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# KENYA'S KONZA TECHNO CITY: UTOPIAN VISION MEETS SOCIAL REALITY

Amina Johari  
*SIT Study Abroad*

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# KENYA'S KONZA TECHNO CITY: UTOPIAN VISION MEETS SOCIAL REALITY

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Spring 2015

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## Abstract

This paper explores Kenya's ambitious Konza Technology City. In 2008 the Kenyan government unveiled its plan to construct a city from scratch 60 kilometers outside of the nation's capital, Nairobi. Konza Technology City is a flagship project for Kenya Vision 2030, the country's development program covering the period 2008 to 2030. The new city is expected to relieve Nairobi of some of its traffic and overcrowding issues, and also support the country's growing technology sector. Konza City is just one of many proposed city plans all over sub-Saharan Africa reflecting a growing phenomenon. Due to the challenges many African cities are facing—around sanitation, overcrowding, and unplanned growth—many African countries, with the help of international investors, are planning to build new cities adjacent to larger existing urban centers to address some of these issues. These cities are branded as “smart” and “futuristic,” and provide leisure facilities, business opportunities and social amenities for their residents. However, while these project have gained a lot of excitement and support, there are many concerns over these plans. Critics argue in a part of the world where many people live on less than US\$2 a day, lack access to clean water, health facilities, and proper sanitation these cities will not lead to meaningful development and will serve only a small elite.

The project seeks to understand the expectations of residents near the Konza City site in Malili, Machakos Town and Old Konza Town as well as assess the impact this city will have on these communities. In addition this project examines key differences between community expectations and government and professional expectations for the project. Ten interviews were conducted over a month period in Malili, Machakos Town, Old Konza Town and Nairobi to gather information. The results show that lack of local involvement in the project has resulted in some key disconnects between community members and the government. In addition while many argue *information technology* has the potential to change the lives of Kenyan citizens, it remains unclear whether *Konza* will.

## Introduction

The second half of the 20th century saw an enormous growth in urbanization across the globe. In 1950, only one city—New York—could be classified as a ‘mega-city’ having a population of more than ten million inhabitants. Just 25 years later, the world had three mega-cities, and by 2000 that number rose to 17. Experts predict that by 2025, the world will be home to some 26 ‘mega cities’ and some of them will attain a new status as ‘meta cities’ with more than 20 million inhabitants. Although countries all over the globe have seen increases in the populations of their urban centers, the growth in both the number and size of cities has been particularly concentrated in the ‘global south.’

Countries all over the world, especially those outside of the Western world, have begun trying to address the growing needs of people living in overcrowded and unorganized cities. These plans in the developing world have also been seen as attempts to bring lagging regions into the modern world. In some cases countries have undertaken large city upgrading initiatives as in both Shanghai and Singapore. In other cases, the more dramatic solution of building entire cities from scratch has been chosen, as in the case of Dubai. These three cities are inspiration for what has been referred to as the “last development frontier,” sub-Saharan African cities. Africa’s urban population is growing rapidly. The growth of cities and urban areas in the 21st century is putting pressure on living standards contributing to a crushing cycle of poverty and crippling social problems. Many of Africa’s largest cities are in dilapidated condition and are buckling under the weight of growing populations and rapid urbanization rates.

Due to the challenges these cities are facing, many African countries, with the help of international investors, are planning to build new cities adjacent to larger existing urban centers. Often called satellite cities, they are designed to stop urban sprawl to the suburbs and to

supplement and aid the larger city's expansion. Often branded as “smart” and “futuristic,” these cities provide leisure facilities, business opportunities and social amenities like schools, medical centers, shopping malls, theaters and restaurants for their residents. Many focus on technology in an effort to provide the infrastructure needed to support the continent’s quickly growing information technology sector and to launch sub-Saharan Africa into the modern world.

The topic of this paper is one such city, Konza Technology City, a satellite city that has begun to be realized in Kenya. A flagship project for Kenya Vision 2030, the new city is expected to relieve Nairobi of some of its traffic and overcrowding issues, and also support the country’s growing technology sector.

While the Konza Technology City (Konza Techno City, KTC, Konza City, the Konza Project) plan and others like it have been championed by state leaders and supported by international organizations, there are concerns over the impact of such large development projects. There has long been a debate within the field of development over whether or not large scale projects—such as satellite cities—are the most effective approach to development. These top-down governmental projects, often supported by international organizations like the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund, require wholesale investments in roads, ports, agriculture, education, justice, finance and public health. The private sector certainly plays an important role in ‘big’ development, however, because of the scale of these projects they often require heavy involvement of government ministries in planning, funding, implementing and assessing results. ‘Big’ development projects typically seek to modernize institutions by importing methods and designs that are considered effective elsewhere, but may not fit local cultures or geographies. While large development projects have generally been favored by national governments and large international organizations, there is much criticism of this type of

development and its ability to improve the lives of those most in need, particularly in the African context. In contrast, ‘small’ development is less inspired by the transformational visions of entire countries and more by the material plight of individuals and groups. In ‘small’ development the entry point for change is not large-scale plans but rather local initiatives that tap into context-specific knowledge.<sup>1</sup> A core principle of ‘small’ development is sustainability, and the belief that initiatives should still be able to function when external support is withdrawn. Although state leaders argue that ‘big’ development plans to build satellite cities will improve the lives of many of their citizens, critics of such projects argue that in a part of the world where many people live on less than US\$2 a day, lack access to clean water, health facilities, and proper sanitation, futuristic technology-focused cities will serve only a small elite, magnifying an already deep divide in Africa between the haves and have-nots.

Despite the fact that many of these plans may never be fully realized, the efforts to achieve them will have profound effects on the lives and livelihoods of millions of people across the African continent. Indeed, actual construction of Konza City has yet to begin and its planning has already impacted the lives of local people. This paper begins with a brief discussion on some of the major concerns over the project and the objectives of this study. This is followed by a settings section describing the Konza City project location. This is followed by a literature review, which explores existing literature on some of the issues at play. This is followed by a description of the methodology used during my project and a discussion of the limitations of this study. The last few sections include a findings and analysis section, a conclusions sections and recommendations for further study.

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<sup>1</sup> Sophie Harman and David Williams, “International development in transition.” *The Royal Institute of International Affairs* (2014): 932.



## Statement of the Problem

Many question whether or not Konza City, given the state of poverty and inequality in the country, should really be a priority of the Kenyan government. These critics cite national statics on poverty, unemployment, education, health and inequality to support their argument. Here are some of the numbers: around 60% people in Kenya live below the poverty line (less than \$1.25 a day);<sup>2</sup> some 40% of the country remains unemployed<sup>3</sup>; access to education is extremely unequal across the country—an elite group of children attend world class schools while thousands lack basic school infrastructure and materials—and despite the educational disparities these children take the same national exams; infant and maternal mortality remain high at 48 per 1,000 and 488 per 100,000 live births respectively<sup>4</sup>; some 1.6 million Kenyans were living with HIV as of 2013, one of the biggest HIV/AIDS populations in the world<sup>5</sup>; and Kenya’s national Gini coefficient—a measure of inequality on a scale of 0, perfect equality, to 1, perfect inequality—is estimated at 0.445 and reflects a high level of inequality.<sup>6</sup>

These statics provide only a brief snapshot into the current state of poverty, education, health and inequality in the country. Critics of Konza City argue that the country has far bigger problems and if the project is to happen, valuable state resources will be redirected to the project when they would be better spent elsewhere. In addition these critics argue Konza City will only serve to deepen the divide between the well off and the poor and their access to education and social and health services. Thus not only will the project take away from other initiatives

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<sup>2</sup> Haradhan Mohajan, “Poverty and economic development of Kenya.” *International Journal of Information Technology and Business*. Munich Personal RePEc Archive paper no. 51072, (2013):72.

<sup>3</sup> “Unemployment and hopelessness among youth bad for the economy,” Standard Digital. Newspaper, 5 May 2013

<sup>4</sup> “Maternal Child Health.” The Partnership for Matern, Newborn & Child Health. 2011, 1.

<sup>5</sup> “HIV and AIDS in Kenya.” AVERTing HIV and AIDS. 2012.

<sup>6</sup> GNI Coefficient Kenya. Society for International Development. Accessed 26 March, 2015.

designed to improve the lives of many of Kenya's poor, these critics argue Konza City will also serve to further magnify the already deep divide in the country.

Another major concern over the Konza City plans is the impact the project will have on the local people. Many people have already had to give up their land to the government in order to form the 5,000 acre city site, but many more people are expected to be moved due to the 10 kilometer buffer zone surrounding the city site. How will these people be compensated when their homes are to be torn down? Will they end up benefiting at all? Will they even be able to afford to live in the new city or within the buffer zone? In addition, many community members have expressed excitement over the prospect of employment as a result of Konza City. But will these people be employed? How is the government planning to ensure that local people get the employment opportunities they have been promised? While most people would agree that the local communities who now find that they are home to the new city site should benefit in some way from the project what remains unclear is how these people will benefit and who will ensure that they do.

## **Objectives**

The broad objective of this project is to understand the existing plans and expectations of Konza City and to assess its purpose and significance. The specific objects are listed below:

1. Review existing plans for Konza Techno City.
2. Examine both the involvement of and impact on the local communities.
3. Compare local and government expectations for the Konza project.
4. Explore whether or not this is an appropriate developmental step for Kenya.

## Setting

The Konza City site is located 60 kilometers from the country's capital, Nairobi. The proposed plan has the city park located on 5,000 acres with a surrounding buffer zone of 10 kilometers which is marked for "controlled development." The area that makes up the city site, the 10 kilometer buffer zone as well as the surrounding area falls within three counties, Machakos, Makueni, and Kajiado.



Figure 1 Map of Kenya showing Konza City location

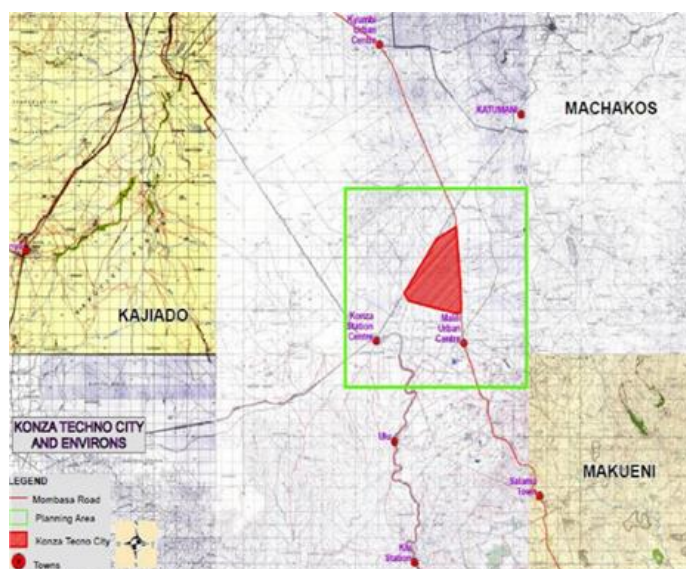


Figure 2 Map showing Konza City site and surrounding counties

The fact that the city site falls in or near these three counties has been a source of much confusion and conflict. Some newspaper articles have claimed that the city site falls within Machakos, others have claimed it falls within Makueni. Even government documents are in conflict with one another. Politicians have publicly fought over the issue due to the tax revenue that would be generated if the city fell within their county. While even residents in the area seem confused about where the city site exactly falls, most documents seem to say that north and east of the city site is in Machakos County, the city site, the immediate east and immediate south fall

under Makueni County and the area east of Konza Railway station falls under Kajiado County.

The climate of the area is semi-arid meaning the area receives little rainfall. As a result the ground is quite dry, and the area looks like a typical African bush scene, knee-high grass, and sparsely spread out shrubs. Wildlife like wildebeests, giraffe and antelope can be seen roaming and grazing. The major ethnic group in the area are the Kambas, a Bantu ethnic group who live east of Nairobi until Tsavo and north up to Embu. The land known as *Ukambani*, land of the Kamba people, constitutes three counties, Makueni, Kitui and Machakos. The Masaai are the dominant group in the area bordering Machakos on the other side of the railway in Kajiado. Kajiado County was initially occupied by only the Maasai people, but over the years many other tribes have moved into the area. The Masaai still have a strong presence in the area and can often be seen grazing their cattle in Malili, a small area near the city site. Given the dryness of the land, large scale agriculture is difficult and residents of the area primarily engage in subsistence farming growing crops like maize and beans, things that require less rain. In addition to farming, people in the area work odd jobs, whatever they can do to generate a little income. Often *jua kali* jobs, “in the hot sun,” or physical labor jobs. While most people have completed high school, few have received higher degrees.

Malili—the area closest to the city site—is seriously lacking in basic services. Residents do not have access to running water, health facilities, and there are only a couple of public primary schools and no public secondary schools. Besides the Mombasa-Nairobi highway, there are no paved roads. Residents of the area rely heavily on *boda bodas*, or motorcycle taxis, to travel from the main road to settlements in the area like the Old Konza Town, just 4 kilometers away from main road.

## Literature Review

### Infrastructure and 'Big Development'

In an article Harman and Williams argue that there is clear evidence recently of a shift in international development efforts towards 'big' development, noting that there has been a greater emphasis on infrastructure, a key element of 'big development.' The focus on infrastructure has been in both the classical sense of transport, public works and public utilities, but also in the modern sense of technology and communication. The authors argue that infrastructure has been a core component of development right from its origins, but starting in the mid-1980s its significance declined. The decline of these large-scale infrastructure projects was largely due to a concern over the impact on indigenous people and the environment. The authors claim these projects had, overall, pretty poor records in terms of sustainability and development and received much scrutiny from NGOs.

The shift back towards large scale infrastructure projects can be attributed to two things. First is the 21<sup>st</sup> century development of China which brought the country into the modern world. Much of China's development success has been attributed to the Chinese government's substantial investment in infrastructure.<sup>7</sup> Second is the shift in the World Bank's policies and priorities. The World Bank Group (the World Bank, the Bank) plays a significant role in shaping development thinking in the wider development community. The Bank formed in 1945 and makes leveraged loans to developing countries. It is the largest and most famous development bank in the world. The Bank sees infrastructure development as critical to reducing poverty and addressing broader development goals. Since 2003 the Bank has made a sustained effort to scale up its support for infrastructure. Between 2008 and 2011 the World Bank's regional lending for

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<sup>7</sup> Sophie Harman and David Williams, "International development in transition." *The Royal Institute of International Affairs* (2014): 935.

infrastructure projects reached US\$600 million per year and in total, the World Bank infrastructure commitments increased six fold between 2000 and 2010. Since 2003 infrastructure, comprising transport, water, energy and information and communications technology, has become the single largest business line for the World Bank, with US\$26 billion in commitments and investments in 2011 alone.<sup>8</sup>

The World Bank's focus on infrastructure was supported by former Bank President Robert Zoelick's emphasis on 'modernization.' During his time in office (2007 – 2012), Zoelick focused on the delivery of 'transformational projects' and in a speech given April 17, 2012 he said a key element of this transformation "is the development of infrastructure to boost future growth."<sup>9</sup> In a 2012 report *Transformation Through Infrastructure*, the Bank stated that "lack of access to basic infrastructure services continues to undermine living standards in low-income countries (LICs) and some middle-income countries (MICs)"<sup>10</sup> and that without infrastructure that supports green and inclusive growth "countries will not only find it harder to meet unmet basic needs, they will struggle to improve competitiveness."<sup>11</sup>

Konza City is undoubtedly an example of 'big development.' The project is largely focused on infrastructure in both the traditional sense and in the modern sense as Harman and Williams define. The World Bank is just one multilateral organization who is supporting and is eager to fund the Konza Project as well a number of other tech projects in developing countries. The Bank hopes Kenya's investment in its tech sector through the Konza project acts as a model

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<sup>8</sup> Sophie Harman and David Williams, "International development in transition." *The Royal Institute of International Affairs* (2014): 934.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid..

<sup>10</sup> *Transformation Through Infrastructure*. World Bank Group: Infrastructure Strategy Update, FY2012-2015. Accessed April 27, 2015: 1.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., forward.

for other countries to follow. While the renewed interest and investment in ‘big development’ is clear, old concerns over whether this type of development is most effective remain.

### **Information Technology in Kenya and the “Silicon Valley” Phenomenon**

Historically, investor interest in Africa has tended to focus on commodities such as the continent's gold, copper and diamond reserves. However recent, and tremendous, growth in the continent's technology sector has started to turn the heads of many investors. The 2013 McKinsey report illustrates the growth—and opportunity—that the internet offers for Africa between now and 2025. By 2025 more than 50 per cent of the population is projected to be connecting to the internet, e-commerce sales are projected to generate some US\$75 billion annually and internet contribution to GDP will be around US\$300 billion.<sup>12</sup>

In Kenya, the IT sector is booming. A huge amount of available bandwidth has opened up business opportunities within the country, and there is certainly an appetite within Kenya for technological innovation. New start-ups are regularly being launched in Kenya attempting to put the country at the forefront of the East African technology boom. A number of IT organizations have made significant contribution to improving business in Kenya and the lives of citizens, here are just a few of these organizations: MyOrder, a startup provides order management and tracking via SMS; iHub offers a free technological space to its 6,000 members to use equipment and share ideas with the aim of launching sustainable tech businesses into Kenya's growing ICT sector; Ushahidi, a non-profit tech company specializing in developing free and open source software, allows users to map and visualize anything from violence hotspots to healthcare facilities in any given country, it was initially developed to map reports of violence in Kenya

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<sup>12</sup> Elijah Bitange Ndemo, “Political Entrepreneurialism: Reflections of a Civil Servant on the Role of Political Institutions in Technology Innovation and Diffusion in Kenya.” *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development*, 4(1) (2015): 3.

after the post-election discord in early 2008; iCow helps farmers trace the reproductive cycles of their cows, also offering valuable tips on cow breeding, animal nutrition, milk production and gestation, it was the winner of the “Apps 4 Africa” award in 2010; and M-pesa—probably Kenya’s most famous example—is a mobile-phone based money transfer and micro financing service.

There is no doubt that Kenya has the *potential* to become an IT hub, however, many worry that Kenya might be getting ahead of itself in building Konza before its IT capabilities are ‘up to scratch.’ Critics of Konza City argue that while the city may be a brave attempt to revolutionize the sector, it should not be the first step. These critics argue that Kenya has not yet fully developed a solid skill base to support the city. Last year the Kenya ICT Board conducted the Julisha Monitoring and Evaluation Survey, and approximately a quarter of those who responded to the survey said that they were not satisfied with the quality of professionals produced by Kenyan universities and colleges.<sup>13</sup> In an article “Konza a Step Too Far” Karanja Macharia, co-founder and CEO of Mobile East Africa, was quoted saying Kenya should focus on producing tech “players” before it builds their “stadium.” Many worry that if Kenya’s lack of satisfaction with Kenyan ICT professionals continues, Konza will merely provide a base for multinational companies to hire foreign staff and repatriate any profits.

Part of the problem in Kenya is the lack of experienced faculty within the technological education system. Many capable teachers are drawn to the private sector where the pay is higher or they choose to leave the country and find jobs overseas. Since the government accepted the Konza City initiative there have been efforts to improve the quality of Kenya’s IT graduates. The Kenya ICT Board has joined forces with Carnegie Mellon University to design a definitive

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<sup>13</sup> Tom Jackson, “Kenya’s Konza Tech City: A Step Too Far?” *Ventures* (Nairobi, Kenya), July 23, 2012.



examination that will test graduating software developers on their practical capabilities. A new internationally-recognized certification will hopefully help Kenya avoid the example of India, which Philip Miller, of Carnegie Mellon, said had produced thousands of software developers that were simply not up to the job.

While the IT sector in Kenya is certainly growing, and there are efforts to improve the quality of the country's IT professionals, Ross Baird, the executive director at Village Capital and Rob Lalka the director of strategy and partnerships at Village Capital argue that trying to replicate the success of California's Silicon Valley is an unrealistic goal. Baird and Lalka argue leaders in government, business, and philanthropy across the world seem captivated by one question: "How do we make (name of city) the next Silicon Valley?"<sup>14</sup> This is certainly a question the Kenyan government has asked as the slogan for Konza City is "Where the African Silicon Savannah Begins." In a Forbes article they wrote that while cities everywhere want to become the launching pad for the next Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, or another one-in-a-billion-odds, multi-billion-dollar winner, replicating the success of the Silicon Valley is impossible. Baird and Lalka claim policymakers do the public a disservice by exalting Silicon Valley as the ultimate goal, especially in relation to development and job creation. They argue that while Silicon Valley-style companies create a ton of *wealth*, they rarely create *jobs* on a meaningful scale. They give the example of Instagram—which employed 12 people when Facebook acquired it for US\$1 billion—to prove their point. With so few winners of the "high tech lottery," large scale investment in IT cannot led to meaningful development because not many jobs are created and wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few—often already well off—people. In the end they argue that the "Silicon my City" approach will not work and instead

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<sup>14</sup> Ross Baird and Rob Lalka, "Why Creating The Next Silicon Valley...Is The Wrong Goal" *Forbes*, July 16, 2014.

countries, cities, and communities need to leverage what they are already good at in order to solve real-world problems.

### **African Satellite Cities**

Because many of these satellite city projects have yet to materialize there has been little published academic writing concerning their plans. Watson, however, has managed to write a paper on the phenomenon of satellite cities in sub-Saharan Africa relying primarily on internet searching, examining and comparing the different city plans on the project websites. Her paper is a review of these plans from Ghana to Tanzania. Watson locates these plans within the larger discourse on urban form, “new urbanism,” “smart cities” and “eco-cities,” terms which have been used in promotion of these plans. Watson concludes her paper with an assessment of the impacts of these proposed plans and warns that there needs to be detailed research into these plans and how they will really serve those living in these various countries.

Watson argues that many of these plans are in response to Africa’s growing middle class who have a taste for modern environments that are clean, well serviced, and free of congestion, pollution and the “disorder” often characterizing existing cities. This new middle class provides a consumer market for goods and services and generates a demand for housing, public facilities and amenities, retail outlets and improved transport routes for growing car ownership. Despite the fact that the African middle class *is* growing, many remain cautious considering the purchasing power of someone who is part of the middle class may still be limited. For example, the African Development Bank describes the sub-Saharan middle class as those spending US\$ 2–20 a day, and the “upper middle class” as US\$ 10–20 a day spenders. Watson consequently points out that it is difficult to imagine how households with such minimal spending power can afford the luxury apartments, facilities, and entertainment complexes that are portrayed in these

“fantasy plans.” Similarly, in an article published in the Guardian, Graham argues that these cities brand bio-tech innovation, hi-tech transport infrastructure and opportunities for universities, things that at least half the population in sub-Saharan Africa does not engage with.<sup>15</sup> Watson ultimately concludes that these plans are economically driven and highlight the disconnect between property developers and the reality of the African market.<sup>16</sup>

In an article published in response to Watson’s article, Cain provides the on-the-ground perspective from Luanda, Angola, a “fantasy city” discussed by Watson that has developed beyond a dream and become a reality. In 2002, Angola emerged from a decade’s long civil war dating back to the 1960s. The conflict arrested economic development in the country but also caused an enormous shift of the population to cities. This, unsurprisingly, led to a huge demand for housing and basic services in the already overcrowded cities. Since 2002, the Angolan economy has grown almost tenfold, and as a result the county became one of China’s main interests on the continent. The Chinese saw the need for more housing and better services in Angolan cities and jumped on the opportunity to start building to meet the demand. What resulted were, as Cain and other have put it, a number of “ghost towns.”

One such town is Kilamba City which is alleged to have cost some US\$3.5 billion to construct. The project was completed in 2012 and included the construction of 750 apartment buildings, schools and more than 100 retail unites. The city was built to accommodate 160,000 people in 20,000 apartments ranging in cost from US\$120,000 to US\$200,000. However as of early 2013 these apartments remained largely empty and consequently the city was dubbed a “ghost town” by the international media. Cain argues that a lack of adequate assessment to

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<sup>15</sup> Gray Graham, “Too-smart cities? Why these visions of utopia need an urgent reality check.” *The Guardian*. Thursday March 13, 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Vanessa Watson, “African Urban Fantasies: Dreams or Nightmares?” *Environment and Urbanization* vol 26, no 1, SAGE (2013).

determine the affordability of land and housing markets resulted in an oversupply of high-end housing which—considering that most Angolans live on less than US\$2 a day—were unaffordable even for senior civil servants. The oversupply of high end housing forced the government to step in and allocate the bulk of its housing budget to subsidies to make the city affordable to civil servants. Cain concludes his article by asking whether, given what happened in Angola, this growing phenomenon in sub-Saharan Africa of building satellite cities is financially sustainable.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Inspiration Behind these Plans**

According to the existing literature, a few cities are acting as the inspiration behind many of these plans. The three main cities are Shanghai, Singapore, and Dubai. The rebuilding of Shanghai which began in 1991, is the topic of an article written by Li. Throughout the 1990s China's official media referred to Shanghai as the "head of the dragon" and Li argues the metaphor symbolized Shanghai's pivotal role in leading the Yangtze River Delta, the Yangtze River basin, and more broadly, China, into the 21st century. This was done through rapid economic growth and integration into the global economy after the Chinese Open Door Policy. Since the process of upgrading Shanghai began, the city has experienced rapid improvements to infrastructure and substantial improvements in the living conditions of its people. Pudong, a financial district on the east side of China was seen as the main force pulling China into the future and Li argues is the most visible testimony of China's quest for power and prosperity in the 21st century. The area, which has earned the nickname "China's Manhattan" boasts 140 skyscrapers and over 500 foreign and Chinese banks, insurance companies, and other financial institutions. Li writes that what took Manhattan more than a century to achieve new Shanghai

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<sup>17</sup> Allan Cain, "African Urban Fantasies: Past Lessons and Emerging Realities." *Environment and Urbanization* SAGE (2014).

has managed to accomplish in little more than a decade. Much of Shanghai's urban improvements can be attributed to the top-down urban planning. In an article Sha argues this approach helped Shanghai avoid many of the problems associated with autonomous rapid urbanization, such as a lack of basic infrastructure, the proliferation of squatter settlements, and poor environmental quality which are common in other developing countries.<sup>18</sup>

The next city that is inspiring the creation of satellite city plans in sub-Saharan Africa is Singapore. Huang argues that by the 1920s Singapore had become a striking example of a plan-less modern city and by the end of World War II the city suffered from a number of urban problems characterizing developing cities such as severe residential overcrowding, dilapidated buildings, intricate and jumbled commercial, industrial and residential land usage, and traffic. All of that changed in the 1960s when the Chinese government announced that Singapore would strive to be the first developed city on the equatorial belt, a "first-world oasis in a third-world region," as former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew put it. The goal for new Singapore was for it to be a 'tropical city of excellence' with a new downtown, a hierarchy of decentralized commercial hubs, high-technology corridors, a world-class transport system, higher quality and a wider variety of housing and a host of cultural, leisure and recreational facilities, as well as a continued focus on conservation and heightened prominence given to emphasizing Singapore's 'island-ness.' Today Singapore is home to some 3.5 million people and is frequently listed as one of the world's best cities to live in. According to Huang a number of things can be contributed to Singapore's success, wise and farsighted leaders, hardworking people, and its city state status to name just a few. Huang argues equally important has been the comprehensive planning process of the city especially in light of its limited land and natural resources. Two of the most important

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<sup>18</sup> Cheng Li, "Reclaiming the "Head of the Dragon": Shanghai as China's Center for International Finance and Shipping." *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 28. (2013).

plans he contends were the Concept Plan of 1971 and the Revised Concept Plan of 1991.<sup>19</sup>

The last city that is inspiring the creation of satellite cities—and perhaps the newest ‘instant city’—is Dubai. Modern Dubai is the product of 20 years of intensive development and the city has captivated the world with record-setting skyscrapers, artificial islands, indoor ski slopes, and a stunningly diverse population. Some 96 percent of its population is foreign born, a number Brook points out makes New York’s 37 percent seem “mundane.” Much of Dubai’s success can be attributed to two main things. First, its geographic location which made Dubai the air hub of the Middle East and the financial hub of the Gulf in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As Brook put it, the locomotive built Daniel Burnham’s Chicago, the jetliner built Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed’s Dubai. Second, were two important policy reforms, one in the 1980s and one in the early 2000s. In the early 1980s, Sheikh Mohammed declared Jebel Ali port Dubai’s first “free zone.” This meant that beyond the borders of Jebel Ali, strict traditional Shariah law would still govern business relations but inside the new free zone, business could be done much as it was done in the West. This made foreign investment much more attractive to investors all over the world. The second policy reform occurred in 2002 when Sheikh Mohammed issued a land reform decree allowing foreigners to own real estate in Dubai. This was a first in any Gulf state and became an appealing opportunity to wealthy families in unstable countries nearby. With the unprecedented land reform in place, Dubai was put on global investors’ maps. Today Dubai has over 400 skyscrapers—including the world’s tallest building—and, perhaps not surprisingly considering it was built in a mere 20 years, 1 out of every 5 cranes in the world is in the city.<sup>20</sup>

Although not satellite cities themselves, these three cities have inspired politicians and

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<sup>19</sup> Shirlena Huang, “Planning for a Tropical City of Excellence: Urban Development Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” *Built Environment*, vol. 27, no. 2, (2001).

<sup>20</sup> Daniel Brook, *A History of Future Cities*. W. W. Norton & Company; 1 edition. (2014).

investors across sub-Saharan Africa to try and replicate their success in their own countries. However there are a number of key differences between these inspiration cities and places like Kenya. One important difference is geographic location. Shanghai is bound to the East China Sea, Singapore is located between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, and Dubai has for hundreds of years been a geographic crossroads where trade and commerce have interacted making it a transport hub of the middle east. All of these geographic advantages played an important role in the growth and overall success of these urban initiatives. The Konza City site has no real geographic advantage. Another important difference between the inspiration cities and the Konza City site is resources. Home to many rivers and lakes, Shanghai is known for its rich water resources, Singapore has the advantage of its natural harbor, and Dubai has valuable natural resources like oil. None of these resources can be found on the Konza City site. Another major concern is whether Kenya has the human capital to make the city as much of a success. Singapore, Shanghai and Dubai had a much larger and better educated work force than does Kenya. Thus given the important differences between the inspiration cities and the Kenya context, it remains questionable whether it will be possible to replicate their success. In addition many have asked whether or not countries should even want to replicate these cities. One commonly cited argument is the fact Dubai was built on the poorly paid labor of migrant workers. Consequently many argue following the Dubai model is unsustainable in terms of humanity.

Despite the criticism surrounding plans that aim to recreate the success of Shanghai, Singapore, and Dubai, in 2008 the Kenyan government unveiled the Nairobi 2030 Metro Strategy which aims to make Nairobi “a world class African metropolis.” The plan proposed 15 satellite cities which were aimed to redirect future population growth away from the “mother”

city and provide "... a wide range of lifestyle choices outside of work [which] will complement the envisaged business success of the region."<sup>21</sup> Konza City was one of these proposed cities.

### **Evolution of the Project and the Plans**

The first discussions on what would later turn to the Konza Techno City project began in 2006. The Konza City project has changed considerably since then. In 2008 the government of Kenya unveiled the first idea for Konza. Originally known as the Kenya Multimedia ICT Park (KMIP) the government of Kenya sought to build a 1,000 acre ICT Park near the Athi River Export Processing Zone just outside of Nairobi. The government wanted to exploit its emerging comparative advantage in low-cost band-width as well as foster Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) and a Business Processing Outsourcing (BPO) sector, something that had been particularly successful in places like India. Early discussions of the project thus primarily focused on developing BPOs. However as the government looked deeper into the existing IT sector they decided Kenya had the potential to do much more than just BPO. At this point the government embarked on a mission to create an environment that would foster collaboration and connect the isolated IT incubation hubs in Nairobi to one another.

In 2009 the government of Kenya hired the International Finance Corporation, a member of the World Bank Group, to evaluate the feasibility of private participation in the development of the ICT Park at Athi River, and, to assist government of Kenya to select a private developer partner. The IFC led a team for the feasibility study and business case for the park, including demand, master plan, infrastructure, and legal special economic zone considerations.

In early 2010 the project changed significantly when the Ministry of Information and

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<sup>21</sup> *Nairobi 2030 Metro Strategy*. Government of the Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Nairobi Metropolitan Development. 2008, xii.



Communications of Kenya (MIC) purchased the 5,000 acre Konza green-field site 60 km south of Nairobi, the current city site. Because the green-field was a considerable distance from Nairobi, the KIMP plan could no longer be viable unless it was integrated into the long-term development of a full-fledged new city of about 200,000 people. Thus the government of Kenya rebranded the project as Konza Technology City (KTC) in 2009. At this point the IFC shifted the feasibility study to the new site and conducted visits with over 20 major developers in USA, Europe, Middle East, and India. It was decided at this time that the city should be designed for phased development in order to permit rapid growth while ensuring that physical amenities and infrastructure grew with the population's needs. KTC will thus be built in five phases and in order to help move the project along the MIC and the IFC decided to engage master partners to help realize the Konza City vision. The city is as a public-private partnership project meaning the government will play a minimal role, only developing the public infrastructure and regulatory guidelines, and the majority of funding will come from private investors. As a result much of the early building of the city will done by the government. The development of the Konza master plan will be monitored by Konza Technopolis Development Authority (KoTDA) who signed a 99-year lease with the government of Kenya. The KoTDA is fully owned by the government and has the authority to sublease parcels to developers, finance the building of the public infrastructure, and package incentives to attract investors.

Master Delivery Partner 1 (MDP1) was hired in August of 2012 and was brought on to help prepare a detailed business plan and physical master plan for Phase 1 which is supposed to be completed between 2014 and 2018. MDP1 was a multidisciplinary six-firm international team led by New York based firm HR&A. The other five firms were: SHoP Architects, an architecture and planning firm which created the conceptual design for Phase 1; Dalberg Global

Development Advisors, an international strategy consulting firm which advised on economic strategy, tenant outreach, and organizational strategy for the KoTDA; Center for Urban and Regional Planning, a Nairobi based physical planning firm which prepared the Local Physical Development Plan for Konza; OZ Architecture, a design firm which provided sustainability strategies for Konza; and Tetra Tech, an international engineer services firm which helped develop the infrastructure concepts for Konza.

When SHoP Architects was brought on to be part of MDP1 the firm took over the master plan after the Kenyan government rejected an earlier proposal by UK-based firm Pell Frischmann. These early plans designed by Pell Frischmann were rejected because they centered around a central business district and did not focus enough on other things the government wanted the city to incorporate like residential areas. One of the old master plans for the city is shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3 Earlier plan for KTC by Pell Frischmann

The Konza plans designed by SHoP Architects show that the city is going to be a mixed-use, high density walkable city. The master plan follows a “stitch” framework. This pattern is designed as a framework for the later growth of the city, which will be made up of crisscrossing horizontal and vertical bands. The east-west axis of Phase 1 includes a boulevard of green spaces with bridges over the wide motorway leading to Nairobi. The four initial north-south “bands” (Phase 1) will include, from east to west, an office band, a science and technology band, a

residential band and a university band. There will also be a park band between the office band and science and technology band.



Figure 4 SHoP Architects Master Plan



Figure 5 Phase 1

Below is a detailed plan for Phase 1, highlighting the different bands.

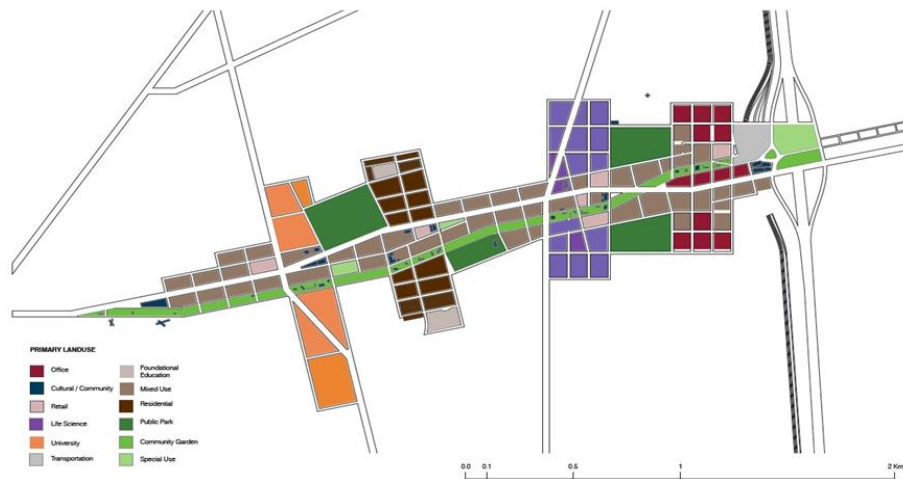


Figure 6 Map showing different bands in Phase 1

Below are some of the artistic designs put together by SHoP Architects of the entry plaza, the KTC pavilion that will be built at the plaza and the different bands.



Figure 7 Entry Plaza



Figure 8 Pavilion Entrance



Figure 9 Office Band



Figure 10 Science and Technology Band



Figure 11 Residential Band



Figure 12 University Band

In June 2014 Master Delivery Partner 2 (MDP2), Tetra Tech Inc., was hired to oversee the implementation of Phase 1. Tetra Tech is the lead firm of the MDP2 team comprising of ten other firms drawn from the USA, Germany, the Netherlands, the UAE and Kenya. The Phase 1 Master Plan will begin at the city sites core and will include 400 acres of initial real estate development. Phase 1 is expected to attract 30,000 residents, 7,500 knowledge workers, and 16,700 other workers and is to be completed by 2018. Figure 13 is a photo of where Phase 1 will be built within the city park.

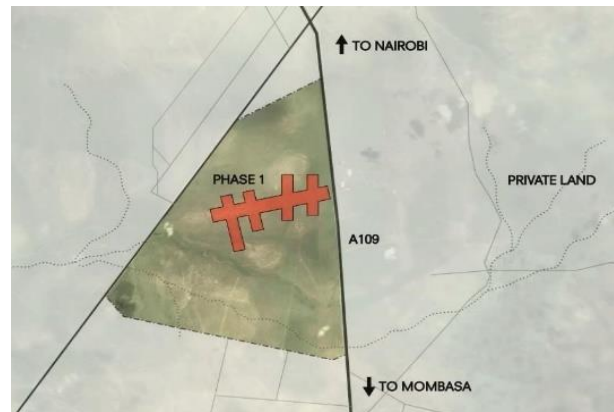


Figure 13 Phase 1 in City Site

## **Methodology**

This research project is a qualitative study and consisted of three methodologies. The first methodology used was archival research, reviewing some of the city plans and artistic drawings. Because meaningful construction of the city has yet to begin, these documents gave a sense of what the plans for the city are, what it will feature and what it is expected to look like. Archival research provided the background information of the Konza City plans and the foundation to this study. The second methodology used was observation and was used primarily during the period spent near the city site.

Interviews were used as the main methodology and were the primary source of information. Participation in this study was voluntary and there were no incentives offered to encourage people to take part. Two phases of interviews were conducted. The first phase of interviews consisted of seven formal and eight informal interviews with members of the communities surrounding the city site, Malili, Machakos Town and Old Konza Town. The second phase of interviews took place in Nairobi and focused on professional opinions on the Konza project. Three key informants were interviewed to provide the professional opinion of the project. Interviews were conducted in a variety of places so as to accommodate people's schedules. Some of the places included restaurants, businesses, markets, homes, soda shops and even a butchery. All formal interviews were conducted in English which was. A number of the informal interviews that took place near the city site were conducted in Kikamba. During these interviews a translator was used. All interviews—both formal and informal—were recorded with the participant's permission. None of the interviews were transcribed and each interview was guided based on a set of pre-prepared questions.

*Ethics*

Ethics were not a major concern for this project given that the topic was not particularly personal and the questions asked were not very intrusive. However steps were taken to ensure that participants felt comfortable. Each participant who was interviewed formally was given a consent form to sign stating the purpose of the project as well as their rights as a participant in the study. To ensure their consent, each interview began with a casual discussion of the consent form during which participants had an opportunity to ask any questions they wanted. The personal information of participants was not shared with anyone and in an effort to protect their anonymity, documents that would identify them have been stored and kept safely.

## **Limitations of the Study**

This study of Konza City was limited in a number of ways. One of the obvious limitations of this study was the fact that at this point meaningful construction of the city has not begun. Consequently artistic visions for the city plans and information found in government documents were relied on to get a sense of what the city will look like and what it will feature.

Another major constraint was time. In any research project time is a major limitation and unfortunately time formed many of the parameters to this study. The ISP period is extremely short, and due to time constraints a number of aspects to the study were not given as much attention as they deserved. Had time allowed, I would have liked to conduct more interviews with local people as well as talked to more key informants in Nairobi.

The last major constraint of this project was scheduling and getting people to interview. Organizing interviews with local residents proved very easy, however getting a hold of key informants in Nairobi was much harder. People were very busy and did not respond to their emails. If the ISP period was been longer I am sure it would have been easier for these people to find some time to schedule in an interview.

## **Findings and Analysis**

### **History of the Area and Government Purchase of City Site**

The area that makes up the city site, the buffer zone and the surrounding land was formerly occupied by white settlers. Because the land in the area is largely unproductive for agricultural purposes, the white settlers raised livestock, mostly sheep, goats and cattle. Between independence and the 1980s, however, many of these white settlers wanted to get rid of their large properties. These ranches were too large and too expensive for any one individual to purchase on their own, consequently people came together, formed societies and purchased these lands together. Members were required to buy shares to be a part of the societies and each society came up with a name for their ranch. The three main ranches in the area were the Konza Ranch (18,000 acres), the Malili Ranch (22,000 acres) and the Aimi ma Kilungu Ranch (18,000 acres). Only the Malili Ranch and the Konza Ranch either make up or border the city park. Each society was managed by a number of elected directors and land was held communally. These groups continued ranching as the white settlers had before them and for a while, things were profitable and members were paid their dividends on time. The ranches provided the Kenya Meat Commission, only 20 kilometers away, with meat and the Kenya Cooperative Creameries with milk.

Malili Ranch is mainly of interest as part of the former ranch now forms the city site. Malili Ranch Limited—as it is formally known—got its name in 1984 when it was purchased from a white settler by a group of farmers. Malili Ranch Limited, when it began, had seven directors, one auditor and one secretary overseeing the society of 2,347 shareholders. The original board of directors had been committed to making sure shareholders benefited. They purchased public utility land in Nairobi and built residential accommodations to lease out and



provide an extra source of income for members of the society..

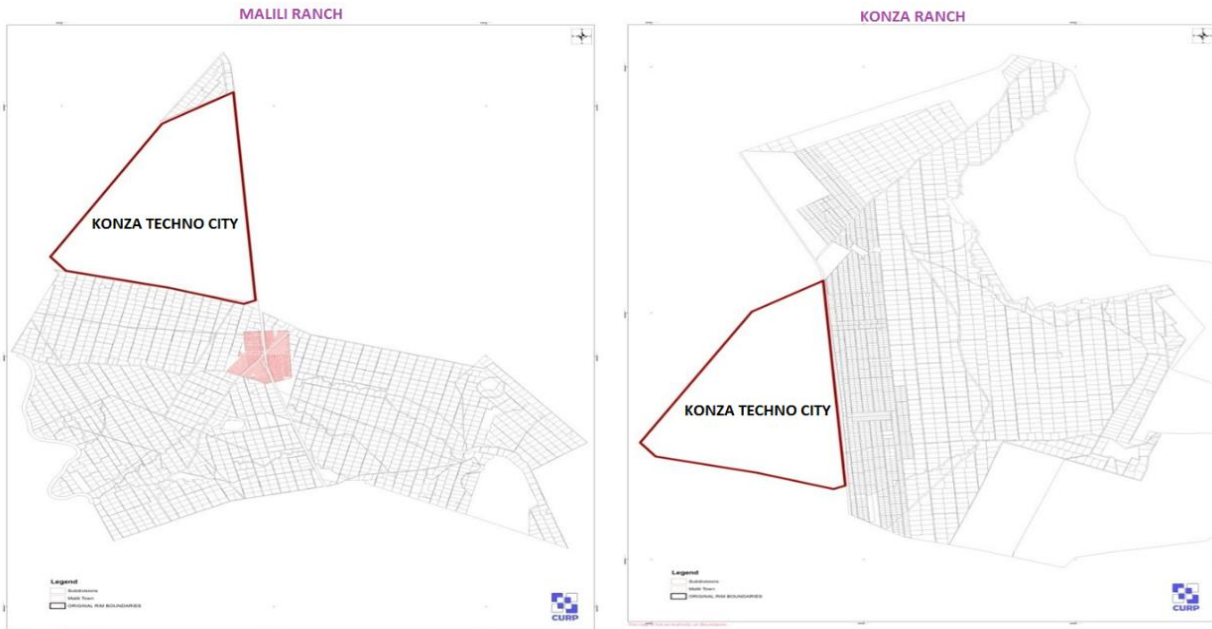


Figure 34 Malili and Konza Ranch

Starting in the 2000s shareholders began agitating for subdivision of the ranches. There were a number of reasons why but primarily it was because the Malili Ranch—as well as the other two in the area—started to struggle to make a profit due to mismanagement by each societies directors. This mismanagement largely began in 2005, when the original chairman of the Malili Ranch died and a new chairman along with new directors were appointed. In addition some shareholders wanted to sell their share of the land to outsiders who were interested in purchasing the land. Malili Ranch was subdivided in 2005 and in 2006 each of the 2347 members of the society was allocated a 7.8 acre plot of land for agricultural purposes as well as a plot of 50ft. by 100ft. for commercial use. In addition, parts of the former ranch were designated for public utilities such as schools, boreholes (wells) and roads. The commercial plots were located in the center of the former ranch in what is now known as Malili Shopping Center. Many people opted to sell their 7.8 acres, preferring to keep the cash over the small plot of land. Part of

the reason many people opted to sell was because polygamy is a common practice in the area and some felt that 7.8 acres could not be divided into reasonable sized plots for their wives and children. Consequently they opted to sell the land and either keep the cash or look for cheaper and larger plots of land elsewhere. Those who choose to hold onto their land were told to manage their 7.8 acres and develop their commercial plots.

The Malili Ranch society remained intact and the board of directors continued to oversee the group. In 2009 the Ministry of Information and Communications (MIC) of Kenya decided to purchase some of former Malili Ranch for the Konza Techno City Park. A deal was struck behind closed doors without the knowledge of the shareholders between the MIC and the seven directors who made up the board of the Malili Ranch society. The directors agreed that the land would be sold for Ksh 200,000 per acre. The government had a budget of Ksh 1 billion to procure the city site and Ksh 1 billion divided by Ksh 200,000 per acre came to 5,000 acres for the city site. The government decided where within the ranch's 22,000 acres the city site's 5,000 acres would be located, consequently only some—around 600—shareholders were forced to give up their 7.8 acre plots. The government purchased the land from the directors, and the directors in turn paid the affected shareholders. Shareholders were paid either Ksh 1.1 or Ksh 1.4 million, no one understands how those numbers came about.

At first, the shareholders who were forced to give up their 7.8 acre plots were okay with the arrangement. When the society formed in 1984 each member was required to purchase 5 shares each worth Ksh 1,000, so Ksh 5,000 in total. Because they had only paid Ksh 5,000 to acquire the 7.8 acre plot, Ksh 1.4 million or even Ksh 1.1 million seemed like a large sum of money. In addition many of the shareholders by 2009 were old men, many of whom were

illiterate and did not understand what their land was really worth.<sup>22</sup> Eventually as some of the details of the deal became known, largely through the media, these former shareholders realized that they should have received more money. They realized that if the government paid Ksh 200,000 per acre and each shareholder was forced to give up their 7.8 acre, each affected shareholder should have received Ksh 1.56 million, not the Ksh 1.1 million or Ksh 1.4 million they were originally paid. Today, those whose land was sold to make up the city park are very upset and feel that they were cheated out of money that was rightfully theirs.

In addition to those who feel as though they were not paid fully, the rest of the shareholders of Malili Ranch are wondering what happened to the 50 acres of public utility land that were located inside the park and that belonged to all members of the society. One man interviewed was a former shareholder of Malili Ranch and explained that while his 7.8 plot was not located inside the 5,000 acres he still feels like he deserves something for the 50 acres of public utility land. He claimed, however, that many shareholders do not want money for that land and instead would be interested in surrendering the 50 acres in return for some sort of stock in Konza City. A number of shareholders have pursued the issue and have brought a case to court to find out what happened to the extra money. Many shareholders suspect that the directors of the Malili Ranch know where the money went and they along with a number of government officials are being charged with fraud, theft and forgery.<sup>23</sup> At the moment the court case is still ongoing.

### **Comparing Local and Government Expectations**

Local people are eagerly anticipating the Konza City project. Their enthusiasm for the proposed city is matched by those currently working on the project. However while community

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<sup>22</sup> Participant 2, interview 4/17/15

<sup>23</sup> "Police indict Muthama, Bitange over Konza." Daily Nation. Newspaper, 25 April 2014.

members' excitement over the project is on par with those working on the project, there are some key differences between how the government and those working in the IT field view the project and how the local people view the project. What follows is a discussion of community expectations for the project as well as some of the contrasting government and professional opinions.

### *Local Knowledge on the Project and Official Perspectives*

Residents of the local communities Malili, Machakos, and Old Konza Town are aware of the Konza project. In fact, one might argue it would be difficult to find someone who has not, at least to some degree, heard of the project. People passing the city site on public transport look out of the windows of the *matatus* and chat to other passengers about the project. While everyone seems to have some knowledge about the Konza project and the proposed plan, residents' knowledge of the specifics of the project are limited. This is perhaps understandable considering there are no *real* concrete plans beyond the Konza vision and the artistic interpretations of the city. Members of the community were not consulted during the imagining of Konza City and are not updated regularly about the project's progress. A few interviewed people mentioned that they knew that meetings with representatives from the Konza Project took place around every four to five months depending on need, however, most felt that these meetings were not open to the public and were largely intended for the former shareholders of the Malili Ranch. Indeed, only one man had attended these meetings and he had been a shareholder of the Malili Ranch. With the exception of the man who attended the meetings, everyone interviewed said they received information about Konza City from the television and newspapers and relied on the media to get information about the project's progress.

During interviews local residents were asked to discuss what they thought the purpose of

the city was. Almost everyone mentioned two things, to boost the Kenyan economy and to create employment. One woman said the purpose of the city was to “put them [Kenya] on the world map.”<sup>24</sup> Another woman claimed that the purpose of Konza City was to boost the Kamba economy specifically. This was an interesting point and something mentioned in a few interviews. A number of people openly said or alluded to the fact that Konza City was an attempt to improve the lives of the *Kamba* people and as a result, it ‘belonged’ to the Kamba people. One woman said that the purpose of the city was to return “glory to Ukambani,”<sup>25</sup> or the Kamba land. One woman explained why she thought the city ‘belonged’ to the Kamba people. She said that many people in the Kamba community feel as though they have been left out of Kenya’s development. The Kamba make up the majority ethnic group in Makueni and Machakos and Machakos Town was the first administrative center for the British colony until the capital was moved in 1899 to Nairobi, Kikuyu land. The Kikuyu make up the largest ethnic group in Kenya and have largely dominated Kenyan politics, three of Kenya’s four presidents were Kikuyu. Many community members view Konza City as an attempt to bring the Kamba people back into the forefront of the Kenyan economy.

By contrast, the government and those working on the Konza project are very clear that this is a national project, not a project targeted specifically for the local community or the Kamba people. During one interview with a key informant the man said “there is one thing here that we need to understand...this is a *national* project.”<sup>26</sup> While members of the community seem largely positive about the project, the one area where people seemed to express their frustration was lack of community involvement. The general feeling amongst community members is that

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<sup>24</sup> Participant 5. Interview. Machakos Town, April 18, 2015.

<sup>25</sup> Participant 6. Interview. Machakos Town, April 18, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> Participant 8. Interview. Nairobi, May 5, 2015.

community involvement in the Konza project has been low if not nothing and everyone interviewed felt that the community should play a larger role in the imagining, planning, and process of making Konza City.

While members of the local community felt they had largely been left out of the project, one key informant argued that the government *had* engaged the community. He said the government “involved them throughout the process, because through their leaders they were part of the entire process, but you’ll never get 100% support.”<sup>27</sup> By leaders he meant the government representatives for the area such as members of parliament and other high up officials. Even though community members were not directly involved he seemed to think that the engagement of these leaders constituted “community involvement.” However even this key informant acknowledged the fact that many of these leaders did not have their constituent’s best interest in mind. He said “to be very honest, their leaders did bad things to them...because we came to discover later on that they lied<sup>28</sup> to most of the poor farmers.”<sup>29</sup> While one key informant felt that the community had been involved enough in the project, another key informant seemed to think that community frustration with their lack of involvement was valid. He said that up to this point the project has not really engaged the local community which is a problem because the government needs to in his words, “sell the project to them.”<sup>30</sup> Lack of community involvement is something he said the KoTDA office is trying to address and at the moment the office is developing a program that will aim to increase community involvement. The program—which should be up and running before July—will try to make local residents more involved in the project by bringing them together with stakeholders. While it is encouraging to hear that the

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<sup>27</sup> Participant 10. Interview. Nairobi, May 8, 2015.

<sup>28</sup> This was a reference to how the government acquired the land.

<sup>29</sup> Participant 10. Interview. Nairobi, May 5, 2015.

<sup>30</sup> Participant 8. Interview. Nairobi, May 5, 2015.

office is looking to engage the community more, members of the community will have to wait to see if that actually happens.

### *Expectations*

*“People have a lot of expectations for this park, they have a lot of it, they look at it and they feel that they will no longer be the same again.”<sup>31</sup>*

During interviews members of the community were asked to discuss their expectations for the project as well as what they thought the community expected out of the project. Unequivocally, community members expect one thing above everything else from the project: employment. Members of the community however, seem to have different opinions on what types of jobs local residents will be able to get. In one two-person interview one participant said, “we shall only provide the labor, so that is also development [laughter] we can provide labor, cheap labor” to which the second participant said “don’t talk about cheap labor, why should it be cheap?” The first participant responded by saying “it will be cheap because if we compare ourselves to New York, investors will run away.”<sup>32</sup> The exchange perhaps highlights some of the different employment expectations of those in the community.

A few participants described jobs that they said would be “in the city.” These jobs included being a teacher and working at a health center among others. Most people, however, described jobs that would *support* the city. One form of employment that was repeatedly mentioned as a job people in the community are expecting to get is jobs as tenders helping to build the city. Some local members of the community have already found employment assisting to build the fence that demarcates the city site as well as helping to dig the ten boreholes inside

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<sup>31</sup> Participant 2. Interview. Malili, April 17, 2015.

<sup>32</sup> Participant 1 & 2. Interview. Malili, April 17, 2015.

the park. The other main form of employment mentioned were agricultural jobs growing the food stuffs that would be needed to support the city. One man said that given the low level of education in the community, many people would find jobs as house helps, cooks and watchmen but that it was not realistic for members of the community to expect to get jobs requiring more skill. The majority of the people interviewed were aware of the fact that most members of the community had relatively low levels of education. Consequently most people expect that a fair amount of labor to be brought in from outside of the community. However while many people said they expected the city require a large amount of skilled labor from outside, especially in the beginning, many argued that as time goes on Kenyans would eventually make up the majority of the workforce in the professional sector.

Like members of the community, the government's number one expectation for the project is job creation and the government is aware that community expectations for employment are high. During one interview with a key informant it was brought up that the community is expecting employment to which the man smiled and said, "we know." He went on to say that the community should expect employment and that they will get employment. He said Those with low levels of education will likely get jobs as tenderers, or by providing food for residents once the city is built, and those with higher levels of education can look forward to getting jobs in the city. One key informant was able to shed light on what sort of education would be required by those working in Business Processing Outsourcing (BPO) jobs, a major focus of the city. He said that local residents could procure employment in the IT field because jobs in the BPO sector require basic skills and could be done by people with only a high school diploma. All a person really needs he said was English language skills, and only enough to provide customer service and handle complaints.



In addition to employment, many members of the community who own land within the 10 kilometer buffer zone hope to either expand businesses they already have or hope to start a business once the regulations and standards, as they put it, for the 10 kilometer buffer zone had been announced. One man interviewed operated a ‘hotel’ and butchery in Malili. At the minute both businesses function in non-permanent structures, but he said he and his wife are waiting to see the regulations and standards for the 10 kilometers before they upgraded to permanent structures. A few people interviewed expressed interest in starting agricultural businesses. At first this seemed strange given the history of the area and the fact that most people used words like “dry,” “idle” and “unproductive” to describe the land. The government, however, is planning to provide water and irrigate the 10 kilometer buffer zone by constructing a dam in Makueni County. Members of the community are relying on the dam—which will be called the Thwake Dam—to make the land more conducive for agricultural purposes and to provide the needed water for large scale agricultural activities. Construction of Thwake Dam, however, has stalled due to an issue over compensation for the people who will be displaced by the large project.<sup>33</sup> Until the dam is constructed community members are unable to start farming.

While many people are expecting to develop their plots of land and expand already existing businesses or start new ones, a major concern is the 10 kilometer buffer zone. The 10 kilometers is marked for ‘controlled’ development, meaning that while the government will not build in this area, it will decide the regulations for building. Some of the people interview

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<sup>33</sup> Similar to the acquiring of the city site, the dam has led to tension among community members in Makueni and the government. One woman interviewed said her family living in Makueni will be displaced as a result of the project. She estimated that there was around 100 families who will be displaced when construction of the dam begins. She explained that recently a surveyor went to evaluate how much affected families should be compensated. The surveyor valued the land at Ksh 60,000 per acre and when the leaders in the area heard this, they “brushed it off.” People in the community were unhappy because people recently displaced by the refurbishing of the railway were paid Ksh1million per acre and people in Lamu received Ksh 1.5 million. At the minute she said a new surveyor is being hired to reevaluate the land.

seemed worried about these regulations, while others did not seem too concerned. One man said that he expects the government to assist him to develop, fund and start his business. The man owns two plots of land within the 10 kilometers and said that many people who own land inside the buffer zone “don’t have the power or the money, to put whatever they [the government] want us to as per their standards.” Consequently he said he intends to “push them [the government] so that they may also help and assist us.” Later he added that, “they [the government] are telling us put up hotels, five class stars hotel, where do I get five class hotels? They tell me to do agriculture, modern agriculture, how will I do it and I don’t have the money. So they have to tell us where we get the money because we are to live here, within the 10 kilometer buffer zone”<sup>34</sup> While this man seemed confident that he would be able to get the government to assist him, other people were more skeptical.

According to the key informants interviewed, the government is not planning on helping people in the area find investors, however one informant said people should not worry because “land will be like gold, as far as Konza is concerned.”<sup>35</sup> He argued people would have no trouble finding investors themselves. In addition he said his office was encouraging people to work together and form partnerships and developing plots of land together. One woman living in Machakos Town said she was very happy when she found out that her share of the Konza Ranch was just outside the 10 kilometer buffer zone because she would not have to worry about building according to the government standards.

There is some confusion over the buffer zone. Community members seem to be expecting the government to publicize detailed regulations for the 10 kilometers, however the government plans to only *advise* individuals on how they might develop their land. One key informant gave

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<sup>34</sup> Participant 1. Interview. Malili, April 17, 2015.

<sup>35</sup> Participant 8. Interview. Nairobi, May 5, 2015.

the example that if someone had a plot of land next to the stadium, it may not make the most sense to construct residential housing. Instead it the government might encourage the individual to construct a hotel of some sort. There will of course be some regulations. Part of the purpose of the 10 kilometers is to avoid the development of slums, so non-permanent structures will not be allowed. But how detailed these regulations will be beyond that remains unclear.

Another frequently mentioned expectation of community members was improved infrastructure and services. All of the people interviewed mentioned that they expected the Konza Project would lead to improved roads in the area. In addition some mentioned better access to electricity and water for irrigation, and a number of people said they expected better schools and hospitals. At first, it seemed many people thought *proximity*, and *access* were the same thing. Their logic seemed to be that if the government built good schools and health centers in their communities they would be able to access those facilities. However when participants were asked whether they thought members of the community would really be able to access those facilities, people amended their original statement by saying something along the lines of “some will be able to, it will depend on their economic position.” Only two community members interviewed seemed to express concern over the communities’ ability to access better health and educational services without being directly asked. The first man claimed that most members of the community will not be able to afford the world class educational and health facilities that will be built in the city and said that community members may not even be able to access services within the 10 kilometer buffer zone. He said that he expects many residents will be pushed out of the 10 kilometer buffer zone not directly, but due to the rising cost of living in the area and residents in ability to build according to the government standards. Unfortunately, he said, many will find that the services they will be able to access will be similar to the services they have

now. Even the key informants seemed to use the words proximity and access interchangeably. One key informant said during his interview that “any time you are close to a major city, you benefit” and that by virtue of being closer to the city, residents would have better access to social services.<sup>36</sup> It is possible these key informants understood the difference but did not want to differentiate the two.

Many people in the area expect to sell at least some of their land when the city is built. Those owning land within the 10 kilometer buffer zone in particular are holding on to their land with the expectation of selling it once the city is built and the land is worth a lot of money. When explaining his and his wife’s plan to sell their land one participant exclaimed “we’ll make a kill out of it!”<sup>37</sup> Local people are not the only ones who expect to sell their land holdings in the area. People are coming as far as Mombasa to buy the highly desirable land within the 10 kilometer buffer zone. While many of these people are purchasing land in the area with the intention of settling on or developing their plots, many of these outsiders have no interest in doing so. According to some locals, many people are buying land in the area with the sole interest of selling the land later once it has appreciated in value.

The government also thinks local people will benefit by selling their land due to the increased value as a result of the city. However while the potential for local members of the community to benefit from selling their land has increased due to the rising value of the land, given land grabbing and corruption in Kenya there is also a very real possibility many locals will become victims of fraud and deceit when they try to sell their property. Already the former shareholders of the Malili Ranch have been cheated out of their land. One woman said she thinks local people should sell their land soon and seek out interested buyers. She went on to say that if

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<sup>36</sup> Participant 10. Interview. Nairobi, May 8, 2015.

<sup>37</sup> Participant 4. Interview. Machakos Town, April 18, 2015.

they wait until the city is built and until people come to them, it is a very real possibility they may get cheated out of their land and not receive all the money they are entitled to.

The last commonly cited community expectation was that the Konza Techno City will bring life back to Old Konza Town. Old Konza Town emerged in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century because it was a stop along the Uganda Railway which was built by the British and completed in 1901. The railway ran from the coast city of Mombasa all the way to Kisumu, on Lake Victoria. The railway served to open Kenya's interior as well as the East African interior to the Mombasa port. A number of activities relied on the railway and were responsible for Old Konza Town's growth. Both the white settlers and the Africans who bought their land later would bring livestock to the town center where it could be transported to different parts of the country. Even the Masai community that occupy the area on the other side of the railway in Kajiado relied on the town's activities to sell their livestock. In addition, Old Konza Town was a collecting center for wattle bark, which needed to be transported to the Limuru Shoe Company. The bark creates a black dye which was used to dye shoes. There was also a branch of the railway that went Magadi where shod ash was mined for lime and salt. Products were brought from Magadi to Old Konza Town and were then shipped elsewhere. In 1975 the railway collapsed and consequently Old Konza Town died out. Today, remnants of the town's history—the old train station, ticket booth and the over a hundred year old housing units for the railway builders—stand as a reminder of the its old glory in the now rundown town. One older man interviewed in Old Konza Town ran a small business where people could come eat *mandazis* and drink tea. He said that he has been in the area since 1984 and that since he moved to the area he has watched the population of the town dwindle and has seen businesses close as a result of the railway collapsing. The Konza City announcement has brought new hope that the city will bring interest back to the area and

business back to Old Konza Town.

None of the community members interviewed put much stress on IT when asked about their expectations for the project. Their expectations generally focused on jobs, business opportunities and increased access to services. This was a major difference between the interviews with community members and the interviews with key informants. While key informants also mentioned job creation, many of their expectations focused on IT. From its inception, the Konza project has been about IT and cultivating the IT sector in Kenya. One key informant explained that the government sees leveraging the IT sector as the means to creating “massive” employment in Kenya. Already he argued investment in IT in Kenya is creating employment opportunities, however what has not happened yet is large scale job creation, which is what Konza is supposed fix. He said “we promised massive employment” and his expectation is that one call center in Konza City will employ anywhere between 5,000-10,000 people.<sup>38</sup> Another major government expectation is that Konza will help make Kenya a regional tech hub by creating an environment that will foster entrepreneurship, innovation and local research.

Members of community talked about the project and its potential (and their expectation) that it can (and will) increase their livelihoods and their access to basic services like electricity and energy, water, sanitation and health and educational facilities. Key informants also mentioned these things—particularly job creation—however, there was a much bigger stress on IT and the expectation that IT will increase GDP in the country.

### *Impact of the Konza Announcement*

While construction of KTC has yet to begin, the announcement has already led to a great deal of change in the area. Everyone who was interviewed mentioned three things that have

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<sup>38</sup> Participant 10. Interview. Nairobi, May 7, 2015.

happened since the announcement. First is the rising price of land in the area. Since the government announced the city site location, land prices in the area have sky-rocketed. In 1997 a share of the Konza Ranch—the equivalent of 1.85 acre—sold for Ksh600, today that same plot sells for over Ksh200,000. Residents of Malili, Machakos and Old Konza Town mentioned the rising prices of land and many said the increases in land prices is not just taking place within the 10 kilometers but is also happening outside the buffer zone.

Second is the large amount of migration to the area. Since the Konza City plan was announced people from all over the country have been moving to Malili, Machakos and even Old Konza Town in anticipation of the new city. In fact, two people interviewed moved to Malili *specifically* because of the Konza City project. A number of people interviewed mentioned the growing presence of non-Kamba people in the area. During one interview that took place in a public setting a woman lowered her voice to tell me that there was growing presence of Kikuyus and Somalis in the area who she claimed were eager to buy land in the area. She explained that some of this in-migration has led to tension between local members of the community and those moving into the area because some local people feel their land is being snatched up.

The third thing all local residents mentioned was the growing level of construction in the area, particularly in Malili and Machakos Town. One resident of Malili said, referring to the Malili Shopping center, that just 10 years ago there was nothing there. Since the announcement however people have been opening up kiosks, small shops and businesses. A similar change has been observed in Machakos. New accommodation places are sprouting up, new businesses, banks and even university branch campuses are opening up in Machakos Town. Since the announcement there has also been a change in the type of building, perhaps in an effort to bring standards up. One woman explained that before the Konza announcement there had been few

multi-story buildings in Machakos Town but now walking around the town there are many.

While all participants mentioned the above three changes since the Konza City announcement, community members mentioned a number of other changes they observed in the area. Some participants mentioned the growing level of traffic along the Mombasa Highway as well as in Machakos Town. Konza City has sparked a large interest in the area and as a result more people are passing through the area and consequently there are more cars on the road. In addition to Konza City leading to increased traffic, a few people mentioned the Machakos Governors' commitment to improving Machakos Town to attract visitors. Two people mentioned the People's Park, a large green space in town, as his latest project. One woman said that she thinks the governor does not want Konza City to over shadow Machakos and as a result has been working to make improvements around the city to make the town "The Place to Be," which is the slogan of the park.

A number of participants also mentioned the mushrooming of informal structures along the Mombasa Highway. This has been a major source of conflict between the residents of Malili operating kiosks by the highway and the government because these structures are within the 10 kilometer buffer zone which the government has marked for "controlled development." In February of 2013 the Machakos County Commissioner, Ann Gakuria, announced that the informal kiosks along the road needed to be torn down and said that those who did not comply would be prosecuted. As a result of the announcement, some members of the community came together and went to court arguing that they should not be forced to pull down their structures when the regulations for what sorts of structures will be allowed within the 10 kilometer buffer zone has not been publicized yet. The court sided with the community members and the structures are allowed to remain until the plans come out or 30 days before building begins. As a



result, on a drive through Malili Shopping center people will notice the many kiosks and informal structures being operated, however, these will all be gone once the city is built.

### *Expected Impact Once Constructed*

In addition to being asked about what they noticed had changed since the Konza City announcement, members of the community were asked to discuss what they *expected* the city's impact will be once constructed. Their answers varied, but what emerged was a list of both positive and negative impacts members of the community expect once the city is built. Some of the positives included: better access to services as a result of better roads, increased consumer markets (people would no longer need to travel to Nairobi to buy certain goods), more schools and health facilities. The negatives of the city were as one participant put it, "the general ills of a city."<sup>39</sup> These included: pollution, congestion, displacement of wildlife, crime and prostitution. Increased levels of prostitution was, surprisingly, something that almost every person interviewed mentioned. Prostitution is a particular problem in the towns along the Mombasa Highway because the truck drivers who pass through these towns spend extended periods of time away from their families. At the moment, most truck drivers opt to stop in established towns like Machakos, however many of the people expect prostitution will spread towards Malili as the area develops around Konza City.

Another anticipated impact of the city once constructed is the presence of foreigners in the area. Members of the community seem ready to embrace these foreigners and a number of people stressed the fact that the Kamba people are friendly and welcoming to outsiders. One woman said that the presence of the foreigners and the international community in the area as a result of the Konza project is *why* she and many people are excited for Konza City. She

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<sup>39</sup> Participant 4. Interview. Machakos Town, April 18, 2015.

explained that there is a notion in the community that foreigners are better managers than the locals and that given the level of corruption in Kenya she feels that the foreign presence in Konza will lessen corruption and increases Konza's probability for success.

Perhaps the most interesting question asked concerning the impact of Konza City was who will benefit most from the new city. The majority of the local people said that members of the community would benefit most. They explained that by having a big city closer it would mean members of the community would no longer have to travel to cities like Nairobi, Mombasa or Kisumu to buy goods, find employment and access educational and health services. Again, there seemed to be a confusion between *proximity* and *access*. However when asked a second time if they felt members of the community would benefit the *most*, many people changed their answers. Most changed their original statement and said that the people who served to benefit the most were those who were educated and "elite." Of the key informants interviewed only one, seemed to share the same opinion as community members. He argued that the people who served to benefit the most were those studying IT, the educated, the "elite" and he also added foreigners. In contrast, the other two key informant said the people who served to benefit the most were the youth. They argued that today's youth are the people most engaged in IT and because Konza is a part of Kenya's 2030 Vision, they will be the people making up the majority of the workforce and will thus benefit most from the project.

In a follow up question local people were asked whether they thought the city would lead to more equality or inequality. While some people argued people in the area would benefit a bit, perhaps from being house helps and watchmen, by selling agricultural goods or by selling their land, all participants said that the city would serve to further divide the haves and have nots and would lead to greater *inequality*. Surprisingly, not one person thought that this greater inequality

should stop the city plans and when asked whether the city was a good idea each participant, without fail, said it was. While it seems that locals should be against the project if they feel it will lead to greater inequality, one possible explanation members of the community seem to support the Konza project so unanimously is because it is the first time the national government has really expressed interest in the area. The Konza project is at the moment the only large-scale project proposed for the area, and the local community is undoubtedly—and maybe they cannot be faulted for doing so—going to support it. It is possible that if there was a different plan, community members would support that one over the Konza project.

From two conversations with key informants, it seemed that while the project is not *for* the local people, the government is committed to making sure local people benefit. However while the government seems dedicated to ensuring locals benefit from the project, it is unrealistic to say that everyone will benefit from the Konza project. One informant said,

“of course we don’t expect every Makueni resident, every Kajiado resident to benefit from Konza, that is a reality. But we are going to ensure that we create as many opportunities as possible to the locals, and they also benefit from this project as we would also wish any other Kenyan to benefit from the project.”<sup>40</sup>

This is a key point. Local residents may look at the project and its potential to improve their lives and the lives of those in the *community*, the government is looking at the project on a much wider, *national*, scale. The man went on to say, “we will not restrict ourselves to livelihoods of Makueni, Kajiados, and Machakos because this is a national project, we want Kenyans to benefit, not three counties, we want the 47 counties to benefit from Konza. So we don’t expect all of the residents to benefit.”<sup>41</sup> While the government says they are committed to improving the lives of all Kenyans, *including* those in the local area, there are no plans specifically targeted for

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<sup>40</sup> Participant 8. Interview. Nairobi, May 5, 2015.

<sup>41</sup> Participant 8. Interview. Nairobi. May 5, 2015.

local residents. The KoTDA office plans to encourage investors to use local materials and local labor, however, there will be no quotas or regulations to enforce that. Thus while the government seems committed to including locals in the project and ensuring that they benefit, only time will tell if that happens.

*Preparations—“We may not see the fruits but we carry the roots”*

Members of the community are preparing for Konza in a few different ways. One overwhelming trend is that individual members and the community at large are investing in education. On the individual level, some people interviewed expressed interest in furthering their education in order to improve their prospects for employment once the city is built. One man, for example, had a master’s degree in education but wanted to go back to school to get his PhD. What most people mentioned, however, was their commitment to their *children’s* education and making sure their children work hard and receive the best education possible. Many of the people interviewed were middle aged and said they would be too old or past their prime working years to get good employment when Konza was finished, but they said their children could. There is also a growing interest among parents to encourage their children to pursue information technology. One woman claimed that now a days she knows a number of young people pursuing degrees in IT. Another man said that he choose the school his son—a Form 1 student—is attending in part because he felt his son would learn basic computer skills.

On the community level, teachers in the area are preparing students for Konza city. Three teachers were interviewed and all mentioned that they were encouraging their students to work hard because of Konza. One teacher said she has noticed a difference in students’ work ethic and parents’ commitment to their children’s education since the announcement. Another teacher said that the announcement has been a huge encouragement to students in the area who are often

discouraged because there are few jobs for youth. She explained the Konza announcement has given them a new sense of hope. Two key informants also stressed the need to focus on youth in preparation for the city and said that youth were the key vision and are the focus of Konza.

The second major way people in the community are preparing is by engaging in, or preparing to engage in, agricultural activities. Many people in the area hope to engage in agricultural activities in order to provide the food stuffs that will be demanded by the new city. One woman explained that she has noticed more “indigenous” crops being sold at the local markets since the Konza announcement. These crops she explained can grow in the semi-arid climate and show local interest in agricultural activities that were before not very popular. While these crops—arrowroots, cassavas, millet, pigeon peas and green grams—are still expensive for many members of the community to purchase, she said their presence in the markets shows that people are preparing for consumers with a greater purchasing power. However while many people are interested in starting agriculture businesses, many are unable to start because they are waiting for the Thwake Dam to be constructed in order to provide the necessary irrigation. In addition many do not want to start before there is a consumer market and before they know what food stuffs will be most desired.

While these are the main things people in the area are doing to prepare for Konza city, many people said they wish they could be doing more but because the regulations for the 10 kilometer buffer zone have not been made public, they are in a sort of holding pattern. This seemed to be a major source of frustration, as many members want to upgrade their informal structures and improve, expand and even start businesses but they do not want to until they know what “controlled development” really means. One man said that he knows of a number of people who have bought land within the 10 kilometers in anticipation of Konza but who are now

disgruntled and regretted purchasing the land given the slow pace of the project's progress.

## **Extra Thoughts**

### *Information Technology and Development*

Community members' knowledge on the technical aspects of IT was limited, however the key informants who were interviewed tended to focus on IT and the IT sector in Kenya. During these interviews they shared their thoughts on the state of IT in Kenya and the potential for IT to improve people's lives. All three key informants said that information technology has the potential to drive development in Kenya. One man in particular felt very passionately about the relationship between IT and development. He said "if there is anything that is removing poverty in this country it is this [IT]"<sup>42</sup> He argued M-Pesa, the mobile-phone based money transfer system, is the perfect example. The people he argued who are benefiting most from M-Pesa are the poor, and M-Pesa is an example of inclusive innovation because the money-transfer system had not targeted the rich, but instead had tried to improve the lives of the poor. He added that IT's impact can be seen "on the ground" changing the lives of everyday Kenyans.<sup>43</sup> When asked why—if *IT* has the potential to change lives—the city needed to feature luxury malls and shopping centers, things that the vast majority of Kenyans will not be able to afford, he said that without these, "where would you get the pull factor?"<sup>44</sup> Using these facilities to attract investors and people to the city he argued would help make the city a success, cultivate the IT sector, and ultimately lead to greater development in Kenya and help the nation realize its 2030 Vision. By contrast another key informant thought that while IT can improve the lives of everyday Kenyans

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<sup>42</sup> Participant 8. Interview. Nairobi, May 5, 2015.

<sup>43</sup> Participant 8. Interview. Nairobi, May 5, 2015.

<sup>44</sup> Participant 8. Interview. Nairobi, May 5, 2015.

these luxury elements of the city would prevent real development from happening. He said many locals are “just going see new shiny buildings, that’s not development to him.”<sup>45</sup>

### *Governance*

As previously discussed, the fact that the city site, the 10 kilometer buffer zone as well as the surrounding area falls within three counties, has been a source of much conflict. These counties are fighting for the city to be located within their boundaries so that they can benefit from the tax revenue the city will generate. The city’s tax revenue is anticipated to be particularly high because the city is likely to be home to many international companies who, under Kenyan law, pay a higher tax revenue. All three counties want a slice of Konza, however, there is a possibility that no county will ‘have’ Konza and the city will be autonomous, much like Nairobi. When local residents were asked what they thought about this almost everyone said this was a good idea and that the city should be independent from the three counties. One man explained that this was the best way to insure Konza City’s success. In addition he argued that if the city and the surrounding buffer were in three different counties, it would be extremely difficult to govern and regulate development. Only one woman thought the city should fall within one of the three counties, Makueni. She said because Machakos is more developed, Konza should be located in Makueni so that the county can benefit most from the city. When asked the same question about how the city should be governed one more pessimistic key informant said, “what will it matter? The city will already be owned by foreigners.”<sup>46</sup> While people have different opinions about how the city should be governed, nothing has been decided and the bill is still pending in parliament.

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<sup>45</sup> Participant 9. Interview. Nairobi, May 6, 2015.

<sup>46</sup> Participant 10. Interview. Nairobi, May 7, 2015.

*The Masaai*

A number of members of the Masaai community were interviewed during the time spent in Malili. From these conversations it became clear that while a techno city and the pastoral way of life may seem the farthest from one other, perhaps even in conflict with one another, members of the Masaai community are, like their Kamba neighbors, excited about the proposed project. The Masaai way of life has changed quite a lot over the last ten years. There are a number of reasons for this change. First, is the climate. One Masaai youth said in 1998 his father had 600 cattle, but the drought that hit the area in 2006 killed around 200 of them. Because of new climate pressures, many Masaai in the area no longer want to rely solely on livestock as their source of income. Another reason for the change in Masaai lifestyle is because many Masaai in the area are being encouraged to switch to zero grazing cattle which allows them to be sedentary instead of nomadic. A last reason the traditional Masaai way of life is changing is due to the fact that it is much harder for them to graze cattle because land is no longer held communally. It used to be that the Masaai would graze on communal lands but because of the privatization of land it has become a lot harder to find suitable grass to graze their cattle. Private land has also become a problem when people inherit land because already small plots are divided into even smaller plots.

Today, the change in Masaai lifestyle can be seen looking at some of the activities the Masaai are engaging in. The Masaai in Kajiado are buying and investing in land, building permanent houses, opening up businesses, and building schools just to name a few things. One Masaai man interviewed had opened up a number of shops, a butchery, a corner store, and a



saloon in the Masaai market<sup>47</sup> near Old Konza Town just on the other side of the railway. When asked why he decided to open all these businesses he explained that the Masaai way of life is changing and it no longer makes sense for them to rely solely on livestock. The Konza announcement also helped influence him to open up his shops. He opened his businesses in 2011 because he knew there would be a greater demand for goods and services because of Konza City. Because their way of life is changing, many Masaai, particularly the younger generation, are excited for Konza city and the employment opportunities that will result because of the project.

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<sup>47</sup> The new railway line being built by the Chinese will pass through Kajiado County, near to the Old Konza Station, consequently many Masaai have been forced to move from their land. Because many Masaai have recently been paid a large sum, the Masaai market, is thriving. A number of new permanent structures can be seen and a lot of business taking place.

## Conclusion

The Konza City project, if it is ever fully realized, has the potential to drastically change the lives of those living in the area. The plan has created a new sense of hope for a part of the country that has been overlooked and for a people who have felt largely left out of the country's development. Konza City will bring much needed educational and health facilities as well as basic services like water, electricity and proper sanitation to the area. Construction of the city park has yet to begin and already the project has caused a great deal of change in the local communities. New businesses are popping, people are moving into the area and land prices have increased dramatically. Change is likely to accelerate in the coming months and year as the project starts to take off.

Konza City will indeed bring educational and health facilities closer to those in the surrounding community, but with no plan to insure local residents—many of whom are poor farmers who cannot afford those services—it is possible local residents will not be able to access those facilities. In addition, those owning land surrounding the city are extremely vulnerable to becoming victims of fraud and deceit when they try to sell their property. Land corruption has already crept into the Konza project and the city has not even been built.

Also of concern is the different ways the local community and those in the government are viewing the project. There were certainly some overlaps between community expectations and the government's expectations for the project, particularly concerning job creation, however, there were also some major disconnects. Those in the government and those involved in the project talked about the city and its potential to increase GDP and cultivate the IT sector, while people on the ground talked about the city's impact on their livelihoods and their ability to earn a slightly larger monthly income. While locals talked about the project's impact on their lives and

those in their communities, the government is viewing the project on a much larger scale. To them Konza City is an attempt to launch Kenya into the modern world, to improve and cultivate the technology sector and to make Kenya an attractive location for international companies looking to open up offices in east Africa.

It is easy to get swept up in the in the lure of the project plans. The marketing videos created by the Konza team which feature skyscrapers, luxury malls, and stadiums are seductive, and the shiny purple Konza City information packets handed out by the KoTDA office are flashy. The project's biggest supporters present a compelling case for why Kenya needs to invest in IT and why Konza is the way to do it. Despite the fact that the project has gained the support of some of the country's most important politicians and some of the world biggest companies, whether Konza will truly lead to meaningful development in the country remains unclear. Often these large scale projects—while their intentions may be good—are removed from the reality of those on the ground. Plans are drawn up by people sitting in government offices, and best practices are taken from things done in other countries in a different context. The government believes investment in IT can further the country's development agenda, this may be true. M-Pesa certainly has changed the lives of Kenyans irrespective of their income. However while *IT* may have the potential to improve the lives of the average Kenyan, it is not clear whether *Konza* will. Although there is certainly truth to needing the luxury elements of Konza to attract investors and the international community to the city, the project seems to be geared more toward this than it seems committed to improving the lives of Kenyans.

## **Recommendations for further study**

The possibilities for further study are great. Some might argue that this project was done too early given the fact that Konza City is still just a plan and construction of the city has yet to begin. However, this project provides the foundation for a much longer study on how development projects get translated into the field. This study could be extended by continuing to track community opinions on the project as the city plans begin to unfold and the city is constructed. Farther down the line the study could assess whether expectations, both local and governmental, were met and where the project fell short.

In addition this study could be expanded by interviewing more people in the government as well as more people in the IT field. Conversations with key informants only began to scratch the surface of the role of technology in development in the modern world and particularly in the sub-Saharan African context. Additionally, interviews with interested investors could be conducted in order to get a sense of investor expectations and their thoughts on why Konza is something worth investing in.

Furthermore, there are a number of dimensions that could also be added to this project. Issues concerning urbanization, sustainability, slums and housing in this part of the world were only brushed over and deserved more attention. If the study was extended it would be worthwhile to explore some of these issues in much greater depth.

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**Appendix A:****Participant Profile**

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>M/F</b>	<b>Residence</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	
1	59	M	Malili	Retired	
2	48	F	Machakos Town	Health Researcher	
3	~40-50	M	Malili	Teacher	
4	50	M	Machakos Town		
5	42	F	Machakos Town	Teacher	
6	33	F	Machakos Town	Teacher	
7	~30	F	Machakos Town	Health worker	
8	~30	M	Nairobi	Works for KoTDA	
9	29	M	Nairobi	Self-employed, IT consultant	
10	~50	M	Nairobi	Former Minister	



## **Appendix B:**

### **Interview Guide: Community Members**

#### **COMMUNITY INFORMATION**

##### Community

1. Who lives in the area?
2. What do you feel the major needs of the community are?

#### **KONZA CITY FOCUS**

##### Knowledge of the project

3. Have you heard of the of the Konza City project?
4. Could you tell me a bit about the history of this area?
5. What county is the site located in?
6. Why do you think the government selected this location?
7. What do you think the purpose of Konza City is?

##### Community Involvement

8. Has anyone from the government and/or the Konza City project come and spoken to you or members of the community?
9. What do you think need to be done in order to make Konza a better place for the community and yourself?
10. Do you think the Konza City plan considers the needs of the people here?
11. Do you feel like there are people or someone involved in the project that is standing for the community?

##### Expectations

12. Do you think you'll benefit from the project?
13. What do you expect Konza City to do for you and for the community?
14. What are you looking forward to about the project?

##### Impact

15. How do you think Konza City will impact the community?
16. How do you think Konza City will impact your life?
17. Do you think the presence of international investors, foreigners, and the international community will affect the culture in this community? How do you feel about this?
18. Who do you think will benefit most from this project?
19. Do you think members of the community will get employment?
20. Do you think members of the community will find affordable housing in the city?
21. Do you think members of the community will have better access to health and educational services?

22. Have you noticed any changes to the area since the Konza City project was announced?
23. Do you think the Konza City plan is a good idea?
24. Is there anything on the plan or the strategy of Konza that you are not happy with?
25. Is there anything you want to be added or removed to improve this initiative in the Konza development?

#### Preparations

26. How are you preparing for Konza City?
27. How is the community preparing?
28. The city will need a large number of people to run it (both professional and non-professional) where are these people going to come from?

#### Feasibility and Significance

29. The government of Kenya wants Konza to replicate the success of cities like Dubai, Singapore, and Shanghai, do you think that's possible?
30. Do you think Kenya has the resources to build and sustain Konza?
31. Do you think Kenya will have enough people with a technology background to make Konza City a success?
32. Do you think investment in technology can really make a difference in Kenya's development?
33. Do you think Konza has the potential to be a model for other African countries?

#### *Additional Questions for Specific Interviewees*

##### Health Workers

1. What are some of the major health concerns in this area?
2. Have you heard of any improvements to health facilities as a result of Konza City?
3. What sorts of improvements?
4. Do you think members of this community will be able to access new facilities in Konza City?

##### Teachers

1. Have seen the Konza City plan? What do they have for educational development?
2. Are you satisfied with the planning? (in relation to education)
3. How are you preparing students for Konza City?
4. Do you think that you and other educators will be able to prepare students to get jobs in the city?

## **Appendix C:**

### **Interview Guide: Key Informants**

#### **KONZA FOCUS**

##### Plans

- Could you walk me through the project plans?
- Where in the process are you now?
- Why was the city location chosen?
- What is the purpose of Konza City? What is it supposed to achieve?
- Where is the funding for this project coming from?
- Could you talk about some of your major investors?
- How will the city be governed?

##### Expectations

- What are your expectations for the project?
- Do you have any reservations?
- Do you expect to complete Phase 1 of the project on time?
  - What would prevent this from happening?

##### Community Involvement

- Has the community been involved in imagining Konza City? How?
- Do you think the community has been involved enough?

##### Impact

- Did KOTDA know about how the Ministry of Information Technology acquired the Konza City site?
- The Konza plan has already impacted a lot of people, particularly those who were former shareholders of the Malili Ranch. Are there any efforts to reconcile how the Konza City site was acquired and re-compensate those who were affected?
- A lot of the local people are expecting to get employment from the city, do you think that will happen?
- Can you talk about the 10km buffer zone? (Specifically what will happen to people within the buffer zone who cannot afford to build according to standard? Will the government help them find funding?)
- Do you think members of the community will find affordable housing in the city?
- Do you think members of the community will have better access to health and educational services?
- Who do you think the city will benefit the most?

##### Environmental Impact

- What do you anticipate the environmental impact of this city will be?
- What is in your plan that will help minimize the negative impact on the environment?

- Will there be some environmental education done to inform people about how to take care of the city and live *green*? (i.e. will there be a recycling education program, what will you do about the use of plastic bottles and plastic bags?)
- What is the city's waste management plan?

#### Preparations

- The city will need a large number of people to run it (both professional and non-professional) where are these people going to come from?

#### **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN KENYA & DEVELOPMENT**

- What do you think the relationship between Konza and Nairobi is?
- Do you think the IT sector in Kenya has developed enough to build Konza?
- Some people think the government should be investing in IT in Nairobi before thinking about building Konza. What do you think?
- Do you think Kenya will have enough people with a technology background to make Konza City a success?
- There was an article in Venture Capital in 2012 and Karanja Macharia, co-founder and CEO of Mobile East Africa, was quoted saying that building Konza is like building the stadium before Kenya has produced enough tech "players." What do you think about this?
- Do you think investment in technology can really make a difference in Kenya's development? How?

#### Feasibility and Significance

- Do you think the city will lead to greater development?
- Do you think Konza can replicate the success of cities like Dubai, Singapore, and Shanghai?
- Do you think Kenya has the resources to build and sustain Konza? By this I mean the energy, water, and connectivity?
- Do you think Konza has the potential to be a model for other African countries?
- Does Konza mean there will not be as many efforts to deal with housing, health, and environmental issues in Nairobi?