

MARTIN MAGIDI

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



Research Interests

My research interests basically lie within the broad disciplines of Urban Studies/Urban Development. I however have special interests in areas like urbanization, (de)-industrialization, urban informality, urban livelihoods, small and informal entrepreneurship as well as issues around sustainable development.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE YOUR CURRENT PROJECT?

The urban populace, when confronted by serious socioeconomic, resort to numerous mechanisms and strategies in their utilization of urban space as they try to sustain their lives. This motivated to further how such housing/settlement-related innovations - with auto construction of informal settlements in mind - is a showcase of inventiveness, creativity and innovation and how planners can incorporate insights and ideas from informal 'auto constructors' in their actual planning as they strive to build creative, inclusive, innovative and sustainable cities.

"Planned rural settlements and economies are also likely to see lowering rural poverty, de-congest cities, as it can discourage rural-urban migration and encourage urban-rural movement as well as reducing the extreme inequalities that occur between cities and rural areas. As such, sustainability thus remains key in every planning if Africa and the rest of the developing world are to help themselves out of the numerous challenges that affect the regions today."

WHAT IS AFRICA'S BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

Africa is confronted by very numerous social and economic challenges. However, poverty is the most crippling and incapacitating of the continent's problems.

THELMA ARKO

**DOCTORAL FELLOW
UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY - INSTITUTE
FOR NATURAL RESOURCES IN AFRICA**



Research Interests

The demand of wood fuel/charcoal in Ghanaian cities has been increasing since 2008, and this trend is expected to continue. Current clean cooking solutions have focused on end-user initiatives such as promoting LPG use, the dissemination of improved clean-cooking stoves and briquette.

The environmental impacts caused by unregulated charcoal production continues to persist. My research looks at developing effective producer-end interventions that can shift charcoal production towards a more sustainable path and provide truly sustainable clean energy solutions for the urban poor.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE YOUR CURRENT PROJECT?

I have a special interest in energy, particular cooking energy due to its link to poverty and hunger. In addition to this, I am passionate about the special role women play and how they are greatly impacted by rising fuel prices and the limited availability of resources.

"Energy is very critical to development. Sustainable development of Africa cannot be achieved without sustainable supply of energy for all especially the urban poor."

WHAT IS AFRICA'S BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

Poor governance

DAVID OLIVIER

**POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW
UNIVERSITY OF WITWATERSRAND**



Research Interests

My interest is in water crisis communication and its influence on public behaviour. I look at the media of communications, the narratives and framings of crises, the agendas that the narratives serve and their impact on public perceptions of crises. My current case study is Cape Town's recent 'water crisis'.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE YOUR CURRENT PROJECT?

I chose my subject because I lived through the crisis and witnessed the conflicting narratives propounded by different stakeholders and the atmosphere of panic and mistrust that these engendered in society.

"I believe it is important to work on sustainability in Africa because Africa's rich heritage of culture and biodiversity may be irredeemably marred by unchecked economic growth or exploitation by powerholders."

WHAT IS AFRICA'S BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

I think Africa's biggest challenge now is to raise leaders who plan for the long-term welfare of the people and natural resources as well as the economies they oversee.

STELLA KWAMI

**DOCTORAL FELLOW
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**



Research Interests

My research interests include sustainable cities, urban ecology, environment, and development. I believe that urban cities need to be well planned to achieve development that will be sustainable and beneficial to all. Green spaces are of interest to me because they need to be actively planned for to improve the quality of life in cities and rural Africa.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE YOUR CURRENT PROJECT?

African countries are losing their green spaces to other land uses. The cost of development in most African countries is the loss of green spaces. Green spaces provide essential ecosystem services for all, promote general well-being, and improve mental health. Human beings need to be connected to nature. There is therefore the need to try and find solutions to the loss of green spaces. For example, making use of unique green spaces like cemeteries. Should cemeteries be well managed, and their vegetation preserved, they can serve as green spaces with multi-functional qualities, serving both the living and the dead. My project's objective is to find out the cultural and social values Ghanaians place on cemeteries and see how best to navigate around them to promote the use of cemeteries as green spaces.

"Africa is urbanizing and experiencing rapid population growth at a fast pace. This has implications for land use. Land is being utilized at a faster rate than the rate of population growth. Vegetation cover of many African countries is being lost, resulting in low density cities and urban sprawl. This is however not sustainable. The issues of sustainability; especially environmental sustainability, need to be addressed in order to promote quality of life and general well-being of all."

WHAT IS AFRICA'S BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

A lack of leadership and the will to enforce laws.

ALICIA FORTUIN

**DOCTORAL FELLOW
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**



Research Interests

My broad research interests include understanding socio-spatial inequality and injustices as it relates to urban land markets, the labour market as well as cultural identity, expression and belonging in cities in the global South.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE YOUR CURRENT PROJECT?

Cape town is an unequal city in many dimensions, at the same time, I know that work is becoming increasingly insecure, with high rates of graduate employment. I want to understand what the implications of these issues will be for a particular group of South Africa's population, specifically focusing on recent graduates and young professionals who are not necessarily middle class and come from struggling backgrounds.

"I believe it is important to work on sustainability in Africa because Africa's rich heritage of culture and biodiversity may be irredeemably marred by unchecked economic growth or exploitation by powerholders."

WHAT IS AFRICA'S BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

Forgetting who we are and where we come from.

VICTORIA WILSON

**DOCTORAL FELLOW
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**



Research Interests

Broadly, I have interests in informal settlements, migration, urban planning, sanitation, inner city development and sustainable development as well as the role of women in sustainable development.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE YOUR CURRENT PROJECT?

Rural urban migration remains a major challenge in developing countries presenting housing deficits and the development of informal housing settlements. These, coupled with inadequate planning by city authorities lead to social and health problems in those settlements. A critical area of attention is the nature and how these informal settlements spring up. I hope to contribute to knowledge by unearthing the nature and developments of such settlements to help provide information for efficient city authority planning.

"Addressing issues of sustainability are ways of mitigating some of these social and environmental issues which have already become developmental problems."

WHAT IS AFRICA'S BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

Africa has been hit by a host of challenges but the biggest among them, in my opinion, is weak institutions, in that institutions do not operate and deliver by their constitutionally given mandate, but rather are laden and drawn back by nepotism, corruption and over politicization. These have further generated other problems such as conflicts, growing poverty levels and high inequality on the continent.

JHONO BENNET

**DOCTORAL FELLOW
UNIVERSITY OF WITWATERSRAND**



Research Interests

My broad research interests are inter-sectional methods of design and research in African urban public space.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE YOUR CURRENT PROJECT?

To deepen and expand my understanding of design-based research that feeds into positive city-making for South African cities.

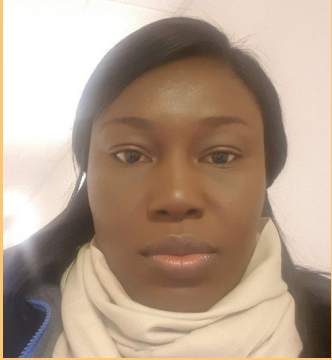
"It is crucial to work on issues surrounding sustainability as Africa is urbanising faster and in more complicated ways than northern/western cities ever did. We need our own ways of doing so."

WHAT IS AFRICA'S BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

To define its own identity of growth and 'development'.

GEORGETTE ATAKORAH

DOCTORAL FELLOW UNIVERSITY OF GHANA



Research Interests

I am interested in the relationship between people and their environment and exploring ways this interaction would be mutually beneficial, specifically in urban areas. My research is on Urban Sprawl and its consequences on sustainability in the Sekondi-Takoradi municipal area.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE YOUR CURRENT PROJECT?

Sekondi-Takoradi municipal area is also known as the oil city in Ghana. Since the discovery of oil in 2008, the city has experienced an influx of migrants in search of economic opportunities, coupled with natural population increase. The haphazard nature of the city's expansion has environmental and social consequences, and I am interested in finding ways through which the city can become sustainable.

"The interconnection between rural and urban areas is growing. The rapid rate of urbanization in Africa has implications on developments in rural areas. It is therefore important to foster linkages between the urban, peri-urban, and rural contexts. There is competition to use limited land resources for different uses such as conversion of agricultural lands for residential purposes, forest lands to agriculture and other commercial purposes, which in the long run affects livelihoods and degrades the environment."

WHAT IS AFRICA'S BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

Economic and social inequalities in health access, education, employment, housing, water, and sanitation as well as other basic social needs. These are continually widening because of increasing poverty levels on the continent.

DAINAH KINYA

**DOCTORAL FELLOW
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**



Research Interests

My research areas include urban poverty and vulnerability, land and housing rights, human settlements, slum development and prevention as well as participatory slum upgrading including development induced displacement/gentrification.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE YOUR CURRENT PROJECT?

I am motivated by the increasing segregation of the urban poor in development models and policies in African cities. As urbanisation expands in Africa, urbanisation of poverty is also becoming a very evident phenomenon, with growing numbers of populations living in informal settlements where they are not able to access housing infrastructure services such as water, sanitation, and services such as education. Working on this project will enable me to gain a deeper understanding on how urban systems function, their role in contributing to segregation, the relationship between the formal and the informal systems of the city and how the same can be harnessed to curb the growing social spatial inequalities.

"With the growing rate of urbanisation especially in developing countries, there is movement of people within urban and rural spaces. promoting sustainability within rural-urban landscapes creates environments that enable people to work and produce optimally for their wellbeing and for economic growth of nations both currently and in the future."

WHAT IS AFRICA'S BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

Spatial and social injustice that further propagate poverty and vulnerability.

EBENEZER AMANKWAA

**POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW
UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY - INSTITUTE FOR
NATURAL RESOURCES IN AFRICA**



Research Interests

My research focuses on urban issues and cuts across the fields of social, economic and development geography. In particular, I have contributed to academic and policy debates on housing and services; youth mobility and livelihoods; environmental management and public health; climate change and disaster preparedness, response and recovery; and governance, policy and planning.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE YOUR CURRENT PROJECT?

To investigate the issues of extreme weather events and the impact on infrastructure services, local economies, and ecosystems to be able to co-produce and co-implement mitigative and adaptive strategies with communities and relevant stakeholders

"There is a complex and continuous flow of interactions among materials, people and ideas that occur at the rural-urban interface. The urban landscape shapes and is being shaped by the rural, thereby making sustainability issues inherently embedded and essential to ensuring inclusivity and competitive advantage."

WHAT IS AFRICA'S BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

There is a weak link between agriculture, manufacturing, and services. Africa has not leveraged the technological and innovative advancements as well as the infrastructure investments needed to promote sustainable economies and inclusive societies. The formal and informal interface has to be integrated to foster inclusive development.

EDWIN OKONYO

DOCTORAL FELLOW UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI



Research Interests

My research interests focus on urban management and governance. A subject, which I initially explored in my master's thesis through a study of Customary tenure: 'opportunity' or 'obstacle' to urban land development? A case of Kisumu city, Kenya.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE YOUR CURRENT PROJECT?

Nairobi, like most cities in Africa, is urbanizing at a high pace. Urban researchers are often quick to point out that the city's extensive growth is mainly influenced by private needs of property owners and commercial interests of real estate developers, rather than long-term priorities of the society. The current project seeks to understand the Urban Sprawl Dynamics in Nairobi City Region i.e., where, when, how, and to what relative extent sprawl occurs in Nairobi City Region

"African cities continue to play a significant role in the development of each other. In this regard, therefore, the future of African economies will depend on the extent to which cities and their territories are governed and managed; ultimately to provide the basic services, infrastructure, and affordable housing for their expanding populations."

WHAT IS AFRICA'S BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

Effectively coping with the challenge of rapid urbanization; manifested by the ineffective urban planning and under-investment in infrastructure and services in medium-sized and small cities that host a majority of the urban population.