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What drives urbanization in Africa?

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The unprecedented growth in human population the last centuries translates to escalated resource consumption manifested in high rates of agriculture production, industrial development and urbanization. At the rate of 5% per annum, Africa is one of the highest urbanizing regions of the world. However, its urban transition is occurring under the vagaries and pressures of globalization. Managing urban transition is therefore indispensable for sustainable development in Africa. This paper reviews Africa's urban transition with case studies of Lagos in Nigeria and Tamale in Ghana. Analysis showed that accessibility, spatial interaction effects and policy variables were the major determinants of urban expansion in Lagos. On the other hand, economic opportunities that pull the rural population to cities were the major driving factors of urban expansion in Tamale. The evidence of frontier development calls for land tenure and housing development reforms, and land use controls to minimize the environmental consequences of unplanned urban expansion.

Keywords: Urbanization, Driving factors, Lagos, Nigeria, Ghana