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WHY YOU LOVE THE ANALOGUE WORLD

Typewriters, LPs and new music on cassette tapes. The analogue age is reborn in counter-cultural enclaves around us. The trend, however, is about much more than simply hipster fashion and retro. Read why on page 12.



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KINYOZI

PHONE CHARGING

AND

REPAIR

KINYOZI

PHONE CHARGING

REPAIR

KINYOZI

Kenya's future includes a doubling of the population before 2050 and massive urbanisation, moving half the population into the big cities. The nation has a great development potential, but there are both physical and technical challenges, writes the author, a South African futurist.

“TO GROW INTO THE FUTURE, KENYA DOESN'T NEED EUROPEAN AID WORKERS WITH A MINDSET BASED ON AID-GIVING, BUT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE”

KENYA'S TECHNOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL FUTURE

By Jan Bezuidenhout

By 2030, Kenya is forecasted to add 25 million people to its current approximate population of 40 million, and by 2050 to have more than doubled its population to 96 million. Urbanisation will be a major factor. By 2030, the total number of Kenyan citizens in urban areas should be 21.75 million. By that time, cities and urban areas will have had to start gearing up for an even greater upswing between 2030 and 2050, when the total urbanised population could be 46.6 million, or 48.1 per cent of the total population.¹

Economic opportunities for citizens of new cities could lie in the field of ICT technologies (ICT is concerned with the storage, retrieval, manipulation, transmission or receipt of digital data) and biotechnologies. According to the World Bank, Kenya has the largest mobile money platform in the world:

“Kenya has positioned itself to become a global ICT hub, attracting investors who want to extend the ICT revolution domestically as well as look for applications in other lesser developed countries and emerging markets in Africa”.²

The mobile telephone net is the first pan-African infrastructural solution. Perhaps this is why the mobile phone has a special status for Kenyans as well as other Africans, including for paying with the so-called M-pesos: on the photo, a solar cell-driven telephone charger.

County governments will also have to spend money on ICT systems. The county councils of Nakuru and Makueni are cited as examples of ICT being used to improve local governance. As an illustration, the 52 councillors of Makueni were taken on a day-long ICT training course. Those who had no email addresses received help with opening Gmail accounts. There is still a long way to go in addressing underlying problems, as only 16 of the councillors replied to an email they were orally alerted about, and only 6 replied with all the details requested in the email.³

Another underlying and yet crucial problem is Kenya's political system. How will it cope with urbanisation, the demand for a greater upswing and economic opportunities in the future?

DEVOLVED GOVERNMENT

In Africa, many countries have borders that had been drawn up and agreed by colonial powers, with little regard for local socio-cultural conditions. After 1960, as most African states gained independence, a number of them experienced conflict related to attempted secession, or managed to change their borders – either uniting into a single state or splitting into two. For instance, Biafra, in Nigeria, fought a war of secession during the 1970s, whereas Senegal and Gambia attempted to unify from 1982 to 1989. Eritrea seceded from Ethiopia in 1993 and South Sudan gained independence from the Sudan on 9 July 2011. Most recently, the government in Mali is struggling to contain the aspirations of the Tuareg. Africa grapples with the 'nation states' it inherited from the colonial powers and numerous other examples of conflicts with a regional slant exist. As a futurist, you can try to predict the next border conflict, or you could look more constructively at other possibilities, such as an alternative political system.

Kenya recently crossed a threshold of major political change. The 2010 Constitution of Kenya has provided for a system of devolved government to make a clean break from a past characterised by central government domination. 47 counties are currently being established, each with its own governor and assembly, to be elected by citizens of those counties in polls that will most probably take place early in 2013. Such devolution of power could address the needs of diverse pressure and ethnic groups to participate in governing their own affairs and to take control of their own destinies. Furthermore, a growing population may be better served by improved institutions at a sub-national government level.

Devolution of government powers to structures of local govern-

ment in Kenya has this pay off: it is important to recognise its limitations as a solution that contains, rather than eliminates, diversity.⁴ Chances for 'unity in diversity' exist, but Kenya remains a country that is divided along entrenched ethnic lines. The membership of Bantu, Nilotic and Cushitic groups in the first place, followed by various ethnic groups within said groups, are relevant. Will devolution of powers create 'unity in diversity' or will it exaggerate existing divisions? This is one of the major variables that may impact the future of devolved government in Kenya.

POWER-HUNGRY INDIVIDUALS

Even if a system of devolved government is prescribed by the current Kenyan constitution, the culture of the government administration paying allegiance to the views of the head of state will still play a role in the future. Will the next head of state be a true democrat and provide the necessary space for the county governors and their governments to deliver on their mandates, or will he/she try to centralise power back into the national executive?

The removal of power-hungry individuals from the centre towards the counties could assist to dilute power at the top and to draw away attention from the position of head of state. This position was previously, and might still to some extent be, seen as the major prize that an ethnic group must take in order to access resources of state. Positions such as county governor and senior positions in the county governments might now also

get attention from those seeking power.⁵

If all goes according to plan, a large economic injection could be provided by the expenditure of the county governments, which will, as prescribed by the constitution, be receiving at least 15 per cent of the total national revenue, up from the maximum of 2.5 per cent provided to local authorities previously. There are concerns that the county public servants will not have the correct skills to deliver on their mandate and implement the substantial funding that will be available to them. A very common problem in Africa is that highly skilled people are drawn to work for overseas aid agencies and the private sector. Local government structures are not able to draw the right skills due to the lower salaries and inferior working conditions that they offer. In Kenya, the substantial additional funding available to them could possibly be part of the solution in acquiring the best skills available. Merely moving current employees of the provincial administration and local authorities into positions they are not qualified for will not be the right avenue to take in the long term.⁶

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What lessons can Kenya
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The next elections (2017/2018) will be a crucial measure of progress. If counties didn't manage to deliver on the promises made during the first elections, their assemblies and governors might be recalled by the voting population. In contrast, ethnicity seems to play such a strong role in voting patterns that the same government might be re-elected, regardless of its performance.⁷

ASSISTANCE AND INVESTMENT

Two questions are crucial for the future. What lessons can Kenya learn from more developed countries' systems of local government, and what does the future hold for Kenya as an emerging market?

An answer to the first would be that the system of governance in Kenya may have already taken too much from its colonial heritage. Taking positives from African traditional practices along with keeping the positives that were taken from the 'West', in combination, may bring about the correct mix. If more developed countries have something to offer, it is most probably not in the form of European aid workers with a mindset based on aid-giving, but rather people with experience of local government in

their own countries and who understand the practicalities of running a municipality or town council. For instance technical assistance could be provided for:

- a fully functioning parking payment system in the Nairobi central business district
- the implementation and maintenance of an automated billing system for municipal, energy and water accounts
- general town planning services.

The above examples may also lead to investment and business opportunities. Investment in mobile ICT technologies was mentioned earlier, and the growth in population during the next 30 to 40 years will also require large investment in appropriate infrastructure. In both the cases of assistance and investment, a well-functioning government is the most important enabling factor. The Kenyan constitution of 2010 provides a broad agreement for the country regarding its system of government. It is now up to Kenyans to make it work; what is on paper alone is not sufficient for a positive outcome. There is an opportunity, now, to do the right things to enable a better future. ■

KENYA IN FRONT WITH MOBILE MONEY

Africa is the home of nearly one billion people, and about half of them now have a mobile phone. In 2010, Africa surpassed Western Europe in the number of mobile connections (according to Wireless Intelligence, a global database for information regarding the mobile market). Since the mobile net is the first pan-African infrastructure ever, it has made sense to use it for more than just talking. One example is the Safaricom telecoms company, which in 2007 launched M-Pesa. M is for mobile, and Pesa is Swahili for money. In its first year, M-Pesa gained one million users in Kenya, and by 2011, the number was 12 million (of the nation's 40 million). Kenyans use M-Pesa for (among other things) sending money to each other and paying bills, taxis and groceries. Transactions via mobile phones have also proven beneficial to the local communities, since they are cheaper and easier than bank transfers. Since 2007, more M-Pesa suppliers have joined the game, including Yu Cash and Orange Money, which are used by about one million more Kenyans. With its total of 13 million users of mobile money, Kenya thus accounts for about half the world market for mobile money transactions.

NOTES

- 1 United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Population estimates and predictions*, available at http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/unpp/panel_indicators.htm
- 2 World Bank, *World Development Indicators Database*, available at <http://data.worldbank.org/>
- 3 M.C. Werner, V.A. Otieno and J.W. Wakhungu, *Kenya's urban development in the 21st century: The call for innovative initiatives from local authorities* (ACT Press, Nairobi, 2011)
- 4 Othieno Nyanjom, 'Devolution in Kenya's new Constitution. Constitution Working Paper No. 4' Society for International Development, Nairobi, available at <http://www.sidint.net/docs/WP4.pdf> (30 March 2012)
- 5 Interview, Muthaka Kangu, Chairperson, Task Force on Devolved Government in Kenya. Nakuru, Kenya, 11 January 2012
- 6 Interview, Winnie Mitullah, *University of Nairobi, Institute for Development Studies and member of task force for devolved government*,
- 7 Interview, Adams Oloo, Department of Political Sciences, University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya, 12 January 2012.

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