

## **The Informal Transport Sector in Kampala and the 'Politics of Survival'**

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This paper deals with the 'politics of survival' (Gombay 1994) of groups within the informal transport sector in Kampala. It will be shown how these groups – and more particularly the motorcycle taxi ('boda boda's) drivers and mini-bus drivers – use a variety of strategies to protect their interests. Central to these strategies is their relationship with high-level political elites: urban informal groups (such as those within the transport sector) constitute important political capital, and political elites use various strategies to recuperate them. It will be shown how this has a largely negative effect on urban planning and public policy in general. Formal urban authorities are sidelined and do not succeed in extending their formal regulatory authority on these groups (and the informal sector in general), for example in the field of taxation or more general transport regulations, as political elites intervene to contest their policies. The paper argues how these political interventions in favor of informal groups do not come out of nowhere, but are closely related with the national political context, i.e. the nature of the Ugandan political regime, which has become increasingly personalized. In this context, the urban planning arena is characterized by a high degree of informalisation and unpredictability for all actors involved, both urban authorities and groups within the informal sector: the latter depend on the unpredictable interventions of political elites.