Trends and Patterns of Urbanization Process in Kenya

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Presentation outline

- An overview of pre-colonial urbanization
- An overview of colonial urbanization and its impact on the urban landscape
- An overview of post-colonial urbanization
- Trends of urban growth, 1948-2009
- Sources and factors of urban growth
- Economic sectors that stimulate urban growth
Pre-colonial urbanization

- Urbanization in Kenya is largely a 20th century phenomena & a product of the British colonization
- Urbanization in Kenya has a long history in the coastal region than in the interior parts of the country – at least until the colonial period
- Town structures may not have existed but spatial organization certainly did (= invisible towns or periodic markets)
- Pre-colonial urbanization developed in the coastal zone as a result of triangular trade between EA, India & Arabia
Colonial urbanization

- Spatial organization of urban centres developed during the colonial period
- Many contemporary towns and cities were established during this period
- A clearer pattern of urban centres emerged due to:
  - The establishment of administrative centres
  - The construction of Kenya-Uganda Railway & road networks
  - Large scale European commercial farming (white highlands)
  - Caravaan towns & missionary centres
  - Asian community (*dukawalas*)
Colonial urbanization shaped the urban landscape in Kenya in a number of ways…

- The network of colonial administrative centres, caravaan towns & mission stations laid the foundation for the present urban hierarchy in Kenya
- Unbalanced urban development, polarization & regional variation
- Non-permanent migration to urban centres
- Spatial segregation of the urban centres, city planning & regulations
- Urban primacy
Post-colonial urbanization

Post-colonial urbanization can be divided into the national (1963-80) and global (after 1980) phases

National phase = urbanization was largely influenced by the national policies and characterized by

– High rates of urban growth (rural-urban migration)
– Promotion of growth centres

Global phase = urbanization being influenced and shaped by global forces

– Impact of globalization/global forces is well documented
### Trends of urban growth (1948-2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Kenya (‘000s)</th>
<th>Urban (‘000)*</th>
<th>% urban</th>
<th>Urban growth rate (%)</th>
<th>No of urban centres</th>
<th>Nairobi (‘000s)</th>
<th>Nairobi growth rate (%)</th>
<th>Nairobi % of total urban</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>5,406</td>
<td>285</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>119</td>
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<td>1962</td>
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<td>91</td>
<td>827</td>
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<td>1999</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>38,610</td>
<td>12,487</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>-**</td>
<td>-**</td>
<td>3,138</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>25.1</td>
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</table>

- Urban population is increasing
- High growth rates after independence but declining from 1989
- Dominance of Nairobi (% urban) but declined in 2009
- Nairobi’s growth rate remarkably constant over the years
- Emerging importance of small and medium-size urban centres
- However, there exists regional variation in urbanization levels, trends & patterns
Sources and factors of urban growth

**Sources of urban growth**

- Rural-to-urban migration
- Urban natural increase
- Expansion in urban boundaries
- Daily commuters
- Refugees from neighbouring countries

**Factors of urban growth**

- “Push” and “pull” factors
- Good transport network
- Strong economic base
- Rich hinterland
Economic sectors that stimulate urban growth

Basically employment opportunity-based economic sectors:

- Service sector (trading and market centres, provision of governmental services)
- Informal sector (*jua kali* activities, casual employment)
- Agriculture
  - Agro-based industries (Athi River, Thika, Mumias)
  - Horticulture industries (Naivasha)
- Tourism (coast and other tourist areas)
- Fishing (Turkana, Homa-Bay)
- Mining (Migori, Magadi)
- Manufacturing (industrial towns)
Challenges of the high rates of urban growth

- The high rate of urbanization has been added to the long list of socio-economic and spatial development challenges.
- Urban population is growing very fast while the economic growth and development transformations necessary to support it and enhance quality of life are not occurring at the same rate.
- Urbanization is not driven by economic growth.
- Increase in urban poverty and informality.