

Migration in Kenya and Its Impact on the Labor Market

Kinuthia Macharia

American University
United States of America

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Introduction

In this paper, I will present an analysis of the causes and consequences of migration. I will also make the argument that such causes and consequences do have an impact on labor markets at both the place of destination (mostly urban areas, and to some extent rural agricultural settlement especially during the colonial days in Kenya). I will also discuss the consequences that may be encountered at the “ sending areas” in the form of able active manpower and the imbalance in the rural sector where sometimes heavy farm labor has been left to the women. Although rural to urban migration was seen as the major flow of migration especially between 1963-1990, we have also seen aspects of return migration (Francis, 2000) to the rural areas and more interestingly, migration beyond the national boundaries in the form of international migration. This has been noted in the last ten to fifteen years especially at the height of Moi’s oppressive regime and a disastrously performing economy which saw many Kenyans migrating to western countries, mainly the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and Canada. African countries in the Southern Africa also became major receivers of Kenyan international migrants, especially those with high skills in technology, health and administration. Such countries like South Africa (after end of apartheid system of government), Namibia (after its independence), Botswana and in the mid-1980s, Zimbabwe.

While relating the political economy of Kenya from a historical perspective to the migration and labor market formation, I will also make new contribution to the literature on migration. I will present the argument that, “people migrating to the urban areas have continued to do so even when the hopes of getting “white or blue collar jobs were vanishing” mainly because of the new hope derived from participation in the informal economy. I will show that with the proliferation of the informal economy in the 1980s and 1990s, migrants who were entrepreneurial still had hopes in the urban areas. This was so, mainly because of the expectations of higher numbers of people who would become consumers of products they hoped to make and sell in the urban areas. Thus, it is not simply the “hope for employment in the urban areas that pulls people to the urban areas but also the hope of venturing in an economic activity

in the informal sector! In other words, self-employment is in compared to being employed to work for someone else.

I will also, in this paper, show the reversal of gender imbalance in the urban areas, which I argue was mainly as a result of colonial labor recruitment processes. This has now been overtaken not only by political independence, but also by women's achievement in educational preparation, earning skills that have made them competitive in urban areas. They have learned to utilize useful women's social networks. This discussion would be incomplete if I do not bring up the non-economic reasons for migrating and present social dynamics that have indeed increased the numbers of migrants for both males and females but much more for the latter.

Given that migration has reached beyond national boundaries, and certainly beyond the capital cities of most African countries, certainly in Nairobi, I will extend the argument of the significance of remittances from urban areas in developing rural areas. I will make the case that, even though no substantive data exists, there is evidence from my observation and informal interviews that remittances from the international migrants in Western cities and those in the cities in Southern Africa is having tremendous economic development impacts in Kenya. Indeed, a recent survey by Western Union showed Kenya and Nigeria to be leading in sending money through their wire service, which is suggestive of a positive consequence to the "sending nation and regions." I will conclude by adding to the literature on migration by making the point that migrants are not only making economic rational decisions but also social and political rational decisions, hence a holistic understanding of migration is recommended. We cannot fail to distinguish between rational decisions made at personal/family level and those resulting from macro policies by governments or certain regimes which may indeed contribute one way or the other to migration and labor market formations. This trend I argue is on the rise especially with the global economy, opening borders to products and personnel where those who are able may sell their labor, locally, nationally or internationally.

Imperial Capitalism, Colonialism and Unequal Development

In this section, I will demonstrate that unlike the case of Western African where urban living was part of the traditional culture in a number of communities (Mabogunje, 1989, Caldwell, 1969, Little, 1973, Adepoju, 1984), East Africa and particularly Kenya was mainly a rural nation except for a bit of urbanization on the coast mainly from Arab traders (Ogot, 1967, O'Connor, 1983, Obudho, 1983). The ethnic groups that are now seen as urbanite in Kenya were living in rural communities raising their cattle and goats and a bit of cultivation before 1920. The Kikuyu who dominate the city of Nairobi in population size, for example were not known to have any form of urban dwellings, neither were the Luos who predominate Kisumu, the third city in Kenya and probably the second largest African group in Nairobi today. Without dwelling so much in the past history, we cannot help but to start this analysis with the growth of imperial capitalism in Europe after the industrial revolution, which among other things was in need of raw materials and new markets. Since such former colonial masters like the then "Great Britain" had the military might, pride of conquest that reached its apogee at the Berlin conference of 1886 which partitioned Africa (Mazrui----) eventually would open East African region to British Imperial companies and later on colonial settlement and a colonial administration. Those imperial companies with an interest of exploiting the existing raw materials were particularly interested in establishing a railroad which would penetrate to the interior to "suck up" those raw materials.

The first economic activity the Imperial companies performed in East Africa, especially in Kenya and neighboring Uganda was to what came to be known as the Uganda railway." This started at the port of Mombasa (the entreport for goods from Europe to Africa and the raw materials from African to Europe) to Kampala, which was the seat of the Kabaka of Uganda and was later to become the capital of Uganda. The "iron snake as a Kikuyu forseeer, Mugo wa Kibiru (Thiong'o, 1965) had predicted would "vomit people (especially the white people) and foreign goods) and would indeed become the nodes on which future urban centers grew. Nairobi is the best example of such impact of the railroad as it grew from no where in 1899 when the railway reached there to some big town. This was when it became the central workshop for the railway

engineers and their sleeping quarters especially as they extended the railway line through the Rift Valley towards Kisumu and Kampala.

Nairobi, a city of close to 3 million today cannot divorce its historical origin from imperial capitalism and more the railroad, which was the means through which exploitation was to be realized from the interior to the coast. All the major urban areas (towns in Kenya and the rest of East African were centrally located along the new railroad, and to this day, the trend is very reminiscent of the past because what has been achieved is more growth in “those original towns.” From this brief historical background, I make two arguments, viz.: a) that “Urbanization in Kenya was as a result of imperial capitalism and b) that the story of the railway line is also the story of urbanization in Kenya. I therefore agree fully with André Gunder Frank (1967) who characterized the cities of Latin America as “suction pumps” for the imperialists who wanted to “suck up dry” the raw materials and all other resources in those countries. A quick elaboration of Kenya’s main towns leaves no doubts about the significance of the railway and urban development, which was later to open the way for migration and urbanization. Indeed all the major urban centers in Kenya, Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, Eldoret, Kisumu, Kitale, Thika, Nyeri, Nanyuki) are all located by the railway line.

After establishment of imperial capitalistic companies, which as we have seen above did start an urban development in east Africa and especially in Kenya, the imperialists need protection and to have their influence of power felt by the new “conquered natives. It is not unusual that what followed was colonial power in the newfound colonies. I bring this up here to make the point that the second cause of urban development in Kenya was colonial administration. The new administrators could not all be accommodated in the urban areas started along the railway road. They also had to be distributed to all regions and ‘corners of the new colony so as to establish effective administration of the natives. This move by the colonial government started administrative centers that were eventually to grow into “second level urban centers” after the “first level ones,” mainly those along the railway line. These new administrative centers became key points for collection of raw materials, taxes and control of the labor market, which was a primary concern of the colonial system in Kenya and in many other colonized African countries. It was much more so in Kenya which from the 1920s received many

Europeans who were allocated land in the richest parts of the country, so called “White Highlands” (Kitching, 1980, Kenyatta, 1971).

Thus, “the second tier urban centers) emerged that way and have continued to grow as administrative centers, expanding to other services gradually. Such towns include, Kakamega, (the seat of Western Province senior government administrators) and Muranga, previously called Fort Hall, after Mr. Hall, who chose it as a strategic post for protection against enemies. It is build on top of a hill and continues to be the seat of the District Commissioner, in charge of administering the district. Others include Nandi Hills, Kapsabet, Kabarnet, Kitui, Kapenguria, Kisii, Siaya, Kilifi to name but a few located in various regions of the country. Roadwork followed as the infrastructure that connected those newly founded urban centers. Ironically the development of urban areas has kept the same pattern. I argue below that the independent government did not change the institutional framework, that it inherited from the colonial days which not only produced uneven urban development that can be used to explain the migration flows that would follow later.

Unequal and uneven development was the product of the Imperial capitalism implanted in the colonies and unfortunately inherited and advanced by the post-colonial regimes of Kenyatta and Moi. The new leader, Kibaki s too new (was sworn into office on 30th December 2002) to asses whether he will change the course and implement equal development which could indeed reverse or stop migration flows to urban areas beyond national boundaries. The colonial settler economy “developed” only areas that were of interest to them. Nairobi for example developed and continued to grow bigger in size because it was almost at the heart of the “White Highlands. Various services were put up to cater for the settler communities. Such included luxuries as golf clubs (esp. Muthaiga club), hospitals, both Nairobi Hospital and Kenyatta hospital, formerly known as King George hospital to remind the Kenyans of their King back in England.” There were also Hotels like the Norfolk Hotel and the Stanley Hotel, which were to become meeting points of the settler from up-country who came to socialize in the towns. The settlers in Kenya were notorious for their urban cowboy life as depicted in the book, “White Mischief” by Fox (1983). Inevitably, job opportunities were to grow in such cities like Nairobi, which were favored by this biased development. The same was to happen to the other towns

along the railway lines. A city like Nakuru, the Headquarters of settler agriculture, attracted not only the settlers but in their near vicinity, large squatter settlements of the African laborers who were recruited to work on the farms (Kanogo, 1987). Thus, even rural regions were subjected to the unequal development and this would indeed produce divergent immigration patterns and need to migrate, as I will show below.

Unequal development has been from a global perspective has been addressed by other scholars trying to make sense, the position of Third World nations vis avis the First World (Amin, 1995-, Wallerstein, 1998 Others (Castells, 1977, Smith, 1990) have extended this discussion to show how spatial disparities may come about as a result of the uneven development. Kenya's urbanization and migration patterns do show this feature.

Indeed, a product of this uneven development has been the primate city phenomenon, a typical characteristic of Third World cities, best exemplified by Kenya's capital city, Nairobi. This is the situation where the largest city is usually three and more times larger than the second. Nairobi is about five times larger than the second city, Mombasa. Uneven migration will also result from such uneven development. The primate phenomenon of Third World cities was a direct result of the selfish interests that characterized the colonial system. It left such a legacy of uneven cities. Unfortunately this has not changed and in some countries, the phenomenon has been compounded by astronomical growth of those original primate cities. The case of Sao Paul in Brazil, Mexico City in Mexico, Cairo in Egypt and to some extent Nairobi, Kenya are but a few examples. Some cities grew very big and continue to grow because they are still serving to serve the original goals of imperial capitalism, i.e. as business capitals and place for accumulation of wealth from the hinterlands of the colonies. This was the situation in Nairobi, which grew from the Railway workshop it was, to the center of colonial settler's business transactions including financial services. It later developed manufacturing industries specializing mainly in food processing for example, cooking oils and corn and wheat flour. It was later made the capital of Kenya in 1920, thus centralizing the colony's administrative duties and activities. Other services grew around this established from of a "city in the-making and it is no wonder then that it was to emerge as the most sought destination for job-seekers during the colonial

times and even more so after independence when it continued to offer similar and even more services.

Colonial labor practices and recruitment system produced disproportionate migration of males and females contributing to further uneven development. This led to a gender imbalance in cities that was to persist for a long time until much later after independence. The cheap labor practices were also a main feature of the colonial labor markets both in the rural and the urban areas. In Kenya as in most of East Africa, primary aims of manpower development were attracting and maintaining sufficient quantity of workers for the colonial labor force: a workforce not associated with local African development but colonial enterprises, industries, farms and coastal plantations (Cummings, 1985). Cheap labor force was always the goal especially for the settler community. In 1945-1961, most migrants to urban areas were largely unskilled workers who migrated to Nairobi and were only allowed to remain there for prescribed periods of time. (Cummings, 1985). The direct negative effect this had on the African worker who was “lucky” to be employed in the urban areas was that the man (usually the urban employee) was paid too little to afford to bring his wife or family in the urban areas.

The other feature of the colonial urban labor markets was that men were predominantly employed on temporarily basis with the assumption that they would eventually go back to their rural home where they would be with their wives and children. Thus by and large the so-called ‘two household’ African family with the man with a household in the urban areas and the wife with a household in the rural areas dates back to the colonial labor market. It was also this same market that created a labor reserve especially in the rural areas to be used at will by the colonial employers when and if they needed it. The “commodification” of the African labor meant that there was control of entry in the urban labor market. There were restrictive laws that did not welcome the African as an urban dweller making the rural areas perfect locations for reserve labor which could also be paid cheap. To ensure that the Africans could be recruited and paid at the mercy of the European employers, the colonial administration introduces taxes (poll, hut) that could only be paid by cash money. This was to ensure a constant supply of labor for inevitably, most Africans had to work for European employers in order to pay their taxes. Unskilled labor in

the urban areas was typical of most urban employees. Most worked as gardeners (“shamba boys”), cooks and domestic servants.

Women Migration to Urban Areas During the Colonial Period

When women migrated to cities like Nairobi and other urban centers in Kenya during the colonial period, it was in smaller numbers compared to the men. As discussed above, the colonials labor market in the urban areas favored and preferred men to women. Women ideally were supposed to be the guardians of the other household, the rural one. In patriarchal social systems like the one that dominates almost all-Kenyan ethnic groups, the women were expected to be docile, homemakers and the ones who cultivated their small rural farm holdings. Despite such restrictions and the unwelcome conditions in the urban areas, few women found their way there in most of Southern and East Africa. (Redding’s (1996) work on South African Women and migration in Umtata (1880-1935) made an interesting point that I also found in my own work (Macharia 1997) that unlike men, women’s “Push factors” from the rural areas were not always economic. While the men primarily left their rural homes during the colonial period to go and work in the urban areas, women often left without the promise of a job (in any case most Europeans at that period employed men).

Women were “pushed out” of their rural settings by a number of non-economic factors. Key among those conditions included social conditions at their rural homes, marital unhappiness and lack of social services. Bozzoli (1991) made similar observations. Such conditions like conceiving from a man that was not one’s husband was enough to make the woman run away to the urban areas where they would not be found to be punished either by the husband or his relatives. Daughters who refused to accept marriages arranged by their parents were also more likely to migrate to urban areas to avoid the imagined misery of an arranged marriage—usually to an older spouse. Incestuous relations which were embarrassing and punishable; as well as being accused of theft or witchcraft were other social conditions that pushed women out of their rural homes in search of anonymity in the urban areas.

While this was typical of the women who migrated to Umtata, it is also applicable to the women who migrated to Nairobi during the colonial days. Besides the non-economic reasons for women migration that I have just mentioned, the women who migrated to Nairobi had a business agenda even though it was not primarily to be employed in a job. They wanted to be traders. I will revisit this point later on when I will discuss the attraction to the urban areas by the prospects of the informal economy.

Studies of women migrants to Nairobi during the colonial days have shown similar selectivity with those migrating to Umtata discussed above. Proximity to Nairobi was also seen as a major attractive “pull” factor for the women who migrated to Nairobi. In her study (Robertson, 1996) found that women from Kiambu area which is adjacent to Nairobi were more likely to make short day trips to trade in beans and other forms of cereals than women from longer distances. She also found non-economic reasons as being prevalent among women migrants. She found that women fled “levirate” marriages. Unhappy wives moved to Nairobi either to trade or to practice prostitution. At the Indian Bazaar, Nairobi’s first commercial center, some women rented rooms in the back for prostitution (White: 1990: 41-42). As early in the colonization era in Kenya as 1907-1909, there was an attempt to “clean-up” Nairobi by arresting and repatriating some 300 prostitutes (among a total population then of 12,000 (Robertson, 1996).

Repatriating women to the rural areas reflected the idea that women did not belong in the urban areas (stichter, 1977). This was the official and also the unofficial policy and understanding even amongst the African men. This was despite the fact that, prostitutes were valuable assets for town inhabitants who were overwhelmingly male because they provided domestic services of all kinds especially to the men who had migrated from long distances to come and work in Nairobi. In addition, provision of fresh food to Nairobi was largely in the hands of women traders. These traders tended to double up their legitimate trade with the illegitimate services. Again, proximity to Nairobi was a key factor that explained women’s early migration. In 1923 for example, a census of Nairobi prostitutes showed over half of them to be Kikuyu (Robertson--). The Kikuyus especially those from Kabete in Kiambu district were able to move easily and without much costs to Nairobi. Some of the women were using trade as an

excuse to Nairobi for prostitution as a supplementary source of income to their trade. Despite African men especially from Kiambu objecting to women's movement to Nairobi, this continued especially from those with bad marriages, the widows and the divorced. Women at that time, unlike men did not require passes especially if they disguised themselves as traders. Men resented this as they construed those women as having "loose morals" and betraying their tribal beliefs—especially that of having affairs with non-Kikuyu men.

All the negative efforts to deter women from not migrating to Nairobi notwithstanding, hawkers moved to Nairobi in search of better pay for their products. Indeed the African population (men and women) in Nairobi went up from 41,000 in 1939 to 70,000 in 1941 (Onstad 1990: 49). Colonial policies changed and in 1941, Nairobi women now had to carry passes (whether hawking or not!) (Robertson, 1996) In 1942, the Nairobi Municipal Native Administrative District Annual Report said that it was more due to difficulties at home than to attractions of town that women ran away (Robertson 19---) This underscores the non-economic factors that prevailed on women's migration to the towns during the colonial days. Women continued to flock to towns especially in Nairobi. They were more likely to be landless and had to support their families hence many came in the town to stay without plans of going back to their rural home of origin.

The colonial era was the genesis of urbanization in Kenya as well as most of East Africa. The towns established either for "industrial," business or administration purposes and mainly to serve European's interests also became the main locations to look for jobs. Thus, African men who were employable in the towns and later African women migrated in disproportionate ratios (more men than women. The situation would change in the post-colonial period when the restricted migration of Africans would be lifted leading to different dynamics.

Post-Colonial Period I (1963-1978): Labor Markets (urban and rural)

The most important changes that took place after Kenya became independent in 1963 under the leadership of Mzee Jomo Kenyatta was the general policy change towards migration. With political freedom came freedom of migration, no more Passes to be carried and absolutely

no restriction of movement whether to the urban areas or to any other rural places of choice. The urban areas, just like during the colonial period continued to be “the places of hope” especially for formal employment. After independence however, there was no institutional change but instead there was a general policy change which brought about a “boom urbanization!” This was particularly the case especially between 1963-1972 when the influx to the urban areas was in great numbers.

Between 1973-1978, the then, President Kenyatta and his government tried to introduce the policy of “Back to the Land” or in Kiswahili, “Turudi Mashambani.” The realization at that time was that the towns were getting overcrowded, housing was a problem as well as high unemployment rates. Both males and females were now free to migrate. The movement then from rural to urban was high. The 1969 Census in Kenya for example showed an increase of about 61 per cent of people living in the urban areas compared to those living there in 1962 (a rise from 670,950 in 1961 to 1,082, 437 in 1969). Those from near Nairobi and from far and wide migrated there in search of better opportunities. Between 1948 and 1962, the urban population in Kenya rose from an estimated 285,445 to 670, 950, a growth rate of 135 per cent or an average compound rate of growth of 6.3 per cent every year over the intercensal period of fourteen years (Ominde 1968: 183).

Between 1962 and 1969, an average compounded annual growth of about 9.9 per cent of urban population growth was noted (Republic of Kenya, 1969). During the intercensal period between 1969 and 1979, the urban population of Kenya increased at an average annual rate of 7.9 per cent. Nairobi almost doubled its population between 1947 and 1957, while the number of urban centers, including townships with more than 2,000 inhabitants, virtually doubled from 47 to 90 between 1969 and 1979 (World Bank, 1982: 2). An Urban center in Kenya has been defined as any area with over 2,000 persons. This has not been revised yet since the 1948 population census. It is notable that there was a slight decline of urban population growth between 1969 to 1979. This could be attributed to the efforts of the “Back to the land policy” adopted by the Kenyatta Government. One way that rural urban migration was slightly averted during those years is through the resettlement policies to productive agricultural areas especially those formerly owned by white settlers. This may also explain why in the 1970s, the pattern of

urban growth shifted significantly from the major cities (Nairobi and Mombasa) to secondary towns whose share of the total urban population grew from 7 percent to 31 percent. Nairobi and Mombasa underwent a decrease in population share from 70 percent to 51 percent over the same period (World Bank 1982: 2). Such secondary towns like Nanyuki, Nyahururu and others neighboring “resettled agricultural areas” started receiving an urban population eager to establish various kinds of business activities. The Government also put certain public services like district administration, schools and hospitals to serve the adjacent areas. This created labor markets in the secondary towns, which in return attracted new migrants.

The “Back to the land Policy” was successful only for a certain period in the early to mid 1970s. The failure of the “policy in the later years was mainly due to the fact that there were not much more agricultural settlement schemes that Kenyans especially from the “sending districts” could go to. More importantly, the education system in the post independence era continued to emphasize on career prospects in the white-collar jobs. This saw a surge of rural –urban migrants (newly educated Africans who were now free to move anywhere) coming to towns in search for employment in the civil service and various industries in the urban centers. This may explain further, my point above that there was no institutional changes as the educational institutions for example continued to produce those aspiring for clerical jobs which would diminish with the high numbers of high school and college students flooding the “white collar job market.”

The Case of Central Province and Migration During the Post-Independence Era 1

In this sub-section, I will demonstrate the labor market formation in the rural Central Province of Kenya and migration to the towns, especially the city of Nairobi during the first Post Independence era, 1963-1978. I have chosen this district not only to make the case for “proximity to Nairobi” and rural –urban migration but also to make case for another pattern of migration, i.e. the rural-rural which was taking place about the same time. After independence, the rural areas of central province had become very impoverished emanating from the villagization policy that had been effected from 1952 when Kenya and esp. central province was under the State of Emergency following the Mau Mau movement (Throup, 1987, Furedi, 1989, Clough-1998). The soils were barren from many years of cultivation with no manure or

fertilizers added. The Province was also by the most densely populated followed by Western Kenya (Republic of Kenya-Census---). Overpopulation in the province had led to landlessness and this problem was clearer after independence when most of those imprisoned or detained during the Emergency period were released and came back home. Most of them found that their land had been taken over by the loyal Africans who had sided with the colonial government. Thus the province was impoverished and unemployment was on the rise hence the need to migrate. Indeed, Central province was a major “sending region” of migrants during this period. Most of those who left the province first moved to the nearby urban centers of Thika, which had become an industrial hot spot, about 30 miles NE of Nairobi. Others who got administrative kind of jobs moved to Muranga and Nyeri as well as Kiambu—although the latter was so close to Nairobi that most migrants preferred to seek opportunities there instead of Kiambu.

The Kikuyu of Central Province who had been rendered landless took advantage of such schemes as the “million acre scheme” to buy land in the former White Highlands though loans advanced by the Kenyatta government (Clough, 1998). Although many, especially those who had fought during the Mau Mau Independent war were expecting free land, this was not to be. Instead, the Government of Kenya through a grant from the British Government and a loan from the World Bank was able to give loans to peasants who moved from Central Province to much of the Rift Valley Province which was the “receiving region” for the landless (Clough 1998). Thus, in the mid 1960s to the mid 1970s Central Province sent many people to the Rift Valley either to the Settlement schemes or to farms that required manual labor. Before the Emergency period, 1952-1960, many Kikuyu had moved to the Rift Valley and had become squatters (Kanogo, 1987) in the White Highlands. They had forcefully repatriated to central Province in the mid to late 1950s which had been another reason for overcrowding there. After Independence, many of those who had previously settled in the Rift Valley moved back there in big numbers. Others migrated to the urban centers and particularly to Nairobi, which is not far from any part of Central Province compared with others like Nyanza or Western province, for example.

The Kenyatta era was pragmatic in the sense that when the president realized that formal employment was not meeting the needs of all the urban migrants, he relaxed the laws against informal economic activities. Two of them blossomed during his time namely informal

transportation (today's "matatu" industry) and also the flourishing of informal housing—(urban squatter settlements especially in Mathare, Kibera in Nairobi and Kiandutu in Thika, (van Zwanenberg, 1972, Macharia, 1985). This may have been a lackluster response to the advice the government had been given, namely to facilitate the growth of the informal sector" by the International Labor Organization (ILO, 1973). The labor market in the city was therefore being expanded from formal to informal. This continued to attract migrants from Central Province to the urban centers and particularly in Nairobi. The new labor market in form of farm labor and plantation workers in the Rift Valley as well as on one's newly acquired land through the Settlement Schemes also meant an "easing of the overpopulated Central Province to the receiving regions of the Rift Valley.

Post Colonial Period II (1978-2002): Labor Markets (urban and rural)

In the previous period discussed above, I argued that there was a great increase of urban population growth especially between 1963-1972, then a slight decline especially in the major cities of Nairobi and Mombasa, in favor of the secondary towns. The period, 1978-2002, however, was one of increasing urban population in both the major cities and in the secondary towns. This period is also identified with the Moi presidency, which faced different issues than those of the Kenyatta era. The Moi era was characterized with less pragmatic policies. While the free movement of people was still the general policy there were now more people moving to the urban centers than those moving to rural areas. The education system had continued to be "urban biased" with those finishing school feeling that the only places their skills would be rewarded was in the urban areas.

The Moi era saw poor performing economy starting with the international oil crisis that slowed most world economies, particularly those of the developing countries like Kenya (Miller, 1984). This period also witnessed more harassment of those in the informal economic activities. This was despite the fact that the formal sector continued to perform poorly for both the government and the private sector, especially the multinationals having less employment and lowering wages. Moi's presidency was also known for the highest levels of corruption and this deterred International Direct Investment into the country, which led to more unemployment.

Agricultural exports like coffee, tea and pyrethrum etc. were fetching low prices and the government also misappropriated the funds leaving the rural farmers in dire stress as they faced their economic future. Besides, it was also the period when Structural Adjustment Policies were introduced and the government had to cut a lot of its public programs. This led the poor in the cities and in the rural areas in more poverty conditions. The formal sector was performing poorly and on the other hand the informal sector was being suppressed. The Moi era was marked with hopelessness, yet with more rural-urban migration with, the “false hope” of starting a business in the urban areas.

It was not until 1986 that there was some form of “reversal policy” towards the informal economy which was marked with President Moi’s visit to the Jua Kali artisans in Kamukunji, Eastlands of Nairobi (Macharia1997). Despite reports that the population increase in Kenya in the 1990s started slowing nationally, the urban areas continue to be overpopulated as a result of the rapid urbanization that has taken place in the last forty years since Kenya’s independence. The AIDS epidemic, which has had quite an impact on Kenya’s urban and rural population during this period, has not necessarily slowed down. The AIDS phenomenon, which does not, discriminate between the urban and the rural (both areas being affected at about the same levels) (Schooef, 1996) has had an impact on the population dynamics and labor markets. While the urban areas had initially a larger number of HIV/AIDS, the spread went beyond the urban areas to the rural areas.

The urban areas initially attracted those with HIV/AIDS who came there to seek medicine and also to escape the scrutiny of their small rural communities. This was mostly in the late 1980s to late 1990s. The recent trend has however been multi-directional given that the disease has become more widespread. Indeed what has been noted through my observation is that as people get more sick and the medicine cannot appear to cure them, many have humbly returned willy-nilly to their rural homes to await death and burial in their ancestral homes. It is a form of “return migration” though one filled with shame and sadness especially to relatives and friends who may still be in denial of the impact of the HIV/AIDS. President Moi was forced to step down by a constitution amendment, which did not allow a president to rule for more than ten

years. The new president, Kibaki is too new (having effectively taken over January 2003) to assess the impact of his era on labor markets and/or urbanization and development.

Different Migration Patterns In Kenya

Like in most countries especially Sub-Saharan Africa, Kenya has five different patterns of migration. They have all had different impacts on labor markets and general development.

They have also impacted heavily on the process of urbanization;

These include:

- a) Rural-Urban Migration. This is most common and has been responsible for rapid urbanization and creation of secondary towns in Kenya. This pattern while noted during the colonial era was to become more noticeable during the post-independence period. This was the case because of the free movement of people and the removal of travel passes. I have shown above the increase of urban population as a result of this pattern of migration.
- b) Rural-rural. This was common especially in regions that had depressed economies, poor soil hence poor agricultural production, natural disasters, landlessness and overpopulation. The case of Central Province that I have discussed above exemplifies this pattern which saw the Central Province being the “sender “ region while the Rift Valley was the rural “recipient” of the new migrants. The movement of the people from Central Province eased the population in that region. After some years especially in the 1970s, the agricultural production yields were higher, soils were better fertilized and since the population was getting more manageable, the region was no longer as impoverished as it was in the early to mid 1960s.
- c) Urban-urban. This involves situations where people migrate from one urban center to another urban center. The general trend was popularized in the step-migration idea where people moved first to the nearest town to their rural home and then later on moved to a more distant, sometimes larger town than the previous one. In Kenya, this pattern was especially notable in the years between 1972-1978. Some urban migrants migrated from the larger urban areas to the secondary ones, which were opening up with promises of new opportunities. People also

migrated from one secondary town to the other especially those who were more bent in looking for their fortune in agricultural production. A secondary town usually afforded the migrant the access to their farms and the opportunity also to have a business in town.

- d) Urban-rural. Though not common in the early years of post-independence Kenya, one can now observe a return of former town dwellers to their rural homes of origin (Frank, 2002). Most of those moving to the rural areas are mostly in their retirement ages (55 years and above in Kenya). Some of those returning as we will see below had been contributing to rural development in their regions, have built a permanent house (a close replica of the house they had lived in the urban areas). These migrants have at times invested in the rural economies and have tended to boost them and their “return home” is usually a welcome. As mentioned above, in the era of the AIDS epidemic, we have observed many of the sick patients returning home for care by their relatives. Those returning under such conditions do not contribute much to the rural economy. If anything they drain it as they demand more attention from those who would otherwise be occupied with other duties.

- e) International Migration: This pattern has been going on in Kenya for many years but with small numbers especially before independence. Just before independence (1960-1963) many Kenyans were given student scholarships to go to Western and Eastern Block countries to pursue higher education. These numbers, I argue elsewhere have risen especially during the Moi era, more specifically from the mid-1980s to the present. There are now many Kenyans who have migrated and settled in foreign countries in search of greener pastures and promising labor markets. Most of these international migrants were forced out of Kenya by the lack of promising jobs, a declining economy, harsh political conditions especially during the Moi era and lack of confidence in the direction his government was taking the country. It will be interesting to observe whether the international migration in Kenya will slow down, now that there is a new government, which looks promising.

Causes of Migration and Who Migrates in Kenya

In this sub-section, I will present the causes of migration as well as discuss who are more likely to migrate in Kenya. I will go beyond the rational economic theories of migration like the one advanced by (Elkan, 1976) or that popularized by (Harris and Todaro, 1970) I will summarize as I did above in the section of women urban migrant during the colonial era the cultural and even ecological reasons that explain various forms of migration. Generally, it has been established that African migrations especially rural to urban have not demonstrated the same effect for industrialization and economic development as migration has done elsewhere especially in Europe and North America. The classic “push factors” from the rural areas, viz.: lack of jobs, famine especially in Pastoralist areas, drought, various kinds of poverty for example landlessness etc. have been known to “push” people out of their rural homes in search of better opportunities elsewhere, particularly in the urban areas. The “pull” factors in the urban areas have been the hope to find a job, increase one’s income, educational opportunities, in search of better services—generally to improve one’s economic welfare.

Economic rationality cannot by itself explain the different forms of migration in Kenya both in the past and in the present. It is not true for example that poverty will always push people to migrate. There are minority ethnic groups for example the El Mollo who live around Lake Turkana and have been perpetually in poverty leading to the almost extinction of their people, yet they have not migrated. The same would be said of many of the Pastoralist groups in Kenya like the Maasai, the Turkana and the Samburu who continue to survive in the same hardship areas without a marked out-migration. While they may also move from their original village to another one especially in search of water and green pastures, they have not been known to move to urban areas. The economic rationality of migration has not worked for all but for some people or groups. It is also at times a very personal decision, which may conflict with the generalized economic rationality! The poorest are not the ones likely to migrate but instead those who are able financially to afford the transportation costs from the original home to the anticipated destination. One also needs money to settle in the new place. Migration for some people becomes a form of upward social mobility while others may not achieve this, ending up staying in their rural homes or moving from one rural area to another—a form of vertical mobility. The

urban areas have also shuttered many dreams of the hopeful who have arrived there and could not get the jobs they anticipated, sometimes ending up living in more poverty than they ones did in the rural areas.

Migration is also in itself a part of the unequal development. This dates back to the time of imperial capitalism, which led to colonization hence creating two unequal worlds of the “colonizer” and the “colonized.” Unfortunately such unequal development at world levels has also been more or less duplicated in the nation states. The colonial development and subsequent post-independence development in Kenya has continued to favor certain regions—starting with the major cities of Nairobi and Mombasa and certain rural regions. It is inevitable then that people who are able from the lesser-developed regions or from the poorer parts of the country will try to migrate to the more developed parts of the country.

The Urban Bias (Lipton 1977) form of development has continued to create two different classes in most African countries, that of the urban class and the rural classes, the latter usually being more impoverished compared to the latter causing uncomfortable inequalities. The neglect of rural masses in East Africa was more eloquently discussed by the late president Nyerere of Tanzania who had put all his efforts to try and make a better life for his rural men and women. His ideas were clearly outlined in the Arusha Declaration of 1967 and subsequent speeches (Nyerere, 1988). The Kenyan leaders were not as eloquent in favor of rural development as Nyerere was (Nyerere (1977)). While Kenyatta tried to call for the “back to the land policy”, the practice in his government by and large continued the colonial legacy which favored urban development over rural development except for “some islands” of plantation and commercial agriculture which benefited only the few landowners. Unequal development became the main characteristic of Kenya’s post-independent times during Kenyatta’s and Moi’s regime’s (Kitching, 1980). It is no wonder that migration has continued, mainly rural-urban and also rural-rural. The latter came to almost a standstill during the later years of Moi’s regime. This was especially so in the early 1990s when his government allegedly sponsored ethnic cleansing sprees which forced many Kikuyu especially in the Rift valley to leave their rural farms and run for their safety in the neighboring urban areas (Daily Nation , 1991). This saw an increased urban population in Nakuru, Eldoret and Narok where those pushed out of their rural homes

sought refuge. Nairobi was also a recipient of those forced out of their rural farms or secondary towns, Those able financially moved to the capital and established businesses there. This was a clear case of political instability and incitement causing labor unrest in the rural areas, eventually leading to the already saturated urban labor market.

An economic reason has also been given as a possible deterrent for women migrants to urban areas. This is based on the Harris and Todaro model (1970) in which they argued that those who are educated are more likely to migrate to the urban areas because of the increased likelihood of finding employment hence realizing the anticipated higher incomes than one would expect in the rural areas. Agesa and Agesa (1999) have argued that in Kenya, there are fewer women educated in the rural areas with at least high school or college diplomas. The fact that they are less educated than the men are also suggests they are less likely to expect to find formal employment in the urban areas. This then may deter them from wanting to migrate and instead may prefer to continue staying in the rural homes. While I agree with the observation that Agesa and Agesa (1999) make, I will advance a different argument below. I will show that migrants in the 1990s from rural Kenya have been migrating to the towns not so much because of an expectation to find a formal sector job but in stead to enter the urban informal economy. This is still looked upon as more prosperous than a rural occupation (Macharia 1997).

Besides economic reasons for migration, cultural factors and expectations have also played a role in “pushing” people from rural to urban areas. The same cultural considerations that pushed women from rural to urban areas during the colonial times continued to apply in the post-independence periods. Thus widowed women are still more likely to migrate today because of the fact that they are not entitled to land inheritance in most rural Kenya where the patriarchal system recognizes men as the land inheritors. If a woman is widowed, and she does not have grown sons, the land that belonged to her late husband might be inherited by the husband’s brothers unless she is a well informed elitist woman who may have had some of their property in joint names or in her name. The case of Wambui Otieno in Kenya in the mid 1980s in Kenya where her famous criminal lawyer husband died and the husband’s family wanted to inherit her their property is a good reminder that cultural traditions are still alive and well even in the “modern Kenyan society” (Otieno, 1998) The case of Wambui and Otieno occurred when they

were both in the city of Nairobi. It is clear from the treatment Wambui got from her in-laws that even if she were in the rural areas, she would have boarded the next bus to move to the city to avoid the harassment by her in-laws. The barren women and those who may have been involved in incestuous relationships continue to migrate to the urban areas where they may start afresh without feeling persecuted by the rural communities that knows them very well.

Another cultural factor that may explain migration from the rural to urban areas in most parts of Kenya is the expectation that men are the breadwinners hence they cannot just sit in the rural home when ends don't meet. Culturally they are expected to move, go anywhere to seek for that bread! It does not matter where they will migrate to but there is that expectation. Indeed, such expectation may explain further why there are likely to be more men migrants than women. Women were expected to be left at home tending children and the little cultivation on the farms and the men were to go outside and seek the 'real fortune' to boost their families economically! Elizabeth Francis (2002) in her study among the Luo in Kisumu district observed that, "In Luoland, several generations of men have spent the bulk of their working lives outside the district." Francis (2002) also noted that most migrants' wives stayed at home, growing crops to feed their children, perhaps doing some seasonal trading to earn some cash.

Luo women did not migrate to the towns freely because the men looked down upon such women migrants. There are those who joined their husbands in the towns they had migrated to but the majority were still left at home to look after children and the husband's land. Unlike the Kikuyu women discussed above who despite lack of support from their men, still went on to trade (Robertson, 1996) the Luo women did not enter into urban trade in comparative terms. The Luo men (like the Kikuyu men during the colonial era) looked down upon their women who chose to go into trade. (Francis 2000) quotes one of her interviewees saying, " Luo men do not like their wives to trade, because they think that they will walk around" (Judith Achieng). Another one was quoted saying, " Luo men take their wife's trading income----a Luo woman who travels around trading is called a prostitute" (Mary Anyango) and a Luo man was quoted saying, "Very few Luo women trade because they are weak (compared with Kikuyu women). Their husbands are not willing for them to trade because of what they might do when they are away from home, like going with other men."(Phillip Ojwang).

I have to say that the attitude of the Kikuyu men had changed or they had tolerated their women to be involved in trade in the 1980s and 1990s to the present. Of course there are a few who would sulk and wish their wives would stay at home instead of trading in town (just like Phillip Ojwang) but the economic realities dictate otherwise. The Kikuyu women also have had a longer exposure to trading in towns from the colonial times to the present and have gained with time more freedom of asserting their rights. The Kikuyu men have had to comply with their trade-minded wives. It is interesting to note that from my observations regarding international migration, there are more Kikuyu women who have migrated to the US as traders and some have since been joined by their husbands or their husbands are still back in Kenya. There is a continuum of rural-urban migration and international migration patterns.

Another major non-economic reason for migration that I established during my research in Nairobi and Harare (Macharia 1997) is the reliance on social networks. Migrants to Nairobi or other towns may not move for economic reason per se but may have social connections that they come to visit in the urban areas and may eventually settle in. Indeed I am making the same observation of Kenyans currently migrating to the United States. People do not migrate blindly and they usually rely on a friend, a kinsman or a member of the same religion whom they rely on initial accommodation in the town before they settle in and become independent. They also rely on these social networks to eventually search for either a formal job or one in the urban informal economy. The latter is especially very reliant on social networks, (Lomnitz, 1988, Macharia, 2002).

Ecological factors have also been known to influence migration. The case of Central province discussed above is a good example for the situation in a number of rural regions in Kenya. In such areas where soil is barren and there is low agricultural production leading to food shortages, people are most like going to migrate to areas that are more fertile. In the case of the people of Central Province, especially in the 1960s, the Rift Valley was the main receiving province given that the soils there were fertile and people with large families were able to grow enough food to feed their children. While some people migrated to the Rift Valley, others migrated to the towns in search of incomes, which eventually were used to fertilize and manure

the poor soils in the province. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Central Province had become a major agricultural producing region and the migrants were more likely to go looking for cash employment instead of food needs as was the case before. Drought, floods have also been known to be ecological factors that have “forced” people to migrate to urban areas. The Kamba of Kenya both in Kitui and Machakos districts have been prone to drought and many of them have had to migrate to urban areas like Thika and Nairobi as well as Kitui and Machakos towns. Distance (or proximity to the city) may also be another reason to explain why some people are more likely to migrate more than others are. Nairobi for example has more Kikuyu migrants than any other ethnic group in Kenya, mainly because they live ideally closer to the city compared to the other migrant groups. The same argument can be made for international migration. In the United States, for example, the Mexicans tend to be the dominant immigrant group given their close proximity to the U.S. This is in comparison to the Africans, for example who have a longer distance to cover before they land in America.

A multiple combinations of reasons as observed above will most likely determine those who migrate. When it is all said and done migration can be a very personal decision sometimes defying all the above-suggested reasons. However, it has been consistently observed that some of the reasons apply elsewhere as they have also applied in the case of Kenya. It is fair to say that those with high skills will most likely be the first to migrate as they feel they have something to “sell” in the place they move into. The skilled are likely to be attracted to the urban areas where their skills are more likely to get the “highest bidder.” Those educated are more likely to migrate (Harris and Todaro) as they expect more opportunities in formal employment. The young more than the old are more likely to migrate-, the single more than the married, although younger married men are more likely to migrate than younger married women. The latter will most likely be left to do the required rural labor while the husband goes to seek paid employment in the urban areas.

Consequences of Migration on the Labor Market

Rapid urbanization leading to what has been described as “overurbanization, (Castells, 1983, Gugler, 1988) has been a consequence of rural urban migration. While the cities of East

Africa as well as other parts of Africa are still considerably smaller in size compared to the cities in Europe, the fact of the matter is that they have grown much faster than those in Europe grew during their time. Given that urban development in Kenya was not coupled with industrialization, a great consequence has been the rising unemployment rates especially as was the case in Kenya in the late 1970s to the present. Many school leavers have continued to migrate to the urban areas with the hope of formal employment as per their training and many have had to lower their expectations. Many have also been forced to seek other alternatives and forget their college diplomas, which have not translated into the “expected job!” The labor market in the urban areas was in the colonial period controlled but as mentioned earlier after independence there was free migration and this increased the labor resource while the market for it did not grow at the same time. Housing problems due to actual lack of enough houses to accommodate the new migrants as well as inability to afford the high rents in most of the residential areas have been other consequences of the rural-urban migration in Kenya. Environmental constraints in the urban areas have also been another consequence.

The rural areas also end up losing their farm labor especially the men who are more likely to migrate to the urban areas (Lele, 1974). Women are left to perform hard tasks that were previously performed by men. Women have been left to make difficult household decisions and many though married have expressed a feeling of being a female head of the household due to the husband’s absence. On the other hand there has been studies that have tended to show the positive sides of rural-urban migration, especially in the consideration of remittances that flow back to the rural places of origin. Oucho (1996) has shown that urbanites send money to their rural homes and this has improved the rural farms as well as building of permanent houses in anticipation of the return migration after retirement. I have also observed that remittances amongst international immigrants, especially Kenyans in the USA has been ploughed back through relatives and friends to real economic development projects back in Kenya. This is an area that calls for more studies to establish the real link between remittances and economic development (both rural and urban).

Migration and the Urban Informal Economy

This last subsection of the paper aims at emphasizing the fact that formal employment as emphasized by earlier scholars (Harris and Todaro, 1970, Elkan, 1967, Rempel, 1981, Sabot, 1979) as being the main attraction for the rural-urban migrants has ceased to be of much significance after the mid 1970s. It was around the mid 1970s that the global economic crisis affected most multinational corporations and most states. Low urban wages and lack of new jobs' effect was mostly felt by the many now entering the urban areas with more skills. Most schools systems like Kenya's that was still producing prospective white-collar workers faced a mismatch in the labor market reality. There was stiff competition for the few available jobs and unemployment rates increased tremendously in 1980 and 1990s. I argue that most of the migrants in these latter decades were not migrating in search of formal employment per se but had in mind the alternative of making a living and indeed in search of a fortune in the informal economy. There are also those who left formal jobs when they realized they were not paying them enough and opted to establish enterprises in the informal economy as was the case of the drum sellers that I interviewed in Nairobi (Macharia, 1997). The entrepreneurs in the informal economy gave it a new outlook and more people who could not join the formal sector felt comfortable joining the informal economy, popularly know in Nairobi as Jua kali.

The informal economy in Kenya has done what the government was unable to do all these years since independence namely, "to change the institutions from the colonial based ones they inherited to ones that addressed the needs of the Africans. The education system should have emphasized self-employment and technical know-how in stead of a "false promise of future employment in a white collar job!" The informal economy has revolutionized the labor market mentality in the urban areas of Kenya as well as others in Africa, widening the choices of the migrants. That suggests that migration will continue and even when return migrations (Francis, 2002) might ease the urban population, births in the urban areas will continue increase the population. Therefore, facilitating and enabling more growth of the informal economy will continue to be a solution to the otherwise squeezed formal labor market.

Conclusion

One of the salient issues raised in this paper includes the impact of the colonial legacy with its selfish interests in labor market control and recruitment. I have shown that the colonial system of establishing urban centers where they pleased and recruiting cheap labor was to have some effect on African migration. With forced labor and introduction of taxes, Africans (especially males) had to migrate to the urban areas. They were considered as temporary urban residents and this meant that the facilities and services for the Africans who were then the minority (both in numbers and in economic power) were limited. After independence in Kenya in 1963, the restrictions of Africans migrating freely to the urban areas was lifted and this led to rapid urbanization, increasing the urban population and labor force in the main towns of Nairobi and Mombassa as well as other secondary ones that had since been established. Associated with this colonial selection of labor is the fact that it led to sex imbalance in the urban areas where men dominated in the labor market.

Another key issue raised in this paper is how the imperial capitalism and unequal development created the urban systems that we have in Kenya to date. I have also shown that while the colonial legacy had its well-documented faults, the independent government did not do much to salvage the mistakes of the past. While lifting the previously restrictive measures (the policy of Africans not migrating freely in the urban areas) the independent government did not do much to change the institutions so as to prepare the cities for the big labor influx. This is what followed and it caused rapid urbanization and high levels of unemployment. The independent government of the new republic of Kenya should have set out to control migration through reallocation of resources to all regions, thus controlling migration by ensuring it does not even begin –given that all regions would have been well endowed with resources.

The new policy should have been a geographic diversification of jobs and other economic incentives so as to avoid flow of people to the urban areas or to the other rural regions that had better opportunities as discussed above. National and international firms, the multinational corporations, would have been expected to assist the planning process by locating employment opportunities more equitably, or selectively throughout the country, rather than primarily in the

major urban centers. This however did not happen in Kenya, as there were ethnic driven political interests. Nairobi was for example close to the Kikuyu and to President Kenyatta who was himself a Kikuyu hence Nairobi continued to be the hub of job creation and modern facilities. Thika, became a major industrial center partly because it was in Kenyatta's home district not to mention that the roadwork to Nairobi and the railway line were properly maintained. It is not surprising the Moi tried to gloom the town of Eldoret (like Kenyatta did for Thika). In other words, the opportunity the independent nation of Kenya had to reverse the negatives of the colonial urban policy were not taken heed of and the same problems continued. This coupled with the fact that capital hungry companies were in for an investment with quick returns made it impossible to invest in far and wide regions of the country. The established urban centers during the colonial era continued to be the main beneficiaries of new investment. They attracted more labor and in most cases more than they wanted leading to unemployment especially in the formal sector.

Lastly this paper has also emphasized on the fact that migrants in the last twenty years are not so much migrating to the urban areas with the expectation of a white-collar job. Since the late 1970s and early 1980s, Kenyans observed that the wages in the cities had gone down and there were much fewer jobs. It is the informal economy that has continued to be the promise of many migrants. The informal economy forms the new labor market that needs more facilitation and an enabling environment from the state. The Kenyan State as I have argued elsewhere (Macharia 2002) has been tolerant though in a discriminative way to certain informal economic activities. It will be interesting to watch what the new regime of President Kibaki will do to reverse mistakes of his predecessors as concerns migration, urban dynamics and labor market in Kenya.

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