From Global Village to Urban Globe

Urbanisation and poverty in Africa: Implications for Norwegian aid policy

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1 Urbanisation in developing countries, with special reference to Africa

The formation of towns and cities is not an altogether new phenomenon in Africa. One of Africa's present-day megacities, Cairo, can trace its origins back to 3,114 B.C. when the first known pharaoh, Menes, founded Memphis where Cairo is located today (Chandler 1994a). Other ancient African towns included Carthage, Aksum, Alexandria, and Meroe. Sub-Saharan Africa remained predominantly rural up until the ninth century. As from around the year 1000 a number of cities were founded in the Niger Basin: Kano, Zaria, Timbuktu, Ife, and Oyo. In Eastern and Southern Africa the old coastal trading towns of Kilwa and Sofala are well known, and above all Great Zimbabwe in the interior (Chandler 1994b). In general, the pace of urbanisation in pre-colonial Africa was slow.

The circumnavigation of Africa by Portuguese navigators and the subsequent colonialisation of the interior provided a strong impetus for the urbanisation of the continent. The colonial powers founded new 'European' cities and connected them to the hinterland with railways and roads. The main initial functions of the colonial cities were trade and administration (and army garrisons). Later, mining and manufacturing provided the growth momentum (Christopher and Tarver 1994).

The main challenge facing African towns and cities today, however, is the achievement of economic growth and its equitable distribution, so that urban economies can contribute appropriately to national economic development and provide sufficient labour market opportunities (World Bank 1999). More specifically, the following issues are often being highlighted:

- Poverty is increasingly an attribute of urbanisation, and urban poverty exhibits specific features which need to be understood better;
- The environmental problems facing developing countries are increasingly associated with cities and urban centres;
- The proportion of women in migration flows to cities is increasing, and the urbanisation process impacts significantly on the status and roles of women;
- Urban areas play a significant role in the democratisation process, through political mobilisation as well as local government;
- There is an unequivocal correlation between urbanisation and economic development and growth;
- There is a close link between urban and rural development, both in macro-economic terms and through migration and urban-rural links.

Urban areas have until recently received less explicit attention than the countryside in terms of national development priorities and development aid. The underlying rationale for this neglect can be traced to two pervasive perspectives:

- That urban areas have always been favoured – by design or default – in development policy and in the allocation of resources – the 'urban bias' thesis (Lipton 1988)
- That they are home to only a small proportion of the national population in the developing world (United Nations 2000)

These 'anti-urban' perspectives seem to be changing, however. Sida (1995:10) captures the prospects for and implications of urbanisation by stating that rapid growth in the South is "unprecedented", arguing that this growth "…constitutes a major transformation … with far-reaching economic, social, cultural and political consequences." This view is shared by the United Nations Centre on Human Settlements (Habitat) which predicts that urban areas will "…be the place where compelling social issues such as poverty, homelessness, crime and unemployment will take on a dimension far bigger and more complex than ever seen before" (Habitat, 1994). Habitat goes on to point out that cities will be the home and workplace for most of the world's population, centres of economic activity as well as areas of major pollution and consumption.

Such a "major transformation" has important ramifications. The urbanisation process bears decisively on (i) poverty generation and reproduction; (ii) livelihoods; (iii) gender relations; and (iv) governance.

Considerable emphasis has first of all been given to the role of urban areas in the coping or livelihood strategies of populations in the developing world (de Haan 1999; Jones and Nelson 1999). Indeed, most traditional explanations of urbanisation dwell on economically motivated migration geared towards improving or maintaining livelihoods. Urban areas still maintain this role in the survival strategies of a substantial section of the rural and urban populations of any African country.

Linked to survival is the rising phenomenon of poverty. The concentration of poor people in urban areas, themselves being run by impoverished administrations in poverty-stricken countries, has obvious negative implications. In this vein, Nelson (1999:1) bemoans the rapid urban growth "…which has made it next to impossible for urban authorities to provide … services or sufficient employment." Special social groups, such as the unemployed, women, and the homeless, are often affected particularly hard. These implications transcend urban borders, linking rural well-being closely to urban well-being.

The management of urban settlements is also important, raising the crucial issue of democratic governance. Democratisation goes beyond urban management, however, into transparency, accountability, the rule of law, participation, reciprocity, and trust. What makes democratisation particularly relevant is the fact that by virtue of various forms of decentralisation, urban centres have obtained increasing formal authority over their areas of jurisdiction, although often stopping short of a genuine devolution of decision-making power.

Linked to decentralisation efforts is the critical issue of local government finance. Central governments in the developing world have, since the adoption of structural adjustment programmes, been decentralising responsibilities without allocating the necessary resources to discharge of them (Wekwete 1992 and 1997). Local authorities are often left with no option but to rely on user charges, fees and rates, in addition to the grants they receive from the central level of the nation-state and foreign donors.

The above picture, to which we will return in more detail later, calls for a re-assessment of development assistance policies to urban areas. It indicates that urban areas are becoming increasingly important, and that they should be considered an integral part of any aid policy and deemed legitimate targets of aid in much the same way rural areas are. The linkages between rural and urban areas entail that, if unattended, the problems of urban areas may spill over into

rural areas. Likewise, development assistance directed exclusively at rural areas cannot be effective unless the problems and opportunities of the surrounding urban areas are attended to.

Based on the above discussion, it can be argued that the process leading to the development and growth of urban areas should be re-examined. An understanding of this process affords us the chance to grasp the dynamics and develop workable intervention strategies (Datta 1990). Urbanisation has implications for economic development and occupies a critical position in sustainable development, but this all depends on how well managed the process is (Sida 1995:2; World Bank 1990, 1999 and 2000a).

Intervention in urban areas by way of development assistance is by no means anti-rural. However, while urban areas are indeed linked to rural areas in more ways than one, they do have their own dynamics and characteristics, and, hence, need their own intervention strategies. Thus, rather than taking an anti-rural stand, this report intends to highlight the specifics of the urban condition, with special reference to the urbanisation of poverty. Nor does this report call for a complete shift of policy emphasis and allocation of funds. It merely argues for increasing attention to the urban agenda, within a comprehensive development framework where both urban and rural areas have their legitimate roles to play.

1.1 Urbanisation: a conceptual framework

1.1.1. What is urbanisation?

Traditionally, urbanisation has always been perceived in demographic terms, that is, as the increase in the number of people living in the urban areas. Most commentaries on urbanisation are based on this demographic perspective (Devas and Rakodi 1993; World Bank 2000; United Nations 2000).

BOX 1. CONCEPTUALISING 'URBAN' AND 'URBANISATION'

"Urban means city or town … Among the most common definitions [of urbanisation] we found the following:
1a. The proportion of the total population living in urban centres;
1b. The number of people living there;
2a. The growth in the proportion (in per cent) of the population living in urban centres;
2.b The growth in the number of people living there;
3. The social process by which a population adjusts to the urban way of life;
4. The physical spread of built-up land.

[U]rban growth …[means] the net increment of the urban population."

Source: Sida 1995:64.

While the demographic strand is dominant, it is not the only one. Other strands focus on socio-cultural, economic, administrative and spatial issues. Table 1 captures the essence of these alternative definitions, which, as noted by Kamete (1999), tend to be biased towards particular disciplines and professions.

Table 1. Perspectives on urbanisation

Strand	Description
Socio-cultural	Changes in life styles The adoption of an urban way of life that is consumerist, diverse, sophisticated, etc.
Demographic	Describes a certain threshold of population for a settlement
Economic	Structural change from an agricultural to a predominantly manufacturing economy Similar change of occupation for the majority of the working population
Spatial	The spreading of 'urban' functions into agricultural land The concentration of people in limited spaces
Legal-administrative	Designated as urban according to the laws and policies of the land

1.1.2. What is 'urban'?

As with 'urbanisation', the term 'urban' has also been conceptualised variously. Functionally, a centre becomes urban because most of its economic activities are in the non-extractive sector. Thus, a centre of settlement that relies heavily on manufacturing and service sectors is urban. A place may also become urban because its population size has surpassed a certain threshold. Most countries put this at a minimum of 2,500 people (World Bank 1999:127). This classification is often qualified by other criteria, such as compactness and density (see Box 2). A place only becomes urban if this threshold population is adequately concentrated in a limited area, defined by, for example, administrative boundaries.

Again, it should be emphasised that the alternative classifications based on socio-cultural, economic, administrative and spatial criteria are difficult to establish and not likely to generate consensus. Demographic criteria carry the day when it comes to real decision-making, even though the economic criterion sometimes enters as an important additional factor.

BOX 2. DESIGNATING 'URBAN' AREAS IN ZIMBABWE

The Central Statistical Office (CSO) (1993) of Zimbabwe has adopted a multidimensional approach to the demarcation of urban areas. To pass the urban test an area should:
Have been administratively declared as an urban area
Have a population of at least 2,500
Have a compact population pattern
Have the 'majority' of its workforce engaged in non-agricultural activities

1.2 What causes urbanisation?

1.2.1 The 'standard' explanations

Traditional geographical and economic explanations of urbanisation tend to focus on population growth induced by internal rural-urban migration (see, for example, Todaro 1989; Devas and Rakodi 1993; World Bank 1995). Until recently, policies and strategies were almost silent on the role of natural increase in urban growth.

In Africa, most of the factors causing rural-urban migration have been seen to be economic (Todaro 1989), reduced to the standard 'push-pull' factors. People are 'pushed' out of poverty-stricken rural areas which depend on low-yielding rural subsistence agriculture, and 'pulled' to the urban areas by the perceived higher wages and better opportunities in these centres (Todaro

1989). Such economic theories have not gone unchallenged (Tolley and Thomas 1987), but they still tend to dominate the debate.

In addition to the push of rural poverty and the pull of a perceived better life in urban areas, socio-political upheavals (civil strife, civil wars or international wars – see Box 4) and natural disasters (principally droughts and floods) in the countryside often result in people seeking refuge in relatively secure urban areas. The continuation of these inflows and the length of the refugees' sojourn in the urban areas depend on the persistence of the original stimuli. Continued urban residence also depends on how well the refugees or internally displaced persons fit into the urban ways of life and adopt an urban lifestyle (Gmelch and Zenner 1996). Some never return to the rural areas, while others adapt to a quasi-urban existence by splitting households and 'straddling' urban and rural areas.

BOX 3. POST-INDEPENDENCE URBANISATION IN ANGOLA

"Rural urban migration constitutes one of the most serious problems of Angola. … The migration to cities is not generally brought about by the search for employment. … Migration occurs due to the search for basic services which can only be found in cities. … [A]n extremely important component of internal migration is the forced migration of people motivated by civil war that attracted migrants to cities. … The urbanisation process has been extended by severely deficient living conditions. Besides Luanda, the private economic and administrative centres of Malange, Huambo, Benguela, and Lobito are the main urban agglomerations whose populations range from 150 to 300 thousand inhabitants."

Source: Amado et al. 1994:1122–1123

1.2.2 The importance of natural increase

Notwithstanding the importance of rural-urban migration in urban growth, the contribution of the "natural growth of the existing urban population" (Devas and Rakodi 1993:22) to urbanisation is increasingly being acknowledged. For example, less than half of Harare's urban population growth between 1982 and 1992 was due to migration (CSO 1993). Indeed, the growth of cities can no longer be regarded simply as a problem of migration (Devas and Rakodi 1993:23). It is suggested that the young age of most migrants contributes to higher natural increases. According to Rakodi and Devas (1993:24) over 54 per cent of the urban growth in Kenya is attributable to natural increase. It is now generally agreed that migration is mainly important in the early stages of urbanisation. Thereafter, natural population growth takes over as the dominant contributory factor in urban growth. (IIED in Sida 1995:13).

BOX 4. URBANISATION IN AFRICA: CAUSE AND EFFECT?

"The high rate of urbanisation poses developmental problems for governments and people concerned. … (It) is mainly due to rural-urban migration, high urban natural increase, and to an expansion of urban boundaries as well as to interethnic wars. Also non-spatial factors have significant impacts … such as non-spatial policies which include fiscal, industrial, defence, equalisation, and agricultural and immigration policies."

Source: Obudho and Obudho 1994:53

Sida (1995:17) maintains that more than 50 per cent of the urban growth of the developing world stem from natural population growth within the urban areas. Migration (35–40 per cent) and boundary changes (10–15 per cent) account for the remainder. Table 2 provides the global picture for the developing regions.

Table 2. The contribution of natural increase to urban population growth in developing regions

Region	Contribution of natural increase (per cent)
Africa	61
Latin America	73
Asia	44

Source: Adapted from Sida (1995:17*).*

1.2.3 The urban sprawl

The spatial expansion of urban areas has not been looked at as an urbanisation issue proper (Kasarda and Crenshaw 1991:470). Rather, analysts chose to call it urban sprawl (Lim, 1987). However, the fact remains that as urban areas expand outwards and incorporate surrounding non-urban land to make way for industrial or housing development, urbanisation is taking place (Obudho and Obudho1994:53; see Box 4). The size of the urban population increases, and the proportion of rural land and rural population goes down. For example, Zimbabwe's second largest city, Bulawayo, started off as a small urban settlement of less than one square kilometre in surface area. Slightly over a century later, the city is a sprawling settlement of about 600 km^2. The city still continues to grow as it encroaches on surrounding rural land (Kamete 2000).

1.3 Urbanisation trends in Africa

1.3.1 Global and continental pictures

Table 3 gives figures on urban population as a proportion of total population in the world.[1] Between 1950 and 1975 Africa was the least urbanised continent. The table shows that Africa has began outpacing Asia in terms of urbanisation, but that the percentage of the population currently residing in urban areas still remains below half. It is expected to pass the halfway mark between 2020 and 2025, by which time 52 per cent of the population in Africa will be urbanised. Considering the relatively low proportion of urban population in Africa, the potential for urbanisation is still high (Wekwete 1990).

This perhaps explains the high annual growth rates in urban populations depicted in Table 4. It is shown here that Africa consistently registered the highest annual urban growth rates during the period in question. Indications are that it will continue to have the highest growth rate, at least for the next 30 years. Within fifty years from 1950, the proportion of urban population increased more than two and a half times, and by 2025 it will have increased by three and a half times.

While the pace of urbanisation is slowing down (see Table 4), the fact remains that in absolute terms the level and rapidity of urbanisation in Africa is significant. In absolute terms, between 1950 and 1975 the African urban population rose by 70 million; between 1975 and 2000 it rose

[1] It is important to note that the figures used throughout this report are official statistics from the countries concerned or international agencies. Apart from the confusion arising from the various definitions of urban and administrative boundaries, figures about the future are based on extrapolations of past trends. Some of these past trends are themselves extrapolations; hence the periodic revisions by some agencies such as the United Nations. In any case the extrapolations do not take into account important changes in, say, the economic, administrative or political landscape (Sida 1995:11). Nevertheless, these numbers are useful for comparison and analysis.

by a further 195 million. The next 30 years will see the figure rise by 469 million, an increase 15 times the 1950 urban population figure.[2]

Table 3. Urban population as a percentage of total population by region

Geographic region	Year			
	1950	1975	2000	2025
Africa	15	25	38	52
Asia	17	25	37	51
Latin America and the Caribbean	41	61	75	82
Europe	52	67	75	81
North America	64	74	77	83
World	30	38	47	58

Source: Adapted from United Nations (2000*)*

Table 4. Average annual growth rate of urban populations by region

Geographic region	Year			
	1950–1955	1975–1980	2000–2005	2025–2030
Africa	4.5	4.4	3.7	2.6
Asia	3.7	3.5	2.5	1.7
Latin America and the Caribbean	4.5	3.5	1.9	1.1
Europe	2.0	1.1	0.3	-0.03
North America	2.7	1.0	1.0	0.7
World	3.0	2.6	2.0	1.5

Source: Adapted from United Nations (2000*)*

1.3.2 Regional and country pictures

This section discusses urbanisation trends in different regions of Africa. Eastern Africa with 18 countries (see Table 6) is the least urbanised of the five regions. It will maintain this position beyond 2025. In this region Djibouti (at 83 per cent) is the most urbanised, while Rwanda (at about 6 per cent) is the least urbanised.

Table 5. Urban population as a percentage of total population by African region

Geographic region	Year			
	1950	1975	2000	2025
World	30	38	47	58
Africa	15	25	38	52
Eastern Africa	5	12	26	41
Middle Africa	14	27	35	50
Northern Africa	25	39	51	64
Southern Africa	38	44	48	60
Western Africa	10	23	40	56

[2] Put differently, this *increase* alone is about 1,470 per cent of the total 1950 population figure.

Source: Adapted from United Nations (2000*)*

Northern Africa has over half its population living in urban areas, up from 39 per cent in 1975. Southern Africa is second at 48 per cent, followed by Western Africa at about 40 per cent. Currently the most urbanised country in Africa is Libya at 87 per cent, followed by Djibouti (83 per cent) and Reunion at 71 per cent.

Table 6. Current urbanisation indicators in all African countries

Country	Total urban population (thousands) (2000)	Percentage residing in urban areas (2000)	Annual urban population growth rate (2000–2005)
World	**2,245,049**	**38**	**2.0**
Africa	**297,239**	**47**	**3.7**
Eastern Africa	**64,576**	**26**	**4.6**
Burundi	600	9	5.9
Comoros	231	33	4.3
Djibouti	531	83	2.3
Eritrea	722	19	4.6
Ethiopia	11,042	18	5.0
Kenya	9,957	33	4.1
Madagascar	4,721	30	4.8
Malawi	2,723	25	7.3
Mauritius	478	40	1.6
Mozambique	7,917	40	4.1
Reunion	496	71	1.9
Rwanda	476	6	4.2
Seychelles	49	64	2.2
Somalia	2,776	28	5.2
Uganda	3,083	14	5.7
Tanzania	11,021	33	5.4
Zambia	3,632	40	2.6
Zimbabwe	4,121	35	2.9
Middle Africa	**33,859**	**35**	**4.3**
Angola	4,404	34	4.9
Cameroon	7,379	49	4.0
Central African Republic	1,489	41	3.0
Chad	1,820	24	4.2
Congo	1,841	63	3.7
Democratic Republic of the Congo	15,641	30	4.5
Equatorial Guinea	218	48	4.5
Gabon	998	81	3.1
Sao Tome and Principe	69	47	3.3
Northern Africa	**87,949**	**51**	**3.0**
Algeria	18,969	60	3.1
Egypt	30,954	45	2.3
Libya	4,911	88	2.6
Morocco	15,902	56	2.8
Sudan	10,652	36	4.5
Tunisia	6,281	66	2.3
Western Sahara	220	95	3.3
Southern Africa	**22,546**	**48**	**1.5**
Botswana	815	50	2.22

Lesotho	602	28	4.6
Namibia	533	31	2.8
South Africa	20,330	50	1.3
Swaziland	266	26	4.0
Western Africa	**88,210**	**40**	**4.2**
Benin	2,577	42	4.4
Burkina Faso	2,204	19	5.6
Cape Verde	266	62	4.0
Côte d'Ivoire	6,854	46	3.4
Gambia	424	33	4.5
Ghana	7,753	38	4.2
Guinea	2,435	33	4.6
Guinea Bissau	288	24	4.0
Liberia	1,416	45	4.9
Mali	3,375	30	4.6
Mauritania	1,541	58	4.3
Niger	2,207	21	5.5
Nigeria	49,050	44	4.1
Saint Helena	4	71	2.3
Senegal	4,498	48	4.0
Sierra Leone	1,779	37	4.0
Togo	1,540	33	4.2

Source: United Nations (2000*)*

Table 7. Projected annual urban growth rates in Africa (2000–2005)

Country	Growth rate (2000–2005)	Region
Malawi	7.2	Eastern
Uganda	5.7	Eastern
Burkina Faso	5.6	Western
Niger	5.5	Western
Tanzania	5.4	Eastern
Somalia	5.2	Eastern
Ethiopia	5.0	Eastern
Zimbabwe	2.9	Eastern
Morocco	2.8	Northern
Libya	2.6	Northern
Djibouti	2.4	Eastern
Algeria	2.3	Northern
Tunisia	2.3	Northern
Seychelles	2.2	Eastern
Reunion	1.9	Eastern
Mauritius	1.6	Eastern
South Africa	1.3	Southern

Source: United Nations 2000:60

As Tables 5 and 6 indicate, there seems to be no clear relationship between regional location and national levels of urbanisation. Currently, Eastern Africa, which has the lowest overall urbanisation level, has some of the most highly urbanised economies, like Djibouti (83 per cent), Reunion (71 per cent) and the Seychelles (64 per cent). These levels exceed some countries in Northern Africa, which at 51 per cent, is the most urbanised region in Africa. Examples are Egypt (45 per cent) and the Sudan (36 per cent).

BOX 5. URBAN GROWTH AND ECONOMIC TRENDS IN URBANISATION IN ZAMBIA

"In the post-independence period rapid growth in urban population occurred, in response partly to the removal of restriction on freedom of movement, partly to the failure of development policies to equalise urban and rural income opportunities, and partly to the growth in employment opportunities in urban areas.

[R]apid national economic growth in the years following independence … based on high copper prices on the world market and increased government investment was accompanied by an increase in urban jobs. [B]y the early 1970s Zambia was a relatively prosperous middle income country. However its economy was heavily dependent on copper which accounted for 90 per cent of its exports. In 1971 and again in 1974 copper prices fell drastically. … Its economy was further damaged by oil price increases of the early and late 1970s. [T]he volume of migration was reduced due to the decline in economic opportunities and an increasing proportion of urban growth could be attributed to natural increase."

Source: Rakodi 1994:346–348

The annual urban growth rate is equally difficult to explain by region. Table 8 depicts no clear pattern. Eastern Africa again dominates the list, not only of the fastest growth but also of the slowest. Of the seven countries with rates of at least five per cent, five are in Eastern Africa. The other two are in Western Africa. Of the ten countries with urban growth rates below three per cent, half are in Eastern Africa. Northern Africa contributes four countries to this list, and Southern Africa a single case. It can be concluded that the evidence at hand suggests no clear regional pattern. In view of this inconclusive picture, the process of urbanisation is perhaps best explained by reference to country-specific conditions.

1.3.3 Is urbanisation correlated with national prosperity?

In Africa, there is no apparent correlation between the level of urbanisation and national economic well-being. The figures on the Human Development Index (HDI)[3], HDI rank and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, as shown in Table 7, do not validate the argument that the most urbanised nations are also the richest. In other words, the table implies that using the level of urbanisation as a proxy indicator of wealth or poverty is unjustified. With reference to the less developed countries of Africa, therefore, the kind of positive relationship between urbanisation and economic development asserted by the World Bank (2000a:36) and cautiously treated by Simon (1997) is not borne out by the available evidence.

[3] The HDI is based on three indicators: longevity, as measured by life expectancy at birth; educational attainment as measured by a combination of literacy rate (two-thirds weight) and the combined gross of primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment (one-third weight); and standard of living, as measured by GDP per capita (PPP US$) (UNDP 2000:269).

Table 8. Comparing the level of urbanisation and the Human Development Index (HDI) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita for the most and least developed countries in Africa

Country	Urbanisation level (per cent)	HDI rank value (1998)		GDP per capita 1998 (1995 US$)
		Value	Rank	
MOST URBANISED				
Djibouti	83	0.447	149	742
Gabon	81	0.592	123	4,360
Tunisia	66	0.703	101	2,283
Seychelles	64	0.786	53	7,192
Congo	63	0.507	139	821
LEAST URBANISED				
Rwanda	6		164	227
Burundi	9	0.321	170	147
Uganda	14	0.409	158	332
Ethiopia	18	0.309	171	110
Eritrea	19	0.408	159	175
Sudan	26	0.477	143	296
OTHER DEVELOPMENT AID RECIPIENTS				
South Africa	50	0.697	103	3,918
Zambia	40	0.420	153	388
Mozambique	40	0.341	168	188
Zimbabwe	35	0.555	130	703
Angola	34	0.405	160	527
Tanzania	33	0.415	156	173
Malawi	25	0.385	163	166

Source: Adapted from United Nations (2000); UNDP (2000); World Bank (1999*)*

Interestingly, the World Bank (1999:130) now admits that while it is true that "urbanisation is typically associated with rising per capita income" … in Europe, Latin America, and … much of Asia" … Africa has been the exception." In a more recent publication the Bank boldly reiterates this observation, pointing out that "…sub-Saharan Africa has been a notable exception to …(the) rule…" where "national economic growth is closely correlated with urbanisation" (World Bank 2000a: 36). Box 7 gives further details on Africa's unique situation in this regard.

BOX 6. LINKING URBANISATION AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY: IS AFRICA THE ODD ONE OUT?

"Africa has been the exception," says the World Bank (1999:130). In the 25 years from 1970 to 1995 Africa experienced an average annual urban population growth rate of about 4.7 percent. Gross Domestic Product per capita dropped by 0.7 percent. The World Bank maintains that this is a unique phenomenon "…even among poor countries." In view of this, the Bank concludes that African cities "are not serving as engines of growth and structural transformation."

Diagnosing the problem, the Bank traces the causes to "distorted incentives" whose effect is drawing people to cities, not for opportunities, but primarily to benefit from state subsidies. This analysis confirms the urban bias thesis, claiming as it does that urban consumers are favoured "over rural producers" due to biased pricing and trade policies.

1.3.4 A closer look at Norway's development aid recipients

The discussion below will focus on Norway's most important development aid recipients in Africa: Angola, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Tables 9 and 10 provide insights into the trends in the countries regarding levels of urbanisation and annual urban growth rates.

Table 9. Proportion of population residing in urban areas in Norway's development aid recipients in Africa 1950–2025. Per cent.

Country	Year			
	1950	1975	2000	2025
World	**30**	**38**	**47**	**58**
Africa	**15**	**25**	**38**	**52**
Angola	8	18	34	51
Eritrea	6	12	19	33
Ethiopia	5	10	18	32
Malawi	4	8	25	52
Mozambique	2	9	40	57
South Africa	43	48	50	62
Sudan	6	19	36	55
Tanzania	4	10	33	52
Uganda	3	8	14	26
Zambia	9	35	40	52
Zimbabwe	11	20	35	52

Source: Adapted from United Nations (2000).

Currently, the most urbanised country in this group is South Africa, with exactly half of its population living in urban areas. Zambia and Mozambique come second with 40 per cent.[4] With a level of only 14 per cent Uganda is the least urbanised.

[4] In fact, Mozambique is slightly more urbanised at 40.2 per cent compared to Zambia's level of 39.6. The 'tie' results from the rounding of figures.

Four of the countries – Mozambique, Sudan, Zambia and South Africa – have levels of urbanisation at more than 40 per cent. The levels in another three – Eritrea, Ethiopia and Uganda – are below 20 per cent. The remaining four are in the 25–35 per cent range. By 2025 all but three of the countries (Malawi, Uganda and Ethiopia) will have more than half of their people residing in urban areas. All 11 will have a quarter of their population urbanised. The average level will then be just above 48 per cent.

On average the urban growth rate now stands at 4.4 percent (see Table 10), expected to drop to three per cent between 2025 and 2030. With 6.1 per cent Mozambique has the highest average annual urban growth rate over the period of analysis. South Africa has the lowest with 2.1 per cent. Ten of the eleven recipients registered an average annual urban growth rate of at least four per cent.

Malawi's current urban growth rate of 7.3 per cent is the highest for the 2000–2005 period. Apart from increasing natural growth, this may be a result of people leaving the congested rural agricultural lands of this tiny country for the towns and cities. The highest rate (11.2 per cent) ever recorded was that for Mozambique in the 1975–1980 period. This can in part be accounted for by the urban influx generated by the intense civil war that followed independence from Portugal in 1975. Even though official statistics are unavailable, Angola's pace of urbanisation has been similarly rapid; the capital city, Luanda, is estimated to have grown from about 1.5 million to 3.5 million in the past eight years.

Table 10. Average annual growth rate of urban population in Norway's main development aid recipients in Africa 1950–2030. Per cent.

Country	**Year**				
	1950–1955	1975–1980	2000–2005	2025–2030	Average
Africa	**4.5**	**4.4**	**3.7**	**2.6**	**3.8**
World	**3.0**	**2.6**	**2.0**	**1.5**	**2.3**
Angola	4.7	6.0	4.9	3.2	4.7
Eritrea	5.4	4.6	4.6	3.4	4.5
Ethiopia	5.4	4.4	5.0	4.0	4.7
Malawi	4.1	6.8	7.3	3.2	5.4
Mozambique	6.1	11.2	4.1	2.8	6.1
South Africa	3.1	2.3	1.3	1.5	2.1
Sudan	7	4.1	4.5	2.2	4.5
Tanzania	4.6	10.7	5.4	2.8	5.9
Uganda	8.1	4.3	5.7	4.3	5.6
Zambia	9.2	6.1	2.6	2.6	5.1
Zimbabwe	5.2	5.6	2.9	2.1	4.0
AVERAGE	**5.4**	**5.6**	**4.2**	**2.8**	**4.8**

Source: Adapted from United Nations (2000)

In absolute terms South Africa has the largest urban population of just over 20 million. Three of the remaining Norwegian aid recipients (the Sudan, Ethiopia and Tanzania) have urban populations of more than 10 million each. Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Angola all register urban population of more than 4 million respectively. Malawi, Uganda and Zambia each have

more than 2 million people resident in their respective urban areas. Eritrea is a solitary case at less than one million urban residents. The potential for further urban growth is considerable, especially in view of the fact that there is still a lot of 'room' in urban areas, because densities "in terms of persons per hectare" in the towns and cities are relatively low (Sida 1995:13).

In economic terms three of the aid recipients – Malawi, Tanzania and Eritrea – had in 1998 a GDP per capita of less than US$ 200. Only Zimbabwe (US$ 703) and South Africa (US$ 3,918) had GDP per capita levels of more than US$ 700. The levels for the rest range from slightly above US$ 225 to a little less than US$ 400. In terms of economic performance three of the countries (Zambia, Zimbabwe and Eritrea) had negative GNP growth rates for the period 1997–98. Table 11 captures the picture. It shows Mozambique's huge economic growth rate of 11.3 per cent compared to an urban population growth rate of 4.1 per cent. Angola (7.9 per cent) also performed well, as did Uganda (5.8 per cent). Incidentally, these are the only countries with GNP growth rates exceeding their annual urban growth rates. The remaining countries – whose GNP growth rates range between less than one per cent and just above three per cent – have annual urban growth rates which exceed their GNP growth rates.

While the urban growth rates can be explained it is more difficult to provide a simple explanation of the economic performance presented above. International conditions are a factor to consider but they do not have the same effect on these countries. A case in point is the rise in oil prices (see Box 6). Whereas most countries suffered economic setbacks as a result of the oil shocks, Angola, by virtue of being an oil producer benefited from soaring oil revenue. Different national contexts and global forces thus offer a possible explanation for the plight of Norway's development aid recipients (see Simon 1997). For example, Zambia's reliance on copper in a situation of tumbling copper prices on the world market offers a possible explanation (Rakodi 1994:346, see Box 6). Zimbabwe's strained relations with its major creditors and donors, coupled with adverse socio-political and economic environments, may shed light on its bad performance.

However, these explanations are inadequate and a conclusive diagnosis in the context of this report would be too ambitious. It remains clear, however, that the situation in the urban centres of the countries in question is not attractive and not conducive for the well-being of the residents (see Box 9). It is particularly disturbing that the urban populations are growing. Some analysts (Jones and Nelson 1999) have pointed out that this may mean the urbanisation of poverty, resulting from "urbanisation without growth" (World Bank 1999:130).

Table 11. Urbanisation and economic growth indicators in Norway's main development aid recipients in Africa

Country	Total urban population (thousands) (2000)	Percentage residing in urban areas (2000)	Urban population growth rate (2000–2005)	GNP growth rate (Average annual percentage) (1997—1998)
World	**2,245,049**	**38**	**2.0**	
Africa	**297,239**	**47**	**3.7**	
Angola	4,404	34	4.9	7.9
Eritrea	722	19	4.6	-4.0
Ethiopia	11,042	18	5.0	-0.8
Malawi	2,723	25	7.3	1.8
Mozambique	7,917	40	4.1	11.3
South Africa	20,330	50	1.3	0.6
Sudan	10,652	36	4.5	-
Tanzania	11,021	33	5.4	3.2
Uganda	3,083	14	5.7	5.8
Zambia	3,632	40	2.6	-1.8
Zimbabwe	4,121	35	2.9	-0.4

Source: Adapted from United Nations (2000); World Bank (1999)

It is evident from the scenario depicted above that Norway's main partners in Africa are not an exception to the phenomenon of rapid urbanisation, albeit perhaps a latecomer compared to other regions of the world. While explanations may differ in emphasis on economic, political and cultural factors, there is one indisputable conclusion: the growth of the economies is not able to match urban growth, let alone handle it. This prospect is particularly disconcerting in view of the fact that urban growth in these countries, like elsewhere in Africa, is not showing appreciable signs of slowing down.

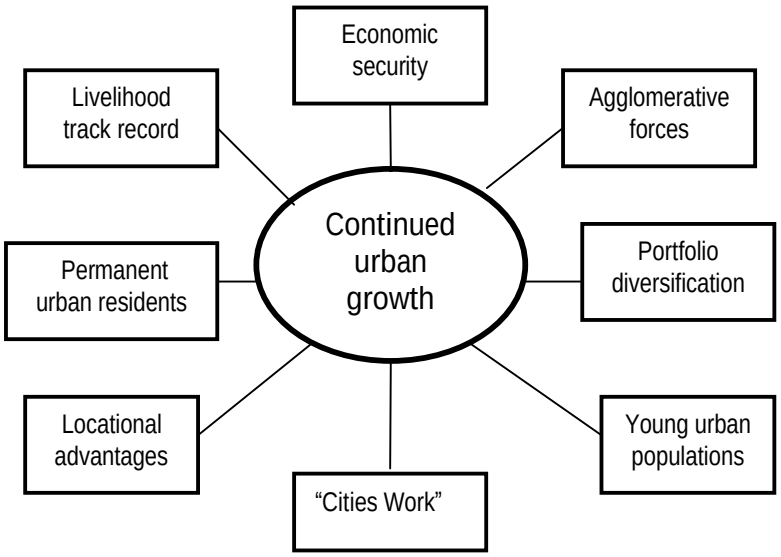
The symptoms of the situation depicted in the tables and figures above manifest themselves in deplorable living conditions in the urban centres: urban poverty, inadequate or unavailable basic services, increasing vulnerability, marginalisation and exclusion (Potts 1997). For further discussion see next chapter.

1.4 Why do cities continue to grow?

As noted above, urbanisation has been rapid in Africa. This trend, though perhaps tapering off somewhat and varying from one country to another, is still phenomenal. There has to be an explanation why urban areas continue to grow, despite polices designed to reverse the trend in some countries (de Haan 1999). Figure 2 addresses this issue.

From purely economic and geographical perspectives, internal mechanisms in urban areas promote sustained growth, linked to their position as production zones. It is acknowledged that urban centres produce a substantial proportion of the national income in most countries. Globally, urban areas account for some 55, 73, and 85 per cent of the GNP in low-income, middle-income and high-income countries, respectively (World Bank 1999:126). This is explained by the fact that the "…growth sectors of the economy – manufacturing and services – are concentrated in cities where they benefit from agglomeration economies, ample markets for inputs, outputs, and labour and where ideas and knowledge are rapidly diffused" (World Bank 1999:126). In urban areas the proximity of all production factors makes economic activity possible and productive. Because of these locational advantages and agglomeration economies urban centres continue to grow as they attract outsiders and retain and help to expand those economic players who are already in. It is a truism that labour is attracted to and retained in areas where economic activities are concentrated (Todaro 1994). Hence, urban areas continue to grow by virtue of the inherent economic growth dynamic created.

FIG. 1. WHY CITIES CONTINUE TO GROW



Another, complementary explanation is that towns and cities, despite all their negative features (see below), provide a much better option for livelihood than their rural hinterland. In the latter, farms are increasingly becoming smaller, sub-economical and eventually unable to feed the farmers' households. Similarly, mining operations located in rural areas are being adversely affected by low commodity prices on the world market (Box 6; Rakodi 1994:346; Sida 1995:18;

Kamete 1999). Left with no better option for their livelihood, the struggling rural-based people move to or remain in the cities, inhospitable though they may be.

In addition, urban areas seem to have established a livelihood track record. The World Bank maintains that people move to the city in expectation of a better life and that the evidence at hand proves that these expectations have largely been met (World Bank 1995:1). This fact is well known by people in the rural and urban areas alike. As a result, those already in the city opt to remain there, and those in the rural areas choose to join the ranks of the urbanites. As a consequence, urban growth continues relentlessly.

Furthermore, for some poor households (both rural and urban) the opportunities offered by urban areas continue to form part of their livelihood strategies. These people straddle the rural-urban divide (Beall et al. 1999). They have learned to rely on both systems (rural and urban) to survive. This, as de Haan (1999:13) proposes, is "…a form of portfolio diversification by families." As long as this strategy is a workable option cities and towns will continue to experience the impact of such strategic considerations at the household level. Urban growth will continue as new families diversify and those in the towns and cities remain there for life.[5]

The age structure of the urban population explains the boom in natural increase (Devas and Rakodi 1993; World Bank 1999). Urbanites are predominantly young, in reproductive age with a wish to have children. In the case of Anglophone Southern Africa, the erstwhile preponderance of single men in the town and cities has giving way to urban families. This, again, bolsters natural population increase.

Linked to the above, as well as to the question of livelihood strategy, is the current situation that induce some people to remain urbanites for life. In colonial South Africa and Zimbabwe blacks were temporary sojourners in urban areas, controlled by means of strict influx control legislation (Levi 1982; van Onselen 1976). They only remained in the cities as long as they were useful as gainfully employed workers. When losing one's job or becoming old, returning to the rural areas to die was the only option available, or to wait until another job was found (Mafico 1990; Kamete 1998). However, with the coming of independence, the repeal of colonial influx control laws and mounting economic pressures, the majority of urban residents has opted to remain in the cities and towns for life; their rural homeland only feature in their plans as a burial ground.

The foregoing analysis seems to suggest that urban areas have an in-built mechanism to initiate and sustain growth. This analysis is perhaps a befitting summary of all the reasons cited above and the World Banks firm conviction that "cities work" (World Bank 1991:18).

1.5 Urban settlements in context

Urban centres can be classified according to various criteria as applied in Southern Africa in Table 12 below. Kamete (1999:5) cautions, however, that the classifications adopted "are not exclusive, neither are they foolproof." For example, some mining towns can also be agricultural towns; border towns can also double as manufacturing towns and/or as agricultural service centres. Similarly, size, local authority type and economic function can 'stand in each other's way' as a definitive category for a given centre is being sought. Thus, it is important to note that

[5] Based on evidence from Zimbabwe Potts (1995) argues that due to deepening urban poverty some urbanites are retracing their steps back to the rural areas.

urban centres are not viewed as uniform entities in terms of size, function and conditions. They differ, sometimes quite significantly, even within the same national borders. What makes this even more intricate is the fact that the same urban centres may have boundaries that are viewed differently by different stakeholders and for different purposes. In this way administrative boundaries may not be coterminous with electoral constituency boundaries; and functional boundaries for health, education and rating purposes may not agree with electoral, administrative boundaries, let alone other functional divisions (Kamete 2000). In addition, there is no guarantee that these will be the same for census purposes.

The World Bank (1999:128) stresses that small and medium-sized centres (however defined) will be home to "most of the world's population" in the future. These centres are growing faster than the larger cities – a manifest feature since 1970. The very definition of what is a small urban centre and what is a medium-sized one is not conclusive as it differs across regions and countries. In 1998 the United Nations specified some criteria for defining cities according to size. Table 13 captures these criteria. The 1999 revision of population projections (United Nations 2000:7) seems to have adjusted the threshold criteria upwards, as reflected in Box 8.

Table 12. Classifications of urban centres

CLASSIFICATION TYPE	**DESCRIPTION**	**EXAMPLES**
Size	According to population	Centres classified as small, medium (intermediate) and large based mainly on population thresholds
Local authority type	According to the local authority type in charge of the area	City Council (Zambia, Zimbabwe), municipality (Zimbabwe), transitional local council, metropolitan council (South Africa) Local Board, Growth Point (Zimbabwe)
Economic function	Functional characteristics of urban centres	Agricultural, industrial, mining, tourist towns
Location	Based on location of centre within the country	Boarder, inland, coastal, tribal towns

If the 'new' criteria are adopted, Africa would only have two cities in the largest category: Lagos (13.4 million) and Cairo (10.6 million). The scenario for the developing world is presented in Table 13. What is the relevance of this categorisation to urbanisation and urban development? It all has to do with the role urban areas is supposed to play and how various types of urban centres relate to the surrounding rural hinterland.

Table 13. Defining cities by size

Identity	**Population size**
Megacity	Over 5 million
Large city	Between 1 and 5 million
Medium–sized city	0.5 to 1 million
Small city	Less than 0.5 million

Source: Adapted from figures and definitions from United Nations 2000:6; World Bank 1999:128

BOX 7. REDEFINING URBAN AREAS BY SIZE?

Though not explicitly stating that it has adopted a new classification system for the world's cities, based on population thresholds, the United Nations does seem to have done so or may be in the process of doing so compared to Table 14. The grouping of cities below (United Nations 2000:7) surely underpins this impression:

- Cities of 10 million or more
- Cities of 5 to 10 million
- Cities of 1 to 5 million
- Cities of less than 1 million

There have been many commentaries on the role of intermediate and small centres in national development as well their part in the development and underdevelopment of the surrounding areas (Hardoy and Satterthwaite 1986; Southall 1988; Kamete 1998). Usually it is the smaller and intermediate centres that are at the doorstep of the rural areas. Therefore, they form the first encounter rural folks have with urban forces. The economies of these centres are normally shaped by the rural hinterland because they serve these outlying areas. It is thus not surprising to find agricultural and mining towns (Kamete 1999) in Southern Africa.

Table 14. Population of urban centres with more than 10 million inhabitants in developing countries

Urban agglomeration	Population (millions)			
	1975	1999	2000	2015
Mexico City	11.2	17.9	18.1	19.2
Bombay	6.9	17.5	18.1	26.1
Sao Paulo	10	17.5	17.8	20.4
Lagos	3.3	12.8	13.4	23.2
Calcutta	7.9	12.7	12.9	17.3
Buenos Aires	9.1	12.4	12.6	14.1
Dhaka	2.2	11.7	12.3	21.4
Karachi	4.0	11.4	11.8	19.2
Delhi	4.4	11.3	11.7	16.8
Jakarta	4.8	10.6	11.0	11.0
Metro Manila	5.0	10.5	10.9	14.8
Rio de Janeiro	7.9	10.5	11.9	1.2
Cairo	6.1	10.3	10.6	13.8

Source: United Nations 2000:9.

1.6 Rural-urban linkages: an overview

As noted in the previous section on the classification of urban centres, cities and towns do not exist in a vacuum. They function in a context shaped by economic, spatial, social and administrative forces at work. In most cases, the main determinant of this context is the nature of the surrounding rural area. This section seeks to describe the types of relationship urban areas have with their rural counterpart – adjacent or distant. Table 15 highlights some of the key relationships.

Table 15. Key relationships in the rural-urban interface

Type	Description	Examples
Economic	Livelihood and production-based	Financial, labour and commodity flows, remittances
Social	Social organisation, social capital, cultures	How the urban populations relate to their home areas and vice versa
Trade and commerce	Exchange of goods and services	Primary goods bought from rural areas, finished goods from urban centres. Commercial services like banking in urban areas
Politico-administrative	Decentralised or delegated authority performing functions of a central government ministry	Official documents (birth certificates, etc). Supervision of field personnel of government line ministries
Environmental	Solid, liquid and waste disposal	Interchange of pollution as air, water sources and the landscape of either centre becomes the other's dumping 'ground'
Spatial	Neighbourhood and neighbourliness	Expansion of urban into rural hinterland

Source: Adapted from Kamete (2000)

1.6.1 The nature and types of rural-urban linkages

The interface between urban centres and their rural hinterland is characterised by diverse relationships and interactions. However, whatever taxonomy is chosen, it is evident that the interface is most conspicuously structured by flows of various types. For ease of discussions this report will elaborate on the most important of these flows as set out in Table 15 above.

Economic aspects are those associated with livelihood and production. They encompass various kinds of resource flows – principally labour, natural resources, commodities, and financial flows (Baker and Pedersen 1992). There is an exchange of raw materials and finished or semi-finished goods, whose sources are found in rural areas and urban areas respectively. Whereas urban areas facilitate extractive processes in rural areas, rural areas facilitate manufacturing in the urban areas. Water used in urban areas is normally drawn from sources located in rural areas. The exchange of labour is driven by urban centres' need for human resources that rural areas have in abundance, especially in the semi-skilled and unskilled category. Once established in the towns those in employment almost invariably remit some of their earnings to their rural homes for the upkeep of kith and kin (von Troil 1992).

The selling of goods and services produced in one type of settlement to another marks the trading and commercial relationships between towns and cities (Pedersen 1992). They are thus each other's market and source of income. Towns serve the additional task of providing access to markets farther afield for their rural hinterland. Whether destined for national, regional or international markets, rural produce has to use the facilities of the nearby town or city.

Environmentally, the interface is characterised predominantly by urban areas polluting the rural landscape, water and air. Industrial, residential and institutional waste in urban areas is often dumped direct onto rural areas or into rivers and emitted into the air that ultimately ends up in

rural areas (Kamete 2000; Abdel-Ati 1992). Rural areas pollute the urban environment, for example, by chemically affecting sources of drinking water or the atmosphere through the use of agricultural chemicals such as pesticides (Kamete 2000). A lot of the solid waste, especially in urban market places, can be traced to rural produce.

Spatial relations take the form of urban areas taking over and incorporating rural territory to make way for housing, industrial or institutional development. This sometimes results in urban areas compromising the revenue base of rural areas as they lose not only rateable land but also the natural, capital and human resources that go with it.

Urban areas serve as administrative centres for specific jurisdictional districts that are mostly rural. These towns host the state-appointed administrators and local governments. Central government ministries also have sub-offices in towns. These urban centres serve an important administrative function in terms of licences, registry, reporting, as well as other services, duties and obligations.

The social interactions in the rural-urban interface range from mere social, individual, household or clan to larger organisational issues. Most importantly, in terms of social capital, rural-urban linkages form a crucial element in coping strategy for the poor.

It should be stressed that the conventional view of urban centres exerting an exploitative influence on the rural areas – thereby leading to rural underdevelopment – is being replaced by an appreciation that the relationship is mutually beneficial and should remain so. Rural and urban areas do need each other. They can be good for each other's growth and prosperity (World Bank 1999:128). The outcome of this relationship is ultimately a function of policy and management, not only at the local level but also, perhaps primarily, at the national level.

1.7 Judging urbanisation: virtue or vice?

Urban centres have had varied impacts on society and space. How good or bad urbanisation is judged to be depends ultimately on the specific effect of the process and the resultant urban settlements, especially on the well-being of its inhabitants and society at large. This well-being may be expressed in various forms: socio-cultural, economic, political and environmental. Figures 3 and 4 reflect some of the important judgements.

1.7.1 The virtues

Urban areas have been described in various terms as generators of economic development (Kamete 1999) due to their role as 'engines of growth' (World Bank 1999:125). The fact that manufacturing and services sectors (which are predominantly 'urban' functions) are the key growth sectors of most economies bears testimony to the role of cities in initiating and sustaining national economic growth (Beavon 1997). There is some truth in the claim that cities and town are the causes as well as consequences of economic development.

Urban centres are a response to stimuli for economic development. If properly managed they also promote it. Economic progress requires specialisation, diversification and division of labour. It requires transport and distribution networks; it needs a large market, as well as the concentration and location of this market in accessible areas. In addition, economic development requires labour as well as inputs in the form of goods and services. Because productive enterprises need inputs and have to dispose of their products, they concern themselves with strong forward and backward linkages, resulting in the grouping of related industries and services – referred to as agglomeration by economic geographers. Wherever and whenever urbanisation has occurred – be it in Asia, the Americas or Europe – these are the ingredients of economic development. And Africa is no exception (Bairoch 1988; World Bank 1999). The emergence of urban centres is thus a response to need and Africa therefore needs them.

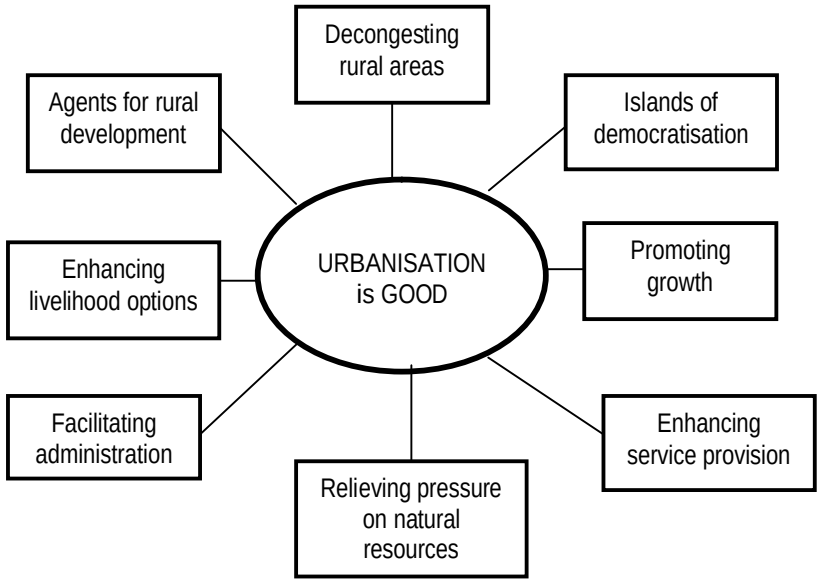
Based on the above analysis it can be said justifiably that urban areas promote rural development, however defined. Urban areas are essential markets for rural produce.[6] The surplus of the rural hinterland finds its way to urban markets and consumers such as households, institutions and industries. Furthermore, these centres are sources of some goods and services that contribute to making the rural areas work. Rural inhabitants need inputs for their extractive processes and agricultural production; they need finished goods for their operations and households; they also require essential services, be they technical, financial, professional or social (Kamete 2000). All of these are readily available from urban areas. Because of this input-output relationship created by urbanisation, urban and rural areas develop backward and forward linkages on a wider scale, from which they both benefit. In terms of livelihood urban centres are the source of remittances to rural kinfolk (de Haan 1999). These remittances are used not only for consumption purposes but to promote rural development as well.

Through their transport and telecommunications networks – however rudimentary – urban centres link their rural neighbours to the rest of the country and the world at large. In a world

[6] In rare cases the preference for imported goods by the urban population may result in rural farmers finding it difficult to penetrate the urban market.

increasingly becoming one huge global village, the importance of this 'window' to the world cannot be overemphasised (see Box 9).

FIG. 2. JUDGING URBANISATION AND URBAN AREAS: THE VIRTUES



A notable impact of urbanisation is the decongestion of the rural areas. As people move to urban areas and establish homes there, the pressure on rural land is relieved. This is what happened historically in the developed world.[7] Relieving pressure on rural agricultural land is complemented by the reduction of pressure on the natural environment as the sole source of livelihood. These twin processes imply a shift from extractive to manufacturing and service sectors. In this way urban centres may be seen as safety valves.

BOX 8. URBANISATION IN JOHANNESBURG: THE VERDICT

"A little over a century ago … the site of Johannesburg was no more than an unwanted south sloping remnant of ground. … There was little to commend the property for agricultural purposes and it offered precious little prospect as a suitable place for a village … [Y]et within a mere 40 years of being founded on such an unlikely site Johannesburg was being hailed as a 'world city'… The financial importance of the city is reflected by the fact that it is the home of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange … [which] is ranked 12th in the world on the basis of its market capitalisation. The … CBD contributes 12 percent of South Africa's GNP.

[N]otwithstanding the glitzy wonders of Johannesburg … there is also a less attractive, deprived and deeply disturbing side. … [A]djacent to this, the most opulent city south of the Sahara, there are hundreds of thousands of people living in deprived communities or townships. In addition there are

[7] This should be considered within specific cultural contexts. Some urbanites do not let go of their rural landholdings, preferring instead to straddle (Beall et al. 1999).

also tens of thousands living in informal settlements of shacks recently erected in the veld."

Source: Beavon 1997:153–161

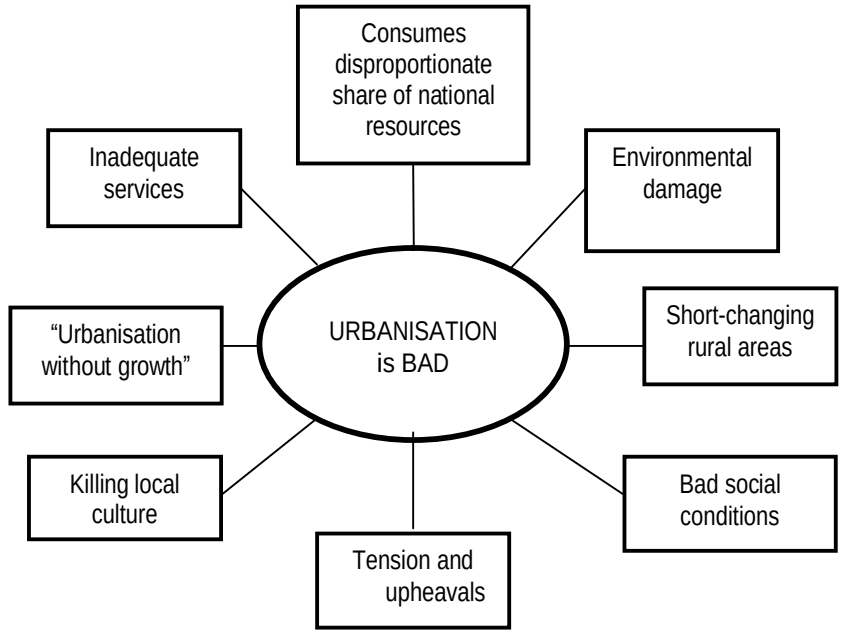
Urban centres are seedbeds of democratisation. In urban areas key components of democracy – diversity, knowledge and information – reach a critical mass large enough to trigger and sustain democratic processes. The proximity to the main political institutions reinforces the political importance of urban centres. Being home to many pressure and interest groups, institutions of higher learning and most supportive (or disruptive) international organisations, urban areas have been known to be springboards of democratic movements that have spread throughout the whole country and given birth to new democratic dispensations. Links to the outside world through various media and telecommunications expose urban centres to international impulses of democratisation.

1.7.2 The vices

There are some sour sides as well to urbanisation and the resultant urban agglomerations. These have become more easily discernible and more pronounced than the positive aspects because of media exposure, thus creating a perception of urban areas as cesspools of human misery and environmental damage. In fact, these vices have been the source of calls for policies and strategies to reduce or halt urbanisation.

Urbanisation in most African countries is not matched by economic growth. As a result, the urban centres have failed to deliver in terms of improved social conditions for the bulk of the population, especially for the low-income category (World Bank 1995). As reflected in Figure 4, urbanisation may mean misery for urban residents whose quest for a better life is met with disappointment (compare Box 9; see also Beavon 1997:161). Unavailable, inadequate and/or decaying infrastructure and community services are now a common feature of developing world cities (Box 11; see also Rakodi and Devas 1993:8–9), manifested in poor housing, squatter settlements and slums, homelessness, declining social indicators and lack of mobility. Some economic policies in developing countries have worsened the plight of the hapless urban residents. Noting this, Potts draws attention to "… the devastation of urban living standards wrought by structural adjustment policies..." which have "…served *further* to immiserise most urban households…" (Potts 1997:451, emphasis in the original).

FIG. 3. JUDGING URBANISATION AND URBAN AREAS: THE VICES



In terms of the livelihood strategies of poor households, it can be argued that urban areas have delivered (World Bank 1995:1). But delivery has not been at the required scale and volume, and at a cost in both human and environmental terms. Although the application of the urban unemployment concept is problematic and controversial there is no doubt that unemployment is rampant in urban Africa (Potts 2000). Zimbabwe's unemployment rate of over 60 per cent is by no means unique. Unable to find a job in the formal sector, the urbanites do not go back to the rural areas (Beall 1999; de Haan 1999). They devise their own means of livelihood, hence the growth of the informal sector, most of it unregulated by any kind of labour, public health, environmental and sanitation laws (Kasarda and Crenshaw 1991:477; Kamete 2000b).

The natural environment is not spared by urbanisation (see Box 11). Environmental damage stems largely from poor waste management practices. Industry, households and the informal sector have been rightly blamed for polluting the environment. A large share of the blame has correctly been apportioned to urban local authorities and central governments for failing to adopt sound and practicable environmental management policies and strategies.

BOX 9. URBANISATION AND HUMAN MISERY IN AFRICA

"The combined impact of the debt crisis and structural adjustment policies reduced urban workers to astonishing levels of poverty, evidence of which, as incomes from wages, slipped completely out of line with the minimum required to keep a family (or in may cases even an individual) fed, let alone sheltered, clothed abounds in the literature. … As a consequence of the massive falls in most urban incomes, sometimes combined with improvements in rural incomes accruing from better agricultural prices, the 'new' urban poor of Africa are often poorer than rural households in crude income terms. … The fact that urban poverty may now surpass rural poverty is of particular significance to any study of the nature of urbanisation in Africa. … It is particularly important that policy makers recognise this, now longstanding, situation so that urban poverty can be tackled and further deliberate reduction in living standards prevented. That this is necessary is indicated by Amis and Rakodi (1994:632) who point out that in sub-Saharan Africa "a view that urban areas are well-off and that all the poverty is rural has proved remarkably robust".

Source: Potts 1997:451

With reference to socio-cultural and political indicators, urban areas have not performed well. The cultural concerns are compounded by perennial political conflicts stemming from instability, protest and tension. Urban areas are hotbeds of pluralism, dissent and even upheaval. Because of the diversity of backgrounds and the prevalence of problems in a situation where knowledge and information flow freely, urban areas sometimes turn into a battleground, in both intellectual and physical terms.

BOX 10. … AND STILL MORE MISERY

"In many cities of the developing world 40–50 per cent of the population live in slums and informal settlements – as much as 85 per cent in the case of Addis Ababa, 59 per cent for Bogota and 51 per cent for Ankara … [W]hile not all informal settlements provide unsatisfactory living conditions, they are usually inadequately served with essential infrastructure. Extremely high population densities and room occupancy rates … indicate an inadequate supply of housing. Other services are generally quite inadequate to meet the rapidly growing needs. UNCHS estimates that, for most cities in the developing world, only a quarter to a half of solid waste is collected by municipal authorities (UNCHS, 1987:2) … with obvious consequences for public health. Inadequate road networks … [and] provision of social services lag far behind the needs. While the health facilities for high-income groups may be very good, those of the poor are so inadequate that their health conditions are as bad as those of the rural population.

Source: Devas and Rakodi 1993:8–9

It is true that urban areas promote rural development. Sometimes though, urban centres do short-change their rural counterparts by for example, under-pricing rural produce, overpricing finished commodities, drawing cheap and mostly young labour from rural areas and spewing tonnes of solid, liquid and gaseous waste onto rural areas. Added to all this is the fact that urban areas seem to consume a disproportionately larger share of the national wealth compared to their share of national population. This is part of the famous thesis on urban bias (Lipton 1988).

1.8 Conclusion: emerging issues

The preceding discussion on urbanisation in the developing world, particularly in Africa, has a number of implications for development and development co-operation.

The discourse has noted that:

1. Urbanisation is an irreversible phenomenon in African countries;
2. The urbanisation trend is set to continue;
3. Urban areas are gaining in influence;
4. Urbanisation and the growth of urban areas have multiple repercussions, among them economic, socio-cultural and political changes;
5. The most important national and local issues will in the future be played out in urban areas;
6. Most of the urbanisation occurring in Africa is not accompanied by economic growth;
7. Urban areas have an in-built thrust to continue to grow;
8. It is not tenable to separate urban and rural areas as discrete spheres because their fate is inextricably linked;
9. Urban areas vary widely not only in location and size but also in functions and substance;
10. There are both good and bad sides to urbanisation.