

# Policy Brief

## Policy concerns on Urban Mobility and Quality of Public Space in Uganda



UGANDA MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

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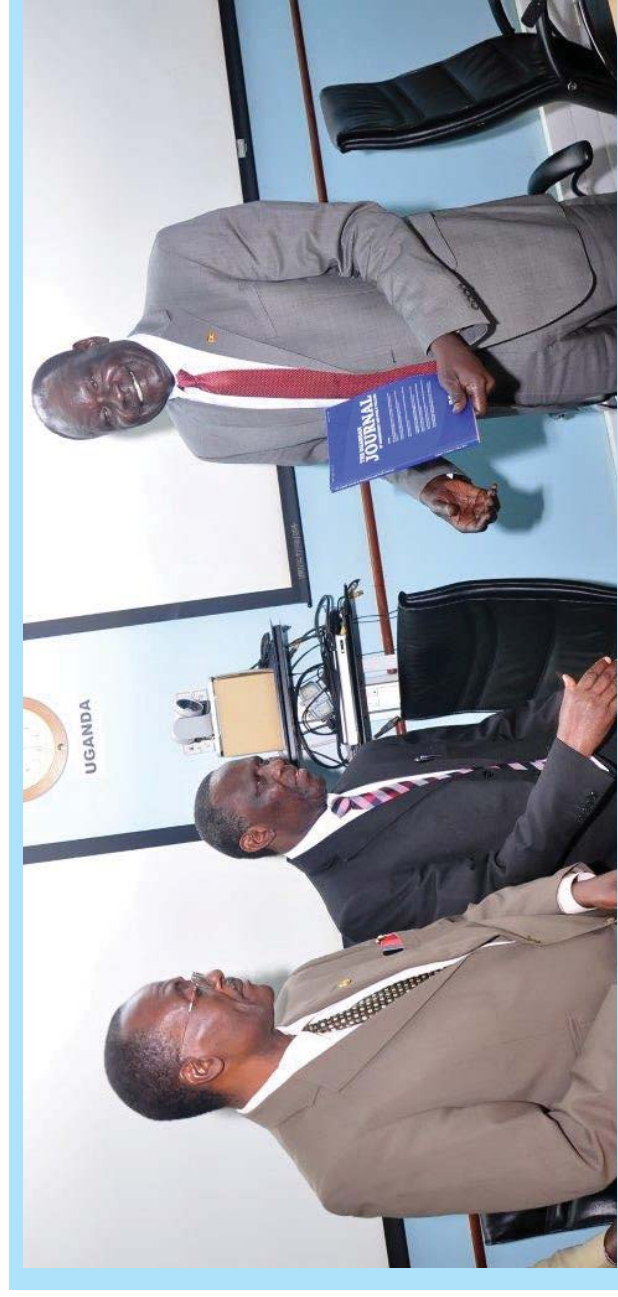
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### Executive Summary

Globally, urbanization, defined as the increasing numbers of people staying in urban areas, is attributed to numerous forces including natural factors, rural-urban migration and the search of better life opportunities. In Uganda, other pertinent drivers of urbanisation include the creation of administrative units, high population growth (3.4% per annum), the education system, rapid growth and development of social infrastructure, industrialisation as well as conflicts and disasters. Cities serve as centres of hope, especially in developing countries, where there is sharp imbalance in the distribution of services and employment opportunities between rural and urban areas.

This naturally results in high concentration of people in urban areas. This trend has direct implications on mobility, among other urban development aspects, given the increased need and demand for travel within urban clusters and their hinterlands. Among other consequences, high population gradually erodes the quality of the public space.

Cities provide employment, shelter but risk being dysfunctional when there is an imbalance in the urbanization trend. Urbanisation externalities can be reduced by good environment-sensitive urban planning and proper management. Interventions to guide, regulate and support urban mobility in Uganda include; Uganda Support to Municipal Infrastructure Development Program, National Urban Policy, Non-Motorised Transport Policy, National Transport Master Plan, The Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area Transport Plan, and the provisions in the Local Government Act. The Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area

(GKMA) forms the overall centre of focus in relation to urban mobility and the quality of public space.

Uganda is experiencing several challenges associated with urban mobility and quality of public spaces. These include challenges in the implementation of on-going strategies, popularisation and governance of urban space provisioning, the process evaluation and contextualisation of quality of urban areas particularly public space and development of an urban hygiene policy.

Developing a national policy for maintenance of high quality public spaces, intensified urban planning with emphasis on the sustainable maintenance of high quality public spaces and creation of a national spatial and mobility data bank are recommended for improvement of urban mobility and quality of public space.

### Rationale

Uganda, like most developing countries is undergoing rapid urbanization, which is estimated at about 15 percent with Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area contributing up to 10 percent (Uganda Vision 2040). This growth exerts immense pressure on the city planning process. Notably, the private infrastructure developers continue to evade documentation and complicate the flow of key services like water pipes and electricity distribution. Kampala city's primacy is a matter of concern considering that it is central to most businesses and hosts headquarters of almost all key installations, ministries, departments and agencies.

Due to the spread of low-medium density housing around urban areas, a trend said to be

facilitated by the increased and developed road infrastructure, and car use, Kampala city has expanded beyond its original boundaries. This urban sprawl, is land consumptive, dispersed and auto-dependent (John Randolph, 2004) and is worsened by the unprecedented levels of land use activity, homogeneously “mixed” and spread over space. As a result, there are several less quantifiable but important environmental effects, including loss of green space in urban areas, noise and air pollution, and generally aesthetically unpleasant sights and smells. The effects of the rapid urbanization of Kampala city have not only exerted pressure on the ecology, but also on the quality of public space. The mega impact is the loss of urban well-being that may negatively affect urban liveability, and also lead to erosion of civic pride and breed indifference and cynicism at local and national levels.

Maintenance of quality of public spaces in Kampala and other urban areas in Uganda should be a matter of concern to central and urban local governments as it affects the overall performance of urban areas, economic development and the wellbeing of the rapidly growing urban population. Randolph (2004) opined that the parties who are involved in land use development are the same who can arrest it by creating a new desired one. These include land developers, investors, urban planners and designers, architects, local governments, and consumers.

## Methodology

This policy brief was prepared by reviewing two research papers obtained from policy research data commissioned by Uganda Management Institute. Researchers reviewed existing topical literature on urban planning and quality of urban spaces, including documents on the Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area Master Plan, the Uganda National Non-Motorised Transport Policy and the Uganda National Transport Master Plan (2018-2023).

Researchers also reviewed how some cities of the developing world managed urban mobility and quality of public spaces. Ideas were also picked from a public policy dialogue organised by the Uganda Development

Policy Management Forum (UDPMF) on 22nd March 2018 at Uganda Management Institute-Kampala-Uganda, whereon the papers were presented and discussed by political authorities in the sector, technical personnel from government and practitioners in urban planning and policy development from government departments and civil society.

## Policy concerns

National statistics on urban mobility show a decimal increase of only 6% in paved urban roads compared to a 97% increase in licenced vehicles by 2017 (UBOS, 2017). This unexpected increase in motorised transport in Uganda affects the performance of individual urban areas in terms of mobility and sustainable provision of high quality public spaces. Proper planning of transportation can increase urban liveability because it intersects with many segments of society and the environment (Miller, et al, 2016; Anastasios et al, 2012). For long, government of the Republic of Uganda has focused majorly on providing for motorized transport.

However, and according to several studies, construction of more roads to facilitate private car flow may decrease the quality of the urban environment and attract more car traffic due to the latent demand phenomenon (Siemonsma & van der Griend, 2011). In urban areas of Uganda where human welfare levels seem to be dwindling as a result of increased motorization, there is need for development of a national policy to ensure good quality of public space and transportation.

The high demand for decent and attractive housing in the outskirts of the city has resulted in emergence of residential areas majorly accessed by private car and commercial motor cycles (Boda-Boda), calling for intensified national urban planning and regulation of development. Residential land use appears to have a more direct relationship with increased motorization, specifically in Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area.

The unpleasant encroachment on urban green and blue infrastructure has increased with the emergence of smart growth and compact

city as master pieces in the current urban planning initiatives (Xinyu & Jason, 2015). Compact development and mixed land use are associated with less mobility or use of slower modes of travel like walking, cycling and unprecedented encroachment on the urban green and blue land uses in the GKMA.

Statistics on settlement and use of urban space and mobility in Uganda remain scanty and there is no authoritative assertion of trends for urban planners' reference.

## Policy Recommendations

Given the regional differences in infrastructure and space, stage and extent of urban development, management of urban mobility and quality of public space should focus on monitoring and mitigating the effects of accelerated infrastructure development. More national guidance and an improved urban development framework is required for meaningful and uniform urban mobility planning especially to sustainably provide quality public space.

### 1. Development of a policy on management and urban space planning and mobility

The ministry for local government should develop a policy to lay out procedures to plan for quality of public spaces and urban mobility. The policy should be geared towards protection of interests of service providers, general practitioners in infrastructure development projects and to mitigate the effects of physical development on the wellbeing of the general population.

### 2. Intensification of urban planning and development regulation

Practitioners in the physical planning departments should design land use patterns aimed at reducing traffic congestion to ease access to the different neighbourhoods. The ease with which land is accessed for use influences the quality of life and life satisfaction in urban areas (Wang, et al, 2016).

### 3. Enforcement of urban green, blue spaces and other open public spaces in urban areas

As cities grow, transportation systems should be periodically reviewed to avoid imbalances

between supply and demand (Baltazar et al, 2015) and to improve the relationship between land use and mobility (Dargay and Hanly 2003). For policy purposes, there should be proper facilities for pedestrians and cyclists in urban areas that do not compromise the green and blue infrastructure.

### 4. Creation of an urban spatial and mobility data bank

Land use concepts that reduce dependency on car transport should be encouraged. Individuals should be encouraged to consider time, money and distance when making choices of home, workplace location and distribution of other activities they wish to engage in (Dargay & Hanly, 2003). A data bank of available space and mobility networks is needed to provide the requisite statistics to inform strategies for halting and reverting negative effects of increased demand in mobility.

## Conclusion

Given the regional differences in infrastructure and space, stage and extent of urban development, management of urban mobility and quality of public space should focus on monitoring and mitigating the effects of accelerated infrastructure development. An improved urban development framework is required for meaningful and uniform urban mobility planning especially to sustainably provide quality public space.

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