

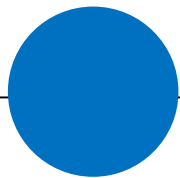
Discussion:

The Spatial Organization of Cities - Land

- “Backyarding”, by Jan Brueckner
- “Compactness”, by Vernon Henderson

5th Urbanization and Poverty Reduction
Research Conference

September 2018



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What led to the current spatial organization of cities?

Two examples from Africa

- “Backyarding”, by Jan Brueckner, Claus Rabe, and Harris Selod
 - Intensive margin: land use at the parcel level
 - Determinants: private decisions of landlords and tenants
- “Colonial Legacies: Shaping African Cities”, by Neeraj Baruah, Vernon Henderson, and Cong Peng
 - Intensive and extensive margin: compactness and street layout at the neighborhood/city level
 - Long-run determinants: French vs. British colonial origin

“Backyarding”, by Brueckner, Rabe, Selod

- A previously unstudied phenomenon
 - Backyard shacks = informal sublets in the backyards of owner-occupied, government-subsidized house
- Beyond South Africa, patterns common in developing countries:
 - A range of tenure modes between formal and informal
 - Anecdotal evidence of slum dwellers renting out public housing instead of living there
- Key findings:
 - Owners trade-off consumption of backyard space vs. rental income
 - More backyarding in areas with better job access

“Backyarding”, by Brueckner, Rabe, Selod

- What can we learn from backyarding by revealed preferences?
 - Backyards as an alternative to slums
 - Value of job and service access
 - True demand for space among low-income households

- Policy implications
 - Misallocation in public housing?
 - Rationale / political economy of RPD housing program design?
 - Should something be done about backyarding?
 - Efficiency enhancing? Counterfactual?
 - Are there negative externalities?
 - Implications for land use regulations: minimum lot sizes

“Backyarding”, by Brueckner, Rabe, Selod



Some comments on the empirics

- Current analysis: comparison in quantities across locations.
With more data:
 - Rents
 - Comparison with slums
 - Time variation?
- Control for more location characteristics
 - E.g.: distances from landmarks, topography... etc
 - Why were certain locations selected for RDP housing?
- Beyond job access:
 - Services access: schools, health centers...(from Openstreetmap?)
 - Markets and retail

“Colonial Legacies: Shaping African Cities”, by Baruah, Henderson, and Peng

- Impressive data collection: over 300 African cities
 - Measure properties of the urban fabric: sprawl, regularity of street networks
 - Metrics comparable across cities
 - Levels and changes
- Key findings:
 - Long-lasting impact of colonial origin on urban form
 - French-origin cities are more compact and with a more regular (grid-like) street network
 - Old and new parts of the city: more than just physical persistence in colonial structures
 - More compact neighborhoods provide better access to utilities to residents

“Colonial Legacies: Shaping African Cities”, by Baruah, Henderson, and Peng

Mechanisms: a legacy of...?

- Legal institutions: property rights, enforcement, common law vs civil law...

- Preferences and architectural style (e.g. “Garden city” paradigm)

- Other determinants (potentially different between French and British)
 - Military / security considerations
 - Public health (e.g. green belts /cordons sanitaires etc.)

“Colonial Legacies: Shaping African Cities”, by Baruah, Henderson, and Peng

Mechanisms: a legacy of...?

Variation within colonial power would be helpful

- Legal institutions: property rights, enforcement, common law vs civil law...
 - French Civil Code declared applicable at different times?
 - Variation in local land tenure systems
 - Development occurring outside official city boundaries
- Preferences and architectural style (e.g. “Garden city” paradigm)
 - Size of expatriate population?
- Other determinants (potentially different between French and British)
 - Military / security considerations
 - Public health (e.g. green belts /cordons sanitaires etc.)
 - Cities that experienced outbreaks?
 - Ecology of vector-born diseases?

“Colonial Legacies: Shaping African Cities”, by Baruah, Henderson, and Peng

- Colonial origins → urban form today → outcomes?
 - Pollution
 - Economic activity: firms, retail
 - Public goods / amenities (from Openstreetmap?)
 - Compactness of French cities may be good for service delivery...
 - ...but heavy-handedness in urban planning may be undesirable in other dimensions (e.g. restrictive land use regulations)?

- Data
 - Informal settlements captured by the GHLS dataset?

The spatial organization of cities

How should cities be configured to promote growth / quality of life?

➤ What we do know:

- Urban expansion involves reconfiguration of cities at the intensive and extensive margin
- Spatial layout has implications for economic activity, public service delivery, transit...
- Spatial structure of cities is determined by policy, geography, history, markets

➤ Why we should learn more:

- Urban transformation will require physical investments with persistent effects
- Concerns: dynamic inefficiency / misallocation

➤ How we can learn more:

- Data for future research: remote sensing + surveys