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**Article:**

Hammett, D., Eborka, K., Thontteh, E. et al. (2026) Peace as governmentality: systemic violence in the urban governance of migration. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*. ISSN: 2399-6544

<https://doi.org/10.1177/23996544261464875>

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# Peace as governmentality: Systemic violence in the urban governance of migration

EPC: Politics and Space

2026, Vol. 0(0) 1–19

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DOI: 10.1177/23996544261464875

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Daniel Hammett<sup>1,2</sup> , Kennedy Eborka<sup>3</sup>, Esther Thontteh<sup>4</sup>  and  
Fana Gebresenbet<sup>5</sup> 

## Abstract

This paper investigates the complex, contested nature of order-making in rapidly expanding African cities, focusing on the intersection of hybrid governance and everyday peace. Extending the urban turn in peace studies we examine how peace is sought and realised amidst rapid urbanization and social tensions in ‘everyday’ Nigerian cities. Drawing on qualitative and ethnographic data from a cross-section of cities – Lagos, Lokoja/Obajana, and Jos – our findings highlight the need to recognise urban peace as being plural *and* both spatially and temporally fragmented. Focussing on the intersections of everyday peace(s) with hybrid and civic governmentality, we argue for a conceptual move to “mosaics of urbans peaces” as a means of deepening understandings of the everyday negotiations and realities of peace within rapidly urbanising spaces. This move positions urban peace as being constituted as a plurality of “peaces” that are continually negotiated, often partial, and inextricably linked to the territorialization of power rooted in hybrid governance systems involving state and non-state agents including traditional leaders, youth organizations, and vigilante groups. Expanding the analytical lens to non-postwar cities and sub-urban scales, the study provides a nuanced framework for understanding how localized protocols of governance produce both security and new forms of social discipline and exclusion that often rely upon a paradox of ‘peace as violence’.

## Keywords

peace, governmentality, Nigeria, urban peace, hybrid, civic governmentality

<sup>1</sup>School of Geography and Planning, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK

<sup>2</sup>Department of Geography, Environmental Management and Energy Studies, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa

<sup>3</sup>Department of Sociology, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria

<sup>4</sup>Centre for Housing and Sustainable Development, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria

<sup>5</sup>Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS), Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

## Corresponding author:

Daniel Hammett, School of Geography and Planning, University of Sheffield, Winter Street, Sheffield, S10 2TN, UK;  
Department of Geography, Environmental Management and Energy Studies, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Email: [D.Hammett@Sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:D.Hammett@Sheffield.ac.uk)

## Introduction

Africa's rapidly expanding cities are crucibles for both peace and violence as African urban development agendas and governance approaches seek to address the challenges arising from rural-urban migration, conflict-related population displacement, and natural population increase. Urban development policies seek to mitigate potential conflicts over resources and the rights of urban citizenship while promoting opportunities for economic growth and constructive coexistence and cooperation (Cante, 2023; Elfversson et al., 2023a). These efforts aim to address informal urbanisation, redress service delivery failures, reduce the potential for social conflict, and maintain peace. The realisation of peace within the context of contemporary African (mega)cities, however, is rarely a static achievement of state policy; it is a contested, ambivalent, and everyday practice of order-making.

Existing scholarship on hybrid governance and everyday peace has successfully moved beyond state-centric models and attended to the local, ambiguous, and contested nature of these phenomena. Much of this work, however, struggles to capture the complexities of street-level order and peace in African cities. Elsewhere, the urban turn in peace studies has focussed on urban spaces that are transitioning to being 'post-war' or are destinations for international conflict-displaced migrants (Elfversson et al., 2023b; Gusic, 2022; Ljungkvist and Jarstad, 2021). However, this literature overlooks local efforts to realise urban peace within 'everyday' cities that are facing challenges of social tension, unrest, and violence related to rapid urban growth (but see Elfversson et al. (2023a) on 'violently contested cities').

Responding to these gaps, our paper interprets peace through the lens of governmentality. We contend that everyday peace is necessarily ambivalent, gaining meaning through its grappling with structural violence, and involving complex, situated politics that do not always lead to justice. To this end, we set out a two-step agenda. First, we expand consideration of urban peace to non-postwar cities. Second, we call attention to *sub-urban peace* to understand the centrality of hybrid (civic) governance systems within rapidly urbanising African cities in producing sub-urban mosaics of governance and (civic) governmentality. Civic governmentality (the localized street-level techniques of management and policing through which citizens and non-state actors enact order) is characterized by fragility and the potential to mirror the violence it seeks to mitigate – a concept we term 'peace as violence'. We argue these mosaics of *sub-urban peaces* are encountered by sections of suburban populations as localised, contested expressions of civic governmentality *and* peace that are partial, incomplete, and potentially tools for exclusion and control – forms of 'putative peace' (Ross, 2011).

We proceed with a brief overview of research methods before placing the urban peace turn into conversation with discussions of hybrid and civic governmentality. We then analyse the power relations inherent in everyday and hybrid peace-making in urban Africa, exploring how these practices function as forms of urban governmentality that resist *and* reproduce structural (street-level) violence which manifest as ambiguous, contested, and evolving mosaics of civic governmentality and sub-urban peaces.

## Research design and methods

This paper draws on qualitative and ethnographic data collected in cities in Nigeria as part of a wider project addressing migration, urbanisation and conflict in Africa. Specifically, we analysed data collected in a cross-section of urban types: Lagos, Lokoja/Obajana, and Jos. Lagos is a core megacity, hosting the largest population and key decision-making entities, and dominating economic activity. Lokoja/Obajana is an industrial and trade-based urban landscape facing tensions arising from sustained labour in-migration, land- and identity-based conflicts, and challenges with

economic growth, service delivery, and employment opportunities. Jos city is marked by the presence of significant populations of forcibly displaced peoples.

A triangulation matrix was adopted to explore questions of peace and governmentality. Focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews (KIIs), and life histories (LH) were utilised to provide multi-dimensional insights into how power and social order are experienced at different scales. Fifteen key informant interviews were conducted with local officials, planners, and community leaders in each city to provide institutional perspectives and insights into the top-down logic of governmentality and “mentalities” of those in power. These were supplemented with participatory mapping interviews involving local stakeholders and officials to develop understandings of the temporal and spatial evolution of each city in relation to migration and conflict.

Focus group discussions with local community groups and organisations, neighbourhood watch members, and residents provide insights into collective subjectivities and shared social or community norms. These conversations revealed how communities interpret government interventions and negotiate peace and friction through “everyday” social contracts that maintain order outside of formal legislation. Five focus group discussions were held in each city. Approximately 40 life histories were recorded in each city, providing individual perspectives on the internalisation of governmentality over time and personal navigation of peace and conflict amidst evolving urban (governance) landscapes.

Interviews and focus groups were conducted by in-country researchers familiar with and sensitive to local contexts and social norms. Questions were framed to explore the nexus between migration, urbanisation and conflict, and manifestations and experiences of these dynamics. Specific attention was paid to the ways in which differing experiences of migration informed understandings and practices of (exclusionary) urban citizenship, and to identify examples of conflict prevention and resolution practices. All interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed in English (including translation into English where necessary). Transcripts were analysed by in-country and international research team members using an iteratively developed coding frame informed by existing literature and emerging themes within the transcripts relating to experiences of urban peace (building). Throughout this process, emphasis was placed on exploring the contextual complexities of community-police relations within comparative contexts marked by differing systems of (non)state policing and urban governmentality, and the overlaps *and* tensions between participants’ positive perceptions of and the potential for local initiatives to be co-opted for exclusionary or violent ends. Discussions across the project team ensured analysis and understanding appropriate to local contexts and historical (colonial) dynamics.

## **The urban peace turn: Mosaics of governance and the everyday peace**

The concentration of political claims-making processes within cities, alongside their symbolic, economic, social, and political importance, renders these spaces as crucial sites for the promotion and maintenance of peace. Growing recognition of the importance of local and everyday realities and experiences of peace (and violence) has been integral to the urban peace turn and recognition of everyday peace as a continual and contested process.

### ***Everyday peace as process***

The urban turn in peace studies – and broader conceptual movement towards local and everyday peace – builds on critiques of ‘liberal’ peace for imposing abstract, universalised understandings of peace regardless of the lived realities of communities being ‘pacified’ (Daley, 2014; Elfversson et al., 2023a; Mitton and Abdullah, 2021). There is growing recognition of peace as process *and* content that is continually (re)produced and contested by different groups and across differences,

scales, and times. This continual (re)production is not confined to national policies or treaties, but realised through everyday micro-labour towards peaceful lives and peace-ful concepts (Loyd, 2012; Mac Ginty, 2014; Vaittinen et al., 2019; Williams and McConnell, 2011). Mutually constituted through place (Cante, 2020: 4), peace is given meaning in multiple ways, including as various forms of ‘order’ at a local or micro-scale. Peace is thus recognised as contextual, messy, as both mundane and inherently political, and continually negotiated within broader constellations of power relations, sovereignty, and territoriality (Cante, 2020; Elfversson et al., 2023a).

These understandings underpin questions of who defines peace (and for whom), where peace is (to be) realised and how (Daley, 2014; Ross, 2011; Williams and McConnell, 2011)? Within African cities, responding to such questions requires consideration of how colonial and imperial histories inform contemporary gendered, raced, and classed approaches to peace (Daley, 2014; Feghali et al., 2021). As the following sections outline, recognising the contextual, contested, ambivalent, and everyday practices of order-making that result from cross-scalar negotiations of power and governance, requires us to think about multiple *peaces* (a concept we return to later) that are always becoming, enacted, encountered, and contested through everyday practices and situated in local contexts (Björkdahl in Featherstone et al., 2019; Feghali et al., 2021; Williams in Featherstone et al., 2019). Peace, therefore, is not simply a process but a *nexus of processes* that are spatially and temporally rooted in both historical and contemporary conditions.

### *Haunted landscapes of urban peace and violence*

Histories and temporalities of (colonial) power and violence are integral to the (African) urban landscape. Contemporary built and social landscapes reflect the spatial, social, economic and structural (re)production of (racialised) spaces of poverty, and ‘othering’ of marginalised and migrant communities as ‘threats’ to urban peace and security (Lombard et al., 2025; Loyd, 2012). The ‘haunting’ of colonial histories in African cities reinforces the need to understand peace as “the *contested* product of disparate and unequally positioned agencies” (Cante, 2020: 4), rendering peace as a set of practices and discourses that may hide inequalities or be mobilised to secure a ‘putative peace’ that reinforces injustice and violence (Feghali et al., 2021; Ross, 2011). These dynamics create specific geographies and *spaces of violence* – in which violence in and towards marginal communities is normalised – and practice that maintain these spatial inequalities through *violence of space* (Forde, 2022; Pain and Cahill, 2022).

These dynamics are entangled with ongoing contestations over control of urban spaces by state and non-state actors, *and* over who belongs within these (sub)urban spaces (Chatterjee, in Featherstone, 2019). Sub-urban neighbourhoods are thus defined and secured as political territories through physical (and violent) control and the co-option or replacement of state-agencies by myriad non-state actors (Cante, 2020). These dynamics leave many residents struggling to access the conditions and rights of urban citizenship, with resultant inequalities risking inflaming distrust, conflict, inter-group instability, and violence (Elfversson et al., 2023b; Hammett, 2017; Lemanski, 2017; Ljungkvist and Jarstad, 2021; Østby, 2016).

Nonetheless, African cities ‘hold’ in these conditions. Amidst tensions over access to land, housing, education, employment, economic and other opportunities, these are also spaces of constructive potential and possibilities for peace and coexistence (Elfversson et al., 2023a). These spaces are often marked by the differential realisation of rights amongst residents amidst questions of who (does not) belong within these (informally governed) spaces (Hammett, 2017). These exclusionary practices are often intersectional and encountered through hybrid governance and security practices that police the presence of those deemed ‘undesirable’ and what constitutes ‘antisocial’ behaviour (Bagayoko et al., 2016; Van Blerk, 2013).

Despite recognition that historic and contemporary dynamics inform peace and conflict in such spaces, urban peace literature has tended to focus primarily on (post)conflict settings (Lombard et al., 2025). Elfversson et al. (2023a: 323) have sought to expand consideration to ‘violently contested cities’, understood as “cities where socio-political order is contested by actors who use violence and repression to challenge or reinforce the prevailing distribution of power”. Taking inspiration from Lombard et al. (2025), we contend there is a need to go further and think of the micro-geographies of everyday urban peace not only in ‘violently contested cities’ but in *uncontested cities*. This conceptual move attends to the dynamics of peace and peace-making in urban spaces that occur on an everyday basis and in spaces marked by mosaics of hybrid governance and civic governmentality. In so doing, we turn attention to the role of non-state actors in urban governance, highlighting the intersection of formal and informal governance and governmentality of urban spaces (Elfversson, 2016) and the basis of peace in the everyday realities of hybrid systems of governance (Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013, 2016).

### *Hybrid governance, civic governmentality and urban peace*

State decline and histories of ‘outsourcing’ state functions to non-state actors mean African cities often face challenges arising from a retreat of state power and control, resulting in blended or hybrid governance (Fourchard, 2012). These conditions are marked by evolving constellations of territorial power and violence involving state and non-state actors who exercise public authority and undertake the functions of urban governance (Paffenholz, 2015). Through assertions of power and provision of urban governance, security, and service delivery these hybrid governance systems and institutions have a ‘twilight character’ and “constitute themselves as *de facto* public authorities” operating between the public and private, state and society (Lund, 2006a: 676, 2006b; Stepputat, 2018; Vigneswaran, 2014a).

Hybrid governance structures occupy an ambiguous space that can blend dynamics of resistance and/or collusion as alliances of state *and* alternative providers of security or services emerge and morph in response to everyday forms of violence and insecurity (Büscher, 2018; Buur, 2006; Fourchard, 2012; Meth, 2010; Mitton and Abdullah, 2021). The authority enjoyed by these alliances fluctuates, as constellations of groups seek to define and enforce (sub-urban) norms and rules while maintaining their legitimacy as neighbourhood powerholders (Lund, 2006a; 2006b). These dynamics illustrate the complex constellations of power and authority in contemporary African urban spaces (Mitton and Abdullah, 2021) while providing avenues through which claims are made to and about local citizenship, legitimacy, and the meanings of and strategies to realise peace.

Such processes reflect the agentic capacities and quotidian efforts of individuals and communities to sustain everyday peace amid broader ongoing violence and insecurity (Vaaitinen et al., 2019; Ware and Ware, 2022). These efforts, alongside the continual (re)production and contestation of hybrid governance systems, mean African cities are continually remade at the blurred intersections between the state, civil society, and the private sector. These processes – and integral practices of both formal and civic governmentality (Cante, 2023; Roy, 2009) – generate local constellations of powerholders seeking to realise order and security, resulting in contested and partial (re)territorialisations of power and control and plural policing landscapes comprising community policing organisations, vigilante groups, and other stakeholders (Fourchard, 2011; Meth, 2010; Umar, 2020).

These landscapes of hybrid governance and plural policing mean efforts to realise urban *peaces* are entangled with the continual reproduction of African cities in ways that perpetuate colonial urban landscapes and mindsets (Jones et al., 2017; Kimari, 2024). These processes render those on the margins as “tenuously rights-bearing citizens” (Jones et al., 2017: 563) and embed violence into



the everyday of these spaces, requiring (sub)urban residents to take responsibility for local peace and safety (Fattah, 2024). Consequently, spatially-grounded parallel political system emerge at the (sub)urban scale, shaped by the state but predicated upon “localised systems built on local protocols of governance, constituted and enforced by local leaders, power brokers, political entrepreneurs, and local enforcers” (Fattah, 2024: 15).

These spatialised regimes of governmentality reflect the long-standing experience of African urbanites at the blurred boundaries between the formal and informal of urban politics and policing (Buur, 2006; Cante, 2020). Such contemporary governing arrangements are encountered as a ‘poly-centric ensemble’ that “serve [s] the dual purpose of privatizing and outsourcing many formerly state functions, and of producing disciplined, self-reliant, ‘responsibilized’ citizen-subjects” (Ellis, 2012: 1146). These processes (re)create rules of belonging and citizenship at a local scale that may “resist and comply with what may be perceived to be top-down forms of rule” (Roy, 2009: 160). The resultant regimes of civic governmentality mean “the urban subject is simultaneously empowered and self-disciplined, civil and mobilized, displaced and compensated” (Roy, 2009: 161) amidst emergent claims to territory, security, order, and particular forms of peace at the (sub)urban level (Buur, 2006; Fourchard, 2008, 2011). Such hybrid urban governance structures are inherently partial, complex, and shifting; rooted in sub-urban territorial claims making processes and resulting in a mosaic of urban govern- and peace-scapes (Elfverson et al., 2023b; Oosterom, 2022).

These mosaics of institutions and governance practices mobilise efforts to realise local-scale security and urban peaces based on social relations, rules, and arrangements that derive legitimacy through references to tradition *and* the ability to respond to contemporary security imperatives. These processes, grounded in partial and situated understanding of peace, may be violent and exclusionary while relying upon the tactical support of local communities realised through the provision of some form of order, control, and peace (Gusic, 2022; Richmond and Mac Ginty, 2019).

### *From peace to peaces: Mosaics of urban peaces*

The result of these processes is a mosaic of ‘urban peace’ (Gusic, 2022) or, more accurately, of urban peaces rooted in the everyday realities of and encounters with formal and informal structures of local and urban governance (Ljungkvist and Jarstad, 2021). Foregrounding the plural (*peaces*) recognises that urban spaces are marked by profound intra-urban diversity of experiences of urban violence and urban peace (Lombard et al., 2025). Lombard et al. (2025) call for a focus on ‘everyday urban peace’ – the everyday agency and actions of communities to resist dominant narratives of division and violence and to continually (re)create and (re)make understandings *and* conditions of peace from the ground up. Similarly, Stepputat (2018: 400) calls attention to the “different constellations of authority and governance that form and spread unevenly” through the notion of ‘governscapes’. Landscapes of hybrid governance in African cities are far from uniform as fragmented presences and absences of governance lead to contestations and struggles between different actors to assert power and control of (localised) urban governance. Resultant mosaics of urban peaces in African cities are thus framed by multiple and uneven interpretations and invocations of peace and security imposed by diverse local (non-state) actors deploying various tactics of governmentality (see Lund, 2001). While these efforts may seek to deliver security and peace for (sub-urban) communities, they often invoke and rely upon forms of violence (Büscher, 2018) rooted in cartographic and social conceptions of the ‘local’ (Hammett and Marshall, 2017; Paffenholz, 2015).

These local, everyday processes, structures and practices involve varied actors, forms of participation, social practices, and survival mechanisms (Oosterom, 2022; Paffenholz, 2015) which generate a mosaic of locals and peaces contingent upon context, practices, and institutions

(Hammett and Marshall, 2017; Kobayashi, 2009; Paffenholz, 2015; Williams, 2015). Recognising mosaics of urban peaces provides opportunity for critical interrogations of contextually grounded understandings of peace and the potential for these to be exclusionary, unsustainable, and violent (Mac Ginty, 2014; Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2016). Crucially, this allows for recognition of the entwining of peace and civic governmentality and the questioning of how and by whom authority is held and how power is exercised to achieve varied forms of peace and for (or against) whom (Gusic, 2022; Stepputat, 2018). Adopting a plural approach to *peaces* thus allows recognition not only of the entangling of plural violences in African cities (Piedalue, 2022) but also of the multiple ways in which and temporalities of peace may also be experienced as tools of discipline and coercion.

By adopting a focus on everyday urban *peaces*, it is possible to acknowledge cities as heterogeneous spaces, bound in networks of state and non-state actors involved in everyday practices of violence, conflict, peace, tolerance, and coexistence (Elfverson et al., 2023a). These networks are embedded in constellations of power connecting the local to the global and contestations and reworkings of normative approaches to peace and (economic) development alongside local processes of social, psychological, and spatial boundary making (Feghali et al., 2021; Laliberte, 2016; LeBas, 2013; Penu and Essaw, 2019; Ross, 2011). These dynamics are entangled with competing claims by political (and other) actors for control over (sub-urban) space and the psychological mapping of (dis)order which – when connected to limited or absent state’s control of over violence – produce “multiple overlapping and competing forms of protection” (Vigneswaran, 2014b: 747). Such ambiguities are integral to the generation of mosaics of local, urban *peaces* through efforts to bring order and security to neighbourhoods realised in contested claims to (informal) urban governance and civil governmentality that produce overlapping claims to and jurisdictions of power, authority, and control.

## Encountering mosaics of peace-as-governmentality

Framed by the hybrid governscapes of many African cities, local peace building initiatives frequently involve multiple actors – from local security and vigilante groups, elders and traditional leaders, youth leaders and organisations, peace ambassadors, to national and global agencies. Amidst local concerns with state absence and a lack of delivery of basic, effective policing measures, communities in rapidly expanding urban areas often rely on private or community-based security agents to keep ‘a’ peace (LeBas, 2013). In such contexts – from South African townships to Nigerian urban peripheries and beyond – peace-keeping militia and vigilante groups operate with varying levels of state sanction or support and utilising a range of tactics of governmentality as well as use of force or violence (Fox and Beall, 2012; Lund, 2001). Efforts towards peace are thus imbricate in practices of civic governmentality and the construction of local moral communities and economies.

Neighbourhood watch, vigilante groups, and similar community organisations are powerful voices in these processes through which understandings of who ‘belongs’ and the types of behaviour expected or tolerated within a neighbourhood are identified and policed. Extra-judicial policing of neighbourhoods by these groups entrench these norms through governance and policing regimes intended “to get rid of ‘undesirable elements’” (Fourchard, 2008: 36; Fourchard, 2011). Through these processes, local peace keeping organisations fill a void in official policing, provide protection from (external) hostile groups, potentially “serve as the security arm of political fiefdoms” or as authoritarian proxy agents for governments (Fox and Beall, 2012: 975; also Buur, 2006; Lund, 2001) while delivering contextually appropriate responses to conflict that may be exclusionary and violent (Hammett and Marshall, 2017).

These dynamics are evident across the Nigerian cities of Lagos, Lakoja/Obajana, and Jos where various constellations of traditional leaders, youth leaders, local businesses, hawkers, vigilante



groups, and formal policing structures have emerged to provide community policing and mobilisation to address concerns with neighbourhood insecurity. These endeavours provide a vital response to levels of crime and insecurity, as one female resident in Jos outlined, “because of the high level of insecurity, we are largely dependent on community policing... we have the vigilante group that really monitors and handles the community” (Female interviewee, Jos). Community experience of failures in state policing and resultant levels of insecurity thus lead to a breakdown in trust and confidence in the state police amongst residents across Nigerian cities.

In Lokoja/Obajana, community distrust of formal policing directly contributed to the emergence of hybrid urban governance and peace structures. Here, failings of state police to respond to calls for help were widely acknowledged: as one interviewee recounted, “I was in a security meeting recently when I heard the former Commissioner of Police said ‘police work closes by 6 pm’ – so anything that happens around 6 pm, 7 pm, we are on our own”. Responding to this situation, residents established a neighbourhood vigilante group who mobilised community members to reduce crime, increase safety and realise ‘peace’. As well as providing patrols and a visible presence in the community, the vigilante group operated a ‘whistleblowing’ scheme. As one member of the group explained, “We told the people: don’t give the police the information. If you give me the information, you get Naira 500,000 [approximately 360 US dollars]. Any house where a criminal is found would be demolished. Eighteen houses were demolished”. While these extra-judicial interventions – alongside other practices including the use of violence against (suspected) criminals – were lauded by several interviewees as crucial in reducing crime and enhancing peace within the community, some of those interviewed in the life history sessions were concerned that the approach was highhanded and violent. As one interviewee outlined,

Although they [vigilantes] are trying to stop bad things like kidnapping, but the way they are doing it is not good. Some time ago, they said they were looking for somebody who used to do kidnapping. The vigilantes went to their house but he was not around. They chased his father out of his house and destroyed his building. What did his father do for them to destroy his house? Till today, they did not find the boy, and his father is homeless. Somebody should not suffer because of another person. (Female, Obajana)

Such stories signal the coexistence of different vigilante groups operating from and at multiple scales as part of the hybrid governance of sub-urban spaces and resultant mosaics of urban peace. State-backed or tolerated vigilante organisations (with varying levels of formal resourcing) operate and are encountered alongside local, street-level vigilante groups who often lack resources but who still utilize promises of monetary reward in efforts to suppress criminality.

In Lagos, similar hybrid urban governance and peace approaches are evident, with community-based organisations – such as the Odele Kolade Vigilante (OKV) group – integral to ensuring local safety (Lagos, Key Informant). Registered with the police, OKV is one component of a community-based self-policing approach that has emerged in the absence of an effective state security agency and lack of trust in the police: “you can barely see police around the street. But when you get to the bus-stop that is where they are, disturbing people driving while armed robbers are on the streets... [Consequently] every street is trying to secure their street, making sure they have comfortability with security” (Lagos, Key Informant). This move to community policing is reliant upon community knowledge and stability – of knowing who is who within the community: “we are police for ourselves. You know why I said so? Look at that guy that sit there, he is the grandchild of this man. If he committed something, four street or five streets from here, they will say ‘Ah! Danjuma’s son’, because you are known, if you are not known you escape, but if you are known, you will be afraid to commit” (Lagos, Key Informant II). Implicit here is a concern with ensuring those present within the community space are ‘known’. In many rapidly urbanising contexts, the demographics within a particular communal or residential area may be tied to ethnicity or common regional place-of-

origin – dynamics which then feed into the (in)formal and hybrid governance systems deployed to determine and police who ‘belongs’ and who is excluded from particular spaces (LeBas, 2013: 242).

In turn, the policing of who is present in, able to pass through, or gain employment in neighbourhoods – in the name of peace keeping – can restrict movement, employment, education and other activities (Forde, 2022). These practices – maintained through sub-urban hybrid governance institutions in the name of ‘peace’ – also limit mixing and encounters across difference while perpetuating symbolic, psychological and physical distances/barriers. In realising and forming particular sub-urban public spaces, hybrid governance institutions mobilise “a claim to legitimate violence” as a means to realising a particular form of peace (Vigneswaran, 2020).

These practices of exclusion and everyday urban segregation may support the realisation of a peace in the immediate term through the “suspension [of conflict or encroachment] rather than reconciliation” and assertion of power over a local space which may result “in contradictory outcomes for different groups” (Ware and Ware, 2022: 239). Entangled with these concerns, the role of community policing and vigilante groups extends to “creating rules to protect the community such as deciding when all shops in the community should close” (Lagos, Key Informant). The imposition of local sub-urban expectations of community and social norms is integral to hybrid urban governance structures and tactics of civic governmentality in determining who belongs *and* associated dispositions and practices.

While these hybrid governance structures “provide functional, socially embedded solutions to social, economic, and political organisations at the local level [these may] also be rooted in predatory socioeconomic and political relationships” (Fox and Beall, 2012: 974). The actions of these groups are rarely altruistic but reflect the complex and variegated nature of hybrid urban governance and resultant mosaics of peace-as-governmentality. Vigilante groups benefit from their roles not only in terms of direct financial recompense but the broader benefits associated with power-holding within hybrid governance systems. These groups are “local mechanisms to manage security” commanding a monthly payment from the community to “reinforce our internal security” (Lokoja Focus Group) alongside state security agencies and civil defence forces. These practices illustrate the hybrid governance structures appearing in rapidly urbanising spaces, where in/non-formal governance and security agencies work in quasi-formalised relations with, or tacit approval and support from, formal state actors.

These measures are viewed as crucial to address insecurity and conflict, as criminals and others “fear the vigilantes more than the police here because it is the vigilantes that they see more often” (Obajana). However, this discussion of ‘fear’ points to a key risk in hybrid governance and peacebuilding: namely, accountability and the limits to the (extra)legal use of power and violence to achieve or maintain ‘peace’ (Fourchard, 2011). Fear may, in this case, not only be a fear of being caught, arrested and punished through the criminal justice system. It may also be the fear of extra-legal or extra-judicial physical violence against individuals suspected or guilty of crimes; it may also be fear of entering particular urban spaces due to the fostering and promotion of distrust and division towards ‘others’ and their resultant exclusion from urban spaces and/or economic opportunities. It is not only vigilante groups and community policing or security groups that are integral to these hybrid practices of urban governance and peace. Multiple twilight institutions and hybrid governance agents are integral not only to resolving or preventing conflict but in determining what peace means and how it will be realised. These organisations play multiple roles: setting mandates and legislation, creating awareness and mobilising communities, enforcing the law, and serving as custodians for community peace. This may be “the elders in the community, the community leaders, youth leaders, and the Suga (traditional hunters and Vigilantes)” (Obajana, interviewee) working together to achieve peace and prevent tensions and conflict on a sustained level. Or as short-term endeavours to “ensure calmness before the arrival of the [police] forces”

(Obajana, interviewee). In Jos, government- and community-based associations often work in parallel to promote and maintain peace,

Various government agencies such as the Plateau State Peace Building Agency, and the various security agencies, are the ones that go to enforce law and order. So, these are legally accepted peace institutions. We also have the peace schools; they teach how to implement peace agreement in the community. We have the tribal community associations which are expected to maintain law and order and sustain peace, even if they need to use the Alternate Dispute Resolution system. (Male Key Informant, Jos)

The role of such groups within the structures and practices of urban governance varies in formality, but their efforts – in negotiating and mediating tensions, setting and agreeing conflict resolution terms, promoting expected norms of (peaceful) behaviour – are interwoven in the fabric of governmentality: whether acting with the power to settle disputes or instil a vision of peace and associated practices and norms in a community, or working alongside and (at times) in conjunction with the police and other state agencies to de-escalate tensions or to enforce law and order (and social norms). These hybrid urban peace and governance systems may, though, be exclusionary, inequitable and ‘uncivil’ in practice and are integral to the development of mosaics of suburban peaces that are framed by the hybrid governscapes of contemporary African cities.

These hybrid governance formations and suburban peace strategies are often “entangle [d] with dynamics of ethnicised exclusion, paranoid territorialisation and extra-judicial violence” (Cante, 2023: 4; also Elfvorsson, 2016). Understanding peace in urban spaces therefore requires a more diffuse engagement not simply with “practices that are specifically and self-consciously geared toward peace or security... but in the general process of making and sustaining the everyday itself, as a necessary background for city life” (Cante, 2023: 4). These may include access to basic services, resources, economic opportunities, political voice, and so on. Twilight institutions thus often occupy an ambiguous position in realising peace: as Oosterom (2022) outlines, vigilante groups may ensure short-term peace but do so using (the threat of) violence and may be viewed by formal institutions as a potential longer-term threat. Everyday efforts by groups to “make and maintain peace and engage in the tolerance and conciliation required for society to function” (Richmond and Mac Ginty, 2019: 615–6) respond in dynamic and flexible ways to emerging concerns, but often in ways that assert power against ‘others’ through both physical, psychological and discursive violence. Nonetheless, while the potential for perpetuation of division across difference remain through the more exclusionary practices of peacekeeping and securitisation, many communities recognised and mobilised the potential of hybrid peacekeeping institutions for more activist and progressive efforts to peacebuilding and inter-community cohesion. Crucial to these efforts are spaces formed for mediation and dialogue between communities – including those aimed at youth, traditional leaders, and other groups (Oosterom, 2022).

In practice, however, vigilante and other community policing groups often deliver a form of peace and security that invokes control over who is welcome within urban spaces. The result can be understood as a localised form of peace realised through practices of governmentality exercised through hybrid (sub)urban governance structures and manifest in (self)segregation within urban spaces between resident and arriving (religious-ethnic) communities. These processes are often self-perpetuating, in part as in-migrants follow the migration pathways of previous migrants from their communities and partly due to the role of community (policing) groups controlling access to housing, employment and other opportunities within particular spaces to reduce risks of civic conflict in the immediate term.

## Resources, service delivery and ‘who belongs’ in the enactment of peace-as-governance

In African cities characterised by poor urban governance, limited economic growth and opportunities, and extensive in-migration, these challenges can take on added significance. As one key informant in Jos outlined, “conflicts and tensions may erupt between resident communities and IDP communities over access to resources” and explaining how these flashpoints are symptomatic of deeper tensions and inequalities:

Sometimes you hear they bring relief materials to the IDPs, the [resident] communities will want to take out of it: this is a major cause of conflict. People experience conflict every day – it’s expected there should be some form of conflict – everybody feels marginalized.

Intersecting with these concerns, the spatiality of urban demographics is key as in-migrants from different communities tend to settle in specific spaces within the city – often facilitated by and reinforcing previous patterns of migration and settlement through family and other contacts and connections to access housing, social support networks, and livelihood opportunities. While urban peace literature has focussed on post-conflict cities or those receiving *internationally* displaced peoples, it is vital to recognise how intra-national population displacement is integral to everyday, suburban peace. Similarly, in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire the urban-scale manifestation of national-level conflicts resulted in struggles to control the streets, to define who belonged – process that ultimately led to the defining and securing of neighbourhoods as political territories through physical and violent control and co-option or replacement of state-agencies (Cante, 2020).

Many rapidly urbanising cities are marked by high levels of segregation – in part from the securing of these spaces as political territories and in part from the settlement dynamics of in-migrants that are simultaneously facilitated by and reinforce previous settlement patterns. In turn, these dynamics inform (and are informed by) understandings and perceptions of urban spaces, practices of ‘othering’, and self-regulation in the avoidance of certain spaces and encounters. While these may be understood as an everyday practice of conflict avoidance and temporary, everyday peace, such practices mask underlying inter-community tensions. Tackling these patterns of residential segregation and building inter-community dialogue and understanding are key to mosaics of everyday urban peace. As one Jos interviewee outlined, “we need to do something about these segregated communities. If you don’t bring them together and reconcile them, we will never experience permanent peace”. Simultaneously, however, many interviewees talked of the importance – for safety and peace – of homogenous, settled communities within which everyone knew each other and in which priority could be given for access to housing, employment, and other services to existing community members. As a key informant in Jos outlined, ensuring control over access to housing and other opportunities within a local area was a vital asset in preserving social harmony and everyday peace: “The reality remains that we live based on who we are and in terms of access, the question remains as a leader, with a sense of balance will you allow people that come from somewhere to have the same access that people you are leading?” (Jos, KII). Rapid urban growth and urban migration present key challenges to these measures, with interviewees across Nigerian cities identifying extensive in-migration as a potential risk to established community identities, norms, and experiences of peace.

Compounding – and underpinning – these tensions are failures in the equitable delivery of core services, opportunities and formal governance. These failings pose a significant challenge to the expected reciprocal relationship between government/state and citizen. As one interviewee noted, “if you deliver good education and infrastructure, you are going to minimize or prevent conflict” (Male, Nigeria) but failures to do so remain a driver of social division, undermining

future opportunities while failing to deliver on the current needs of communities. These immediate needs, around housing and livelihoods, remain a particular flashpoint in urban spaces marked by (perceptions of) disparities in support and everyday (informal) mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion from geographical and economic spaces for different communities. Tensions surrounding economic opportunities are particularly pertinent, notably in urban spaces with rapid population growth and established twilight institutional mechanisms that control access to socio-economic opportunities. While these efforts may help maintain a form of peace within suburban spaces and communities by protecting livelihoods for in-group members, these can stoke inter-community tensions and conflict. As one interviewee outlined, “it is when people are deprived or feel threatened in terms of their survival that they resort to conflict, but when your means of livelihood is not threatened in any way, there is less tendencies that you want to engage in conflict”.

The lack, or denial, of access to livelihood opportunities amongst in-migrants to urban spaces emerges as a key challenge to everyday urban peace. These dynamics are further compounded by stigmatisation and scapegoating of in-migrant communities as threats to existing communities – whether in terms of competition for (scarce) resources or the branding of incomers as criminals and delinquents. These dynamics were evident in various interviews, and notably in the thoughts of one former government employee-turned NGO worker in Jos, who outlined how increasing concerns with security and conflict resulted from the influx of migrants into spaces with limited economic opportunities and that “issues of insecurity grew high within those locations and issue of drug and substance abuse grew because whatever these people can do for survival are very key to them”. Tensions over access to resources including access to government-delivered services such as health, education, roads, etc, and the delivery of targeted state- or donor-funded investments to provide services to migrant communities can lead to unintentional social tension and unrest. In Jos in particular, key challenges to everyday urban peace often coalesced around resource provision and perceptions – and realities – of marginalisation and exclusion from these. Despite these concerns amongst some interviewees, others took a longer-term view of the potential peacebuilding benefits of targeting resources and support to certain groups of in-migrants. One key informant in Jos argued that targeted resource provision had the potential to enhance social cohesion and empower participation in local communities and leadership, “Internally-Displaced Persons (IDPs) are down the ladder: people that are so weak in terms of access to power and they look up to the host community not just for sustenance, but even administration of their own lives and livelihoods... With time, economic activities that you find that this same IDPs now become empowered and with empowerment they become members of the host community”. This perception, however, was contested as other Jos residents offered more hostile or critical views on in-migrants and the challenges posed to mosaics of governance and urban peace.

As various interviewees in Jos and Lokoja outlined, urban conflict and challenges to urban peace and governance arose from these tensions,

In most cases you find the quest for economic control. Resource control is the major cause for conflict... in most cases you find competition happening between members of the host community and the IDPs. (KII Jos)

These experiences give expression to “the underlying anger of natives<sup>1</sup> feeling migrants have come to take what belongs to them” (KII Lokoja) amidst “tensions as regards employment because there is no way you can satisfy everybody as long as there are demands” (KII Lokoja). This combination of factors contributes to triggering conflict around security and criminality as:

The urban economy is so difficult, you find most of those that fail to settle into it, they are the ones that often take up arms or that are liable to become goons or hoodlums to be manipulated and used by politicians. You have a proliferation of criminals or criminal activities as a result. (Jos, male, KII)

Crucially, the interviewee also points to the role of (political) leaders in manipulating individuals as well as vigilantes and other groups for self-gain, control over economic resources and to maintain (local) power and control. A key tension is evident in the potential manipulation not only of communities *and* informal or hybrid peace structures and agencies to perpetuate control through expressions of governmentality and often exclusionary peaces.

At the heart of these concerns are tensions around the role of local communities and leaders in protecting their access to resources and opportunities (often narrated as ‘belonging’ to them) and resultant exclusionary attitudes and behaviours towards migrants. These attitudes perpetuate the ‘otherness’ of in-migrants, solidifying their lack of access to economic opportunities and social cohesion, and perpetuating the underlying conditions for urban conflict. Compounding these challenges are common perceptions that in-migrants lack the education and skills needed to gain employment in the city and instead are an unskilled ‘nuisance’ whose only recourse to income is “to look for how to take somebody else’s belongings” (Female Key Informant, Jos). This discursive positioning of in-migrants is encountered as a form of symbolic and discursive violence, one which then feeds into everyday practices of exclusion and marginalisation, and the potential for physical violence against ‘othered’ in-migrants – such as the positioning of Nigerien migrants to Jos as “Buzaye” and inherently disposed to criminality. The resultant risk for urban peace is two-fold: a rise in vigilante groups to ‘secure’ local peace; and an entrenching of social division. These dynamics are inherently framed by the practices of (civic) governmentality at the sub-urban scale and intersection of these with efforts to build and maintain peace.

These concerns intersect with broader concerns with “a lack of willingness of state actors to resolve” conflicts and their underlying causes (male KII) or to invest in building trust and breaking cycles of reprisals and exclusion (male KII, government). Moreover, failures of leaders to honour agreements made to resolve conflicts and build peace result in distrust of leaders who become seen as duplicitous, self-interested and manipulating power – and peacebuilding narratives – for their own ends rather than the collective good. Concerns thus remain that the reliance on non-state actors and hybrid governance approaches to urban governance and peace can be subject to misuse and abuse – risks of these structures and strictures of peacebuilding and enforcement being used by individuals for self-benefit, to retain power and accrue wealth.

## Peace(s) as violence and civic governmentality

Peace is highly political and politicised, it is riven with and encountered through power asymmetries and forms of violence, and mobilised to demand compliance and legitimise and assert power (Cante, 2023; Gusic, 2022; Williams, 2015). In rapidly urbanising African cities where formal governance institutions are weak or absent, non-state actors such as vigilante groups take on *de facto* roles of the state – patrolling and policing geographical areas, implementing and enforcing unofficial ‘bylaws’ and community norms, or controlling movements, trade, or employment within geographical areas. In so doing, these non-state actors deploy various tactics and techniques of governmentality to promote particular and secure forms of peace (Hammett and Marshall, 2017).

While governmentality – the governance of mentality and efforts to influence the conduct of a population – is primarily theorised as a tactic of the state (Ettlinger, 2011; Gordon, 1991), it is not the sole preserve of the state and agent. When exercised by the state, governmentality is encountered through various techniques of discipline intended to reinforce the strength of the state and develop citizens whose dispositions and behaviours reflect the ideals and desires of the state



(Foucault, 1991; Gordon, 1991). In this sense, governmentality is used to protect and reinforce the power of ruler(s) over their territory through direct and indirect tactics intended to “produce subjects that *behave as they ought*” (Adebanwi, 2007; Jazeel, 2009: 136; Hammett, 2023).

However, when there is an absence of a functional form of government the interdependence between political and social security that frames the relationship between citizens and the state is ruptured (Gordon, 1991). In rapidly urbanising spaces this “necessitate [es] a more particular and contextual engagement with governmentality” (Hammett, 2023: 2) that engages with the role of non-state actors in taking on the functions and tactics of governmentality. In these scenarios – whether realised through civic governmentality as exercised by a non-state actor independent of the state or *de facto* devolved to a proxy (non-state) actor – we see new forms and means of ‘ruling at a distance’. These forms of civic governmentality, where governmentality is developed and practised from the grassroots within a specific space, may replace, mimic, oppose, or reinforce state governmentality. Crucially, these practices – and assertions of power and control integral to them – seek to produce self-disciplined individuals or urban subjects who enact the state in daily life through the provision of security and peacebuilding (Berents and McEvoy-Levy, 2015; Roy, 2009). Various actors within hybrid governance systems therefore adopt techniques of power and discipline to assert control over local space(s) and people(s), determining what local peace(s) mean, how this is experienced and enforced and by whom, and who is included and excluded (Fourchard, 2011; Vigneswaran, 2014a).

In ethnically-divided societies and urban contexts – as in some Nigerian cities – these non-state actors (such as self-determination militia or vigilante groups) are often exclusively constituted by members of the majority or host ethnic community (Guichaoua, 2010). This ethnicisation of non-state security apparatus often turns self-determination militia into instrument of oppression and violence against migrant/ethnic enclaves perceived as threats to host community/local autonomy (Tiwa, 2022). Indeed, during one focus group participant in Lagos recounted:

The Yoruba have informed OPC (Oodua People’s Congress – a group said to be fighting for self-determination of the Yoruba in Nigeria) that Hausas are fighting Yoruba. The OPC distributed guns among themselves and come here and start to shoot. They shot my son of 22 years and he died. The police later came to stop the fight. The OPC came again in the night around 2 a.m after the police had left and started burning Hausas’ houses. We tried to beg them but they refused. One of them said “No! Hausas have insulted us too much”.

These processes not only evidence a re-scaling of how “peace and peace-building may be deployed as tools of governmentality” (Hammett and Marshall, 2017: 3) from the (inter)national scales to the local/sub-urban, but result in a complex, overlapping mosaic of urban peaces that may be infused by multiple socio-political and other dynamics.

Approaching urban peaces as a mosaic of hybrid urban governance practices and expressions of governmentality provides opportunity to critically engage with how multiple forms and understandings of peace are encountered and deployed as a form of or to perpetuate structural, discursive, representational, cultural and physical violence within particular spaces and times (see Loyd, 2012; Mac Ginty, 2008; Öjendal and Ou, 2015). Focusing on (sub)urban mosaics of hybrid peace facilitates critical engagements with how everyday peace outcomes and hybrid urban governance and governmentality practices are inextricably linked to unequal power relations that are experienced as “domination, repression, coercion, exclusion, and marginalisation” (Ware and Ware, 2022: 225). We can thus understand (sub)urban peace as grounded in interventions to realise peace and entwined with efforts to render local communities and spaces as governable (political subjects) for local (non-state) actors and agents through hybrid governance systems and tactics of civic governmentality.

At this granular level, the everyday politics, practices and violence of peace(s) are foregrounded in efforts to simultaneously provide security and safety while maintaining and asserting demands to the ‘rights of the city’ and the meeting of basic needs, services, rights and livelihood opportunities. The (sub)urban peace turn thus provides this more granular engagement with peace(s) in everyday (rather than (post)conflict) urban spaces. Integral to this conceptual move is moving beyond the ‘local’ as homogeneous – instead recognising there are multiple ‘locals’ within an urban space; a mosaic of spaces, places, peoples, networks, institutions, practices and relations that are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Rather, these locals – and their peace(s) – are varied, overlapping, and informed by intra- and inter-community dynamics, national economics, politics and narrations of (ethno)nationalism, as well as global influences (Stepputat, 2018).

Across these different encounters and contexts, contested and complex mosaics of hybrid urban governance contribute to and inform efforts to realise very local levels of peace – a sub-urban peace. These efforts are firmly rooted in various practices of civic governmentality exercised by various institutions and organisations that have taken on responsibility for the realisation of sub-urban governance in the absence of an effective state presence. In responding to immediate concerns with crime, security, safety, and community cohesion, the practices of civic governmentality adopted are often encountered as exclusionary dynamics that demarcate the dynamics and mosaics of suburban peaces.

## Acknowledgements

This paper is based on research carried out under the ESRC GCRF-ARUA funded research project ‘Migration, Urbanisation and Conflict in Africa (MUCA): Building Peaceful Urban Futures’ (ES/T01542X/1). This funding was vital to the completion of this project. We are grateful for the contributions of numerous colleagues on this project for their inputs at various stages, as well as to audiences at multiple conference sessions for their questions and feedback. We are also grateful for the generous comments of the anonymous reviewers during the review process.

## ORCID iDs

Daniel Hammett  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9607-6901>

Esther Thontteh  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4577-0589>

Fana Gebresenbet  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8376-7068>

## Funding

The authors disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was supported by Global Challenges Research Fund (Grant No: ES/T014903/1).

## Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Note

1. While recognising the problematics of the term ‘native’ as a term laden with colonial resonance and exclusionary politics (Amin, 2023) we retain the use of this wording here as this was the phrasing used by the interviewee.

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### Author biographies

**Daniel Hammett** is a political and development geographer specialising in issues of citizenship, civil society, and statehood. He is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Geography and Planning, University of Sheffield, UK and Senior Research Associate at the Department of Geography, Environmental Management and Energy Studies, University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

**Kennedy Eborka**, Ph.D., is a lecturer in the Department of Sociology, University of Lagos, Nigeria. His research interests include population and development studies and span across population health, urbanisation processes, migration and conflict, urban poverty, and access to housing. He associates with various professional organisations such as the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP), Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria (PPFN), and Union for African Population Studies (UAPS). His publications have appeared in scientific journals, and he is currently collaborating with a team of international researchers on migration, urbanisation and conflict in Africa.

**Esther Thontteh** is a Senior Lecturer and Land Management and Administration Research Fellow at the Centre for Housing and Sustainable Development (CHSD), University of Lagos, Nigeria. Her research sits at the intersection of urban land governance, housing equity, and conflict, with particular attention to land rights and disputes, land inequality, gender and land tenure and migration and urban belonging. She serves as a Research Cluster Manager under the UKRI-ARUA Centre of Excellence in Urbanization and Habitable Cities. Her work engages directly with urban peace and governance questions in African cities, including neighbourhood-level dynamics, transit-oriented development, and the application of global urban definitions to SDG and New Urban Agenda monitoring.

**Fana Gebresenbet** (PhD) is an Associate Professor of Peacebuilding and Development at Addis Ababa University. He is currently serving as Head of the Center for Peace and Security Studies.