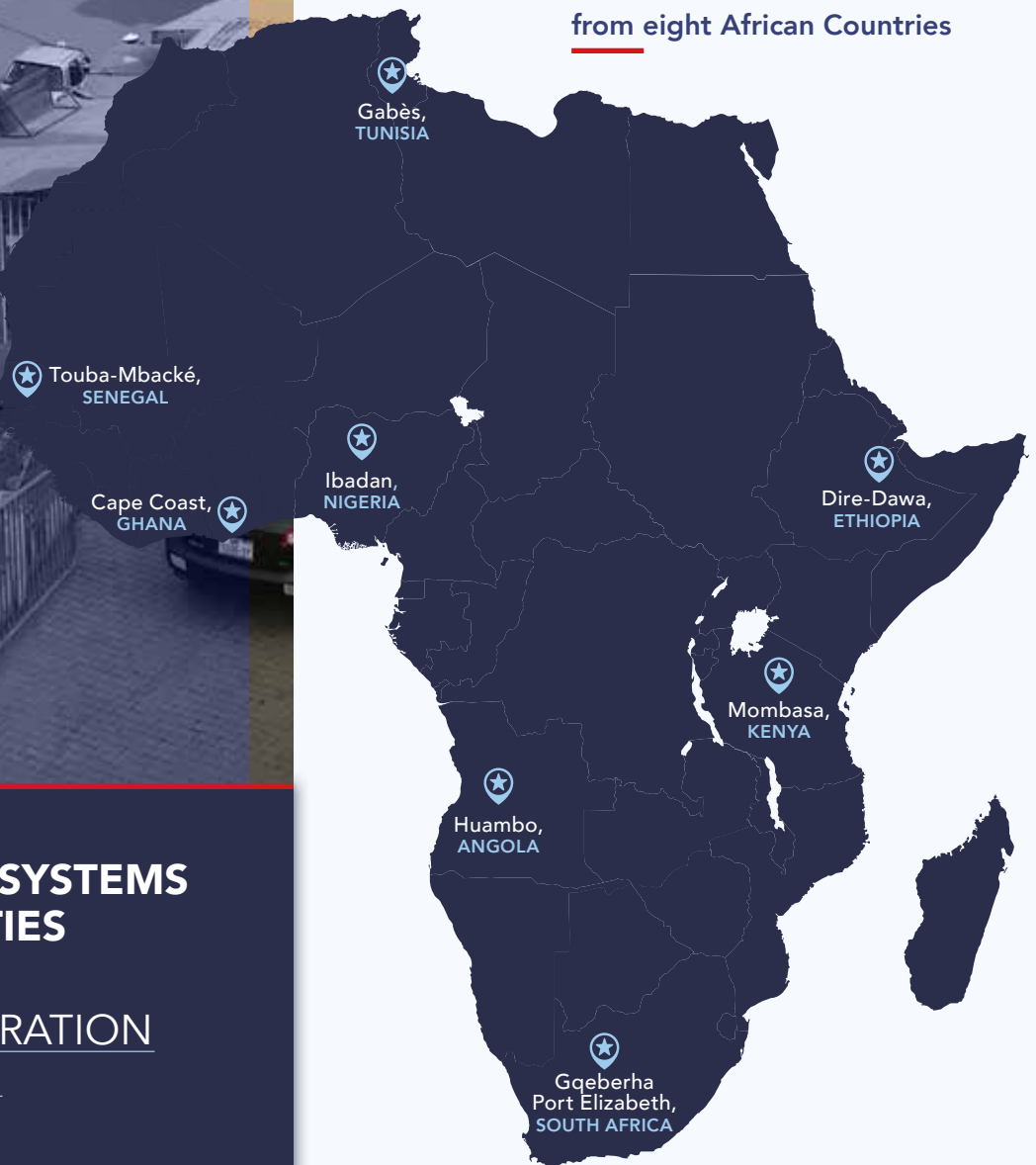




This brief provides an overview of the book *The Dynamics of Systems of Secondary Cities in Africa: Urbanization, Migration and Development* published by Cities Alliance and African Development Bank, with financial support from Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The book was written by several authors who are experts in urban development and edited by Professor Emeritus Brian Roberts and Professor Godfrey O. Anyumba.

The book provides comprehensive insights into the dynamics of the system of secondary cities in Africa and how secondary cities are developing, performing and managing the challenges of urbanization. Eight country case studies illustrate the way some countries have approached urbanization, decentralization, and other developments in support of secondary city development. The book concludes by calling for a new urban agenda for supporting the development of secondary cities and outlines how governments and international development agencies and organisations can play a role in this.

### Secondary City Case Studies from eight African Countries



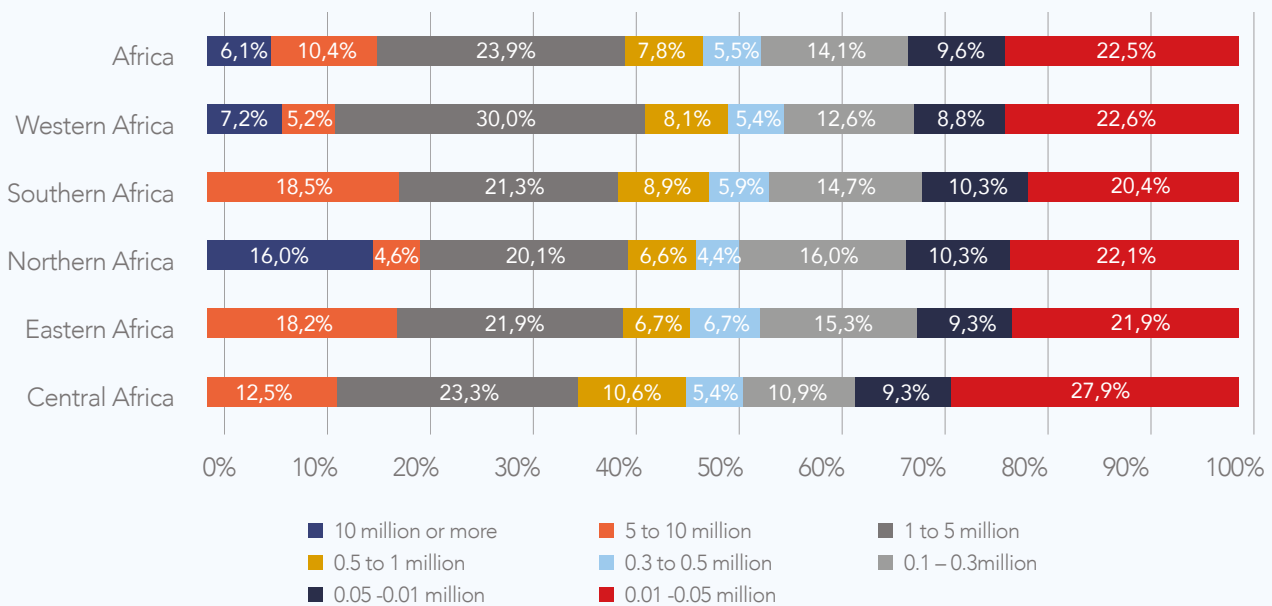
## THE DYNAMICS OF SYSTEMS OF SECONDARY CITIES IN AFRICA: URBANISATION, MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

# INTRODUCTION

Some 65 percent of Africa's urban population live in settlements of less than one million people. These cities are called secondary cities and often much less known than their primary counterparts – e.g., the capital of a country – but nevertheless they are vital points of governance, commerce, and manufacturing. Currently, there are an estimated 885 secondary cities in Africa. They are home to 180-200 million, and some are growing at more than 4% in some regions of the continent.

Secondary cities in Africa often suffer from an underdeveloped economy or insufficient policies. Initiatives aimed at developing urban areas often still favor the large metropolitan regions and capital cities. The recognition and importance of secondary cities in Africa in supporting national urban and economic development — especially in reducing regional income disparities — needs greater attention in national urban and economic development policy.

Percentage Distribution of African urban populations by city size, 2015 (Africapolis)



Source: Africapolis Database (2020).



Unreal sight, kind of like a safari with a bus and masked people driving by ...

# 1 . DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

Africa's urban development challenges have been studied extensively. However, the focus of most studies is on the challenges of Africa's large metropolitan regions. Few studies specifically focus on secondary and smaller intermediate-sized cities. The challenges facing the development and management of African secondary cities are of a different scale, magnitude, and difficulty to resolve to those experienced in the large metropolitan regions.

“  
**Secondary cities are not on the urban policy agenda for most African countries.**  
”

Significant development challenges facing African secondary cities include:



**Local governments lack the governance, infrastructure, finance, and management capacity to provide their citizens with even basic essential services.**



**Poor planning** policies, laws, and enforcement result in unmanaged development and only sporadic growth of urban areas, even though the population is rising rapidly



**Education and learning capacity** is weak, making it extremely difficult to develop the skill base and workforce to build a stronger and more competitive workforce.



**A high influx of migrants or people displaced** due to civil unrest, climate change, and joblessness



**Access to land** is causing significant housing and urban planning and development problems in the sporadic growth and servicing of the urban area



**Little attention** has been given to social planning, poverty alleviation, and community development or making communities more self-reliant



## 2. LEARNING OUTCOMES

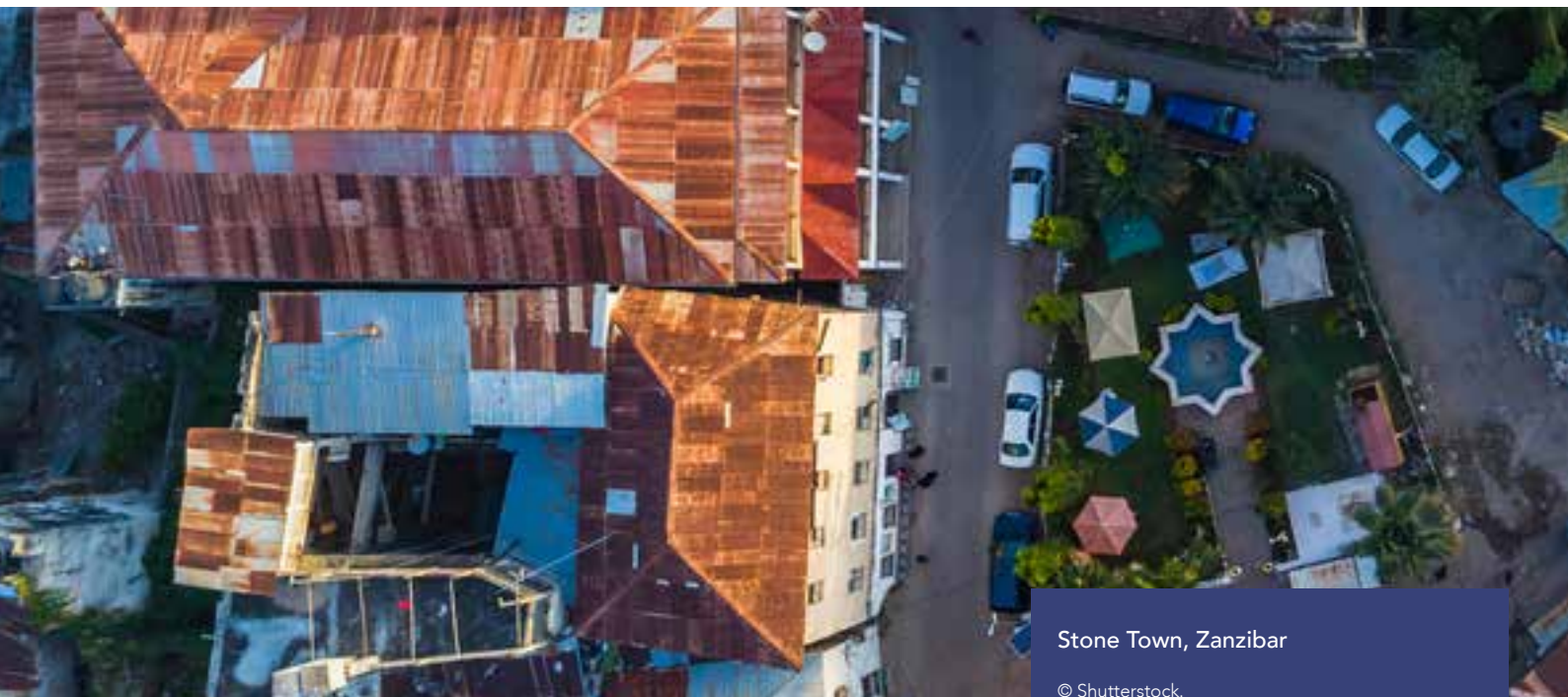
The book highlights several important learning outcomes from the perspective of secondary cities.

Significant reform efforts are required to bring about changes in urban governance systems and management practices if secondary cities are to play a more effective role in boosting the development of national and local economies.

“

**Secondary cities are important in building and maintaining a well-run national system of cities that can support a more equitable and efficient national economic and industrial development structure in African countries.**

- Colonial government legacies continue to influence very strongly urban policies, laws and practices on the development of national systems of cities. Many of these need reform.
- The model of competition for access to national grants, transfer and regional development which pitches secondary city and smaller cities against each other is not sustainable, it is wasteful of limited public resources and does not enable smaller cities to create scale and critical mass, to value add or become competitive. It needs to be replaced by a model of more collaborate governance model of development where resources and infrastructure are pooled or shared.
- Urban and regional economic development policies and Initiatives are not supporting secondary city development. They continue to favour the development of primate cities in Africa.
- Poor national and local spatial planning and budgeting contributes significantly to the Inequitable distribution of physical and economic development, resources, fiscal transfers, grants and FDI
- Accelerating E-governance is crucial to enhancing economic prosperity, development and governance in secondary cities but in many African countries this is not a national development priority.



Stone Town, Zanzibar

© Shutterstock.

“

**Secondary cities should be given priority in public policy. The critical roles of secondary cities in a national system of cities need to be recognized and advocated strongly.**

”

- Connectivity (infrastructure, economic, policy integration and networking) between national systems of cities is weak. The competitive and socio-political model of regional intermittent and development is not enhancing connectivity of systems between cities in Africa
- Recentralization is emerging as the result of COVID and security issues. Decentralisation and devolution of authority to secondary cities is crucial if they are to become more self-reliant and self sufficient
- Economic development policies are top down providing with few incentives for secondary cities to take responsibility and leadership in attracting investment and developing localised policies for development
- Urban management and governance is weak and not professional. Local government are under resourced, lack of essential skills and poor leadership. Public Financial Management is poor, especially the linking of planning, capital works, maintenance and budgeting systems.
- Land Administration and Management is weak leading to high levels of land disputes, speculation and land grabbing.
- The main funding source for African secondary cities remains the short-run inter-governmental fiscal flows. Financial management reform, a more equitable share of national goods and services taxes, capacity building, and greater financial autonomy to increase own-source revenue generation is crucial to efficient, competitive, and responsible secondary city government.
- Human capital skills and development in business, community services and local government is weak undermining the competitiveness and development potential of secondary city economies. Network, especially with the diaspora, to improve skills, access to finance and knowledge is not being capitalised on.
- Poor management of the natural and urban areas is resulting in the degradation hinterland of forest and grazing lands, and urban environments with pollution of waterways and urban areas from sillage and solid waste and severe climate change impacts becoming significant problems.
- The lack of strategic and integrated planning, digital sharing of data and Information and engaging communities of interest in decision making is leading to poor quality development outcomes, regional information and knowledge accumulation risk management and resource allocation choices.



# 3. A NEW AGENDA FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE SECONDARY CITIES

A new approach is needed to support the development of national systems of cities that recognise the importance of secondary cities to national development.

While their contribution to economic development may be lower than metropolitan regions, secondary cities play a crucial role as the conduit for many goods and services to reach the large proportion of the national population living in smaller urban and rural areas. People living in those areas deserve more equitable access to the goods, services and employment opportunities of residents of metropolitan regions.

“

**National governments must help support the building of stronger enabling environments for secondary cities.**

## 3.1 Moving from sector to systems Approach to secondary city Urban Governance

African countries follow a vertical hierarchical governance systems to managing cities. Horizontal integration between sectors is very weak. Infrastructure and services delivery at the secondary city/region level is overly dependent on the resources of line agencies at multiple levels of government. This setup leads to poor planning and delivery of infrastructure and services. A more coordinated and systems approach to urban management and governance is required in African secondary cities to make them more effective and sustainable.

“

**Secondary cities need significant institutional capacity-building support, hard and soft infrastructure investment, and human capacity development to become more dynamic, creative, and welcoming places for investors.**

## 3.2 A new spatial economic Model for Development of secondary cities

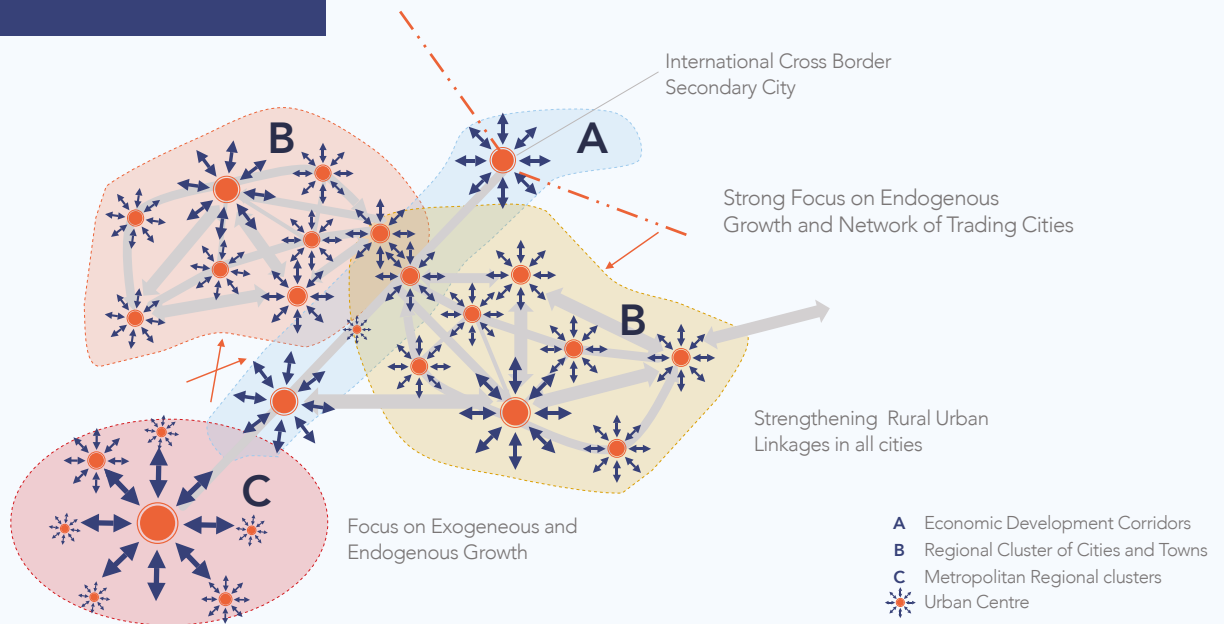
The key to implementing a new urban agenda for supporting secondary cities is a new spatial economic development model. There is need for a decentralised and integrated, spatially networked system of cities. Three spatial strategies can be applied to support this model:

A. Economic Development Corridors

B. Regional Cluster of Cities and Towns

C. Metropolitan Regional Clusters

Three broad spatial strategies for enhancing the development of secondary cities

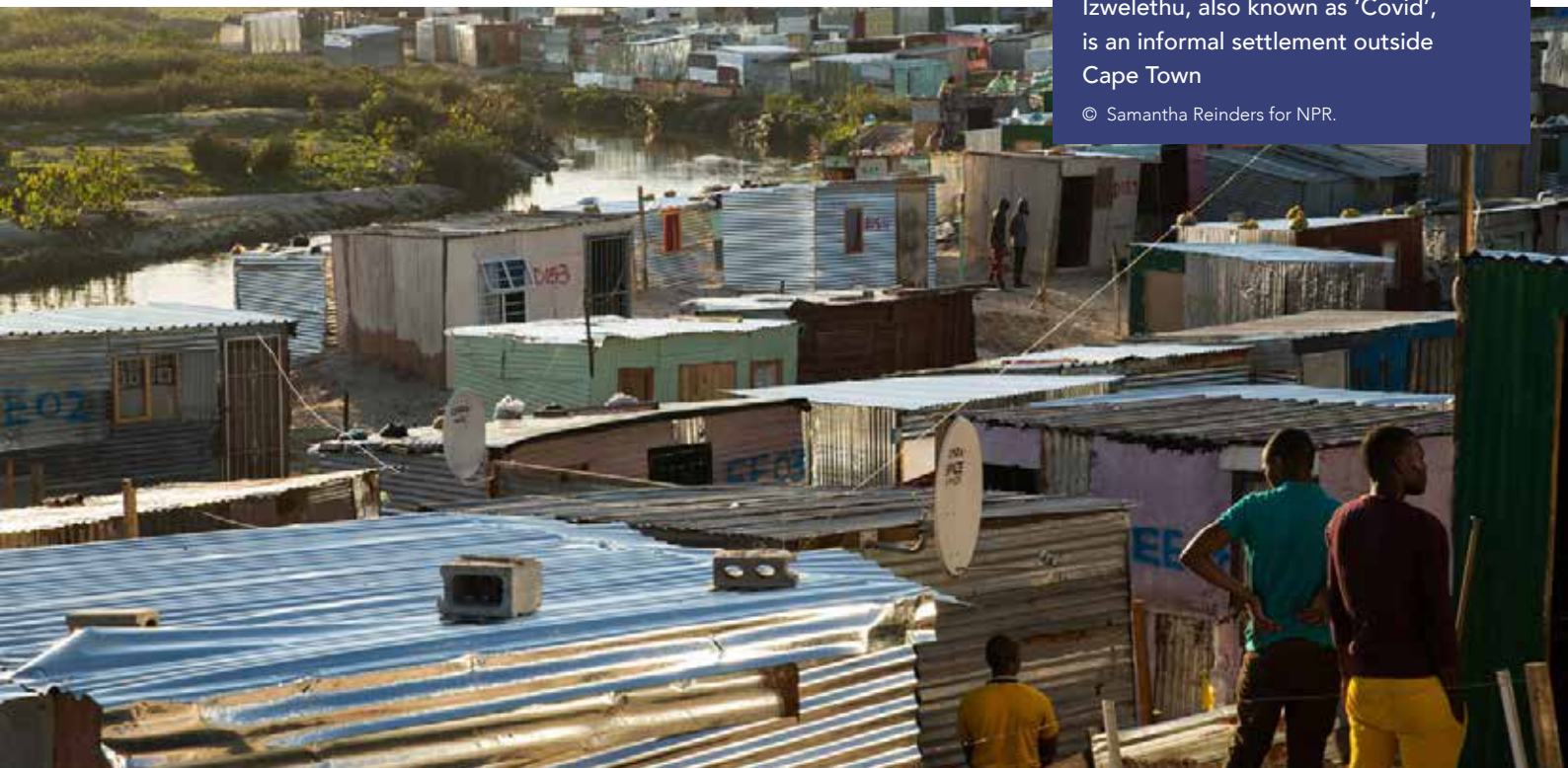


These principles underpinning each of the three strategies involve building a framework to foster the development of the following:

- Networks of trading-city partnerships.
- Frameworks for enhancing connectivity.
- A focus on linking value-chains and industry clusters.
- Strengthened rural-urban linkages.
- The mix of exogenous and endogenous growth.
- The growth of competitive subnational corridors and regional markets.

Izwelethu, also known as 'Covid', is an informal settlement outside Cape Town

© Samantha Reinders for NPR.





**There are significant opportunities for secondary city and regional local governments to collaborate in the delivery of regional public goods and services which would help overcome economics of scale and reduce transaction costs.**

## KEY ACTIONS TO SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF SECONDARY CITIES

1. Recognition of the role and Importance of secondary and intermediate cities in National Urban Strategies
2. Secondary city collaborative governance, especially linking strategic planning to financial planning and budgeting and e-governance
3. Local Government Finance Corporations to support the development of infrastructure, goods and services delivery in secondary cities
4. Human Resource Management and skills development, especially on e-learning and the development of learning and network communities. Focus on diaspora networks.
5. Environmental Systems Management and Regional Networks in supporting responses to climate change, water and solid waste management and improved urban amenities
6. Enhancing Connectivity within National and Regional Systems of cities, especially internet services, trade and co-investment and collaborative public sector governance

### Cover Photograph:

Agona- Swedru, Ghana (Brian H Roberts, 2019)

UN House,  
Boulevard du Regent 37  
1000 Brussels, Belgium

✉ [info@citiesalliance.org](mailto:info@citiesalliance.org)  
🌐 [www.citiesalliance.org](http://www.citiesalliance.org)  
f /CitiesAlliance

in @CitiesAlliance  
🐦 @CitiesAlliance



AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP  
GROUPE DE LA BANQUE AFRICAINE  
DE DEVELOPPEMENT

