City Space Architecture

Spatial Orders in Spontaneous Settlements.
Findings from Five Domestic Spaces within Kasokoso Neighbourhood in Uganda

Brenda Kirabo, Mark Raphael Owor Olweny
Uganda Martyrs University, Uganda
brenda.kirabo@stud.umu.ac.ug | molweny@umu.ac.ug

Abstract
Spontaneous settlements are a feature of urban areas across the world, and the global south in particular. Over the years, studies of these settlements have been framed around upgrading. Premised on the idea that spontaneous settlements were (and are) an undesirable part of the urban fabric. Often described by what they lack (land tenure, space, water, sanitation and adequate shelter), spontaneous settlements appear as a problem to be fixed. Upgrading schemes were thus geared towards 'regularising' them, so as to ensure they could fit into the formal desired characteristics of urban spaces. Upgrading largely concentrates on the built fabric, often neglecting the complex social structures that exist and even less about the intricate public/private linkages within these settlements. Interfaces are a physical manifestation of the parochial social order which forms a transitional zone between the public and private territories.
To unpack the spatial negotiations, present in spontaneous settlements, this paper studies the relationship between the built and social environment of the Kasokoso neighbourhood in Uganda. From a study of five dwellings, the study seeks to answer what defines private or parochial (semi-private) spatial orders, and what is deemed as spaces within the public realm? Are these permanent divisions, or are they temporal, varying between day and night? The paper highlights the important aspects of the physical environment including dwelling location, private to public space thresholds, and arrangement of shared open spaces that are interwoven with the social environment of the settlement.
To generate these findings, the study combined observation, interviews, on-site sketching, and field notes to arrive at a comprehensive spatial and social analysis of activities in a spontaneous settlement. Drawing on this data, spatial domains around the five representative dwelling units were mapped and categorised under the social order structure (private, parochial, and public) with supplementary information recorded from narratives by actors within the study area describing their everyday activities.

Keywords: spontaneous settlements, spatial domain, public/private interface

Introduction

Spontaneous settlements are a feature of urban areas across the world, and the global south in particular. The term *spontaneous* settlements is derived from a paper by Kellet and Napier (1995), which explored the product and process dynamics of marginalised urban settlements' and the people who create and inhabit them. It encapsulates the people who shape, use, alter and are shaped by these built environments. Spontaneous settlements emerge alongside formally planned areas, providing accommodation for thousands or in some cases millions of individuals who work in urban centres. Authors such as Hackenbroch (2011) and Roy (2011) indicate a hybrid relation between seemingly separated geographies, on the one hand space arrangements laid down in statutory rules and regulation, and on the other, norms or social relations governing spatial configurations. The hybrid relation allows actors within these two geographies to claim and use public space in what Hackenbroch (2011) terms negotiated space. In Uganda, spontaneous settlements have developed and grown parallel to both traditional and colonial urban centres. These were documented during the early 1900s around the traditional capital of the Buganda Kingdom, the *Kibuga* (Nkurunziza, 2007). With the opportunities that emerged when Kampala was established adjacent to the Kibuga, spontaneous settlements became the haven for those who were not permitted to take up residence in the colonial city. Over the ensuing years, and with the arrival of (and subsequent end of) colonialism, spontaneous settlements have become a significant part of the urban landscape. For the most part, these settlements are driven by policies that dictated planning and development agenda, which often did not keep pace with economic realities and population growth. They serve as an alternative to the constraints of formal structured urban areas as they provide flexibility and negotiation of rules that govern political, spatial or social behaviour (Bayat, 1997).

It is estimated that approximately 60% of the population of Kampala resides in these spontaneous settlements spread across Greater Kampala (Richmond et al., 2018). The settlements provide low-income earners with affordable housing, as well as space and access to finance for small scale business ventures (Jones, 2021). Regardless of the contribution the inhabitants of these settlements make to the urban economy, they are considered an eyesore that does not meet the Uganda government's sanitised view of what urbanism should be. This is exemplified through a number of resettlement and redevelopment projects, including the Namuwongo project (Heslop et al., 2020). 'Slum upgrading' led by UN-Habitat and the Ugandan government resulted in material reconfiguration and spatial transformation of Namuwongo. While much needed infrastructure and services were provided, many of the original beneficiaries were marginalised from the process or sold their plots, in turn losing their social and welfare networks. The settlements and their inhabitants are marginalised, relegated to the periphery. The marginalisation of these settlements has meant little is known of how residents in these settlements negotiate space and carry out their daily activities. For urban planners and architects who are often tasked with these redevelopment and resettlement schemes, understanding the spatial dynamics and spatial negotiations of these settlements is crucial. More so as spontaneous settlements are often difficult to access and are guarded by the residents due to their informality. Undertaking a study within this context thus provides an opportunity to unpack the spatial orders that exist contributing to our understanding of how people use space in these marginalised neighbourhoods.

Spatial negotiations within Spontaneous Settlements

Over the years, studies of spontaneous settlements have been framed around the need to upgrade them (Gilbert, 2000; UN Habitat, 2014; Dobson et al., 2015). This has been premised on the idea that informal settlements were an undesirable part of the urban landscape. Often described by what they lack (land tenure, space, water, sanitation and adequate shelter), spontaneous settlements are continually viewed as a problem to be fixed. Upgrading schemes are often geared towards 'regularising' and ensuring these settlements are aligned with formal desired characteristics of urban spaces derived from colonial planning policies. Some upgrading projects in Uganda include the Namuwongo Upgrading low-cost housing in 1984 and 2014, and the Masese Women slum-upgrading housing project in 1989. Upgrading in these projects largely concentrated on the built fabric (Govender & Loggia, 2022), mostly neglecting the complex social structures that exist and even less about the intricate public/private linkages within these settlements. It is acknowledged that within these urban spaces, more so for shared public spaces, it is often difficult to unpack this complexity, given the multitude of actors involved (friend, neighbour and citizen). It is also difficult to delineate the hierarchies and domains that make up the totality of these spaces (Hunter, 1985). Rapoport (1990) suggests studying the systems and settings within which activities take place, it is possible to gain a better appreciation of the relational quality between people, the spaces they inhabit and the activities carried out within, leading to more comprehensive solutions for these marginalised settlements

Previous studies on urban culture and place identity by Dovey & King (2011) and Dovey & Wood (2015) highlight the importance of the transition between the public and private self since they present as productive of economic exchange and social identity. This transition facilitates social interaction between different groups of people where shop owners receive customers or residents passively observing their neighbourhood. Unpacking the complexity of spontaneous settlements hinges on a sophisticated understanding of context, visibility, and image – all things informed by knowledge of these transitions. It is here that the boundaries and thresholds that determine the relationship between the private and public realm emerge as important, providing a distinction between 'potential strangers' and 'inhabitant'. Within settings which are fluid and less demarcated, this distinction becomes blurred and ambiguous. Hunter (1985) suggests different forms of social order are defined while exploring mutually interacting and limiting mechanisms of social control specific to the respective social orders (Jabeen, 2019). Social orders are established as private, parochial, or public based on the different scales of intimacy experienced within them. Although an uncommon concept, parochial space signifies an area where individuals form interpersonal networks around a sense of commonality (Jabeen, 2019). The parochial can include the world of neighbourhood or workplace as opposed to the intimate network in the world of the household. Scales of intimacy are informed by the actors emblematic of the social bond but also correspond to the three social orders (Hunter, 1985). These social orders link to what have been described by Rapoport (1990) as activity systems, people's behaviour in the physical environment. Activity systems are derived from the field of environmental-behaviour relations that pursues an understanding of the extent to which built environments affect, guide, and constrain behaviour (Rapoport, 2000). Systems of activities start with actions as a cultural construct in relation to housing, although this is not to suggest that activities are looked at in isolation of others. This concept directly

links how and what people do to the spaces within which these activities are carried out and the relationship between the activity locations. Rapoport (2000) breaks down activity systems into four components:

1. The activity itself
2. How it is carried out
3. How it is associated with other activities and combined into activity systems
4. The meaning of the activity

Particular activities take on specific meanings in relation to other activity-types. The practice of dwelling, if viewed as a whole, is thus a system of both regularised and randomised activities that always occur in space, where that space is defined by the setting. From activity systems, social orders are derived.

Within spontaneous settlements an absence or neglect of formal building regulations and practices that govern the utilisation of domestic and public space results in spaces characterised by flexibility in accommodating multiple activities. Previous studies, such as Nguluma (2003), investigated this negotiation, while Kellet & Tipple (2000), Lirenzsa, et al. (2019) and Kamalipour (2020) looked specifically at home-based enterprises (HBEs). In HBEs the challenge of limited space meant a host of strategies were employed to negotiate space without dismantling spatial and social networks (Lirenzsa et al., 2019). People defined activities through allocating specific functions to space and utilising objects to demarcate functions. Social relations were also negotiated, for instance, interactions in the presence of work activities between the household or neighbours and customers impacted privacy. Jones (2021), aptly points out how micro-scale notions of distance and proximity in informal settlements become significant variables in determining how private and public circulation space is negotiated. For Jones (2021), the narrow alleyways reinforced a sense of enclosure and human scale, while in in contrast, the porosity of building facades or plot extents in proximity to alleyways delineate public and private space.

Seeking to build an understanding of the organisational elements that define spontaneous settlements, this paper explores the spatial order of domestic space within a spontaneous settlement on the outskirts of Kampala, the largest city in Uganda. The purpose of the study is to investigate the extent of the domestic realm, often understood to exist within the confines of a building. However, as is the case in many rural and traditional dwellings across the world, this realm extends well beyond these physical boundaries. Beyond the indoor spaces that define spaces for sleeping and business ventures, evidence from informal walkthroughs of some spontaneous settlements suggests that communal spaces are inhabited through negotiation.

Seeking to understand the processes and forms of informality in spontaneous settlements, Kamalipour (2017) proposed typological tools for the analysis and mapping of the public and private interfaces in such settlements. These were based on two variables, 'Proximity' and 'Connectivity', with the latter denoting the degree to which a private territory is connected to the public space and the former referring to the extent to which a private territory is close to the public space. Based on a range of examples from a number of different spontaneous settlements, this typology focuses on the materiality of the public/private interface from which interface types were developed (Figure 1). Instead of a dichotomy between connectivity and proximity, the figure illustrates a co-existing twofold condition that suggests a dynamic continuum (Kamalipour, 2017). An understanding of interface types increases with the use of

physical and socio-material layers that include functional mix, social activities and building density. For unregulated contexts, analysis of interface types promotes an improved understanding of urban transformation and adaptation where human agency/action are linked to space.
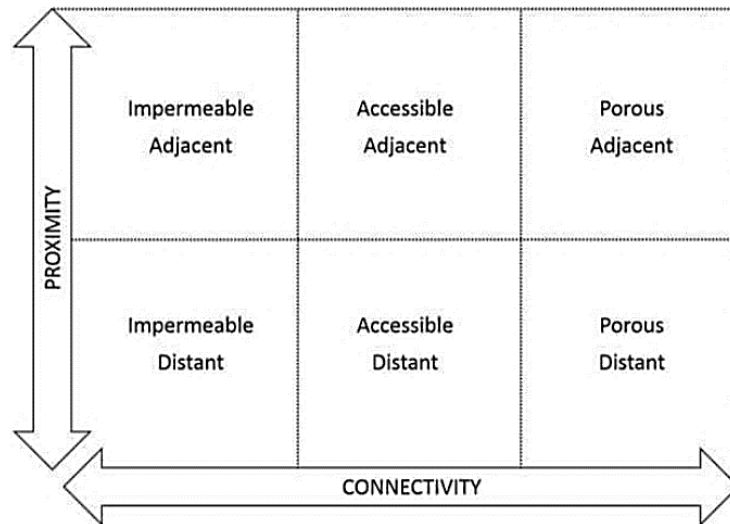

Figure 1: Interface types in informal settlements. Source: Kamalipour, 2017.

For Dovey et al. (2020), understanding the morphology of spontaneous settlements by necessity needs to include how they work or fail to work. Beyond highlighting how informal settlements emerge, morphology underlines informal morphogenesis as a form of production. Unpacking informal morphologies includes a study of the threshold interface between private and public space, or *urban interfaces* which play a key role in enabling different forms of social and economic exchange (Dovey & Wood, 2015). This is particularly important as the boundaries of the public and private space are often contested and appropriated in informal settlements (Kamalipour, 2017). These interfaces are the physical manifestation of Hunter's (1985) parochial social order, which form a transitional zone between the public and private territories. Based on two key variables, connectivity and proximity, one can assess the degree to which these realms co-exist. Dovey & Wood (2015) go on to note that mapping these interfaces reveals the often-hidden relationship between public activities and street-life intensity. Interfaces are sites where people exercise control over social, spatial and temporal boundaries to include or exclude others.

Research Approach and Study Area
The area of study, Kasokoso, is located in Kira Municipality, on the eastern edge of the Kampala metropolitan area. It occupies an area of about 1.2 square kilometres (See Figure 2) with a population of approximately 30,000 inhabitants (NHCC, 2013). Much of the land in Kasokoso is dedicated to housing and commercial activities, with virtually no space dedicated to recreation or other public outdoor activities. Kasokso was formed through what Dovey & King (2011) describe as inserting, one of the primary processes

spontaneous settlements grow, that is, emerging from uninhabited, abandoned and left over fragments of land owned by governments, or in this case, the National Housing and Construction Company (NHCC). Unique for Uganda, is the reality that some spontaneous settlements are not only found on land owned by parastatals like NHCC, but on land owned by private landowners including the Kabaka (King of Buganda Kingdom) and religious institutions. This is a consequence of a complicated land tenure regime enshrined in the Uganda Agreement that was the basis of the founding of the Uganda Protectorate in 1901.
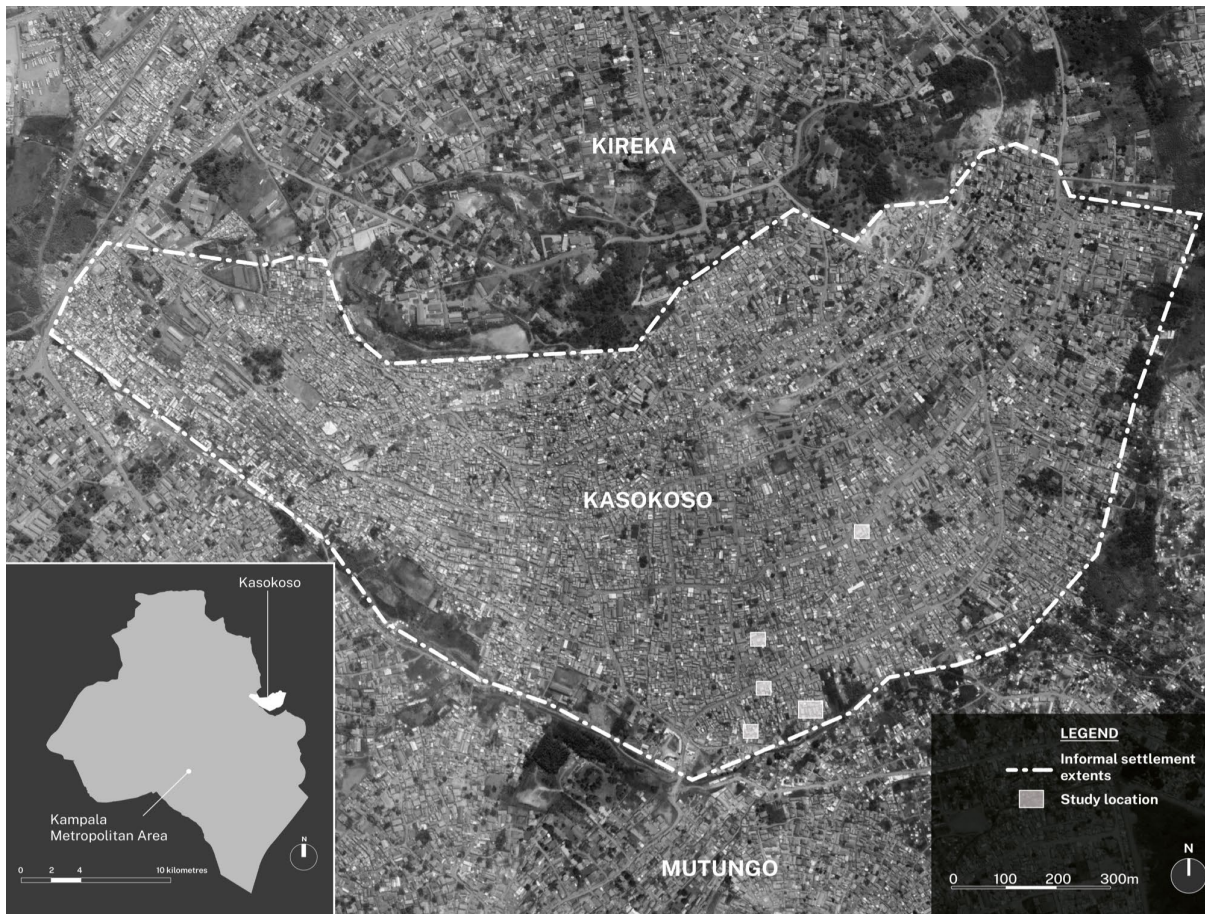

Figure 2: Extents of Kasokoso settlement. Source: Modified from Google Earth Pro.

Existing were three systems of land tenure (*Mailo* under the Kabaka's regents, leasehold under the state and freehold made out to religious institutions) determining access and use even after the country's independence in 1964. Formal planning schemes and guidelines in Kampala did not extend to African-areas largely located outside its boundaries (Nkurunziza, 2007; Southall & Gutkind, 1957). Consequently, African migrants into Kampala placed severe housing demands on the national and city authorities. Africans were driven into spontaneous settlements and inadvertently separated from infrastructural services. Irregularity regarding land tenure and construction are one of the ways through which the poor settle in and urbanise cities.

The conditions for irregularity include land invasions or disputes over tribal land as is the case for many areas in Kampala (Ernstson & Nilsson, 2022).

Residents of spontaneous settlements are generally distrustful of outsiders inquiring after spatial issues. There are a multitude of reasons for this, most significant being the perilous land occupation, and ever-present threats of eviction. Consequently, residents of these settlements are often hostile towards researchers and other outsiders, who are considered as spies for the land owners. Planning the research activities thus took considerable time, seeking approvals and finding willing participants for this study, notwithstanding written backing from their Local Chairman (LC[1]). To add weight to the introductory letter from the LC, a resident of the area nominated by the LC was required to be present at all times while conducting the survey and when research activities were being conducted in the area. Interviewees were unwilling to have their private domain recorded through photographs, in part on account of the social climate surrounding land ownership in Kasokoso and its projected redevelopment by NHCC. As a response to the complex and contested nature of Kasokoso, observational sketches performed as a form of record keeping, locating and indicating the 'centrality of everyday objects' (Tayob, 2018). To guarantee privacy and anonymity, no personal details were collected, and no photographs were taken anywhere in the settlement. Documentation thus relied on conversations and detailed sketches of locations and activity scenarios, a particularly time-consuming task.

From thirteen cases visited between May and August 2021, five case study dwelling units were investigated. The study took into consideration who the key actors were and how they negotiated the interface across the different realms of public and private space. The spatial domains around the five dwelling units were mapped and categorised making use of the social order categorisation structure (private, parochial and public) developed by Hunter (1985). Thistook into account proximity of actors within their physical domains and the mutual dependence of human action (activities) and social structure (scales of intimacy). Through observation, activities and their location in space were recorded, making use of on-site sketching and field notes. Additionally, the use and layout of spaces, including the location of household items, within the home, the spatial location of activities, and temporal variations across the day. Accounts of activities and their location during the night were recorded through interviewee recollections and narrations as the settlement was inaccessible to the authors after dark for security reasons. Additional records and aerial photographs were derived from the Kampala City Council Authority planning unit for morphological analysis to map out built and unbuilt spaces.

Findings

For each of the dwellings identified, discussions were held with the primary occupants. Given that these discussions were conducted during the day, discussants were mainly women, who were either at home at the time, or engaged in business activities in adjacent spaces. With the exception of the occupants from House 5, all others from

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[1] A village is the lowest political administrative unit. A village committee, which is headed by a village chairperson (LC), oversees the implementation of policies and decisions made by its council. The LC also serves as the main communication channel between the Government, district or higher local council and people in the area.

houses 1-3 & 4 rented their dwellings and are consequently dependent on their landlords for the delivery and maintenance of services (electricity and sanitation facilities). A number of occupants had illegal electricity connections that provided light and power televisions, DVD players and other entertainment devices. Water is generally only available at public stand taps and local wells scattered around the settlement, with all occupants having daily water collection tasks. Occupants rely on charcoal for cooking, although some households do occasionally use electric cookers, but this was a rare occurrence, due to the high cost of electricity relative to charcoal and LPG. Waste collection is managed privately with occupants often discarding their waste in a designated open space away from shared outdoor areas. Waste from latrines is also handled privately, with landlords and owner-occupiers paying for private waste disposal companies to have these facilities emptied on an irregular basis.

Figure 3: Mapping spatial domains of social order around houses 1 & 2.
Source: Brenda Kirabo, 2021.

A close inspection of the dwellings revealed that physical spaces are negotiated between leisure, work, and domestic activities by designating activity spaces. This is achieved by making use of physical boundaries (household furniture/walls), and the

permeability and flexibility of the spaces based on time. It also becomes apparent that the activities and the actors define what space is public or otherwise. Looking at House 1 and House 2 (Figure 3) activities such as doing laundry and cooking were done outside – under the shelter of the eaves and defined by a concrete splash apron[2] that sets the building on a small plinth of sorts (shared courtyard, Figure 3).

The juxtaposition of the splash apron to the adjacent public footpath suggests potential for conflict within this shared courtyard. While the space is publicly accessible, gradual movement from public to more private space provides a greater feeling of security and sense of belonging to areas outside the private area (Gehl, 1987) and as such permitting domestic activities (laundry, child care and food preparation) to spill-over into this shared space (Figure 3). The social bond amongst neighbours also plays a role in this classification of the parochial. In their experience of everyday activities, discussants indicated being 'used to' their environment and people who lived near them. A familiarity built over ritualised activities such as daily fetching of water and maintenance of shared open spaces. By definition, the parochial social order is based on the physical proximity of structural positions (neighbours/co-habitants) of a shared common area (Hunter, 1985). Following Kamalipour's (2017) matrix, House 3 is adjacent/accessible, a typology that presents no physical distance between the public and parochial domains (Figure 4). The pedestrian-accessible passageway into the parochial realm is off a public laneway (Figure 4). This characteristic is common in mono-functional areas within informal settlements (Kamalipour, 2017 and Jones, 2021). Houses 1 & 2 on the other hand present a distant/accessible typology where the dwellings are setback from the public realm (Figure 3). Here the parochial realm is the physical distance between the two realms, separating actors of different levels of familiarity/intimacy to the household.

Social order instances reveal themselves differently when work and domestic activities share space. Domestic space as a Home-Based Enterprise (HBE) not only functions as a setting for social reproduction, but also a space of production (Kellet & Tipple, 2000). Through an allocation of space, time and labour, House 5 negotiates domestic and work activities, in this case hairdressing, within the same space. A hairdressing business was situated in the room fronting the street, giving the owner of the HBE the ability to spatially control work activities and workers movements between the different social orders. Control is established through an emphasis on the division between working and living space, where the position of the private space is negotiated so that it does not intersect with hairdressing activities. Marking the space for hairdressing are a display shelf for hair products, hair washing-sink and sitting place for customers.

To maintain this division between work and private life, the door separating the business and living space is almost always shut during work hours), associating control to the time the business is operational and the labour (provided by the family) to operate the HBE. This negotiation has implications for what activities happen in proximity to others.

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[2] Splash apron is a concrete slab built around a building to prevent water from splashing onto the walls, especially rainwater from the roof.
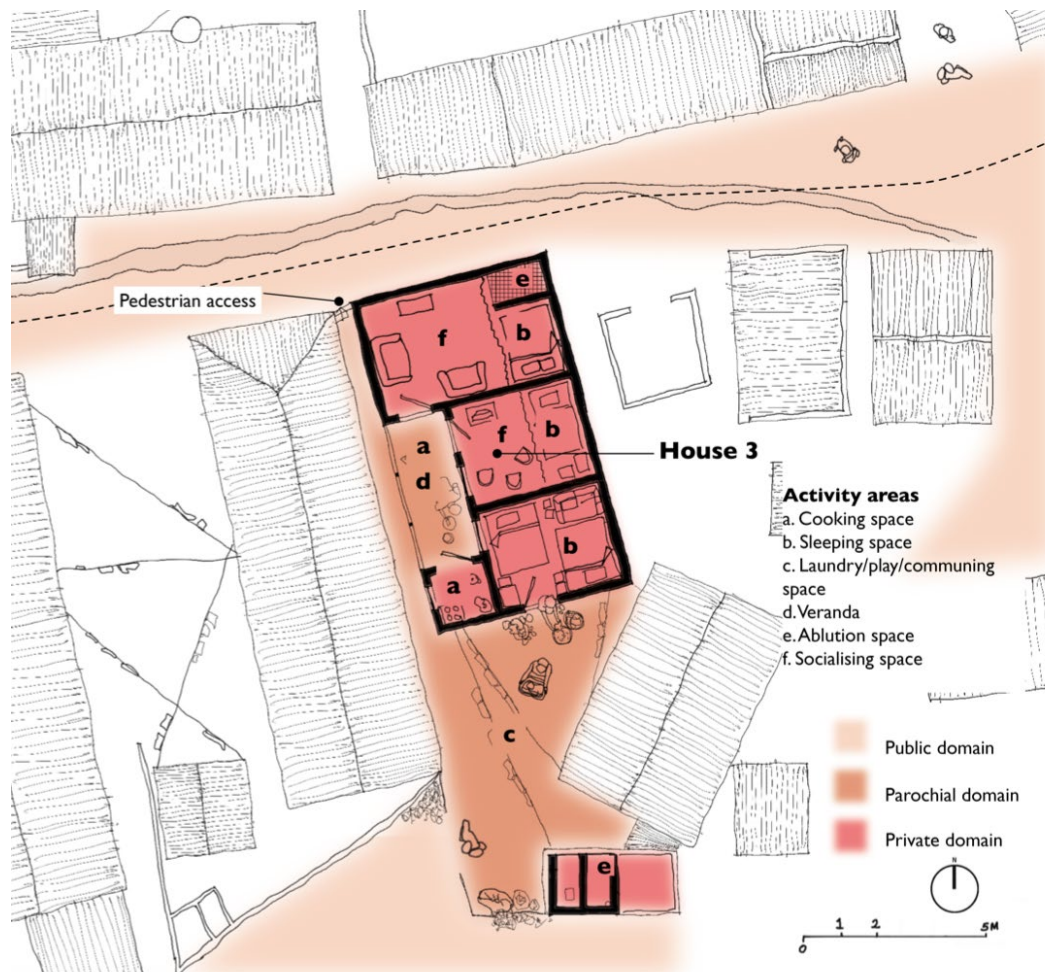
Figure 4: Pedestrian access to House 3's parochial domain (Source: Brenda Kirabo, 2021).

Preparing and cooking of meals happens between buildings in a space adjacent to the dwelling (south of House 5, see Figure 5) or on the veranda north of the business space. The latter location is utilised especially during the day as labour for the HBE shares her time between work and child care/food preparation, making this area parochial/semi-private. During the day, family members share meals within the business space, primarily a public realm, moving furniture around adapting it to suit this activity. Occasionally, the area between buildings also becomes a space for respite (south of House 5, Figure 5) for workers apart from the public realm, a space they withdraw to when tired and interact with neighbouring workers. House 4 similarly differentiates working from living space and as such the public and private realms. House 4's business space (beverage sales) is separated from the kitchen by a door in which part of the owner's workers split their time (Figure 5). As the use of the kitchen is generally gendered, it occasionally functions as the female's space of relaxation, socialising and eating separate from the living area in House 4. Different activities may render a space either private/public without necessarily corresponding to its location. For instance, occupants within houses 1-3 and 5 all mentioned brushing their teeth within the parochial domain despite having a designated ablution space located in the private domain.

Figure 5: Social orders for households with home-based businesses.
Source: Brenda Kirabo, 2021.

This may be tied to where water-storage containers and personal hygiene items are stored (indoors but in close proximity to the splash apron, Figures 4, 5 and 7). This section identified spatial orders in five dwellings within the Kasokoso neighbourhood that are shaped by activity systems and the interface types of the public/private threshold. Tables 1-3 attempt to categorise the different spatial negotiations that occur within and around the studied cases. Spatial patterns that include dwelling location together with the arrangement and quality of shared open spaces allow residents to meet their needs and sustain viable livelihoods. The spatial orders derived from use-patterns reveal salient organisational patterns that impact and are impacted by people's behaviour. Policies that aim to regularise spontaneous settlements by erasing them or providing new (often alien) settlements fail to recognise why people have organised their built environment as the findings indicate. Viewing these settlements as a problem only frames 'solutions' that have harmful outcomes for the livelihoods of the already marginalised occupants.
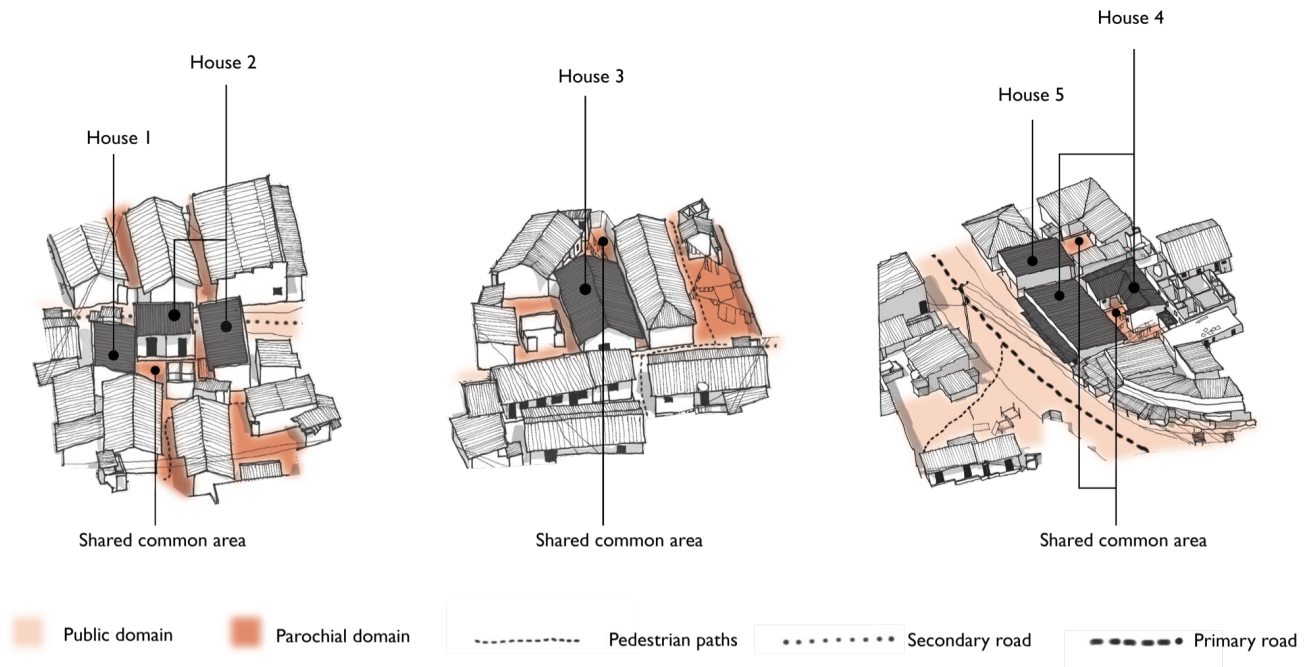
Figure 6: Public/private interface and its adjacencies (Source: Brenda Kirabo, 2021).

Table 1: Categorising spatial negotiations within and around domestic space.

Category of spatial negotiation	House 1	House 2	House 3	House 4	House 5
Covered outdoor area (veranda and splash apron)	Splash apron as laundry and meeting space.	Splash apron as laundry and storage space.	Splash apron as laundry and food preparation space.	Veranda as laundry and meeting space.	Veranda as laundry and cooking space.
Space of ownership	Basins and cooking apparatus placed on splash apron to indicate ownership.	Basins placed on splash apron to indicate ownership.	Personal belongings placed on footpath fronting splash apron to indicate ownership.	Specific spaces are assigned activities. Personal belongings placed on veranda to indicate ownership.	Cooking apparatus placed on veranda to indicate ownership.
Working space	N/A	N/A	N/A	Serves as a meeting space – separate from domestic space. Affords male owner control over workers and domestic help.	As a space of conversation/interaction and extend domestic activities.

Translation of immediate outdoor space	As a space of conversation/ interaction and extend domestic activities.	As a space of conversation/ interaction and extend domestic activities.	As a space to extend domestic activities.	As a space of conversation/inte raction and extend domestic activities.	As a space to extend domestic activities.

Table 2: Categorising private/public interface

Categorising variable for private/public interface	House 1	House 2	House 3	House 4	House 5
Connectivity	Adjacent to a public footpath and accessible.	Houses are close together narrowing entry into shared outdoor space.	Narrow street entry to domestic space comes off a public laneway and is only pedestrian accessible.	Adjacent to and accessible from primary road.	Adjacent to and accessible from primary road.
Proximity	Adjacent to public laneway but impermeable.	Adjacent to public laneway but impermeable.	Entry adjacent to public laneway.	Entry adjacent to and accessible from secondary road.	Entry adjacent to and accessible from primary road.

Table 3: Categorising social order

Categorising variable for social order	House 1	House 2	House 3	House 4	House 5
Social bond	Shared common area cleaned by nearby residents.	Shared common area cleaned by nearby residents.	Shared common area cleaned by nearby residents.	Shared courtyard maintained by neighbours.	Shared courtyard maintained by neighbours.
Social control	Inward looking buildings support continuous surveillance.	Inward looking buildings support continuous surveillance.	Unfamiliar visitors and neighbours interact with house occupants on splash apron and immediate outdoor space.	Unfamiliar visitors interact with house owner on veranda and within business space.	Neighbours interact with house occupants in shared courtyard.

Conclusion

The paper highlights the important aspects of the physical environment including dwelling location, private to public space thresholds, and arrangement of shared open spaces that are interwoven with the social environment of the settlement. The parochial mediates relative privacy of the dwelling and the more public nature of shared open spaces by directing a somewhat socio-spatial behaviour for socialising with neighbours and all other actors. Particularly for Houses 1 & 2 this domain also alleviates the small size of the dwellings seen through the activities that are extended to this space. The domain accommodates children's play and social interactions too. For Houses 4 and 5, the nature of this domain allows occupants to carry out social, domestic, and economic activities simultaneously. The overlapping nature of private and public activities justifies the extension of private activities into shared outdoor spaces and public activities into the indoors. This occurrence illustrates the fluidity of social relations in space unbound by physical or spatial settings. The definitions of spatial orders developed by Hunter (1985) appear insufficient in categorising strict spatial realms within these dwelling spaces. The parochial, the threshold of public and private space, is characterised as a *commoning* area based on the actors and activities carried out within it. There appears to be strict social distinctions that organise these dwelling spaces but they materialise as fluid/negotiated spatial areas. This is especially evident in House 5's business space that negotiates both work and domestic practice. The *commoning* areas, occasionally productive spaces, have social value to the inhabitants of these neighbourhoods and are able to adapt to changing circumstances. Recognising *commoning* areas as relevant in structuring use and social order is similar to sentiments shared by Dörmann & Mkhabela (2019) on urban compounding in Yeoville, South Africa. Dörmann & Mkhabela (2019) speculate on an urban process that integrates and supports existing work-and-live models relevant to established living situations. Generated from knowledge of how space is used and negotiated, positions like these disrupt the models of expertise (Roy, 2005) because they recognise the practices by residents of the intended spaces. An attitude that steps away from upgrading schemes whose agenda is stipulated by (non)governmental organisations.

Recognising and understanding the underlying processes that generate and give meaning to urban interfaces of spontaneous settlements is critical to improve resident's quality of life. Yet, with spontaneous settlements providing 60% of housing stock in Kampala, *informality* and spontaneous settlements will likely remain a fixture of the urban landscape of Kampala and indeed many cities across the globe (Jones, 2021). With the aim to unpack the complexity that is informality, this paper studied the connection between the built and social environment in Kasokoso, Kampala, raising awareness of the lived experiences of those inhabiting these environments.

The nature of the studied interfaces is tied to the arrangement of the built environment, actors living within domestic spaces and the activities they carry out. These findings suggest these might not be unplanned as is portrayed in previous discourse on informal settlements - as actors make intentional decisions on how these spaces are used. Dwellings are arranged around shared open spaces to maintain social ties and provide a sense of security, while interfaces allow people to mediate public and private realms through their activities and controlled behaviour. A starting point for solutions that improve occupants' well-being could be policy regulations that emphasise the neighbourhood's spatial and social characteristics, built from an understanding of their

specific spatial negotiations. Solutions should include a combination of commoning, habitable and productive space to accommodate and maintain existing forms of living within spontaneous settlements.

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