

# Joel Kotkin - Welcome To The Billion-Man Slum



[www.doctorswithoutborders.org](http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org)

*dailybeast.com*. August 2014. As megacities (urban areas with more than 10 million people) mushroom across the globe, we need to start thinking about how to make cities better, not simply bigger.

When our urban pundit class speaks of the future of cities, we are offered glittering images of London, New York, Singapore, or Shanghai. In reality, the future for most of the world's megacities—places with more than 10 million people—may look more like Dhaka, Mumbai, or Kinshasa: dirty, poverty- and disease-ridden, and environmentally disastrous.

Harvard's Ed Glaeser suggests that megacities grow because "globalization" and "technological change have increased the returns to being smart." And to be sure, megacities such as Jakarta, Kolkata (in India), Mumbai, Manila, Karachi, and Lagos—all among the top 25 most populous cities in the world—present a great opportunity for large corporate development firms and thrilling treasure troves for both journalists and academic researchers. But surely there's a better alternative to celebrating misery, as one prominent author did recently in a *Foreign Policy* [article](#) bizarrely entitled "In Praise of Slums."

Read more: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/the-billion-man-slum.html>

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# **Notre Dame Helps Build Affordable Housing In Haiti**

Following the Jan. 12, 2010, earthquake, the attention and concern of the world was focused on Haiti. As is often the case, as time went on, the focus on Haiti became less intense as the world moved on to the most recent natural disaster. However, the plight of Haitians has remained a driving concern for a group of University of Notre Dame engineering professors and students who are working to bring about a novel housing solution in that country.

Read more: <http://ntrda.me/1kUVIYq>

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# **Jeanice Hortence N'guellet - Urbanisme : Plus De 50% De Constructions Privées Au Congo Sont Sans Autorisation**



Photo: [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

*diac-congo.com. 2014, Août.* Les règles de l'urbanisme sont applicables tant par les acteurs du secteur public que par ceux du privé. Elles font obligation à quiconque désire entreprendre une construction en matériaux durables d'obtenir une autorisation administrative auprès des services compétents. Malheureusement, cette exigence ne se constate que sur le papier, car sur le terrain, nombreux sont les citoyens qui la foulent aux pieds.

À Brazzaville, comme dans d'autres agglomérations du Congo, plusieurs quartiers naissent vite et se dégradent aussi vite à cause de l'occupation anarchique des espaces. Les propriétaires fonciers et terriens, principaux acteurs dans ces ventes délibérées des terrains, opèrent sans grand respect des normes en la matière.

*À quand le rétablissement de l'ordre ?*

Le phénomène de l'occupation anarchique des terres est loin d'être éradiqué au Congo, malgré les lois et règlements pris par les pouvoirs publics. Le phénomène prend de l'ampleur alors qu'au Congo, la terre, patrimoine inaliénable et signe de reconnaissance d'une nation, semble de plus en plus mal gérée. La léthargie et le laxisme constatés dans la mise en application d'une véritable politique cadastrale laisse présager l'absence d'un département en charge de ces questions.

Read more: <http://www.adiac-congo.com/constructions-privees-au-congo>

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## **Villes-Noires - In A World Of Conversions, What Is The Urban To Be Governed?**



At the Venice Biennale of 2013, the Danish Pavilion presented a video installation of Jesper Just that portrayed three black men navigating a large exurban development, Tianducheng, some 200 miles from Shanghai. Tianducheng is built as an immense replica of Paris, or more

precisely, an early modernist rendition of Paris. The city was initiated in the mid-2000's but remains largely under construction, and despite the aspirations for elegance, the rapidity and cheapness of the construction process renders much of the built landscape as already ruined. Additionally, the inhabitants of the city have largely altered the supposedly Parisian characteristics of the place, removing balconies, balustrades, and reworking the surfaces of buildings in order to make them more functional and long lasting. The black male characters assume different positions in relationship to this environment. One man is filmed walking through the expanse of the city as if carrying out some obligatory rite of passage that needs to be expeditiously experienced and then disposed of. Another presses his face closely to the surface of the buildings, inserting his body into their curvatures as if awaiting the words of some oracle, some secret to be revealed.

The exhibition demonstrates the simultaneously obdurate and exhausted imaginary of city form, the unyielding yet never kept promise of urban life. In contrast to the barriers and high costs entailed for Africans to access urban Europe—the supposed embodiment of “well-being”—the Chinese have mass-produced the surface representations of that well being as cheap knock-offs. But instead of simply bemoaning the kitsch of such simulations or the ways in which simulations take on a reality more real than their referents, the “provision” of Paris in Tianducheng offers a way of activating different networks of urban comparison and thus potential.

*Read more:*

*Part one:* <http://villes-noires.tumblr.com/one>

*Part Two:* <http://villes-noires.tumblr.com/two>

*Part Three:* <http://villes-noires.tumblr.com/three>

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# Paul Goble - A \$50 Billion Ghost Town - Sochi Six Months After Putin Games - Photographer Aleksandr Belensky



“The outcome was a Chinese pseudo-Europe, naturally. Only today nobody already needs it anymore,” Alexander Belenkiy writes.

*interpretermag.com. August 2014.* Photographer Aleksandr Belensky has documented what many observers feared: despite spending more than 50 billion US dollars on the Sochi Olympics, Vladimir Putin has left Sochi not the vital place he promised but a ghost town where there are almost no tourists and where much of the infrastructure is already decaying.

On his [Livejournal page](#), Belensky has posted more than 30 pictures to back up his description of Sochi six months after the games concluded, a place which he suggests was “simply condemned to become a ghost” now that Putin, Russia and the world have moved on to other things.

Belensky’s pictures tell his story, but he provides brief commentaries for each of them, and they too are instructive. He notes that it isn’t the case that there is no

one about. One can sometimes see three or even as many as five people if one looks closely. “But the place is lifeless and isn’t working at even five percent of capacity.”

Read & see more: <http://www.interpretermag.com/ghost-town-sochi>

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## **Christine Mungai - Big Surprises: Why African Cities Should Look At Slums As The ‘New Normal’**



mgafrica.com

Photo: Flickr/Meena Kadri

*mgafrica.com. August 2014.* It’s the mantra of urban public policy in Africa: *Slums are bad*. Everyone should live in a decent house that doesn’t let in the cold and rain, has clean water to drink, and not have to jump rivers of sewage to get home. But the story isn’t as straightforward as that—scratching past the surface can challenge some of the assumptions held about Africa’s “informal settlements”, as they are euphemistically called.

The proportion of city dwellers who live in slums can be staggeringly high in Africa—in most of western, eastern and central Africa, more than 50% of city residents live in slums, and it can be as high as 80% in Mozambique, Angola and Central African Republic (CAR).

The stereotypical image of a slum is that of a squalid, overcrowded settlement of

dilapidated metal-and-cardboard shacks.

But some African cities “hide” their slums well. In Addis Ababa, for example, some 40% of the housing stock is formal, yet a quarter of those in supposedly good formal housing actually live in slum-like conditions—a quarter lack access to toilets, a third share toilets with more than six families, and 34% rely on public water taps that have unreliable supply.

Read more: <http://mgafrika.com/article/surprises-from-the-slums>