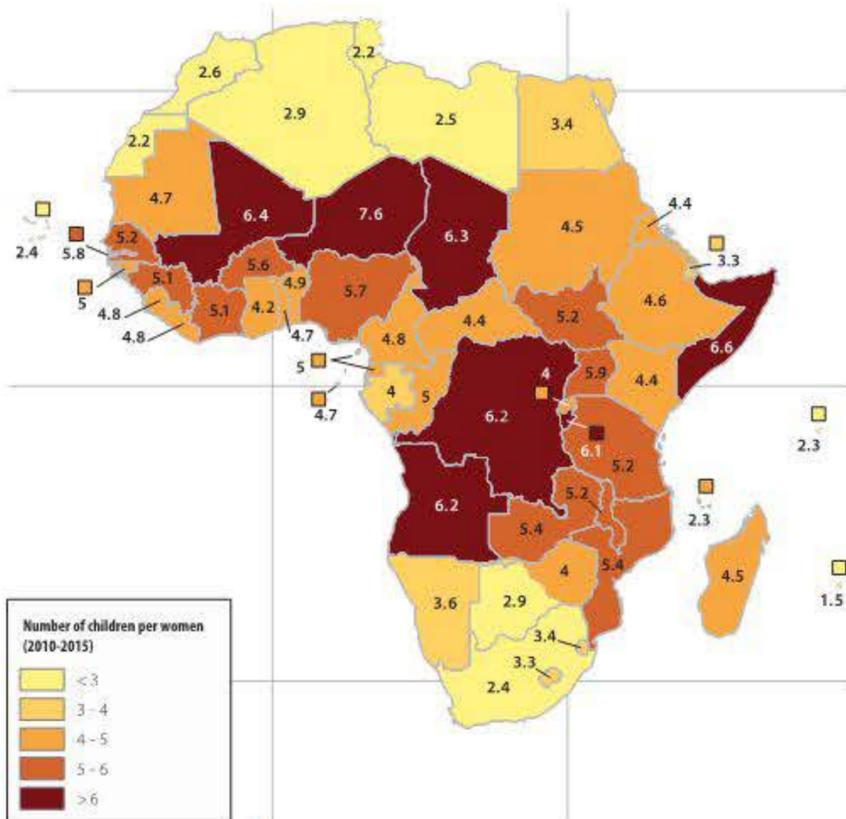


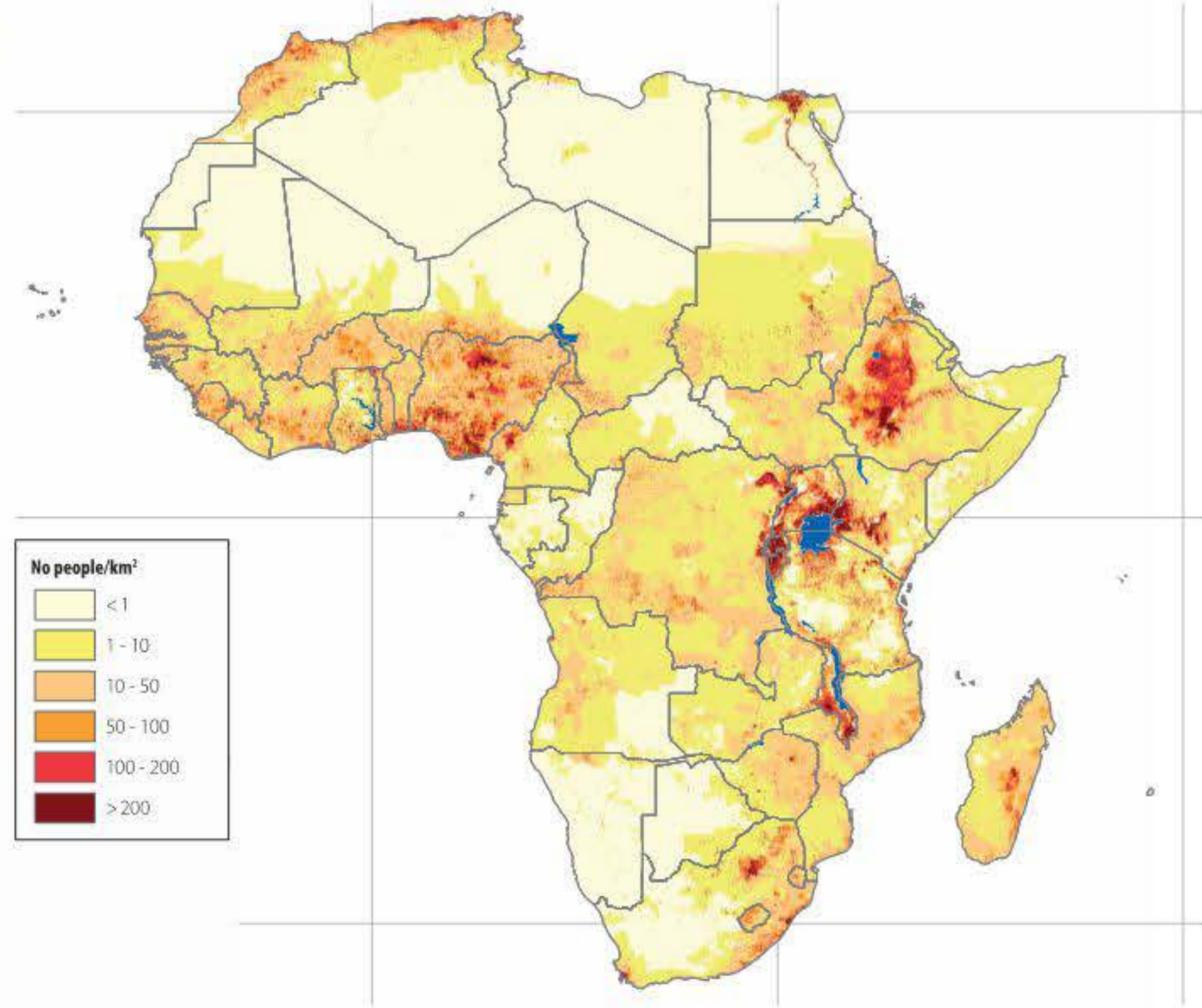
M2. Fertility rate (average 2010-2015)

Source WPP 2015



M4. Population density in 2010

Source Worldpop 2013



M3. Urban and rural population ratio in 2015

Source WUP 2014

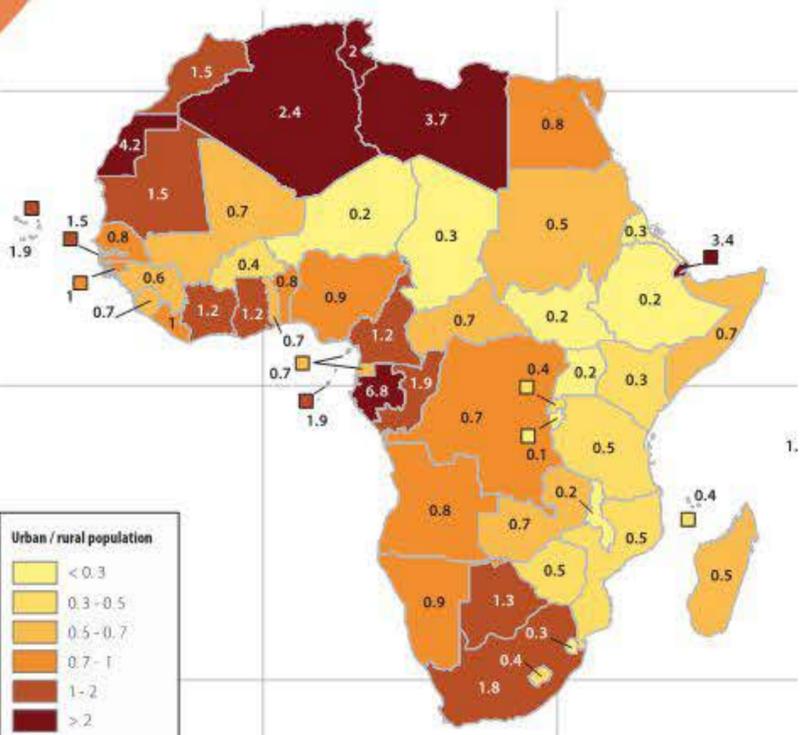


Fig. 1. Evolution of rural population by regions and countries (1950-2050)

Source WUP 2014

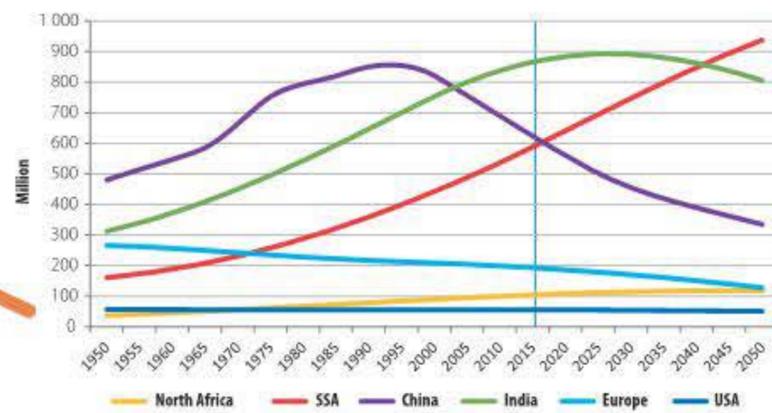
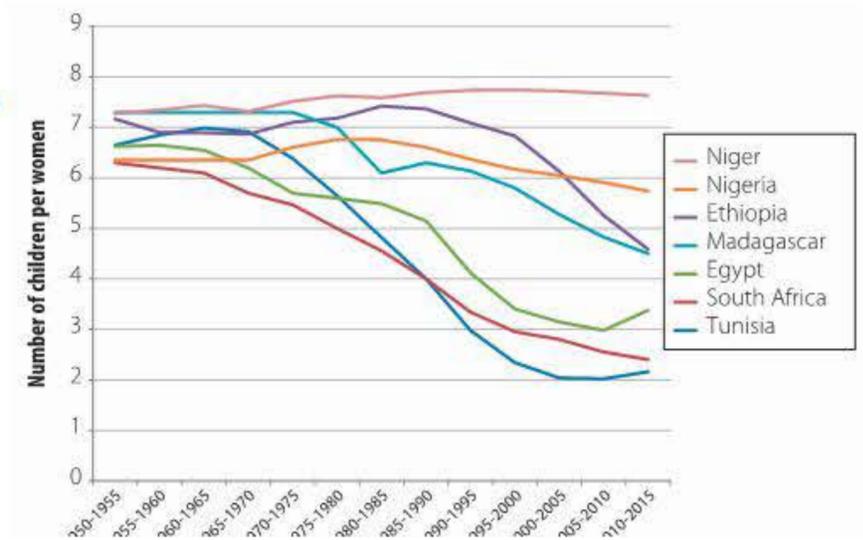


Fig. 2. Evolution of fertility rates (1950-2015)

Source WPP 2015



RURAL AND URBAN DENSIFICATION CONTINUES

The African continent is vast with an unequally distributed population. It has experienced high population growth over the last 50 years, which has corrected its former demographic deficit. If current dynamics continue, the results will be population densification, with serious implications for the relationship between people and natural resources, and changes to territorial configurations.

• The exceptional scale of the population boom in Africa

The African continent is the last region in the world to have begun its demographic transition. Unlike in Asia, where demographic change was rapid, this transition is slower than expected – United Nations projections are regularly revised upwards –, and is accompanied by an exceptional population boom: the population is expected to reach almost 2.5 billion people in 2050 (compared to 1.2 billion in 2015). This growth will result in a complete reversal of relative demographic weights: in 2050, Africa will have three and a half times as many people as Europe, whereas the European population was twice that of Africa in 1950.

This growth is explained by better public health and continued high fertility rates resulting in an average annual growth rate of around 2.5% (compared to 1% in Asia). These average aggregate values clearly hide considerable differences between North Africa and Southern Africa, where the number of children per woman has dropped to less than 3, and the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, where this figure often still stands at between 4 and 5. Diversity is also

seen within West, East and Central Africa, and is highly correlated with the rate of urbanisation, with regions or countries where the number of children per woman is still more than 6 (the Central Sahel, DR Congo and Angola).

Sub-Saharan Africa is about to undergo demographic change on an unprecedented scale. While its population increased over the last 40 years in proportions equivalent to those of China or India, growth over the next 40 years will be more than twice as high (1.4 billion more people instead of 650 million), whereas the population of China will decline and that of India will increase by only 400 million people.

• A slow shift from rural to urban

These population dynamics will accompany the progressive shift from rural to urban. Urbanisation in Africa has skyrocketed, with a tenfold increase in the number of city dwellers since the 1950s, but it remains low in comparison with the global average, with the exception of the Mediterranean coasts and the mining regions of South Africa. The urban boom of the 1950s to 1970s (with annual growth rates close to 7%) was followed by more moderate urban growth, which has stabilised at around 4% per year since the 1980s, as a consequence of the structural crisis. This trend has not been altered by the economic recovery of the 2000s.

The countryside thus maintains its demographic lead over the cities and the urban/rural ratio remains at less than 1, with the exception of North Africa, South Africa and several coastal

countries in the Gulf of Guinea. Although the relative importance of cities will continue to increase, providing more and more opportunities for rural producers (the urban/rural ratio will rise from 0.6 on average today to 1.2 in 2050), the population in the countryside will continue to grow in absolute terms. This is a second African exception, since the rural population is projected to include 350 million more people by 2050 and to carry on expanding after this date, contrary to the rest of the world.

• A new population pattern

The demographic surge is reshaping population distribution. This has long been marked by low average population densities and contrasts between highly populated regions and largely uninhabited areas, as a result of interconnected environmental and historical factors. Low-density areas often reflect the arid environment, such as the Namib Kalahari, the Horn of Africa and especially the Sahara. They also correspond to the great equatorial forest of the Congo basin. The older areas of settlement are situated in fertile zones, such as the Nile Valley or the highlands of the Great Lakes, Ethiopia and western Cameroon, and in environments that have historically provided protection, such as the mountains of North Africa and the mangroves of West Africa. The agricultural export and mining regions that sprang up in the late 19th century also established large urban and rural populations.

The continent's average population density has risen from 3.3 people per km² in 1900 to 7.5 in 1950 and 39.3 in 2015. For the last 50 years, high density areas have become more so, while the agricultural frontiers have pushed into regions that were once sparsely populated (Madagascar, south-western Côte d'Ivoire, and northern Cameroon). Some urban centres in the Sahara are even growing through the control of mining activities and

migration, despite an unstable geopolitical environment. The few cases of rural decline (inland Gabon, Algerian Kabylia) are the exception.

These dynamics are putting increasing pressure on natural resources: extensive long fallow agriculture systems based on family user rights are being called into question. Tensions are growing between uses and users of land and water (agriculture, livestock farming, urbanisation and mining). To address climate uncertainty linked to global changes and to the need to step up agricultural productivity, the use of water resources is increasing. Shortages are sometimes a threat, as in North Africa. Deforestation is affecting biodiversity while eroding the environmental capital.

With population densification, the boundaries between rural and urban areas are blurring. They are witnessing the emergence of new territories on the outskirts of major cities and roads linking regional capitals via strings of secondary towns. This is exemplified by spatial dynamics between the coast of the Gulf of Guinea and the Sudanian zone, or in the eastern part of the Great Lakes region. Large-scale intra- and inter-regional migrations are to be expected as a result of this exceptional population growth, as well as spatial inequalities in terms of development that are likely to grow in the absence of support policies.

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