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REGULATING URBANISATION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA THROUGH CLUSTER SETTLEMENTS: LESSONS FOR URBAN MANGERS IN ETHIOPIA

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ABSTRACT
Against the backdrop that urbanization in sub-Sahara African (SSA) countries, including Ethiopia, has occurred without the attendant growth and development spillovers; and that the inherent benefits of urbanization are threatened by the fast pace of urbanization, unparalleled speed and the uneven spatial spread, This paper posits that this challenge and indeed urban management can be address through a proxy regional planning tool; cluster formation. Settlement cluster formation that focuses on the potentials of small and medium towns. Small and Medium towns are supposed to represent a necessary link between the complex, sophisticated urban life and the simple, undiluted rural existence. They tend to combine the attributes of the two space-economies (Urban and Rural). They are, therefore, instruments through which the much desired rural-urban linkages can be strengthened for sustainable urbanization. The focus of the paper is on Regulating Urbanization in Ethiopia through Clustering of Settlements as a tool in Urbanization and Urban Management. Information and data assemblage was carried out through a review of urbanization issues; such as trends, local economic development opportunities, and urbanization options amongst others. This was further strengthened with a desktop analysis of pertinent government documents. The findings reveal that economic and settlement clusters within the framework of existing urban dynamism (small and medium town) can be formed in Ethiopia. It can serve as a reliable instrument for settlement stabilization and consequently sustainable urbanization**.** The paper recommends deliberate dispersal of mini-industrial and commercial corridors via Cluster formation as a major instrument for deflecting the army of migrants.
Key words: Rural, Urban, Linkages, Settlements, Cluster Urbanization and Ethiopia

1. INTRODUCTION

Urbanization per se is a process, and can not just, be understood only in terms of the number of rural-urban migrants, but also the functional relationships among and between the actors. It is a process that takes into account human, economic, social, amenities.., etc agglomerations, which translates an area of country side or village, into a town or part of one or the further growth and expansion of already existing urban centers. The increase in the proportion of urban vs the rural population, the continuous life style changes we observe in every day, the adoption and consumption of new technologies, and

innovations of various issues, including, economic, social, cultural, administrative, political and many more, and the general gradual transformation of the traditional life into modernity, the relinquishing of the rural life by the urban, etc are all the phenomena where urbanization can be explained. Therefore urbanizations is a positive development factor, capable of enhancing access to adequate shelter in a built environment, and through a gender sensitive and participatory approach, enable communities to have infrastructure access, governance, security, and employment opportunities (Yachan, 2005). The process has several positive and negative multiplier effects; a well managed urbanization provides opportunities for development, and if it goes in the wrong direction, urbanization can result in a number of malfunctioning particularly for the urban economy, an area where the veins of the national economy is anchored. Economic activities in urban centers, depending on the level of development, account for between 50 to 80% of the nations GDP, with the clear trend that, the quality of life for most people in the future will be determined, to a large extent by the quality of urban centers in their region. The increasing contribution of urban centers to countries' gross domestic product (GDP), globally, has made urbanization and urban development an attractive tool for economic development and poverty alleviation. This arises from the population threshold advantage, making urban centers the domain of trade and consequently employment.

Strong urban economies in such conditions can serve as the engine rooms of production, and sustainable urbanization (Adelman and Morris, 1971; Jacobs, 1984).The potential benefits of urbanization are, nevertheless, threatened in sub-Sahara African countries by the fast pace of urbanization with the uneven spatial spread of urban centers. This has occasioned a situation of accelerated urbanization without an accompanying economic growth to produce the public and private goods necessary for housing, infrastructure, and urban employment at the required scales (UN-Habitat, 2004). With urbanization level of about 40% and annual growth rate of 3.9 %, Africa's urbanization experience is unprecedented both in time and space(African Development Bank, 2005). This fast pace of urbanization especially in SSA, has created many problems which urban managers must grapple with. This is in addition to the spatial patterns; which depicts primate city structure an indicator of a lopsided urban system. Primate city example can be found in Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania, and Ghana just to mention a few. However, "well managed urban growth and development can contribute not just to economic advancement but also to reduce poverty and improved quality of life for all citizens, including the poor"(Un-Habitat, 2002).

Ethiopia, a predominantly agrarian country, has the lowest urbanization level- (16%) with and highest urban growth rate. The national urban growth rate is over 4.1%, higher than, the average African growth rate of 3.9%. The country is enmeshed in the circumstances of high prevalence of urban poverty, rapid

increase in urban population, with the poor facing vulnerability in various issues: poor sanitation, inadequate shelter, overcrowding, high proportion of vulnerable women, youth, children, elderly and destitute with very low incomes, high risk of disease and poverty trap for many residents (Ministry of Works and Urban Development, 2007).

This situation is further compounded by the weak rural-urban linkages, which, at the moment is limited and exists as truncated linkages, in the form of regional markets and the provision of some of limited economic and social services, a consequence of lack of economic infrastructure in the localities, Tagegne (2000). The flows of agricultural commodities from rural to urban markets and in turn flows of manufactured and imported goods from urban areas to rural settlements, which is a typology of spatial linkage, is generally poor. At the same time the flows of goods and services, which involve the transfer of income, and of course the people and capital mobility among households is poor due mainly to the largely dispersed and isolated nature of the rural setting. The linkage that represents the daily transactions between farmers and traders, producers of goods and services in urban areas and consumers are largely weak.

The present urbanization processes and policies are largely anti-rural as they neglect the urbanization needs of rural population (Yachan, 2005).Neither do policies take into account seriously rural-urban linkages as indispensable issues. Urbanization system that lacks such spatial integration, usually, by circumventing the role that medium and small towns play, will witness, skewed growth, creating and sustaining pressure on the few urban centers including the primacy structures. Ironically, the physical link and functional inertia needed for sustainable urbanization that integrates rural and urban areas in symbiotic rural-urban linkages are, indeed, firmly located in small and medium sized towns. Sustainable urbanization and indeed effective urban management must revolve around smart regional planning mechanisms such as the clustering option. Given this background the aim of this paper is to reflect on opportunities for settlement cluster formation as a measure for regulating urbanization in Ethiopia, with a view to maximizing urbanization benefits. The specific objectives are to:

- Profile the nature of settlement linkages
- Underscore the need for settlement clusters
- Offer a prototype economic cum settlement cluster within the urban system of Ethiopia

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2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology used to achieve objectives includes analysis of literature pertinent to urbanization, settlement cluster formation and rural-urban linkages. Review of theoretical works to understand the conceptual links between urbanization and rural-urban dynamics. The experience of other countries within the framework of Ethiopia's experience was also appraised. Its consistency with conditions in the developing world was also attempted. In what follows briefly draws literature on the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of rural-urban linkages so as to identify points of entry for policy. Methodologies and types of cluster formation were also analyzed. Settlement cluster as a tool for sustainable urbanization will also be looked at. Policies that facilitate rural-urban linkage and some criteria for setting policy priorities are identified. Data sources were secondary, but, focused essentially on regional resource strength of Sawla. *Sawla is* a small/medium town from the Southern Nations Nationalities Regional State (SNNPR). Based on the data obtained a prototype economic cum settlement cluster (ECSC) was put forward.

3. NATURE OF SETTLEMENT LINKAGES

Essentially, urbanization is a factor of five major forces: economic growth and development, technological change, rapid growth in the total population, a rural-urban exodus, and a net outward movement of population from cities to towns and villages (Balchin, Issac and Chen, 2000). Although the mentioned variables have significant roles to urbanization, the extent to which each plays, differ, with the highest share contributed by rural – urban migration. This has, nevertheless, been given a lip service in many government development programs and has resulted in the failure of urbanization spillover effects (Alaci, 2006).The vital significance of urban-rural linkages as a major approach in sustainable economic and social development is often dwindled due to the uncomplimentary posture urban and rural policies/programs or writers and academics or both. Rural regions across many developing countries suffer from various ailments. They include rural disabilities like remoteness in information, infrastructure (health, education, energy, and telephone), market & population loss through rural-urban migration etc. These results from sharp inequality in development between the two components of the space economy: urban and rural areas. The magnitude of this inequality has over the years been on the increase (Alaci, 2006; Abumere, 1987; Adeniyi, 1978).

Economic progress and overall development of any society is a factor of quality and quantity of employment availability. Employment is the basic stratum for any society's economic progress. Employment opportunities can be induced with availability of infrastructural facilities whose multiplier

effect generates concurrent opportunities. The absence of these facilities results in total economic stagnation and, consequently, encourages mass migration. The concentration of infrastructure in few urban centers must be recognized as a fundamental cause of developmental dichotomy, a major cause and effect of unsustainable urbanization process. Oluremi (2005) contends that "the fundamental cause of regional imbalance is disparity in regional employment and the provision of physical and social infrastructure". Nwaka (2005) further expounds several questions in matters of potential to support regional planning and development, and how to ensure that they do, in fact, improve the progress of the region. He argues that settlements of between 5,000 and 100,000 population range are favored because more than half of the urban population in Africa lives in urban centers f this size. Ethiopia has over 900 hundred urban settlements only 2% with a population of greater than or equal to 20,000. This implies that to harness the benefit of urbanization in Ethiopia depends to a large extent, on improving small & medium sized towns. These settlements are effective tools for integrating the urban and rural economies and for achieving a balanced distribution of urban populations. This can greatly relieve the pressure on the overstrained infrastructure, services and resources of the large cities by deflecting the fold of migrants and helping to disperse the clustering of industrial and commercial activities. The infrastructural services and facilities have direct impact on employment, agricultural enterprise, and rural welfare. Indeed, it is in this front that the battle of equitable regional development and sustainable urbanization can be achieved.

A number of other complementary variables can be introduced around the vicinity of the small and medium settlements to make the benefit more practical. For example, the introduction of academic institutions: university, college and training institutes, research and development organizations, and finance institutions among others can impact positively on human welfare with spillover effect to the surrounding rural area (Ifatimehin and Ufuah, 2006). In this respect, the availability of academic and research oriented institutions can be utilized optimally when there is a concomitant infrastructure service, ranging from physical such as road, transport, telecom, energy, to the social amenities of health, educations entertainment. Where rural-urban linkages are weak, the result is rural-urban exodus, over bloated but limited urban centers including primate city structure. These are scenarios of unsustainable urbanization, which is unable to sustain the present and future social and economic needs of its components. Absence of growth inducing agents, legal power to enforce compliance and the knowledge gap between investors and the policy itself has been adduced as one of the reason for the failure of the growth and service centers policies of the Kenyan Government in the late 60s (Ndegwa, 2005).

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It is these synopses that has generated and strengthened inequalities, de- emphasizing positive linkages that are inherent and that can be harnessed for collective benefits. The phenomenon of the rural-urban exodus induces enormous problems at both ends of the divide (urban/rural).The result of poorly managed small and medium sized settlements is either the perpetuation of poverty in the rural areas or the transfer of the same to urban centers through the migrating unemployed or unemployables. The spatial distribution of urban centers and the strong rural-urban linkage that exists within a national space can be an informed reason for the nature of both regional and national development planning. It is also a measure of urban service accessibility and modernization potentials. Careful analysis of urbanization, a process that takes into account, both the rural and urban transformations as a continuum, is critical to the emergence of clusters. This is because clusters promote the growth of small and medium sized towns and encourages spatial balance in settlement distribution. The benefits of a spatial city-size distribution include, but not restricted, to spatial/regional redistribution of wealth and resources. It is, thus, imperative to strengthen the growth of settlement clusters as lubricants of rural-urban linkages which ultimately harness and sustains urbanization process and benefits.

4. SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED SETTLEMENTS IN NATIONAL URBAN DEVELOPMENT

In developing countries, including Ethiopia, the role of small and intermediate urban centers in local, regional and national development and sustainable urbanization is immense. These centers contribute to sustainable urbanization development in five main ways. First, they act as centers of demand/markets for agricultural produce from the rural region, either for local consumers or as links to national and export markets. Access to markets is a prerequisite to increase rural agricultural incomes, and the proximity of local small and intermediate centers to production areas is assumed to be a key factor. Second, they act as centers for the production and distribution of goods and services to their rural hinterlands or regions. Such concentration is assumed to reduce costs and improve access to a variety of services, both public and private and for both rural households and enterprises. These centers provide service that includes agricultural extension, health, education, banking, post, professional services such as lawyers and accountants and lower order services such as bars and restaurants, and wholesale and retail sales of manufactured goods from within and outside the region. Third, the small and intermediate (medium) towns can serve as centers for the growth and consolidation of rural non-farm activities and employment, through the development of micro and small scale enterprises. Fourth, they attract rural migrants from the surrounding region through demand for non-farm labour, thereby, decreasing pressure on larger urban centres. Fifth, they provide effective roles in forward linkage: physical, economic, population movement, social, administrative and political issues with the large

and/or mega cities. Nevertheless, empirical evidences available show variations in the extent to which small and intermediate urban centres perform these roles. The central argument in this paper however, is that these roles can be enhanced through settlement amalgamation; a prototype Economic cum Settlement cluster (ECSC).

Unlike fragmented settlements, clustered towns serve as growth-engines and stabilizers of urbanization and economic growth. They have the natural tendency to properly align economic realities with spatial elements, and hence seen as economic development endeavors/catalysts, or economic cum settlement cluster. The Economic cum settlement cluster (ECSC), as being proposed here, is a corollary that dwells on the improvement of the economic convergence idea. Clustering amalgamates physical and functional specializations. It is the integration of localities: physical, sectoral, information, market.., to strengthen the realization of industrial development based on one or more economic resources. It may be in the form of localities being made to come closer through the pull effect of facilities and services concentrated at the cluster point (physical) or the increased interaction between the small villages a the cluster point by way of services and facilities.

The issue worth noting here is, if facilities cluster in a strategic location, it galvanizes economic activities with the concomitant precedence of industrialization, keeping other things constant. A cluster combines economic and demographic benefits, thus, increases collective actions and strengthens threshold factor. In this thinking, spatial re-organization can be integrated into intensification of economic activities by clustering formation to strengthen threshold. The coming together, physical and functional interactions, of a number of rural communities with limited inter locality distance defines the spatial re-organization in the small/intermediate town cluster where its target is to promote economic and settlement convergence as a spatial unit of development process. Through clusters the physical and sectoral interactions agglomerate and business enterprises found together (Kiggundu, 2007). Clusters have two important features: on the one hand they exhibit spatial elements and on the other enjoy economic advantages. These attributes must be clearly discerned to initiate a clustering scheme.

In African countries, most clusters are based on spatial proximity and sectoral specialization (Zeng, 2007). Clusters can, generally, be formed in two ways (i) as a result of spontaneous agglomeration of enterprises and other related actors and (ii) policy induced. Techno poles, industrial parks, incubators and export processing zones are examples of policy induced clusters (Zeng, 2007). The ESC, as advocated, falls under the policy induced clusters. Several factors are cardinal in the formation of a cluster. Some African countries show that attributes of natural resources, market proximity, entrepreneurship, government intervention, amongst others, are fundamental ingredients inducing

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clustering. The Lake Naivsha Cut Flower Cluster in Kenya, Lake Victoria Fishing Cluster in Uganda, and The Wine Cluster in South Africa are examples of Natural resource-based clusters. Proximity to markets, availability of infrastructure, and related services have influenced the rise of clusters, such as those of Otigba Computer Village in Ikeja-Lagos, Nigeria; Kamakunji cluster in Nairobi, Kenya; Suame cluster in Kumasi, Ghana; and Mwenge cluster in Dar-es-Salam, Tanzania. Availability of entrepreneurship, tacit knowledge, and basic skills are also important factors for business cluster. The success story of Otigba clusters, Nnewi auto- parts clusters all in Nigeria and the Kamukunji metalwork cluster in Kenya are all attributable to the availability of local entrepreneurship. The existences of businesses that initially meet the demand of local markets as well as deliberate government intervention are also necessary factors. A good example of how government intervention through policy or plan can lead to the formation of a cluster is the Mwenge clusters and the Suame clusters.

The economic cum settlement cluster (ECSC) decentralizes commercial and industrial corridors away from over blotted primate centers. It is a hopeful variant which premise on regional income inequalities common to all countries but with greater severity in less developed countries. It demonstrates that income disparities can reduce as level of development increases and widens. The clusters which operate along physical and functional specializations emphasize regional competitive advantages. Thus, a commercial/industrial corridor can grow based on one or a number of agricultural products of the clustering area. Africa's spatial system is largely homocentric. In such a system inequality normally tends to increase between regions unless there is a counter balancing force in time to restore relative equilibrium. The counter balancing force here refers to deliberate government intervention aimed at regional equality in development. This is because existing in- equalities cannot be rectified without far reaching changes and the re-organization of the existing spatial structures. In fact, the inherent lopsidedness of existing spatial system, if left without deliberate intervention, can only help to reinforce current status. Intervention may entail infrastructural provision and distribution against economic determinants initially. As Abumere (1987) pointed out "once this (infrastructure) is in place, several private investments may be attracted to those hitherto deprived areas. Besides, governments need to encourage indigenous private investors to locate in the deprived areas". This is similar to the British government experience of 1934, when it deliberately encouraged new industries and firms to locate in depressed areas, the measure has remained the spine of regional policy ever since. ESC, as conceptualized, urbanizes rural areas by extending urban benefits to rural dwellers without the conventional social, economic, and cultural dislocation associated with migration. This is consistent with the regional urban development objective of Ethiopia which lays emphasis on "promotion of small rural service centers and medium sized towns to strengthen rural-urban linkages, promotion of cities and

towns with economic and social objectives that transcend regional objectives, promotion and encouragement of private sector participation in developing cities and towns,…." amongst others (Ministry of Federal Affairs / National Urban Planning Institute 2002).

5. ECONOMIC AND SETTLEMENT CLUSTER: ETHIOPIAN CONTEXT

The country has roughly nine hundred and twenty five (925) urban settlements, with 105 of them, having population of over 20,000 people, 2/3 have population not exceeding 5000 (UN-HABITAT, 2007) spreading across the 9 Regional States and 2 chartered cities. Majority of what fits into the definition of urban settlements are, therefore, small & medium sized localities with limited social and economic activities. The distribution, size and spacing vary significantly. The Regional States of Afar, Gambella, Benishangul Gumuz and Somali have the lowest number of urban centers. Oromiya, Amhara, SNNPR and Tigray have the highest concentration, comprising 3/4 of the entire urban population (Tagegne 2000; Ministry of Federal Affairs, 2002). The challenges posed by the pattern of urbanization in such regional states generally include very poor social and economic activities within and between urban centers. The capital, Addis Ababa alone, accounts for 1/5 of the GDP of the urban sector (Cour, 2003 in Kessides, 2006). It is by any standard a typical primate city exerting strong pull effect as the domain of complex and high social and economic activities and thus has become the principal focus of migrants from all parts of the country.

Considering the role of intermediate urban centers in regional development, Ethiopia's size and diversity presents a regional development opportunity that fits into the ESC as advocated. Rondineli in Sattertherwaite and Tacoli (2003) pointed out that, a locationally efficient network of small, medium-sized, and larger urban centers can give rise to services, facilities and infrastructure clusters that may not fit economically into the structure of small villages and hamlets to serve a widely dispersed population from an accessible central place. In context of the central place theory each of the 105 (central places) small and medium sized towns can be mapped out delimiting its present and potential zone of urban influence. Based on this, some form of hierarchy can be imposed and then the focus of cluster formation delimited. The point of clustering represents the central place for groups of localities and the sum of the localities constitutes the clustering area and a spatial development unit.

6. THE SAWLA CLUSTER

Sawla, one of the towns in the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State, is estimated to have a population of over 21,000 (Figure 1 and Table 1).The area is categorized within the ambit of

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an intermediate urban center and is the administrative center of Gofa district (woreda[1]) in Gamo Gofa Zone.

TABLE 1 - SAWLA CLUSTER COMMUNITY

Locality Name	Population	Distance
Sawla	21,707	Nil
Yela	1,823	Under 5km
Sazga	2780	5km
Turga	2268	5km
Mirso-ola	N.A	5-7km
Shefite	1641	10km
Bulki	4263	17km
Zelu zetsla	1809	N.A
Ouba Ganchela	1460	10-12km
Ouba Dema	2335	Do
OubaYanbesa Yenge	2568	Do
Ouba Beregono	1478	Do

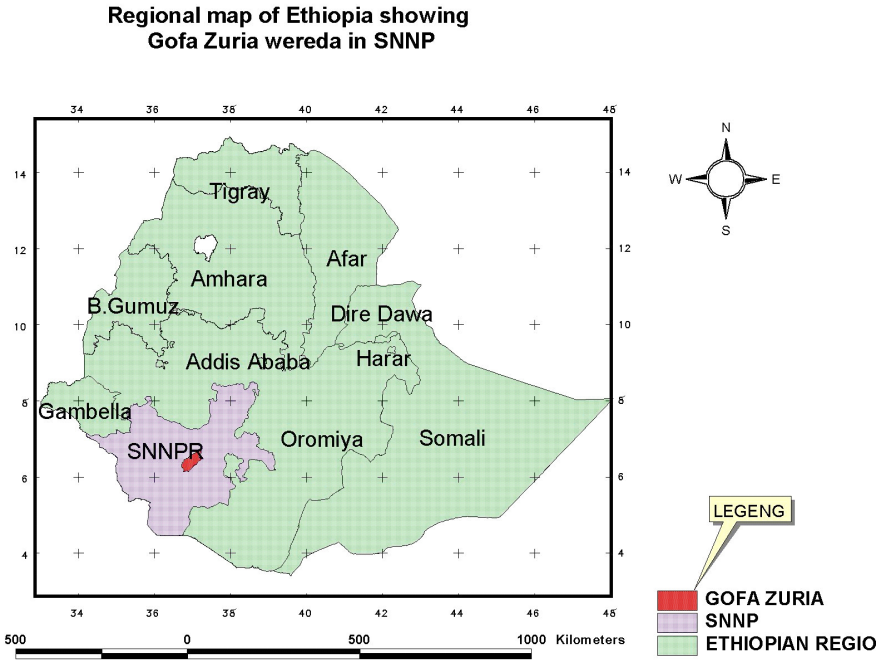

FIGURE 1 – REGIONAL MAP OF ETHIOPIA

It is one of the twenty two reform towns of the region and is surrounded by 9 *woredas* and several other smaller urban centers and villages. The envisaged cluster of the Sawla town encompasses the entire

[1] The fourth level in the five tier administrative units of Ethiopia

district in the surrounding. Being in the center of key agricultural community and untapped natural resources the functional and spatial benefits of the area are indeed, enormous for economic growth and development to the region. The major source of income and livelihood in the community constitute agriculture and the area enjoys a comparative advantage in commercial crop production. It is known for Sorghum, Maize, Wheat, Barley, Beans, Pea, Harcot bean, Lentil, Groundnut, Sweet potato, Coffee, *Koreriema*, Ginger among others, where they are categorized as the commercial area (Table 2).

TABLE2 - CULTIVATED AND PRODUCTION OF MAJOR SEASONAL AND ANNUAL CROPS

S/no	Crop type	Area (ha)	Production (quintal)
1	Sorghum	3950	27650
2	Maize	12259	160946
3	Teff	6100	42590
4	Wheat	1540	12320
5	Barley	1880	15040
6	Bean	1240	8430
7	Pea	2185	14595
8	Haricot bean	2100	16800
9	Lentil	120	600
10	Ground nut	632	5044
11	Sweat potato	3000	300,000
12	Coffee	433	2706
13	Korerima	65	260
14	Ginger	10	1000

Source: Gofa Zuria Woreda rural development Office (Fikru, 2006)

With a record of about 6597 beehives, apiculture, has great potentials to its local development. Livestock keeping is also an important activity in the area. Cattle, Sheep, Goat, Poultry, Horse, Mule, and Donkey are leading livestock of the woreda (Table 3) In addition, large expanse of arable land across the several small sized villages constitutes potential for large-scale commercial farming. With only 34% of the total land area under cultivation, the remaining 66% is an opportunity milieu. This is made up of grazing land, forest and bushes, cultivatable land etc (Table 4). It has also been noted that the people of the area have a strong work behavior and social organization that leverage harmonious living and working together (Fikru, 2006). The case in favor of a Sawla cluster is that the Sawla economic space can be utilized and planned; assuming it to be a micro region, where macro regional influences and externalities are non-existent. Significant constraints faced by Sawla relates to low level of infrastructural development and poor service provision. Within the immediate neighborhoods there are about eleven (11) rural settlements with individual threshold population of between 1000 -5000 and a combined threshold of over 44,000 with the distance between Sawla and the neighboring settlement ranging between 2km- 17km (Table 1).

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TABLE 3 - LIVESTOCK SIZE BY CATEGORY

Livestock by category	Number
Cattle	116,959
Sheep	20,197
Goat	14,430
Poultry	63,170
Horse	2,474
Mule	2,299
Donkey	250
Total	**219,779**

TABLE 4 - LAND USE PATTERN

S/no	Land use	Area in hectare	% share
1	Cultivated land	54,843	34
2	Cultivable land	6,278	4
3	Forest, bushes and shrubs	17,391	11
4	Grazing land	23,400	15
	Others	58,581	36
	Total	160,493	100

In Sawla infrastructural investments have potentials to generate agro-allied industries, specifically, coffee-the leading cash crop in the region and the country as a whole. A number of coffee based agro allied firms/enterprises can cluster in Sawla specializing in different aspects, fostering production, increasing value chain, and being able to achieve collective efficiency. The advantage of this set up is that employment can be generated as new firms/enterprises agglomerate to form the economic cluster. The multiplier nature of this sector further generates more employment. In Kenya, for example, the cut flower cluster alone has an estimated farm employment of 350 workers for small scale farms, between 500-1000, for medium scale farms and between 1000-2000 workers for large scale farms, while the average employee per firm is between 250-6000 across 24 large firms (Bolo, 2007).

Given the spatial distribution of localities within Sawla's territorial sphere of influence, clustering can lead to the emergence of Walter Christaller hierarchical settlement morphology. The short distance between Sawla and the neighboring settlements will enable the rural society to benefit from services: hospital, schools, market and banks without necessarily migrating to Sawla. Similarly, coffee production can assume a large scale dimension as higher prices are paid. More land is now available for greater production since the emerging coffee cluster should have freed some hands from farms. The ruralites who leave farm for industry do not necessarily migrate to Sawla because the very short distance may encourage commuting from the domiciled country side. The implication is that these sets of urbanized rural dwellers could also contribute in community development in their native homeland, thus, moving

the entire fabric of the society forward. More importantly, too, the expansion that follows rising income levels at both Sawla and the neighboring localities may lead to the gradual colonization of the peri-urban Sawla, firmly establishing the true settlement cluster. Using motorcycle as means of transport can also become a viable venture. In this case, the strong rural-urban linkage, which Ethiopia currently requires at any cost, can optimally be flourished and utilized. In this way, Sawla can relieve the traditional city problems of unemployment, homelessness, and infrastructural malfunctioning. The ESC as put forward for Sawla is replicable within the diverse regional landscape of Ethiopia, with variation, depending on the economic resources of competitive advantage in the various regions and sub regions.

7. CONCLUSION

Although urbanization is progressing at a fast pace in Ethiopia like many Sub-Saharan countries, the benefits of urbanization have remained a mirage, as demonstrated by the multi-dimensioned challenges urban areas are faced with. Such challenges have actually turned the national urban landscape to a national blight. Attributes of degraded environment, squalid and inadequate housing condition deteriorating social services e.g. growing and uncollected refuse; unreliable water supply; epileptic power supply; poor roads among others tell the story. These entirely have over time snowballed into a state of insecurity and the urbanization of poverty. African cities rather than be a catalyst to the economy and thus, the welfare of its people, have become parasitic, failing in its traditional role of an escape route from poverty associated with the rural areas. It is for these and many other reasons that make investment focusing on this novel tactics for efficient management of the urban system expedient.

There is therefore an urgent need for government across sub-Saharan countries to identify growth inducing agents, build capacity of professional planners, and managers to re-invigorate the development of small and medium size towns. In this case, establishing economic settlement cluster (ESC) would require careful examination and documentation of some basic economic and demographic indicators as clustering potentials. The task in this category would require identification of economic resources that can be industrially harnessed through their economic viability and sustainability as well as the presence of localities or villages in close proximity such that the cumulative interaction can generate requisite economic threshold. Critical to the existence of ESC is the establishment of resources and opportunities data bank at different government levels. This can form a basis for determining the competitive advantage of various regions, sub regions, and or localities.

The suggested areas requiring government intervention include promoting incentives that may form part of the growth inducing agents. This may include, but not limited, to (i) government policy on land, for example whether land can be obtained easily and how such can constitute industrial incentives, (ii)

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policies of tax holidays for a number of years in respect of industries and firms establishing in the ESC, (iii) industrial sites and service or industrial layouts in designated ESC location are part of the areas requiring government action. As Zeng (2007) pointed out, clusters are important pockets of economic vitality and sustainability. Their sustainability and growth depends on governmental vital and multifaceted role through the provision of leadership and coordination. There is a need to establish a favorable regulatory and incentive based environment, which facilitates innovation, knowledge and technology acquisition. The provision of high quality goods (infrastructure and services) which benefits the private sector also rests with government. The existence of infrastructural facilities like roads, water supply, hospital, electricity, scales up the quality of life and promotes industrial establishments, thereby sustainable urbanization.

In the context of this study, it will be able to transform the agricultural surpluses from the food production process into manufactured goods if small and medium town settlements are properly utilized. The presence of agro-allied industries would also guarantee employment and consequently raise income levels. As argued we can enhance sustainable urbanization and maximize the benefits of urbanization by boosting the rural-urban linkage. In this way overall growth in the economy is not retarded, yet we can succeed in narrowing the variant of spatial inequalities within a national space.

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