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***RECENT TRENDS IN RURAL-URBAN AND URBAN-RURAL MIGRATION IN
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: THE EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE AND
IMPLICATIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING
URBAN LIVELIHOOD INSECURITY***

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Introduction

Since the ending of colonialism, most of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa have experienced three broad economic phases which have shifted the balance of forces influencing urbanization and patterns of migration, as outlined in the discussion of push-pull modelling. In the 1960s and into the 1970s global economic conditions were generally positive and African governments, under the influence of prevailing modernizing ideology and advice, embarked on development paths in which they played a key role, directing and making investments into what were then seen as strategic productive sectors such as import-substituting industrialization, and investing heavily in government services like health and education. These policies generally encouraged rural-urban migration and facilitated family migration and longer stays in town, if not full permanence. The oil crises of the 1970s rapidly dismantled, then reversed, the upward trend in urban livelihoods. Real urban incomes and welfare dwindled as most non-oil-exporting nations became heavily indebted, forcing them to turn to the international financial institutions which were by then dominated by neo-liberal, as opposed to modernization, ideology. The market-dominated economic policies subsequently enforced deliberately unpicked the government's central role in economic development, sharply reduced government spending and public sector employment and, by liberalizing trade and thereby concentrating production in areas of comparative economic advantage, led to the closure, reduction or stagnation of swathes of previously protected urban-based production and formal employment. Urban incomes, already on a downward trajectory before SAPs, plunged. These general global factors and African policy shifts and their intensely negative impacts on African urban livelihoods, incomes and welfare have been detailed and critically analysed in a wide array of literature on sub-Saharan Africa in general (eg Adepoju 1993; Baker 1997; Becker et al 1994; Bryceson 2006a, 2006b; Hansen and Vaa 1994; Jamal and Weeks 1993; Meagher 1995; Nelson and Jones 1999; Potts 1995, 1997, 2006; Rakodi 1997; Rogerson 1997; Simon 1992, 1997, 1999; Simone 2004; Simone and Abouhani 2005; Stren 1992; Zeleza 1999) and a host of individual country or settlement case studies.¹ While these works are in general agreement about the severe increases in urban poverty which have occurred since the imposition of structural adjustment, not all of them consider the consequences for migration and those which do are not always in agreement about how migration has been affected. To some extent this is a function of sources: analyses which rest largely on institutional data compilations (i.e World Bank or United Nations) on African urban populations and growth frequently concluded that, despite the negative transformations in urban economies and livelihoods, migration rates have been little affected and, consequently, urban growth rates have not reduced (eg. Jamal and Weeks 1993; Simon 1997; Jamal 1995) or, even if it is noted that there has been some reduction in growth in the largest cities, that the overall trend in the increase of national urbanization levels has not slowed (Bryceson 1996c). Others argue that net in-migration has reduced in response to the urban economic declines (eg Becker et al (1994); Zeleza 1999; Baker 1997b; van Dijk et al 2001; Findley 1997; Tabutin and Schoumaker 2004. My own census-based research on trends in a range of mainly East and southern sub-Saharan African

¹ These are too numerous to cite.

countries since the 1960s supports this view (Potts 1995, 1997, 2006), as does work based on large-scale migration surveys and some national censuses in francophone West Africa (Beauchemin and Bocquier 2004; Beauchemin 2002a, 2002b, 2005, 2006; Beauchemin, Sabine and Schoumaker 2004).

This paper reviews a range of evidence on downward shifts in the growth of African urban settlements in different countries and what is known about the causes. It is helpful to place this in a broader international comparative context of debates and evidence about the nature of contemporary urbanization trends in developing countries, since these have undergone some important revisions, many of which lend weight to the view that migration rates have been sensitive to economic change and that shifts in circular migration, whereby many migrants do not stay permanently in towns, has played a role in reducing urban growth.

The Evidence: Contemporary Urban Growth Trends and the Role of Circular Migration

First, there has been revision of the historical comparisons often made between urban growth in the developing and developed world. In essence, it has long been argued that the urban growth rates experienced in the last half of the twentieth century in many poor countries were unprecedented as they so greatly exceeded the rates typical of Europe or North America during the Industrial Revolution, when urbanization there was fastest. However, direct comparisons between these very different societies can be misleading because the underlying demography is different. For example, many European cities at that time had very much higher urban death rates and lower birth rates than those typical of contemporary African cities, and would scarcely have grown, and sometimes would have contracted, without net in-migration. Thus most of their growth derived from migration from rural areas. By contrast, high urban natural increase rates in lower and middle income countries across the world is now recognized to have been the major component of urban growth for some decades. This has been confirmed by work by the UN and Chen, Valente and Zlotnik (1998) and it is estimated that about 60% of population growth in the 1980s in the 'median city' in such regions was due to NI, with the rest attributable to net rural-urban migration and reclassification of rural settlements as urban (Montgomery et al 2004). Furthermore rates of net rural-urban migration in these regions have not been historically unprecedented; it has now been shown that the rates in Western countries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were not dissimilar to those in these poor regions more recently (Montgomery et al 2004: 93). The issue can be illustrated by comparing the rate of growth of *levels* of urbanization (ie the urban share of the population, rather than the absolute numbers of urban dwellers). This expanded from 29% to 41% in lower and middle income countries between 1975 and 2000, roughly equivalent to the experience of the developed world from 1900 to 1925 (Brockerhoff 2000 cited in Montgomery et al 2004).

In sub-Saharan Africa, *per se*, although urban growth in the 1950s and 1960s in many cities was very often obviously mainly due to net in-migration, this began to shift thereafter and by the end of the 1970s was at least half due to natural increase, and then in many cities evidently mainly caused by that. For Africa as a whole, it has been estimated that the contribution of net in-migration to urban growth was about 40% in the 1960s and 1970s, but fell to only 25% in the 1980s (Chen et al 2004). An

important differentiating issue for sub-Saharan African towns is that their natural increase rates often prove to be very similar to, or sometimes higher than, rural rates. This can be shown individually for many countries, including Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania and Kenya (Potts 2005, 2006), Zimbabwe (see Chapter 4), Cote d'Ivoire, Central African Republic, and the DRC (Potts 1997). This sometimes comes as a surprise, given the known tendency for urban fertility to be lower than rural, and UN analyses of urbanization tend to emphasise this point and assume lower urban than rural natural increase. Yet up until, and into, the 1990s in many African countries this was more than counterbalanced by the youthful and fertile urban age profile compared to rural areas which boosted *birth* rates, and significantly lower urban death rates (see Potts 1995, 2006). A detailed proof of this point for Zambia has been demonstrated (Potts 2005) and is also shown for Zimbabwe in Chapter 4. The rate of urban natural increase for the whole of Africa is actually estimated to have increased from about 2.6% per year in the 1960s and 1970s to 2.8% in the 1980s (Chen et al 2004). The regionally differentiated impacts of HIV/AIDS, which are far worse in southern African countries - where there have also been sharp falls in fertility since the 1980s (Potts and Marks 2001) – have altered these parameters to some extent, although the gap between rural and urban HIV rates have also often narrowed there reducing any differentiation derived from this tragic factor. Recent Demographic Health Surveys in the 2000s still indicate remarkably little difference between rural and urban crude birth rates in most (but not all) countries, but significant differences in infant and child mortality rates which remain the chief factor in determining overall death rates in most African countries, which suggests urban natural increase is often still as high or higher.²

There have also been major revisions of the forecasts of urbanization levels and individual city populations in developing countries made in the 1970s and 1980s. These have usually been significantly reduced in more recent years by the United Nations (Brockerhoff 1999; Satterthwaite 2002). Even sharper reductions are argued for by Bocquier (2005) on the basis of economic modelling, rather than population projections. He concludes that even the revised UN projections for the year 2030 may overestimate the world's urban population by 19%, or roughly one billion people. Vast mega-cities have generally grown more slowly than projected: Mexico City, for example, had eighteen million people in 2001 but had been projected to have around 31 million (Montgomery et al 2004). In one analysis of large city growth in less developed countries in recent decades, almost a third of the cities were found to have grown more slowly than their respective national populations and this is explicitly related to the possibility of reductions in rural-urban migration rates and strengthened 'return migration to [small] towns and villages' (Brockerhoff 1999: 769).

Authoritative reviews of African urbanization compared to other global regions in recent major studies of world urbanization acknowledge the changes in the role and

² Recent Demographic Health Survey data for two countries where there has been very steep fertility decline in recent decades are illustrative. In Kenya and Zimbabwe the gap between rural and urban fertility rates has increased, which might be expected to have finally led to urban natural increase falling significantly below that in rural areas. Yet, the birth rate gap remains small: urban birth rates in Zimbabwe from the 2005-2006 DHS were 28.5 compared to 32.0 in rural areas, and the respective rates in Kenya from the 2003 DHS were 35.3 and 38.1. Disaggregated crude death rates were not published in these DHSs, but despite the impact of AIDS, these are (so far) invariably still lower in urban rather than rural areas due to much lower infant and child mortality rates in towns. For example, the Kenyan DHS reported that rural child mortality rates were 26% higher in rural compared to urban areas (117 to 93 per thousand). As yet, therefore, a major difference in rural and urban natural increase rates does not appear to have emerged.

scale of migration. Thus, net rural out-migration rates in Africa are reported to have declined from 1.07 per thousand in the 1960s to 0.5 in the 1980s (Chen et al 2004), which certainly fits with the idea that circular migration has strengthened. The calculations are based on censuses from seventeen African countries, including five from North Africa, but as their coverage of the time period is very incomplete, the specific rates have to be treated with some caution even if the direction of change can be regarded with greater confidence. A recent analysis of African urbanization argues that 'deurbanization' is indicated by a range of demographic and economic indices, that there has been a rapid slowing of urban growth and that, for sub-Saharan Africa excluding southern Africa, available data suggests that *levels* of urbanization may stabilize at under 50%, or even less if 'urban' is defined as settlements over 10,000 people (Bocquier 2004). Bocquier argues that explaining why this may be requires, inter alia, a better understanding of 'neglected movements from urban to rural areas' (p 149), which is largely a call for more research on circular migration.

Such broad statistical continental reviews are always open to debates about the adequacy of the data and need to be triangulated with national or urban case studies for confirmation. The downward revision of individual mega-city populations which has been significant elsewhere is less relevant in the case of sub-Saharan Africa, however. First, there are few mega-cities. Outside of the major urban agglomeration in Gauteng Province in South Africa, centring on Johannesburg, which has experienced strong in-migration since 1994, only Kinshasa and Lagos can be so considered. Second, there are major issues with data reliability for these two cities. There is no recent reliable estimate for Kinshasa, as there has been no census in the troubled DRC for decades, although the UN suggested 5.1 million for 2000 (Montgomery et al 2004: 99) and 7.8 million in 2007 in its recent report on African Cities (UN-Habitat 2008), implying an annual growth rate of over 7% which would be extremely unusual for such a large city. Censuses in Nigeria are all deeply contested for political reasons. The inability to evaluate properly the nature of urban growth in two of sub-Saharan Africa's three largest cities, and for Nigeria as a whole, the country with the largest number of large urban settlements in Africa, is a major problem for scholars of urban Africa, who frequently lament the difficulties created by lack of reliable or recent data (eg Gould 1995; Adepoju 1995; Ouchou 1998). The Nigerian censuses have, however, indicated not only a sharp downward revision in the assumed national population in the early 1990s, but also led to the UN similarly reducing Lagos's projected size from 13.5 million in 1994 to 8.7 million in 2001 (Montgomery et al 2004). In 2006 the census reported a population for Lagos Metropolitan Areas of 8 million (and 9 million for the entire state of Lagos), well below the figure of around 15 million frequently still cited, suggesting an annual growth rate since 1991 of around 2.9%, less than the national rate of 3.2%. This was immediately attacked as a political manipulation of the national regional balance between north and south, but it has also been vigorously defended by the national statistical office as a reasonable figure.³ If the data are even broadly meaningful, alongside the body of survey material indicating increased circular migration out of Lagos (see Potts 1995; Ohagi and Isiugo-Abanihe 1998; Arene and Mkpado 2002), it indicates that inflows must have been largely countered by outflows and therefore that

³ Some of the dispute rests on misunderstandings about the differences between populations within state versus urban boundaries, and have easily been countered by the statisticians. The census is also generally in line with what is known about national demographic indices from other surveys (see National Population Commission (2007)).

circular migration has been significant. Out-migration to other Nigerian towns almost certainly has also played a part.

Beyond the mega-cities, however, support for the general indications of the broad studies on African urbanization discussed above is plentiful, with reports from a wide range of individual countries across sub-Saharan Africa that population growth in many large urban settlements has slowed and, in some cases, that growth in the levels of overall urbanization is also reducing, although this is sometimes countered by an expansion in the numbers living in small, and sometimes very small, towns. For East and southern African countries, I have previously provided a detailed analysis of available census data from the 1960s up until the early years of the 2000s and indicated the frequent occurrence of major towns, from about the 1980s, growing at rates which imply that the role of net in-migration is only fairly small, and sometimes probably or certainly negative. This is explicitly related to shifts in global and national economic policies and their impacts on urban livelihoods and migration patterns, including circular migration (Potts 2006). When analysed on a country by country basis, rather than aggregated regional level, the vital significance for interpreting urban growth patterns of national variations in the nature and timing of, for example, the de-colonization process and the imposition of structural adjustment, and of wars and conflict (eg in Angola, Mozambique, Rhodesia, Uganda, Rwanda) becomes very clear (ibid). Much of the literature on urbanization assumes a fairly stable political environment in which economic and social factors influence the nature and growth of towns, but this has frequently not been true in sub-Saharan Africa, and virtually all migration or urban theory has to be abandoned in order to interpret the impacts of life-threatening conflicts. In addition to census-based analysis, I have also previously reviewed a wide range of survey evidence from countries across sub-Saharan Africa, including Ghana and Nigeria, which identified increasing rates of return migration from towns or falls in the attraction of cities for rural migrants (see Potts 1995, 1997). In a more recent study from Nigeria on urban-rural migrants' farming activities, for example, Arene and Mkpado (2002:118), assert that structural adjustment resulted in urban 'poverty becoming the hallmark of the economy. Consequently, to avoid being crushed by the receding economy, the counter-urbanization process began'. The strengthening of urban-rural migration as a response to structural adjustment has now also been specifically identified for Cameroon (Gubry et al 1995) and has been suggested for Malawi (Chirwa 2001).

Slow growth of individual towns, sometimes below national rates or at rates close to those attributable to natural increase, for long periods of time has been identified in Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, and South Africa (Potts 1995, 2006). The most extreme case is represented by Zambia where a clear trend of net urban-rural migration has been established for at least twenty years, the level of urbanization reduced from 40% to 36% between 1980 and 2000, circular migration has been very strong and there is also evidence of some urban-born people leaving towns and absolute falls in the populations of some Copperbelt towns (Potts 2004, 2006).

Studies of urbanization and migration in francophone West Africa, based on censuses and survey data from a large-scale migration project across the region covering 1988 to 1992, NESMUWA (Network of Surveys on Migration and Urbanization in West Africa), have identified even clearer downward trends in urban growth in a number of

countries and increases in circular migration out of towns which have also been explicitly related to the declines in urban living standards due to structural adjustment (eg Beauchemin and Bocquier 2004; Beauchemin 2002a, 2002b, 2005, 2006; Beauchemin, Sabine and Schoumaker 2004; Bocquier and Traore 1998). In addition, new census material from the end of the 1990s into the 2000s is available for a number of West African countries, within which there is sometimes quite startling evidence of counter-urbanization at the top end of the urban hierarchy, although whether this extends to include the largest town varies between countries. A compilation of these census data (excluding those where conflicts have distorted migration patterns) from across the continent, supplemented by the NESMUWA results, are presented in Table 1 which indicates via different degrees of shading where strong or weak net out-migration, or negligible net migration, can be identified for individual cities or groups of towns for particular time periods. The data in this table form the backdrop to the following analysis of the accumulating evidence of major shifts in migration and urbanization trends in individual African countries.

In Cote d'Ivoire, circular migration has been of central significance for decades. At the end of the 1970s a national report calculated that only Abidjan, the largest town and former capital city, had net in-migration while other towns had net out-migration. At this time between a quarter to a third of all internal migrants, including rural-rural, were return urban-rural migrants. Rural forest zones were more attractive to migrants than towns, except Abidjan. By the end of the 1980s, as economic conditions became more difficult, even this city began to experience net out-migration to rural areas of national citizens (Beauchemin 2005) at a rate of 12,000 people per year (Bocquier and Beauchemin 2004). If foreign immigrants are included, its net migration rate from 1988-92 was zero.⁴ These trends continued through the 1990s, so that Cote d'Ivoire experienced actual counter-urbanization in the same way as Zambia, with its level of urbanization, if defined as the population share of settlements with over 5,000 people, reducing from 46% to 43% between 1988 and 1998. The NESMUWA results indicate that rural out-migration rates to urban areas for both sexes and all ages declined from the 1970s to the 1980s (Beauchemin, Sabine and Schoumaker 2004). Abidjan again experienced net out-migration in 1997-98 (ibid), although calculating its average annual growth rate for 1988-98 from published census material shows that it was 3.8%,⁵ a little higher than the national rate of 3.3%. This must have been accounted for by high natural increase rates, or international immigration, since the city was not attracting and keeping local in-migrants. Three of the four next largest towns all grew at less than the national growth rate and thus certainly experienced net urban-rural migration along with most of the rest of the urban hierarchy.⁶ The stagnation of towns in Cote d'Ivoire in the 1990s was also reported in other surveys (Bredeloup 1997), as was increased out-migration by both immigrants and locals (Baker 1997). These significant trends, although evident from the end of the 1970s, were ignored in the census report for 1988. Also, although they were acknowledged in the 1998 report, this still reported continued urbanization based on official

⁴ From 1988-1992, the country as a whole de-urbanized, as the population of urban settlements with over 5,000 people taken together diminished.

⁵ Calculated from census data for 1988 and 1998 published on Brinkhoff (2008) <http://www.citypopulation.de/>. All the growth rates of individual cities cited in the text have been calculated by myself from census data either from published census material, or for the recent West African censuses from Brinkhoff's urban census website.

⁶ The exception was the new capital of Yamassoukro which, in line with new capitals generally in Africa, such as Lilongwe in Malawi, Abuja in Nigeria, and Gaborone in Botswana, registered rapid growth.

definitions of urban settlements (Beauchemin 2005). Such definitional issues quite often lead to considerable misunderstandings about real trends in migration and urbanization in African countries (eg see Bocquier 2004), with vastly inflated total urban populations reported and transcribed into UN and World Bank data compilations, when more realistic and functional definitions of urban settlements indicate more moderate urban growth and much lower net in-migration. This is true of recent censuses in both Kenya and Tanzania; for Kenya the problem is utterly confounding. If the Kenyan 1999 census data for the total urban population are used as the basis for calculating its urbanization level then and its rate of urbanization in the 1990s, this gives a totally false picture of that country's true urban dynamics for that decade (see Potts 2004:341).

Internal migration patterns in Burkina Faso have also changed. Reduced migration to Ougadougou and increased return migration to rural areas to farm because of the major devaluation of the CFA franc (used throughout francophone Africa) in 1994 was reported by Baker (1997) and the strengthening of rural-urban linkages and perceptions of rural areas as an economic 'refuge' by Oudreaogo (1997). There has not been actual counter-urbanization but net rural out-migration to national urban areas was slowing by the 1980s and, in the 1990s, urban net in-migration contributed very little to overall urban population growth within the country (Beauchemin, Sabine and Schoumaker 2004). The influence of increasing urban poverty and a relative improvement in certain rural conditions on these patterns is emphasised in Beauchemin (2006). In both Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire, a crucial aspect of these trends is that they have *not* been accompanied by any shift towards stabilization and really major contraction of rural-urban migration (although this has slowed), whereby the changes would be mainly due to far fewer people moving to towns and those who do, stay there longer or permanently. Instead, the data show that large numbers of people are still moving between rural and urban areas, and that general mobility has increased, particularly for women and young people. It is just that they stay in town for shorter periods and return moves have significantly increased. It is also highly significant that urban-rural migration streams have become less, not more, age-specific: in Cote d'Ivoire urban net migration rates were negative only for the over-40s in the 1960s, then for the over-30s in the 1970s, and by the 1980s for all age groups except the under-20s. In Burkina Faso, urban net migration in the 1970s was positive for the under-30s, but by the 1990s this was true only for the 15-19 age group; even children here were net out-migrants. The propensity to move from urban to rural areas is also less differentiated between the different age groups – it used to be clear that this was more likely for the over-40s – and it has even become somewhat more likely for young adults than more mature age groups (Beauchemin, Sabine and Schoumaker 2004).

The NESMUWA project also included Guinea, Senegal, Mali, Mauritania and Niger although less detailed analyses have been published for these. As in Burkina Faso, net out-migration was recorded from most rural areas although the internal rates for those over 15 years of age to urban destinations within the countries were generally low, between -0.1% in Niger and Burkina Faso (ie about one in a thousand rural residents) to -0.2% in Senegal and Mali; in Guinea the rate was zero (Beauchemin and Bocquier 2004).⁷ With the exception of Mauritania, rural out-migrants were always far more

⁷ These rates have been rounded up and even lower net rates are reported in Bocquier (1998). The rates for Mauritania of -0.7 are not comparable as they exclude principal towns.

likely to be emigrants to other countries, rather than moving to towns within their countries (eg the rate was -0.7% in rural Guinea and highest in rural Mali at -1.4%). Some of these would be moving to towns or rural areas in other West African countries, and others overseas. The contribution of immigration (ie from other countries) to urban growth was found to be particularly important for Ougadougou and Yamassoukro, the capitals of Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire, but less so for the capitals of the other countries. For other large towns and the smaller centres in all the countries, except Cote d'Ivoire, immigration was generally less significant. In any case, in every country except Mali, in small towns there was a net outflow of migrants to internal rural areas and this more than counterbalanced any inflows from immigrants. For Senegal, the net impact of immigration was negative at all levels of the urban hierarchy, except Dakar where it was negligible. Dakar also experienced the lowest rate of internal net in-migration ($+0.5\%$) of any capital city in the survey (Beauchemin and Bocquier 2004).

More recent work on Dakar argues that its growth has further slowed due to emigration (cited in Cross 2008). There is also a range of survey evidence for Senegal of the continued significance of rural-urban links for urban migrants and of much circular migration (eg Linares 2003; Evans, pers. comm 2003; Oestereich 1997). A study by Fall (1998) sometimes cited as indicating decreasing rural-urban linkages for migrants in Dakar is actually replete with evidence of continuing links such as remittances and visiting, but found gradual integration also into urban networks. Yet this need not mean any reduction in economically-generated return migration. As noted by Owuor (2006), Fall's study actually found that 90% of male and 80% of female migrants in Dakar maintained links with their places of origin. That there have been significant shifts in the nature of migration to Dakar became clear from the census of 2002 which demonstrated that the city agglomeration (Dakar plus Pikine and Guediawaye) had grown no faster than the national population since 1988, at 2.6% per year. Its population in 2002 was 1.98 million. The relative contribution to this of emigration to Europe and other overseas destinations compared to internal migration trends is not known but the census results are in general accordance with the trends identified by the NEMSUWA project ten years before, so it seems possible that all Dakar's recent growth has essentially been due to natural increase, with a negligible component attributable to net in-migration from either internal and foreign migration flows. Indeed, actual counter-urbanization had occurred at the top of Senegal's urban hierarchy, with its ten largest towns counter-urbanizing (see Table 1) and their share of Senegal's population falling since 1988. Only two of the nine largest urban settlements below Dakar grew faster than the national growth rate.

Counter-urbanization has also occurred in Mali according to the 1998 census which reported that the urban share of the population had fallen to 19% from 22% in 1987 (Tacoli 2001). Analysis of the census data for the main urban areas found that the capital, Bamako, grew at 4% per year, faster than the national population rate of 2.6% but three of the six largest towns hardly grew at all and must have experienced net out-migration, as did many small centres. Analysis of the censuses at the beginning of the 21st century in Benin, Mauritania and Niger also indicates a general pattern of very weak net in-migration to most towns, and net out-migration from some (see Table 1), although Niamey, Niger's capital was an exception. It has not been possible to evaluate growth trends in these countries in their smallest towns, however, but it is obvious that there has been major change in the existing towns (ie those

defined as urban at the previous census) with over 10,000 people. The share of Niger's population in its 36 main urban centres with over 8,000 residents in 2001, for example, increased only 1% from 1988 to 2001, to 16%. In Benin the national population share in towns with more than 10,000 residents in 2002 had increased less than 1% from 1992, from 38.2% to 38.8%.

In the past rural-urban migrants from Sahelian countries have fuelled urbanization both in their home countries and in Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal, particularly the capital cities. Tacoli (2001) suggests that such emigration may account for Mali's falling urbanization level. However, the shift to internal counter-urbanization is still a significant change from earlier trends. Furthermore, although regional immigrants are still moving to Abidjan and Dakar, the shifts towards counter-urbanization in both Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal, and the reduced contribution of migration to urbanization in Burkina Faso, demonstrate that the process of urbanization in the francophone West African region as a whole has experienced a fundamental change. Increases in urban-rural migration are clearly part of the explanation, but so also must be increases in emigration to non-regional destinations. The precise figures are unknown, and such moves are missed by censuses, but it now receives more attention than internal African migration patterns. There is thus a vast literature on such migration and it is well known that its incidence has greatly increased, driven by the same structural economic declines that have transformed internal migration.⁸

It is also known that net rural-urban migration played relatively little part in urban growth in Ghana in the 1970s and early 1980s, when the economy suffered very serious decline (Tacoli 2001; Sowa and White 1997 cited in van Dijk et al 2001; Asante and Anarfi 2003; Potts 1995). From 1970 to 1984 three regions, including Greater Accra, experienced some counter-urbanization (Tacoli 2001), although nationally the level of urbanization increased from 29% to 32%.⁹ Return migration to rural areas was frequently noted (Braimoh 2004; Peil 1995; Kasanga and Avis 1988) and very strong net shifts from urban-based into agricultural occupations were recorded in 1987/88 and 1988-91 (Asante and Anarfi 2003). Other indications were that the acreage under crops in Ghana increased very significantly from the mid-1970s to 1984. In the northern regions smallholder numbers involved in crop production increased by 76% over this period, having fallen slightly in the early 1970s (ibid). Migration flows in the 1980s and 1990s were often recorded to be in favour of rural areas, with urban-rural flows outnumbering rural-urban moves (see Adepoju Migration in Africa: an overview, for 1984; and Asante and Anarfi for 1991/2 and 1998/9). The Ghana Living Standards Survey during the year 1991-92 reported that urban-rural movements accounted for 34% of all migration recorded

⁸ Two examples of major collections are Appleyard (1998) and Russell, S et al (1990). The accounts by Simone (2004) of the constant restless search of, usually male, youths in urban West Africa for the crucial break which will give them access to overseas economic opportunities provides the qualitative picture that complements the quantitative evidence. For the extraordinary rates of out-migration and success of Togolese emigrants in gaining access to the USA, see Piot (2006.)

⁹ Tacoli (2001) suggests that this slow growth may have been in part due to immigration of rural residents to Nigeria during the oil boom. However most of these were expelled in 1983 and returned virtually overnight to Ghana, a year before the census, so they would have been enumerated in their home country (see Potts 1995). Issues of definition of urban centres also seem to play a major part in analyses of Ghana's urban trends. A recent government report indicates massive counter-urbanization from 1970 to 1984 from 38% to 32%, and a rural annual population growth rate for that period of 3.4% compared to only 1.2% for urban areas (Ghana Statistical Services 2005). However most reports, including other Ghanaian government sources, suggest the level of urbanization was only 29% in 1970.

and rural-urban for only 10%, with the rest being urban-urban and rural-rural.¹⁰ However, since 1970-84, urban growth rates have increased again in Ghana although much of this appears to be concentrated in small centres. Accra Metropolis grew at an annual 3.4% during 1984-2000 compared to 3.2% for 1970-84, while national growth rates were 2.6% and 2.7%. Of the major centres, Kumasi had become by far the most attractive to in-migrants, growing at 5.5% per year from 1984 to 2000, while its previous growth had only matched the national rate. Excluding Kumasi, the towns with over 100,000 residents in 2000 grew at an annual 3.3% in the last inter-censal period, and 3.2% in the previous one. A number of large towns - Tamale, Takoradi, Tema and Cape Coast – grew below the national population rate and may therefore have experienced net out-migration. However, the growth of the total urban population was much more vigorous at 4.8% per year, and the level of urbanization thus increased to 44% by 2000. Hence, Ghana's urbanization from the mid-1980s to 2000 must have been very concentrated in its smallest towns. Some of this would have been caused by re-definition of villages as towns as they crossed the urban threshold.

In East Africa, it is clear that neither Nairobi nor Dar es Salaam have experienced any slowing of their growth since they continued to expand at just under 5% per year in the 1990s, exactly as they had in the 1980s. However, for the next largest towns in Kenya the evidence is very varied (see Table 1). Mombasa, which had stagnated in the 1980s (see Rakodi 2006), appears to have become more attractive again to in-migrants, but some other large towns have stagnated or had a relative loss of migrants. In Tanzania, Arusha's growth has been exceptional and this town has sustained significant rates of net in-migration since independence. However, the next ten towns together (all of which have over 100,000 people) have experienced a major downward shift in their growth, and thus hardly any net in-migration. In Uganda the urban picture is distorted by two large settlements whose population dynamics are driven by refugee movements due to the longstanding serious conflict in the northern part of the country. However, net in-migration was only a minor element of Kampala's growth in the 1990s, and five of the main towns experienced clear out-migration.

Only Mozambique and Zambia from southern Africa are shown in Table 1. South Africa's urban dynamics are discussed in Chapter 3, and Zimbabwe's in Chapter 4. The countries furthest south are not directly comparable to most of the rest of sub-Saharan Africa due to the influence of South Africa, and the complicating factors of that country's much more recent ending of restrictions on migration and the transition to democracy (see Potts 2006, which also provides a detailed analysis of urbanization in all the countries in this region). Externally imposed structural adjustment has also been less significant, although neo-liberal ideology has had various impacts. In addition, the impact of HIV/AIDS is far greater which makes analysis of other population changes, such as urbanization, more difficult. Lesotho's population has stagnated over the ten years before its last census in 2006, and the 2007 census provisional results in Swaziland indicated that its population has actually declined. Emigration to South Africa, where there have been amnesties for migrants from these

¹⁰ It is not clear how the GLSSs record migration although Asante and Anarfi (2003) appear to suggest that the data refer to life-time migration (ie based on the incidence of people not living in the same district as their birthplace during the year of the survey). However, whatever methodology is used, the patterns are clearly indicative of significant urban-rural flows.

countries to allow them to become South African citizens which have been taken up by some (Sechaba Consultants 1997), will also have been important. Zambia's counter-urbanization is evident from Table 1, which also shows that counter-urbanization appears to be occurring in many of Mozambique's main towns, including the capital city (whether or not it is agglomerated with its functional neighbour, Matola). It is something of a surprise that Maputo's growth has been slower than the national average, given the economic impetus of the gradual rehabilitation of its port facilities, the development of MozAl, the huge aluminium smelter, and its involvement in one of South Africa's largest spatial development initiatives, the Maputo Corridor. However, extreme poverty has remained endemic within the city and there were some indications of the renewed strength of circular migration and rural-urban linkages in the city before the latest census in 2007 (see Jenkins 2006).

The cumulative evidence from across sub-Saharan Africa is thus very strong that trends in urbanization have really changed in response to the lack of economic opportunities in the largest towns. Actual counter-urbanization has occurred in a few countries. In many others the change is seen in weak or negligible net in-migration into individual large towns or large parts of the upper end of the urban hierarchy; sometimes this includes the capital or largest city. It is usually clear, also, that much of this is due to significant upswings in the rate and speed of circular migration out of these towns to rural areas, as rural-urban migration remains important but is being counterbalanced. In West and southern Africa, in particular, cross-border migration complicates the picture, as discussed above, but in West Africa the share of the national population in the large cities is stagnating, or only slowly increasing, even in the countries of net regional immigration. However, as shown by the example of Ghana, these very significant changes in the fortunes of the major urban centres, are often occurring whilst small centres are experiencing rapid growth. Where national urbanization levels are still reported to increase strongly, therefore, this is now often due to expansion at the lower end of the hierarchy.¹¹ Since most of the census data-sets analysed for Table 1.1 usually exclude most small centres, these dynamics cannot be directly considered here.¹² However, the implications of urbanization driven by growth in very small towns in African countries are very different from those for rapid expansion at the top of the urban system.

Small towns: issues of definitions and livelihoods

First, there are endless difficulties with definitions at this level (Bocquier 2004; Chen et al 2004; Champion 2004; Baker 1997). Changes in the national criteria for designation as 'urban' can make massive changes in recorded population dynamics, but may be utterly misleading in terms of real structural change in the nature of economic activity, settlement functions, and specialization – all essential elements of any truly 'urban' rather than rural settlement. Second, increases in the population designated as urban at this level are often due to settlements passing a threshold size. This is an inevitable part of the urbanization process everywhere, and is reported to have accounted for about a quarter of 'urbanization' in Africa in the 1980s, but it need

¹¹ There is evident variation among small towns too, however (see Baker 1997:29 for francophone West Africa).

¹² A review of small town dynamics in ten West African countries from 1960 to 1980, which picked up on the beginning of the reduction in larger town growth in coastal countries and the increased contribution of small towns to overall growth can be found in Giraut (1997).

not involve any in-migration at all, or change in the residents' livelihoods so again it is dangerous automatically to infer structural change from this dynamic. On the other hand, redesignation as urban because economic activities have become more 'urban' in small settlements, no matter what their size, as has occurred on a massive scale in Botswana (Potts 2006; Selolwane 2006), is a really significant marker of real urbanization. Finally, and in direct contrast to the case of Botswana which has had some of the most sustained and positive economic development in Africa, there is accumulating evidence from across Africa that today many, and sometimes most, residents in small 'urban' settlements are deriving their primary livelihood from agriculture. This may in part be a function of the first two points just considered, but in addition there is evidence that farmers are migrating into *small* 'urban' settlements, and remaining essentially as farmers. Their motives appear mainly to be to gain access to services, markets and transport. The ending of pan-territorial pricing and closing of marketing board depots across Africa as a result of neo-liberal policies has been a factor, and a creeping geographical exclusion from the (positive) reach of the state of remoter areas (which cover vast swathes of rural Africa). This phenomenon has been reported from case studies of small towns in Tanzania by Holm (1992) and Bah et al (2006); in Ethiopia by Baker (2006); in Burkina Faso (Ouedraogo 1997); and in Mozambique and Angola by Jenkins (2003).

In areas where farming land is still available in close proximity to small towns, this is a logical move, and renders rural-urban linkages both temporally and geographically complete. Where the settlements involved are small, the process (and the motivations of the migrants) is in many ways similar to the sort of settlement nucleation deemed positive and essential for the delivery of services that was often favoured by rural development policy-makers in the past, most notably in Tanzania with its ujamaa policy which included villagization. However, the analysis of the phenomenon can turn on the definitions: are the growing settlements essentially rural, enhancing the livelihoods of farmers (a good thing), or are they, simply due to crossing a size threshold, urban areas which are unable to meet the non-agricultural employment and planned housing needs of their populations (a bad thing)? For the residents, it is probable that such questions are fairly meaningless unless there are resources available to either reward them or punish them for being 'urban' – both of which can occur via the imposition of urban planning. Yet from the viewpoint of properly understanding urbanization processes and urban economies at the national, regional or continental level, these questions are salient. Evidently, any impetus to urban growth derived from this type of in-migration should not be interpreted in terms of any relative attraction of the urban labour market (or as imposing extra demands upon that market) since, for these migration flows, the significance of the impact of urban recession on urban wages, employment and food prices is understandably small. As argued by Jenkins (1993:133), '[t]his is not the product of an urbanization based on a strong demand for labour but an urbanization based on a strong rejection of labour' and 'peri-urban areas' are often 'a labour dumping ground, where households can straddle urban and rural economies and thus enhance (minimally) their survival'. While Jenkins' peri-urban areas apparently include those round large towns, he also notes similar characteristics in 'peri-rural' settlements, the essential characteristics of which parallel those of the sorts of centres which are often re-defined as urban as their populations grow. All such settlements are felt to offer major challenges for, and a need to adopt new approaches to, urban planning and development as well as questions of urban definition (Jenkins 1993). In my view,

where there is a lack of urban-type specialization in employment in such centres, their definition as towns must be questionable. Certainly, were it possible to disaggregate such settlements from the urban system, the weakening of the real urban growth and dynamics of many countries where net in-migration at the upper end of the hierarchy has slowed, would become more evident.

The issue of straddling livelihoods between rural and urban areas, as viewed from the urban end of the spectrum, has sometimes confused understandings of growth characteristics in the largest African towns. Thus, for Jamal (1995:22), a combination of urban agriculture (within town boundaries) and increased urban-rural flows of food from rural kin explain why 'prices lose most of their bite as mechanisms for distribution' and he concludes that 'urban families *have* adjusted structurally; that they would do this by actually going back to the rural areas remains a forlorn hope [of neo-liberal policy]'. This analysis is explained by the fact that World Bank statistics showed that at 'the end of the 1980s more than twice as many migrants were coming into the towns as a decade ago and African cities were growing at 6-7% per annum compared to only 2 per cent in the rural areas..... the attraction of urban income has increased and migration not only continues but has intensified in recent years'. The compiled statistics were largely wrong so the conclusion deduced was also wrong, but had they been correct it is not surprising that the conclusion would be drawn that livelihood straddling must explain the supposed continued rates of net in-migration. In reality, the empirical evidence across much of sub-Saharan Africa is that these sorts of urban livelihood adaptations, while extremely important in large towns, have not been sufficient in most large urban areas to prevent further adaptations in the nature of migration, including increased out-migration.

Conclusion

Circular migration between rural and urban areas remains a crucial, and adaptable, aspect of urbanization processes in sub-Saharan Africa. As has been shown, the scale, duration and direction of such migration flows have adapted in logical ways to the increasing poverty in urban areas accompanying structural adjustment and net in-migration has been reduced, sometimes very markedly. Yet, as I have argued elsewhere, 'there has been a degree of mythologizing about the 'stubbornness' of sub-Saharan African urban growth rates to refuse to 'abate'' (Potts 2006: 68-9). There is a political element to this, with city governments often tending deliberately to overestimate the projected future population as this influences their funding claims and political significance.¹³ Also, as argued by Beauchemin (2002a), there is an almost overwhelming fascination with rural-urban migration in academic and other studies which can limit the recognition of the emergence or re-invigoration of other sorts of flows. He also feels that African politicians are attracted to the idea that rapid urban growth is due mainly to migration and thus that its accompanying economic and planning problems can be 'blamed' on migrants. Outdated projections from previous periods of rapid growth have also played a major part.

¹³ This is obvious from comparisons between such projected rates cited in literature on African cities and the actual rates measured by censuses. At a meeting on Zimbabwe in the UK in 2007, a city representative from Bulawayo cheerfully admitted that the never-ending disagreement between the city government and the state over its presumed under-enumeration was based on a set of 'political' figures and that the enumerated population was probably reasonably accurate.

These adaptations in circular migration patterns are mainly the result of very negative livelihood changes for most of the urban population for whom there is no economic safety net, if all else fails, except within the nexus of rural-urban linkages. The nature of such linkages, and of circular migration in particular, had been of very longstanding scholarly interest before the advent of neo-liberalism in sub-Saharan Africa. However, there have been major debates about its interpretation and implications. These debates are considered in Potts (forthcoming), alongside a detailed examination of longitudinal evidence from the 1980s to the 2000s from Harare, Zimbabwe about trends in migration and migrants' attitudes and plans which provide, in microcosm, an extreme example of how these shift in response to major changes in urban economies.

The current trends in population growth in many sub-Saharan African large urban settlements across a range of countries mean that the level of urbanization in these countries will rise much more slowly than currently seems to be assumed. In some cases, as in the Ghanaian example examined, where the level of urbanization is recorded to be expanding significantly, this can only be explained by vigorous growth in small and very small towns or highly misleading re-definitions of what is 'urban' (cf Kenya). None of this means that many large towns will not continue to grow quite fast – the issue is that this is increasingly largely due to high rates of natural increase in these towns. If the growth continues to be attributed to mass net in-migration (or even more misleadingly to increasing rates of net in-migration as is still suggested in some analyses), this sends the wrong signals to policy-makers, local and national governments, and donor agencies. Managing a city like Lagos, with a population of 9 million and very probably a growth rate of around 3% from its own internal demographic forces (ie in the absence of any migration component) is a massive challenge. Such a city will double in size in 23 years even without in-migration. However, that growth may not increase the proportion of Nigeria's citizens living in Lagos if rural population growth keeps up with the city's growth. In very crude terms, the message is that some African countries are now not necessarily becoming more urban or only very slowly so, in the sense of a higher proportion of their total population living in large towns. The implications of this, in terms of understanding the nature of contemporary urban and rural livelihoods and economies, are very different from those where there is clear evidence that a large urban economy is so attractive that the city's population growth is very significantly derived from in-migration from rural areas. The most recent World Development Report for 2008, entitled *Reshaping Economic Geography*, highlights the beneficial developmental aspects of large urban settlements and of migrants and mobility. All these points are welcome. Nonetheless, the report does not recognize the evidence from sub-Saharan Africa about current rural-urban and urban-rural migration trends which are such important indicators of the crisis in urban poverty and livelihood insecurity in so many of its major urban settlements, and the urgency of addressing these issues.

Table 1. Recent net migration evidence and urbanization in selected sub-Saharan African countries

(shaded cells: dark grey = strong negative in-migration; light grey = weakly negative or no net in-migration)

Country	Time period	National AAGR %	Category of urban settlement(s)	AAGR %	Notes
Benin	1992-2002	3.3	Cotonou (capital)	2.2	Counter-urbanizing/ net out-migration Counter-urbanizing/ net out-migration Negligible net in-migration
			Porto Novo (2 nd city)	2.2	
			All towns >10,000	3.4	
Burkina Faso	1990s 1996-2006	2.9	All towns All towns >10K excl capital city	3.1	Net in-migration negligible Ougadougou 4.7% per year
Cote d'Ivoire	1988-92	3.3	Abidjan (largest city)	<3.3	Net out-migration of national citizens Counter-urbanization: 46% to 43% See text Net out-migration of national citizens Counter-urbanizing/ net out-migration
	1988-98		All towns >5,000	3.8	
	1988-98 1997-98		Abidjan Abidjan	< 3.3	
	1988-98		3 of 4 next largest towns		
Ghana	1970-1984	2.6	Accra (capital city) Kumasi (2 nd largest)	3.2 2.6	Gtr Accra and 2 other regions de-urbanize Net in-migration negligible Net in-migration less than 1/5 urban growth Growth less than national rate
	1984-2000	2.7	>100,000 (excl Kumasi)	3.3	
			5 of 10 largest towns	2.1	
Kenya	1989-1999	3.0	Nairobi (capital)	4.9	Strong net in-migration. approx 40% growth Net in-migration c 1/5 urban growth Net in-migration negligible Strong net in-migration. approx 40% growth Counter-urbanizing/ net out-migration
			Mombasa (2 nd city)	3.7	
			Nakuru (4 th city)	2.9	
			Eldoret and Kisumu (3 rd , 5 th)	4.9	
			Next three largest towns	2.0	
Mali	1987-1998	2.6	All towns		Counter-urbanized; urb level falls 22% to 19% Net in-migration approx one-third growth Strong net out-migration
			Bamako plus 2 nd largest town 3 rd , 4 th and 6 th largest towns	4.0 0-0.6	
Mauritania	1988-2000	2.4	Nouakchott (capital)	2.6	Net in-migration very small Counter-urbanizing/ net out-migration Counter-urbanizing/ net out-migration
			Nouadhibou: 2 nd town	1.5	
			3 of 6 next largest towns	≤2	

Country	Time period	National AAGR %	Category of urban settlement(s)	AAGR %	Notes
Mozambique	1997-2007	2.5	Maputo (capital)	1.1	Counter-urbanizing/ net out-migration
			Maputo plus Matola	2.2	Net out-migration from capital conglomeration
			Beira (4 th largest)	0.5	Strong net out-migration
			16 largest towns	2.5	Negligible net in-migration
Niger	1988-2001	3.3	Niamey (capital)	4.7	Net in-migration positive: approx 30% growth
			3 of next 4 largest towns	<3.0	Counter-urbanizing/ net out-migration
			38 main towns excl Niamey	3.5	Very weak net in-migration
Nigeria	1991-2006	3.2	Lagos: largest city	c 2.9	Net out-migration? See text.
Senegal	1988-92	2.6	All towns except Dakar		Net foreign emigration
	1988-2002		Dakar (capital city)	2.6	Net migration negligible
			10 largest towns (inc Dakar)	2.3	Counter-urbanizing/ net out-migration
Tanzania	1988-2002	2.9	Dar es Salaam (largest town)	4.8	Strong net in-migration: approx 40% growth
			Arusha (2 nd town)	7.1	Very strong net in-migration >half growth
				3.0	Net in-migration negligible
			Next ten largest towns		
Uganda	1991-2002	3.4	Kampala (capital)	3.7	Net in-migration small
			Gulu and Lira (2 nd & 3 rd towns)	c 10	War-induced urban growth from refugees
			Next five largest towns	2.4	Counter-urbanizing/ net out-migration
Zambia	1980-1990	2.7	All urban areas	2.5	Counter-urbanization: 40% to 38%
	1990-2000	2.4	All urban areas	1.4	Counter-urbanization: 38% to 36%
			Copperbelt towns	-0.09	Very strong counter-urbanization

Sources: compiled and calculated from raw data in national censuses (see footnote 5), supplemented by data for 1988-92 from NESMUWA project reported in Beauchemin et al (2004) and Bocquier and Traore (1998); counter-urbanization of all towns in Mali (Tacoli 2001).

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