

Urban Expansion Processes of Kampala in Uganda: Perspectives on contrasts with cities of developed countries

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As noted by Charles Redman and Nancy Jones in the background paper, rapid urbanization brings opportunities to new urban developments. But urbanization also comes with serious loss of arable land, degradation of ecosystems as well as social and environmental changes to the urban populations. The current urbanization process in developing countries is indicative of a process that needs considerable attention not only as a basis for transformation of societies in the developing countries but also for sustainable development. As cities grow and expand it is expected that economic growth and development will progress and act as a driver for social transformation and improvement of not only in urban areas but the greater rural hinterland served by the urbanized region. Experiences in developing countries show a disjuncture between urbanization and the envisaged socio-economic transformation. Increased and persistent urban poverty, environmental sanitation issues, urban food issues, housing, transportation and pollution problems are prevalent in cities of developing countries with the most vulnerable being areas of recent urban expansion and settlements of the urban poor.

In this paper, I put some thoughts to the many features and characteristics of urban expansion in developing countries focusing on the local processes underlying urbanization in Kampala. I also endeavor to highlight how such features differ from or are congruent with the experiences in developed countries. As challenged by Redman and Jones, I present some findings on several urban thematic areas on which we have undertaken research in Kampala with the intent to stimulate further thoughts and debate during the cyberseminar. Experiences brought forth by the paper are intended to provide a perspective of urban expansion processes from developing countries and act as an impetus for discussion about contrasting processes with developed countries. The paper is structured to initially give a brief on driving forces of urbanization in Kampala, followed by processes of expansion in Kampala similar to developed countries before summarizing the main contrasting features of urban expansion in Kampala. A concluding remark with some pointers to the urban research agenda are also given.

Background

Urbanization in Uganda is currently estimated at 12% of the population which proportion considers only the major urban areas in the country among which is Kampala city, which is expanding faster than any other urban area in the country. From a small *Kibuga* (Buganda Kingdom headquarters) and a township established for administrative purposes, the city has expanded from 170 acres gazetted in 1902, 3200 acres by 1929 and 195 sq km by 1968 (Norstrand, Development et al. 1994). The expansion has been mainly through annexing adjacent townships and rural areas to the *kibuga* and Kampala Township. As the city boundaries were extended the population in Kampala also increased from 2,850 in 1912, 24,100 in 1948 to 458,503 by 1980, 774,241 in 1991 and 1,208,544 in 2002 at average annual growth rates ranging between 3.14% to 5.61% (UBOS 2002). Spreading over an area of up to 839 sq km the

Metropolitan Kampala has expanded engulfing the urban centers around the city and continuously converting the rural landscape (Nyakaana, Sengendo et al. 2004) into urban uses.

Although there are some similar expansion processes of Kampala to those of developed countries, the processes in Kampala are largely dissimilar due to the nature of and the product of the expansion. Whereas urban expansion in developed countries is driven by private development interests, globalization, deregulation and a tax system forcing municipalities into competition against each other for tax-paying residents and businesses (Wegener 2001) - urban expansion of Kampala, is driven by demographic shifts in the form of rural-urban migration that has led to creation of unplanned settlements within the city and at its periphery (Wegener 2001; Lwasa 2002). The expansion processes of Kampala have created an imprint of unplanned settlements with inadequate services and infrastructure as well as environmental sanitation problems. The next section of the paper provides a brief on the driving forces of urbanization in Kampala after which a summary of the contrasting processes of urbanization in Kampala are presented for further discussion during the seminar.

Driving forces of Kampala's urbanization

Several drivers of urbanization are responsible for the fast growth of the city which are summarized in this section. In the first instance *population dynamics* manifested in urban population growth and rural to urban migration are by far the most significant driving forces of urban expansion of Kampala. Through natural increase (due to high fertility rate 7.1 decline in mortality, internal migration and international migration(Nyakaana, Sengendo et al. 2004) the population of Kampala has steadily grown in the last three decades faster than the pace at which urban services and housing are provided. Secondly policies for the economic transformation of Uganda which have mainly been pursued from and around the city through industrialization are also responsible for the urban expansion of Kampala. As a primate city, Kampala has continued to absorb 40% of the total country's' urban population. This is because the city acts as the major industrial and commercial center in the country.

But the unique feature of urbanization due to economic transformations is the informal sector proliferation which is dissimilar from developed countries and significant in employment generation within the city. Although the informal sector is considered an expression of the need and provider for employment in Kampala, it has also come with serious environmental and health implications in Kampala since many of the activities occur in residential neighborhoods. Associated with economic transformations are the market forces of *consumption* derived from the population. *Market forces* are influencing urbanization of the city in two distinctive ways. First the consumption by the urban population for products produced both within the city and in the country. In this respect the high consumption of Kampala's population is further driving the expansion of the city through establishment of numerous industrial establishments, commercial centers and general urban developments within the city (Lwasa and Nyakaana 2004). Secondly through exchange of land for development in the city, which has intensified recently leading to commodification of land and informalization of the land acquisition processes.

The consequence of informalization and comodification has been the conversion of environmentally sensitive land to urban uses with serious social and health consequences mainly at the fringes of the city. Due to these factors, the expansion in Kampala is steadily advancing at

fast pace leading to engulfing of adjacent rural landscape and urban centers. In the next section of the paper I present some thoughts on the similarities between the urban expansion processes of Kampala and experiences in developed countries after which a summary of the contrasting features with the developed countries is presented.

Congruence of Urban Expansion Processes of Kampala with developed countries

Urbanization in developed and developing countries though often distinguished does have similarities. First globalization, market forces and regulation of cities is not peculiar to developed countries as drivers for urbanization but are also evident in developing countries. Thus we are increasingly experiencing developments driven by private interests and competition between municipalities as they attract investments by targeting similar private entities to bring urban developments in their own areas(Ingram 1998). Secondly the primary driver for urbanization is population increase and though differences exist between population increase in developed and developing countries, in both cases densities in urban areas are increasing. A summary of some of the similar features of urbanization is given below;

- dispersal processes from the centre to the periphery of both population and employment, with the largest metropolitan areas converging to decentralized and multiple sub-centered areas, (in Kampala, office space and institutional use are shifting to hitherto residential areas and at the periphery of the city);
- highly decentralized manufacturing, employment and emerging specialization of the central business district in service employment;
- increased reliance on road-based transport for both passengers and freight (some industrial countries have experienced decreases in public transit usage as automobile ownership rises; in Kampala we have higher transit-ridership levels and a mix of options in terms of vehicle and levels of services)
- land-markets are strong determinants of this outward movement, land rents being closely related to development densities; (in Kampala the intensification of land markets has recently influenced the rapid expansion of the city to the periphery)
- urban housing demand patterns are similar across cities in industrial and developing countries, but the supply side varies, as does the efficiency of the public infrastructures provision (Ingram 1998).

Thus the above issues give us insight into some of the similarities between developing and developed countries in urban expansion processes. It's interesting to note that the differences are along these above issues but occur mainly in terms of the nature and the outcome of such processes.

Contrasting Processes and Features

Providing Urban Services and Infrastructure

In Kampala services and infrastructure including water supply, transportation, energy, health services, education services and recreation are inadequately provided and poorly planned in the city. This is true especially in unplanned neighborhoods and responsible for the increasing environmental and health problems in the settlements of the urban poor where individual ingenuity has shown that the problems of no paved roads, water supply, drainage and solid waste management seems far from being addressed(Lwasa 1999). There is a mixture of providers and actors in providing urban services including 'self' provisioning, private institutions while public provision is going down. The subsequent deterioration of the urban environment is manifest in problems of flooding; un collected garbage, poor housing due to flooding, health problems of the people and reduced economic productivity of households as well as loss of community amenities.

Urban land markets and peri-urban developments

Another peculiar process of urban expansion involves the Peri-urban developments that are becoming significant features of the urban expansion processes in Kampala. With the different interpretations notwithstanding, peri-urban areas of Kampala have undergone environmental and social changes caused by the extension and urban uses in hitherto rural landscapes. In Kampala these areas have characteristics of spontaneous developments, reliance on largely 'rural based' livelihoods, activated land markets that are converting environmentally sensitive areas to urban uses as well as emergence of social safety nets that connect peri-urban people with both people in rural areas and the core urban areas. Through land speculation, land markets have significantly contributed to the environmental and social changes in Kampala. For example the environmental costs of land speculation especially in peri-urban areas of Kampala are far reaching(Lwasa 2004). Rather than develop existing vacant land within the city land developers have found it more profitable and perhaps convenient to develop vacant land along transport arteries at the periphery, often by converting agricultural land or land earmarked as environmental. This type of development has in the end put greater pressure on natural resources, particularly wetlands and forests that line the boundaries of the administrative Kampala(Nyakaana, Sengendo et al. 2004). It has also increased the costs of waste disposal since settlements have developed expanding towards the current landfill. Because of greater commuting distances and lack of an adequate transport infrastructure has also increased air pollution(Matagi 2001).

Urban-rural linkages and social networks

This feature gives an explanation of the social implications of urban expansion on the persistence of 'urbanized poverty' in peri-urban areas of Kampala. By maintaining rural linkages, peri-urban people persistently reproduce rural life which is 'urbanized'. Examples of urbanized rural life is manifest in the nature of urban farming and other natural resource based forms of livelihood such as brick making and quarry mining. The consequence, has been increased vulnerability to shocks that emanate from urban life driven forces such as inflation, limited jobs due to retrenchment and public policy for housing(Lwasa 2002). To provide mechanisms of absorbing the shocks of urban life, sets of linkages between individuals and families have emerged in form of social networks. These social networks have become significant for the urban people in the quest to improve their livelihoods. This issue in my opinion deserves greater analysis and critical examination for our understanding of social conditions of the population in peri-urban areas.

Environmental consequences of urban expansion

The expansion of Kampala is occurring at the expense of the environment in and around the city. The city is surrounded by a ribbon of wide green valleys with swamps and low land forests extending into the rural hinterland of the city. However the green environment with associated natural resource components is under threat from the fast expanding city. Threat for the environment is manifest in destruction of vital environmental components such as wetlands, forests, water resources and the natural landscape of Kampala(NEMA 2000). Proliferation of informal settlements has taken a toll on the wetlands and low land forests in and around the city. For example an analysis of land use land cover change in Kampala reveals that agriculture decreased from 62% to 45% of total land area mainly to housing and industrial establishments. Low land forests also changed from 7.6% to 0.4% of the total land area. This change implies loss of swamp forests to land uses including industrial and residential developments(Nyakaana, Sengendo et al. 2004). Similarly swamps which are mainly covered by papyrus also reduced over the period of 11 years from 20.6% to 1.9% occupancy of the land area. Change rates indicate that industrial land use and built up cover changed at annual estimates of 8.9% and 15.7% respectively. This speed of change shows the environmental degradation driven by urban expansion which raises concerns for the environmental conservation and restoration.

Urban Expansion and health

The relationship between urban environmental conditions and health is well established(Leo 1999; Lwasa 1999; NEMA 2002). Infectious diseases especially water-related and air-borne are prevalent in many of the neighborhoods of Kampala while outbreaks of cholera have been recorded in 1997 and reoccurring in 1999. The health conditions of the city are attributed to the sanitation conditions, waste management and prevalence of pollutants in ambient air of the city due to high energy consumption and existence of a dense network of dusty roads. A study carried out in one of the unplanned high-density settlements, stagnant pools of water create conditions of breeding of mosquitoes and flooding which are responsible for transmission of vectors and pathogens. Over 50% of household occupants in Kampala are hospitalized in every three months due to malaria while contamination of water by prevalence of micro-organisms is evident in the water sources of the city.(Matagi 2001; NEMA 2002) Experiences in Kampala further indicate that health is an indicator of the environment in which people live and associated with a poor living environment is high expenditure on health and reduction in economic productivity of the urban population due to ill-health. Both of these issues are very significant since labor days lost due to poor health have serious implications on persistence of urban poverty. For social sustainability of Kampala, it is important that urban health is attended to.

Urban Planning and Development

Having summarized the major contrasting processes of Kampala's expansion, I would like to raise the issue of planning more so urban planning since I have found it crucial as an intervening factor to the development and expansion of the city. Urban planning in Kampala is one of the many factors responsible for the contrasting processes of urban expansion in Kampala. Although spatial planning exists, experience shows very limited account of such planning and planning

outputs on the ground. Implementation of spatial plans has largely failed due to institutional weaknesses, financial constraints, political interference and lack of appreciation of planning by society. What is under practice is piece-meal planning that is not necessarily guided by a comprehensive development plan for Kampala. The uncontrolled developments, inadequate services and infrastructure are partly explained by failure to implement the development plan for Kampala although some environmental concerns such as conversion of wetlands are rooted in the previous spatial plans which allocated wetlands to industrial use. But the recent intensification of the urban land market especially in the peri-urban areas of Kampala has also had far reaching implications on social changes, environment and sustainable development of the city. As noted by Charles Redman and Nancy Jones in the background paper, the urban expansion process in Kampala presents opportunities and challenges to the sustainable development of the city. But I consider the challenge of ensuring guided developments and making livable neighborhoods in Kampala more daunting. I would like to note that its also important during this seminar to exchange ideas on how governance issues, development planning and institutional arrangements can be transformed to improve the environmental, health and well-being of the urban areas especially medium sized urban centers such Kampala that are growing and expanding very fast.

Conclusion

Kampala's experiences provide evidence that medium sized cities are growing and expanding faster than probably mega cities and the conditions so created by the fast paced change have had consequences in terms of poor environment, ill-health and social distress. Development is occurring well ahead of planning resulting in settlements that have inadequate services and infrastructure. The fast paced developments have also in turn made it difficult to implement the spatial plans that would otherwise guide the expansion of the city. The nature of Kampala's expansion raises concern on the sustainability of urban development due to the socio –economic and environmental problems created by its nature. Unplanned settlements with characteristics of poor and inadequate infrastructure, social services and haphazard development are evident within and at the fringes of Kampala and have led to persistence poverty and suffering to a sizeable proportion of Kampala's population. Similarly the environment has not been spared through the spatial developments with Valued Environmental components of wetlands, water resources, forests degraded by the uncontrolled developments.

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