Cairo Univ. Afr. Stud. Rev. 9 (9-19 1980)

SOME PROBLEMS OF POPULATION REDISTRIBUTION IN AFRICA

JOHN I. CLARKE

(Department of Geography, University of Durham, U.K.)

1. Africa exhibits unusual characteristics of population redistribution which reflect a wide variety of historical, social, economic and political influences. Moreover, these influences vary spatially within the continent, so that it is unwise to generalize without being aware of the scale-linkage problems in explanation. For Africa experiences marked spatial unevenness and heterogeneity of human geography - - much more than of physical geography - and they contribute considerably to the processes, patterns and problems of population redistribution. This paper is intended as a general background statement.

2. The patchy population distribution of Africa is attributable to many factors including (Clarke and Kosinski, 1982) :

a) the diverse environmental conditions affecting the continent, from arid deserts to humid swamps and clay plains to high mountains ;

b) the immense profusion of ethnic groups, particularly in the zone of cultural fragmentation stretching across tropical Africa ;

c) their diverse traditional modes of life, involving pastoralism, hunting and gathering, peasant cultivation and combinations of crop and livestock agriculture ;

d) the long and unequal impact of alien peoples, coming as slavers, conquerors, colonists, commercial companies or international agencies ;

e) the localized development of modern agricultural, mining, industrial, commercial and tertiary activities which have tended to from "islands" (Hance, 1970) or cores of economic development, often

near the coasts. With modern transportation facilities, such cores are sometimes very externally-orientated, and concentrate foreign populations.

3. In short, Africa has long experienced spatial unevenness - physical, cultural, economic and demographic - with a great range of population pressures, which may bear little relationship to the range of poplulation densities. If operational indices of population-resource ratios were easily calculated, they would be extremely diverse, ranging from under-inhabited areas where insufficient people live to exploit the many resources to over-inhabited areas where critical densities have been exceeded, thus causing starvation, enforced agricultural modifications or out-migration. Moreover mobility is not new to the African continent, but modifies constantly with ever-changing conditions. Spatial unevenness has intensified since mid-century with the polarization of Modern activities, as economic core areas generally experience above-average natural increase of population as well as attracting people from more peripheral areas.

4.. Polarization of modern activities takes a number of forms, with varying impacts upon population redistribution. Mining centres, often located in relatively isolated areas, have frequently been dominated by multinational corporations (Lanning and Mueller, 1979) whose company towns have often been furnished with the most modern of facilities and inhabited by expatriate managerial staff and preponderantly male African workforces. Many of the larger mining regions, like those of the Copperbelt, South Africa and Gabon, have recruited contract workers from very large catchment areas including many neighbouring countries, suchworkers being employed for specified periods and engaging in circular, periodic or even seasonal migration. Such shifting, unstable labour forces have often been only feebly unionized and have experienced housing conditions quite different from those employed in other modern activities.

5. Regions of modern agricultural development have different effects, and are more diverse in character. First, there are the large plantations or estates, often developed with foreign capital, which are devoted to the production of sugar, rubber, bananas, tea, coffee, palm oil, coconuts, olives, grapes, etc., attracting both male and female labour especially for harvesting. Some, like the Kericho tea eststes of Kenya,

attract migrant workers from other countries. Then there are those African commercial farming areas which involve less controlled population movements, but are nevertheless attractive to migrant labour. Frontiers of colonization where spontaneous agricultural resettlement occur are also common, as evidenced by Wood (1982) in Ethiopia. In addition, there are the many development projects and resettlement schemes, of which more later when we consider the role of policies with respect to population redistribution.

6. The most polarizing effect of all has been the growing concentration of people in towns and cities. Although (and also because) Africa is the most feebly urbanized of all the world's major regions, its urban poplation is increasing more rapidly than any other region, currently at about 5 per cent p.a. (U.N., q198) : 13)... Only the urban poplation of Western South Asia is presently growing at a comparable rate, but this rate is predicted to decline more quickly than that of Africa before the end of the century. In 1950, Africa's urban poplation numbered-about 32 million, less than 15 per cent of the total population, but by 1980 it was probably about 133 million or 29 per cent of the total,a little above the current estimate (25 per cent) for Sudan. If U.N. projections prove correct, by 2000 Africa may be faced with nearly 350 million urban dwellers, 42 per cent of the total population and more than ten times number at mid-century.

7. Much of the urban growth has been concentrated in the larger cities, many of which are capitals, ports or both. The number of cities with a quarter of a million inhabitants or more rose from 16 in 1950 to 74 in 1975 and their populations from 10 to 51 million, from 31 to 49 per cent of the total urban population (U,N., 1980 : 49) ; the number of cities with a million or more inhabitants increased from 3 to 12, and there could be 57 by the year 2000. The rapid growth of these larger cities partly reflects real growth but also it reflects the graduation of cities from smaller to larger size categories, as Africa has an unusually high ratio of population in small cities to that in larger ones (U.N., 1980: 53). It is largely explained by the concentration of new administrations, industries and commercial, educational, medical and many other facilities which contribute to increasing urban primacy (Gugler and Flanagan, 1978). This has burgeoned from small beginnings and has augmented

as rural-urban differentials have evolved in natural change and as rural-urban migration streams have swollen in persponse to the contrasting opportunities for jobs, higher incomes, education and amenities (Mortimore, 1982) and to the many difficulties and hazards, natural and human, which afflict the mainly poor rural people of this continent, whose agricultural productivity on the whole remains low and who frequently suffer from poverty and hunger. As yet, urban primacy has not attained the levels achieved in the more developed countries of Latin America and South East Asia, partly because growth been more recent, partly because transportation networks are so much more rudimentary and partly because urban systems have been greatly affected by the extreme political fragmentation of the continent, a factor of considerable importance with respect to population redistribution.

8. With only 11 per cent of the world's population, Africa about 56 countries, over 40 per cent of the world's total. While their poplation size varies from about 80 million in Nigeria to less than ½ million in Cape Verde, Comoros, Seychelles, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe, the median population of an African state is only8½ million, less than half of that of Sudan. Moreover, in terms of areal size sudan is at one extreme with about 1 million square miles whereas countries like Cape Verde, Djibouti, Gambia, Mauritius, Reunion and Swaziland have less 10,000 square miles. Obviously the population-area relationships of countries greatly influence population redistribution within the continent, and there are obvious contrasts between the macro and micro-states however defined, the latter generally experiencing a relatively higher level of external migration (e.g. Lesotho, Gambia, Djibouti). It is perhaps useful to think of the broad contrasts between the following 5 categories of countries :

a) major states with large areas and populations (e.g. Nigeria, Sudan, Egypt, Zaire, Ethiopia);

b) states with large areas and small populations (e.g. Mauritania, Libya, Chad, Botswana);

c) states with moderate areas and moderate populations (e.g. Cameroon, Ghana, Malagasy Republic, Zimbabwe);

d) small densely peopled states (e.g. Rwanda, Burundi, Malawi, Mauritius); and

e) small sparsely peopled states (e.g. Lesotho, Togo, Djibouti, Gabon). Such an arbitrary, classification merely assists in emphasizing the contrasts in spatial complexity of populaytion distribution and redistribution between macrostates like Nigeria and Sudan and micro-states like Swaziland and Burundi, as well as the need for different governm-ent policies towards them.

9. Associated with political fragmentation are the problems of the profusion of political neighbours - Sudan is not alone in having 8, as Zambia and Tanzania also have that number and Zaire has 10. - and the great length of political boundaries. In all they exceed 50,000 miles, internationalizing much migration that was formerly between parts of colonial empires , as for example the movements out of poorer countries like Upper Volta, Swaziland and Malawi and into richer countries like Ivory Coast, South Africa and Zambia. Those countries benefiting from mineral wealth, particularly oil-rich countries such as Libya and Nigeria, are most attractive to migrant workers from poorer countries, which sometimes become extremely dependent upon remittances, a notable case being Lesotho. Some African countries have been very anxious to stem or control these movements through the development of visa and passport regulations, customs controls, work permits and restrictions upon the movement of currency (E.C.A., 1981). Some, like Ghana, Zambia and Sierra Leone, have at one time or other expelled other Africans (Addo, 1982) in order to offer greater employment opportunities to their own national workforces. But border controls are not easy, and Africa now has millions of illegal migrants, a large proportion of them refugees who are increasingly numerous in many countries of tropical Africa. Some of which Like. Somalia are hardly capable of coping with them (Rogge, 1982). Indeed, it was estimated in 1981, perhaps excessively, that half of the refugees in the world are in Africa, where they tend to be mainly rural in origin and locate especially in frontier zones, and where they become a volatile and special problem.

10. Whether internal or international, population redistribution cannot be ignored by African governments, for they help to cause it, can influence it greatly and are certainly affected by it. Thetefore they are constrained to consider their attitudes towards it and how their policies, both direct and indirect, are likely to affect it. Generally, the U.N. inquiries among Governments on Population and Developm-ent have suggested that the great majority of Afrivcan governments

are dissatisfied with their population distribution and with their patterns of settlement, and although they are mostly prepared to tolerate levels of international migration this is not the case for internal migration (Clarke and kosinski, 1982), which they would like to decelerate or even reverse. Government perceptions, however, are a long way from government policies, and so far many African governmrents have been more concerned with the aggregate problems of social and economic development than their spatial implications upon population distribution. It is, of cours, extremely importantto integrate the population component into social and economic develpment plans, a need recognized by the Parliamentary Conference on Population and Development in Africa held in Nairobi in July 1981 (Population and Development Review, 1981). Whether intentional or not, government development policies inevitably affect population redistribution, though government intervention may have all sorts of unfortunate and unintended effects. Most African governments are well aware that their spatial distributions of population and resources are not well matched, and that regional inequalities have to be ironed out, but most have more influence upon population through implicit (or indirect) policies than through explicit (or direct) ones.

11. What sorts of policies affecting population redistribution have been employed in Africa ? Following the arbitrary classification used in the U.N. volume *Population Distribution Policies in Development Planning* (1981), we may differentiate between the urban-orientated policies and the rural-orientated policies. Amongst the former, one may distinguish several types (but the examples given must not be taken to imply the general or persistent policy of a country) :

a) accommodation of urban growth, through improving slums and squatter settlements, thus sometimes accepting centralized urban development (e.g. Libya);

b) closed city programmes to prevent the incursion of migrants (e.g. South Africa);

c) urban rustication or reversal programmes to move people back to rural areas (e.g. Somalia);

d) dispersed urbanization, involving the development of dormitory towns and satellite cities (e.g. Senegal);

c) decentralization through medium-sized city and growth pole strategies and regional development (e.g. Algeria); and

f) creation of a new capital (e.g. Nigeria).

As for the rural-orientated policies, they fall into a number of types, such as :

a) frontier colonization of marginal lands, sometimes involving the sedentarization of nomads (e.g. Ethiopia, Uganda);

b) resettlement and redistribution of colonized lands (e.g. Kenya, Algeria);

c) capital-intensive agricultural development programmes, often based upon large-scale dams (e.g. Ghana, Sudan);

d) integrated or comprehensive rural development aiming at reducing ruralurban differentials (e.g. Tanzania's *ujamaa* villagization); and

e) resettlement for political or security purposes (e.g. Algeria and Mozambique before independence).

Obviously these various categories are far from comprehensive, but they give some idea of the diversity in time and space.

12. Unfortunately, too many past policies have been uni-dimensional and have addreesed themselves to a few aspects of population mobility such as rural-urban migration, and have neglected well known migrational characteristics such as the gravity rule, information flows and selectivity. It is now realized that to be successful population redistribution policies should be multi-dimensional, taking into consideration all redistributional processes and broadly refllecting overall national policies (U.N., 1981). Indeed, the programmes which are most effective are usually those for which there is a strong political will. One thinks of the case of Nigeria, faced with immense ethnic complexity, firm distrust of centralized control, and strong demands for devolution of political power and socio-economic development. Not only has Nigeria created 19 state capitals, but it is now building a new federal capital at Abuja, in the centre of the country. Political decentralization is here a key force in population reduistribution. Equally, Tanzania's programme of agro-industrial villagization was only accomplished by a strong political volition. In short, although population redistribution is not controlled by governmrents it is greatly

affected by political decision making, and the more governments that take this fully into account the better. One concurs with Mabogunje (1981) that goverment intervention in African population redistribution is inevitable and vital to the thrust of development.

13. It is encouraging that the Nairobi Parliamentary Conference on Population and Development in Africa recognized the importance of population in development programmes and that it recommended the following measures to develop rural areas and reduce the high rates of urbanization (Population and Development Review, 1981) :

1. creation of jobs in rural areas through provision of water supplies, subsidized farm inputs and agricultural support services, and in small towns through the establishment of agro-based industries;
2. resettlement schemes to move people from infertile and rugged mountainous districts to more fertile ones;
3. change of educational emphasis towards agriculture in primary and secondary schools;
4. creation of more middle-sized towns, especially through political decentralization and by increasing the number of administrative units ; and
5. increased research into causes and consequences of the changes in geographical distribution of population.

14. Research requires better data than are at present generally available in African countries. African mobility eludes simplistic enumeration, for not only are its movements variable and complex but its participants are not easily counted or even identified on a locational basis (i.e. place or area of residence or birth). The problem of political boundaries means that border crossing data are rare, except at ports, so our knowledge of international migration is notriousluy inaccurate (E.C.A., 1981). Most migration data in African have been derived from censuses, though censuses have not had a record of conspicuous success,, being high variable in universality, content, accuracy and acceptance. Generally speaking, migration data from censuses are largely inadequate because they are retrospective (and therefore reflect past rather than present movements) and because their perio dic snapshot technique may do little to elucidate important circulatory movements of, for example a seasonal nature. For the most common relevant question is place

of birth by region, territory or country, a question which reveals nothing about time of migration, and is preferably supplemented by questions concerning residence at a fixed past date, say one year or five years previouslu. However, neither of these time periods is wholly satisfactory, though more useful than a question on previous residence, which may have been a few months or many decades ago. Equally, data on duration of residence are valuable supplementary evidence but have limitations as sole evidence of migration, as they do not indicate either sources of origin or numbers of out-movements, so net migration cannot be determined. On the other hand, data on nationality may not coincide with country-of-birth data, and can therefore enable differentiation of (a) immigrants, (b) returnees, (c) persons born abroad but holding the nationality of the country of enumeration, and (d) persons born in the same country but holding foreign nationality (E.C.A., 1981). In all these circumstances it is inevitable that periodic sample surveys of a longitudinal character have become important, though their objectives have varied and they focused more on areas of in-migration than out-migration. In most cases lack of an adequate sampling frame is a major problem.

15. It follows that cooperation is vital between researchers and government statistical services in order that government planners and policy-makers may be fully apprised of the processes and patterns of population redistribution taking place within their countries. Their task is extremely difficult, for population redistribution is merely one aspect of social and eonomic development (Gosling and Lim, 1979). It is, however, a neglected aspect, and one which is of great importance to the people of this continent. Given the political complexity of Africa, there are no simple formulae.

References

1, ADDO, N.O. (1982) Government –induced transjers of foreign nationals, in Clarke J.I. and Kosinski L.A. (eds.), *Redistribution of Population in Africa*, London, Heinemann.

2. CLARKE, J.I. and Kosinski, L.A. (1982) *Ibid.*

3. E·C.A. (1981) *International Migration in Africa : Past, Present and Future Procpects* (unpublished memo, ECA/PD/WF/Z1982/2)

4. Gosling, L.A.P. and Lim‘ L.Y.C. (1979) *Population Redistribution : Patterns, Policies, Prospects,* New York, U.N.F.P.A. Policy Development Studies, No. 2

5. GUGLER, J. and FLANAGAN, W.G· (1978) *Urbanization and Social Change in West Africa, Cambridge,* C.U.P·

6. Hance, W.A. (1970) *Population, Migration and Urbanization in Africa,* New York, Columbia University Press.

7. Lanning, G. and Mueller, M. (1979) *Africa Undermined,* Middlesex, Penguin

8. Mabogunje A.L. (1981) Objectives and rationales for regional population redistribution in developing countries, in U.N. *Population Distribution Policies in Development Planning,* Dept· of International Economic and Social Affairs, Population Studies, No· 75.

9. Mortimore, M. (1982) Framework for population mobility : the perception of opportunities in Nigeria, in Clarke J.I. and Kosinski, L.A. (eds.) *op. cit.,*

10. *Population and Development Review* (1981) vol. 7, no. 4, The Parliamentrary Conference on Population and Development in Africa : Conclusions and Recommendations' 719—25.

11. ROGGE, J.R. (1982) Refugee migration and resettlement, in Clarke, J.I. and Kosinski, L.A. (eds.) *op. cit.*

12. .N. (1980) *Patterns of Urban and Rural Growth,* Dept. of International Economic, and Social Affairs, Population Studies, No. 68

13. U.N. (1981) *Population Distribution Policies in Development Planning,* Dept. of International Economic and Social Affairs, Population Studies, No. 75

14. Wood, A. (1982) Spontaneous agricultural resettlement in Ethiopia, 1950—74, in Clarke, J.I. and Kosinshi, L.A. (eds.),*p. cit.*

بعض مشكلات اعادة توزيع السكان فى افريقيا

يشير د. كلارك فى هـذا المقـال الى الاختلافات البشرية فى أفريقيا وانعكاساتها على اعادة توزيع السكان فى القارة . ويذكر أن هناك عـوامل كثيرة تؤثر على توزيع السكان غير المتوازن . ويبرز التحركات السكانية الى مناطق النشاط الاقتصادى مثل مناطق التعدين التى جذبت القوى العاملة من المناطق المجاورة وكانت معظمها من الذكور ، هذا فى حين أن المشروعات الزراعية الكبرى جذبت الذكور والاناث .

كذلك يبرز د. كلارك جذب المدن الأفريقية لأعداد ضخمة من الريف ويشير الى أن الحضرية الأفريقية تتزايد بشكل سريع خصوصا العواصـم وما يترتب على ذلك من مشكلات .

كذلك كان للتقسيم السياسى فى أفريقيا أثره على الدول الأفريقية سواء فى المساحة أو عدد السكان وانعكس أيضـا ذلك على الهجرة واعادة توزيع السكان . ويشير الى ظاهرة التفتت السياسى التى انعكست على الهجرة من الدول الفقيرة الى الدول الغنية ، وعلى ظاهرة اللاجئين الافريقيين .

ويركز د. كلارك أيضا على أن كثيرا من الدول الأفريقية تهتم بحل المشكلات الاقتصادية والاجتماعية دون النظر الى انعكاسها على السكان وعدم وجود عدالة بين الأقاليم المختلفة .

ويناقش كلارك السياسات التى اتخذت والتى تؤثر على اعادة توزيع السكان مثل تحسين حالة الأكواخ حول المدن ، واعلان اغلاق المدن أمـام المهاجرين ، واعادة المهاجرين الى مواطنهم الأصلية وانشاء عواصم جديدة . هذا فى المدن ، أما فى الريف فقد اتخذت سياسة توطين البدو وتشـجيع مشروعات الزراعة الكثيفة ، واعادة توطين بعض السكان . وكل هـذه الحلول بقصد سد الفجوة بين الريف والمدن ، ولكنها حلول ليست شاملة .

ويوضح كلارك السياسات الافريقية التى تركز على جانب واحد من المشكلة سواء بالاتجاه الى اللامركزية السياسية أو انشاء عواصم جديدة أو سياسة « الترييف » الزراعى ـ الصناعى . ويبرز التوصيات المؤتمر البرلمانى لمعالجة موضوع السكان والتنمية فى افريقيا الذى عقد فى نيروبى مثل خلق فرص العمل فى الريف والتأكيد على أهمية الزراعـة فى التعليم وانشاء المدن المتوسطة الحجم .. الخ .

ويشير الى نقص المعلومات الدقيقة وينهى المقال بأهمية التعاون بين الباحثين .