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To What Extent Are Cities Influenced by Rural Urban Relationships in Africa

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ABSTRACT

If rural-urban relationship is treated as an open and unregulated process, cities serve as a sink for rural population, meaning that higher proportions of rural people migrate from rural areas to stay permanently in the cities. This process, which is commonly referred to as rural urban migration can be more evident if the urban system is maintained as an open system. This holds key to interpreting how cities attract and retain their populations, a process that is critical to understand the causes of deterioration of most cities in developing countries that still draw much of their population inputs from rural areas, as it is the case with Africa. Deducing from South African experience, if policies that regulate movement of people between rural areas and cities are politically inclined they tend to give a particular character to the evolution and development of cities. This has been found to be true for two sets of policies implemented in South Africa. Ones that were implemented during Apartheid, while they encouraged the migration of unskilled laborers from rural to urban areas, failed to promote settlement and adaptation of African communities in the cities and this led to an upsurge of informal settlements around many cities of South Africa. One that have been implemented since the advent of Democracy, due to their relaxed nature have led to an influx of people of African descent into the city centers and the effect of this has been the deterioration of these areas. With these findings this study cautions that urban system needs to be treated as open, that is, be allowed to regulate itself through economic success and failures of people who aspire to live in urban areas by choosing to settle in the cities.

KEYWORDS

Urban Dynamics; Urban Settlement; City Centers; Rural-Urban Relationship

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