A preview of
The State of African Cities 2014
Re-imagining sustainable urban transitions

Nairobi, 5 December 2013
State of the African Cities reports

2014 (E & F)
African cities: often analyzed from a perspective that sees urbanism as progressing towards the example set by Western paradigms

Global climate and environmental change; increasing awareness of water, food or energy insecurities

→ dire need for new visions on what good urban management for the 21st century entails
A continent in transition – Demographic transition

- By 2030, the total African population will exceed that of Europe, South and North America

- Overarching challenge: Massive population growth in the context of widespread poverty
- Demographic dividend potential: By 2040, Africa’s youth is projected to constitute the largest labor force in the world → cornerstone of development or a major socio-political risk
Urban transition

- Least urbanized, fastest urbanizing continent
- More than 40% of Africa’s people are urbanized
  2060 projection: 60%
- By 2050, African cities will need to accommodate 3 times as many people as today

→ African urban characteristics present significant opportunities for sustainable transition pathways
  - Youth bulge
  - informal economies
  - community-based service delivery models
  - natural resources endowments
  - mobile technologies for micro-finance
Economic transition

- By 2020 the GDP of African countries is projected to almost double from its 2008 real GDP value of USD 1.6 trillion
- Emerging middle classes and significant economic growth
- Booming cities are stimulating many nations’ construction industries
- Massive poverty persists & inequality has worsened
Political transitions

• Growing number of democratically-elected governments

• Continued post-independence statehood formation towards truly democratic, participatory and inclusive governance systems
Climate and environmental changes

- Higher frequency and greater severity of cataclysmic events
- Due to their intense concentration of populations, assets and functions, urban areas are particularly at risk

➔ These transitions should be interpreted as opportunities for deep review of African nations’ policies and strategies
Re-imagine urban transitions

Comparatively late onset of urban transition in Africa: Opportunities for embracing new urban paradigms that are more conducive to the needs of African cities and nations

Opportunity to leapfrog conventional urban development paths to greener urban economies
• Greener solutions
• Climate change adaptation, vulnerability reduction
• Technological innovation
• Economic development decoupled from the dependence of fossil fuels and carbon emissions
→ Integrated into strategic and spatial planning towards a socially just and inclusive city
→ Economic development translated into broadly-shared wellbeing
Re-imagine urban transitions

- The need for location specific, tailored interventions
- Increasing need for cooperation
  - between cities - between sub-regions - between countries

Re-imagining sustainable urban transitions calls for visionary champions