

Foreword

A wide variety of recent research on urban development in the Global South shows how a high-capacity infrastructure is of utmost importance to sustainable development of metropolitan areas. However, most analysis – both in the Global South or North – is often preoccupied with technical aspects; it commonly focuses on questions of how to make infrastructure projects feasible and technically safe, how to develop sound financial schemes or how to guarantee political support and balance different demands. Renard Teipelke's work is different in this respect: It is not primarily concerned with technical questions but embeds the infrastructure project in the particular context of the Kenyan state and includes a wider contextualization within Kenya's contemporary political society, urban situation, and developmental ambitions.

In so doing, Renard Teipelke explores backgrounds, preconditions, developments, and effects of the Thika Highway Improvement Project (THIP) – a vast road project in Kenya's capital city of Nairobi. He explores the outcomes of this megaproject in the Northern Nairobi Metropolitan Region; providing an insightful account of the project's social dimension and its meaning to the people involved in and directly affected by it. Throughout the analysis, Teipelke throws new light on the THIP, often with surprising elements. He shows how, in the dominant perception, the THIP avoids many of the problems associated with other megaprojects, such as challenges by the local population, funding shortfalls, or environmental degradation. Instead, the THIP is widely supported by the public, the private sector, and politicians. Critical voices therefore evolve less around the project in its entirety but more around the way it has been implemented and realized. In a kaleidoscopic picture of Kenyan society, Teipelke pays attention to often overlooked details. He illustrates how, due to unsettled tenure questions, the compensation for people without formal property rights to their homes or businesses is socially extremely unjust. Tenants, home owners, or entrepreneurs without a formal title, constituting the majority of inhabitants of the land used for the THIP, have not received compensation for their lost property. As such the THIP is contributing to increased social inequality, favoring those with formal land titles (and the political elite) and discriminating against the vast majority of people living and working in informal arrangements.

Surprisingly it is thereby not the project itself that is questioned but the way how social questions and legitimate demands are handled. His empirical data shows how, generally, Kenyan society is particularly sensitive with respect to questions of social involvement and political participation. However, the analysis also shows how this sensitivity is not visible in governmental strategies. This is only one of the examples where Teipelke's work goes beyond the social aspects of the THIP. Embedded in an informative contextualization with the two overarching development strategies, Kenya Vision 2030 and Nairobi Metro 2030, Teipelke provides insights into the political structure of the Kenyan state and relations between political (and business) elites and society. His work explores possible ways for overcoming the shortcomings and pitfalls of such megaprojects, and their underlying development strategies, in the Global South. It is particularly in this sense that we expect Renard Teipelke's work to find broad readership not only amongst researchers and students, but also amongst policy-makers, NGOs, and international development organizations.

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Metropolitan Region

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