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Fair Shared City: Lagos
Feminist city planning from the micro-level

Content

1. Fair Shared City Approach

The current thinking, approaches and instruments for urban development in Lagos and other Nigerian cities are based on a technical–instrumental orientation of urban planning. But in Lagos, as in most cities in the developing world, this orientation is far from delivering the expected results. It conceives of functioning city government institutions that are responsible for centralised planning, public infrastructure and service delivery, but its understanding of "functioning institutions" is largely based on models imported from Asia and the West that are influenced by neoliberal policies of deregulation and privatisation and have been promoted by international institutions like the World Bank since the 1990s.

Over the past decades, the government of Lagos has introduced complex public-private partnerships, with the participation of foreign private or state investors, to plan and implement giant infrastructure and real-estate developments like Eko Atlantic City and the Lekki Free Zone. The principal planning instrument for the city government is the Lagos State Development Plan (LSDP), which aims to provide overall direction for the growth and the development of the city of this smallest state of Nigeria with its bordering rural areas up to 2025. A major result of the LSDP was the establishment of the Office for Overseas Investments (Lagos Global), which is responsible for prioritising private-sector-led economic growth, increasing the ease of doing business in Lagos and attracting investment. While it might seem reasonable at first glance to attract international investment to finance infrastructure and real-estate projects, these projects have ignored the needs of the vast majority of the urban residents for jobs, sanitation and shelter. The urban dwellers, on the contrary, have found their own strategies within their informal networks to make their environment work.

This shows that the LSDP needs an assessment. It was not based on careful research and rather perpetuates past strategic-development plans and statements. A different approach to urban planning is needed: one that will build on residents' successful initiatives at the micro level. A deeper understanding of what already works in today's Lagos, no matter how precarious, rough or informal it might be, would lead to a more pragmatic and effective urban planning approach. This is especially the case when we take into account the considerable contributions women have been making to make the city work. They make provision for most basic services, which should actually be provided by government. Meanwhile, the way that Lagos is envisioned, planned, designed and built is still predominantly shaped by concepts and an understanding of life that reflect the dominant gender inequality and gender stereotypes in this patriarchal urban society.

Methodology

In 2021, the Heinrich Böll Foundation's Abuja office and the Fabulous Urban Nigeria Foundation reflected with a wide range of young women from Lagos about how a feminist approach to the city's planning and design could lead to more efficient answers to people's needs. Such a feminist approach has to start from the needs of the most disadvantaged – women in the lower- and lowest-income communities – and with an awareness that aspects of social class generally overshadow those of gender in this city and that higher-income men and women understand "functioning city" in a substantially different way than do lower- and lowest-income men and women. The concept of a "fair shared city" is derived from research into gender-sensitive planning in Europe, it builds on mainstreaming gender into urban planning and design.[1]

The "3R" method is a useful tool for analysing gendered needs and structures. It looks at the responsibilities of women, with a focus on care work and reproduction, where social assistance is painfully absent; the profit-oriented dispersal of resources, which women cannot easily access; and representation at city and neighbourhood levels that are characterised by a low involvement of women in decision-making. The proposed "fair shared city" planning framework derived from such an analysis therefore puts social, spatial and environmental justice and digital equity at the centre of its thinking. Improved accessibility and affordability of services that are produced and managed in co-governance with informal and traditional networks will be key to achieving a city characterised by equity, diversity, participation and respect for human rights.

Young researchers from the Department of Urban and Regional Planning of the University of Lagos and NGO activists used the fair shared city framework and the three Rs to interview women of all ages living in low-income communities in Lagos about their experiences of access to healthcare and the supply of clean water.[2] The collection and analyses of these interviews gave them a deeper insight into the daily practices on the ground and enabled them to identify lapses and suggest pragmatic and affordable solutions.

1   Inés Sanchez de Madariaga and Marion Roberts, eds. Fair Shared Cities: The Impact of Gender Planning in Europe. (Farnham, U.K. and Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2013).
2   The research was conducted in the communities of Idi-Ori, Daramola, Amukoko, Ifelodun, Otumara, Agoro and Iwaya.

Overarching Goal	Fair Shared City			
Core Values	Accessibility	Affordability	Co-governance	
Focus Areas	**Social Justice**	**Spatial Justice**	**Environmental Justice**	**Digital Equity**
Priority Areas *Examples (non-exhaustive)*	Equal access to administrative and political decision-making and Equal access to finances, services Equal share of time, resources	Public spaces Recreation Income Opportunities Urban Regeneration Mixed income Housing Safety and Security	Sanitation and water Basic Health Services Mobility and Transportation Building and Drainage Waste and Pollution Green Spaces	Access to hard and software Income opportunities(trade, finance) Buildings, Markets Governance Online Education

Proposed Framework of the Fair Shared City for Lagos, Nigeria

Lab workshop with Fabulous Urban Nigeria and women in Oworonshoki, Lagos
Photo Credit: Fabulous Urban Nigeria

2. Justice and Equity in Lagos

Let us first explore the different aspects of justice and equity and how they are currently manifested in Lagos, one of the fastest-growing cities in the world, where more than 60 per cent of its residents are poor and live in over 100 slums and squatter settlements located across the city.[1]

Social Justice

The culture of chauvinism and patriarchy is prevalent in most countries and cities in Africa. Lagos, where the participation of women in decision-making and discussions on public policy and implementation is acutely low, is no exception.

One example is the role of market women in Lagos and how they negotiate social justice to enable their trading ventures. Although the majority of sellers in the more than 400 markets in Lagos State are women,[2] the extent to which their engagement translates into power and control of resources is limited. This trajectory was established back when the colonial administration took away the powers of women (especially women leaders) by employing male market-masters to administer markets.[3] As a result, the markets are in constant contestation, shaped and controlled through gendered power struggles.[4] Aside from being sidelined in market governance, women traders are also often not able to own their trading spaces, even if they have the money to do so. The owner-landlords, who are mostly men, insist on a rental-only basis rather than handing over ownership through outright property sales. This reinforces the patriarchal construct of men as the decision makers and property owners. It negatively affects women's control of their businesses and leaves them vulnerable to predatory landlords who often increase rents and issue eviction notices at will or remodel the property without prior consultation with the tenant trader. Women traders must also constantly renegotiate their trading spaces with market-association leaders and government officials – who are mostly men. Rebuilding and remodelling projects often take the female traders by surprise, because government officials feel they are

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1   Taibat Lawanson, "Lagos' Size and Slums Will Make Stopping the Spread of COVID-19 a Tough Task," The Conversation, 1 April 2020, http://theconversation.com/amp/lagos-size- and-slums-will-make-stopping-the-spread-of-covid-19-a-tough-task-134723.

2   Faith Ikioda, "Communities of Practice in Competitive Settings: Exploring the Role of Associations of Market Traders in Nigeria's Marketplaces," Knowledge Management for Development Journal 10, no. 2 (2014): 105–116

3   Nwanda Mba, "Women in Lagos Political History," in A History of the Peoples of Lagos State, eds. Ade Adefuye, Babatunde Agiri and Jide Osuntokun (Lagos: Lantern Books, 1987), 243–255.

4   Nkechi Eke Nwankwo, "Women's Economic Empowerment? Gendered Strategies and Institutions in Oke Arin Market, Lagos" (PhD thesis, University of East Anglia, 2017).

at liberty to make decisions about public spaces and rights of way without recourse to public debate or consultation.[5] These gendered power struggles are prevalent across all formal and informal professions and trades in the city.

Spatial Justice

Similarly, colonialism and the racial underpinnings of colonial planning and government resulted in the continuous production of the unjust urban landscapes of Lagos today. In colonial times, planners used the practice of zoning to legitimise social segregation.[6] The concern for providing sanitation for the European and later government elites in selected areas – still today called "government reserved areas" – entrenched the division of Lagos into essentially two parts: the municipality proper and the "native" area, disparaged as unsanitary.

"Spatial justice" is a relatively new concept and derives from "social justice". It takes up the spatial dimension of a fair distribution of the burdens and benefits of urban development, and particularly how this distribution is managed through formal institutions, such as planning systems, but also informal institutions, such as locally negotiated agreements and cultural attitudes towards urban space.[7] It could also be defined as "equal access to life chances". Suffice to say, the planning of Lagos, and indeed of most African cities, is deeply rooted in urban forms that prevent spatial justice on many levels, from infrastructure development to decision-making and accessibility.

Environmental Justice

The concept of "environmental justice" aims to highlight the fair distribution of environmental burdens among all people, regardless of their background and location. Efforts to attain environmental justice are almost entirely futile in today's Lagos. Citizens are not yet aware that a justice concept can be linked to environmental degradation, not to talk of tools they could use to claim their rights.

Meanwhile, the examples of environmental injustices are manifold. Air pollution is caused by the open burning of waste materials because communities are not serviced by the municipal waste collection system. Water pollution is caused by the open dumping of waste into the Lagos Lagoon and the sea by communities. Even more damaging, but less sanctioned, are water and air pollution caused by heavy industries located along the waterfront. Another government-promoted ecological disaster is the

5   Damilola Odekunle and Damilola Oluwo, Fieldwork on social justice, Iwaya community, July 2021.
6   Charisma Aceh, "Space vs. Race: A Historical Exploration of Spatial Injustice and Unequal Access to Water in Lagos, Nigeria," Critical Planning 14 (2007): 49–70.
7   Roberto Rocco, "What's spatial justice?" Spatial Justice, accessed 16 January 2022, https://spatialjustice.blog

sand filling of the Lagoon to create new residential and commercial estates, which causes floods and devastation in neighbouring low-income communities.

Environmental justice is clearly not the case in Lagos. Communities are certainly not involved in environmental decision-making and the burdens are not fairly shared. On the contrary, the government uses the need to address environmental degradation – which is blamed on the communities themselves – as one of the main reasons to evict these communities.[8]

As the research into the healthcare and water sectors below will show, environmental justice is still neglected in the analysis and discussion of urban planning, but greater spatial and social justice would help to reduce environmental hazards and health impacts.

Digital Equity

The "smart city" is another concept for sustainable urban design that is increasingly discussed worldwide. With Lagos's huge human resources of "smart" tech-affine young people, foreign investors, be it governments from the Arab world or international tech companies like Microsoft, IBM and Facebook, have inundated the Lagos government with ideas for creating smart-city estates or targeted sectoral approaches based on smart technologies.

In 2020, the current government launched the Smart City Project with a budget of 250,000 million Naira (around $640 000) for research and investment in fields such as artificial intelligence, robotics, biomedical informatics and sustainable energy.[9] It took off with the laying of optic-fibre network cables and broadband infrastructure: 6 000 kilometres of cables across the city were planned to fasten commercial activities, provide instant access to education, healthcare and government services and improve security through interconnected technological tools. Despite the initial promises of the political decision makers, the cable-laying came to a halt without explanation, burying instead all the hopes for improvements such as internet connectivity in public schools to enable their participation in online education programmes.

The transformation towards a fair shared city through digital technology can only succeed if efforts are directed towards digital equity. This means that women and youth in disadvantaged communities also have access to affordable internet service, hardware and content; that content design, such as virtual medical consultations, e-banking or participation in online trade, has to be tailored to women's various needs; and lifelong learning opportunities are made available.[10]

8   Ebere Akwuebu and Abimbola Abikoye, Fieldwork on environmental justice, Agoro community, July 2021.
9   Sawyer Lachance, "The Smart City Project in Lagos, Nigeria," The Borgen Project, 20 June 2021, https://borgenproject.org/the-smart-city-project/
10   Modupe Darabidan, Fieldwork on digital equity, Idi-Ori community, July 2021.

3. Possible Approaches and Actions Towards a Fair Shared City

Health

The research teams examined different low-income communities in Lagos to analyse how these justice and equity concepts apply to government interventions in the health and water/sanitation sectors and to set out recommended measures to increase justice and equity for low-income women by building on functioning initiatives in their communities.

With regard to healthcare, all community women identified the spread and treatment of malaria and issues related to pregnancy, birth and contraception as their major health concerns. The fieldwork revealed limited spatial access to public primary healthcare centres, which are seen mostly as understaffed and under-equipped with medical tools and medicine. The opening hours, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., are not adequate for emergencies during nights or weekends, forcing community members to travel far to general hospitals.[1] The women rely mainly on self-medication, visiting the hospital or healthcare centres only when the situation has gone out of hand. There are a number of intertwined reasons for this. All interviewees reported long waiting times at healthcare centres and hospitals. Women experience the environment at these facilities as uncomfortable and often face discrimination manifested in the unresponsive attitudes of the personnel, even at the government-owned hospitals. Another major issue is sourcing the necessary funds to pay medical bills.[2]

Across Lagos, up to 70 per cent of the population patronise the services of over 12,000 traditional medicine practitioners, especially in low-income communities.[3] Access to the mostly female traditional healers (organised in elewe omo associations), faith healers, bonesetters and agbo sellers is evaluated as good and practical, as they live in the communities. Going to the traditional healer means no travel time and no waiting time, and the services are affordable. Traditional herbal medicine offers an alternative approach to public healthcare in Lagos and is heavily relied on by residents, especially the women. With the creation of the Lagos State Traditional Medicine Board (LSTMB), the traditional medical sector in Lagos already has some

1   Ebere and Abimbola, Environmental justice fieldwork, Agoro; Odekunle and Oluwo, Social justice fieldwork, Iwaya

2   Fabienne Hoelzel and Boluwatife Soremi: Fieldwork on spatial justice, September 2019 and July 2021.

3   Lagos State Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget, Lagos State Development Plan 2012–2025 (September 2013), https://www.proshareng.com/admin/upload/report/11627-271150413-proshare.pdf.

formal government recognition. Given their proximity, accessibility and affordability, traditional healers therefore have a lot of potential to provide people with immediate medical care.

The services they provide can be considerably improved through regular and continuous medical training by government and the relevant medical and doctors' associations. An official and "certified" list of health issues and healers issued by LSTMB could ensure that services rendered to community members are safe and up to required standard. In an attempt to productively link traditional and conventional medical services, it could be possible to attach the services of (female) traditional healers to conventional primary healthcare centres where they could receive patients and support medical doctors in the treatment of certain conditions, diseases and injuries, to make those centres more attractive for the communities.

Such increased external services offered by the traditional healers must be supplemented by improved conventional medical services. It is therefore still critical to establish more primary healthcare centres that are well distributed spatially. In order to bring healthcare to the people without practical and bureaucratic hurdles, administrative burdens for small community-owned and community-operated health centres have to be eased.

Considering the high number of female traditional medical practitioners and their role in the well-being and health of women and children in the communities, strengthening their role and professionalising their services would contribute to more social justice. The proportion of female healers active in the LSTMB needs to increase to reflect their proportion in the sector. Female healers who are not members of the Board have to be fully included in its deliberation and decision-making processes through their traditional medicine associations across the city. Given their deep knowledge of women's health and ailments, giving female healers an opportunity to contribute more equitably to governance processes will not only increase their participation in the sector but policies will be better targeted and women's health issues will finally be given adequate attention.

In 2017, the Lagos State government initiated the Lagos State Health Scheme (LSHS), a medical insurance plan that costs N40,000 per year for a family of six and N8,500 per year for an individual.[4] Although many women and community members seem to embrace the idea of subscribing to such a public health insurance system, most live on daily income and cannot afford to make the annual payment at once. Social justice requires that monthly or weekly payment instalments be made possible. Most of the women are already used to making such daily contributions towards their thrift cooperative societies.[5] Apart from the payment modalities, poor women's

4   "Lagos to Kick-start Health Insurance Scheme," Lagos State Government (20 April 2017), https://lagosstate.gov.ng/blog/2017/04/20/lagos-to-kick-start-health-insurance-scheme-2/.

5   Darabidan, Digital equity fieldwork, Idi-Ori.

patronage of the LSHS will remain low until the system, which is run by private insurance companies, has proven itself to address their needs and to be trustworthy. The insurance companies have not yet sought community women's input to design insurance coverage according to their needs and practices, nor are they included in the implementation details, monitoring and evaluation – leaving them completely out of such governance systems.

Other government efforts to provide healthcare to women are linked to digitalisation. According to the current governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, "Digitalisation of health is having a profound effect on health delivery, enabling new models of care and shifting the focus of health systems toward speed, efficiency, security and transparency." [6] This includes the Lagos State Health Management Agency's cooperation with the PharmAccess Foundation in the MomCare project, a health information platform with an initial roll-out to six private and public health centres in Lagos.[7] LSHS also cooperates with CarePay, a digital health-benefit wallet that operates on a mobile phone.[8]

The unresolved question is how the majority urban poor women can access and afford such public and private e-care services. So far, the government has not given a thought to bridging the huge digital divide in society. Poor women's use of information technology is minimal; only a few own smartphones, which they use to make calls and payments and to source information. More often, they rely on their husbands' or children's phones, which makes them dependent as they have to ask for permission.[9] The digital divide and women's limited access to hard- and software for such e-care solutions need to be bridged first.

In 2012, the minister for communications and technology introduced the Students Computer Ownership Scheme, which ensured that students in tertiary institutions could own computers through a low-interest loan.[10] A similar share-our-phones scheme could be supported with loans from a government-funded smartphone ownership scheme for women. An additional option would be solar-powered e-kiosks run by women for women, equipped with internet compatible mobile phones and stable internet service. With such shared facilities, women could subscribe to the LSHS and link to secure e-health services. Tripartite cooperation between public services, communities and IT start-up hubs needs to be established for young IT programmers and entrepreneurs

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6   Juliet Umeh, "Only eHealth innovation can solve healthcare challenges in Lagos – Sanwo-Olu," Vanguard, 21 January 2020, https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/01/only-ehealth-innovation-can-solve-healthcare-challenges-in-lagos-sanwo-olu/

7   DConnect News, "Lagos, PharmAccess Launch ‚Momcare' To Reduce Maternal Death," DConnect News, 3 December 2020, https://www.dconnectnews.com.ng/2020/12/lagos-pharmaccess-launch-to-reduce.html?m=1

8   CarePay, "An Example: Lagos Sate, Nigeria," CarePay, accessed 16 May 2022, https://www.carepay.com/public-health.

9   Darabidan, Digital equity fieldwork, Idi-Ori.

10   Federal Ministry of Communication Technology, Connected for Growth: Progress Report on Projects and Programme Implementation July 2011–February 2014, February 2014,

to identify the needs of local women and develop tools adapted to their specific capabilities and preferences.

Water

The challenges of clean water supply are similar to those of the health sector. Despite a wealth of water resources, Lagos faces a major water crisis, like many other African cities. The Lagos Water Corporation (LWC) is officially in charge of water supply in the main city, but its services are severely unsatisfactory and insufficient. This increases spatial injustice since most of the – minimal – water supply runs in middle-class residential areas. For the past few years, the ministry of local government and community affairs has been responsible for providing water to densely populated low-income areas that have officially been recognised as slum areas. Without local facilities for water treatment, people are forced to get water directly from the ministry-supplied boreholes, using hand pumps or fetchers, thus increasing social injustice in the city.[11]

The Lagos Water Supply Master Plan (2010–2020) projected a reduction in the water-demand gap from 330 million gallons per day in 2010 to 12 million gallons per day in 2020.[12] The actual figures for the gap in 2022 are not available. Given that the population continues to grow, it does not seem very likely that the city government will ever be able to bridge this gap. The main problem certainly stems from the Plan's rigid approach, which focuses solely on reaching the set supply-and-demand figures for water, rather than on maintenance and other factors that influence supply and distribution or dealing with customers' unwillingness or inability to pay.

Usually, women in the communities are in charge of organising water for the family. Due to the irregular and insufficient public supply, most women buy from private borehole owners who sell water for profit and from water vendors who deliver directly to households. Some women also report that they have to walk long distances daily to get potable water, especially if there is a long power outage and the private suppliers do not power their boreholes with generators. In some cases, water is free of charge from boreholes located in the compound of the local traditional leader or donated by political candidates during election campaigns. The price of water varies according to quality (drinking, cooking, bathing or washing clothes), with the lowest ranging from N10 to N20 per 25-litre container. The higher the quality and the closer the water source, the higher the selling price.[13] To balance the different costs and purposes,

11   Odekunle and Oluwo, Social justice fieldwork, Iwaya.
12   Lagos Water Corporation, Lagos Water Supply Master Plan, 2016, https://www.lagoswater.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Lagos-Water-Master-Plan.pdf.
13   Hoelzel and Soremi, Spatial justice fieldwork

women must fetch water from four different sources. Unfortunately, because borehole water may be of lower quality and require expensive chemical treatment to be safe to drink, potable water is often only available outside of the community – for instance, at official LWC mains – again requiring longer transportation routes for the women.[14]

The field research revealed that there is no clear-cut technical solution for the provision of affordable and easily accessible water. There cannot be a blueprint or one-size-fits-all solution; what might work in community A may not work in community B. Proposed improvements must be based on an in-depth understanding of the functioning local private/informal water distribution system in order to support the existing expertise of the women and the community's governance systems and to improve the overall situation from there.

One suggestion arising from the research on the healthcare and water situation in Lagos is to combine improved access to healthcare services in primary healthcare centres with shared sanitation facilities and water points. This would require enough funding to research the most suitable and affordable design and materials, and adequate management systems placed in the hands of the women living in the community. When proposing community-based or city-wide solutions, many problems arise because of persistent issues of funding, ownership, maintenance and security. However, small-scale interventions entrusted to a limited group of people can have a more effective impact. This is important to keep in mind since successful urban interventions in Lagos are currently only achieved at that scale. Given the important role of women in providing water for their households as well as acting as water vendors, their technical and managerial capacities in the water-governance process need to be strengthened. Civil society or local religious institutions can help to implement safe and sustainable mini waterworks and to design a maintenance and management scheme for the local women's association. Such an approach has proven efficient in Okpoko, a self-organised slum community in the city of Onitsha, where women came together to reactivate an abandoned borehole with the financial support of the local church and are now running, through their women's association, a transparent fee collection system which secures the costs for maintenance and repairs and enables all women to access clean water at an affordable price.[15]

Such shared mini infrastructure can serve as community and governance centres, giving women the possibility to learn and to take over leadership positions, making them relevant and recognised within their communities. Equally important is the contribution and active participation of women in the officially recognised community development associations (CDAs), which are the most reliable decision-making structures at the community level, due to the general failure of the local government

14   Ebere and Abimbola, Environmental justice fieldwork, Agoro
15   Rebecca Roberts, Local Governance Strategies of Okpoko Community in Onitsha to Access Water (Abuja: Heinrich Böll Stiftung, July 20210, 13, https://ng.boell.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/Local%20governance%20strategies%20of%20Okpoko%20community%20in%20onitsha%20to%20access%20water.pdf

institutions.[16] These are the places where the needs and problems of the community are identified and where links with government agencies can easily be established. Community women need to be made aware that they are already contributing to solving many problems; they should not be seen and should not see themselves merely as passive victims of social, spatial and environmental injustice and digital inequity. On the contrary, one could say that, irrespective of the disparity in the distribution and their access to amenities, the community women in Lagos have shown tremendous resilience and adaptive capacity in the use of scarce resources, practising innovative and resource-efficient problem-solving solutions, which are important means to ensure sustainability for all.

The women should be encouraged to build on those strategies. A further suggestion to reduce the social justice gap is the introduction of innovative neighbourhood labs for women, to be organised by local volunteers and/or women's associations in cooperation with academic institutions, artists and civil society organisations. They can provide cognitive, technical and social capacity-building with the aim to shift the governance process to citizen-led approaches. This way, women would gain enough self-confidence to stand for elections in the CDAs and to support each other during such elections, gradually moving into decision-making positions. Such neighbourhood labs can also help to seek environmental justice locally. They can challenge waste-management authorities to provide alternatives to the harmful burning of daily waste or explore avenues of innovative public litigation to raise awareness of environmental cases that affect their neighbourhoods.

Lab workshop with Fabulous Urban Nigeria and women in Oworonshoki, Lagos
Photo Credit: Fabulous Urban Nigeria

16   Basirat Oyalowo, Community Development Associations in Low-Income and Informal Communities in Nigeria (Abuja: Heinrich Böll Stiftung, July 2021), https://ng.boell.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/Community%20Development%20 Associations%20in%20Low-Income%20and%20Informal%20Communities%20in%20Nigeria.pdf

4. Towards a Needs- and People-Centred Lagos State Development Plan

The field research and its conclusions demonstrate that women in Lagos have proven their ability to provide for themselves and their communities, as basic as this might be. Informal and government institutions could be available to assist them in making their responses more effective. Unfortunately, however, the new policies and approaches gradually being introduced by the city government have so far not carried along those who are most in need of such policies. The question is how to connect the different dots so that pragmatic and cost-effective solutions enable vulnerable women to participate fully and take decisions for themselves.

In this sense, we believe that our approach of evidence-based multidisciplinary research on equitable access to healthcare and water from the perspective of low-income women unveils a number of overlooked opportunities. We suggest it be extended to other priority areas like housing, green spaces and education (see Figure 1). Such an approach might also offer ways out of the many trade-offs met in urban development in Lagos, like the trade-off between the need for space for housing versus the need to protect green spaces for biodiversity, cooling and recreation, or between space needed for smooth traffic flow versus space for informal economic activity – and again, always viewed from the perspective of low-income women. A update of the Lagos State Development Plan towards the years 2030–2050 done through such a feminist lens could lead toward a development vision, policies and projects that are rooted in the potential of the women to design, plan and shape their city in such a way that the needs and ambitions of all its residents are considered. To be fully inclusive, it will be indispensable to look separately at women and girls who migrated to Lagos from other Nigerian or African regions, especially those recognised as internally displaced persons – currently, their needs are completely ignored at all political and social levels.

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