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1. Introduction

Urbanisation is one of the key mega-trends that will shape the economic, social and political future of sub-Saharan Africa in the decades to come. It is closely interlinked with demographic and economic trends, and it is likely to increasingly affect politics in the region too.¹

Historically, cities are engines of economic growth, innovation and productivity. Yet in sub-Saharan Africa rapid population growth is happening in the context of slow structural economic transformation, pervasive poverty, sharp inequalities and widespread socioeconomic and spatial exclusion, and environmental degradation. These conditions severely compromise the prospects for sustainable urban futures. In the best case, the urban transition will help surmount some of these structural hurdles. In the worst case, it will compound them. Most likely, the future will be a mixed picture reflecting the diversity of African countries, in particular their demographic and economic baselines as well as the quality of (both national and urban) governance.

Sub-Saharan Africa's urban transition is in full swing. The region is expected to account for close to a quarter of global urban population growth over the next 15 years. Sub-Saharan Africa's urban population is expanding even faster than its overall population, which grew at an annual average rate of about 2.5% during 2017. In the same year, the region's urban population grew at around 4%, a more rapid increase than anywhere else in the world (International Futures, version 7.29). Partly this is due to the low baseline. More importantly, however, families living in sub-Saharan Africa's urban areas still tend to have many children, while at the same time people today live healthier and longer lives. In other words there have been significant gains in life expectancy over the past two decades.

In fewer than 20 years from now every second person in sub-Saharan Africa is likely to live in a town or a city, matching the current global situation. It is therefore not surprising that the urban agenda has gained immense traction over the past years, both on the continent and globally (UN.org, 2015). The notion that cities cannot make positive contributions

1. This chapter draws on Bello-Schünemann and Aucoin (2016). It also draws on the chapter on urbanisation in Bello-Schünemann et al. (2017).

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to development is now largely outdated. Making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, as stipulated in the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, is necessary if sub-Saharan Africa is to become more prosperous. However, it is also a very ambitious task.

This chapter uses a time horizon of 2035 and explores the following questions. What are the key characteristics of urbanisation in sub-Saharan Africa, and what does the future hold? Is the urban transition likely to translate into increased prosperity? And lastly, what should urban governance look like in order to capitalise on the opportunities urbanisation brings about and mitigate the risks?

All forecasts are based on the International Futures (IFs) system (version 7.29), a long-term integrated modelling system that leverages historical data (over 4000 series) to identify trends and forecasts for hundreds of variables for 186 countries for every year from 2015 to 2100.² All forecasts in this chapter are "Current Path" forecasts, i.e. where systems seem to be heading given current policies and environmental conditions.³

By 2035, more than 810 million people will live in sub-Saharan Africa's cities and towns of different sizes: megacities and large cities with more than 10 million and between 5 and 10 million inhabitants, respectively; medium-sized cities with between 1 and 5 million; as well as smaller cities and towns. This is close to 350 million more urban citizens than today, or the equivalent of adding the current combined populations of Nigeria, Ethiopia, Angola and Mali.

The current and expected level of urbanisation of Africa's regions differs considerably. Higher levels of urbanisation tend to go with lower urban population growth rates. By 2035, over 40% of sub-Saharan Africa's urban population is expected to live in West Africa. And with more than 60% of West Africans living in urban areas by then, West Africa will be Africa's most urbanised region, having surpassed North Africa, which is generally much further ahead in the demographic as well as the urban transition than the rest of the continent. Central and Southern Africa are forecast to cross the 50% urban population threshold before 2030, with Central Africa leading the transition. East Africa/the Horn is the only region in sub-Saharan Africa which will remain predominantly rural in the longer term.

A third of sub-Saharan Africa's countries, including South Africa, Nigeria and the Congo, for example, have already crossed the threshold of having more than half of their population living in urban areas. In fact, variation is great across countries. With less than 20% of their population living in urban areas in 2018, Burundi, Malawi and Uganda are the region's most rural countries, and in the future this is not going to change significantly.

2. The drivers of urbanisation in sub-Saharan Africa

Natural urban population growth or the predominance of births over deaths in urban areas is the single most important driver of sub-Saharan Africa's rapid urban population growth (AFDB, OECD and UNDP, 2016: 54). The historical evidence shows that families living

2. IFs is a free, open-source model used for thinking critically about development futures. It is hosted and developed by the Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures at the University of Denver (see <http://pardee.du.edu/understand-interconnected-world>) and was originally created by Professor Barry B. Hughes. IFs provides forward-looking, policy-relevant analysis that frames uncertainty around the future of countries (or groups of countries) and across development systems. It also helps users to think systematically about potential futures, as well as development goals and targets.
3. The IFs Current Path (CP) is a collection of historical data and trends that represent a likely scenario of how the future will unfold. The CP assumes no major paradigm shifts, policy changes or "black swan" events. Although the CP generally demonstrates continuity with historical patterns, it provides a structure that moves beyond a simple linear extrapolation of previous trends.

in urban areas have fewer children than families living in rural areas. Yet, in sub-Saharan Africa, widespread poverty in terms of income but also education and access to healthcare means that fertility rates have remained high, including in cities and towns. Over time, fertility rates in urban areas will drop, but the fact that the number of extremely poor Africans is set to increase over the coming decades suggests that this might not happen quickly.

The second-most important driver of urban population growth in sub-Saharan Africa is rural-urban migration, followed by cross-border inward migration. Rural-urban migration accounted for less than a third of urban population growth between 2010 and 2015 in Africa. That said, South Africa, Rwanda and Namibia all show higher levels of rural-to-urban migration. People tend to leave rural areas because of poor service provision, changing weather patterns, land pressures and natural disasters as well as violence and large-scale conflict. Between 2009 and 2016, the Boko Haram insurgency in northeastern Nigeria, for example, displaced an estimated 1.5 million people, and the city population of Maiduguri may have more than doubled to 2 million due to the influx of internally displaced people (World Bank, 2016: 63).

With Lagos, Kinshasa, Johannesburg, Luanda and Dar es Salaam, sub-Saharan Africa will be home to five of the world's expected 41 megacities by 2035. Next in line are Ouagadougou, Addis Ababa, Bamako, Dakar, Ibadan and Kano. Megacities in sub-Saharan Africa (and in the developing world more generally) are growing at absolute rates unprecedented in history. Lagos, for example, is estimated to add an average of about 700,000 people every year, more than three times as many as New York during the 1920s and more than eight times as many as London during the 1890s, when the city experienced the fastest change in its population yet (Jedwab and Vollrath, 2015: 9). If the current trend holds, by 2035 close to 30 million people could live in Nigeria's commercial capital, turning it into the largest megacity on the entire continent, overtaking Cairo. Kinshasa could have a population of close to 24 million, followed by Dar es Salam with over 13 million.

Megacities merit attention because they tend to absorb a significant share of national populations, are key drivers of their countries' economic performance and connect Africa to the global economy. However, the majority of Africa's urban population live in relatively smaller cities and towns which are expanding incredibly fast as well.

Most of sub-Saharan Africa's cities are ill-prepared for such rapid and dramatic population increases. The provision of land, finance, physical and social infrastructure and other critical services are bound to be a challenge, not least because of the massive backlogs that exist already.

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3. Urbanisation and economic development

Essentially, urbanisation in sub-Saharan Africa is not synonymous with economic development. In the Western context, urbanisation followed industrialisation and hence economic diversification. Sub-Saharan Africa is urbanising, but it is not industrialising.

Urbanisation in sub-Saharan Africa is not synonymous with economic development. The region is urbanising without industrialising.

At present, manufacturing in sub-Saharan Africa accounts for less than 16% of value-add with little change expected by 2035 under the Current Path forecast. In fact, the current value-add from manufacturing is lower than during the 1970s (an estimated 16% today versus close to 18% back then). In absolute terms the manufacturing sector is growing but much slower than the services sector, or the agricultural sector.

Urban population growth has been outpacing economic development, precisely because of the lack of employment creation in higher productivity segments of the economy (Spence, et al., 2009: 26–27; AFDB, OECD and UNDP, 2016: 163). According to the World Bank, on average, up to 60% of the urban job market in sub-Saharan Africa is estimated to be informal (World Bank, 2009). Usually that means that people work but under precarious conditions.

Most countries will see a tremendous increase in the share of their working age population (aged 15 to 65 years) over the coming decades, particularly in urban areas that typically attract the young. This is a potential booster for the economy. However, to translate into economic development, the additional workers need skills and productive jobs and both are scarce. The issue of low-wage jobs in the informal sector is directly connected to the challenge of providing services for all from a small tax base when most households are limited in their ability to pay for services.

Sharp income inequalities in many cities in sub-Saharan Africa also mean that the contribution of economic growth to poverty reduction is limited. Africa has more urban poor than any other world region, and new research from the World Bank indicates that poverty could be urbanising (Ravallion et al., 2007). Even though future improvements in urban poverty reduction are likely, the sheer number of urban poor is expected to increase. Being poor is synonymous with being exposed to multiple risks relating to health, livelihoods, external shocks from natural disasters and governance (Tacoli, 2003: 1–10). All things being equal, the number of people that will lack access to services like clean water and improved sanitation is likely to increase dramatically. The African Economic Outlook 2016 predicts that Africa could see its slum population triple by 2050 (AFDB, OECD and UNDP, 2016).

In fact, new research challenges the common narrative that slums are transitional homes for rural-urban migrants that leave again as they move up the income ladder (Fox, 2013: 6; Marx et al., 2013). Survey data from three slums in Lagos, for example, “suggests that slums are poverty traps rather than temporary living quarters for migrants incorporating into the urban economy” (World Bank, 2016).

Global climate and environmental changes, and pressure from water, food and energy insecurities, compound the challenges for human development and the complexities of contemporary urban governance on the continent (UN-Habitat, 2014: 3).

4. Violence is urbanising

Uncontrolled, rapid urbanisation in the context of pervasive poverty, inequality, large youthful populations and lack of economic opportunities does not bode well for the future sustainability of Africa's towns and cities. In fact, unplanned, overcrowded urban settlements populated with marginalised youth can be hotbeds for violence, particularly in lower-income informal areas.

Urban areas are increasingly the locus for political violence in sub-Saharan Africa. This is largely due to the relatively recent sharp rise of riots and protests across the region. Cities are also where media is most concentrated and so activity can garner the most attention.

In South Africa's Gauteng Province, for example, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project at the University of Sussex, people took to the streets more than 1,900 times between 1 January 1997 and 1 September 2016 – more often than in any

other current or emerging African megacity. That said, fewer protest incidents do not necessarily reflect more peaceful or stable cities. They can also indicate more repressive regimes that suppress citizens' right to voice discontent publicly, a case in point for Angola, for example.

On the other hand, terrorism in Africa to date is concentrated in rural rather than in urban areas. Terrorism, as defined by the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), is concentrated in large cities and often capitals in high-income countries such as the United States and Europe. Population density, the present government and state organisations as well as the media make cities ideal stages for terrorist acts. The urban nature of terrorism is part of the story behind the urbanisation of conflict or the concept of "fragile cities", which calls for greater attention to the fragility of cities facing multiple threats.

However, in Africa to date, the majority of terrorist incidents occur in rural areas. According to the GTD in the 2012–2015 period, Africa's largest cities were never host to more than 10% of their countries' total number of attacks. For example, Cairo hosted 77 incidents of terrorism out of the national total of 779. Similarly, Lagos hosted five incidents in the same period compared to the countrywide number of 1,849. That said, the continent's highest-fatality terrorist attacks have typically occurred in large cities, a trend that seems likely to consolidate in the years to come.

Another form of urban violence is criminal and hence mostly economically motivated. This includes homicide, organised criminal violence and gang violence. Cities provide much more opportunities for illicit economic activities than rural areas, and with them, greater potential for the rise of violent criminal gangs. According to an Afrobarometer survey, in four out of six of the countries that host Africa's current and emerging megacities – Nigeria, Tanzania, South Africa and Egypt – fear of crime is greater in urban areas than in rural settings.

The sheer number of urban poor is expected to increase. This implies that the number of people that will lack access to services such as clean water and improved sanitation is likely to increase dramatically.

With increasing levels of urbanisation, the urban space is quickly becoming the new arena for political competition and party politics. Urban constituencies are likely to become more and more important for political leaders.

5. Urban governance

The governance of African cities is incredibly complex, with local governments that often have responsibilities but lack power and resources, and with frequent political conflict with higher levels of government due to the fact that cities are typically the base of opposition political parties. There are also high levels of malfeasance and/or corruption and parallel traditional and civil society forms of governance. Lastly, capacity in the sense of skills and training is often a concern.

Generally, the nature of national and urban governance understood as the ability of governments to effectively formulate and implement sound policies as well as the quality of national and urban planning will influence greatly whether urbanisation contributes to transformation in sub-Saharan Africa or not. Ad hoc urban governance that serves the interests of the few who are wealthy at the expense of the many who are poor – a pattern that is widespread across the continent – will not lead to sustainable urban futures. Growth that does not benefit the poor is likely to exacerbate existing inequalities.

Urban planning needs to address the problem of slums and informal settlements, for example, but large-scale luxury projects, such as Eko Atlantic City in Lagos, are likely to compound spatial segregation and existing inequalities. In fact, global capital flows that target the construction of gated communities, walled-off condominiums and exclusivist investment hubs tend to compound fragmentation, segregation and exclusion in the urban space (Klaufus et al., 2017).

Moreover, the conflict between informal settlement location and prime economic zones often results in state-led slum clearance programmes that drive large portions of the population from their homes. Zoning laws, in a similar fashion, restrict the poor from working or trading out of their homes, as they are located in areas classified as residential. In South Africa apartheid-era spatial planning and the building of dormitory suburbs that kept people far from their place of work and with a relatively low level of access to services still affect informal settlements in today's biggest South African metros (Centre for Development and Enterprise, 2014: 14).

The countries and cities that are best placed to capitalise on the urban transition are those with healthy economic growth prospects, a reasonable regulatory environment, good planning and strategic investments in key sectors, such as physical and social infrastructure.

Nigeria, for example, requires investment in four critical areas of urban infrastructure: utilities infrastructure, including electricity, water distribution, and sewerage; housing; interregional corridors to reduce economic distance between regions and cities; and mass transport cities to relieve congestion and lower transport costs (World Bank, 2016).

After all, higher population density and economies of scale in urban areas mean that providing public services is more cost efficient than in rural areas. Investing in economic diversification, skills and providing productive employment opportunities for a growing urban workforce is key to promoting less unequal and therefore more sustainable urban futures.

Policymakers need to find approaches that combine interventions that improve peoples' lives in the short term with strategic investments that target longer-term returns and ensure sustainability. Propping up the informal sector, for example, can have short-term livelihood benefits but is unlikely to solve economies' structural problems.

Urbanisation can drive broader industrialisation and economic structural transformation through providing a favourable business environment where companies realise economies of scale and share knowledge more easily. Similarly, services-led growth, by encouraging innovation and developing the skills of the urban labour force, will increase the supply of modern services for the growing urban middle class. This can also help attract more foreign direct investment to African cities by incentivising investment in well-connected urban corridors.

Urbanisation is not a silver bullet for sustainable economic development, but the majority of respondents to an expert survey of country economists from the African Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme carried out by African Economic Outlook 2016 see urbanisation as an opportunity for their country, and not as a risk (AFDB, OECD and UNDP, 2016: 178). There is momentum for countries to manage urbanisation in ways that support more inclusive and therefore more sustainable development outcomes. This should also open channels for much needed urban financing.

Policymakers need to combine interventions that improve peoples' lives in the short-term with strategic investments that target longer-term returns and ensure sustainability.

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