



"AFRICA'S URBANISATION DYNAMICS 2020: AFRICAPOLIS, MAPPING A NEW URBAN GEOGRAPHY" LAUNCH

AFRICA'S URBAN REALITIES

Better cities for an integrated, prosperous and peaceful continent

7 February 2020, 10am - 12:30pm, Radisson Blu, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Africa has and will continue to have the fastest urban growth in the world. The continent's population is projected to double by 2050. Two-thirds of this growth will be absorbed by urban areas. This means that over the next 30 years Africa's cities will be home to an additional 950 million people. This urban shift offers great opportunities, but also challenges for African citizens, businesses and governments. The time to act is now as policy decisions taken today will have lasting consequences for generations to come.

In 2014, the African Union (AU) created a Specialized Technical Committee N°8 (AU-STC8) on Public Service, Local Governments, Urban Development and Decentralization. This body guarantees that urban considerations are aligned with the AU's Agenda 2063, the long-term vision for continental transformation. At the global level, a stand alone sustainable development goal to "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" (SDG11) emphasises the global consensus around the importance of urbanisation and reflects the central role of cities in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The correlation between urbanisation and development is at the heart of the New Urban Agenda adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito, Ecuador, on 20 October 2016.

In addition, as put forward by the Rural Futures Programme of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in their landmark publication, *A New Emerging Rural World: An Overview of Rural Change in Africa*, the static categories of "rural" and "urban" no longer capture the reality of lifestyles and socio-economic behaviours. Rural-urban relations need to be reinvented in order to grasp the full potential of an integrated and sustainable development. Furthermore, the cities and regions of Africa are also the places to redefine decentralised democracy through empowered local government systems, as recently highlighted in the Durban Political Declaration of the UCLG 2019 Congress.

Africa's Urbanisation Dynamics 2020: Africapolis, Mapping a New Urban Geography

Produced by the Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC/OECD), the report *Africa's Urbanisation Dynamics 2020: Africapolis, Mapping a New Urban Geography* highlights the diverse and multifaceted nature of Africa's contemporary urban transition – a diversity which is rarely captured in existing analyses and narratives. This is explained in part because urbanisation is developing beyond the capacity of statistical measurements that are based upon administrative divisions and therefore only reflect a partial understanding of urban phenomena. The publication, based on the Africapolis geospatial database, highlights singular Africa's urban realities.



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Africa is already urban

More than 50% of Africans already live in one of the continent's 7 617 urban agglomerations. In the coming decades existing cities will continue to grow and many new ones will emerge. Strategic agendas need to refocus on the opportunities and challenges that cities and urbanisation offer.

Africa's urbanisation is unique and diverse

The multifaceted nature of Africa's contemporary urban transition gives rise to new dynamics, new urban forms and new scales of urban development. The processes behind Africa's urbanisation are different from past experiences in other part of the world. Population growth, rural transformations and mobility drive its urban transition. Understanding this diversity is key to designing better policies.

Intermediary cities connect and structure urban networks

210 million Africans live in one of the continent's 1 400 intermediary cities. Intermediary cities and small towns are vital in structuring the urban network and connecting the local and regional to the continental and global levels. There is an urgent need for socio-economic and financial policies to reflect the growing importance of intermediary cities in programming and planning decisions.

New urban forms blur the lines between rural and urban

Between 2000 and 2015, 2 500 new urban agglomerations emerged in Africa, revealing the existence of hundreds of urban agglomerations that are not recorded in official statistics. These agglomerations are rooted in rural transformations and gives rise to new and unique urban forms increasingly blurring the lines between rural and urban. Pragmatic and inclusive approaches need to integrate this reality by designing policies beyond artificial politico-administrative boundaries.

Africa's urban future is to be shaped together

Africa's urban transition offers tremendous opportunities to experiment and develop new social, economic, environmental and political development models. Generating the relevant data and evidence, and designing the inclusive, sustainable and productive cities of the future will require the engagement of a diversity of stakeholders at local, national, regional and continental levels.

The pace and scale of Africa's urban transition makes the nexus between urbanisation and sustainable development of paramount importance. A better understanding of the emerging urban geography and its impacts, made possible thanks to tools and analyses such as *Africa's Urbanisation Dynamics 2020: Africapolis, Mapping a New Urban Geography*, is key to rethinking policies at all levels for an integrated, prosperous and peaceful continent. This turning point is a unique opportunity for Africa to reconnect its populations to its territories and its ecosystems; calling upon a "re-territorialisation" of public policies.