# Intra-settlement politics and conflict in enumerations

**Abstract**

While traditionally an instrument of government power, enumerations are increasingly conducted by urban communities themselves to gain recognition and negotiate with city authorities. Most literature focuses on the productive relationship between communities and government enabled by enumerations, and how enumerations transfer power to communities. However, in highly unequal informal settlements, it is very important to understand who within the community gets such power. Through the ethnographic account of an enumeration promoted by a slum-upgrading project in Nairobi, this paper makes a contribution to the analysis of power in enumerations. The article reveals the strategies of local elites to shape the exercise in their favour. Often, local elites present themselves as representatives of the wider community and draw on this power and legitimacy to advance their specific claims. Therefore, rather than looking at the relationship state/community, analyses of enumeration processes should pay more attention to the complexity of internal communities dynamics and conflicting interests, and how these play out in the relationships with the state.

## 1    Introduction

Government censuses and enumerations have always been much more than a mere technical data collection process. They have consistently raised political issues and have been resisted and challenged. In the African context, they were perceived as a tool of the colonial government and associated with other policies of forced labour and forced migration. Censuses implemented by independent governments have also been political because data were used to identify constituency borders, for resource allocation, etc. (Campbell, 1976). More recent analyses have adopted a Foucauldian perspective and conceptualised censuses and enumerations as the state's attempts to render a population 'legible' for the purpose of government (Rose, 1999: 215-230; Scott, 1998). Global policies in relation to informal settlements have shifted from evictions and demolitions to planning development *in situ*, and this has meant that these settlements have more and more been the targets of government enumerations. Over the last decade, self-organised residents structured around saving groups have increasingly conducted their own 'participatory enumerations' to ensure they are taken into account and to engage with local authorities (Chitekwe-Biti, Mudimu, Nyama, & Jera, 2012; Farouk & Owusu, 2012; Huchzermeyer, 2009; Karanja, 2010; Muller & Mbanga, 2012; Patel, Arputham, Burra, & Savchuk, 2009; Patel, d'Cruz, & Burra, 2002; Weru, 2004).

Sometimes residents have produced their own data to counter government figures (Ghertner, 2010; Livengood & Kunte, 2012: 84). By using enumerations as a tool to negotiate with the state, urban communities participate in the co-production of development (Mitlin, 2008). As we just said, the literature on state enumerations tends to emphasise the dimension of *governmentality* and analyse the process from this perspective. For example, in *Seeing the State,*

Corbridge *et al.* (2005) explore encounters between the state and the rural poor and examine how through such multiple encounters the poor become co-producers of the state itself. Corbridge *et al.* reject restrictive interpretations of Foucault regarding the concept of governmentality, but adopt Foucault's view of 'dispersed practices of government' (2005: 5), rather than conceptualisating the state as a discrete and singular entity. Following Fuller and Harriss (2001), they look at the state as 'bundles of everyday institutions and forms of rule' (Corbridge, et al., 2005: 5). They argue that 'We can learn about the practices of government by attending to the diverse ways in which the state is experienced and understood by differently placed individuals, including by its own employees' (8). To do so, Corbridge *et al.* contend that we need to focus on the performance of these encounters between the state and the citizens.

This journal has dedicated considerable space to the discussion of participatory enumerations, including a special issue (Vol. 24, Issue 1, 2012). These papers document and analyse the work of Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI), a global network of affiliated community-based organisations promoting community-led slum-upgrading through federations of the urban poor structured around women-led saving groups and participatory enumerations. The papers acknowledge the importance of dealing with internal unresolved issues and disagreement on eligibility between different groups of residents such as tenants and owners, between family members and long-term residents and newcomers (Patel, Baptist, & D'Cruz, 2012), or different interest in participating in community initiatives on the basis of social class (Hooper & Ortolano, 2012). However, the main relationship explored in the special issue articles is that between 'the community' and the Government. While there may be conflicting views between the two, often, it is argued, participatory enumerations facilitate productive cooperation and, as restated more recently, generate 'authentic partnerships between communities and local government' (Dobson, Nyamweru, & Dodman, 2015: 617). Sometimes, potential conflict within a community is said to be the result of a misunderstanding of the intentions of the enumeration process, but once implementers have explained the advantages for the whole community to 'opinion leaders', the process is smooth (Makau, Dobson, & Samia, 2012: 39).

However, with reference to Kenya, Weru (2004) describes resistance by part of a community to a participatory enumeration and Karanja (2010) explains the process of participatory enumeration and the potential problems that may arise. Even though these papers do not give a detailed account of the micro-politics of carrying out such processes and do not explore local dynamics deeply, they reveal the conflictual nature of such processes. Such conflicts within the community around enumerations were particularly evident during my fieldwork in Nairobi informal settlements.

The papers in *Environment & Urbanisation* and elsewhere show how enumerations are used by 'the community' to make their demands for the right to live in a location and for services to the Government. Some accounts mention 'dialogue' between 'the community' and 'the Government'; others report how community-generated data can challenge the legitimacy of government data. However, there is seldom an in-depth analysis of internal conflict. Despite enumerations being considered participatory research to learn more about the diversity within a community, the authors analysing enumeration processes often present the residents of a

settlement as a single actor. For example, Livengood and Kunte argue that 'This process [community mapping and data collection] has helped to open and sustain a dialogue between the residents of informal settlements and city government around "slum" upgrading' (Livengood & Kunte, 2012: 77). They also mention how different steps were taken 'with settlement leaders' (Livengood & Kunte, 2012: 91). Banana et al. (2015) explain how *community representatives* played an active role in mapping and enumerations. However, there is no mention of *who* these leaders are, to which social group they belong, how they became leaders, and so on. The community is presented as a single actor, with undisputed and legitimate leaders, common goals, and clear requests to make.

There are, of course, more nuanced representations (e.g. Karanja, 2010) in which potential challenges are presented, but in such cases insufficient detail is provided. While conflicts within communities are not the subject of the published articles about their experiences, the members of Shack/Slum Dwellers International are very aware of the internal conflicts generated by enumerations and the type of strategies adopted by various actors to manipulate enumerations. My analysis in this article owe a lot to the insights provided to me by members of Shack/Slum Dwellers International, whom I met and interviewed on different occasions relating to other upgrading projects. This paper contributes to the debate on participatory enumerations in informal settlements by analysing the micro-politics of counting people and the importance of this process in local struggles. Moreover, by providing an account of a government-initiated process, this articles aims at complementing previous literature mostly focused on enumerations initiated by the Federations of the Urban Poor.

Finally, this paper engages critically with works looking at the politics of knowledge which present the community knowledge of urban subaltern groups as consensual and underpinned by a shared rationality and interest which is in conflict with that of the state (Jacobs, Jordhus-Lier, & de Wet, 2015). It does so by drawing upon the insights from the anthropology of development and gender literature on the conflictual and plural nature of local and community knowledges.[1]

After briefly presenting the case study, the paper analyses how the elite of Kwa-maji,[2] a Nairobi informal settlement, operated to simplify the enumeration exercise and gain control over the process. The ethnographic account reveals the strategies deployed by local elites and how the project did not counter elite capture. Finally, the paper makes a contribution to the analysis of power in this type of census process. While enumerations are indeed a 'technology of government', a government's attempt to render an area 'legible' through the collection of data may be shaped by the *agency* of residents. Some residents know how to manipulate the process and provide the government with their own 'reading' of the community.

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[1] For example, Pottier *et al.* (Pottier, Bicker, & Sillitoe, 2003) *Negotiating local knowledge: power and identity in development*.
[2] Pseudonym.

## 2    Kwa-maji and the upgrading programme

In the 1970s, the relocation of residents from more central areas of Nairobi to Kwa-maji originated the settlement. Local leaders temporarily allocated plots of land to these initial settlers which allowed them to construct temporary structures. Progressively, they built additional rooms to rent. The government remained the owner of the land but an informal market of structures was established. These processes led to the creation of the main social division that between structure-owners[3] and tenants. The profitability of the rental market in Kwa-maji attracted external investors as well as allowed some of the residents to move to more affluent areas of the city. These became the so-called absentee structure-owners.

In 2000, an attempt to upgrade the informal settlement was initiated with the intention of giving the land to the residents. In this context, the key political issue was around who should get the land. Should public land be transferred to all residents, structure-owners and tenants? Or should the informal ownership of the structure-owners, many living outside the settlement, be recognised as legitimate? The two groups have different resources in terms of political capital, self-organisation, and money, and these inequalities played out strongly in the upgrading process. A first step of the upgrading process was an enumeration but a powerful group of structure-owners felt that their claims would be undermined by such exercise and violently mobilised against it to the extent that enumerators needed police protection. The upgrading was abandoned when this group of structure-owners filed a court case against the government.

A second more structured attempt, the Kwa-Maji Urban Development Project (KUDP), started in 2008. The project was led by a government ministry (Lead Agency, funded by a bilateral agency (AIDX), and involved the technical support of a UN agency (UNX). It attempted to provide security of tenure and infrastructure. As an initial step, the project conducted community elections to create a Residents' Committee which would help the government in taking key decisions regarding the upgrading and avoiding the conflict and failure of the previous attempt. Using their better resources and stronger power, the structure-owners succeeded in gaining a strong majority of the places in the Residents' Committee despite being a minority of the residents. They were a powerful elite group further legitimised by their new role in the Committee (XXX, 2014). A key activity of the KUDP was a participatory enumeration, it is normally an initial activity of an upgrading but was postponed significantly for its sensitive nature. By exploring the implementation of this enumeration, this article analyses the *politics of counting people* on the ground.

## 3    The participatory enumeration

Drawing on community and academic experts from different countries, UN Habitat's report *Count Me In: Surveying for tenure security and urban land management* (2010) discusses the

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[3] They are not called landlords as they only own the structures rather than the land which, in this area, is formally owned by the government.

importance of enumerations. It starts by clearly stating that collecting people's information in informal settlements is not a neutral exercise (2010: 3). If carefully conducted, a participatory enumeration can challenge 'the actions of powerful elites within a settlement' and 'marginalised groups (women, tenants, seasonal contract workers, backyard dwellers, etc.) can be included in the upgrading and development processes' (UN-Habitat, 2010: 8). However, if carried out poorly, enumerations can 'favour only particular groups or classes of residents, at the exclusion and expense of others' (UN-Habitat, 2010: 118). The report points out that enumerations are a potential source of conflict:

> Enumerations bring to the fore, and invite discussion, on the often underlying and hidden factors of how a community is organized. Who owns the land and buildings? What are the relationships between landlords and tenants? What resources exist in a community and who controls those? What are the systems distributing or sharing these resources? And so on. The prospect of exposing these issues for discussion is contentious. This is because in informal settlements assets and resources are usually very inequitably distributed (UN-Habitat, 2010: 140).

The UN-Habitat report forecasts that enumerations may also face other challenges such as people's refusal to be counted or cooperate; and residents providing false information, or trying to prevent the survey from taking place. Their description of the typical attitude of people in informal settlements perfectly fits the Kwa-maji situation:

> Often their right to live where they [people in informal settlements] are is very uncertain, and they fear being told to move elsewhere. Many have already been forced to move – some more than once. Justifiably, many people do not trust what others are planning for them (2010: 3).

Kwa-maji was formed after different waves of evictions from more central settlements; therefore, in the experience of some residents, government intervention was linked to having being forced them out of their dwellings, followed by years of abandonment. The enumeration in the previous upgrading attempt generated conflict and residents were therefore sceptical of external intervention and even more reluctant to provide personal information to third parties.

Enumerations are generally comprehensive and relatively costly exercise. However, if properly conducted can provide the data needed to plan slum-upgrading and support decision-making regarding who should be entitled to what. What data is collected and the level of detail depends on the prospective use of the enumeration (UN-Habitat, 2010). In some cases, establishing the total number of residents may be enough but in others, including Kwa-maji, accuracy is paramount because the enumeration aims at identifying project beneficiaries. Therefore, any error may lead to the exclusion of legitimate recipients.

The following sections describe the process of the enumeration in Kwa-maji and how the local elite of structure-owners, whose leaders had visited India to understand enumeration processes, deployed a range of strategies to counter the emancipatory and redistributive potential of an enumeration aimed at recognising all residents.

### 3.1 The implementation

While the Lead Agency had negotiated to be the main implementer of the project, UNX was considered by the donor to be both expert and neutral and thus retained the sensitive task of carrying out the enumeration. However, the Resident's Committee insisted that the community did not trust this external agency and pushed to have the enumeration conducted by the Lead Agency under the close supervision of the Committee.

The process of data collection in Kwa-maji was split in three separate processes: the numbering of structures; a socio-economic survey; and the enumeration of residents. The first consisted in using the physical mapping of the area and assign a number to every structure and identifying the name of the owner (no information on tenants or other residents was collected). This was followed by the socio-economic survey to a sample of 540 households and 77 business owners. Before carrying out the survey, the Residents' Committee reviewed its contents and eliminated any question on controversial issues, specifically on the relationship between structure-owners and tenants. The data collected was inconsistent, full of errors, and even the final draft contained illegible graphs drawn manually from non-specified data sets.

When it was noted that the project intended to also benefit long-term residents, and therefore a full enumeration was needed, the Residents' Committee agreed as long as it was implemented under their control by the Lead Agency. I joined one of the two enumeration teams in their work to enumerate the second most populous of the 8 villages that compose Kwa-maji. Most of the ethnographic details and information on the conduct of the enumeration are taken from the observations and conversations recorded in my own fieldnotes.

Each team was formed of a Lead Agency officer, two members of the Residents' Committee and one to three young female enumerators. The team would call at every door and ask for ID and voting card of whoever was there. A form was quickly filled in the street outside the dwelling. The process took place between 10:30 and 3pm on weekdays when many residents were away.[4] Sometimes neighbours were approached for information; however, in most cases they refused to provide information on other people. I asked what they would do to get the missing information in order to avoid excluding from the list of beneficiaries those who would be entitled. The team leader answered that they were doing their best but an error was "normal" and they did not have a plan to verify data and include the missing households.

The more information is collected on the residents, the easier it is to devise appropriate eligibility criteria, identify beneficiaries fairly, and include them in the programme. The design of the enumeration form was based on that used by the UN and the Government of Kenya in

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[4] Other NGO workers as well as academic researchers, who had conducted household surveys in Nairobi settlements, were keen to explain how they needed to work at night or weekends in order to find people at home.

other enumerations, in particular the one carried out in Kibera. In similar enumerations, forms are normally several pages per households but the Kwa-maji enumeration adopted a very basic form of one page per structure. Since each structure has multiple rooms occupied by different households, it meant that the enumeration collected several times less information than other exercises with similar aims (XXX, 2014).[5] Instead, there was an attempt to rely on the information from the socio-economic study based on a limited sample. This meant that issues and needs could be identified at the level of the settlement as a whole, but particular people in need would not be registered for special intervention. For instance, the enumeration form did not contain information on disabilities, family composition and so forth, which could have been used to identify priority groups and design targeted social policy interventions.

The form did not offer the possibility to differentiate between a vacant room and one where residents were away when the enumerators called, making it very difficult to attempt to get missing data at a later stage. Only one name and document details per room was collected, supposedly the head of household, but as I observed, some structure-owners pushed to register themselves as living in the room and have their name taken because they knew that in other slum-upgrading projects, non-residents benefited less than the residents. Since the form could only fit one name per room, tenants – unaware of the importance of the process – lost the opportunity to be registered as residents. More importantly, registering only one name per household, generally the man, means that if the relationship breaks the woman is no longer a project beneficiary.[6]

When I asked UNX personnel why they agreed to such a simplified exercise, I was told that in Kibera the analysis of the collected data took more than a year and they could not afford such a 'waste' of time and resources. In Kwa-maji, they already had socio-economic data gathered through the socio-economic survey, and therefore thought that they only needed a list with information relating to the number of residents, property ownership, and number of years in the settlement – the last two being the key criteria to define the list of beneficiaries.

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[5] As a reference, this is the information collected in an enumeration undertaken for similar purposes and documented by Karanja (2010) . Questions asked of residents included: name of owner, owner ID, gender, age, level of education, occupation, daily household expenditure, marital status, religion and relation to household head; type of plot ownership (purchased, allocated by government, inherited or moved onto) and whether they had a title deed or other evidence of ownership; land/house use; plot size; details of all occupants and whether they were land/structure owners or tenants; size and quality of house; years of residence; distance to work; main source of water, time needed to collect it and how much is used in a day; and availability of services.

[6] This issue had also been identified in relation to the slum-upgrading in Kibera, where the list of beneficiaries was composed by taking the names of heads of households from the enumeration (Flores Fernandez & Calas, 2011).

Figure 1. The Enumeration form. Source: Lead Government Agency.

## 4    Analysing the process: capture and exclusion

### 4.1    The exclusion of 'everyday bureaucracy'

This section examines how the social exclusion of certain groups of residents was achieved. The account of the enumeration process so far has shown a certain level of carelessness in the recording of information. The enumerators were young, female graduates on short-term contracts: one enumerator had a short contract with the Lead Agency for other secretarial needs of the project, which was due to expire in less than a month's time and which was eventually not renewed; the others were just recruited for the purpose of the exercise and complained about the slim chance of having their contracts renewed. They did not have the power or the incentive to challenge the Residents' Committee members who gave them directions and information.

The timing of the enumeration was designed to fit into normal working hours. The employees of the Lead Agency met at the office in the city centre and their driver took them to Kwa-maji, on the outskirts of the city, through the morning traffic-jams, meaning that they started at around 10.30am. They typically finished around 3pm with a short briefing, before going back to the city centre office in time to avoid the afternoon traffic. The work was physically tiring, as it involved standing and writing under the sun for about five hours. Moreover, during that period the hot days were generally interrupted by an afternoon of tropical rain, with the result that the team members wanted to leave before it started to rain.

Each morning the car had to go back to the office for a second round to pick up the remaining staff who joined the rest of the team around mid-day. We started with only one enumerator in

the team, which increased to a maximum of three during the day. One morning, I followed closely the work of an enumerator who was under a considerable amount of pressure to increase the pace of her work because the plan was to complete enumeration of the village that day and she was the only enumerator present. I observed that the newly recruited graduate's attempt to comply with the request was achieved at the cost of accuracy. She could not wait for the tenants to go and collect their documents, for children to call their parents, or even properly knock on every door. On one occasion, a frightened young girl was invited to provide the information on behalf of her father who was not there. As long as some households residing in the structure were on the form, it seemed that this was considered to be sufficient. The level of accuracy on that morning was significantly lower than that of the same enumerator the previous day, when three enumerators were present and more time per structure was allowed.

As mentioned above, when no one was found in a home, neighbours were approached for information; which in most cases was not given. While the enumerators considered it strange that people would not provide details about their neighbours since 'they only live a thin wall of mud apart' (Fieldnotes), residents did not feel comfortable taking the responsibility for revealing details about others to the government. In this situation, the enumerators would sometimes ask to be told at least the ethnicity of the head of household and put this as the name of the head of household on the form. Ethnic affiliation was considered to be in the public domain and generally provided to the enumerators. Ethnicity was used as a way of identifying project beneficiaries and avoiding leaving the form blank. However, knowing that, for instance, a Kikuyu household was living there is not a very valuable piece of information for the preparation of a list of residents, considering that more than half of the households are Kikuyus.

Something that I also started to notice was that respondents would not automatically include little children when answering the question regarding how many people lived in a household. Only when the enumerator insisted and asked to count all the people who slept in the house, including small children, would people re-count carefully and provide the correct figure. This latter question was not asked systematically, leading to possible underestimation of household size. A number of inconsistencies emerged in the forms and were somehow adjusted quickly on the spot rather than through accurate data verification. A common inconsistency was that the number of rooms in a particular structure did not correspond to the number of households listed on the form.

The work was organised in the following fashion: the team leader had the village map detailing all the structures. As the team approached a structure, he marked it on the map so that even if the team left with incomplete data, the structure would appear to have been enumerated. The lack of interest of the Residents' Committee members and the enumerators in collecting complete and correct information led to many residents not being counted correctly. In summary, the exclusion of marginalised groups was achieved through little omissions and lack of accuracy in compiling the forms. However, there are other factors which contributed. The simplification of the data collection tool has already been described. In what follows, I analyse the strategies of structure-owners, information asymmetry, and the avoidance of checks and data validation.

## 4.2    Structure-owners' strategies

This section presents the strategies that structure-owners put in place to shape the process to their advantage and counter the redistributive and empowering effects of enumeration in Kwa-maji. An NGO worker with long experience of enumerations and slum-upgrading immediately pointed out to me in an interview that, 'when you talk of enumeration nowadays, and especially government [enumerations], people know you are talking about [land] allocation' (Interview 22, 29/07/2010). In many other interviews with slum-upgrading professionals, I was told that everyone in the informal settlements is aware that the government, especially in a foreign-funded programme, has no interest in allocating a *large* piece of land to *one* person, even if he or she owns multiple structures. Therefore, the typical structure-owner behaviour in such circumstances is to conceal property concentration by registering his/her relatives as owners, starting with his/her offspring, siblings or cousins, and even using trusted figureheads. It is not surprising therefore that the initial numbering of structures in Kwa-maji showed little concentration of property ownership.

The programme implementers' interpretation of the data was that in Kwa-maji there were no large structure-owners, unlike other Nairobi informal settlements (e.g. Kibera, Mathare). Instead, I argue that the data is indicative of structure-owners' knowledge of development interventions and their capacity to create coping strategies. My ethnography reveals that there were certainly some important structure-owners whose considerable amount of property did not emerge from the data collected in the numbering of structures.[7] Structure-owners have a lot of knowledge of the way development programmes work and are able to act strategically in order to protect their personal interests.

Moreover, structure-owners were aware that the government criteria for the allocation of land were more likely to divide the benefits equally between selected beneficiaries, rather than according to how much they informally owned. One tactic adopted by a significant number of small structure-owners was to insist on having their structure registered with two owners,

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[7] The multiple informal discussions but also formal interviews with community members confirmed the following information. Whereas the situation had changed compared to 20 years before, when a single person used to own almost all the structures in a village that had his name (later renamed), there were still some big owners and people named them to me. Triangulating the information provided, I can confidently say that some people owning more than one structure did not appear as multiple owners in the enumeration. The local MP and high-level Provincial Administration officials were named by people amongst those who had owned many properties in the area that they sold at the end of the 1990s, when they feared that policy changes might undermine their investments. However, due to the sensitivity of this information and the informality of such transactions I could not personally verify it.
What has to be recognised in the claim of project implementers is that Kwa-maji does indeed have more resident structure-owners possessing a relatively small number of structures than in other settlements where extensive informal commercial renting was prevalent (e.g. Kibera). This is due to Kwa-maji's specific history of temporary allocations granted to people evicted from other areas.

usually them and their sons. From the enumeration data, it appeared that over a third of the structures had more than one owner. This clearly shows how structure-owners were not only trying to conceal property concentration, but were also trying to disperse the ownership amongst as many beneficiaries as they could.

The other key strategy was to prevent tenants from registering by registering in their place members of the structure-owner's household or other relatives as tenants. An NGO worker interviewed explained what happens during enumerations. Speaking as if she were the structure-owner, she referred to the enumeration conducted in a settlement near Kwa-maji several years before.

> Legitimately, I own these structures […] during enumeration I will mobilise my big children [and tell them] to come and stand here. And the tenants are silenced. […] You would find somebody standing at the door waiting to be enumerated. But then, when we insisted to get in[side the house], she doesn't want to get in because she doesn't belong to that house. She has everything: if you need an ID, she has it here. She has been waiting for enumeration. […] So we could be having fewer tenants or many structure-owners or owners just because they were able to organise themselves prior to the enumeration. So they distribute. I can even tell you, '[author's name], come, we are being enumerated and I don't want my house to go to tenants. Sit and say you are the owner of this structure' (Interview 22, 29/07/2010).

Therefore, she argued that in a proper enumeration you need to enter every room so that you can check if the person actually lives there. But in Kwa-maji no verification inside the dwelling was ever made, and thus it was not possible to know whether the person at the door was the resident, or a relative of the structure-owner sent to get registered.

As tenants have no security and can be evicted anytime without reason, they were particularly weak in countering this process and the lack of an organised tenant response is not surprising. Unfortunately, more detailed information on the conflict between structure-owners and tenants was not collected during the socio-economic study since the questions on this matter were removed at the request of the Residents' Committee. This was in spite of the fact that data emerging from that same study indicated tensions between structure-owners and tenants as the major cause of conflict among the people of Kwa-maji. The categories of 'land issues' and 'rent issues' accounted for 28% of the causes of conflict, followed by the more general category of 'insecurity issues' (27%).

During the enumeration of Kwa-maji, it often happened that a single individual answered for all the households of one structure, with the result that enumerators did not speak to every tenant or examine the documents provided carefully. The structure-owners knew that the enumeration was going to take place and some of them were ready waiting with the relevant documents outside a given structure. On one occasion, a structure-owner had all the documents ready (ID and voting card) for all the people that he claimed to be his tenants. In many other cases, the information on tenants was provided by the structure-owner, who also provided the answers to

the delicate issues of household size and the number of years a tenant had been living in the settlement (the latter being a key criterion for inclusion as a beneficiary at that stage of the project).

Another strategy reported by NGO staff working on other projects is that structure-owners do not want tenants to be registered as independent households, because they fear that, in this way, tenants would be considered as beneficiaries (Interview 23, 2/09/2010). As explained above, in Kwa-maji, including tenants in the same household as the structure-owner was a very practical way of excluding them, since only the name of the head of household was recorded on the form.

In one particular instance, a structure-owner said to the enumerators that there were no tenants in his structure. A tenant woman living in a neighbouring structure, who had just been enumerated, heard the conversation and said, 'He is lying. There are tenants and these are their names', and went on to list their names. This was followed by a sort of verbal conflict and, at the end, the enumerators wrote down the names given by the woman. However, the tenants were not present and therefore they could not be fully registered.

One of the recommended ways to counter all these practices and obtain an enumeration database that can help avoid abuses during the exercise and in the subsequent allocation of benefits is to take a photograph of each entire household in front of the door of their dwelling. Such a picture is very useful for verifying the data at a later stage and during the allocation process. While the photo technique will not always include all household members, taking pictures is a well-established practice in these types of enumerations and, through the use of digital support, it is not particularly expensive. However, no such measure was ever considered in Kwa-maji.

One important issue debated in the programme and in particular among the Residents' Committee was that of which policy to adopt in relation to absentee structure-owners. In Kwa-maji, many structure-owners (according to the enumeration under discussion here, over half of them) reside outside the settlement and own over 56% of the structures as a profitable investment. The objective of the KUDP was purportedly to benefit the residents, not just those owning property in the area. Still, many members of the Residents' Committee, including some very prominent ones, were actually living outside the settlement.

Some structure-owners that normally reside outside Kwa-maji were informed about the enumeration and came to be enumerated. On the form, the choice between marking an owner as 'resident' or 'absentee' was particularly delicate, since it was likely to have an impact on the inclusion/exclusion from the project's benefits. In one case, Residents' Committee members argued that one owner, who was at the time participating in the enumeration process, did not live in the area. The latter tried to explain that while he had moved out, his son was now living in the structure and therefore he had to be considered as resident. Another issue was that when a structure-owner was not there he was often considered an absentee, but it was not possible to know whether he was absent, resident in another structure in the settlement, or simply not there

at that particular moment. This also revealed different degrees of power amongst the structure-owners between those connected with Residents' Committee members and those who were not.

## 4.3    Checks and balances

The above mentioned UN-Habitat report regarding enumerations and the interviews conducted with experts recommended a series of checks and controls to counter elite strategies. But even the simplest checks recommended by international best practice were deemed unnecessary by the Lead Agency.

NGO staff who had worked on other enumerations explained during interviews that to counter structure-owners' strategies there is a need to create a wider process around the enumeration to 'strengthen the tenants so that they are able to question, they are able to challenge, that's what eventually gives you a more valid [residents'] list, but if you do an enumeration and disengage then obviously you will never get [a valid list]' (Interview 23, 2/09/2010). In this particular interview, the NGO officer also underlined the importance of a process of data verification supervised by a neutral actor. Such verification, it was suggested, must take place after equally crucial processes of empowerment and education for the tenants.

However, the Lead Agency and the UNX representative argued that there was no need for such checks and controls, since the Residents' Committee – considered to be comprised of the legitimate representatives of the community – was fully involved in the enumeration and would prevent abuses and provision of erroneous information. In the view of programme officers, the presence of community members was sufficient to guarantee that data would be correct. Moreover, project staff considered that further checks would have implied that the Government did not trust the community representatives. However, the Residents' Committee was largely composed of structure-owners. Therefore, the resulting conflict of interest called for accurate checks on the enumeration process.

## 4.4    Information asymmetry

Another assumption of UNX and other programme staff was that since the programme had been on-going for about two years at the time of the enumeration, all residents should have been aware of the slum-upgrading programme. From this perspective, all residents were supposed to be aware of the role of the enumeration and of the criteria to become a beneficiary. When interviewed before the enumeration, programme workers expressed their expectation that they would obtain an inflated number of residents, all of them claiming that they had been residing in Kwa-maji for more than 10 years – the criteria discussed at that time to be eligible for land allocation. However, this did not happen as information was unequally disseminated among the population.

The power of the leaders is connected to their access to information that is strategically guarded to maintain their position, often as brokers/gatekeepers. The slum-upgrading programme did not involve all residents *equally;* many lacked information and viewed the programme with scepticism as one of many development initiatives that took place in the area. Analysing these dynamics in the Indian rural context, Corbridge *et al.* pointed out that 'some people also know more than others and are able to control, in some degree, how information circulates across a space-economy' (Corbridge, et al., 2005: 131). Control of the circulation of information in Kwa-maji was absolutely crucial in elite strategies.

The enumeration outcome was also very influenced by the social networks of the different structure-owners. We mentioned inaccuracies resulting from the strong pressure to accelerate the enumeration process. However, the Residents' Committee members made sure that the important structures owned by people they knew were attentively enumerated, controlling the compiling of the forms closely, in some cases dictating the information directly to the enumerator. At one point, a Residents' Committee member working with a particular enumeration team came to check that the forms relating to some of the structures owned by her relatives were compiled the way she wanted and, when she realised that her brother-in-law was marked as an absentee structure-owner, she got the team to change the form. By contrast, a small structure-owner living in a nearby settlement, who had invested his savings in a structure in Kwa-maji, had no idea what was going on, or what were the criteria set for benefiting from the programme. He also had no connection to any member of the Residents' Committee. During the enumeration, the Residents' Committee members present were holding the list containing the names of the owners; this gave them significant influence over the process. Moreover, by collecting data on the ownership of structures, members of the Residents' Committee themselves implemented a process of verification of the data that had been collected months before during the numbering of structures.

Awareness of the importance of the enumeration and other information on how and when residents were being counted could be gained through acquaintance with at least one Residents' Committee member. However, being enumerated or not also depended on physical location. The residents on the main roads saw the enumeration team arriving and had time to call other family members and prepare documents. By contrast, many people residing in the small walkways deep into the settlement were not ready. Sometimes if the head of household was not there, the people found by the enumerators offered to go and call the head of household. Children, in particular, asked to go and find their parents, who were generally working somewhere within Kwa-maji (often at their vending stalls). They were answered that the team was in a hurry and could not wait. The enumerators collected the little information available from those who were present and left. But such information was not supported by documents. Another factor of advantage was that if someone was residing close to the main road and was momentarily away, other people were able to go and tell him/her that they were enumerating his/her house, because the process was very visible. However, when the team was deep into the small walkways this did not happen.

Full information about why the enumeration was being carried out and why it was important did not reach everyone equally. Some people were very keen to be registered and they were ready and waiting with their documents, while others were completely unaware of the importance of the exercise. The availability of information was one of the factors which determined whether someone was enumerated or not; thereby establishing whether he/she would be a beneficiary or not. The power of community leaders was strongly based on their role as information brokers; this was particularly relevant because, according to the socio-economic study, 'word of mouth' was considered the main form of communication in the settlement by 68% of the respondents. In the context of the prevalence of this means of communication, their role in the Residents' Committee as conduit between implementers and 'community' reinforced structure-owners' power as gatekeepers and information brokers.

## 5    The outcome

> Communities are not homogeneous: power disparities exist within them, and empowerment for the most disadvantaged is a major challenge. Enumeration is likely to include conflict: who controls resources, who owns land, what are the boundaries, who holds which proof? […] It is difficult to ensure that the interests of marginalized groups such as tenants or women are adequately reflected in an enumeration, as there is a danger that the results may solidify an already unequal distribution of rights, assets and access to resources (UN-Habitat, 2010: 141).

The experts brought together by UN-Habitat for the above report recognised that to ensure adequate representation of vulnerable groups an enumeration needs to be designed and implemented meticulously. However, in Kwa-maji the enumeration was rushed, the data collection tool was too simple, and no household verification inside dwellings was undertaken.

The results were significantly lower than existing estimates and the previous enumeration. The enumeration conducted in 2001 counted 18,537 households, while the KUDP enumeration only identified 10,581 households, while the socio-economic study commissioned by UNX just a few months before the enumeration states that the population inside the settlement had continued to grow over the previous ten years.[8] But no one questioned this inconsistency. When I raised this issue, I was answered that because the "community" through the Residents' Committee oversaw the process, results were correct.

The enumeration also revealed information on the ownership and the phenomenon of absentee structure-owners. The 3,268 structures recorded apparently belong to 4,343 structure-owners, over half of whom were enumerated as absentee. The data show that amongst the households resident in Kwa-maji about 20% are of structure-owners and 80% are tenant households. However, if the tenant households are underestimated, as argued up till now, the percentage of

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[8] While previous estimates used in project documents indicated 100,000-120,000 residents, likely to be an exaggeration, the enumeration only counted 34,000 people, probably an underestimation.

tenant households may be even higher.[9] What is important is not necessarily an error in the total number of residents or in the proportion of tenants but the fact that poor data collection means that there are no information on a significant number of households and therefore it is not possible to identify them as project beneficiaries.


## 6    Conclusion

Kwa-maji structure-owning elites had learned from their previous involvement in other upgrading attempts and were aware of the potential of enumerations to challenge power relations. Therefore, they shaped the exercise in their favour by, for instance, simplifying the socio-economic survey and enumeration form, and were helped by implementers' desire to finish quickly and avoid conflict with the elite.

Rather than a government attempt to render the community 'legible' for the purpose of government, local elites manipulated the enumeration by exercising a significant degree of agency. The 'legible representation' of the settlement created in this process was shaped by specific interests and tended to exclude certain groups of residents. Synthesising these two approaches, we could say that the Government consciously let local actors shape the process in order to create a 'legible representation' that would be accepted by both the Government and by the local elite, who could otherwise have sabotaged the programme. This confirms the negotiated and co-produced nature of development. The enumeration served an important purpose in the programme; it is significant that this was not *despite* its inaccuracies but *because* of them. In fact, the enumeration accommodated (and was itself the product of) different interests, while at the same time, it allowed the programme to claim a rigorous and scientific data collection process.

This paper agrees with Appadurai's (2012) argument that enumerations are a tool for group formation, a *ritual* which builds a community (640). However, it is important to be aware that enumerations can build very unequal or exclusive communities which can reproduce and enhance pervasive inequalities. As pointed out by Appadurai, 'Self-enumeration takes this power away from external agencies such as the state and puts it back where it truly belongs, which is within the community itself' and therefore can be an important part of 'the process of deep democratization' (640). However, the question of who within the community gets the power is of the utmost importance. In highly unequal contexts, and informal settlements are some of the most unequal settlements, who is going to rebalance the inequalities within communities? The first step is to avoid idealised notions of communities and recognise internal heterogeneity and conflict between residents. Too often, local elites present themselves as representatives of the wider community and draw on this power and legitimacy to advance their specific claims. Therefore, rather than looking predominantly at the relationship state/community, analyses of enumeration processes should pay more attention to the

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[9] Gulyani et al (2012)  find that the average for Nairobi informal settlements is 92% tenant households and 8% owner-occupier.

complexity of internal communities dynamics and conflicting interests, and how these play out in the relationships with the state.


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