



# The UN Sustainable Development Goals and Creating THE AFRICAN METROPOLIS

Can the African Dream be achieved given the skewed dynamics of the continent's cities?



**R**esearch by a team from the African Centre for Cities at the University of Cape Town looks at African urban infrastructure and service delivery in relation to African aspirations and the developmental imperatives, not just in cities, but also for the African continent.

Cities have, until recently, not attracted specific development. The increased focus on cities and their intersection with infrastructure is critical given that Africa's urban transition over the next few decades will define the development trajectory of the continent for some time. Getting this right is essential. The UN's SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities and the New Urban Agenda (Habitat 3), among other agendas, influences policy-making for urban development and, in particular, the African metropolis. The SDGs have created, for the first time, an acknowledgement that the current model of economic growth is unworkable and that a new trajectory is needed that encompasses environmental sustainability, social justice and economic inclusivity.

The problem is that African cities currently undergoing rapid urbanisation face a number of challenges, including poor management and the legacy of colonial and Western style of city development which continue to impact city residents, especially the poor. These challenges include unequal access to bulk services; an undersupply of public infrastructure such as wastewater treatment, ports and energy; and unrealistic formal infrastructure standards. Overcoming this legacy requires engagement with the more recent political, technical and institutional dynamics at the city level. The current deficits in governance and the

economic, demographic and wider urban developmental realities of African cities could derail the achievement of the UN's SDGs.

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**T**he study suggests that Africa's academics need a vision of the future African urban governance domain which, inter alia, integrates local research and scholarship. This is critical in light of estimates that Africa's urban population will increase to 1.3 billion by 2050 and that it will pass the 50% urban tipping point by 2035.