

beMUN 2022 Online

COMMITTEE: African Union

TOPIC: Africa's urbanization in rising cities by 2050

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE: English

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There are several challenges that Africa must face in order to achieve many goals. One of them is improving African lives as the population's growth and development continue increasing within a couple of decades.

With a steadily growing population heading towards 2bn, Africa's 1.1bn workforce will be the world's largest by 2040. Equally, with a collective GDP of \$2.6 trillion by 2020 and \$1.4 trillion of consumer spending, many see the impact of around 500m new middle class consumers.

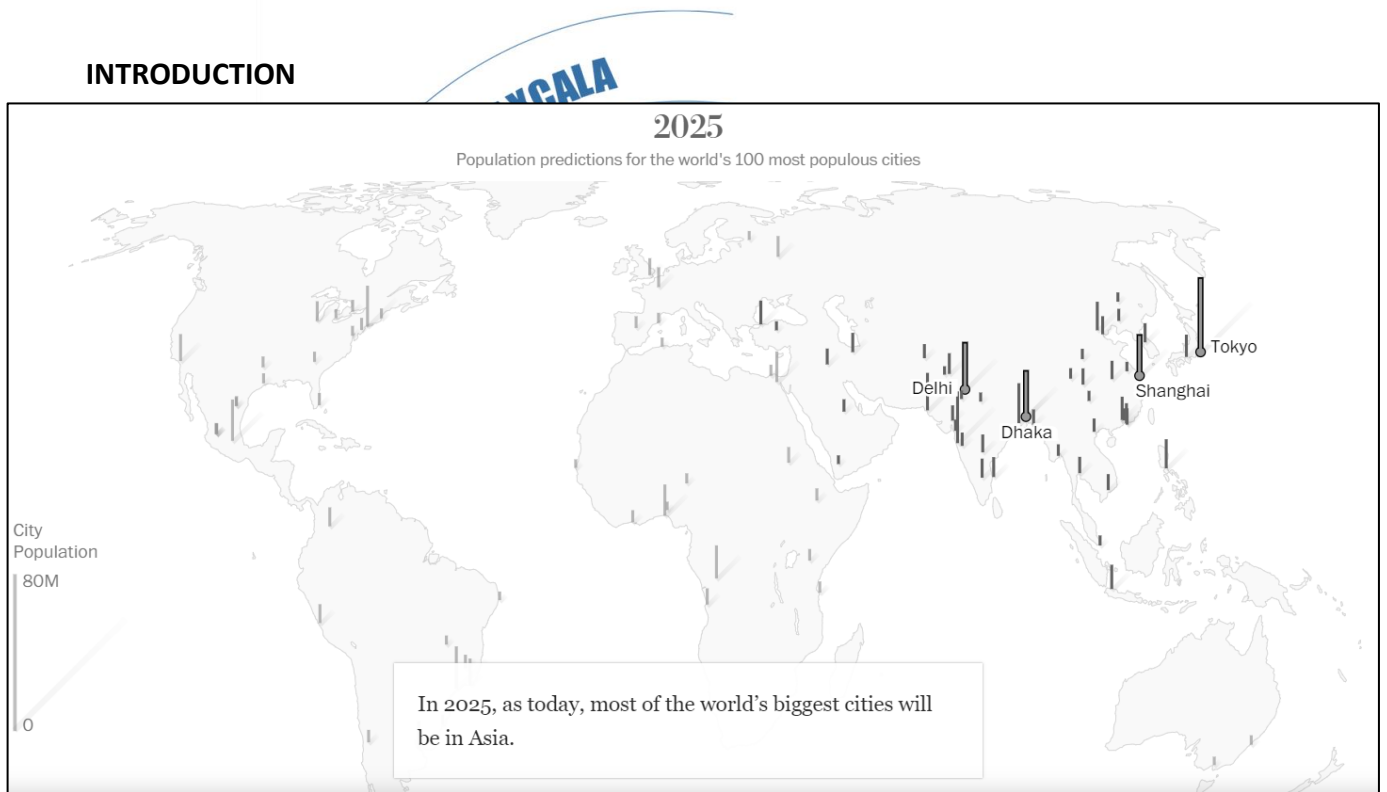
Planning and anticipation must become central for new cities. Not only for decent living but also thinking in sustainable and organized ways to create the streets and buildings without damaging or affecting the existing ones.

In a bid to diversify away from resources, several nations have been pushing hard to grow other sectors of the economy. To date, manufacturing, services and tourism in

particular have all shown growth. For years, Africa's growth has been shaped by commodity prices – the continent has a third of the planet's mineral resources, 10% of the world's oil reserves and produces nearly 70% of the global diamond trade.

Growing at unprecedented rates, and shaped by forces both familiar and new, dozens of African cities will join the ranks of humanity's biggest megalopolises between now and 2050.

INTRODUCTION



As seen in the image above, many of the most populated cities by 2050 will be in Asia like Delhi (India), Dhaka (Bangladesh), Shanghai (China) and Tokyo (Japan) according to recent

studies but if we look more into the future, by 2100 the population's growth will be in Africa and so it will be the most urbanized area of the planet.



Several recent studies project that by the end of this century, Africa will be the only continent experiencing population growth. Thirteen of the world's 20 biggest urban areas will be in Africa — up from just two today — as will more than a third of the world's population.

Researchers created three population models to account for different paths of development African countries might take this century, and in all of them, African cities outpaced the rest of the world's cities in growth.

They found that changes in government policies, education levels, access to contraception, movements for women's equality and the severity of climate change had significant effects

on the birthrates driving population growth, but not enough to keep most major African cities from growing faster than cities on other continents.

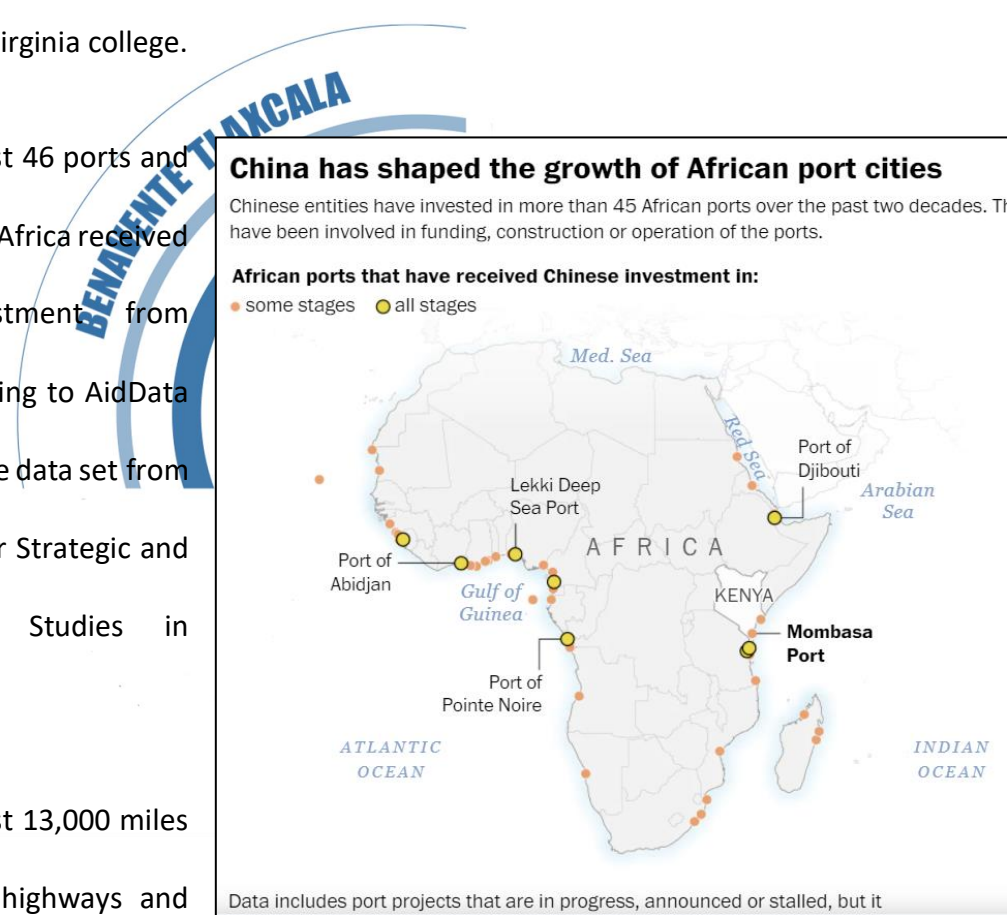
CURRENT SITUATION

Chinese institutions invested more than \$200 billion in the transportation and power sectors across Africa between 2000 and 2017, according to the AidData initiative at William & Mary, the Virginia college.

At least 46 ports and 34 airports in Africa received direct investment from China, according to AidData and a separate data set from the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

At least 13,000 miles of railroads, highways and

bridges have been built or renovated with investments from two Chinese state-owned banks, according to a third data set, from Boston University's China's Overseas Development Finance Database.



China's growing role in shaping African cities is driven by unfulfilled local needs for trade and transport infrastructure. But expansion also serves China's need to export labor and goods, and its desire to gain diplomatic clout in dozens of nations.

The shifting dynamics have been a source of concern in Western capitals, which have seen their cachet on the continent decline. And the changes have spawned warnings from those same capitals to African governments that they are being tricked into debt traps that leave strategic resources and infrastructure vulnerable to Chinese takeover.

That view has been increasingly discounted by scholars, in part because Chinese lenders have not requisitioned any major infrastructure projects even as debts continue to mount. Chinese loans to Africa also have declined after a high in 2013, the year China launched its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative to link its markets with the rest of the world.

China's current influence in Africa, however, is difficult to scrutinize. In the post-2013 Belt and Road era, nearly all Chinese loan contracts have included extensive confidentiality clauses that prevent citizens of both China and the African countries receiving the loans from being able to investigate the terms on which their governments are interacting.

The loans create work for Chinese firms and employment for Chinese managers; the debts keep African governments invested in having close ties with Beijing. They don't need to get literal returns on investment to win.

Competition was low in Africa, but the population was growing and urbanizing at a quick pace — and Chinese leaders have always taken demography seriously. They knew that the same kind of material they needed for their own urbanization — tin sheeting, tiles, cement, household electronics — would find ready markets in Africa. And they could create brand loyalty in places where people were still buying their first cars and mobile phones. “China has given the money and said, ‘We want to help you integrate into the global economy, of which we are now at the forefront’”.

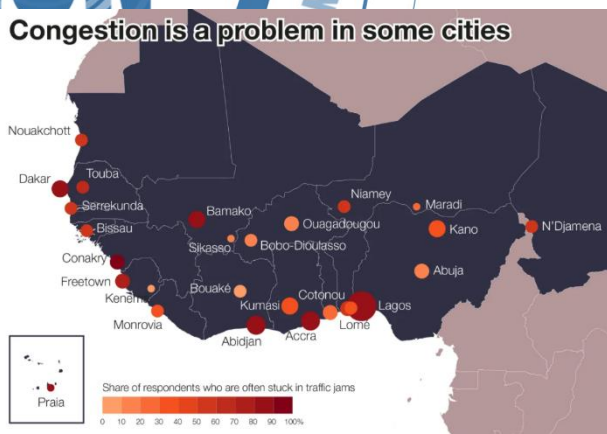
KEY POINTS

- While the number of migrants moving from West Africa to Europe is minuscule compared with migration within the continent, Europe has nevertheless reorganized its historic relationship with the region around limiting the number of Africans who can reach its shores.

In doing so, Europe has restricted the flow to exceptionally strong-willed migrants for whom the lure of Europe is hard to shake.

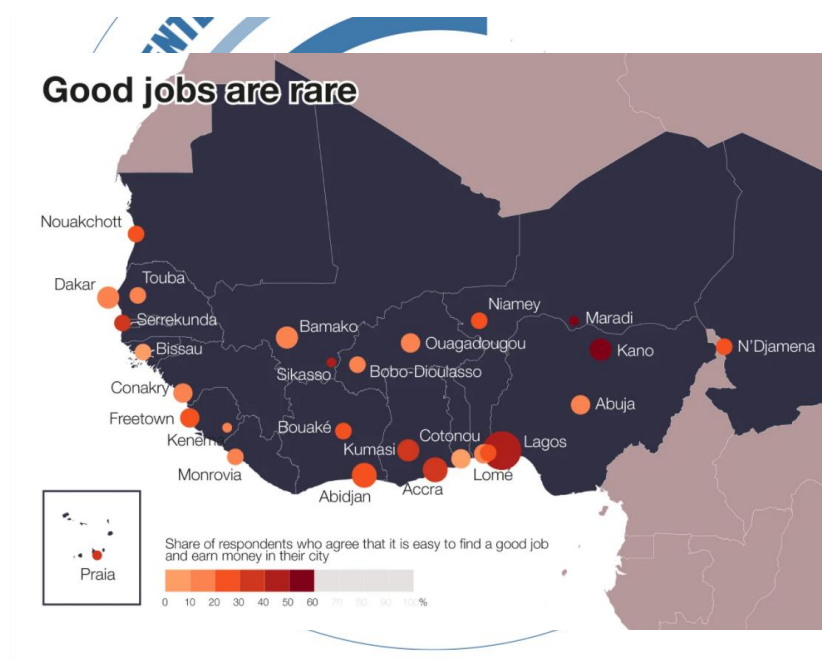
- However, there are important differences across cities. For example, 78% of respondents in Accra (Ghana) and Dakar (Senegal) agree that it is difficult to find good housing that is affordable, while only 19% and 25% do so in Kano (Nigeria) and Kumasi (Ghana), respectively. Likewise, 93% of respondents in Conakry (Guinea) and 86% respondents in Abidjan

Congestion is a problem in some cities



(Côte d'Ivoire) agree that they are often stuck in traffic jams, while only 3% in Bouaké (Côte d'Ivoire) and 7% in Touba (Senegal) agree with the same statement.

- One important factor explaining these differences is city size. Generally, young West Africans in larger cities are more likely to agree that downsides exist in their city than respondents in smaller cities. Yet, even when city size is taken into account, important differences across cities exist. For example, Abuja performs better than most cities with respect to the abovementioned downsides of urban life even though it is larger than the average city that we surveyed.



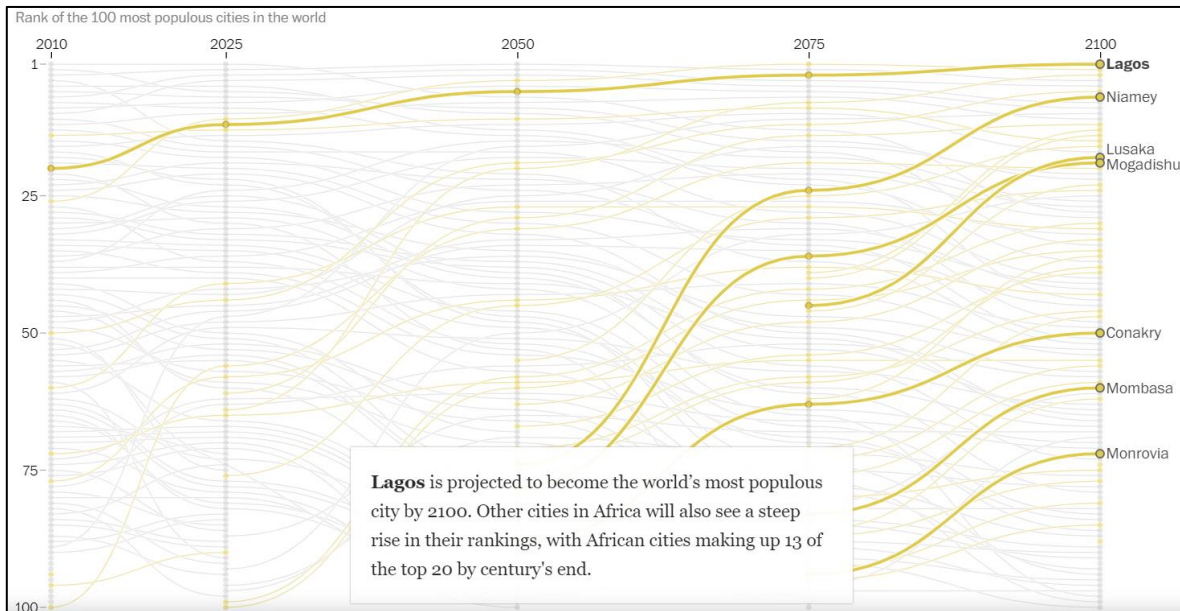
- The result does not imply that West African cities do not create jobs. To the contrary, job opportunities are likely an important factor in the attractiveness of cities contributing to their strong growth. Yet, the pace of job creation in cities is exceeded by an even faster population growth, highlighting the challenge that policy makers face to create sufficient jobs. Moreover, the quality of available jobs might not always correspond to the expectations of respondents.

COUNTRIES INVOLVED

In each of the following five African cities, we examine common themes — migration, inequality, foreign investment, conflict and planning — that underlie this transformation across the continent.

These cities — such as Goma, in war-torn eastern Congo, or Bangui, the capital of the deeply impoverished Central African Republic — tend to be as big as their countries' problems are deep. Growth spikes as crises flare; some cities, including Mogadishu, Somalia, are seeing the latest of successive waves of arrivals, while others, such as Pemba in northern Mozambique, where the government recently lost control to an insurgency, are suddenly adapting to the addition of hundreds of thousands of the displaced, seeking safety in numbers on the cities' peripheries.

- **LAGOS, NIGERIA:** Set to become the world's most populous city, Lagos faces all the challenges rapid growth poses, which can be boiled down to one: planning. Can solutions outpace the weight tens of millions of new inhabitants will place on a city that is low-slung and dense, situated on polluted lagoons and rivers, and short on public services?



The traffic is a manifestation of what Lagosians fear most for their city: There is no plan. Lagos will balloon to 30 million, then 50 million, maybe even 100 million people, and meanwhile the government will keep unveiling new visions for the city that never come to fruition. Many doubt even its simplest promises, such as the impending inauguration of a single subway line that was supposed to open a decade ago.

Lagos is already enormous, but no one is sure how many people live there. City officials say there are at least 20 million residents; the United Nations puts the number at a more modest 15 million — still nearly double New York City's population.

Every new Lagosian has their own reason for coming here: fleeing poverty, fleeing conflict, fleeing family burdens, perhaps. The birthrate in Nigeria — one of the world's highest — means the city also grows rapidly on its own.



- **KHARTOUM, SUDAN:** Unstable states like Sudan crumble first in their hinterlands, and in those moments of crisis, cities are beacons of safety, places for people to regroup, build new identities and forge political movements — even revolutions — that aim to bring peace back to places they had to abandon.

Millions of Sudanese have fled their homes in rural areas over the past two decades. In 2011, one of many wars ended with the secession of South Sudan. Khartoum, which remained Sudan's capital, and Juba, capital of the newly created South Sudan, both became magnets for the displaced.

Land disputes between Arabic-speaking nomadic and non-Arab agrarian tribes stretch back decades in Darfur. In 2003, wider conflict erupted and Sudan's government backed the nomadic groups in a campaign of ethnic cleansing. The conflict still simmers and causes mass displacement to this day.

Broadly, the United Nations estimates that a quarter of Khartoum's population is or was displaced by conflict alone — around 1.5 million people — but researchers say that number excludes a huge group that never passed through displacement camps and was never classified as displaced. The real proportion, they say, is well above half of the city's population of 6 million.

Around 40 percent of the world’s internally displaced people are in Africa, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center’s most recent report, and that number is growing. In 2020, nearly 9 million people became newly displaced on the continent. As with the population estimates, these figures are thought to be a significant undercount.



“What we have is a problem of scale. We’re not thinking big, we’re not thinking about how to assimilate so many people. We have, like, one park for a million people. Or one main road for a million people. It feels like we are planning based on a zoomed-out map. The city can’t keep up with the population, so instead, everything deteriorates, and that also drives prices up because everything is more expensive to produce and deliver,” Abdullah Adin, architect for projects in Khartoum said.

- **KINSHASA, CONGO:** Like many port cities, Mombasa is infused with distant cultures. From its centuries-old core, its expansion has been spurred by sultanates, seafaring mercantilists and great world powers, which all saw economic opportunity in its protected inlets.
- **MOMBASA, KENYA:** Their relationship with African governments remains an unequal one, and in some cases, the outcomes resemble Africa’s years emerging from the colonial era. Opaque loans and closer ties with Beijing have strengthened-

African governments that have little regard for democracy, human rights or economic equality.

Now, instead of states wielding power through force, it is corporations, banks and the world's largest lending institutions wielding loans laden with confidentiality clauses. The boom has left the country billions of dollars in debt but also with some of the tools it might need to get itself out.

- **ABIDJAN, IVORY COAST:** Despite fearmongering that Africa's growing population will flood into wealthier parts of the world, cosmopolitan cities like this one draw most of Africa's migrants and serve as models of tolerance, welcoming immigration policies and a reinvigorated Pan-African identity.

Data from the United Nations' migration agency offers a clear rebuttal to the misconception that this century's projected population growth will inevitably lead to a flood of Africans leaving the continent.

- The majority of African migrants, both rich and poor, do not cross oceans, but rather land borders within Africa.
- 94% of African migration across oceans takes a regular, legal form.
- At least 80% of Africans contemplating migration say they have no interest in leaving the continent.

West Africa is one of the most integrated regions of the world. That's partly a holdover from France's colonial domination of the region, which left behind a lingua franca and a common currency still backed by French reserves.

"There are levels of irony here. Europe has integrated into a union, and yet they pay us to isolate ourselves," said Issiaka Konate, a senior official in Ivory Coast's ministry that promotes regional integration. "By doing so, they create an opportunity for criminal networks to operate in human trafficking, which has led to a profusion of armed groups and instability. Migration is not the political lightning rod in West Africa that it is in Europe. We welcome it."



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