. Perspective to that and and maybe coordinating a little bit a a little bit more.

These are all great insights, and I think they bring us to our last question, which is what do you think is the promise of urban Africa for the future and what should policy makers keep in mind to help citizens and municipalities realize that promise?

Just, you know, stepping off from my Astrid and passions, I have highlighted, you know, in there, you know, different reflections. I think there's so much to. Work with already and.

And I think.

For me, I think at the end of the day, it's. Always going to be about equitable. You know, and socially just. You know, you know cities at the end of the day, so it's going to be. About this, you know how you know. For whom? As you know. Are we trying to make cities for whom you know these infrastructural development projects and you know? Policies and so on. Are they being made? And I think first policy makers have to what what they need to keep in mind. Is that they? They just have to realize that it's going to take more than standard master plans, you know. More than you. Know model plans and development plans and visions to realize inclusive and sustainable urban futures.

And I think we need to think about how best to realize, you know, development that is in. That is more holistic, that is continuous. I think it's very important that we understand that development is continuous and that it can't, you know very easily be realized through, you know, different kinds of you know, instant plans or development projects and so on. It's also important to consider the multi dimensionality of urban information. The diversity of urban trajectories and also the needs of all citizens, I think that is very important if we, if we are going to even start thinking about realizing equitable and, you know, cities and social justice needs and concerns about the second point. For me, I think is that is. I think there there is a need for a better appreciation and understanding of a kind of what I, you know, refer to as provisional urban walls. You know where informal settlements, you know, slums and informal constructions and installations would offer. And we need to start thinking about these kinds of constructions as a kind that are beneficial to urban planning, actually as constructions that actually offer different. Kinds of alternatives to what is there at the moment, which really obviously isn't working as it should, but you also need to start thinking about it for more and transient housing and so on as. As well as you know, high density settlements as viable alternatives. It means they usually and you know. Usually, exclusionary nature of neoliberal and market oriented interventions. So there is definitely a need to instigate a kind of practice that speaks to different ways of being in the world and I think one, you know, one thing that has been you know headquarter about African cities, you know many times is how these cities tend to be highly fragmented. They tend to be. You know, very diverse and you know split. And so it's very it's going to be really important that we at least try to think of ways to think of modes of urban practice that speak different ways of being. In the world.

And Astrid, how? Do you see it? What are your big takeaways?

I mean, I think my my big takeaways are probably similar to prints, but let me just say, you know from an economist perspective, the opportunity is clear, right? No country has ever reached the income status without going through a well managed urbanization process. And you know, given that Africa is now the fastest continent urbanizing in the. World, you know that provides an unprecedented opportunity in terms of, you know, achieving development and and and for all. But I think from a you know what I would, what I would say to policymakers, obviously caveat it it's always easier to dish out the advice and and not have to implement. It oneself, but I think. It it echoes what what Prince has just said, right, which is. You know Africa's urban trajectory is unique, both in terms of its speed, its scale, but also no other, you know, in Africa is a diverse continent of 54 countries, so we can't even talk about, you know, sort of 1 urbanization trajectory. You know, our institutional structures are historical legacies, you know, patients mentioned the structural adjustment programs that we've gone through that. Have a very big legacy on urban today. Hey, that's very unique. So what I would say to policymakers is stop trying to emulate models from elsewhere, stop trying to import models from elsewhere, be it in a smart city. So you're trying to import a whole city, be it in your planning regulations or your plan, your, your, your development plan for your city and rather look. At what your city is. And try and create the models that work because as Prince said, cities are only as good or only as successful if they meet the needs of the people. Who live there? And that's what the focus. Should be in my my own opinion.

Yeah, so well said. Patience, how do you see it?

Yeah, echoing Prince and Astrid were youthful. Continent is a very, very youthful population. I I think kind of a central focus should be on the welfare. Of urban residents. And and thinking of them, you know, this kind of creative generative force to say, well, you know how how, how are people? How are planners, policymakers and all actors going to support this creative generative energy that you do find? In African cities, and I think kind of one of the central parts of that is thinking about kind of

really very much about welfare and well-being. You know, our people being given the the the chance to. To thrive? Or is that kind of energy going to be kind of that short because then people have been low life expectancies because they, they there there really isn't the kind of social infrastructure such as healthcare and the life to support that. And related to that, of course, this kind of education. So what what are we? Point to do so. I would kind of center to center the the focus for the future and how does one support that creative energy to allow it to thrive?

Patience Prince Astrid and Jeffrey, thank you all so much. These are such important takeaways, deep expertise and a way of connecting the conversation across what can be sometimes seen in a, you know, planning model is very distinct, separate topics, bringing them all together. Across infrastructure, politics, social demographics, developmental trajectories, it's all so, so appreciated. And thank you for being with us today on this podcast.

Thank you for the invitation and for the very, very fascinating discussion.

Yeah, thank you. I look forward to more of this kind of.

Me too. Yeah, thank you.

Yeah, that's great.