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City dynamics: Rurban Africa: African rural-city connections: briefing no.3

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RurbanAfrica

African Rural-City Connections

2013

Briefing 3

City Dynamics



European Commission

City Dynamics

The nature of city dynamics in sub-Saharan Africa is contested. During the past decade it has been commonplace for extremely high rates of urban growth to be predicted with accompanying scenarios of cities growing out of control with ever expanding slums. However, another line of argument has emerged alongside these claims, with researchers such as Satterthwaite (2007) and Myers (2011) highlighting how these scenarios are often based on the misinterpretation of unreliable data. As Potts (2009, 2012) argues, sub-Saharan African urban growth rates are very variable; most have slowed down and recent censuses show that many are around or below the national rates. Thus the increase in the urban share of a country's population is slow or stagnating in most sub-Saharan African countries.

Although much city growth in sub-Saharan Africa is now due to natural population increase, this does not mean mobility is on the decline. Circular migration, which has always been important in sub-Saharan Africa, has intensified in recent decades. As urban retrenchment has made urban living insecure, linkages back to rural areas have provided the primary safety net for many urbanites (although there are cases such as South Africa and Zimbabwe where rural-urban links for long-term city dwellers are weakening). A key outcome of this situation is that elderly migrants returning to their hometown no longer dominate urban-rural migration streams. On the contrary, young people are now increasingly involved in migratory processes back to rural areas (Kristensen and Birch-Thomsen 2013).

This report aims to contribute to our understanding of city dynamics by providing a detailed analysis of current urban population trends and the relative contribution of migration to urban growth in Cameroon, Ghana, Rwanda and Tanzania. Our summary here is structured under three headings: urban growth trends, urban hierarchy, and urban migration.

Urban growth trends

Urbanization in statistical terms is the increasing proportion of a population living in settlements defined as urban centres. The net movement of people from rural to urban areas typically causes urbanization. Urban growth on the other hand is the absolute increase in the urban population. Hence urbanization leads to urban growth but urban growth can occur without urbanization also taking place.

In terms of the level of urbanization in our four countries, there is a clear difference between Ghana and Cameroon, which have both recently become predominantly urban countries with just over half of their populations living in urban areas, and Rwanda and Tanzania where between about a fifth and a quarter of the population is urban. However, Cameroon, Ghana and Tanzania have urban populations of 10-12 million inhabitants, while Rwanda has only 1.4 million. The periods of highest urbanization rates also vary between the four countries, with Ghana experiencing high rates in the late 1940s and1950s, Tanzania in the late 1960s to 1970s, Cameroon in the latter half of the 1970s and 1980s, and Rwanda in the 1990s and 2000s.

Ghana is now predominantly urban and its highest period of urbanization began over four decades earlier than Rwanda, which has the lowest current level of urbanization and most recent period of high urbanization rates. These similarities and differences are attributable to historically differing social, economic and political processes in each of the countries.

A key theme that emerges is the importance of the transition from colonial to post-independence governance. All four countries attained independence from colonial rule over a seven year period from 1957 to 1964. Rwanda, which has a lower level of urbanization and smaller total urban population in comparison to the other three countries, began its highest period of urbanization thirty years after attaining independence from colonial rule. In contrast, Cameroon, Ghana and Tanzania experienced their highest urbanization growth rates within the first two decades following independence. The delay in Rwanda's period of highest urbanization is notable because it differs from the prevailing strategy of many post-independence governments that were steeped in the era's prevailing economic rationale: that investing in capital-intensive industries located in urban centres would stimulate structural change, pulling in excess rural labour and slowly increasing rural wages. This approach was particularly pronounced in Cameroon and Ghana. When Cameroon attained independence in 1960 agriculture was at the heart of the economy. But an oil boom from 1976 allowed the Cameroonian government to expand its import-substituting industrialisation policy and protectionist trade stance to foster infant industries. Urbanisation accelerated from this time to 1987.

In post-independence Ghana, state-led industrialisation especially affected the three urban agglomerations of southern Ghana: Accra-Tema, Kumasi, and Sekondi-Takoradi, where government industrial estates provided the infrastructure and services needed to attract manufacturing firms. This benefited regions that were already relatively more developed. Consequently, job opportunities in the manufacturing sector were enhanced within what is often described as a 'golden triangle' with Accra-Tema and Sekondi-Takoradi forming the base, and Kumasi as the apex. The creation of Tema as the industrial hub of Ghana made Accra-Tema an attractive destination for migrants from all over Ghana, but most especially from the regions adjoining greater Accra. Other regional capitals, including Tamale in the north, did not benefit from the same state-sponsored industrialisation and contributed to population movements to major cities.

As indicated above, Rwanda's post-independence approach to urbanization differed from the general sub-Saharan African trend as the government actively discouraged migration into urban areas. Kigali became the official capital of Rwanda and the associated relocation of national ministry functions to the city fuelled its growth and importance. Restrictions on rural-urban migration resulted in urbanization growth rates remaining relatively slow from independence through to the mid-1980s.

When comparing the four countries we find that net in-migration is important in Rwanda and Cameroon but only moderately so in Ghana and Tanzania. With natural increase, the reverse is the case: it is important in contributing to urban growth in Ghana and Tanzania but less so in Cameroon and Rwanda. The reclassification of settlements is important in Cameroon, Rwanda and

Tanzania but less so in Ghana, whereas the absorption of smaller settlements is less important in all four countries.

Urban hierarchy

There are four principal methods for distinguishing urban places. The first is population size; the most universally applied method for defining an urban settlement is by stipulating a certain minimum population for demarcation as a town. Second, population size is combined with other diagnostic criteria to define urban places, such as the majority of the workforce engaged in non-farm activities. Third, administrative criteria are used in defining urban areas though these may have little correspondence with the actual physical extent of the urban area. Fourth, there is a functional classification that reflects the role of urban areas and the extent of urban influence. Our four countries all define urban in differing ways which has major implications for measuring the levels of urbanization. Ghana and Cameroon both use population size but with different thresholds. Cameroon and Tanzania include functions in their definitions but in differing ways. Rwanda, by contrast, uses an administrative/legal definition of urban (see Table 1).

Table 1 – Defining 'urban'

Country	**Definition**
Cameroon	Administrative headquarters with at least 2,000 inhabitants
Ghana	Settlements of at least 5,000 inhabitants
Rwanda	Those resident within the urban administrative units recognized as such by law
Tanzania	Regional and district headquarters; other areas where there is a concentration of houses and institutions like police stations, post offices, health centres and streets

Similar to these definitions, the urban hierarchy differs in each of the four countries (see Table 2). Rwanda is the country that demonstrates the highest degree of urban primacy with 45 percent of its urban population living in Kigali. In both Tanzania and Ghana, one city, Dar es Salaam and Accra respectively, dominate the urban scene (though both countries, especially Ghana, also have other secondary cities of notable size). Cameroon is dominated by two major cities, Douala and Yaoundé, a reflection of its dual British/French colonial past.

Table 2 illustrates the major cities selected for primary research. In the case of Ghana and Rwanda, Accra and Kigali respectively are also the capital cities, whereas in Cameroon and Tanzania the capital cities are Yaoundé and Dodoma respectively which, despite being the seats of government, are smaller and economically less important than Douala and Dar es Salaam.

Table 2 – Size of major city

Country	Major city	Population of major city around independence	Population of major city today	Proportion of urban population (percent)
Ghana	Accra	400,000	2.1 million	17
Cameroon	Douala	111,000	2.5 million	25
Rwanda	Kigali	6,000	603,000	45
Tanzania	Dar es Salaam	433,000	3.1 million	32

The regional distribution of the urban populations differs between the project countries. The majority of Rwanda's urban population is located in the capital, and the nation's urban population is, therefore, very much focused in the centre of the country around Kigali. In Cameroon, Ghana and Tanzania, the coast is an important location for urban growth. As well as the major city in each case being coastal, other cities located on the coast are also important and expanding rapidly; in Cameroon the ports of Kribi and Limbe, and in Ghana the cities of Sekondi-Takoradi and Tema are rapidly growing urban centres. As well as having a coastal concentration of urban settlements, Ghana, Cameroon and Tanzania exhibit distinctive urban regional distributions. In Ghana there is a clear north/south divide with the south of the country, which includes the major cities of Accra, Tema, Kumasi and Sekondi-Takoradi, as well as numerous intermediate and small urban centres being the most heavily urbanized. In Cameroon, towns and cities are especially concentrated in the west, centre and far-north of the country as well as along the coast; the Moungo corridor stretching from Douala to Bafoussam is especially important in this regard. In Tanzania, the location of the urban population is more diverse with urban centres of importance being located in the north, west and south of the country. One striking feature of the four cities is the youthful age of the population. For example, in 2010, 42 percent of Accra's population was aged between 15 and 34 years, with 31 percent under 24 years old. Douala also has a youthful population, with a notable share of residents in the 20-35 age cohort.

Four secondary cities have also been selected for the collection of primary data: Bafoussam (Cameroon), Tamale (Ghana), Musanze (Rwanda) and Arusha (Tanzania). These vary in size from Musanze with a population of just over 80,000 (though this is likely to have increased since 2002) to Arusha with an estimated population of over 700,000. Tamale is the regional capital of the

Northern Region and is the dominant urban centre in the three administrative regions of northern Ghana, which as well as the Northern Region includes the Upper East and Upper West Regions. In 2010, Tamale with a population of over 370,000, had more than seven times the population of the next largest town in the Northern Region, Yendi (around 52,000). Tamale is reportedly one of the fastest growing cities in West Africa.

Bafoussam is the regional capital of West Cameroon and one of the most densely populated regions of the country with a population of over 280,000. Its location at the convergence of three national roads has made the city an attractive destination for migrants from the Western highlands as well as the North and East region. Alongside administrative and commercial functions, Bafoussam has numerous agro-industries including breweries, soap and oil factories. Musanze (formerly known as Ruhengeri) became recognised as a town following a decision by the extraordinary Consultative Council of Musanze District in October 2010. Musanze is now the most important town in Rwanda's Northern Province with a population of over 83,000 in 2002. The town's growth is linked to the increasing importance of tourism in the area as it is located close to a national park.

Arusha is situated in northeast Tanzania and shares its name with the region within which it is located. Arusha had an estimated population of 728,000 in 2010. Its importance is linked to the regions historical influence, and the city's growth rate has been higher than the national average for all the inter-census periods. Tourism is also an important driver of urban growth in Arusha due to its proximity to Mount Kilimanjaro and several national parks famous for their wildlife. Although of differing sizes, all four towns are capitals of their region/province and hence play important administrative roles. They all act as important service centres for a large rural hinterland and agro-industry is present in all of the cities. Tamale and Bafoussam in particular are both important trading centres due to their strategic location, while Musanze and Arusha are both well located in relation to national parks.

Urban migration

Urban settlements have typically been sites of in-migration as rural residents move from rural to urban areas in search of better livelihood opportunities. Migration therefore plays a key role in the early stages of urban growth. This migration, however, is not simply a one-way process from rural to urban areas; as conditions in many African cities have deteriorated, mobility patterns have changed with higher rates of circular migration, higher prevalence of multi-spatial households and increasing urban-rural migration.

In the case of Ghana, internal migration to urban areas was the most important factor in the population expansion of Ghana's major urban centres between 1948 and 1970. This movement was often circular and dominated by males. A characteristic of contemporary rural-urban migration is the shift from circular and male-dominated movements, to one which has become more permanent including children, independent females and/or large family units. Independent female migration has become a major survival strategy in response to deepening poverty. Consequently, in Ghana the dominant migration stream is from north to south, and increasingly involves female

youths moving independently of their families towards the cities of Accra and Kumasi, some of whom become 'street children'.

Migration to towns also remains a key factor in the composition of Cameroon's urban population. According to findings in the last census, the proportion of Cameroonian migrants living in towns increased from 36 percent in 1976, to 41 percent in 1987, and to 51 percent in 2005. However, unlike Ghana, Cameroonian males are still more likely to migrate than their female counterparts. Migration to urban areas, particularly among young people, has also played an important role in Tanzania's urban growth and urbanization process. Between 1988-2002 migration contributed to 17 percent of urban population growth in Tanzania. However, urban-urban migration is almost as important as rural-urban migration but as it does not directly contribute to urban population growth it is often ignored by policy makers.

Rwanda offers a sharp contrast to the three other countries because 80 percent of the population are categorized as non-migrants. The population's relatively limited mobility is attributed to physical/geographical constraints, gender norms and the traditional practice of intensive agriculture along with sedentary animal breeding. The genocide clearly impacted on mobility within Rwanda during the 1990s. Migration is now emerging as an important livelihood strategy for financially disadvantaged groups in Rwanda, however similarly to Cameroon, men dominate migration streams. This links to research indicating that multi-spatial households are becoming more prevalent as some households split up with, for instance, women living in rural areas and men working in towns and cities, a practice found to be most prevalent in Cameroon. The findings from this body of research illustrate how static understandings and definitions of households as either urban or rural are problematic because they fail to grasp the increasingly fluid and multi-spatial nature of households, where some members are resident in rural areas, some in urban areas while others have undertaken international migration.

The connection between migrants and their places of origin highlights the importance of rural-urban linkages, as rural-urban migrants often maintain ties with their origin communities in rural areas. These ties are expressed in both economic and non-economic terms, however urban migrants are typically expected to send remittances back to their origin communities, and face significant pressure to do so. It is well documented that rural households often benefit from remittances from urban kin, yet recent research has also found the reverse to be true. With increasing economic insecurity and rising costs of living in cities, access to rural food through kin or rural land ownership is now a crucial resource in the livelihood strategies of many urban dwellers. This economic insecurity is linked to the predominately informal nature of occupational opportunities available in sub-Saharan Africa, and in line with widespread trends across the continent, all four countries have experienced increasing informalization of their urban economies.

Conclusions

While Cameroon and Ghana are now predominantly urban countries in statistical terms, Rwanda and Tanzania still have the majority of their populations living in rural areas. All four countries are experiencing urbanization and rural-urban migration remains a contributing factor. However, the continued salience of rural-urban migration should not divert attention away from the increasing importance of natural growth, as the latter is also a major factor in the growth of urban areas, and may pose its own unique policy challenges. Some of the key differences between urbanization rates and levels and the nature of urban growth in the four countries stem from their very varied colonial and postcolonial histories. However, a key difficulty, in engaging in comparisons between the countries is that they all define urban areas differently. Existing data is also very limited.

A number of key areas requiring further research have emerged from this report. First, the concept of informality is central to an understanding of urban livelihoods as informal employment is dominant and increasing in African cities. Many urban residents who used to have formal sector jobs are now self-employed informal workers, and many of those who have formal jobs supplement their wages through engaging in the informal sector. Second, the role that mobility plays in urban growth and urban livelihoods has emerged from the state of the art reports as being a central feature of city dynamics. It has been claimed that mobility is so widespread that it should not be seen as a rupture in society but as a normal way of life, with immobility being the anomaly (Sheller and Urry 2006). Third, the youthful nature of urban populations highlights the need to gain an understanding of the priorities and prospects of urban youth.

Finally, this project has the potential to make an important contribution to attempts to view African cities in their own terms rather than through the lens of western conceptualization. This improved understanding of city dynamics should both feed back into some of these key intellectual debates whilst not losing sight of the fact that many urban residents face situations of real hardship, a better understanding of which should contribute to better policies and practice.

Source

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Work Package Identity

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RurbanAfrica - African Rural-City Connections

The African Rural-City Connections (RurbanAfrica) project explores the connections between rural transformations, mobility, and urbanization processes and analyzes how these contribute to an understanding of the scale, nature and location of poverty in sub-Saharan Africa. The RurbanAfrica project is advancing the research agenda on rural-city connections in sub-Saharan Africa by addressing a range of crucial components: agricultural transformations, rural livelihoods, city dynamics, and access to services in cities. Our aim is to generate new insights into the relationship between rural-city connections and poverty dynamics.

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