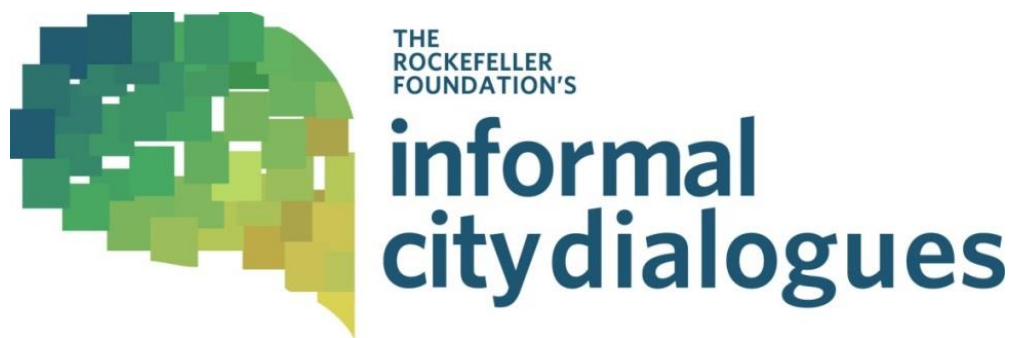




Reimagining the Future of Informality: Scenarios from the Global South

Analysis Report

September 2013

Informal City Dialogues is a year-long project supported by the Rockefeller Foundation in partnership with Forum for the Future and Next City. Workshops were held in the cities of Accra, Bangkok, Chennai, Lima, Metro Manila, and Nairobi in 2013 and led by Forum for the Future, in partnership with the African Center for Economic Transformation, Chulalongkorn University Department of Urban and Rural Planning, Transparent Chennai, FORO Nacional Internacional, Ateneo de Manila University School of Government, and the Institute of Economic Affairs, respectively.



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Institute of
Economic Affairs

TRANSPARENT CHENNAI
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THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION'S
INFORMAL CITY DIALOGUES



DEH

Illustration by Daniel Horowitz

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INTRODUCTION

The future scenarios presented in this report were developed as part of the Rockefeller Foundation's Informal City Dialogues Project. They were generated through an inclusive, multi-stakeholder, locally-adapted workshop process, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and led by Forum for the Future in partnership with the African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET) in Accra, Chulalongkorn University Department of Urban and Rural Planning (CUURP) in Bangkok, Transparent Chennai in Chennai, FORO Nacional Internacional in Lima, Ateneo de Manila University School of Government in Manila (ASoG), and the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) in Nairobi. In addition, Geci-Karuri Sebina acted as facilitator for the scenarios workshop in Accra and Tanja Hichert facilitated both the scenarios and innovation workshops in Nairobi and Chennai.



Participants in the scenarios workshop in Lima were given glasses to “see” into the future.

Workshops to create the scenarios were held in each city in February and March 2013. Many of the local partner organizations also hosted a series of pre-workshop stakeholder consultations to inform the process. Creative methods for engagement were employed in the consultations—for example, ACET ran a video contest to capture the hopes and challenges perceived by the youth of that city; FORO conducted focus groups with marginalized stakeholder groups, including transvestites and children in slums; and IEA held an essay contest.

With input from a wide range of participants, including slum dwellers, wastepickers, community organizers, local government leaders, youth, private sector workers, academics, people with disabilities, and others, four scenarios were generated for each city. These scenarios imagined possible futures of the city out to the year 2040, with a particular focus on the informal sector, and how it might evolve over time. A second series of workshops was convened in

each city that used the scenarios to catalyze ideas for social innovations to promote more inclusive and resilient futures for each city. The resulting innovation concepts have formed the basis of innovation grant proposals from each city, currently being reviewed by the Rockefeller Foundation for funding from the Informal City Dialogues City Grants.

These scenarios are not predictions. Rather, they depict imaginary but plausible alternative futures in order to stimulate more creative and systemic strategic thinking today. They also provide a means to model the viability of innovation ideas, given the multiple critical uncertainties facing each city. Finally, the scenario creation process itself served to catalyze new sorts of conversations among diverse stakeholders in each city. By shifting the conversation from the often stuck realities of the present to the myriad possibilities of the future, the scenario process opened up a space for new ways of thinking about how to create inclusive and resilient cities that work for all people.



The “idea wall” generated during the scenarios-to-innovation process in Nairobi.

The purpose of this report

The 24 scenarios generated by participants in the six cities were diverse in content, style and presentation. Accra told their stories, named after traditional Ghanaian symbols, from a first person perspective, tracing the different possible lives on their narrator, Nii-Armah. Bangkok's are named after meals and Manila's after songs, reflecting the importance of food and singing, respectively, in the two cultures. At the same time, certain common themes can be discerned among the different scenarios. This report aims to tease out the commonalities and differences

among these diverse scenarios, to provide a snapshot of how people in each city (particularly representatives of the informal sector) are thinking about the future of informality and how it relates to strategies for creating more inclusive and resilient cities.

The report first presents summaries of each of the 24 scenarios (the complete text of which can be found in the appendix). It then considers what these scenarios tell us about perceptions of informality in the different cities, what emerged in the scenarios as the most likely pathways towards inclusivity and resilience, and some of the critical challenges facing those efforts. It concludes with some thoughts about how these scenarios can contribute to the evolving discussion of informality in cities of the Global South, and an overview of next steps in the Informal City Dialogues project.

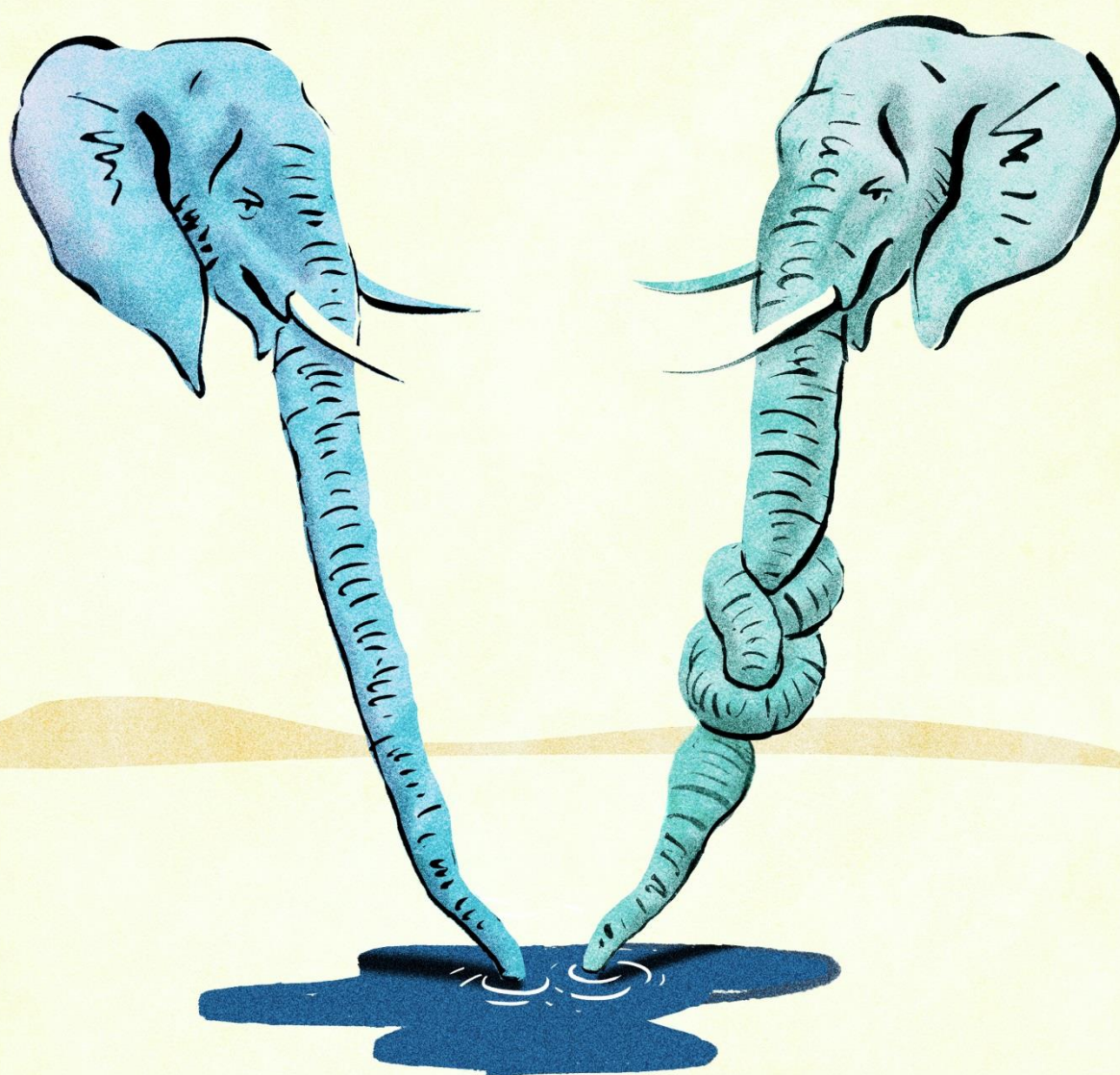
SCENARIO SUMMARIES

The following section contains summaries of the future scenarios created for Accra, Bangkok, Chennai, Lima, Manila, and Nairobi. The full narratives are available in the back of this report (see Appendix). Accompanying each summary is 1) an illustration representing the scenarios and 2) a diagram showing the two scenario axes, which, when crossed, create the four quadrants from which each scenario was generated.

ACCRA

ENERGY COSTS AND COMPETITION FOR RESOURCES

AFFECTS CITIZENS' QUALITY OF LIFE..



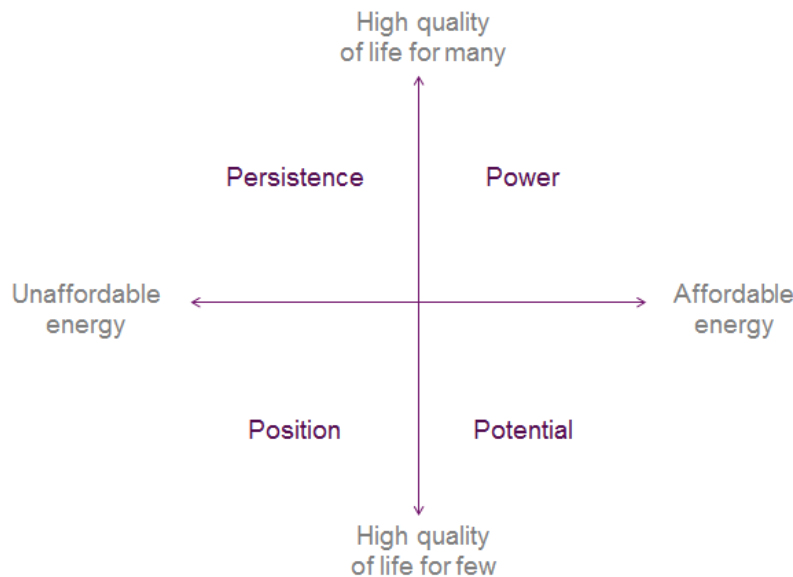
*MAKING THOSE RESOURCES ACCESSIBLE
TO ALL IS KEY TO THE CITY'S SUSTAINABLE FUTURE*

DBH

Illustration by Daniel Horowitz

Accra

The two scenario axes for Accra are: high quality of life (for many vs. for few) and energy (unaffordable vs. affordable), as shown in the diagram below. From these axes, came four scenarios (clockwise from top left): high quality of life for many + unaffordable energy (**Persistence**), high quality of life for many + affordable energy (**Power**), high quality of life for few + affordable energy (**Potential**), and high quality of life for few + unaffordable energy (**Position**).



Persistence

In this scenario, Accra's government has closed the poverty gap and ensured decent lives for many of its residents. It must now rely on the ingenuity of its citizens to address its energy challenges. Accra in 2040 has an efficient public transport system, healthcare and basic education are free and of decent quality, and the city has grown into a beautiful metropolis. Effective governance in the 2010s strengthened the economy and created innovation clusters around agro-processing, finance, and services. The increased tax base then funded massive public infrastructure investment in public health, affordable housing, efficient transport, and quality education. By 2025, Accra had emerged as an oasis of opportunity and was rapidly becoming a key regional economic hub. However, over the following decade the city struggled to provide clean water and energy, and slums began to re-emerge. In 2040, the economy has begun to pick up again as the energy situation improves and the state is still able to maintain minimum living standards for most people in the city based on its legacy investments.

Power

Accra in 2040 is prosperous and united. In the late 2010s, slum dwellers were relocated in special deals that restructured land ownership and enabled private development. The government supported informal workers with welfare and skills development programs, as well as a medical insurance and pension scheme. The city became a center of entrepreneurship and innovation, particularly related to agriculture. In the 2020s, resilient systems were built to manage social, economic, and environmental challenges. The city's visionary leaders understood the power of informal communities and created opportunities for citizens across the socio-economic spectrum to contribute to development plans. While the government invested in infrastructure and services, it also enabled other stakeholders to do the same. Incentive programs encouraged the private sector to invest in sustainable industrial development and corporate social responsibility. Land administration was successfully reformed and housing, much of it environmentally sustainable, became accessible to all. Community-based strategies have been developed for including the increasingly large elderly population in city life and ensuring that they have adequate care. Ghanaians from the diaspora have begun to come back home—not just for retirement, but also so their children can attend the excellent universities, and to start businesses drawing upon their accumulated capital and new ideas.

Potential

Accra in 2040 is making progress after suffering through difficult times. A “lost decade” of regional armed conflict killed many of the city’s residents and caused major disruptions to education and development. Following the war, international aid and the African diaspora were successfully mobilized to create jobs, trade, and good governance networks. Reconstruction and social cohesion began to take root around 2030, and Accra’s political leadership improved. A surge in natural resource extraction made energy affordable and Accra became a hub for global production and services. Although most people still live in poverty, a middle class has started to emerge. Gleaming high-rise buildings now rub shoulders with squalid shacks. The benefits of new infrastructure, like a new high-speed rail link and the West Africa power grid, have trickled down to the poor to some extent. Accra’s government has begun to focus aggressively on urban regeneration through land reform programs, basic service provision, and economic infrastructure investments. Social innovations are starting to provide real benefit to those in the informal sector.

Position

This is a story about a highly unequal and unstable society, where the majority of the poor are disenfranchised. Accra in 2040 is characterized by a sharp divide between the formal and informal sectors in the provision of education, environmental stewardship, and governance. Although Ghana seemed to be on the right path when university education was made free in the 2010s, an armed conflict wracked the region in the 2020s and disrupted the country’s forward progress. Things have improved since the conflict abated in the 2030s but development has been uneven. Some parts of the city went through massive redevelopment funded by international aid, whereas other areas were passed over. Given the high cost of energy, transportation and housing have become increasingly unaffordable. Water is the most expensive commodity and the effects of climate change are causing serious disruption in the city. The Chinese now dominate the informal economy.

BANGKOK

*THE CITY'S STRENGTH LIES IN THE
RIVOTOUS ASSEMBLAGE OF ITS PEOPLE.*



*TOGETHER, THESE PEOPLE CAN PROPEL
THEMSELVES FORWARD. SEGREGATED,
THEY BECOME VULNERABLE.*

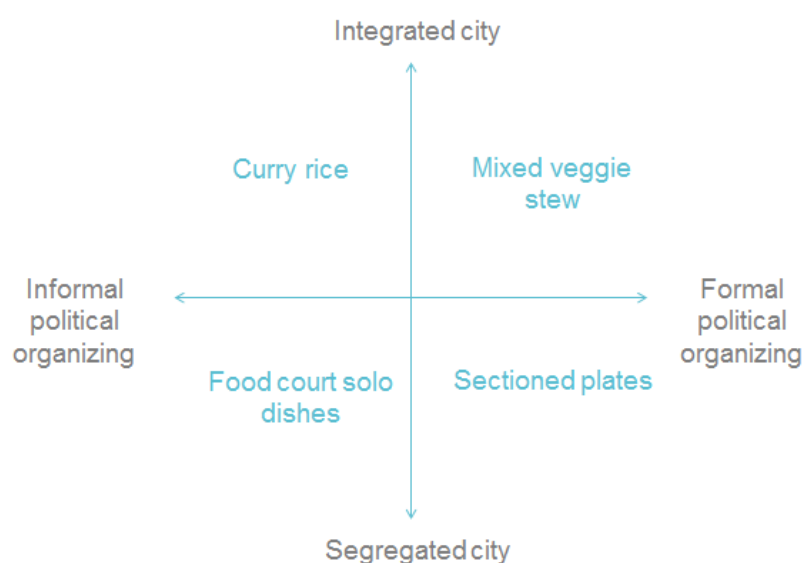


DBH

Illustration by Daniel Horowitz

Bangkok

The two scenario axes for Bangkok are: integrated vs. segregated city and formal vs. informal political organizing, as shown in the diagram below. From these axes, came four scenarios (clockwise from top left): integrated city + informal political organizing (**Curry rice**), integrated city + formal political organizing (**Mixed veggie stew**), segregated city + formal political organizing (**Sectioned plates**), and segregated city + informal political organizing (**Food court solo dishes**).



Curry Rice: A Mafia and Clique City

This is an economically integrated city, in which informal and formal economic activities are intricately linked. The poor and vulnerable populations live and work close to the middle class and the rich. It is an integrated environment but not necessarily inclusive. Due to ad hoc, informal, political organizing, and limited civic engagement and advocacy, the basic infrastructure of the city still favors the middle class and the rich. Despite this, informal public services allow the poor and vulnerable populations to live and work in the same areas. The poor in the informal sector have limited formal political representation and get co-opted by “influential people.”

Mixed Veggie Stew: An All-Inclusive City

In 2040 Bangkok has become an inclusive city—with extensive and formal political organizing and a high degree of civic engagement. The poor and vulnerable populations, both in the formal and informal city, have adequate access to basic services and employment opportunities, as well as political representation at the local and national levels. City residents, regardless of their ethnicity, age, or social and economic background, can live, work, travel, and play alongside one another. They share public services such as mass transit systems, public parks, and hospitals. Due to strong political organizing and advocacy on behalf of the poor and vulnerable, there is a commitment to remove all obstacles to the full participation of everyone in city life. People are equally valued and respected as unique individuals. City infrastructure and facilities are re-developed to accommodate the needs of disadvantaged people.

Sectioned Plates: A Tug of War City

Bangkok in this scenario has become an even more segregated city by 2040, in which people of different social and economic backgrounds live and work in different parts of the city. Formal political organizations and advocacy groups lobby for group interests along social, economic, and political lines. Even the poor and the informal now have collective political clout. They pursue and maximize their group interests at the expense of other groups, creating an extremely partisan political environment that negatively affects social harmony. Due to decentralization efforts, each municipality has more authority over local infrastructure and facilities but there are clear inequalities among municipalities in the region.

Food Court Solo Dishes: A Free for All City

This is a socially and physically segregated city where the rich, the middle class, and the poor all live in separate areas. Rich foreigners and poor foreign migrant workers are also segregated. Informal settlers have been pushed out to the margins of the city. Meanwhile, economic instability has pushed even more people into the informal economy, although these days the ubiquitous street vendors are often peddling high-tech gadgets imported from abroad. City residents, whether rich or poor, are apathetic about national and city politics and do not care much about civic engagement. People with more resources and political connections are able to benefit most from urban public services. “Those with the longest arms are able to grab the most.”

CHENNAI



*RESILIENCE IS ONLY POSSIBLE WHEN
EVERY CITIZEN'S BASIC NEEDS ARE MET.*

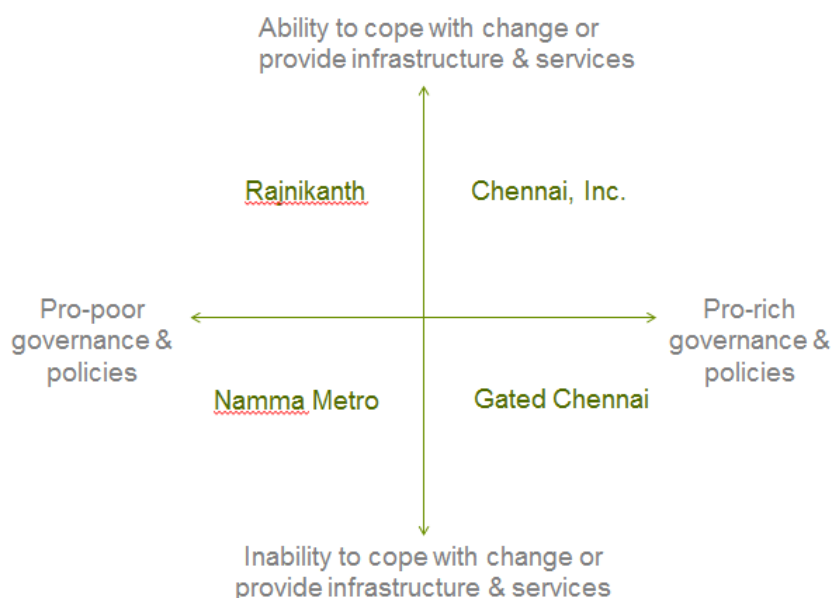
*A TRULY GREAT CITY COUPLES ITS
COMPETENCE WITH COMPASSION.*

DBH

Illustration by Daniel Horowitz

Chennai

The two scenario axes for Chennai are: to cope with change or provide infrastructure and services (ability vs. inability) and governance and policies (pro-poor vs. pro-rich), as shown in the diagram below. From these axes, came four scenarios (clockwise from top left): ability to cope with change or provide infrastructure and services + pro-poor governance and policies (**Rajnikanth**), ability to cope with change or provide infrastructure and services + pro-rich governance and policies (**Chennai, Inc.**), inability to cope with change or provide infrastructure and services + pro-rich governance and policies (**Gated Chennai**), and inability to cope with change or provide infrastructure and services + pro-poor governance and policies (**Namma Metro**).



Rajnikanth

In this world, a transformation of Chennai began in 2014 with the implementation of a new kind of housing development called *Samthuvam* (“Equality”)—an *in situ* redevelopment of a slum guided by an inclusive and participatory process. The new development integrated people from different social and economic strata and sparked a revolution in attitudes and policies. By 2040, an efficient and pro-poor government is able to provide high-quality and affordable services to the people of the city—including universal healthcare and education, clean water, and a fair and efficient judicial system. The cityscape features high-rise buildings to house the growing population and consists of self-sustaining neighborhoods that benefit from community agriculture and localized waste treatment. Waste pickers have been able to transform themselves into community waste managers thanks a government-funded education program.

Chennai Inc.

Chennai in 2040 is a city for the rich. They dominate the local government, which enacts policies for their benefit. The city is clean and efficient but has no room for the poor or the informal. In 2025, the slums were demolished to make room for shopping malls and high-rise buildings. Public spaces like parks and roads have been cleared of street vendors and the informal sector has been largely eliminated. Problems are outsourced to the private sector to solve and services including water, electricity, waste management, education, and healthcare have all been privatized. Service delivery is efficient and high-quality but unaffordable for the poor. They’ve been pushed to the edges of the city and now their only interaction with the wealthy is when they work as maids, cooks, or other household servants. Waste is sent offshore to be recycled and is no longer available for waste pickers to process.

Gated Chennai

In this scenario, Chennai’s government in 2040 is pro-rich, autocratic, and laissez faire. It is also inefficient and unable to deal with the needs of the growing city. The wealthy have ensconced

themselves in luxurious gated communities that benefit from privatized services like clean water from desalination plants and high-quality health care. The poor are mostly confined to crowded and squalid settlements on the outskirts of the city that lack basic services. Unemployment and crime rates are high and there is a widespread sense of alienation. Public spaces and other amenities are scarce and poorly maintained. The government's inability to manage waste has caused severe degradation of air and water, leading to widespread health problems—especially among those too poor to afford private hospitals. Waste from the gated communities is mostly dumped outside the city, preventing access to it by waste pickers.

Namma Metro

Chennai in 2040 is run by a government that has progressive policies but is highly ineffective. In this scenario, a radical leftist party took power in 2015 and has been in control ever since. The party has promoted pro-poor policies and is committed to providing public services but has a hard time delivering on its promises. Slums were officially recognized and legalized in 2020 and are now widespread throughout the city. However, conditions in the slums are poor, as the government is unable to effectively provide services to the rising population. Open spaces are scarce, as most of them now contain informal settlements. Waste management has been decentralized and provides income for waste pickers, but conditions are unhygienic and difficult. Ineffective waste management combined with climate change has caused extreme environmental degradation, including dangerous levels of air and water pollution. Disease is rampant and the poor quality of healthcare in government hospitals means that infant and maternal mortality rates are at an all-time high. The informal sector in 2040 accounts for more than half the workforce.



Illustration by Daniel Horowitz

Lima

The two scenario axes for Lima are: citizen participation (high vs. low) and resources (more vs. less), as shown in the diagram below. From these axes, came four scenarios (clockwise from top left): high citizen participation + less resources (**Solidaridad para avanzar**), high citizen participation + more resources (**Comunidad y riqueza**), low citizen participation + more resources (**Aporta para el orden y sostenibilidad**), and low citizen participation + more resources (**Yo mismo soy para surgir**).



Solidaridad para avanzar (Solidarity for progress)

In 2040, the effects of the over-exploitation of Lima's resources are obvious: poor soil quality, water and energy shortages, and a reduction of public space. To counter these problems in the absence of strong state institutions the population has self-organized, with some assistance from the government. Informality has become a lifestyle choice but people are unsure of how to integrate it with existing mechanisms and institutions.

Comunidad y riqueza (Community and wealth)

In this scenario, Lima has expanded vertically and public spaces have multiplied. Large infrastructure construction has endowed the city with resources such as communications networks, environmental services, and improvement of its surrounding valleys. Civic participation and policymaking have been led by an organized middle class that leverages new communications technologies to promote its economic interests.

Aporta para el orden y sostenibilidad (Chip in for order and sustainability)

In this world, Lima in 2040 has plenty of resources, managed rationally by the city, but the young and talented are leaving for other cities. Order and sustainability are the principal public goods—which citizens strive to maintain at any cost. There is a crackdown on informality through regulations and legislation. This raises the cost of doing business and impels talented people to move elsewhere.

Yo mismo soy para surgir (I can succeed on my own)

Lima's vital resources in 2040 are controlled by private companies comprising an elite that also holds the political power. The masses are pacified with populist measures. Informality is associated with a precarious lifestyle but one in which everyone manages to take care of their own daily subsistence. Residents of the city pursue their individual wellbeing at the expense of the commons.

MANILA

HOW MANY PEOPLE CAN A CITY HOLD?



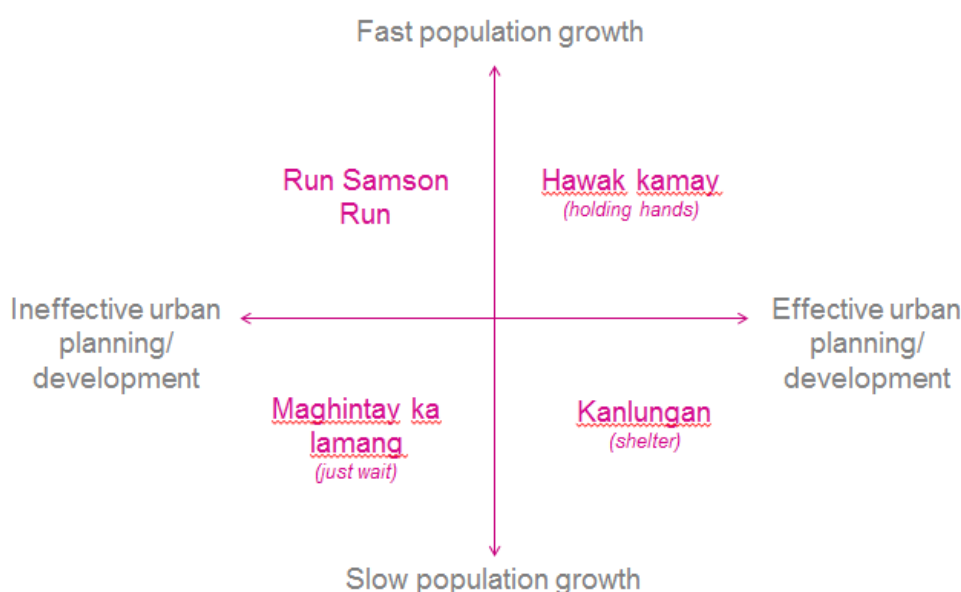
*INCLUSIVE POLICIES CAN MEAN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN URBAN REALM THAT
IS CROWDED AND STRUGGLING, AND ONE THAT'S CRAMMED WITH POTENTIAL.*

DBH

Illustration by Daniel Horowitz

Manila

The two scenario axes for Manila are: population growth (fast vs. slow) and urban planning/development (effective vs. ineffective), as shown in the diagram below. From these axes, came four scenarios (clockwise from top left): high citizen participation + less resources (**Solidaridad para avanzar**), high citizen participation + more resources (**Comunidad y riqueza**), low citizen participation + more resources (**Aporta para el orden y sostenibilidad**), and low citizen participation + more resources (**Yo mismo soy para surgir**).



Kanlungan (Shelter)

Slow population growth and effective urban planning have enabled Manila to become prosperous, healthy, and inclusive by 2040. Progressive reforms initiated in the 2010s, including the Reproductive Health Act and a program to provide cash to indigent families for child education and maternal health, have been continued by subsequent administrations. The Farm to Market program has curtailed food insecurity. Public housing has put an end to evictions and resettlement and the few remaining informal settlers are all living in medium-rise buildings (MRBs). New housing developments are built sustainably and communities are more walkable, energy efficient, and livable. Unemployment is low, meaning that workers remain in the Philippines and families are kept together. Affordable and high-quality healthcare and education are widely available. Pollution has been largely eliminated and technological innovations have been developed to mitigate the risk of other natural hazards like earthquakes. The well-educated populace is politically engaged, ushering in an era of better governance.

Hawak kamay (Holding hands)

In this version of Manila's future, the challenges of rapid population growth are met through collaboration and effective urban planning. By 2040, Manila's population has expanded significantly—but slums have disappeared, there is ample public housing, and people are happy living in smaller spaces. Housing is generally affordable, accessible, and safe, and nearly everyone has security of tenure. Pedestrian areas and green space are both abundant and public transit is widespread, accessible, and efficient. The city has been re-designed with disaster risk reduction and climate resiliency as priorities—so that when disasters do occur, they are no longer catastrophic. All children have access to education. Solar energy provides for most of the country's energy needs.

Maghintay ka lamang (Just wait)

In this scenario, slow population growth and ineffective urban planning have engendered widespread apathy among the people of Manila by 2040. Successful implementation of the

reproductive health law has slowed down population growth but other aspects of governance and planning have been less effective, however. Manila these days feels like it did in the more “laid back” 1960s—less chaotic but also stagnant. The government tried to address the housing issue in the 2010s by constructing MRBs and relocating settlers. But by failing to do so in a truly consultative way, and ignoring key issues like the prohibitively high cost of transportation, this initiative ultimately failed and slums have proliferated. A labor shortage is compelling many of the elderly and the young to work, often in the informal sector, preventing children from going to school. Climate change has disrupted weather patterns and Manila is now subject to droughts, rather than typhoons and flooding. Increased temperatures coupled with a lack of potable water are causing disease. People accept these problems with resignation and focus on meeting their immediate needs.

Run Samson Run

In this scenario Manila is hobbled by the negative effects of rapid population growth coupled with ineffective urban planning. By 2040, the population has exploded and many people are unemployed. Environmental degradation is widespread, the supply of water and energy from public utilities is inadequate, and the number and quality of public spaces is declining. Development is mostly unplanned and uncontrolled. Hunger, unemployment, prostitution, and crime are all on the increase. Foreign investment and tourism have declined over the intervening decades causing job losses and a drop in revenue. Poverty is endemic and there is a generalized lack of access to government services. Agricultural land around Manila has been developed for other uses, leaving the city dependent on food procured from much further away in the country—a situation that is more expensive and less reliable. Education is too expensive for many families to afford. Informal settlements are common and many of them exist in hazardous areas. Regular flooding has caused widespread loss of life and billions of dollars in damages.

NAIROBI



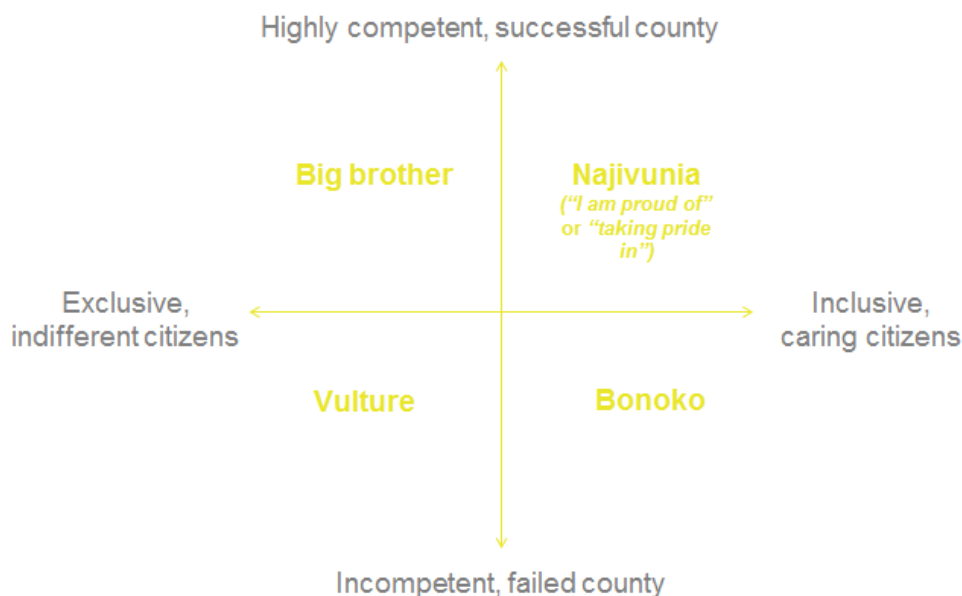
JUST AS IMPORTANT AS A GOVERNMENT THAT CARES FOR ITS CITIZENS IS A CITIZENRY THAT CARES FOR EACH OTHER. INDEED, IT CAN MEAN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PROSPERITY AND FAILURE.

DBH

Illustration by Daniel Horowitz

Nairobi

The two scenario axes for Nairobi are: high competent, successful county vs. incompetent, failed county and exclusive, indifferent citizens vs. inclusive, caring citizens, as shown in the diagram below. From these axes, came four scenarios (clockwise from top left): highly competent, successful county + exclusive, indifferent citizens (**Big brother City**), highly competent, successful county + inclusive, caring citizens (**Najivunia City**), incompetent, failed county + inclusive, caring citizens (**Bonoko City**), and incompetent, failed county + exclusive, indifferent citizens (**Vulture City**).



Najivunia (I am proud of)

The citizens of Nairobi in 2040 have a strong sense of civic duty and are proud to call the city home. The county government is competent, trusted, and genuinely consultative. Infrastructure and services are mostly adequate—and when they're insufficient citizens collaborate to fill the gaps. High-quality healthcare is widely available, with costs being shared between the government and the people. Land tenure policy has been reformed and now land is owned by the people who live on it. Most slums have been upgraded to decent low-income housing. Although settlements are denser they're also better organized. The cost of living is higher, and income equality still persists, but government controls have narrowed the gap between rich and poor. A creative and entrepreneurial class has emerged in Nairobi and the city has become a hub for technology and innovation. The formal and informal sectors are more porous and collaborative, with easier licensing procedures and designated spaces for street vendors. Climate change is being taken seriously by business and government, and substantial investments have been made in renewable energy, smart buildings, wildlife conservation, habitat restoration, and water management.

Bonoko City

In 2040, Nairobi's government is in the hands of wealthy individuals and corporations who use it to promote their own interests—rather than those of ordinary citizens. Public services have been privatized in the name of efficiency but are poorly run. Water and sewage systems are failing, causing water contamination and the threat of disease. The city's residents, however, have successfully self-organized to provide themselves with many key services in the absence of effective government—from transportation to banking to housing. The informal sector has become increasingly attractive, and enjoys a largely symbiotic relationship with the formal sector, but is subject to continual suppression by the government.

Vulture City

The prevailing ethos in this scenario is survival of the fittest. Nairobi's citizens in 2040 are selfish, apathetic, and cynical. The government is ineffective and unable to provide basic services. Poor

sanitation in informal settlements causes regular outbreaks of disease. Gangs have come to dominate much of everyday life, including the informal provision of water, electricity, and security. Expensive credit has dampened entrepreneurship and big business is consolidating its advantage through exploitative practices. The informal economy has partly collapsed, due to the high cost of doing business, and people are moving to other cities in search of better opportunities. The city has become more dangerous and the wealthy and middle class have retreated to gated compounds. Citizens innovate in this scenario, but only for survival.

Big Brother City

Nairobi in this scenario is prosperous but stagnant. An effective county government has delivered high-quality infrastructure and services and exercises control over much of society. The city enjoys security, low levels of inequality, and ample job opportunities. However, high taxes and government regulation are stifling innovation. The citizenry is apathetic, individualistic, and wary of outsiders. The media has largely abdicated its oversight function out of deference to the government. The informal economy is considered bad for the city's image and has largely disappeared.

PERCEPTIONS OF INFORMALITY

The scenarios generated by the Informal City Dialogues project highlight some of the conceptual ambiguities of the concept of informality. Not only is informality defined by that which it is not, it also manifests itself quite differently depending on context. So, for example, the challenges faced by a slumdweller in Nairobi, who may lack basic sanitary infrastructure, can look quite different from those of an entrepreneur who has chosen to sell high-tech gadgets on a sidewalk in Bangkok.

Furthermore, formality and informality exist along a spectrum, rather than as a strictly defined binary opposition. Activities may be more or less formal, depending on where and when they take place. People often engage in informal activities in one context (e.g. street vending) and not another (e.g. housing). As the Lima project team notes, “the borders between informality and formality have been blurring [...] and definitions have been becoming more complex because they cannot capture the diversity of situations where informality and formality mix, collaborate, conflict [with] and complement each other.”¹

Instead, based on what was heard at the workshops and can be discerned from the scenarios, it seems that people perceive and act as though informality is a mode—of acting, being, and even thinking.² Participants in the Nairobi scenarios workshop, for example, agreed that all of them engaged with both formal and informal systems at some point practically every day.

What drives participation in informal systems can vary significantly. Newly arrived immigrants to a city who can't afford formal housing may well find themselves living in a slum. For some, however, operating informally may be a lifestyle choice that offers certain perks, such as flexible working hours or freedom from onerous licensing requirements. The participants in several cities produced scenarios that imagined this possibility.

Informality is also evolving in ways that further stretch the concept. In Nairobi's *Najivunia* scenario, for example, informality still exists in 2040 but it has been incorporated into a more collaborative relationship with the formal. Slums have been upgraded to low-income housing, street vendors are allowed to sell in the city but have designated places where they can do so, and the creative industries have been given easier ways to get licensed. Similarly, in Bangkok's *Curry Rice* scenario, the informal economy “is intricately integrated with the formal economy to the extent that the boundaries between informality and formality in most sectors seem arbitrary. This is particularly true with creative jobs where flexibility and entrepreneurship are closely associated with informality.” The scenarios therefore suggest that the whole concept of informality could become irrelevant in the coming decades.

¹ Lima scenario template

² For a more detailed analysis of how informality can be defined, refer to the [Project Briefing Paper](#)

PERCEIVED DRIVERS OF URBAN INFORMALITY

The scenarios generated in the Informal City Dialogues workshops indicate several categories of factors seen by most participants as driving the prevalence and characteristics of urban informality. Most prominent are those related to the movements of people and the demographics of populations. Macroeconomic shifts, environmental degradation, and resource constraints were also seen to affect—and be affected—by informality. Although certain global trends are evident, the scenarios also made clear that these drivers need to be examined in their local contexts.

Urbanization

Informality in these scenarios is largely driven by flows of people to cities. Migrants from the countryside seeking opportunities in the city, refugees from conflict zones, and immigrants from other countries are all among those who are most likely to move to cities, settle in slums, and join the informal economy. In Manila's *Run Samson Run*, "the conflict in Mindanao and other areas of the country forced people to flee the area and migrate to metropolitan centers in the hope of finding a more peaceful community where they could start a new life." In multiple scenarios from Bangkok, immigrants from Burma have moved to the city in search of freedom and economic opportunity. In Accra's *Position* scenario, immigrants from China have moved to the city and come to dominate the city's informal economy.

These immigrants to cities often lack the financial capital, political clout, and legal status to settle in formal housing and secure formal employment. Informality, in such cases, may serve as the catch-basin that holds the overflow of new arrivals into a city.

Although there are broad trends driving urbanization on a global level, the scenarios underscore the importance of examining how these play out on a local level in order to understand their impact on informality—particularly as some of these drivers are highly uncertain. So, although a major source of immigration to Bangkok has been people fleeing political repression in Burma, nascent political reforms there have raised the possibility that this trend *could* change significantly. *Mixed Veggie Stew* imagines a future for Bangkok where, "in 2015, more than a million foreign migrants were living and working in Bangkok. Due to the economic boom in Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia in the late 2010s, many of them moved back home. In 2040, middle class housewives in Bangkok are no longer able to afford to hire Burmese housemaids as they used to do"—impacting that segment of the informal economy.

Demographics

Demographic trends including population growth and age distribution also act as key drivers of informality in many of these scenarios. Population growth is associated with an increase in informality, as existing housing, transit infrastructure, and employment capacity may be unable to keep pace with demand. As with urbanization, the scenarios demonstrate how these global trends are locally articulated. For example, although demographic trends are often considered relatively predictable, this isn't the case in all the scenarios.

In the Philippines, the passage of the country's first reproductive health law in 2012 could augur a significant change to the longstanding tendency towards large families there. Given that a burgeoning population has been a source of both economic growth and the proliferation of slums in Manila, any slowing in the pace of population growth would have major and varied effects on the city in general and informality more specifically. However, it remains to be seen how the law will be implemented and what the reaction will be among the country's citizens. The question of population growth is so important and now so uncertain in Manila that the participants in that city's workshop chose this as one of the two dimensions that frame their scenarios.

Age demographics are also shifting, with potentially significant implications for social security, healthcare, economic growth, labor markets, consumption, and taxation. This was of particular concern to participants in Manila. In their *Just Wait* scenario, an aging population leads to a labor shortage: "The elderly, who comprise the largest percentage of Manila's population, are now

engaging in informal small-scale livelihoods, such as street vending, to help support their families. The profit from these kinds of informal livelihood engagements is not enough to make ends meet for a family of four. As a result, the younger generation has no choice but to help out with these informal ventures rather than concentrating on their studies full time.”

Demographic shifts will also change attitudes and expectations. In Bangkok’s *Mixed Veggie Stew* scenario, “the ‘Millennial’ generation demands more from public services, as its members are more educated, informed, and empowered than their parents.”

Global macroeconomic shifts

The scenarios demonstrate how global macroeconomic shifts may impact urban informality. Many of the scenarios depict future versions of their cities that are more prosperous, more high-tech, more consumerist, and more middle-class than at present. This shift entails not just new economic opportunities in both the formal and informal sectors, but often also an increase in purchasing power, political engagement, and inclusivity. But the rise of a consumerist middle class presents challenges, as well. Some scenarios, such as Nairobi’s *Bonoko City*, imagine a future city that is more prosperous, but where hyper-individualistic attitudes undermine solidarity and inclusivity.



In Chennai, participants in the scenarios workshop developed a timeline of important events affecting the city over the last 60 years. This helped illuminate drivers of change in the city.

A rising middle class may also have different expectations for the city and has greater capacity to relocate if infrastructure, job opportunities, cultural offerings, or other amenities are lacking. In Lima’s *Aporta para el orden y sostenibilidad* scenario, “the young and talented are leaving for other cities” due to a repressive political atmosphere and a lack of investment in public infrastructure—despite the fact that the government has successfully provided for security and sustainability. Nairobi’s *Vulture City* scenario imagines a situation where “the economy is shrinking as both capital and labor move to other cities that provide better opportunities.” In these scenarios, mobility has become a matter of preference rather than necessity, with broad implications for patterns of urbanization and, thus, informality.

This new, more mobile, middle class may also engage in new and different forms of informal livelihoods, at times reminiscent of what is found in the Global North today. Nearly every city created a scenario which imagined the emergence of a class of innovative and entrepreneurial professionals, working in creative and/or technology-related pursuits, who would work informally not because they have to, but as a lifestyle choice—because it affords them certain benefits like flexibility and higher profit margins.

In Nairobi’s *Bonoko City* scenario, for example, “the informal sector is no longer seen as a source of temporary employment for new entrants awaiting formal jobs or as a transitory stop for retirees or people who have been laid off but is now a preferred destination due to its flexibility and high profit margins. Young people in particular prefer flexible working hours... In addition, excessive regulation has made business formalization difficult and expensive.” Informality as a lifestyle choice differs significantly from informality as a survival strategy, and raises important questions about how to nurture the adaptive capacities of informality while mitigating its challenges.

Environmental degradation and resource scarcity

Many of the scenarios depict a situation in which, without effective government management, the environment will suffer degradation and natural resources—particularly water—will become critically scarce. These developments are linked to increased mortality and morbidity among poor and vulnerable populations, as well as to changes in livelihoods.

In Accra's *Position* scenario, "the rivers became too polluted for people to eat the fish from there and the fish stocks went down until the fishermen only caught plastic containers and other rubbish in their nets," forcing them to find new jobs. At the same time, drinking water has become scarce and expensive. "It's become our most valuable commodity here now. The Chinese brought in special technology for water harvesting, the government privatized water and sanitation provision across the city, and so they cornered the pure water market. The rations get smaller and smaller but the price keeps going up."

Chennai's *Namma Metro* scenario depicts a future in which the rivers and air are polluted by waste. "By 2025, surface water was polluted beyond use. From 2030 onwards the government had to start rationing water to citizens...Ailments are commonly related to the high levels of water and air pollution. The effects of water-borne and vector-borne diseases have led to a loss in productive man-hours." Lack of access to clean water is also a major issue in Manila's *Just Wait* scenario, where diarrhea linked to contaminated drinking water has led to a spike in child mortality among informal communities.

The lack of availability of resources was one of two key dimensions in Lima's scenarios. In these scenarios, the availability of resources is linked to various factors including technological innovations, investment in infrastructure, and civic engagement. A lack of resources can lead to quite different outcomes—competition and fighting, on the one hand, or solidarity and self-organizing, on the other. In *Solidarity*, for example, "the legacy of resource exploitation is a depleted Lima. But the resulting insecurity has been mitigated by a variety of solidarity-based ways to make a living, and community networks have been mobilized to provide necessary social services...While social and economic divisions are still wide, the city has managed to revive the grassroots organizing and solidarity mechanisms of the past—now reinterpreted for 2040." By contrast, *Yo mismo soy para surgir* imagines a future in which the scarcity of resources has led to fierce competition, but "it has also created an environment conducive to innovations to reduce the costs of accessing scarce resources. Black markets emerge along with other ways of accessing limited social resources such as education, health, water, sanitation, and employment."

How cities manage their resources and natural environments is shown in the scenarios to have wide-ranging implications for the future of those in the informal sector.

OTHER FACTORS IMPACTING URBAN INFORMALITY

There are certain trends that will almost certainly, in one way or another, affect every city involved in the Informal City Dialogues project.³ Many of them found expression in the scenarios, but not always prominently. Two broad categories of drivers that seem underrepresented in the scenarios are those related to climate change and technology.

Climate change

Climate change can be reasonably expected to have profound and systemic impacts on every city participating in the Informal City Dialogues. It is likely to exacerbate existing vulnerabilities in each of these cities and pose new challenges to social and economic development. From flooding to drought to food insecurity, poor and vulnerable populations—including those in the informal sector—may well bear the brunt of many of these challenges. Climate change was also identified by local project teams as a key factor shaping the future of their city during their pre-workshop research.

In the workshops, however, climate change did not occupy center stage, and it was, for the most part, only minimally integrated into most of the scenarios. Where it is mentioned, it tends to appear as one factor among many, but rarely as a force that will interact with most other dimensions of life in the city. Additionally, the more optimistic scenarios generally say little about how the destructive impacts of climate change have been successfully averted (an exception being Nairobi's *Najivunia* scenario, which envisioned substantial investments in solar and geothermal energy and the construction of energy-plus buildings).

One possible explanation is that the participants from the workshops were largely drawn from the informal sector and may be more acutely concerned with immediate challenges, such as jobs and housing, even if climate change is likely to impact those in the future. Indeed, for poor and vulnerable populations, climate change may threaten a quantitative but not qualitative change in prospects—that is, an intensification of already existing challenges. It's also the case that climate change only firmly entered the international development discourse within the last several years. It's also possible that the Informal City Dialogues project's emphasis on building resilience may have shifted focus away from questions of climate change mitigation. Finally, the interconnected effects of climate change, like all complex systems, can be difficult to parse.

On the other hand, scenarios from nearly every city gave attention to natural disasters. In Accra's *Persistence* scenario, flooding and earthquakes damage crucial infrastructure. In Lima, natural disasters reduce the availability of natural resources. Bangkok's *Curry Rice* scenario imagines collective community efforts emerging “as a response to crises such as large floods.” Although disasters such as flooding don't cover nearly the full range of climate change impacts, they do hint at the sorts of impacts and response that climate change may entail for the informal city and, as such, may act as a sort of simplified proxy for climate change in these scenarios.



Drawing connections in Bangkok.

One scenario that does explore climate change impacts on a more systemic level is Manila's *Maghintay ka lamang*, which depicts how climate change may shift weather patterns in the Philippines and what the implications might be for the informal city. “Due to climate change, in 2040, it is now the southern region (e.g. Mindanao) that is always hit by [typhoons and tropical storms]. Manila, which is located in Northern Luzon, experiences very hot temperatures and drought. Access to water (potable or not) is scarce. This is a problem for people living in informal settlements with little or no access to water and electricity. Insufficient water supply is the major

³ These are reviewed in detail in the [Project Briefing Paper](#)

cause of illnesses in informal communities.” These are the sorts of secondary and tertiary impacts of climate change that warrant careful consideration in each of the project cities.

Technology

Certain kinds of technological developments appeared as drivers in multiple scenarios, while others were more notable for their absence. Most frequently mentioned were renewable energy and desalination technologies. In Accra’s *Persistence* scenario, desalination technology is key to providing clean water to a rapidly growing population. In Manila’s *Holding Hands* scenario, solar power, incentivized by wise policy, is able to fill the gap when fossil fuels become scarce.

Both cities also imagined advances in agricultural technology that would improve the city’s resilience under conditions of climate change and also, in the case of Accra, turn the center into a hub for innovation. In *Power*, Accra’s African Center for Science and Technology has become a leader in developing virus-resistant strains of cassava. Similarly, Manila’s *Holding Hands* scenario describes the development of a new strain of rice “that is resistant to the changing climate” and has helped ensure food security to the growing population.



Technology was raised as an important driver during the scenarios workshop in Accra.

In other scenarios, technology affects the types of informal livelihoods that may evolve in the future. Accra’s *Potential* scenario imagines two quite different possibilities: one involves a band of hacking scam artists that can “clone credit cards, phones, laptops, anything—and hit the accounts like termites in a storm.” The other is a new social innovation called mPedigree Corps “that recruits young people from the informal sector to trace fake drugs that are being sold across the city, using text messages to verify simple barcodes on drugs.”

In Bangkok’s *Mixed Veggie Stew* scenario, “a centralized traffic monitoring system has been in operation that tracks the movements of motorcycle taxis and other ‘informal’ modes of transport, so that they are responsive to the demand of residents who live in areas that are not covered by public transport services.” This is also notable as an example of increased cooperation between the government and the informal sector. In the same scenario, information technology has also been used to improve coordination among public agencies and facilitate good governance in public administration. This has an additional consequence: “Since the information systems of the Revenue Department and other government agencies were streamlined and integrated in the late 2010s, employers have found it extremely difficult to hire workers informally. There are now many fewer workers without proper contracts and welfare protection.” This scenario highlights some of the complex possible implications of technology, for better and for worse.

Other kinds of emerging technologies, related to increased connectivity, new types of exchange systems, and distributing manufacturing, received less attention in the scenarios. Some of them, however, figured into a number of the innovation proposals that came out of the workshops. For example, the Nairobi workshop participants have proposed the creation of a “fab lab” called Ubuni Studio that will train youth to use new tools like 3D printers and laser cutters to “transform problems into creative ideas, prototypes and products that can be sold in various markets or used to solve social challenges among individuals (e.g. prosthetics for the disabled), businesses (cheaper and good quality spare parts) and communities (mobile apps to enhance security or report disasters or prototypes to help in teaching hygiene or safe driving).”⁴ In Lima, initial innovation concepts included the use of microchips to reduce food waste, digital printers to

⁴ Nairobi innovation concept note

create replacement parts for machines, and the development of smart refrigerators that could optimize nutrition and reduce waste.

International aid

An additional factor that is prominent in the discourse around development in the Global South but that did not play a prominent role in the scenarios is international aid. This may be because it's seen as more static and less dynamic and uncertain than other factors.

The one city in which international aid played a prominent role was Accra. In *Position*, a mostly negative scenario, aid money helps transform a former slum: “Nima is now the place for the new middle class—those who got to the other side of poverty by the skin of their teeth—and they work hard to make sure they never fall through the cracks again. The area underwent a massive redevelopment program financed by huge international aid funds. It took the seeds of good projects that were already helping the community—like the Nima Street arts program, the sports programs, the after school clubs, and technology societies—and scaled them up rapidly.” Other slums don't fare as well in this scenario, because “our history of communal land ownership was complicated and our troublesome chiefs would not budge, nor give any land over to the developers.” In Accra's *Potential* scenario, following a global economic slowdown, “international aid went beyond mere talk and actually created jobs, trade, and good governance networks.”

The complex interaction of factors

From the scenarios, it is clear that these various factors driving urban informality are dynamics within a complex system and, as such, are subject to feedback loops and interactions with other trends that may change their speed, magnitude, and direction over time. As such, it is necessary to examine how these may play out over time in the specific local contexts of the six cities, and interact with one another. Only with this systemic perspective is it possible to fully understand the challenges—and the opportunities for positive change—of the informal city.

This interplay among different drivers is richly imagined in Accra's *Persistence* scenario. In this world, wise leadership and sound policy have created a flourishing city with plentiful economic opportunities by the year 2025. As a result, regional in-migration, coupled with greater life expectancy stemming from improved health outcomes, swells the population of the city. This in turn leads to an acute water shortage. Although the city is able to address this through the use of desalination technology, over time the energy requirements of the technology create another crisis. Over the course of several decades, the wellbeing of Accra's residents fluctuates as these different factors interact in time.

This scenario highlights the importance of examining how myriad factors might interact with one another over time, rather than focusing on any one of them in isolation.

PERCEIVED PATHWAYS TO INCLUSION AND RESILIENCE

The purpose of the Informal City Dialogues project is to use these scenarios to stimulate innovation ideas that can help catalyze resilience and inclusivity in the six participating cities—and beyond. In order to do this, it is helpful to develop an idea of what an inclusive and resilient city might look like.

Most of the cities produced clear best and worst case scenarios. This resulted from a choice of critical uncertainties that were rather value laden, such as the effectiveness of urban planning or the selfishness of the population—with an obvious preferred outcome. On a methodological level this can sometimes be problematic, as such scenarios tend to be less plausible and nuanced than those with less polarized outcomes. There's also a risk that the positive state of the one of the variables functions in the scenario as a sort of panacea, so that effectiveness or inclusiveness become the solution to most or all problems—and this can reduce the explanatory value of the scenarios.

One possible reason that participants chose to focus on such value-laden uncertainties was their high degree of personal investment in the outcomes. This was neither an abstract intellectual project nor a planning exercise undertaken by professional strategists. These scenarios concern the possible futures of the participants' lives in the most quotidian dimensions of housing and livelihoods.

At the same time, these normative scenarios are useful in articulating a positive vision for the future, and in surfacing participants' hopes and fears. The scenarios were not intended to be accurate predictions of the future but rather steps in the larger journey of the Dialogues. And, the scenarios proved effective in stimulating innovation ideas, which was the express purpose of the Informal City Dialogues project.

Certain common elements emerged in the scenarios of what a preferred future might look like.

They include:

- inclusive and participatory governance
- civic engagement among all residents
- networks of solidarity
- effective government delivery of infrastructure and services
- careful stewardship of the environment and resources, especially water
- collaborative relationships between the formal and informal sectors
- recognition and cultivation of the positive aspects of informality
- mitigation of the negative aspects of informality
- reform of land tenure and housing policy

The need for systemic solutions

Strategies for achieving these preferred futures need to take a systemic approach. This is illustrated by Manila's *Just Wait* scenario, which describes a family that is relocated from a slum to a settlement so far outside the city that it takes Larry, the breadwinner of the family, two hours just to travel to work and the cost of transportation requires half his daily wages. Larry and his family are later relocated to another settlement, this one within the city, but it, too, has major deficiencies—such as an absence of recreational space and a lack of a disaster response plan, among other problems.

Larry and his neighbors feel that if they had been included in the planning process these problems could have been avoided. However, “although government representatives did come to

their community two years before the [buildings] were constructed, it was only to inform them of the government's plans—not to consult them.”

In this and other contexts, it is the people themselves who best understand the complex systems of their local environments, and who are able to inform the development of solutions that are less likely to be derailed by blind spots or unanticipated consequences. The systemic approaches that received the most attention in the scenarios are described below.

Participatory and stable governance

A refrain heard throughout the Informal City Dialogues project, from participants in each city, was that inclusive and participatory governance is the most important lever for improving the wellbeing of those in the informal sector. Government is the key actor when it comes to improving housing infrastructure, tenure policy, mass transit, infrastructure for water and sanitation and electricity, social security benefits, healthcare, labor regulations, and education.

Participants from the informal sector need to be included in governance to ensure that their concerns are addressed—and that solutions take into account their understanding of complex realities on the ground. This is not only a matter of democracy and human rights, but also a practical imperative to ensure the effective functioning of the city. It is also an important counter to the often implicit assumption that development entails the elimination of informality.

Enabling participation is a difficult challenge, however. The scenarios generated by participants in nearly every city noted the feedback loop between wealth and power that tends to lead to the entrenchment of elite interests and corruption. There is a recognition that the wealthy tend to extend their dominance via politics, and that political power and financial power are self-reinforcing. Although participants in the various cities all agreed that more inclusive and participatory government was essential, how to achieve this is a pressing question, in light of obstacles like corruption and nepotism.

Several of the cities generated innovation concepts that directly addressed this challenge. In Nairobi, for example, the Informal City Lab would “provide an avenue for reframing challenges, developing, prototyping and modeling and testing new approaches or alternative solutions (for policy experimentation) to complex policy challenges as well as evaluating impact. The informal sector has for a long time been on the receiving end of poor policies, their poor implementation as well as casualties of poor public service delivery. The lab will provide the various stakeholders interacting in the informal space with an opportunity to participate in developing solutions to these challenges hence ensuring that all outcomes are inclusive and strengthen their sector.”⁵

The Informal City Dialogues workshops themselves were hailed by many participants as being models of exactly the sort of inclusivity they would like to see. Concerted efforts were made in each city to involve a diverse range of participants in the workshops. In Manila, this included informal community representatives, local government officials, NGOs, intergovernmental organizations, youth, women, elderly, persons with disabilities, academics, and members of the media, among others.



Here, as elsewhere, the process of collaboratively generating scenarios was seen by participants of all backgrounds as enabling a sort of inclusivity rarely seen in previous government-led consultations. This process was described by the Manila project team as “a ‘technology of participation’ that can be shared with Local Government Units and national government agencies whose concept and practice of

Participants in the scenarios workshop in Manila included informal community representatives, local government officials, NGOs, youth, women, elderly, persons with disabilities, academics, members of the media, and more.

⁵ Nairobi innovation concept note

participation is not resonant with the poor, the vulnerable, and informal sectors.”⁶ It served as a model for the participants’ proposed innovation concept, a Community-Driven Informal Settlement Transformation Process, that “will promote the use of scenarios as a tool for inclusive and resilient community development planning.”⁷ In Bangkok, participants have already started to use scenarios in other community projects and have expressed interest in a manual to help guide the process of running other scenario and innovation workshops.

An additional point that was illustrated in several scenarios is that effectively addressing the challenges of the next several decades will require not only participation, but also long-term vision and policy continuity. Frequent shifts in direction make it difficult to successfully implement ambitious improvements to the city.

Lima’s *Comunidad y riqueza* scenario highlights policy continuity as a key factor in the city’s ability to successfully manage its resources in 2040. “The citizens of Lima have achieved several decades of public policy continuity and have sought to solve their problems collectively, guided by a long term vision. This stability has brought economic growth, led to the consolidation of the middle class, and improved living standards. In spite of the different ideologies at play within Peruvian politics, the city of Lima has reached a consensus on key long-term policies to promote the common good and has embraced redistribution policies that have improved opportunities for everyone.”

Similarly, Manila’s most optimistic scenario, *Shelter*, imagines the long-term continuation of progressive reforms begun by the current President Aquino. “Leadership changes after the Aquino administration did not destroy the initial reform initiatives, thus subsequent presidents were able to build on the previous administration’s reform programs, such as the Conditional Cash Transfer Program, which provided cash to indigent families to support child education and maternal health. This program, in addition to others, was responsible for many improvements in the lives of the citizens—particularly in terms of education and health.”

Education

Another critical lever for improving the lives of those in the informal sector is education, which can create opportunities for new sorts of livelihoods and open pathways for political participation. In many of the scenarios, education is seen as most effective means of providing the skills necessary for workers to obtain jobs in the formal sector and move out of informality.

The role of education in moving people out of poverty and informality is played out in several of the scenarios from Accra. In *Power*, for example, the family of Nii-Armah, the protagonist, is relocated from the slums of Nima to Tema, as part of “special negotiated deals that restructured land ownership and allowed developers to come in and transform the entire area.” There, he was able to receive a high-quality secondary education and then went on to the University of Ghana where he studied agriculture. Eventually, he became an agricultural scientist working on disease-resistant strains of cassava to help ensure food security in Ghana.

In other scenarios, however, availability of education isn’t enough if other factors prevent students from accessing it or profiting from it. So, for example, in Accra’s *Potential* scenario, a “dark decade” of armed conflict among militant factions from Ghana and neighboring states prevents Nii-Armah from attending school as he needs to work with his father to help keep his family alive. In Manila’s *Just Wait* scenario, “access to basic education is theoretically available to all. However, the school drop-out rate, even as early as in primary school, is still high, caused by the high unemployment rate of parents.” Children can go to school, but end up working in the informal economy instead to help support their families.

⁶ Manila scenario template

⁷ Manila innovation concept note

These examples point to the need for a holistic approach to intervention, as fixing one part of the system may not have the desired effects if the other parts are still broken.

Self-organizing and civic engagement

Participants in every city viewed self-organizing and civic engagement as key ways to create a more inclusive and resilient city. Informal networks already exist, and finding ways to strengthen these and leverage them for civic engagement were seen as a high priority. Although the potential is there, the question of whether members of informal communities will be able to self-organize and increase engagement was seen in several cities to be a critical uncertainty. In Nairobi, one dimension of their scenarios is the degree to which the citizenry is caring and inclusive and, in Lima, a key dimension is high citizen participation vs. low citizen participation. Self-organizing and civic engagement were seen to be critically important for both promoting more inclusive governance as well as for providing resilience when government is unable to meet the challenges.

Self-organizing can help promote inclusivity by enabling the poor and the vulnerable to participate in governance. In Bangkok, the possibility of political organizing among those in the informal sector was chosen as one of the critical uncertainties that framed their scenarios. The possibilities ranged from one in which people in the informal city are represented by formal national political parties, registered associations of informal workers, and networks of NGOs and activists to the other end of the spectrum, where civic engagement by those in the informal sector is low, barriers to participation remain in place, and apathy and individualism is the order of the day.

In *Mixed Veggie Stew*, “representatives from the alliances of informal workers have been elected to city councils and even the national Parliament.” This had previously been impossible, as informal households were not registered, but with a change in the law in the 2010s, “that requirement was relaxed and changed; now anybody who lived in the city would have to be registered locally to receive benefits. With that legal and administrative change, local politicians who used to pay little attention to the needs of the informal people started a number of initiatives to support their livelihoods.”

Interestingly, one of the possible outcomes envisioned by the participants in Bangkok is that the informal sector is able to organize itself out of existence. In the *Mixed Veggie Stew* scenario, “as informal workers gained protections and welfare support they no longer needed the political networks in the same way they did before. By 2030, many of these organizations transformed themselves into formal political organizations representing a social agenda no longer based on a formal/informal dichotomy. Many of them now focus on migrant families, who are not fully integrated into Thai society.”

This points to the fact that informality is not a fixed category, and that many of those who could be described as within the informal sector may be seeking to escape it. This raises the question of whether once they have they will continue to advocate on behalf of those still in it.

Self-organizing is also shown in these scenarios as being key to promoting resilience, by bringing people together to fill the gaps where institutions fall short. In Nairobi’s *Bonoko City*, for example, government is ineffective and privatized services are failing. However, the residents self-organize in order to provide for their needs. “In response to a failed transport system, for example, the poor turn to *matatus* (14-seat vans used for public transport), a few form cooperatives and invest in buses; and others opt to carpool. While land ownership is difficult, community members join together to buy land and build affordable housing. Cooperatives and investment groups (*chamas*) are used to save money and obtain loans. And to ensure security the citizenry contracts with private firms, resorts to community policing, or pays the youth in informal settlements to provide it.”

Lima’s *Solidaridad para avanzar* scenario depicts a similar situation. Resource exploitation has threatened the wellbeing of the city and the government is weak. However, the people are able to

self-organize to meet their needs: “Innovations in social policy revolve around voluntary participation. Soup kitchens have resurfaced, as have cooperative businesses and the communal management of natural resources. The population organizes itself despite a lack of political power to supply what institutions are unable to provide.”

Self-organizing networks may extend beyond the geographical boundaries of the city. Beyond the income provided by remittances from overseas workers, diaspora networks may increasingly also provide a source of resilience for cities, infusing not just financial capital but human capital and innovative ideas, as well. So, for example, in Accra’s *Potential* scenario, people from the African diaspora play a vital role in rebuilding the city following a devastating armed conflict.

Education, self-organizing, and inclusive governance are not merely discrete pathways forward but are mutually reinforcing system levers. Access to education helps people self-organize to participate in governance. More inclusive governance will better recognize the need to promote education. So these should be seen as different strands of a systemic approach, rather than disconnected priorities that do not relate to one another.

ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES TO INCLUSION AND RESILIENCE

There are myriad challenges facing the cities participating in the Informal City Dialogues project. Several of these, such as water scarcity and climate change, are discussed above. The scenarios depicted some additional possible challenges that could rise to the level of systemic threats.

The consolidation of elite interests

Most of the scenarios pointed to the tendency for governments to cater to the interests of corporations and the wealthy, rather than to the poor and vulnerable. This is the opposite of inclusive governance and has a variety of negative consequences. One frequently imagined possibility is one in which critical infrastructure and key services have been privatized, usually in the name of efficiency, and often with negative implications for the people of the city.

In *Chennai, Inc.*, the government has outsourced much of its work to the private sector and everything from waste management to the provision of electricity and clean water has been privatized. Unfortunately, although service delivery is excellent, it comes at a price that is prohibitive for most citizens. For example, “there is high-quality education and excellent health services, but these are privatized and very expensive—in other words out of reach of the poor.” In this world, even parks and beaches are only accessible to the rich, and the street vendors and informal settlers have simply been pushed out of the city.

Nairobi’s *Bonoko City* scenario depicts a future in which key services and infrastructure have also been privatized but, in this case, those tasked with delivery don’t do so effectively, creating myriad additional problems. “The water and sewer systems are not properly maintained, causing old pipes to burst and contaminate the water sources—leading to warnings that the country might face a cholera epidemic.” Despite these difficulties, the residents of Bonoko City enjoy better outcomes than those of Chennai, Inc., because they have self-organized to create social innovations that compensate for the shortcomings of government and industry.

While pointing to the sorts of ways in which informal communities can and do innovate to create resilience in the face of challenges, these scenarios also allude to a broadly shared concern among participants that urban planning dictated by corporate interests will exclude poor and vulnerable populations.

Effective but authoritarian government

An interesting risk depicted in some scenarios was that local governments might become highly effective but authoritarian. In these instances, legitimate needs of the population might be provided for but freedom and innovation are stifled. These scenarios are characterized by an ethos in which those in power see prosperity and informality as opposed and the latter is banished in the name of law and order.

In Lima’s *Aporta para el orden y sostenibilidad* scenario, for example, the government has provided physical security and sustainable resource management but at the expense of civic participation and liberty. The city has cracked down strongly on informality and has levied high taxes to pay for its initiatives. Although Lima is safer than it once was, its most talented residents are leaving for other cities that offer more freedom and opportunity.

Nairobi’s *Big Brother* scenario describes a similar situation, in which a strong government has been highly effective in providing infrastructure and services but the city is stagnating as a consequence of too much control. “Economic competition is moribund due to strong government control of the economy. The taxes levied on individuals and firms are excessive. The level of innovation is low due to the fact that the county government is the largest employer and there is little pressure for individuals to be creative.” Informality is also discouraged in this scenario, as it is seen as bad for the city’s image.

These scenarios depict the risk of competence without humanity. In these futures, the government has lost sight of the people in its focus on the infrastructure and services that are supposed to serve people. In denying the reality on the ground, the government ultimately creates a hollow city, in which the people who constitute the soul of the city end up leaving, despite the appearance of a successful metropolis. It also indicates that people from the informal sector are concerned with the wellbeing of the entire city, not only with meeting their own needs.

Armed conflict

Finally, armed conflict, particularly involving non-state actors, is a wild card risk that appeared in several scenarios. This threat was depicted most vividly in Accra's *Potential* scenario, in which progress is derailed by a "dark decade" of terrorism, Boko Haram, Al Qaeda, and new factions mixed with the Fulanis from the northern regions, the militarized Tuaregs from Mauritania, and the failed states of Western Sahara—all of them fighting for supremacy with the rebel armies from the DRC and the Niger Delta Boys who joined the Somali pirates for training and began to really terrorize the ECOWAS shores. Everywhere became a messy war zone and you had to live by your wits with no permanent friends or foes during that sad time. Many people died, especially the young men." The scale of the conflict is such that children are prevented from getting an education and any pathways towards a better future are seriously disrupted.

Nairobi's *Vulture City* scenario depicts a less violent but still corrosive threat from violence: the city is rife with gangs and vigilantes that seek to dominate different parts of the city, especially the informal ones. They control movement in and out of their strongholds and monopolize security services, water vending, and illegal electricity connections. In Bangkok, too, the mafia has control over the informal economy.

The violence in these scenarios ranges from persistent, low-level, fairly predictable threats from local mafias that control aspects of the informal economy to highly unpredictable, large-scale civil war that could disrupt the entire country. In each case, though, it has the potential to threaten multiple aspects of the city's development.

While greater inclusivity can help mitigate the risk of corrupt and authoritarian governance, strategies for resilience may be most appropriate in addressing the risk posed by armed conflict.

CONCLUSION

More than half the world's population currently lives in cities, and that number is increasing rapidly. Many of these people participate in the informal life of their city, whether by making their home in a slum, earning a living as a street vendor, or by benefitting from the goods and services of the informal economy.

Rather than be seen as something to be eliminated, informal activities should be considered as a wellspring for inclusivity and resilience. These scenarios help us imagine what that might look like in Accra, Bangkok, Chennai, Lima, Manila, and Nairobi. While each local context is distinct, insights can be gathered that have wide applicability.

Access to education, the ability of informal communities to self-organize, and greater participation in governance by poor and vulnerable populations are shown to be three critical system levers that can help shift cities towards greater inclusivity. The flexibility of informal networks, and improvisatory informal innovations—like transportation and finance cooperatives—that arise to fill critical gaps in infrastructure and services, demonstrate the ways in which informality can be a crucial source of resilience for cities. Given the disruptive shocks from climate change and other trends that are facing cities over the coming decades, it is critical to recognize and cultivate these sources of resilience.

At the same time, these scenarios raise the question of whether we still be talking about informality in 2040. Many of them imagine future developments that could transform informality beyond recognition. Chennai's wastepickers of today may indeed become the highly-trained "community waste managers" described in *Rajnikanth*. The "informal shacks" of Nima, without electricity, sanitation, or running water, may be replaced by thoughtfully designed houses "in the popular New Nimani architectural style"—as imagined in Accra's *Power* scenario. Bangkok's motorcycle taxi drivers may, as described in *Mixed Veggie Stew*, be able to enjoy retirement thanks to an Informal Workers Retirement Fund. At their limit, these scenarios challenge us to think even beyond the categories of formal and informal, as we seek to create cities that are truly inclusive and resilient for all.

Next steps

The scenarios presented in this report are one output in the larger Informal City Dialogues project. They have already been used to generate social innovation concepts for each city, intended to catalyze a shift towards inclusivity and resilience.

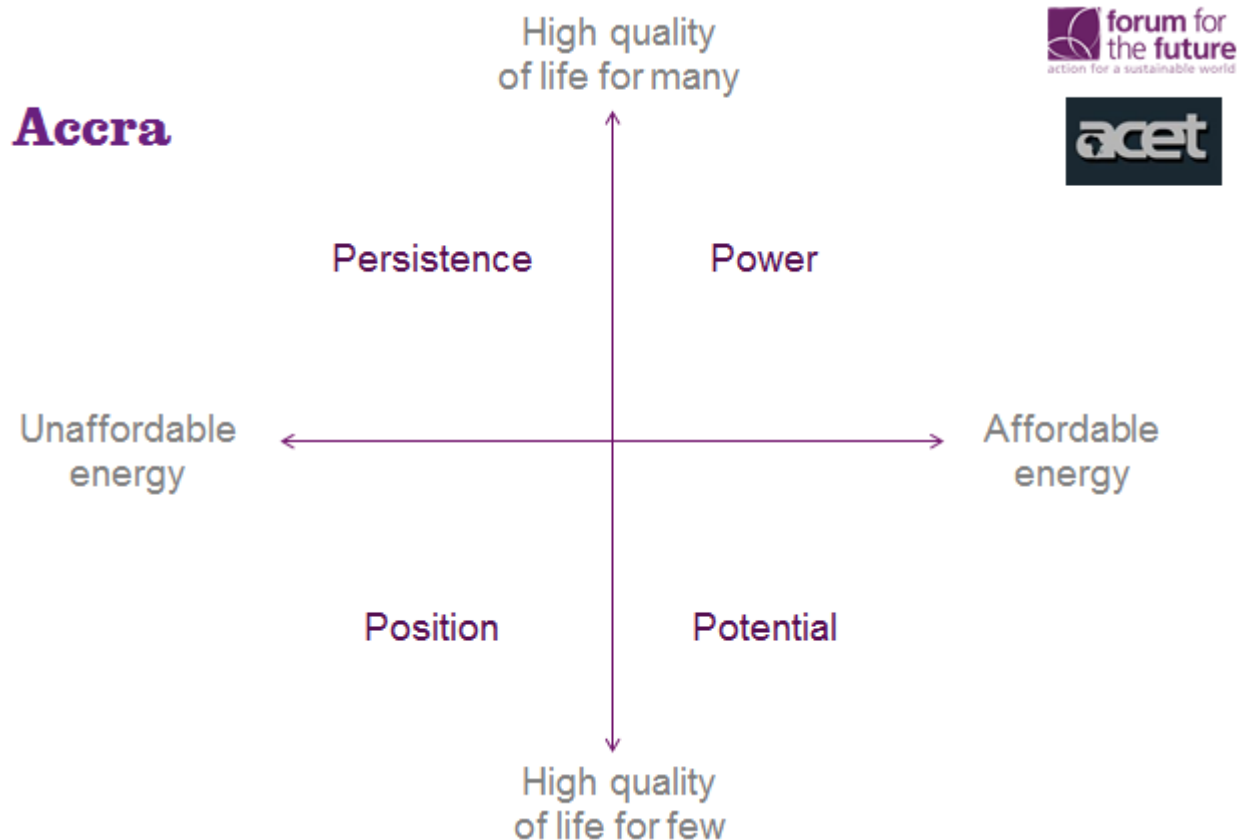
Next they will be used as the basis for a wider discussion, and for the development of a shared agenda for informality and cities. In September 2013, local project team members, participants from the workshops, and global experts will be convened at the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Center in Italy to explore how cities can better embrace informality. We will be using the scenarios both to envisage more inclusive and resilient futures for cities, as well as to look globally at the barriers and leverage points for embracing informality. We will then explore what might need to happen both at the individual city level but also globally to enable this.

Appendix:

Full-length scenario narratives

In this appendix are the full-length narratives of future scenarios created for Accra, Bangkok, Chennai, Lima, Manila, and Nairobi. Summaries are available on pages 7-24 of the main report. Accompanying each summary is a diagram of the two scenario axes, which create the four quadrants from which each scenario was generated.

1. Accra scenarios



Position

This is a story about a highly unequal and unstable society, where the majority of the poor are disenfranchised. The formal and informal sectors have neglected the invisible divide which was growing across the city in terms of the provision of education, environmental stewardship, and governance systems. The sharp splits in society now mean that one's birth largely determines one's destiny. Ironically, the whole society—including the well-to-do—secretly shares the same sense of despair as the choices for all young people narrow further and further. The shadows of the economy have risen and the filthy city sprawls around and engulfs them all.

It is 0600 on Monday, March 6, 2040, and Nii-Armah wakes up in Ga Mashie, Accra. It is his 42nd birthday today and a deep gloom engulfs him as he considers his hopeless situation. He looks around his small room, which he keeps neat but that is leaking again from the rains that have already started. It continues to be a sore reminder of his impoverished life.

My name is Nii-Armah and I was born on Independence Day 42 years ago. I'm making this recording today as the new Mayor of Accra has decreed that this year every person in the city born on Independence Day must go to Town Hall and record details about themselves and their lives. They are building a giant database with all our stories—a "digital Doomsday Book" some people have called it. Ha! Doom and gloom certainly describes how I'm feeling today.

I'm one of the "privileged few," I guess. When I was in secondary school in 2012, there had just been an election in which "free education" was a central plank for one party (the NPP) and "quality

education” for the other party (the NDC). In the end, after long legal wrangling over the legitimate winner, a bit more attention was paid to building additional schools in poor communities like Ga Mashie.

People like to say that the Ga people, the indigenous of Accra, “don’t like to learn.” They call us lazy and dismiss us. But my poor parents worked hard to send me to school. My mother used to sell smoked fish by the shore at Ga Mashie and my dad was a fisherman. Then the rivers became too polluted for people to eat the fish from there and the fish stocks went down until the fishermen only caught plastic containers and other rubbish in their nets. So my dad switched jobs and became a recycling middleman. He built up a network of “fishermen” who trawled the river for waste, and some young boys who sorted out the refuse, and he sold it to the network of shops and recycled goods sellers across the city. He became “rich on rubbish” for a while and was able to pay for me to attend Wesley Grammar School. Poor kids like me are not supposed to go to schools like that, people say—but I paid them no mind and did well on my exams.

After that, in 2016, I entered Methodist University. By that time all the state universities had become “free”—except for the fact that crooked lecturers asked their students for “gifts” of money and other “favours” before giving them lecture notes or grading their exams. The quality of the educational system had reached rock bottom by the time I managed to graduate, in 2019. Before that time it used to be that Nigerians in Ghana spent more money on private education for their kids in Ghana than the government in Nigeria spent on education within its own borders. There were about [75,000 Nigerian students](#) in Ghana paying about a billion US dollars annually as tuition fees, according to the governor of Central Bank of Nigeria. The growth of private universities in Ghana was driven by massive inflows of foreign capital from the region. This continued until the rise in northern Nigeria of Boko Haram—that militant group of young terrorists—began to infect the restless Fulani youth in northern Ghana, as well. Soon, the violence spread across the region and everybody retreated to their own borders again. Universities and hostels became vacant and the government could not fill in the gap.

I have a lot of regrets today, when I look back and see that if I had just helped my dad build up his business and his networks when we had a chance to team up with the Chinese (who started coming to work in every sector in Accra) my life might have turned out better. But my dad insisted that, as his eldest child, I should go to university—since he never got a chance to go to school. He loved to read and his hero was the founding father of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah. He saw it as a sign that I was born on Independence Day. Nkrumah was indeed a visionary man who had a long-term development plan for our country that fell into disuse soon after his death. We are still paying the price of our inability to plan for the future today.

Education should be a path out of poverty—but not for me, not in this city, not anymore. My father pushed me to study political science because he said that, according to Plato, “one of the penalties for refusing to participate in politics is that you end up being governed by your inferiors.” He thought I could become a leader one day, but I never believed in that. I begged to study computer science and work my way up in one of the Chinese-owned multinational firms in Accra. The Chinese are now everywhere in Ghana. They’ve brought some prosperity to our country but they also keep the divide between rich and poor as wide as possible: for the poor Chinese migrant laborers as well as for the poor Africans—it’s all the same. And there are more of them working in the informal sector here, too: as street hawkers, slum landlords, and small home factory owners. Once the cost of producing cheap goods in China became too high, all their petty traders came to Africa and set up little cloning factories for digital devices, spare parts, and

popular consumer goods. It's funny how things change. Now the good stuff comes from China and the cheap stuff comes from Africa.

That's what the hawkers are selling in the streets of Accra now, and everybody has to speak a little Chinese to survive. But my dad didn't believe in the 2020s that the Chinese would take over our economy and build factories here to produce more quickly and cheaply what we used to make by hand.

I tried to avoid the rat race when I left university. First I volunteered to do community work in Ga Mashie for several months. Then I joined the National Service, which posted me to Nima for a year to work on a community sports program with local youth.

Nima is now the place for the new middle class—those who got to the other side of poverty by the skin of their teeth—and they work hard to make sure they never fall through the cracks again. The area underwent a massive redevelopment program financed by huge international aid funds. It took the seeds of good projects that were already helping the community—like the Nima Street arts program, the sports programs, the after school clubs, and technology societies—and scaled them up rapidly. I loved the work.

That's what should have happened in Ga Mashie. But our history of communal land ownership was complicated and our troublesome chiefs would not budge, nor give any land over to the developers. So they passed us over and went to Nima. Now we've been left holding on to more useless land and less space to live and breathe in, because we fought too hard for our rights to tenure instead of embracing our right to space.

Transport is an expensive business now in Accra. People are discouraged from commuting as the costs are too high and the security controls in the gated zones make it hard to get across the city unless you have special passes. The small state stipend that I got for my youth service was consumed by the cost of commuting to Nima and filling prescriptions for my aging parents. It's every man for himself in our country now. "Each to himself and all for God," they say. Rich and poor alike, we all have to support ourselves. The state provides very little.

I looked for work for years...but nothing! No mafia connections in the world of the "have nots." No prominent family name in the world of the "haves." What could I do? I now work with my old dad, helping him haul our nets of rubbish in for the collectors every day. He has chronic rheumatoid arthritis, and is glad to have me here, but it's hard not to notice the disappointment in his eyes at the end of each day.

It hurts so much more today—all the things I cannot have. I cannot marry my girl Naa-Adoley, for where would we live? Space in Accra now is beyond our means. I cannot let us start our life together living in a shack! But that's all we could afford in the zones where the government allows us to live. Power is charged per household now and it's so expensive that we all have to remain packed together in the smallest spaces possible, or we can't afford the energy bills.

Naa-Adoley is the mother of my son, who is 4 months old now, and I have nothing at all to give him. Naa-Adoley delivers water around town. It's become our most valuable commodity here now. The Chinese brought in special technology for water harvesting, the government privatized water and sanitation provision across the city, and so they cornered the pure water market. The rations get smaller and smaller but the price keeps going up. Climate change has ravaged the region. At least we now have biodegradable containers for it.

Water, energy, sanitation: the basics of life are still outside our reach! More than 80 years after we achieved our independence, what has become of the vision for our country?

I no longer believe in a God that hears the cry of the poor. I believe in the power of great men and good government to change things—men like Confucius, who said, “In a country well governed, poverty is something to be ashamed of. In a country badly governed, wealth is something to be ashamed of.” I think that Nkrumah would be ashamed today because, as he said in the year of independence, “We shall measure our progress by the improvement in the health of our people; by the number of children in school, and by the quality of their education; by the availability of water and electricity in our towns and villages; and by the happiness which our people take in being able to manage their own affairs. The welfare of our people is our chief pride, and it is by this that my government will ask to be judged.” (*Broadcast to the Nation*, December, 24 1957)

Potential

This is a story about a society where an enduring majority still lives in poverty but, having achieved energy accessibility, the society demonstrates that it has the resourcefulness and potential to meet the needs of all.

It is 0600 on Monday, March 6, 2040, and Nii-Armah wakes up in James Town, Accra. He went to bed very late last night and decides to sleep in a little bit longer before going out to join his crew. As it is, the high-rise building blocking his small window makes it almost impossible to distinguish between night and day as he can never see the sun. Even though he is vaguely aware that today is his 42nd birthday, he is sure that nobody else remembers it and that therefore today is really just another day of surviving life in Accra.

It's Independence Day again, but nobody cares about such sentimental events any more. It's been more than 80 years since Ghana became a country and history is for dead folks, they say. Live for today and bury the past as soon as possible. I'm making this video for my special online crew around the world. It's my birthday, dudes! You're my family too, so thanks for all the virtual hugs and kisses.

You know, it's amazing to think about how James Town has changed since I was young. Back when I was a teenager working with my father, a fisherman at the time who mostly collected scrap from the sea, James Town was one of Accra's poorest neighborhoods. We lived in streets that had no pavement. In fact, most nights we slept outside in the streets. It took a while for me to notice it, but one day I went to visit an “uncle” in the suburbs of East Legon and that's when I finally realized that we were indeed the “filthy poor.” The insults that people slung at us carelessly now began to make sense.

So you can imagine how impossible a dream the James Town of today was for me then. The generally poor housing, filth, and lack of basic infrastructure made it so undesirable that it would have been impossible to imagine that these shiny, clean, super chic neighbors, who live in the expensive 10-story apartment building next door, would ever want to live here. Though many of us natives of James Town still live in broken down shacks, squeezed in between the “Charlie Just Come” newly rich African Diaspora residents of the high-rise beachfront apartments, we are happy that we can now just look up and across the ‘hood to see how the other half lives. Indeed, the benefits of our mixed development are trickling down in a way since this has become the best area

in the city to live in and work in now, with its commercial buildings, modern infrastructure and facilities, and some of the city's best restaurants and cafés.

This is a mixed bag of progress that came about by accident as well as design. Back in 2013, when our chiefs refused to budge on sharing our land titles with development companies, no one ever thought this area could be transformed into a real city center. Then came the “dark decade” of terrorism, Boko Haram, Al Qaeda, and new factions mixed with the Fulanis from the northern regions, the militarized Tuaregs from Mauritania, and the failed states of Western Sahara—all of them fighting for supremacy with the rebel armies from the DRC and the Niger Delta Boys who joined the Somali pirates for training and began to really terrorize the ECOWAS shores. Everywhere became a messy war zone and you had to live by your wits with no permanent friends or foes during that sad time. Many people died, especially the young men. We survived because we knew our coasts very well and held down our corner by negotiating when we could and fighting when we had to.

Now you can see why going to school was not an option for me. I worked with my father to keep our family alive, although we couldn't save everyone. We lost our mother and sisters during one of the raids.

Our father held us together. He is an honorable man and although his body has suffered the toll of so many wars his will is not broken. There were some who profited from the wars. My father was a traditional elder and gave away whatever surplus he could during that time. He didn't join the others in plundering his own people. So what has become of us now? What profit is there in honor? How do we make money now that there is peace, so we can eat?

Reconstruction and social cohesion finally began to take root around 2030, and we got some pretty good leaders at last. The “lost decade” for West Africa significantly impacted global trade too. That's when the world really began to appreciate how important African trade and consumers are as an engine for the global economy. The new middle class in Africa became high consumers for a while and demanded luxury goods from Asia, while the depressed European and US economies were still the destination for cheap Chinese products. This was a game changer, as the surge in natural resources made energy affordable across West Africa, transforming Nigeria and Accra into hubs for global production and call centers. Labor costs elsewhere in the world had become prohibitive. It was like watching a new luxury car with a Rolls Royce engine come to a halt on a Formula 1 track. No one was prepared for it. Perhaps the other big surprise was seeing how the informal sector networks survived better than the formal ones during that time.

For the first time the world really joined together as one to revive the global economy. International aid went beyond mere talk and actually created jobs, trade, and good governance networks. The African diaspora, now a powerful force operating on its own terms, also mobilized networks and drew on the transformational power of remittances from abroad. A few radical activists even came to James Town to help re-orientate our thinking towards self-empowerment.

I'll never forget when one of them quoted T-Bone Slim, a barge captain from the 1920's who said “Men die in hope, live in hope, but hope buys them nothing. Wishing ain't catching any fishes—it's organized economic action that puts the roof over your head”.

I heard him loud and clear. And I'm going to get my act together soon, leave the underground, stop my petty thieving ways. You see, we had to survive. So my guys who were pretty good with computers and technology—some of them were part of the group that started the Ghanaian

computer giant RLG—during the troubles they innovated on the 419 internet scams, and figured out how to hijack accounts on any kind of platform that transmits money wirelessly. We're a crew that can grow to thousands overnight. We can clone credit cards, phones, laptops, anything—and hit the accounts like termites in a storm. We can clean out millions in a day as a large informal network or a small locally based network of 419 “scam artists”.

High tech thieves in a high tech world, we've got knowledge and power. But it's beginning to bother me now, how we roll. My father would be disappointed in me.

But maybe there's a chance for old guys like me to get out of the game in Accra now. I think the Accra local government has begun to focus aggressively on urban regeneration through land reform programs, basic service provision, and economic infrastructure investments. But many of those who are able to develop or gain property are the already-well-to-do, as well as those Ghanaians from the diaspora who had the wherewithal to acquire properties and grants. There were some general benefits to all, though: the new high-speed rail link that was built to transport natural resources across the region and the West Africa power grid network has benefited everyone. Many petty traders can now move their goods easily across the region but, like everything else, good things are not evenly distributed.

There's this new program called the [mPedigree](#) corps. It recruits young people from the informal sector to trace fake drugs that are being sold across the city, using text messages to verify simple barcodes on drugs. They are saving the lives of so many poor people now.

So, I'm thinking of the future now and it has got to be better. I'm dating a young girl called Naa-Adoley. She's from James Town like me and a bit of a hustler like me, too. But I don't know. She's not serious about school because she's always hanging out with me when she should be studying. And I'm not sure where she gets her money these days either. Her folks are as poor as mine and yet, every now and then she's wearing designer clothes and nice watches. I think she may be seeing one of those rich young executives in the apartments around here on the sly. That hurts, because if that's the case then her future's not too bright at all.

Anyway, I've got my eye on another woman, Anti-Akweley. She's a serious career woman, lovely, and she goes to my church too. I've been talking to her a lot these days and I think I may be getting somewhere. She may be resisting me now, but I think she also sees that I'm a guy with potential and I can turn my life around and make us happy. It's like that saying in twi, “Ab]sobaa na ɛma ogya pae.” Persistence wears down resistance!

Persistence

This is a story about a society that has ingeniously closed the poverty gap and ensured decent lives for many. It must now rely on the ingenuity and intelligence of its citizens in order to recover from its energy challenges in order to emerge victorious.

It is 0600 on Monday, March 6, 2040, and Pastor Nii-Armah wakes up in his apartment in Old Fadama. He has to get ready quickly in order to catch the early train in to work as he has several meetings today. It is his 42nd birthday today and Accra has become a hectic place to live as everyone labors to make ends meet, even those working in the churches. But Nii-Armah thanks God that the basics, at least, are in hand. There is an efficient public transport system, healthcare and basic education are free and of decent quality, and the

city has grown into a beautiful metropolis. It is dense and always bustling, but the range of parks, social and cultural facilities, and precincts make it vibrant and pleasant.

Good morning, church! I'm recording this podcast this morning because today is my birthday and many of you have not heard my personal story. This gives me a chance to reflect on how the story of my life is in many ways closely connected with the story of the city of Accra.

I thought that becoming General Overseer of the Church on the Streets – Accra would ease the stress on my life and give me more time to focus on the administrative side of the ministry. But somehow, despite the popularity of our young and dynamic pastors, people still want to hear me preach on at least one Sunday a week. We are also committed to keeping our online community informed, preparing reading materials and reports for all those who request updates about our community investment funds, and working with local pastors to make sure that you find someone to pray with you and help you in times of sickness and other needs. I hope that you can join me to thank God for all we have achieved in the last seven years since we became a church.

Things have become busier since my picture was put on the cover of Net Time Magazine, as the pastor with the most followers and most downloaded podcasts last year. My fiancée Amina is also very busy with her thriving NGO that works for the economic empowerment, financial literacy, and inclusion of women in Accra—many of them former sex workers who used to fill the streets of the city.

It wasn't always like this. I remember when I was a boy living in the neighborhood of Old Fadama in the 2010s. Life was just a painful struggle from day to day. My mother was a *kayayo* working on the streets of Accra. Not many people know that word these days, since that kind of work became illegal so long ago. It's formed from two shorter words: *kaya*, meaning *load/luggage/goods* in Hausa, and *yo*, meaning woman/female in Ga. Traditionally, the *kayayei* were used as manual labor, exploited to transport goods to and from the markets, particularly agricultural goods. Sort of like female pack horses or donkeys, to put it crudely. And people were often very cruel to the children of *kayayei*, like me. Our mothers were mostly running away from poverty or abuse in northern Ghana and they ended up on the streets of Accra, with nowhere to live and no family networks to fall back on. So many of them, like my mother, would find themselves trusting the first man who offered help or shelter—and, sadly, would end up finding themselves pregnant and alone, with nowhere to turn. My sisters and I lived in a shack in Old Fadama, at that time still known as Sodom and Gomorrah because people related it to the biblical den of all evil.

I was angry all the time—angry and hungry, mostly. We basically lived on rubbish dumps and scavenged on garbage to survive. But I just kept looking at the beauty of my mother and my sisters and said to myself this cannot be allowed to continue. This has to end in my lifetime if I have anything to do with it. Maybe that's why I became a preacher.

But, actually, it's a more complicated story than that, because I had very little regard for churches for much of my life—even though I was inwardly very religious. In the 2010s there were so many megachurches that were basically exploiting poor people, in my opinion. Taking one tenth of our income for "tithes and offerings" each month, which meant that often people could not pay for medical treatment or education and fell deeper into the power of unscrupulous preachers. I like to say that God simply gave me a *ministry of encouragement* rather than a formal church to run. Anybody who crossed my path in need, even when I was a young man, got quizzed about how they spent their money. I then advised them on how best to invest their money back into their own lives and then to purposefully give back to their community. This "tithe" was building the body of the church, which is the people themselves, by helping the poor with viable micro-projects that could be scaled up.

But let me not cut a long story short. When I was young, I simply focused on education as a way out of poverty. I wanted to do well in school and get a good job to get my family off the streets. At first, I succeeded through sheer hard work, winning one of the few merit-based scholarships left in

Accra at the time—the Ghana Oil & Gas Scholarship—in 2018 to attend Methodist University’s new campus in Dansoman, where I studied finance and economics.

Around that time, the city of Accra was beginning to leverage its enhanced metropolitan autonomy to put in place city policies, plans, and investments to strengthen the local and regional economy. Strong and committed leadership at both the local and national levels leveraged and partnered with each other to facilitate massive gains in indigenous and foreign direct investment.

On the back of this growth strong innovation clusters emerged, particularly in agro-processing, finance, and services. The tax base grew and the focused leadership translated these gains into a massive public infrastructure investment initially focused on the mission “public health, affordable housing, efficient transport, and quality education for all in Accra.”

By 2025, Accra was an oasis of opportunity and was rapidly becoming a key regional economic hub. Industries—old and new—were thriving, city efficiencies and productivity were high, unemployment was low, and incomes were steadily rising. Investment in the education system was paying off with a skilled workforce and a strengthening national R&D program supported by private sector funds leveraged against public spending.

Through these good times, Accra’s population was expanding rapidly, mainly through regional immigration and increased life expectancy due to improved health. By 2025, the city was facing a population explosion, coupled with massive growth in consumption. In addition, recurrent natural disasters (flooding and earthquakes) were affecting crucial infrastructure.

The confluence of these phenomena resulted in a major water shortage crisis. The impact was felt almost immediately as households struggled with water rationing and industrial productivity was constrained. Although the city had been caught somewhat unprepared, a major technological breakthrough for affordable desalination was achieved in 2027 through the activation of the city’s science, technology, and innovation (STI) capability and investment in priority R&D projects in cooperation with international partners.

This technology solved the water crisis by enabling the wide-scale processing of seawater for human and industrial consumption. Within a few short years, accessible and affordable water supply was generally secured and people were back to living well and the economy began to pick up again.

But the good times were short-lived. By 2030, it became evident that there was a looming problem around energy. While the city had focused effectively on water security, the ongoing intense energy requirements of the desalination program were becoming untenable. This, combined with poor energy utility management, a lack of demand side management (both of water and energy), generous subsidies and concessions being offered to big industries, and poor revenue collection, led to a rapidly deteriorating energy situation. By 2034, rolling blackouts, industry negotiations, and municipal energy efficiency campaigns were the order of the day in Ghana, and Accra’s economy was starting to suffer. Soon, Ghana was in a full-scale energy crisis. Clean energy access was intermittent and increasingly unaffordable. The impact of this was felt most in those segments of society that lived on small margins. Slowly, I began to see the re-emergence of slums in Accra, people eking out a day-to-day living from very little.

So this is when the ministry that had been lying dormant in my soul began to come life again. Up until then, I had been content with my small micro-finance enterprise—which had initially done very well but, with the downturn, suffered as the government began to turn its back on poor people once again. Contrary to the national government’s position, which was to protect “the small man” through the crisis, Accra’s leadership opted strategically to protect its “big boys” (the established formal industries, mainly in manufacturing and high-tech agriculture) because they were seen as more crucial to the economy. This meant that smaller players like myself—the small, medium, and microenterprises (SMMEs)—bore the full brunt of the crisis, and many of them failed, mine

included. Eventually, though, the government's shortsightedness became evident as even big businesses were not immune to the crippled economy. You cannot ignore 80% of your economy—the informal side—and plan only for the 20% at the top and think that the pyramid you created can stand secure.

So I took my message to the streets. “Na by Small Small—we dey double double.” Pidgin English is the best form of communication across the region now. My first “disciples” were the Susu money collectors—one of the oldest financial groups in Africa. Based largely in Ghana, they provide (for a small fee) an informal means for Ghanaians to securely save and access their own money, as well as to gain access to a bit of credit, a form of microfinance. Money looked after for an individual by a Susu collector is held in a Susu account. A Susu collector can often be recognized by his distinctive coat of many pockets. The word *susu* in the Akan language means “small small” and refers to the way that combining small amounts of money from numerous sources ultimately adds up to a large sum. Eventually the rotating credit and savings associations of Ghana joined my little informal church in Old Fadama. Then the newly formed Christian banks followed and virtually overnight my church saw the “hundredfold” increase that the Bible promises everyone who trusts in Him.

But I didn't want to follow the example of the other pastors with their huge expanses of land and their private jets—mega-riches that could not hide the messy scandals within their leadership and congregation. I committed myself and our members to remain small at the center and grow outwards in their communities. We are a group of small, self-managed, and loosely affiliated churches. They exist mostly in informal communities, which form the “body” of our church. What keeps us strong is the power of our financial systems, which maximize gains from small incomes and leverage the power of relationships and multi-layered connections. The power of this ministry is evident in the visible transformational changes that communities, working together, can bring. Where the roads are bad, our people rebuild them. Where there are no schools, the community education taskforce gets to work. Where there is no water, they dig wells and bring in water harvesting technology. Inward change manifests in outward transformation here in Accra now.

I hope people can relate to our work as a philosophy for life rather than a religion. We are not tied to any one doctrine; our message is universal. My wife-to-be is a practicing Muslim and I am a devout Christian minister. How is this possible? Well, I cast a distance between myself and the “prosperity gospel churches” by saying that we are a form of African Liberation Theology—interpreting the teachings of Jesus Christ to promote liberation from unjust economic, political, or social conditions.

Now, in 2040, the economy has begun to pick up slowly as the energy situation improves thanks to better system management and the payoff from renewable energy investments. The state is still able to maintain minimum living standards for most people in the city based on the legacy investments made, but this has created a growing dependency on the state.

The national government is reluctant to increase its fiscal support to Accra, and there are increasing tensions between the two spheres as the national government imposes more on the metropolitan government and seeks to re-centralize some of its functions like economic development policy. This runs directly contrary to the philosophy of our church. We see ourselves a little like the grub that inhabits the mighty palm tree and eats away at its center, thriving and providing food for the community but leaving a hollow center that provides just the barest infrastructure.

In His Time, God will resolve all these tensions and bring us back to the center of His will for our lives, in Jesus' name.

Power

This is a story about a society that is prosperous and united. There is enough for everyone and Accra thrives!

It is 0600 on Monday, March 6, 2040, and Nii-Armah wakes up, only to remember that he can sleep for a little longer. He tells his alarm clock to wake him up two hours later so that he can prepare breakfast for his beloved wife Amina and their twins. It is his own 42nd birthday today but it has become his tradition to use his birthdays to celebrate his family and his life with all its blessings. This year is even more special for him because it was recently announced that he has won the prestigious and highly competitive Accra Innovator of the Year Award. Life is good.

It's my birthday today and I'm preparing to give an acceptance speech tonight at the Accra City Forum for the Accra Innovator of The Year Award. It's such a big honor to receive that award—not just because it appears to precede the award of a Nobel Prize in Science and Technology (the past three winners went on to win the Nobel)—but even more because it represents the recognition of my peers. That truly moves me. You see, the Accra City Forum, which awards the prize, was founded in 2013 with representation mostly from the informal sector: slum dwellers, street traders, and so forth. That's my background. Those are my people.

Who would have thought that today, nearly 27 years after my family moved out of the slums of Nima, my wife and I would struggle to move back to a townhouse right where I was born! Except that this house is not like the informal shack that I grew up in—with no water, electricity, or sanitation. No, now houses in Nima are designed in the popular New Niman architectural style, an innovation by architects in Nima that blends traditional regional styles with classical Islamic architectural influences. Though this is not our only property, this one means the most to us because when I met my wife here seven years ago it was my first time coming back to really witness the transformation of the area. She runs a plant nursery and community gardening school project at the center of Nima.

This was one of the new vocational skills training centers set up by the Accra City Forum. I was gathering data for my research project at the African Center for Science and Technology (ACST), a worldwide center of excellence for agricultural innovations that has nurtured three World Food Prize winners and even a past Nobel laureate. I had become an agricultural scientist in the intervening years, you see, and we were gathering data for the Virus-Free Cassava Certification Database. About 300 million people in Africa depend on cassava, a root that is ground into flour, used as starch and biofuel, and even [brewed into beer](#). For a century, production across the continent had been hindered by outbreaks of cassava mosaic disease, which is caused by several viruses. Breeding of new varieties helped get this problem mostly under control, but in 2013 cassava brown streak disease (CBSD) emerged as an even more serious concern. The virus could wipe out the root crop underground without a farmer even noticing until harvest.

CBSD began afflicting crops in east and central Africa and eventually it moved west with the whiteflies (which spread the viruses) to Nigeria, Congo, and Ghana—all of which grow a lot of cassava. We were looking at a human and economic disaster, but fortunately, through good long term planning, an international task force was created in 2013 that set up a surveillance system in Africa and Southeast Asia. An important component of the program was a public-private partnership that provided farmers with high-quality, disease-free seed. Young people were trained to help in this capacity-building program, using computers and mobile phones as educational tools.

I got involved in this after leaving the University of Ghana, where I had studied agriculture, in 2021. You see, slum dwellers in Nima had been encouraged to relocate between 2014 and 2020, in special negotiated deals that restructured land ownership and allowed developers to come in and

transform the entire area. My family was relocated to Tema, where I went to secondary school and had a very different, much more comfortable life as a teenager. My mum and dad continued to work as street traders but the government had begun to support us through many special welfare and skills development programs. They even introduced a special medical insurance and pension scheme for informal workers, which helped a lot as my parents got older.

Things began to improve dramatically across the whole region. People were building more resilient systems and processes for managing lots of different social, economic, and environmental challenges. Accra became a center of excellence for innovations in agriculture and a Pan-African University for Science and Technology was built here in 2021. That's where I did my post-graduate research in the genetic modification of viruses for pest control. Using the indigenous baculovirus expression system, developed in Ghana over a century ago, we were able to combine that knowledge with the viral database for plant diseases started in 2013 and scan a huge bioinformatics network for potentially useful genes to tackle emerging viral threats.

The spirit and power of the people of Accra began to shine through as the city grew due to urbanization, encouraging entrepreneurs and innovators to thrive. By the 2020s, Accra residents' high level of social awareness led them to begin organizing and demanding that the city make more effective use of public resources and contribute to creating better living standards for communities. In 2022, a landmark victory was achieved when the parliament passed a major bill in response to the popular demand for redress in cases where committed policies were not implemented by the responsible organs of state. By 2024, the election mantra on the ground was "Political Accountability! People Power!"

By this time, administrative devolution had advanced significantly and the Accra local government was able to strategize about how it could enact better public resource management; improve taxation and revenue mobilization; and ensure efficient resource use for long-range inclusive growth and development. Through coherent policies, good planning, and a focus on implementation and regulation, the city progressed onto a positive trajectory.

A major factor in the city's achievements was visionary leadership. The council understood the power of informal networks and communities. It embraced and strengthened the Accra City Forum, which gave citizens across the socio-economic spectrum a space to contribute to development plans for the city. Everyone felt they had a stake in the city's future success, at last.

City leaders consistently engaged with traditional leaders and communities to ensure social cohesion and a development approach built on strong values. Beyond this grounding, the leaders had a progressive agenda based on activating innovation and investment from "all of society." This meant that while the government invested public resources in affordable housing, basic sanitation, basic education, good markets, hospitals, potable drinking water, and access to energy, it also encouraged and enabled other social partners to do the same. Incentive programs were created to encourage the private sector to invest in sustainable industrial development and corporate social responsibility. Successes in the energy and financial sectors, in particular, were used to develop SMMEs and deepen local value chains to create more jobs and new industries.

Another critical success was addressing the land issues that had long stunted development in Accra. The city managed to work with social partners to develop an effective approach to land administration and initiate a regulatory process. This was treated as a high priority project and over time the issues were resolved. Land was held in trust, there were no more indiscriminate sales of land, a time-bound social housing program was initiated, and a hybrid housing market began to develop—enabling decent housing access for all.

New developments were completed, consistent with urban development plans and policies, and Accra began to evolve into what people jokingly called "the jungle city"—a city of green roofs, green balconies, and green parks—in line with the city's plans to create a "city with lungs."

By 2035, Accra was a flourishing city of abundance, endowed with strong social cohesion. Residents enjoyed increased life expectancy and the ratio of aged people in the population was high. Through social negotiations, community-based strategies were emerging for how to include the elderly population in city life and ensure that they had adequate care. Health care and emergency services linked to rapid transit were also a key focus with a goal of becoming a city that was “user friendly” to the aged and disabled.

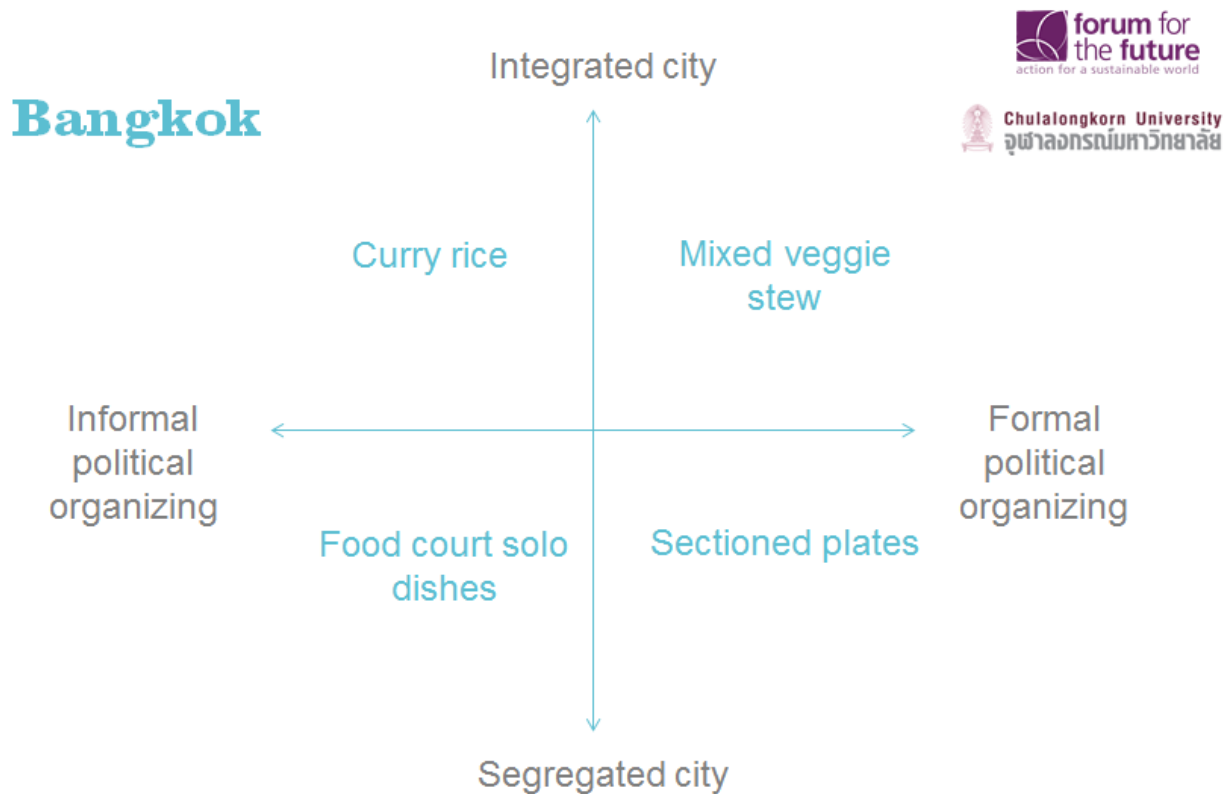
Many diaspora Ghanaians began to come back home—initially for retirement, but increasingly also for their children to attend the excellent universities, and to start businesses leveraging their accumulated capital and new ideas. They were also able to afford higher property prices, although the market was regulated to keep it accessible for locals.

Nima steadily developed during this period into a mix of low- to middle-cost housing. Today, it’s a cultural mecca and destination in the city. Though my research center offices are near Tema I prefer to live in Nima, where you can still hear the “heartbeat of the city.” With the effective public transport system it’s easy to get around the city.

I am proud of Accra today. It’s like a good coconut tree, with lots of strong branches for people to climb up to enjoy the fruits of their labors.

Find out how Accra’s scenarios were developed [here](#).

2. Bangkok scenarios



Mixed veggie stew

An all-inclusive city

Like a mixed vegetable stew, the lives of Bangkok's citizens in 2040 are well integrated and inclusive. While each group is somewhat distinct in terms of socio-economic and cultural character, the various elements and ingredients bring out the best in one another when combined. This is not a melting pot, however, where different elements lose their identity as they form an entirely new mixture.

Bangkok in 2040 epitomizes how Thailand has developed economically, socially, and politically. By 2030, Thailand had escaped the middle-income trap, as its economy moved from resource-based growth that relied on cheap labor and capital to growth based on high productivity and innovation. It took longer for social and economic inequality to decrease significantly from 2010 levels, only doing so after the implementation of a series of tax reform measures. Thai society has become increasingly diverse and its economy is more open and integrated than ever before. Urban structure and development patterns of Bangkok, as well as the urban livelihoods here, reflect such progress.

The efforts to decentralize political and administrative functions from 2010-2020 finally bore fruit, creating more job opportunities in smaller cities throughout the country. As a result, the rate of migration to Bangkok has slowed down significantly since 2015. But the metropolis still remains the largest city in Thailand. The population reached 15 million in 2020 and has leveled out since then. An aging population has been the key demographic issue for Thailand for quite some time now. With the new high-speed train networks that were completed in the early 2020s, it is now much easier to travel back and forth from Bangkok, and healthcare facilities in the provinces have

improved their quality. As a result, a growing number of retirees have left Bangkok for other smaller cities around the country.

In 2015, more than a million foreign migrants were living and working in Bangkok. Due to the economic boom in Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia in the late 2010s, many of them moved back home. In 2040, middle class housewives in Bangkok are no longer able to afford to hire Burmese housemaids as they used to do. The labor shortage crisis in the early 2020s prompted the government to reform its immigration policies, allowing children of migrants who were born in Thailand to receive Thai citizenship. Consequently, even though many immigrants have left Thailand, there are still a large number of them who stay on and become Thai citizens. Their children are born and raised as Thai. This has somewhat eased the problems posed by an aging population, including the labor shortage and a tax burden on young workers.

Slowly but surely since 2015 good governance has taken hold in public administration. The organizational fragmentation that was once the main problem for public management has been reduced. The use of information and communication technologies contributed significantly to this improvement, as public agencies started to combine databases and streamline their planning, programming, budgeting, and execution activities. The “Millennial” generation demands more from public services, as its members are more educated, informed, and empowered than their parents.

Starting in 2015, informal workers were able to form political alliances throughout the city. They also created networks and connections with international NGOs, which extended their support in terms of capacity building and financial resources. Ironically, however, these organizations became a victim of their own success. As informal workers gained protections and welfare support they no longer needed the political networks in the same way they did before. By 2030, many of these organizations transformed themselves into formal political organizations representing a social agenda no longer based on a formal/informal dichotomy. Many of them now focus on migrant families, who are not fully integrated into Thai society.

A series of mega-floods in the 2010s prompted the authorities to attach more importance to urban planning and land use control at the regional level. The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration has worked closely with surrounding local governments to plan and control urban development. The parliament finally passed a new Property Tax Act in 2020, which improved not only the ability to raise local tax revenues but also to link the tax systems with zoning regulations.

Since 2015, large landowners, particularly former state-owned enterprises, have redeveloped their land as part of their initiatives to increase corporate revenue. In 2020, the national government used a public-private partnership to buy some land plots for affordable housing development. Around the same time, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration started working with the National Housing Authority and the Mass Rapid Transit Authority of Thailand to increase the stock of affordable housing in Bangkok and the surrounding provinces. Politicians at the national and city levels supported the policy, as they were elected by people from the informal sector.

The groundbreaking Bangkok Comprehensive Plan of 2013 included a set of affordable housing clauses that spurred local governments to use a mixture of incentives and regulations to encourage developers to allocate 5-15 percent of the total number of units in their properties for affordable housing. There are now a number of buildings located close to transit stations or in the center of the city where ordinary people can afford to either buy or rent. Middle class residents can now also buy larger units in the same buildings at market prices. Due to the improved property tax systems, the rich and the upper middle class are no longer able to hoard condo units for investment and speculation as they once did.

Although homeless people are still found here and there even in 2040, slums and informal settlements have disappeared. Relatively poorer middle class people now live in high-rise apartment buildings in units they rent from public housing agencies. Some of them have been able

to buy affordable housing units, under the condition that they could only sell back to national and local housing authorities.

Between 2015 and 2020, several small public parks were built throughout the city. The number of pocket parks increased threefold between 2020 and 2025. A package of financial and regulatory incentives instituted as part of the new building codes allowed land owners and developers to provide open space to the public. Many commercial buildings and public institutions have re-designed their premises, tearing down walls and turning parking lots and empty land into public parks and recreational areas for surrounding communities.

By 2025, Bangkok's central districts had almost completely entered the post-industrial era, focusing primarily on services and commerce. Large factories relocated before the turn of the century, with small and medium-sized factories following suit over the next couple of decades. Manufacturing plants are now located in the outer suburbs and surrounding provinces of Bangkok. Since the information systems of the Revenue Department and other government agencies were streamlined and integrated in the late 2010s, employers have found it extremely difficult to hire workers informally. There are now many fewer workers without proper contracts and welfare protection.

In 2040, the streets of Bangkok are as lively as ever. But the vendors are now more orderly, regulated, protected, and supported. A newly elected Governor of Bangkok in 2021 fulfilled part of her election platform by formalizing some of the informal activities in the city. To eradicate the street mafia, she revamped the City Law Enforcement Office and started working closely with the National Police and representatives from organizations of informal workers. Street vendors now pay rent to the respective city governments for use of public space, rather than paying "protection fees" to the local mafia. These changes came about following a peaceful, city-wide protest by street vendors as a demonstration of collective resistance to extortion by the mafia. The Bangkok Law Enforcement officers are now able to keep order without any allegations that they themselves are taking money from the people. Water and electricity are properly provided for these vendors; they no longer have to illegally hook up to public taps and cables. Food vendors use mobile wastewater units instead of dumping gray water on the ground.

Some informal jobs have been taken up by foreign workers from Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos. Even though the economies in those countries have grown rapidly in the past few decades, Bangkok still remains a popular destination for their migrant workers. As the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has become more integrated economically, movements of both skilled and unskilled labor have become freer.

People who used to work in the informal sector are now able to retire, thanks to the National Savings Fund established in 2015, and their children work in the formal sector. Thailand has been an aging society since 2010 so people are now working until they are 70 years old. Informal workers were also able to set up savings co-operatives, which not only enabled them to save and access credit but also formed the basis for political organizing and advocacy for other community-related causes.

In 2017, motorcycle taxi drivers staged a strike when the national government was pushing for a draconian measure to ban them from the streets of Bangkok. Some representatives from the alliances of informal workers have been elected to city councils and even the national Parliament. Informal workers once were unable to elect the Bangkok Governor and other local political positions, because most of them did not have household registrations with the local districts. That requirement was relaxed and changed; now anybody who lived in the city would have to be registered locally to receive benefits. With that legal and administrative change, local politicians who used to pay little attention to the needs of the informal people started a number of initiatives to support their livelihoods.

The rail system in Bangkok was mostly completed by 2025, extending the initial system from 85 kilometers to about 200 kilometers in 2020, and 500 kilometers in 2025. Due to the extensive mass transit network, rail-based suburbanization accelerated during the years 2015-2020. The level of car ownership has remained relatively constant since 2025 and people mostly own electric cars. Only very rich people have drivers or commute by car, however. The middle class and poor tend to get to work using mass transit, which has become more affordable with the implementation of cross-subsidization schemes to support rail lines that are not financially profitable.

In 2025, several communities around the city adopted public-private-community partnerships (PPCPs) as a way to invest in community-based infrastructure systems, such as community energy systems and feeder transport systems. A large number of Bangkokians now ride bicycles to transit stations. Some park their two-wheelers there, while others take them onto the train and ride them to their offices. What were once “informal” transportation modes are now integrated into the whole transport system in Bangkok. For about 20 years now, a centralized traffic monitoring system has been in operation that tracks the movements of motorcycle taxis and other “informal” modes of transport, so that they are responsive to the demand of residents who live in areas that are not covered by public transport services. There are now fewer motorcycle taxis than before and many of the drivers have retired, thanks to the Informal Workers Retirement Fund, which was established in 2015.

While some rich parents still send their children to private schools, most parents now prefer local public schools—where the quality of teaching has improved tremendously. In these schools, students of different social and economic backgrounds study and play together. As the quality of the schools is not very different, and because of the school district systems in place, parents prefer to send their children to local schools so they can walk there with their friends.

Curry rice

A mafia and clique city

Bangkok in 2040 continues to be a functionally integrated city. Like curry and rice when eaten together, informal and formal economic activities are creating functional synergies, contributing not only to vibrancy but also to economic resilience in the city. It is not, however, a socially inclusive city, as there are still clear divisions among people with different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The urban structures still favor those in power, allowing room for others only to the extent that it does not change the status quo. Socio-economic and cultural differences, represented by the colors of rice and curry, are neither changed nor challenged. If you are rice and I am curry, the best we can do is to recognize that we are different—and to interact only when necessary.

This reality is reflected in how Bangkok residents live in 2040. Low-income residents are still able to find cheap, old apartments in central districts of the city, alongside the middle class in new condominiums and the rich in large houses. Some low-income, low-rise informal settlements also remain in the city. This is partly because the mass transit system has expanded to the suburbs since the late 2010s, more or less according to the Bangkok Mass Rail Transit Master Plan. This has enabled real estate developers to develop condominiums and apartment buildings near transit stations further away from the city. The pressure for and attractiveness of urban redevelopment in the central districts has somewhat decreased, so land owners do not have incentives to redevelop land plots in the city right away. The cyclical real estate busts in 2015 and 2030 put a temporary brake on urban re-densification projects, allowing some of the informal settlements that are not located close to transit stations to remain in the city. Without political pressure on the government and the parliament to pass a comprehensive property tax law, land owners face do not incur a high opportunity cost by keeping their plots undeveloped.

The government has been modestly successful in providing public housing to the poor and vulnerable populations in the city. The bursting of the real estate bubble allowed the government to buy up some of the vacant buildings and turn them into public housing. But these are high-rise concrete buildings, instead of low-rise, wooden houses like those they lived in previously. Although these public housing units are located in the same areas as luxurious condominiums, there is a limited sense of community among them as they rarely share common facilities or open space.

Local public schools in many areas in Bangkok now have both middle-class and poor students in the same class. This is certainly an improvement from what it was like in 2010s, when they never had a chance to study together. Since the late 2010s, the government has spent a large sum of money on upgrading public schools and equipping them with new digital technologies. Every student is now given a free tablet for their use in class. Nonetheless, the educational system is not yet truly inclusive. Upper middle-class and rich parents can still afford to send their children to after-school tutorial classes, so that they get better grades at school and are more likely to be accepted to top universities.

Bangkok's transportation systems continue to include a mixture of formal and informal elements. Mass transit systems have expanded. Because of cross-subsidy programs, in addition to huge subsidies from the government, fares on government-owned transit lines are relatively affordable. They are much cheaper than those operated by private companies that have received long-term concessions through Build-Operate-Transfer and other public-private partnership schemes. This allows low-income people to use mass transit and bus rapid transit systems alongside the young middle-class professionals who have been taking the trains for quite some time now.

It was not until late 2010s that the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system was expanded. Policymakers then realized that traditional bus services would have to be improved as well. The Bangkok Mass Transit Authority, which runs most of the bus services, finally redrew its decades-old routes in response to changing land-use patterns in the city. This improvement has lured middle-class riders back to public buses, which at one point were only serving low-income passengers.

Most informal transport modes remain active throughout the city. The government has been able to regulate and enforce safety measures on informal vans and motorcycle taxis. After a series of fatal accidents in the mid-2010s, van services are now more regulated and closely monitored by Intelligent Transport Systems. Motorcycle taxis now have meters, so passengers do not have to negotiate the fares and every passenger is required to wear a helmet. People now use motorcycle taxis even more than before, particularly as a feeder service to transit stops. Some of transit users have also started to ride bicycles to the stations, but the number is still small. Overall, the interfaces between formal and informal transport have improved substantially.

Despite the regularization of informal transport services, their operators do not receive additional welfare and livelihood support. They still have no accident or health insurance, let alone retirement funds. This is partly because they have been unable to form political alliances for policy advocacy. Some of them have decided to buy private accident and health insurance, because they are afraid of high and increasing medical costs. Many of the informal transport groups are still controlled by "influential people" as the drivers and operators have not been able to organize politically.

People in the informal sector remain co-opted by the local Mafia because they lack access to affordable, reliable, and accountable legal services and support. They also have limited knowledge about their basic rights, as well as regulations and laws that have significant implications for their livelihoods. Even though the government tried to promote community-based justice systems in the mid-2010s, the informal are excluded from these systems and remain susceptible to negligence and exploitation by "influential people."

There are very few formal, community-based organizations that politically represent informal communities as a whole. There are informal gatherings of people for specific events, such as festivals and fund-raising campaigns for religious ceremonies, and collective community efforts

also emerge as a response to crises such as large floods. But such community initiatives are more reactive than proactive and are rarely institutionalized for other political and civic purposes.

While there are a number of political networks of informal settlements and informal workers, their initiatives tend to operate in an ad hoc manner. Some dedicated activists try to push for changes in the legal and welfare systems so that the voices of informal settlers and workers are heard and that the welfare systems accommodate their needs better. However, such activism remains limited and informal settlers and workers have not been able to form stronger political alliances and movements beyond their communities. The volunteerist mindset of people who participate in these networks is one factor preventing them from creating any formal organizations to mobilize resources for political purposes. Instead their focus is on helping one another in various ways when help is needed.

The informal economy remains as vibrant as ever and is intricately integrated with the formal economy to the extent that the boundaries between informality and formality in most sectors seem arbitrary. This is particularly true with creative jobs where flexibility and entrepreneurship are closely associated with informality. As a result of the government's implementation of the creative economy policy in the National Social and Economic Development Plans from 2011 to 2025, a large number of individuals in Bangkok now work from home doing design and creating high value-added work. Their products are often manufactured in Myanmar and then exported to department stores in China.

The most obvious informal activity in Bangkok remains street vending. There are as many street vendors as there were a few decades ago, but most of them are not ethnically Thai. Many are Burmese who have lived in Thailand for a couple of decades, including a large number of second-generation descendants of workers who decided not to go back to Myanmar even after the country started to liberalize and developed economically. Because they lack political support, however, the immigrants do not enjoy the same legal rights as those people who are ethnically Thai. They may be able to receive basic healthcare from public hospitals but the coverage is very limited. They are unable to receive many other social benefits and often work in jobs that are dirty, dangerous, and demeaning. Bangkok remains as informal as before but the people who make up the informal city are different.

There are still a large number of Burmese housemaids, although these days they tend to live with their friends and families in cheap apartments around the city rather than with their employers. While their economic lives are integrated with the rest of the city, their social lives are not—and they have no political representation.

Sectioned plates

A tug-of-war city

The Bangkok metropolitan region in 2040 is clearly and formally segregated, much like the sectioned plates of a bento box. Each group functions independently, even if they happen to be located next to one another. The rich and the poor alike organize their political and advocacy activities to pursue group interests, and face off against each other without yielding.

It has been evident since 2015 that the rich and upper-middle-class households tend to congregate in three types of areas in the Bangkok Metropolitan region: big houses in rich suburban municipalities, luxurious condominiums in the Central Business Districts, and renovated and newly-built townhouses in artsy, historic neighborhoods. Higher density urban redevelopment was clearly visible from 2010 to 2015, when the mass transit system covered only the central parts of the city. Shophouses were torn down to make way for condominiums and hotels. Such redevelopment put tremendous pressure on informal communities that were leasing land from land owners. Land prices had always been beyond what they could afford and some of them moved out

of the city to outlying parts of the metropolitan region. Others rent small apartments in the areas where they used to live, in order to save on transportation expenses.

By the mid-2020s, a spatial separation of residential locations according to social and economic groups had become clear. The key drivers were decentralization and the political empowerment of the poor and informal in the 2010s. Efforts to decentralize administrative functions and to increase the fiscal power of local governments started in the 2000s, but it was not until the late 2010s when real progress became evident, and the early 2020s when the balance of power tipped towards local governments. Since 2025, District Directors have been elected by district residents, as opposed to being appointed by the Governor as they were before.

The fiscal crisis at the national level in the late 2010s prompted local politicians to demand more control over local resources and public finance, forcing most of the central government agencies to let go of their power to manage local resources and finance. In particular, the ability to raise property taxes locally has changed the way local governments provide basic utilities and facilities. More than 75 percent of local revenues now come from local taxes, and each municipality in the Bangkok metropolitan region has both the capacity and resources to draft its own Comprehensive Plan. Water and electricity are still provided by regional utility companies, due to the extensive coverage and economies of scale. But public schools are operated and funded by local governments, as are police and fire departments.

The poor and the informal have been able to capitalize on decentralization and their own empowerment. They have become well organized politically, and some of them have won municipal elections in Bangkok's outer districts. The flip side of this drastic change is the clear disparity between rich and poor municipalities in the Metro Region. Rich districts and municipalities provide excellent schools, clean and well-paved roads, beautiful public parks, responsible and reliable policemen and firemen, and high-tech community libraries. These services and facilities are mostly funded by local tax revenues. Poor municipalities, on the other hand, lack the capacity and resources to match their richer counterparts in providing local public services.

This disparity did not become noticeable until the mid-2020s. Rich and middle-class residents in poor municipalities did not move right away because Thai people still feel attached to their houses. But the succeeding generations have been less sentimental. Young families who prefer less congested environments and don't want to live close to transit stations started moving to richer municipalities with better services. By 2035, it had become clear that residential segregation across municipalities had taken hold, strikingly similar to what happened historically in American cities.

By 2020, several mass transit lines were completed and started to serve older areas of the city that were once derelict. Due to strict historic preservation regulations, high-rise development is not permitted in these areas. But because of their accessibility and convenience, these districts attracted a new wave of developers targeting young urban professionals, aka yuppies, who prefer to live in low-rise, cozy neighborhoods than in high-rise condominiums. In addition, thanks to a series of monumental and expensive efforts to clean up Bangkok's dirty and polluted canals in the 2020s, canal-side properties have been bought up by developers. Many historic areas by the canals have been completely renovated and rejuvenated with art galleries, fancy restaurants, and cozy tea shops. By 2030, large shopping malls had already become passé for the rich and the middle class. Urban revitalization projects in historic areas coincided with the popularity of small, cozy, and sustainable neighborhoods. But as these neighborhoods were gentrified by the yuppies and expats, the poor have moved out. Many now live in poor, suburban municipalities, within which enclaves of foreign migrants are found—although there are still low-income communities remaining in the city, albeit in locations that are far from transit stations or outside historic districts.

Since 2015, several networks of community activists and leaders have formalized their activities by registering as non-governmental organizations. By doing so, they have become eligible to be selected as board members of "autonomous" organizations that oversee urban development and

public utility services in the city. Such formal political organizing has empowered the communities to implement community development initiatives that combine housing development and livelihoods improvement. Through these formal political networks, several low-income groups have put pressure on local governments of rich municipalities to provide affordable housing for lower income groups. But the number is still limited, and not enough to make these municipalities become more integrated and inclusive.

The power struggle between rich and poor municipalities reached new heights in 2030 when it became clear that Bangkok needed more incineration plants to handle its burgeoning waste stream. A Not In My Backyard (NIMBY) mentality was so prevalent and strong that not a single town was willing to host the plants, despite subsidies and compensation.

Fewer gated communities are being built in rich municipalities because they no longer need to protect themselves from poor neighbors. But there are more of them in municipalities where there is a mixture of rich, middle-class, and poor households. Residents of rich communities continue to drive to work in the city. Even though the cars now use renewable energy sources, the total amount of energy use has still increased as people travel even more than before. There are fewer informal transport services in these suburbs because most people own and drive personal cars.

There are still a large number of motorcycle taxis in the city. In the poor suburbs they remain significant due to inadequate road networks and limited public bus service. Even though used, gasoline-powered cars are popular among the poor, those who cannot drive—especially students and the elderly—have to take motorcycle taxis. In the city, motorcycle taxis continue to have an advantage when navigating through traffic.

By 2030, most of the mass transit lines were completed. Slowly but surely, segregation according to transit station became clearly noticeable. Neighborhoods around stations in the rich suburbs look cleaner and safer than those near stations in poor neighborhoods. Ironically, transit ridership from stations in poor neighborhoods has increased, while the ridership from rich neighborhoods has slowly but surely decreased. Urban sociologists fear that this trend indicates entrenched segregation between the rich and the poor.

While segregation is evident in Bangkok in 2040, the livelihoods of the poor and vulnerable populations in the informal sector have improved somewhat. This is largely due to the political movement to formalize and institutionalize efforts to influence public policy to accommodate the needs of the informal poor. Since 2015, a number of associations of informal workers have been registered, including associations of street vendors, motorcycle taxi drivers, van drivers, garbage collectors, and housemaids. They receive financial support from the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, which has aimed to empower people in the informal sector.

In 2015, the National Savings Fund was finally passed by Parliament, making it possible for informal workers to contribute to pension and provident funds that would allow them to retire at the age of 70. It took a few more years before a large number of informal workers decided to participate in the program. This was because they did not have enough resources to spare and were also not sure if the money would really be there for them a few decades later. However, professional associations of informal workers actively promoted the Fund through various educational and outreach initiatives and by 2030 most informal workers had participated in the savings program.

Food court solo dishes

A free-for-all city

This scenario shows what Bangkok could look like if there is extreme social and physical segregation that is exacerbated by the inability of the poor and vulnerable populations to form political alliances and the lack of policy advocacy to improve their quality of life.

During the years 2012 and 2015, transit-oriented gentrification occurred in the central districts of Bangkok at an alarming rate. Particularly in neighborhoods close to the BTS Skytrain and MRT subway stations, land owners started to sell off their land to real estate developers who built high-rise condominiums for young middle-class professionals and hotels for foreign tourists.

Shophouses were torn down and their tenants had to move to outlying locations in the suburbs. Large land owners, especially state-owned enterprises like the State Railway of Thailand and the Port Authority of Thailand, as well as quasi-governmental agencies, started redevelopment projects in locations where land prices were rising. In most of these locations, low-income “informal” communities had been settled for a long time. While there were no evictions by force, the agencies steadily increased rents until many residents could no longer afford to live in these areas.

Because of this “voluntary” relocation, older people who were able to save some money moved to buy small houses in the surrounding provinces. Many of them wanted to live in rural villages—but they had been away from those places for so long that they no longer knew anyone there. So they chose to live in the vicinity of Bangkok instead. Their children, however, work in the city and rent small apartments close to work. The households in Bangkok have become smaller and smaller as households with no children have become the new normal. The elderly who used to live in informal settlements now live further away from their children, albeit still in the same megacity.

Because of the market-driven evictions, informal settlers who did not have enough savings ended up squatting on neglected plots at the city’s fringes. Many of the plots remain undeveloped, as the exurban locations are no longer attractive to the middle class who now prefer to live near transit stations. Large developers with deep pockets just keep the land undeveloped, since the opportunity cost of holding the land is very low due to limited property taxes. Many of the plots, however, are foreclosure properties that banks now own, as small developers went bankrupt in the real estate busts of the late 2010s and 2020s.

There are still a large number of gated communities that were built during the 2010s. Because of their legal status as “juristic organizations,” the associations of gated communities remain “untouchable” by the government. This is despite the recognition that gated communities not only create social segregation, but the physical obstacles created by walls and gates also makes it impossible to provide efficient public infrastructure. The government has been unable to solve this problem, as it does not want to risk public uproar by legally forcing them to tear down the walls. The segregation between gated communities and the surrounding communities becomes a societal norm. Children who have grown up in these two separate but adjacent communities never know each other and never become friends.

The informal economy keeps growing. Economic fluctuations and instability in the late 2010s and 2020s led to higher employment rates in the informal sector. A large number of workers find it even more difficult to have full-time jobs, so they rely on additional income from informal jobs here and there. As a result, street vendors have become a permanent feature of Bangkok life. It’s impossible for the authorities or anyone else to fully formalize and regulate it. Privatization and capitalization of public space continues. A few false alarm incidents have occurred inside major transit junctions since 2015, causing commuters to panic and rush out of the stations and creating

chaos in areas filled with street vendors. The authorities have attempted several times to restrict street vending in the areas around transit stations, without success.

The characteristics of street vendors in the central areas now are different from those in the past. Young middle-class entrepreneurs find sidewalks more attractive as a place to sell new hi-tech gadgets than air-conditioned department stores. While they still pay “rent” to the street mafia, the amount is much less than it would cost to rent a store, and there are no rental contracts to be bothered with. In locations where there are constantly a large number of pedestrians, such as transit stations, poor street vendors are no longer able to sell their goods. The “rental” fees paid to the mafia have become so high that only middle-class informal entrepreneurs can afford to pay them. Meanwhile, street vendors are no longer independent sellers, but are hired by capitalists who source the merchandise abroad, ranging from high-tech gadgets from China to toys and clothes made in Myanmar and Africa.

Since 2015, mass rail transit systems have continued to expand to the suburbs of Bangkok. But the rate was not as fast as planned for political and financial reasons. The demand for condominium units near transit stations continued to grow, making it more attractive for developers to build condominiums in central parts of the city. Landowners kept selling their land to developers, making it practically impossible for low-income and lower-middle-class people to own houses, however small, in the city. As for the informal settlers on the fringes of the city beyond the reach of transit systems, they have to commute to their jobs in the city. They either ride electric motorcycles, which are now cheaper than those with two-stroke engines, or drive second-hand cars that still run on gasoline. While the middle class has already switched to eco-friendly cars, the poor drive cheaper vehicles that are less energy efficient.

Due to the exorbitant costs of constructing transit systems, the fares in 2040 are still higher than what the poor and lower-middle class can afford. Mass transit remains “class transit”. The Build-Operate-Transfer schemes that were adopted for infrastructure projects remain within the hands of the private sector. The ownership and operation have never been transferred back to the government, because the government never developed the requisite capacity even though it was known that the concessions would end in the early 2030s.

The poor take public buses, operated by the debt-ridden Bangkok Mass Transit Authority. Traffic congestion in the city is as bad as before, so the buses continue to suffer from low ridership. Informal transport has been the norm for a long while now. Informal passenger vans continue to proliferate as the city expands to the suburbs. Even with the effort of the government to regulate and formalize the van services, informal operators can flout the rules and get away with it because they pay protection fees to the mafia and corrupt authorities. Because van operators have been unable to form professional associations, they can’t collectively lobby the government to abolish unnecessary and cumbersome regulations and to seriously crack down on unregistered informal van operators and the mafia.

Despite efforts to promote good governance in public management, improvement has been painfully slow. Even though Thailand has developed economically, corruption and extortion are still as prevalent as they were a few decades ago. Motorcycle taxis and van drivers still have to pay protection fees to the local mafia. The government has suppressed the growth of networks of activists and informal workers.

There are now more migrant workers in the country than ever before, arriving constantly from neighboring countries to seek employment opportunities. The influx of foreign migrant workers makes it more difficult to mobilize collective action. Due to cultural and language barriers, the efforts to create welfare provisions for foreign migrants in the informal sector have not been successful.

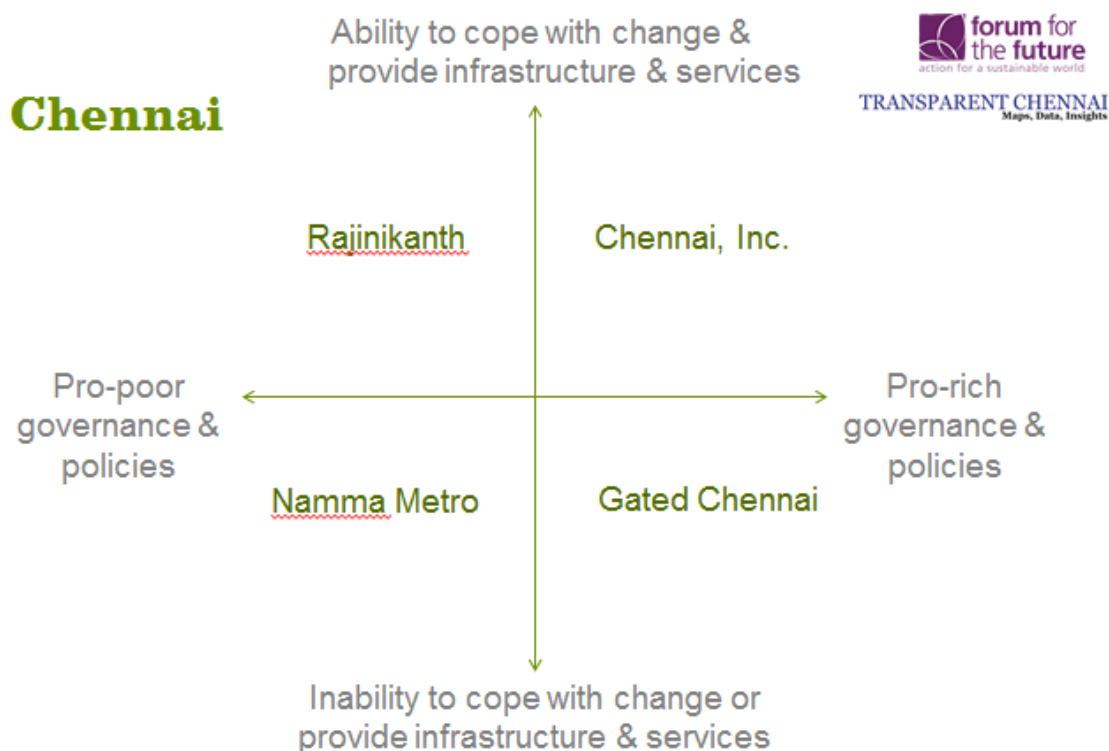
There are few social protections for informal workers. The efforts to extend social security to informal workers from 2012 to 2014 failed, and the coverage was too little to make any difference

to their livelihoods. Efforts to build collective action among informal workers have been consistently thwarted by the mafia, which has connections with government officials. There were networks of activists who tried to influence public policy for better protection and welfare for informal workers but their success was limited to a few cases; they were not able to scale up their advocacy work due to limited resources and capacities.

Due to the lack of policy advocacy, informal workers are still unable to retire. The government has long recognized the issues of aging society; in 2040, more than 30 percent of the Thai population is over 60. But the policies in the past three decades have only favored the aging middle-class; very little welfare is given to the poor and the informal when they do not have enough savings. And because the social fabric has drastically changed, there are limited social safety nets based on familial ties upon which they can rely. With little government and familial support, elderly people in the informal economy continue to work.

Find out how Bangkok's scenarios were developed [here](#).

3. Chennai scenarios



Chennai Inc.

Chennai Municipal Corporation has an excellent ability to cope with change and provide infrastructure and services, but its governance and policies are pro-rich.

In 2040, Chennai is a city much like Singapore was in 2013. The local government has been efficient and pro-rich. This means the answer to all its problems has been to hand the problem over to the private sector to solve. Alternatively, the response of the government since 2013 has been to stamp out all traces of informal sector.

Chennai Inc. is clean and efficient, but does not accommodate the informal city that was once an integral part of the economic and social fabric of Chennai. In 2025, the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board decided to evict all slum dwellers and raze the slums to the ground. The land, in prime areas of the city, was then auctioned off to builders and developers. Five years later, large shiny shopping malls and high-rise apartment buildings had replaced the slums.

In 2018, the government went on a cleanliness drive, banning the defacement of walls in public places, penalizing spitting and urination in public, and launching a heavy-handed crackdown on encroachers and pavement dwellers.

The local city government in 2040 is controlled by powerful business houses that have the power to pass policies that are pro-rich and pro-private business without much resistance. Waste and other service delivery items, and utilities, such as water and electricity, are privatized. Decision making about services, and service delivery, is quick and effective, but ignores any provision for

those who cannot afford to pay for those services. There is high-quality education and excellent health services, but these are privatized and very expensive—in other words out of reach of the poor.

Public spaces like parks and beaches can only be accessed by the rich, since one has to pay high entry fees. Chennai Inc. in 2040 has no place for the street vendors and hawkers of 2013. Roads have been widened—but for the sole use of automobiles—and Chennai has the dubious distinction of having a human-to-car ratio of 2:1!

Consumption has skyrocketed with a culture of disposability having caught on. Luckily for the city, 'zero-waste' became a trend in 2020. What could have led to mountains of garbage looming over the city became a boon for the now booming waste-exporting industry. Anything that can be recycled is sent offshore to countries with a large waste-recycling industry. While that is good for the environment in Chennai, it has had a detrimental affect on labour, taking jobs away from locals. The waste-pickers who made their living collecting recyclables and selling them to the informal recycling industry can no longer be found in the city.

The poor residents of the city have been forced to move to the outskirts, and commute into the city to provide services to the rich—as housemaids, cooks, and other domestic help. This is the only remaining form of interaction between the rich and the poor.

Gated Chennai

Chennai Municipal Corporation has a complete inability to cope with change and cannot provide infrastructure and services, and it has pro-rich governance and policies.

Chennai in 2040 is a city with an inefficient local government with pro-rich policies, which has been unable to deal with the growing city and the needs of its citizens. The rich live in luxurious gated colonies where all amenities and services are available to them for a price that is unaffordable for the rest of the city's residents. The population density in these areas is low compared to that in the low-income settlements.

The less privileged citizens of the city live in a few densely populated low-income settlements that are squalid, with piles of garbage along narrow unpaved streets and open drains with sewage flowing sluggishly through them. These are the few settlements that have survived the drive by the government in 2020 to evict the informal settlements from prime real estate. The prime lands that were recovered from these evictions, especially along the seacoast and the banks of the Cooum and Adyar rivers, have since been converted into fancy gated colonies. The evicted citizens protested but the government quelled the protest with an iron hand. The informal settlers were eventually forced to move to the outskirts of the city into matchbox tenements with no water or sanitation services and have been living there ever since. Land and housing in the city is prohibitively expensive for an ordinary citizen.

The unemployment rates are high and crime rates in the city are soaring. Exploitation of labour is rife and there is increased mechanisation of service provision. Personal relations suffer from the increased alienation of individuals and a reduction in socialising.

The government is autocratic and panders only to the needs of the rich. Unable to cope with the changing times, it has given free reign to private interests. Service provision for basic services has been privatized and is confined to gated colonies.

Open spaces outside of the gated colonies are few and those that exist are badly maintained. There are no public toilets to speak of and clean water is scarce. Private industries have established seawater desalination plants to provide water to the gated colonies.

The environment has suffered to a great extent due the government's inability to manage municipal solid waste, as well as hospital, hazardous, and electronic wastes. The Adyar and Cooum rivers have become mere drains for garbage and sewage, carrying the city's waste to the ocean. The Pallikarnai marshlands are now a mountain of garbage. Air quality has deteriorated to such an extent that in 2035, five years ago, the government officially recommended the use of facemasks for protection.

These conditions are leading to increasing health problems. The tragedy of the situation is that the health services are unable to cope. The government hospitals are understaffed, under-equipped, and badly run. Private hospitals exclusively cater to the rich.

Solid waste management services in gated communities are mechanized to a great extent, reducing the scope of waste pickers in the city. Waste is collected in compactor trucks and dumped outside the city. There is some recycling, with the gated communities selling some of their recyclables to the unregulated recycling industry.

Namma Metro

Chennai Municipal Corporation has a complete inability to cope with change and cannot provide infrastructure and services, but its governance and policies are pro-poor.

In the 2015 State Assembly elections, the unimaginable happened in Tamil Nadu. A radical leftist party rose to power with the slogan, "Tomorrow is ours and the nation is ours." In the subsequent elections, another shock awaited the Dravidian parties. After more than 30 years, an incumbent government returned to power—and has continued at the helm in Tamil Nadu ever since. This may be surprising to someone who faces the chaos of the city for the first time.

Before 2015, the main feature of politics here, no matter whether the AIADMK or the DMK was in power, was that the rich lined their pockets by influencing policies to their advantage. In 2015, that changed. The local government, in particular, gave a very distinct pro-poor push to urban policies. It changed its policies to provide infrastructure and services to those who had never had access to such services before. The only drawback being that the government was, and has continued to be, most inefficient.

Chennai has seen a huge increase in the number of slums and informal settlements in the city, with open spaces and parks turning into residential quarters to house the poor. In 2020, prior to the state elections, the government officially recognized and declared all slums in the city to be legal. In 2040, the city is dotted with numerous slums and high-rises. Even though open spaces are scarce, no evictions take place. Conditions in slums are quite poor since the government doesn't have the ability to provide for the increasing population.

There is extreme environmental degradation in the city as a result of poorly managed waste coupled with the impacts of climate change. By 2025, surface water was polluted beyond use. From 2030 onwards the government had to start rationing water to citizens at the rate of 4 pots per household, provided by the desalinization plants set up after 7 years of delay.

Health facilities are accessible by all, including the economically weaker sections of the population, but are not efficient. "So you can go to a public hospital, but the doctor will probably kill you." Ailments are commonly related to the high levels of water and air pollution. The effects of water-borne and vector-borne diseases have led to a loss in productive man-hours. The number of quacks has increased, as good quality healthcare is no longer in the reach of the poor. As a result, the infant and maternal mortality rates are at an all-time high.

Due to the inability of the government to cope with change, the informal sector has seen extensive growth, filling in where the government has failed or in sectors that remain beyond state regulation. The informal sector employs more than 50% of the workforce, with people changing roles according to the opportunities presented by a hapless government.

The solid waste management system has been decentralized, though the conditions of waste pickers has not improved very much since 2013. They have access to tradable waste but since the government does not insist on segregation at the household level, such access is not easy or hygienic.

Rajnikanth

Chennai Municipal Corporation has an excellent ability to cope with change and provide infrastructure and services and it has pro-poor governance and policies.

Chennai in 2040 is the best possible version of itself. It is a vision of what an efficient government that is committed to improving the lot of the poor can achieve in 27 years. What began this transformation of the city was the conception and implementation of a new type of housing called “Samathuvam”—which means “Equality.” This began as an in situ redevelopment of a slum in 2014. Through a consultative and participatory process under the current Rajiv Awas Yojana (a central government sponsored housing scheme for the urban poor), a plan was conceived for a slum area on the banks of the Cooum which provided for the coexistence of different economic and social strata of society with shared parks and shopping areas. The success of this program led to a revolution in urban attitudes and policies with the idea of “Samathuvam” dominating all action.

Today Chennai is a dream city. There are many high-rise buildings to accommodate the growing population, and the extent of the city limits has increased as well. Each neighborhood is self-sustaining—featuring gardens, community parks and vegetable patches. Wastewater management and sewage treatment were localized in 2020 and hence there are no pollutants emptying into the rivers or the ocean. After a massive cleanliness drive, which started in 2030, the Adyar and Cooum rivers are clean and flowing full. As a result, in 2035, ferries were introduced on the rivers as a means of transportation!

Wealth disparities are low and there is a high degree of economic equality. Caste discrimination has all but disappeared and there are no more arranged marriages. The government’s delivery of services is according to Service Level Agreements with little reason for citizens’ complaints. The government has also exited from the business of selling liquor, and there is a move towards total prohibition.

Law and order problems have been on a steady decline. There is very little domestic violence. The police and courts work well and are fair, accessible, and equitable. A Rapid Action Force attends to any minor law and order disturbances immediately.

In 2025, the government introduced universal healthcare with health insurance for all. Doctors and nurses are just a phone call away and hospitals are efficient and well-equipped.

A program was introduced in 2018 to provide free education to waste pickers simultaneously with a planned move to decentralize the management of solid waste. In conjunction with other welfare programs, this assisted the waste pickers in reinventing themselves as community waste managers. Today each household segregates their waste, whilst chutes and bins are provided to enable efficient collection services.

Primary and secondary school education is provided free of cost and is compulsory for all. As a result of governmental regulation and assistance introduced in 2030, higher education is affordable for everyone.

The downside to the efficiency of the government is that entrepreneurship has been on the decline and the private sector is less active. Chennai is no longer an attractive destination for private industries because the government no longer panders to them in the acquisition of land, or in circumventing guidelines and regulations, as is the practice elsewhere.

4. Lima scenarios



Solidaridad para avanzar (solidarity for progress)

Extensive participation and scarce resources

Summary

- The signs of over-exploitation of resources are obvious: poor soil quality, water and energy shortages, and a reduction of public space.
- To counter these problems in the absence of strong state institutions the population has self-organized. The state helps to strengthen these networks.
- Informality is a lifestyle but people are unsure of how to integrate it with existing mechanisms and institutions.

In 2040, the legacy of resource exploitation is a depleted Lima. But the resulting insecurity has been mitigated by a variety of solidarity-based ways to make a living, and community networks have been mobilized to provide necessary social services.

The city grew rapidly during the previous decades until conflicts began to arise from the over-exploitation of resources in the city, compounded by various natural disasters that further reduced their availability. But rather than leading to social collapse, this spurred people's capacity for self-help and solidarity. While social and economic divisions are still wide, the city has managed to revive the grassroots organizing and solidarity mechanisms of the past—now reinterpreted for 2040.

Innovations in social policy revolve around voluntary participation. Soup kitchens have resurfaced, as have cooperative businesses and the communal management of natural resources. The population organizes itself despite a lack of political power to supply what institutions are unable to provide although the small scale of these initiatives creates gaps among different groups according to their organizational capacity and access to resources. Community organizing that was once the domain of the informal sector is now associated with the state. Many previously informal mechanisms now provide vital goods and services—such as time banking, savings circles, and cooperatives.

Comunidad y riqueza (community and wealth)

Extensive participation and abundant resources

Summary

- Lima has expanded vertically and public spaces have multiplied.
- Large infrastructure construction has endowed the city with resources such as communications networks, environmental services, and improvement of its surrounding valleys.
- Civic participation and policymaking have been led by an organized middle class that leverages new communications technologies to promote its economic interests.

Technological innovations and infrastructure projects have enabled the rational management of key resources for the city. This has been possible due to an entrepreneurial and well organized middle class that supports democratic governance and policy continuity.

The citizens of Lima have achieved several decades of public policy continuity and have sought to solve their problems collectively, guided by a long term vision. This stability has brought economic growth, led to the consolidation of the middle class, and improved living standards. In spite of the different ideologies at play within Peruvian politics, the city of Lima has reached a consensus on key long-term policies to promote the common good and has embraced redistribution policies that have improved opportunities for everyone.

Growth has brought its own challenges but organized public participation has helped people find long-term solutions. Investment in various projects to adequately manage the city's resources has increased their availability. For example, investment in urban densification has increased the number of public spaces where people can gather and has improved housing standards. Irrigation technologies and water management have also improved. Lima's valleys have been able to develop using water transferred from other basins and though investment in desalination. Without a certain level of consensus, this infrastructure would not have been economically or politically possible.

The informal sector comprises a minor part of Lima's economy. The middle class is a consumer force and prefers investing in high-quality services. The city also receives many visitors. In this world, there have been frequent partnerships between small and large companies to form service chains that enable them to be competitive in an open economy. The government has encouraged this by using highly targeted incentives to promote the consolidation of service chains and a reduction in the costs of formalizing.

Aporta para el orden y sostenibilidad (chip in for order and sustainability)

Limited participation and abundant resources

Summary

- There are plenty of resources, managed rationally by the city, but the young and talented are leaving for other cities.
- Order and sustainability are the principal public goods—which citizens strive to maintain at any cost.
- There is a crackdown on informality through regulations and legislation. This raises the cost of doing business and impels talented people to move elsewhere.

Lima is an unequal and divided society that reduces conflicts through a group of strong institutions. There is still entrepreneurship and innovation, but little capacity for association in the aging city. Instead there is order, stability, and security.

Lima's inertial growth has not benefitted the majority of its citizens—most of whom live in vulnerable conditions. However, its valley ecosystems are stable and provide the main environmental services for the city. But the city has grown at a slow pace, and is no longer attracting talented young people or new companies at the same rate as other Peruvian cities that have invested in infrastructure and new opportunities for their residents. Lima's demographic trends were stable until the 2030s after which the population started aging, though it still retains a certain dynamism.

Lima remains the administrative hub of the country and tries to impose its model of order and control. It is one of the cities with the highest taxes in the region—raising revenue to finance strong institutions that provide legal stability and order but that are in the long run weakening Lima's potential. New businesses find it difficult to comply with Lima's strong regulations. The city has invested heavily in security and crime reduction at the expense of civil liberties.

Informality is strictly discouraged and its growth has slowed. The high cost of security and doing business are reducing the long-term growth potential for the city. The society is prone to authoritarianism and public participation in the city's affairs is minimal. However, the civil insecurity of the previous decades has been reduced.

Yo mismo soy para surgir (I can succeed on my own)

Limited participation and scarce resources

Summary

- Vital resources are controlled by private companies comprising an elite that also holds the political power. The masses are pacified with populist measures.
- Informality is associated with a precarious lifestyle but one in which everyone manages to take care of their own daily subsistence.
- Residents of the city pursue their individual wellbeing at the expense of the commons.

Limeños are individualists in this scenario. Resources are scarce and controlled by a few powerful groups. Institutional weakness favors an elite that controls the business of water and food distribution. Informality and populism are thriving.

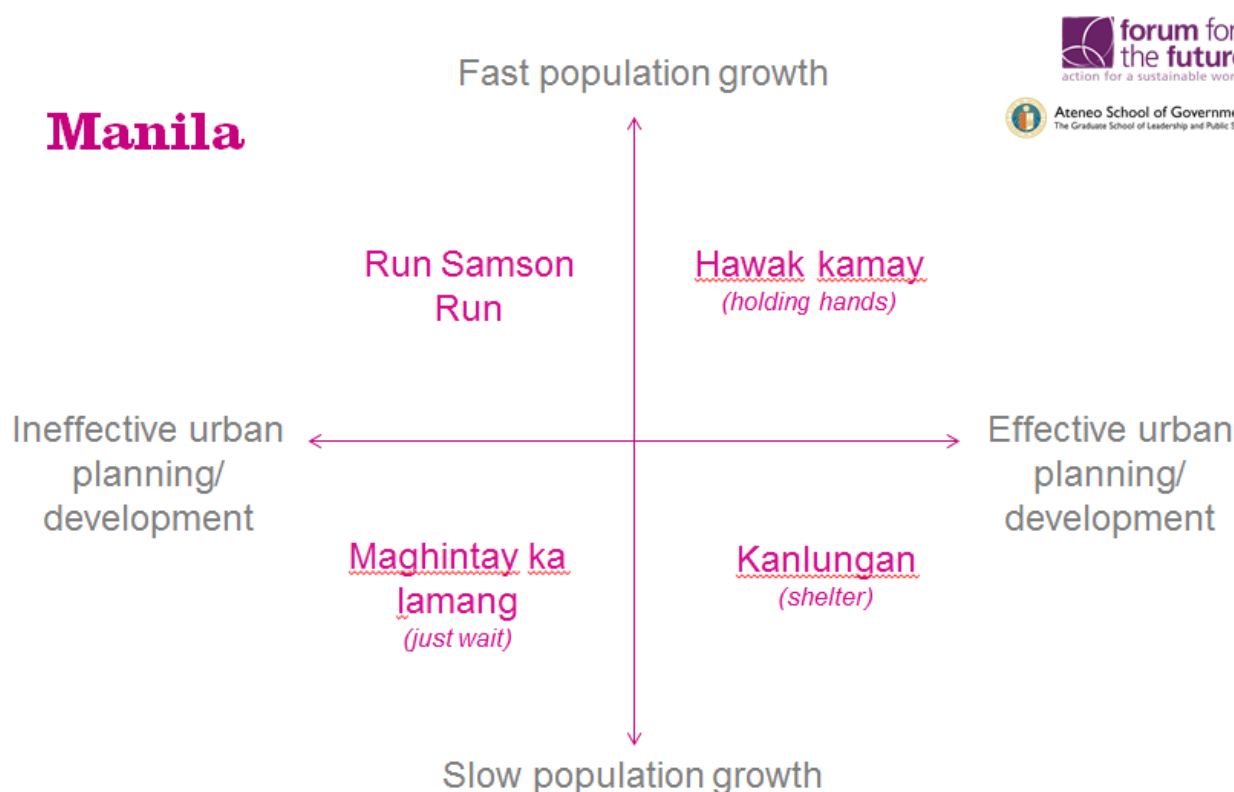
“I can succeed on my own” is the attitude of Lima’s citizens in a context of weak institutions and a fragmented and unequal society. An entrepreneurial attitude exists but it operates according to the law of the jungle, where visions of the present and the future are constantly in conflict. After a series of natural disasters reduced the availability of resources such as space, water, and food, access to them is increasingly a matter of having power, contacts, and means. Succeeding on one’s own means getting what I want, even if it also means stepping on somebody else’s toes.

Power is in the hands of those who have access to resources, which are scarce and expensive. The elites have been able to use their wealth to consolidate control over these resources. They also control the machinery of government in a city lacking in popular participation, using political favors and access to resources to obtain political support. This arrangement generates social conflict even though the elites are able to hold the fragmented society together.

Informality is a means to survive and earn money for goods and services. But it has also created an environment conducive to innovations to reduce the costs of accessing scarce resources. Black markets emerge along with other ways of accessing limited social resources such as education, health, water, sanitation, and employment. But the difficulty of accessing resources leads to a pervasive sense of insecurity in most of the population.

Find out how Lima’s scenarios were developed [here](#).

5. Manila scenarios



Kanlungan (shelter)

Slow population growth combined with effective urban planning and development

The song “Kanlungan” (Shelter) highlights the importance of retrieving the beauty of the past and the shelter that provides comfort and nurture.

Past efforts to align the rapid urbanization of cities with world standards and ensure its benefit to affected communities proved inefficient as policies regulating urbanization, such as relocation mechanisms, resulted in congested cities characterized by social inequality. However, by the end of the Aquino administration in 2016, the situation in urban areas had greatly improved due to the effective implementation of policies designed to address population issues and rapid urban development. Yet human and economic development, even at the incremental level, has tradeoffs that may offset the positive effects of development programs and efforts. In spite of this, hope is high that efforts initiated by the Aquino government will continue to pay off through an inclusive process of urban planning that reflects the convergence of perspectives from different sectors. At the grassroots level, people believe that, through proactive engagement, the achievement of an inclusive planning process will result in a strong and resilient Metro Manila beyond 2040.

It's 2040, and life in Metro Manila has improved. Life is comfortable and prosperous for most people for two reasons. First, population growth over the past few decades was kept to a minimum. During this time, the average population growth each year was only 1% to 1.25%, resulting in a current population of 16.4 million people. There are two causes of this slow population growth: the passage of the Reproductive Health Bill into law in 2012 and the improvement of the national education system. After initial opposition to the bill by some religious sects, the bill was finally signed into law and this enabled women to have easier access to contraceptives. Moreover, sex and sexuality education has been taught in high schools and has

introduced the youth to different family planning methods, making it easier for them to choose an appropriate method when they reached adulthood.

The second reason for the improvement of life in 2040 pertains to effective urban planning and development. This can be seen in the current year's low unemployment rate (8%) and the relatively small number (5%) of informal settlers in Metro Manila. Only 8% of the youth in informal settlements are non-high school graduates. Leadership changes after the Aquino administration did not destroy the initial reform initiatives, thus subsequent presidents were able to build on the previous administration's reform programs, such as the Conditional Cash Transfer Program, which provided cash to indigent families to support child education and maternal health. This program, in addition to others, was responsible for many improvements in the lives of the citizens—particularly in terms of education and health. Other aspects of effective urban planning and development that brought about progress included good governance and effective public management, utilization of available technology, and participatory planning.

The convergence of these drivers of change created the conditions in which the socio-economic needs of the community could be effectively met. In particular, improvements can be seen in the quality of life, the environment, public order and safety, and political participation and governance.

Quality of Life

Food security is no longer a problem due to the effective implementation of the government's "Farm to Market" program. Thus, only 8% of the population reports experiencing hunger. In terms of housing, informal settlers represent only 5% of the urban population—with all of them living in medium-rise buildings. Eviction has become a thing of the past due to the availability of government-assisted housing. More importantly, urban housing developments are characterized by green architecture that makes them energy-efficient and creates liveable communities. People with disabilities (PWDs) have benefitted from the development of road infrastructure with accessible sidewalks and walkways. The communities to which each citizen belongs are functioning and inclusive due to the fact that population remains constant. Good and stable livelihoods, with 8% or less unemployment, ensure that individuals need not go abroad to be able to send their children to school. Thus, families can stay together. Basic education is now accessible to most, if not all, citizens—and the dropout rate remains minimal. The improvement in the education system has reduced the preference for manual labor as individuals are more likely to engage in professional work due to specialization. With the increase in wages, people are given the opportunity to either spend or save, both of which enable money to circulate and stimulate the economy. Lastly, easy access to health services due to the creation of more health facilities has ensured a lower mortality rate.

Environment

The environment has also benefited from the interaction of the two drivers of change and now exhibits no serious air, water, or land pollution. The Clean Air Act is finally being strictly observed after years of poor implementation and the government has passed additional laws to make alternative energy more viable. Furthermore, the government is now utilizing modern technology to predict the possible occurrence of natural disasters. People are therefore in a better position to prepare for them compared to years ago, when urban dwellers were vulnerable to calamities. An information campaign has also increased awareness among both the public and private sectors of the availability of renewable energy sources such as solar and wind. This new knowledge enables them to come up with mechanisms to exploit new technologies appropriate to their needs, thus decreasing the carbon footprint of different sectors.

Public Order and Safety

Ordinary citizens no longer fear for their safety since public order is ensured by the authorities. The government cracked down on illegal organizations, making similar groups less likely to operate now. The penal system has been reformed and justice has been served to those who

deserve it. The crime rate in urban areas has decreased dramatically. Communities also enjoy a higher level of civility as an effect of education and public order.

Political Participation and Governance

This year has seen the consolidation of democracy as more people get to participate in the political stage. In previous years, the political landscape had been dominated by politicians with the socioeconomic capital needed to be able to join the exclusive group of political elites. But all that has changed for the better. Now, ordinary citizens are able to participate due to the improvement in their educational levels and this is manifested in their voting preferences. There is high voter turnout for every election, indicating that citizens are no longer politically apathetic. This also means that people are more vigilant about what is happening in the different branches of the government. Quality education and good governance are seen as correlated in that morally upright leaders will be put in office and engagement with a participatory civil society will result in heightened responsibility in envisioning the positive growth of the city. Elections serves as a mechanism through which government officials are constantly reminded that they are accountable to the collective will of the people. Thus, governance and public management is enhanced.

Although these conditions are meeting people's needs, things are far from perfect. The country faces an aging society due to slow population growth. The demands of economic growth act as a disincentive for citizens to have more children, as shown by countries that have experienced rapid economic growth in the past like Japan. This aging society threatens sustainable growth since it entails a decline in the potential labor force. There is also a fear that the new breed of urban dwellers may have a set of values far from what has been considered acceptable and desirable by society. With rapid modernization, foreign cultural elements have been incorporated into societal attitudes and behaviour, resulting in a breakdown in traditional Filipino values.

Another trade-off of this condition is the current higher standard of living that ordinary citizens find it difficult to cope with. Hence, out-migration to provinces and towns leads to a decrease in the potential labor force. In relation to this, the decrease in the number of city dwellers affects the service sector of the urban economy as fewer people avail themselves of services and that eventually leads to decreased income.

Nevertheless, the combination of slow population growth and effective urban planning are potent in ensuring an organized and prosperous community. This future is a shelter that offers respite to the politically and economically weary, and that reflects to a significant degree a system of governance in which citizen participation is integrated to achieve long-term development.

Hawak kamay (Holding hands)

Rapid population growth combined with effective urban planning and development

This is a story showing how people could work together despite a rapid increase in population and how effective urban planning and development could lead to inclusive growth.

It's May 2040, election time, and while listening to the lyrics of "Hawak Kamay," Seda, a young migrant from Mindanao, reads that Metro Manila is bursting at the seams with 23 million people due to the high rate (2.25%) of population growth.

Seda was a bit surprised with this statistic so she decided to get an updated Philippine History Book (published in 2038) and while reviewing it she can't help but smile because the EDSA she knows today is so much different from what she reads about the EDSA of 2013, when the road was chaotic and everyone seemed to complain of the poor public transport system. She can't even imagine it being so chaotic—not to mention the regular episodes of demolition and rallies of

informal settlers—and wonders she could have survived during that period of history. She even wonders about how one defines informal settlers. She can't imagine "slums" the way they are described in the book.

It's election time and she is reminded of what she heard on the news prior to reading the history book: that the main issue for ethical politicians is how to continue improving the city's already effective urban planning. They are all challenging one another to improve the city further and to come up with better disaster risk reduction innovations, in particular, because a big earthquake is expected.

Housing & Climate Change Resilient Infrastructure

Despite the current large population, housing is not an issue. Living in small spaces is the norm and because of the young labor force, everyone participates in making Manila more liveable, with abundant green spaces and garden walls. There is more public housing and it is seamlessly integrated with good pedestrian spaces, cycling networks, and public transportation. Housing and building infrastructure strictly follows disaster risk reduction and climate resiliency standards. Housing is more affordable, accessible, and safe—and almost everyone has security of tenure.

Governance and Social Issues

All children have access to basic education. People are more gender-sensitive and respectful of other's beliefs. Everyone is engaged in cultural and environmental activities. And this happened because the government was true to its word when it signed its declaration of human and people's rights. In fact, the declaration became one of the catalysts for the signing of the Asia Human Rights Declaration in the early 2000s.⁸ In 2020, even gay and lesbian marriage was legalized because of people's active participation. In fact, this policy became instrumental in keeping abandoned kids off the streets as many of them were adopted by gay and lesbian couples.

Seda smiles because she is very happy that the current high quality of governance and strong political leadership are bringing the necessary positive changes, including climate-resilient infrastructure. The leaders in office are all competent and a system of weeding out corruption has been put in place. There is also a Freedom of Information Bill⁹ that was enacted in 2014. The system is so good that she can't recall any incident where many Filipinos were affected when there was an earthquake or typhoon.

Food Security

Seda is very thankful for all the innovations in science and technology, in particular where food security is concerned. Even though she read in the news that the agricultural sector is having some problems due to the large population, new scientific developments are being utilized to address this. For example, the International Rice Research Institute has developed "scuba" rice, a strain that is resistant to the changing climate, and this has greatly helped the city. Moreover, no food is ever wasted since the government initiated a food miles program, or a system that all food is sold or donated to the community needing it.

Non-Renewable Energy and Inclusive Mobility

By 2030, non-renewable energy sources such as gasoline had become scarce. But this did not become a problem for the city due to the development of sustainable energy sources such as solar power. In fact, the city has not been dependent on any non-renewable energy source for the past five years. The passing of the Renewable Energy Act of 2008,¹⁰ with its implementing rules and regulations, is the catalyst that made this possible. Implementing the act was not easy but some

⁸ http://www.hurights.or.jp/archives/other_documents/section1/2001/11/the-human-and-peoples-rights-declaration-of-the-philippines-2001.html

⁹ <http://www.gov.ph/foi/>

¹⁰ <http://au.legalbusinessonline.com/law-firms/philippines-renewable-energy-act-of-2008/1076/34123>

communities were able to show a very good proof of concept and the rest followed. Initially, the price was prohibitive, but when a university demonstrated how it could be done, that was a turning point. A good example is the invention of the electric vehicles used as shuttles by many universities and private companies. For instance, for feeder modes, Ejeeps now run on solar power. And this was an innovation jointly developed by a university and the national government. There are now a number of urban transport modes serving all kinds of people, especially the vulnerable sector, the youth, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

Seda closes her book and smiles while listening to “Hawak Kamay”—and thanks those who were and are still part of the city’s development. She is happy because three decades later she is experiencing the outcome of better urban planning and development in Metro Manila. It is a planning system based on a triple bottom line approach: people first, planet earth or the environment second, and finally profits to create more jobs. And this makes her very confident about the results of this year’s election.

Maghintay ka lamang (Just wait)

Slow population growth combined with ineffective urban planning and development

This is a story about how people developed an “I don’t care” attitude towards the government, given the situation of a slow population growth and ineffective urban planning and development. The Filipino song “Maghintay Ka Lamang” (Just Wait) clearly depicts the fate of informal settlers in Metro Manila.

For a predominately Catholic society, the passage of the Reproductive Health (RH) Bill in the Philippines, initiated by President Benigno Aquino III, was a truly courageous act. After tensions between the government and the Catholic Church, the Senate finally passed the bill in December 2012. President Aquino, along with a number of congressmen, congresswomen, senators, NGO activists, business leaders, former presidents, cabinet members and former cabinet secretaries, faith leaders, academics, professional association leaders, housewives, and ordinary people—persevered to finally give the Filipino people, especially the poor, knowledge of and access to reproductive health through the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012. The bill, at its simplest, stated that women and men could “decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and have the information and means to carry out their decisions.”

It is fortunate that the two elected presidents after Aquino were both firm believers in and supporters of the RH Bill. This is also true of the newly elected president, who has focused on maintaining steady and slow population growth. The national government appointed the Department of Health to take the lead in the strict implementation and monitoring of the RH bill. Thus, for over three decades now, the RH bill has been implemented with firm monitoring mechanisms in place. This has resulted in slow and steady population growth of 1% to 1.25% per year. 30 years later, Manila’s population has increased by only 7%, from 11.5 million people in 2012 to 16.4 million at present. A huge portion of these 16.4 million people are senior citizens, aged 60 years old and above.

However, due to all the attention given to this bill, the government, specifically the local government units, neglected other aspects of governance. The Metro Manila Development Authority was abolished. Urban planning, along with the implementation and monitoring of laws and ordinances, was left to be managed independently by each city and municipality.

As a result, urban planning and development in Metro Manila have become totally ineffective. This combination of slow population growth with ineffective urban planning and development is odd. Although slow population growth seems to have a positive impact on people’s lives, in reality the absence of effective urban planning and development has resulted in community social disorder.

The year is 2040 and with a relatively small population, Metro Manila almost feels like it did in the 1960s—a time when people were more laid back. However, because of ineffective urban planning and development, the number of poor informal settlers is still high and the city is still crowded. Local migrants have no choice but to live in makeshift houses adjacent to big subdivisions. The government, through the local government units, has tried its best to address the major physical, social, economic, institutional, and environmental problems that Metro Manila faces, but for the people their best is just not good enough.

Housing

Way back in 2010, through consultations with local engineers and architects, the government tried to address the housing problem related to informal settlements in Metro Manila by constructing medium-rise buildings (MRBs) in some of its key cities. Communities situated in danger zones and big commercial areas were moved to different relocation areas, but people went back to the city to squat on idle land due to the availability there of basic services like potable water, electricity connections, and transportation to their places of work.

This was the case with Larry, a migrant from the Visayas who came to Manila in the late 1980s. His family was relocated outside of Metro Manila in an area from which it would take him two hours to travel one-way to his workplace and would cost him ₱120 (\$3) for the roundtrip fare each day. For a laborer earning the minimum wage of ₱250 (\$6.25) per day, such a high transportation cost has a major impact on his household budget. In 2012, Larry's informal settlement was selected to become part of the government's resettlement project. Larry and his family were then relocated to an in-city relocation site. Together with their neighbors they eagerly welcomed this opportunity. The relocation site was well-equipped with basic services and facilities that a community would need, including potable water and electricity connections—and, nearby, an elementary and high school, a health center and a barangay headquarters to respond to safety and security issues.

However, after a year, Larry and the rest of the residents of the MRB realized that they were still confronted with major problems in multiple dimensions: social (disturbances to peace and order due to drug and alcohol-related incidents); physical (a flimsy building that felt vulnerable to tremors, narrow hallways and alleys, no open space for recreation); economic (no livelihood opportunities for unemployed residents); institutional (an unresponsive city government); and environmental (no community disaster risk reduction management system). To address the lack of effective government regulations, Larry believes that the residents can only depend on each other in looking for solutions to their community problems. In 2014, he spearheaded their very first community Homeowner's Association. For Larry and his neighbors, if had only been consulted and were part of the planning process before these MRBs were built, they felt that none of these problems would have existed. Larry claims that although government representatives did come to their community two years before the MRBs were constructed, it was only to inform them of the government's plans—not to consult them.

Economy

Given the slow rate of population growth, the proportion of the elderly is increasing, which is causing the labor force to age. As a result, local businesses are starting to outsource work to the younger labor force from neighboring Asian countries and businesses are controlled by foreign investors. Hence, 50% of the total population of workers from informal households in Metro Manila is unemployed. This economic effect has trickled down to the household level. The elderly, who comprise the largest percentage of Manila's population, are now engaging in informal small-scale livelihoods, such as street vending, to help support their families. The profit from these kinds of informal livelihood engagements is not enough to make ends meet for a family of four. As a result, the younger generation has no choice but to help out with these informal ventures rather than concentrating on their studies full time. Increasing informal employment among senior citizens and minors is one of the major issues that the Department of Labor and Employment is currently facing.

Education

With slow population growth, access to basic education is theoretically available to all. However, the school dropout rate, even as early as in primary school, is still high, caused by the high unemployment rate of parents. The number of out-of-school children and youth has increased and the literacy rate has dropped. To address this, in 2030, the Department of Education (DepEd), in partnership with local government units, NGOs, and the private sector, initiated and set up an Alternative Non-Formal Education Program (ANFEP) that caters to students from both the younger and older generations from informal cities in Metro Manila that cannot afford the cost of formal schooling. The set up of ANFEP is community based. As mandated by the DepEd, each barangay should have a one-story building with three rooms: one for senior citizen enrollees, one for youth enrollees, and one that serves as their computer/library room. DepEd trained retired university teachers who volunteered to manage ANFEP schools. Unlike formal schools, the ANFEP has only three school days per week because the objective of the program is to teach basic reading and writing skills. The people in the community willingly participated in this endeavor, now in its tenth year. The local government units, however, have shown weakness in supporting the program due to ineffective urban planning and development. To date, only 744 out of 1,200 barangays in Metro Manila (or 62% as opposed to the target of 90%) have implemented the ANFEP.

Health

The Department of Health, in partnership with the local government, is extensively implementing the RH bill to keep population growth low. Aside from this, there are a number of proposed programs trying to meet the health needs of people from the poor communities of Metro Manila. However, because there are few employment opportunities for medical practitioners in Manila (specifically for doctors and nurses because private hospitals hire foreign medical practitioners from other countries in Asia), Filipino doctors and nurses opt to work abroad instead. Thus, government hospitals lack the ideal number of doctors and nurses, and the barangay health centers only have barangay health workers who are trained in basic first aid. The people in the barangays don't have access to the health services their families need.

Because of the increasing number of senior citizens, the Department of Health is enhancing its knowledge of geriatric medicine. The government has established nursing homes for the aging populace, even though it's contrary to Filipino cultural practices to care for elderly family members outside their homes. Given this reality, Filipinos have learned to cope with the kind of life the future is leading them towards as they age.

Environment and Climate Change

The Philippines continues to be vulnerable to natural disasters. In the past, Northern and Southern Luzon were the areas most frequently hit by typhoons and tropical storms. Due to climate change, in 2040, it is now the southern region (e.g. Mindanao) that is always hit by these storms. Manila, which is located in Northern Luzon, experiences very hot temperatures and drought. Access to water (potable or not) is scarce. This is a problem for people living in informal settlements with little or no access to water and electricity. Insufficient water supply is the major cause of illnesses in informal communities. Senior citizens and young children are particularly vulnerable to this menace. There is a high infant and child mortality rate due to the high incidence of diarrhea. Meanwhile, a large number of senior citizens died because of heart attacks and hypertension brought about by the heat wave that struck Metro Manila last year.

Because of the absence of proper local government regulations, Manila continues to be confronted with problems that informal communities face every day, such as high infant and adult mortality, unemployment, lack of decent housing, improper waste disposal, heavy traffic flow, illegal street vending, and informal water and electricity connections. People have seemingly accepted the situation they are in at the moment. They have accepted the fact that for poor people, living in informal settlements and engaging in informal livelihoods is inevitable. They are confronted with

life threatening problems but choose not to complain because they have developed an attitude of “walang pakialam” (“I don’t care”) or “maghintay ka lamang” (“just wait”). They don’t have long term plans; what matters most is their immediate future: what will they have for breakfast tomorrow and how to meet the essential needs of their family for the day.

Run Samson Run

Rapid population growth combined with ineffective urban planning and development

Run Samson is a story about the negative effects of rapid population growth coupled with ineffective urban planning and development.

It’s 2040 and the quality of life in Metro Manila has reached its poorest state. With a 2.25% annual growth rate, the population has grown to approximately 23 million. Many areas are in poor physical and environmental condition: waterways and rivers are biologically dead, the supply of water and energy from public utilities is inadequate, and the number and quality of open public spaces is declining. Development is mostly unplanned and uncontrolled. Socioeconomic conditions are worsening: hunger; a lack of employment opportunities; an increasing number of street children, juvenile delinquents, and young women forced into prostitution to meet the daily needs of their families; and a high crime rate. The incidence of poverty is high and there is a general lack of access to government services. In the past two decades, Manila has also experienced a decrease in foreign investors and tourists that has led to job losses and lower GDP.

The undesirable state of the communities has created distrust in people towards the government. The programs and projects being implemented are piecemeal approaches without clear purpose and do not address the real concerns of cities. The focus of governance is more on addressing current problems without examining the root causes and the effects of government decisions and actions.

2040 has been a turning point for Metro Manilans, though. Following the recent national and local election citizens expect a better future for their region. With a renewed spirit of nationalism—and encouraged by moves by the newly elected government towards greater transparency, accountability, citizen participation, and good governance—many Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) have responded to the call of government to return, and to join with retired professionals in helping with the development of their cities and towns.

Urban Development and Food Security

A large percentage of the population is experiencing hunger. In the past three decades, the rapid conversion of agricultural lands surrounding the region has made the metropolis highly dependent on food supplied from provinces in the northernmost part of Luzon and Mindanao. However, the growing metropolitan centers near the remaining food producing provinces has become the primary market of the farmers, making food and other goods more expensive and irregular in supply in Manila.

Migration

The conflict in Mindanao and other areas of the country forced people to flee the area and migrate to metropolitan centers in the hope of finding a more peaceful community where they could start a new life. The story of many migrants in Metro Manila for decades has been the same. Many of their relatives who first came encouraged other relatives to migrate with the same thought of finding more livelihood opportunities. Manila has also served as staging point for professionals and skilled workers for work overseas. The trend of outmigration in Metro Manila during the last 20 years was also affected by threats due to terrorism and conflicts with China (related to territorial claims) and North Korea (related to nuclear weapons).

Population Control and Unemployment

The passage of the Reproductive Health Bill was remarkable in 2012. However, its implementation has been difficult due to the many factions in government, civil society, and religious groups. Moreover, many couples and even youths are not educated—or, if they are educated, are not practicing the right approach to family planning.

Metro Manila's young population poses a challenge in addressing the problems of unemployment and the provision of basic services. The unemployment rate has ballooned to 50%. Finding a job is difficult, especially for those without a degree or formal education.

Education and Labor

The full implementation of a K to12 program¹¹ in 2013 was supposed to enhance the competency and quality of the education available to the people of Manila. However, it was unable to cope with the rising cost of a “good education” over the past two decades. It has become a barrier for families, especially those who have five or more children going to school. Public schools continue to offer a poor quality education due to the inability of the government to provide and subsidize educational facilities.

Even though there exists a large number of licensed teachers, their qualifications, expertise and experiences do not meet the needs of the times. There have been fewer opportunities for continuing professional education of teachers. Moreover, the skills of the majority of labor force do not match the available opportunities. With a desire to help meet their daily family needs, more children are being forced to labor (e.g. selling goods on the street) and eventually dropping out of school.

Many of the families who have difficulty finding jobs are engaging in illegal activities, while others maintain their old approach of using several informal sources of income and businesses (household based) to meet their daily needs. Informal businesses still exist in many communities and for decades they have provided easy access to affordable goods and services in many areas of Metro Manila.

The people are still optimistic about the situation. They can see the opportunities afforded by the surplus manpower to strengthen local businesses and industries. Likewise, they believe that the practice of businesses prioritizing local residents in employment will be a good start and should be supported with the enactment of local policy. Moreover, innovative strategies are being designed to systematically link the different economic sectors (mostly secondary and tertiary sectors) of the city.

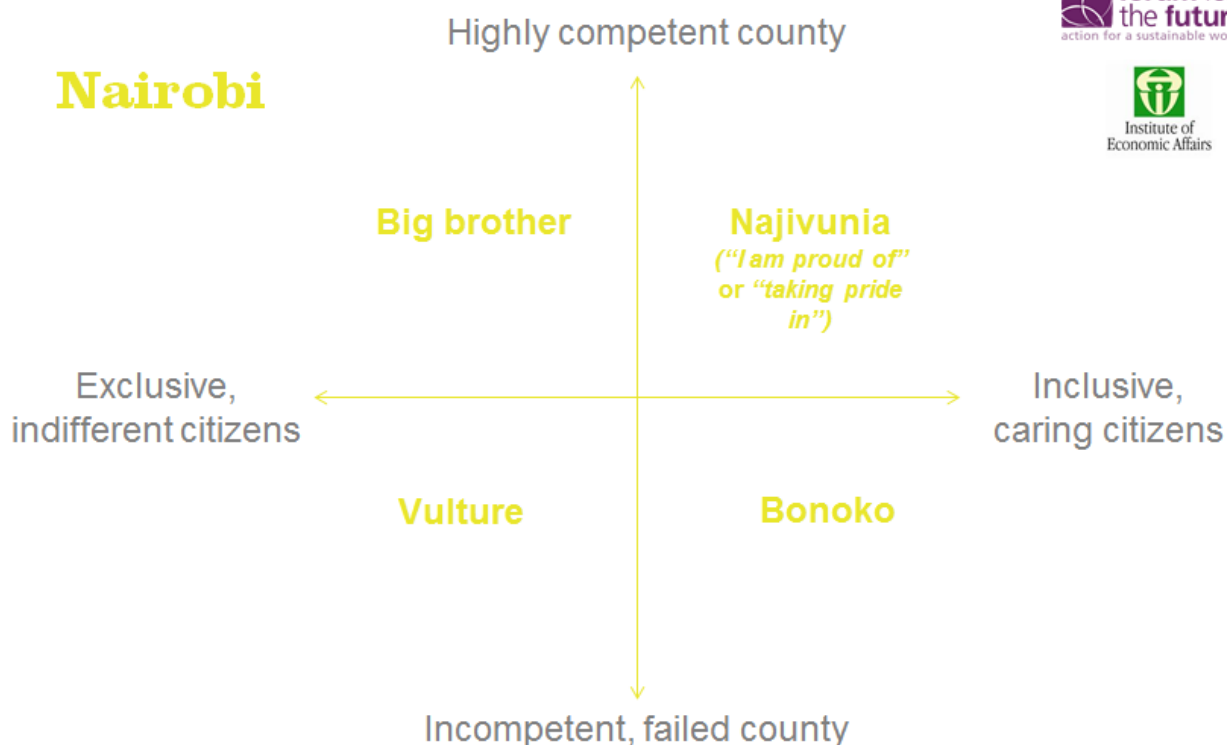
Housing and Climate Change

The housing program remains inadequate, with 15% of Metro Manila's population still considered to be informal settlers. Many are still living in esteros, riverbanks, and alluvial lands (*anak lupa*). These settlements are in high risk areas and are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, especially during disasters. With the city unprepared, there is always a great loss of life and damages to properties. Manila experienced 10 major floods between 2020 and 2030 that caused billions of dollars in damages and killed hundreds of people. The degenerating physical environment and the relocation of major businesses have caused the value of land to drop. Furthermore, there are already several areas deemed too dangerous for human habitation.

Find out how Manila's scenarios were developed [here](#).

¹¹ The K to 12 Program covers kindergarten and 12 years of basic education (six years of primary education, four years of junior high school, and two years of senior high school [SHS]) to provide sufficient time for mastery of concepts and skills, develop lifelong learners, and prepare graduates for tertiary education, middle-level skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship.

6. Nairobi scenarios



Najivunia

Najivunia is a Swahili word meaning "I am proud of" or "taking pride in." It reflects a city that many are proud to call home and whose residents work to ensure that all people can enjoy a good life there. This is the story of a city with a highly competent county government and caring and inclusive citizens.

People feel a sense of civic duty here and the government actively consults all stakeholders in policymaking and implementation. The middle class is active and engaged in the struggle to secure people's rights. Freedom of speech is respected. The city has embraced equal opportunity and has elected a woman as governor.

The city's infrastructure is adequate for human development and service provision is efficient. In those cases where public services are unable to meet demand, citizens come together to fill the gaps. Nairobi has high quality and affordable healthcare whose costs are shared between the government and the people.

Progressive policy on land tenure has seen most slums upgraded to better quality low-income housing and land is owned by the people who live on it. Settlements are denser but well organized and people have increased trust in the government's ability to properly plan and use land for the common good. Laws to regulate how much land one owns are enforced and the government has bought back extra land.

The cost of living is high and inequality still exists but there are controls that have narrowed the gap between rich and poor. Opportunities for self-employment abound and small and medium-sized enterprises, which are protected by the government, form the mainstay of the economy. This creates an atmosphere of creativity, innovation, and competition. Increased development in technology helps make the city a technological hub. The city's competitive edge is further

sharpened through its diverse skills base, a twenty-four hour economy, and cheap capital for investors.

The creative industry has become more formalized and better organized, with easy licensing procedures and designated places for business. The formal sector has opened up to the informal: for instance, street vendors are now allowed to sell their wares in the city but in compliance with clear regulations. Collaboration has made some informal systems more powerful, such as those in SMEs and technology.

There are instances of economic protectionism but this is only to ensure that local businesses are not disadvantaged by foreign ones. The East African Community (EAC) still exists but there is some disagreement regarding membership and the level of engagement, i.e. whether it should be purely economic or also political. Kenya is also a very strong player in the regional community, being a driving force in the African Union, and this dominance also contributes to the tensions.

Climate-related issues are being given increased attention as evidenced by the numerous studies on climate change, adaptation, and responses funded by the business community. This results in improved knowledge and capacity to address the challenges associated with climate change through such measures as the development of smart buildings that generate their own energy. The city has also embraced renewable energy with investments in both solar and geothermal energy.

Water is obtained from strategic reservoirs, new boreholes are no longer being drilled, and the city recycles most of its water. The national park is in good condition and the animal migration corridors and forests are well protected. The Nairobi River has been rehabilitated and protected, providing a suitable environment for both fishing and water sports—and the city pays other counties to ensure they don't pollute the river.

Physical security is enhanced through the use of proper lighting and surveillance cameras. Crime levels have dropped in tandem with decreasing inequality. People are generally optimistic but this is not a utopia. Still, although the journey to Najivunia City has been full of challenges, the residents are proud to call it their home.

Bonoko City

Bonoko is a reference to an incident where security agents planted a gun, or *bonoko*, on an innocent trader and then executed him in cold blood. A man who saw the whole incident was able to attest that the trader was innocent, earning himself the nickname *Bonoko* and becoming a symbol of a caring citizenry that fills the gaps produced by ineffective leadership and systems.

In Bonoko City, a cabal of wealthy individuals and corporations holds the government hostage to advance their own interests and frustrates relations between the government and the citizenry. Government plans are weak or non-existent in some sectors and stakeholder involvement is minimal. As a result there is a disconnect between the citizenry and the leadership of the city.

Public service provision has been privatized based on the premise of increased efficiency but those tasked do not deliver and corruption is growing by the day. The water and sewer systems are not properly maintained, causing old pipes to burst and contaminate the water sources—leading to warnings that the country might face a cholera epidemic. Despite these challenges, the residents still live with a certain level of dignity, as they are able self-organize to provide needed services affordably.

In response to a failed transport system, for example, the poor turn to *matatus* (14-seat vans used for public transport), a few form cooperatives and invest in buses; and others opt to carpool. While land ownership is difficult, community members join together to buy land and build affordable

housing. Cooperatives and investment groups (*chamas*) are used to save money and obtain loans. And to ensure security the citizenry contracts with private firms, resorts to community policing, or pays the youth in informal settlements to provide it.

Although fuel and energy costs are perpetually on the rise and green energy is too expensive, the number of people living on less than a dollar a day is at its lowest since independence. And the number of millionaires is on the increase.

The government is not only unable to cope with the high demand for service provision presented by the large population but it also lacks the will and capacity to expand its resource base. An increasing number of people refuse to pay taxes because they do not receive adequate services. The informal sector is blamed for losses in revenue and is subjected to stricter regulations.

As part of so-called beautification projects the government demolishes informal structures housing businesses in the Central Business District (CBD) and its environs, forcing entrepreneurs to relocate. A “hide and seek” game between the city council officer, police officers, and traders takes place in the CBD. Nevertheless, city residents flock to these areas in search of informal goods and services that are unique, affordable, and diverse.

For workers, the informal sector is no longer seen as a source of temporary employment for new entrants awaiting formal jobs or as a transitory stop for retirees or people who have been laid off but is now a preferred destination due to its flexibility and high profit margins. Young people in particular prefer flexible working hours and the majority hold at least two jobs. In addition, excessive regulation has made business formalization difficult and expensive.

There is a symbiotic relationship between the formal and the informal sector, wherein the informal sees the formal as a market for creative products while the formal uses the informal as a distribution channel.

Despite the impressive ability of residents to provide for themselves, life in the city is increasingly difficult and public protests are the norm. The people are also overwhelming the courts seeking redress for their grievances.

The strongest voices in this scenario are cartels, contractors, large corporations, foreign direct investors, cooperative movements, and the informal sector.

Vulture City

Vulture City results from a failed county government and indifferent residents who exclude others. The citizens are disengaged from the affairs of the city and only care about themselves and their immediate families.

In 2040, Vulture City is rife with gangs and vigilantes that seek to dominate different parts of the city, especially the informal ones. They control movement in and out of their strongholds and monopolize security services, water vending, and illegal electricity connections. Vulture businesses take advantage of the absence of strong county government regulation in order to exploit the public. The rule of law has failed and corruption and impunity thrive. Small arms circulate openly in Vulture City as individuals seek to protect themselves.

A high level of inequality and diminished trust in governmental leadership has led to a fraying of the social contract. Private firms no longer observe minimum wage requirements and other established workplace standards. The informal sector, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, is collapsing due to the high cost of doing business—and the large firms that remain are able to dictate prices with impunity. The cost of credit is high, which curtails entrepreneurship.

The economy is shrinking as both capital and labour move to other cities that provide better opportunities. Due to the lack of collective vision and leadership, residents—especially the poor—are reverting to their tribal and religious identities in search of security. The middle class and upper class have ensconced themselves in high-walled gated communities replete with privatized services such as shopping malls, borehole water, solar power and medical services on site. The high cost of living makes life difficult and Nairobi has become a place of survival for the fittest.

The flight of capital and labor means that the county government cannot raise sufficient resources to provide adequate services despite taking on additional debt. Poor sanitation in informal settlements leads to regular outbreaks of communicable diseases. Failure of the county government to respond to these crises leads to intervention by the national government, working with non-state actors, to provide health services. In a bid for control the county government seeks help from the police to suppress the emergence of gangs. However, while the use of force leads to deaths it does not stop the gangs, who enjoy public support.

People in Vulture City are innovative—but only when it comes to solving their daily problems. In other words, they innovate for survival. Street protests by the poor are common, as people can no longer bear the harshness of life in Nairobi. Politicians take advantage of this by offering lip service to gain political mileage. However, voter turnout for the general election is very low due to voter apathy and cynicism. The losers in the election seek to prevent their opponents from governing effectively and nearly bring to a halt the approval of county policies and budgets. In this city, those who have money are able to make it—while the rest live “one day at a time”.

The key actors in Vulture City are gang leaders, vigilante groups, apathetic citizens, inefficient and compromised county government officials, unscrupulous investors, and humanitarian agencies that try to fill the gap of failed government systems.

Big Brother City

The Big Brother scenario envisions a Nairobi that is characterized by highly competent city governance but uncaring and indifferent citizens who exclude others in their daily lives.

In Big Brother City, the government has the final say and an upper hand in all decisions. The city possesses functional infrastructure including roads, rail, water, sewerage, and effective waste management services. Social services such as healthcare, education, and sports are efficient and provided universally to all residents. Employment is readily available and the quality of political leadership is good. There is little corruption, meaning that the city can be run efficiently and citizens can rely on government services. Population growth is controlled and the majority of the population is old. Big Brother City has a low level of inequality due to a high degree of wage parity. The city is highly mechanized and largely secure. Multinational corporations find it investor-friendly and set up many of their regional businesses here.

There are problems, however. People have become hyper-individualistic in their lifestyles and intolerant of outsiders. Economic competition is moribund due to strong government control of the economy. The taxes levied on individuals and firms are excessive. The level of innovation is low due to the fact that the county government is the largest employer and there is little pressure for individuals to be creative. The cost of living is high compared to other cities in Kenya. The population is complacent and there is little public participation or debate about policy alternatives. The media is controlled and is careful to remain loyal to the ruling elite. People don't want to destabilize the government given its good delivery record so the culture of the city has become stagnant.

Although the political leadership is dominated by middle-aged and older males it is more inclusive at other levels of governance. Religion has assumed a low profile with a ‘Don't Ask, Don't Tell’ policy practiced in public life. Big Brother City is in constant conflict with the national government

as it demands its own space to operate. It also sees broad constitutional rights as an unnecessary interference to the city's independence and autonomy. The informal sector is considered ruinous to the image of the city and is withering.

The key actors in Big Brother City are the county government; business associations; and professional bodies representing fields such as law, engineering, and planning.

Find out how Nairobi's scenarios were developed [here](#).