

Division or Development? Missing Link #12: A New Road Through Kibera



“Hatupingi maendeleo lakini tunataka usawa na haki idumishwe.”

“We are not against development, but we want equality and the rights of the affected to be observed.” – resident of Lindi village, Kibera

In January of 2016, the Government of Kenya and the Kenya Urban Roads Authority [announced the award of contracts for a new link road](#) to connect the recently completed Southern “Langata” Bypass with the Ngong Road and the Kilimani Ring Road. This “Missing Link #12” will fill a clear gap in the city’s rapidly evolving road network and go a long way towards addressing congestion in Nairobi. However, the road’s direct pathway through the Kibera settlement - home to some 300,000 people - presents a number of challenges and questions.

On the 3rd of July the Secretary of the National Buildings Inspectorate issued an eviction notice for all “illegal” structures within the road’s path, despite the prior issue of a title deed to the Nubian community for 288 acres of Kibera land, including the road reserve. As the removal of homes, businesses, and schools to clear the path for construction has started over the last couple of weeks, it remains unclear how the new road will integrate with the settlement, and whether evicted residents will be compensated or supported as they relocate.

The “Master” plan(s)

The proposed link has featured in plans for upgrading Nairobi’s road network for several decades, and has been a subject of discussion and speculation in Kibera for many years. It was identified in the 2006 Master Plan for Urban Transport in Nairobi (NUTRANS) as a medium-term (2015) target. Residents showed KDI some of the older plans from the Ministry of Roads in 1989, shown on the next page.

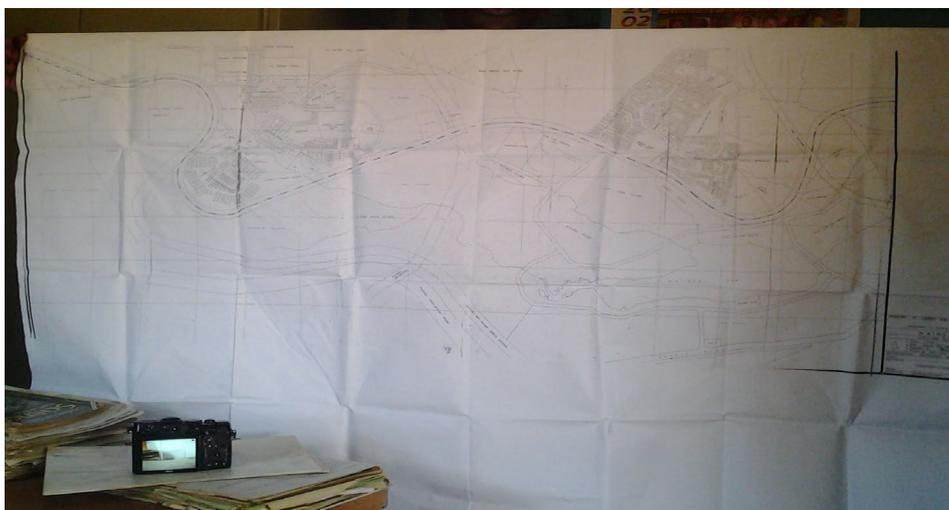
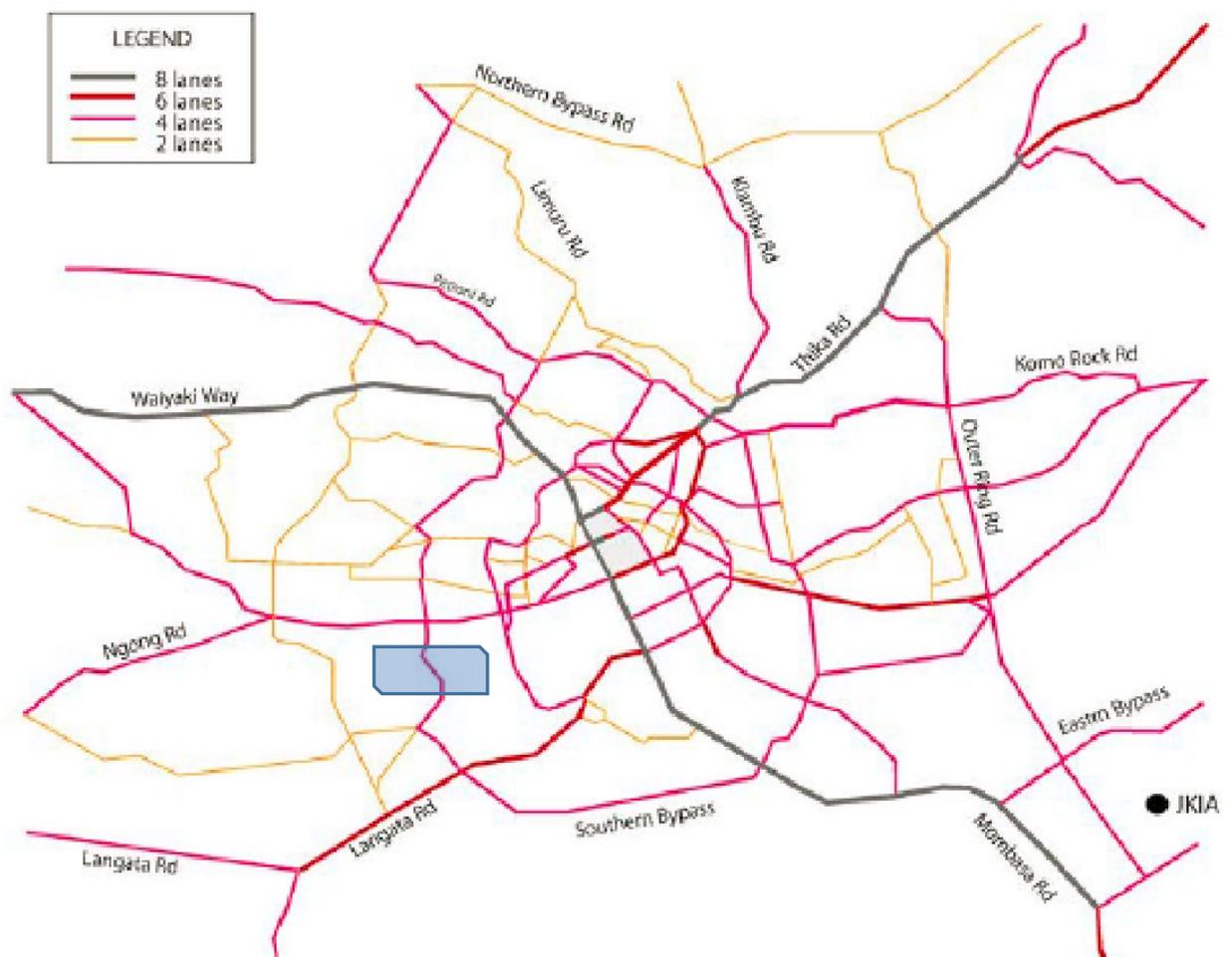


Photo: Amos Wandera and Pascal Kipkemboi, 2017

In the [Draft 2014 Nairobi Integrated Urban Development Master Plan \(NIUPLAN\)](#), the road is designated as a Medium Term (2023) objective (Table 7.1.17) and shown within the Future Road Network 2030 as a 4-lane “Major Arterial Road” (Figures 7.1.25 and 7.1.26). This classification is key to understanding the nature and purpose of the road. According to NIUPLAN, Major Arterial Roads are “for through traffic and relatively long distance movements [...] linking district headquarters and other major designated towns”. In other words, the link road will be a key piece of transportation infrastructure for travel both within and through Nairobi. From a macro planning perspective, it will provide critical radial connectivity for the city and reduce the pressure on the axial East-West roads, which are routinely clogged.



Since the Southern Bypass was completed in 2016, the approach to Kibera on both the southern (Langata) and northern (Kilimani) sides has progressed with the removal of informal business kiosks adjacent to Prestige Plaza, where the road will eventually connect to Ngong Road and the Kilimani Ring Road. The video below shows the Langata (southern) approach to Kibera. From there, it will climb the steep hill through

Lindi village and head towards the center of Nairobi, the Golf Course, and the District Commissioner's office, where it will connect to the Kilimani approach.

While these plans carry the promise of a more mobile, more connected, and more prosperous Nairobi, they also ignore one inconvenient fact. The link road bifurcates Kibera, one of Nairobi's major residential areas and an extremely dense informal settlement that faces a number of challenges. There has been no clear indication of how the road will connect to or serve this disadvantaged population, and next to no engagement with the community. As road marking beacons started appearing in Kibera in January 2016, KDI began investigating further by tracking the road Right of Way (ROW) on the ground and talking with the residents, businesses and school owners that would be affected.



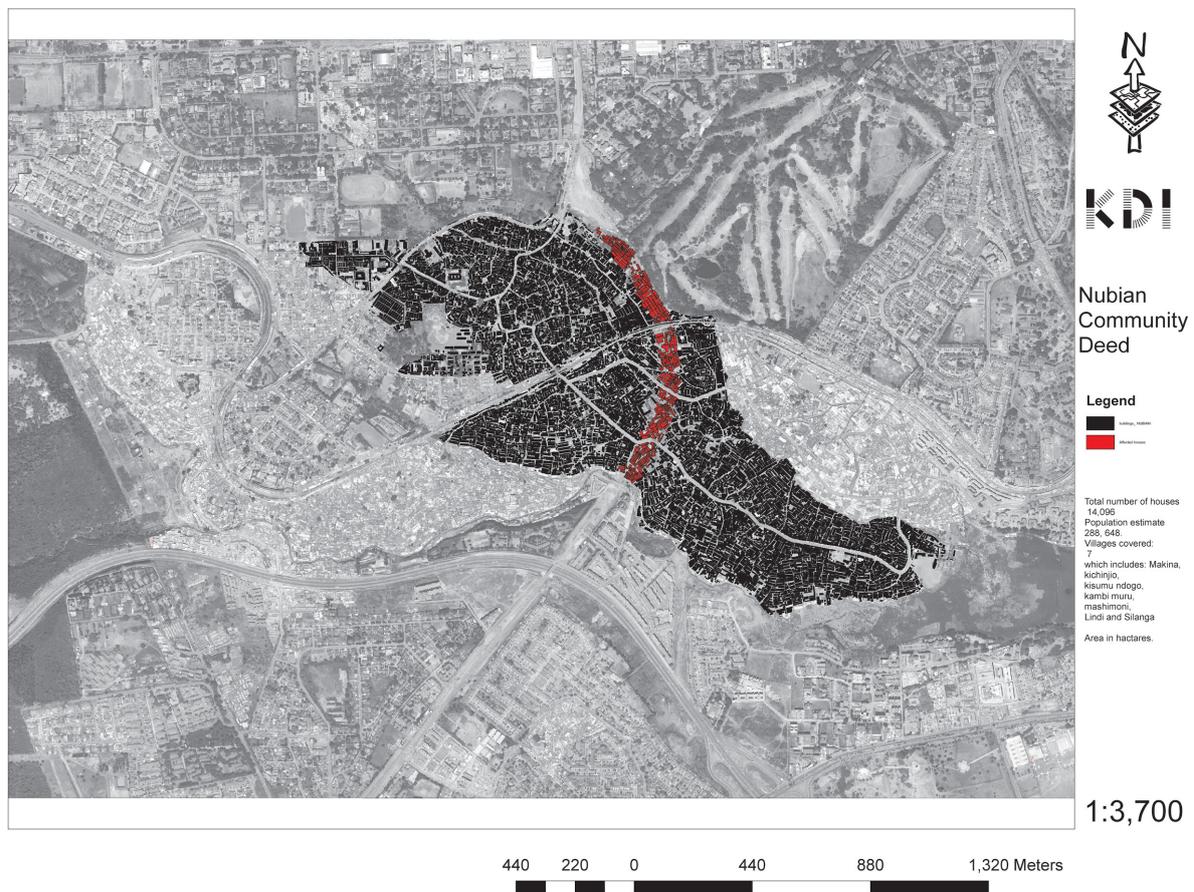
On the Ground

In February 2016, KDI coordinators Amos Wandera and Pascal Kipkemboi tracked the locations of the yellow road marking beacons with GPS. The alignment of the beacons is given in the image below, showing a 60m wide ROW running from Langata and the new National Housing Corporation projects, through the Lindi, Laini Saba, and Makina villages, to the District Commissioner's compound ("DC").

It is assumed that the beacons denote the outer boundary of housing clearances - though this is not confirmed and is being actively contested on the ground. The road carriageway itself is assumed to be in the order of 12-18m, with space on either side for sidewalks and bike lanes (which is how the northern sections of the ring road function

above Kibera), plus access for vehicles and materials during construction. However, it should be noted that the total distance between the properties that lie either side of the Kilimani Ring Road (to which this link will connect) is only 30m - raising the question of why this ROW is twice as wide, and what will happen to the land that lies within the additional 30m marked out by the beacons.

In addition, the road passes directly through the [Nubian land claim that was recognised by the government last year](#) and which is shown in black in the below map.



From our own GIS data based on aerial imagery from January 2017, we have counted 598 residential structures within the ROW. Extrapolating from our demographic data, this represents a night-time population of approximately 11,500 people. In addition, the road will impact a significant number of schools (13) and public facilities, including Mashimoni Squatters “Blue” Primary, one of the oldest and largest schools in Kibera, and Makina Self Help Primary. This [story map](#) shows some of the schools and communities that will be affected by the bypass.

Impacts on both housing and public facilities are of course unavoidable, given the scale of this project and the density of Kibera’s structures. However, there has been no planning on how to provide alternative facilities for the hundreds of school kids affected.

As a Lindi resident notes: "It's very clear that the road is passing through all the schools that we have around... Double tragedy: finding a new settlement (home), also finding a school for the kids too."



The letter from Mashimoni Primary School on the next page demonstrates how the demolition of just one of the schools affected will impact hundreds of children.



MASHIMONI SQUATTERS PRIMARY SCHOOL

P.O.BOX 76153-00508,

YAYA CENTRE,

NAIROBI, KENYA.

Mobile: 0716 583975

Date: Thursday 12th July 2018.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

It is with deep regret and a very heavy heart, we are writing to inform you that Mashimoni Squatters Primary School will close on Friday 13 July 2018 until further notice.

This situation is entirely due to the decision by the Kenyan Government to demolish a large section of the school to make way for the extension of the Ngong Road -Kibera- Kungu Karumba- Langata link

As you are aware, we have been fighting to divert the course of the road for almost two years but, last Friday, we received official notice that work to demolish buildings will start on 16th July 2018. After that, construction of the road will commence.

We have spent the last week attempting to have this decision reversed but have not succeeded.

The demolition affects the majority of our buildings and, therefore, we have no choice but to close the school. Enough buildings will be left to house Class 8 for the remainder of the school year in order that they can sit their final exams.

For clarification, we will receive no compensation from government for the road going through the land. We are not the owners of the title.

As a charity, we are devastated to have to make this decision. We have always been committed to the children of Kibera and have invested in the growth of Mashimoni Squatters Primary School for more than 10 years. It was our deep desire that the school should continue for many years to come but the situation is beyond our control.

We would like to thank all the pupils and parents, past and present, who have helped make Mashimoni Squatters Primary School such a special place of learning. Great things have been achieved there and the legacy of the education of more than 1,500 children over the last 11 years will live forever.

NB. In light of the above, all parents are invited for a meeting on Friday 13th July in the school dining hall by 4pm for further deliberations.

Yours faithfully,

Ferdinand Muzaya

Head teacher.

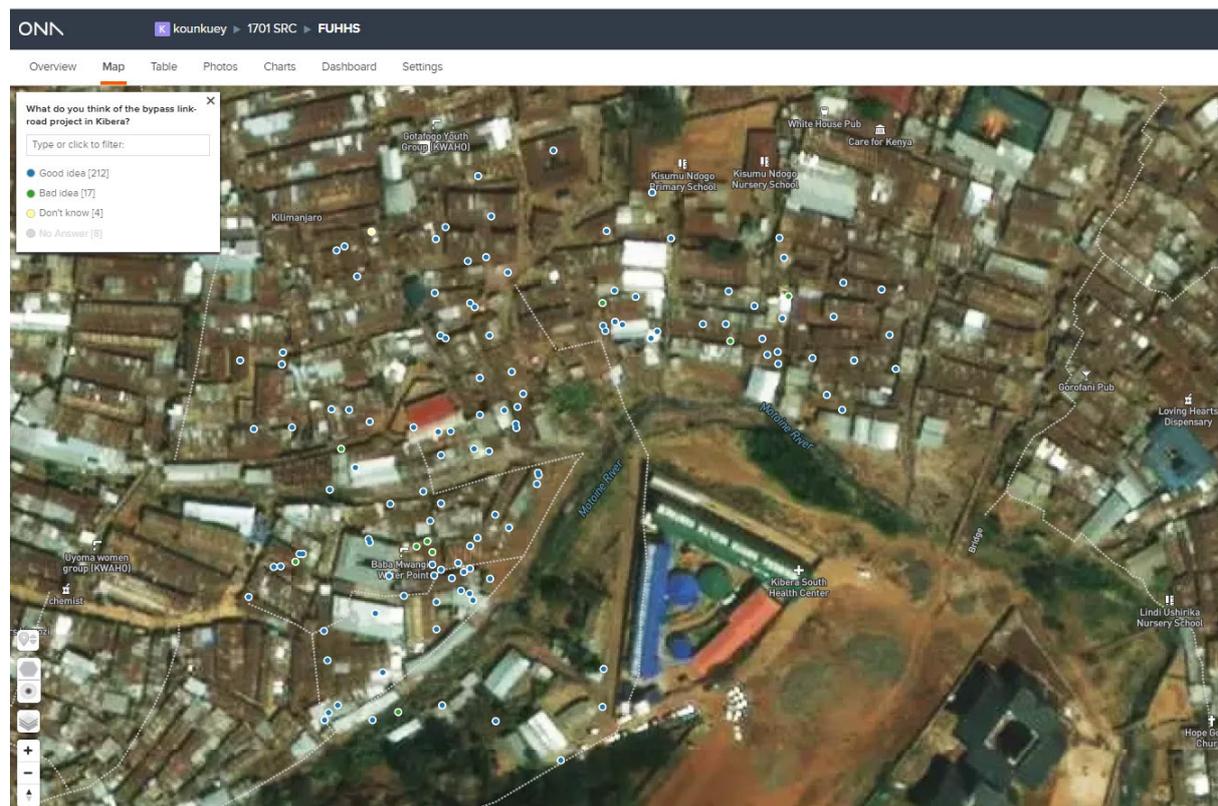
HEADTEACHER
MASHIMONI SQUATTERS PRS SCH

Date: 12/7/2018

Signature

Another Lindi resident noted the pressure this will put on families: “We already have very few schools within, and the populations of kids is so high, until they all don't fit in classrooms. Where are we going to take our kids?”.

At the same time many residents are in support of the road, as shown below through data collected in late 2017 by KDI from households in Sokomoko immediately adjacent to the road reserve. They see the value of the road for Nairobi, but also have the legitimate expectation that it should bring benefits for them too.



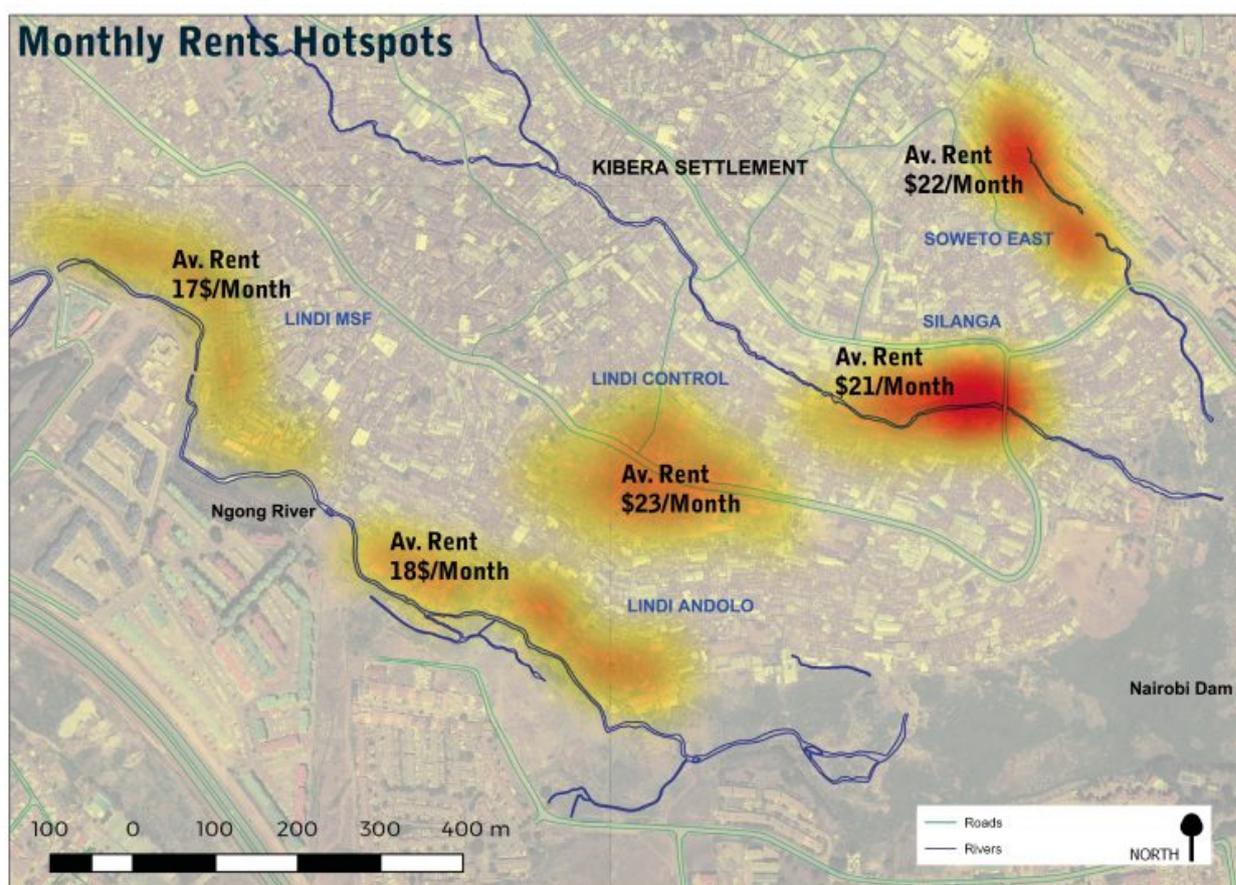
Missing Links, Contrasting Approaches

Changes to the alignment of the road, and therefore its impact, have also been a source of frustration, along with the lack of transparency/communication on when residents will need to relocate and if they will be supported in re-settlement. A mother of four who has lived in Mashimoni village for 12 years said: “Nobody has talked to us. Nobody knows where the road is passing. Here or there. We went to the D.O.’s office but we did not find more information there. Even though the notice says the 16th we are not sure if it will happen or not.”

How the new road will connect to the existing (and recently upgraded) road network, and how it will align with other slum upgrading initiatives in the community, are also open questions even as demolitions begin. We have been exploring some of the

opportunities for linkages with recently completed upgrading projects through our previous research.

Under the NYS “Kibera Slum Upgrade Initiative”, a number of existing accessways were upgraded between 2015 and 2016. In our [2017 paper on slum upgrading](#) and road widening in Kibera we noted that “the support for the road widening and formalization, and the speed with which it occurred, built trust in the government’s ability to deliver projects and will leave a transformative legacy in Kibera. The improvement in access to Kibera has enabled the functioning of many small businesses (e.g. local shops) that have also engaged and benefited youth (in particular matatu (minibus) SACCOs).” While these upgrading projects were not without significant controversy, the majority of our respondents across all our research sites highly valued elements of the NYS project, particularly the youth employment and road widening components, and were keen for its return. As a result of the road widening, some of the settlement’s highest rents can now be found adjacent to the new roads - see rental data collected by KDI in 2015 from 963 households across Kibera below.



Another sticking point is the railway and associated railway housing constructed by the Government of Kenya and the World Bank. How will “Missing Link #12” interact with the railway and the newly constructed housing beside it? Organised by [Muungano wa Wanavijiji](#) and [AMT](#), the community consultation process for this upgrading project has been rightly praised - but urban connectivity remains a question. Local organizations consulted during our study “expressed concerns about the long-term strategy for access across the railway tracks... and that connectivity and cohesion between different villages might be affected”. These concerns for connectivity through and across such a large upgrading project are emerging again as the road ROW is drawn across the Kiberan landscape, effectively dividing the settlement in two.

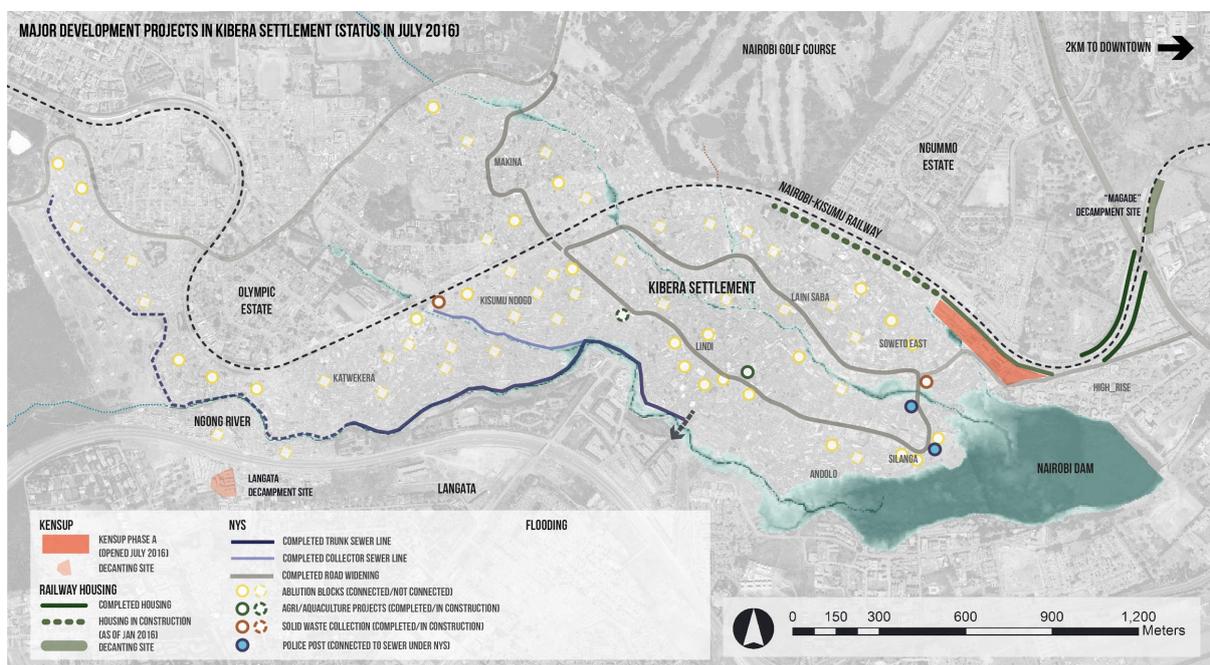
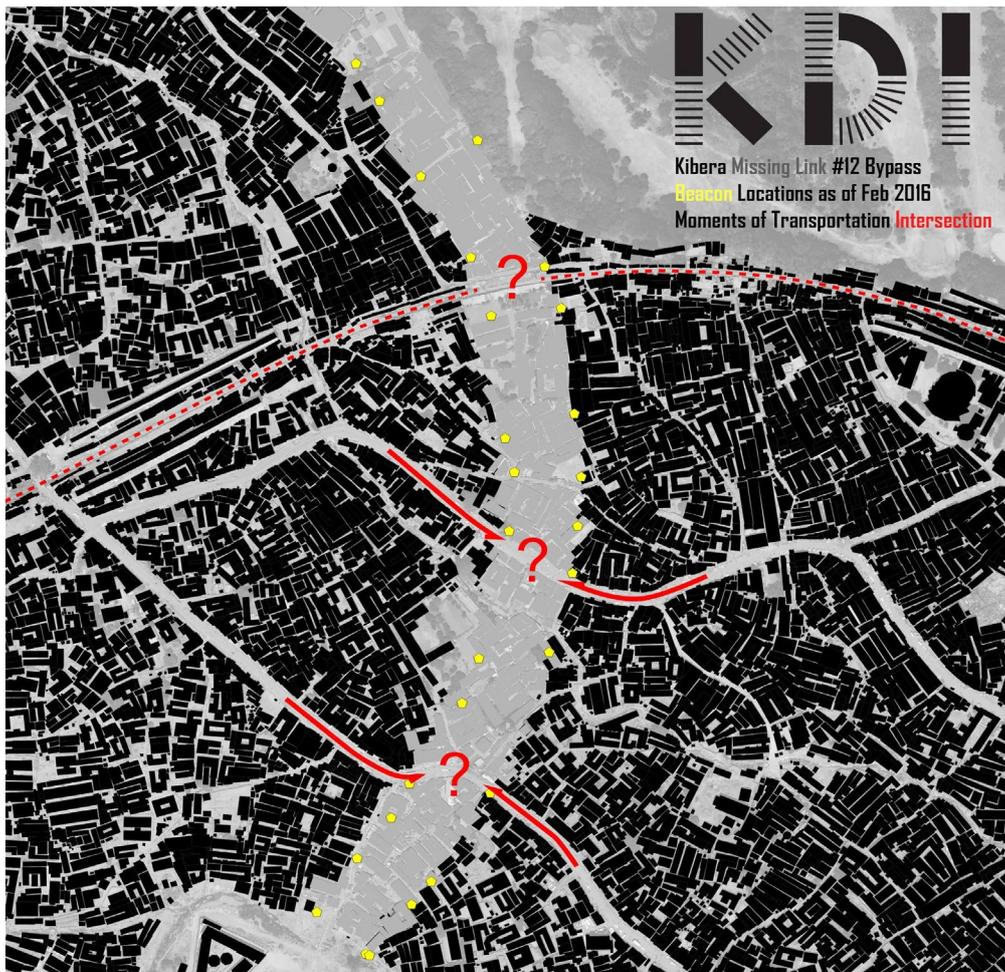


Image: Map 2 (Joe Mulligan and Amos Wandera), from Mitra et al, 2017, “Developing risk or resilience? Effects of slum upgrading on the social contract and social cohesion in Kibera, Nairobi”, *Environment & Urbanization, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)*.

While there is no question of the need for a major arterial road to increase the capacity of Nairobi's overburdened transportation network, there is also need - and potential - for intersections and connections within the Kibera settlement. Indeed, the northern sections of the road around Kibera Drive and Ngong Road demonstrate how the new carriageway could link with existing roads. There is a critical opportunity here to create an integrated access plan that serves all of Nairobi, including one of its biggest neighbourhoods. Some of these linkage points are highlighted below.



The relative success of the NYS and Railway projects can be attributed to the levels of participation and consultation achieved with residents. Our research and experience show that these projects enjoyed greater support from residents because they included processes that build the social contract, such as meaningful consultation with residents and accountability mechanisms that enabled them to air and resolve grievances. An important blog post by [Nairobi Planning Innovations](#) on the Outer Ring Road further highlights how consultation needs to be broad and deep to avoid missing key groups and the risk of significantly underrepresenting informal businesses and services.

The Future of Kibera

“This road is good for us... it's good development, but there are a lot of propagandas coming with it.” - Lindi resident

Not only do the projects described above represent the beginnings of an access network that could be leveraged for future integrated upgrades in Kibera, but they also stand as precedents for effective citizen-government collaboration in Kibera. Drawing from these lessons, the transformative “Missing Link #12” project could and should take into account the livelihoods and wellbeing of affected communities through active engagement. Support for government projects is high in some parts of Kibera, and the need for the road is widely recognised even within affected areas. However, despite consultation and agreements with residents, the Nubian community, and the various schools and public amenities that stand in the ROW’s path, the concerns and rights of residents have not been adequately addressed.



Image: Youth painting alternative clearance instructions in Kibera (17th July 2018). Pascal Kipkemboi.

In the last few weeks, residents have begun to clear the way for the road. At the same time there remains confusion on the alignment. This week, a number of youth have been engaged by structure owners to re-mark the road reserve in contradiction with the 2016 beacons in what some see as a probably unsuccessful attempt to shift the route.

Statements released by the [The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights \(KNCHR\) and media](#) on compensation and resettlement have not resolved contention around the route of the road or the question of support for affected residents. The situation on the ground is consequently still dynamic.

As the situation develops, KDI will continue to monitor the project and engage constructively with stakeholders on all sides. We will be encouraging a dialogue on the merits and drawbacks of the project, promoting a more inclusive, integrated vision for the road, and advocating for a process that recognises the rights and needs of residents.

Do get in touch if you want further information from our side!

The KDI Kenya Team (Joe, Amos, Pascal, Ibra, Charles, Sabrina, Rosie)



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