



EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF

RurbanAfrica
African Rural-City Connections

RurbanAfrica Policy Brief No. 1

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INTRODUCTION

RurbanAfrica: African Rural-City Connections is an EU-FP7 funded research project that was initiated in April 2012. The purpose of this RurbanAfrica Policy Brief No. 1 is to provide a background for why a more concerned focus on rural-city connections in Sub-Saharan Africa is needed. The Policy brief will also in a short form introduce some of the initial findings from the first phase of research (April 2012-August 2013).

EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

The RurbanAfrica Project

Agriculture remains central to national economies of Sub-Saharan Africa. Despite the fact that, on aggregate, agriculture's share of GDP is only around 15 percent, it is still the main occupation of the majority of the population and generates important export earnings as well as foodstuffs for both rural and urban populations. But agricultural production systems are undergoing

rapid and profound transformations that include growing incorporation in world markets often leading to increasing wealth as well as increasing inequality and social polarisation.

Sub-Saharan Africa is urbanizing. Africa currently has a low proportion of its population living in cities and towns. This is rapidly changing, however, and by the middle of this century it is predicted that the majority of Africans will be urban residents. Urbanisation is largely the consequence of development, and the spatial concentration of people and enterprises is an integral part of economic growth in most of the world. It is also the consequence of major transformations in agriculture, with production systems increasingly linked to global markets and a declining proportion of the population engaged in farming. As a result, the lives of rural residents are more and more connected to urban areas and activities, and vice versa.

Migration and mobility as livelihoods strategies. Migration and mobility go hand in hand with urbanisation. Migration enables rural households to take advantage of economic opportunities both in the city and in the countryside and remittances can contribute to rural development, but for poor migrants finding decent employment and accommodation in the cities can be a struggle. Thus, the rapid shift from rural to urban areas of the population of many African nations, the major transformations in agriculture production and the increased mobility of rural and urban residents are this century's main challenge for policy-makers.

Rural-urban connections: opportunity or challenge? The links between rural and urban people, activities and areas have great potential for socially equitable and environmentally sustainable economic development. They can also exacerbate inequalities and increase poverty. Realising the potential and addressing the downsides requires good forward planning and policies. But good planning and policies need good, reliable information that is relevant and accessible to both national and local governments.

Inadequate governance responses to rural and urban transformations increase inequality. All too often, there is little forward planning for rapid urban growth and urban residents' movements within cities. For a very large proportion of urban dwellers, finding affordable shelter can be extremely difficult and many are forced to live in marginal locations that are often environmentally hazardous and do not have adequate basic infrastructure. Similar processes take place in rural areas as the incorporation of African agriculture in global markets benefits some groups and at the same time increases inequalities and restricts access to land and water for others.

The RurbanAfrica project seeks to contribute to the production of information on these complex processes through case studies in four Sub-Saharan African countries: **Cameroon, Ghana, Rwanda and Tanzania**. It also seeks to engage with policy-makers and civil society in refining the research agenda and discussing the implications of the findings to ensure that the information gathered is relevant and contributes to local and national debates around the formulation of policy and planning.

Insights and enquiries

The first phase (April 2012 to August 2013) of the RurbanAfrica project has focused on exploring what is already known about agricultural transformations, rural dynamics, migration and urbanization. Thus existing analyses and policy papers within the respective area have been collected and analyzed for each African country and compared across them. The following is a short presentation of the outcomes of the explorations and some of the enquiries that will guide the

next phase (RurbanAfrica Briefings presenting this work can be found: <http://geo.ku.dk/rurbanafrika/outreach/>).

Agricultural transformations and rural dynamics

Our reviews show that there are notable differences in the agricultural sectors of the four countries due to their history, agro-ecological and socio-economic characteristics and governance systems. Nonetheless, we can identify three main models: the large estate model, the peasant/smallholder model, and the elite demonstration model. Over time the relative importance of these models in the national development strategies has changed, as the internal content of the models are modified and there are cases of hybridization. A key finding, however, is the continuity of the basic models: there is quite striking temporal and substantive resemblances in the main transformative models applied to agricultural production and rural development. In sum, the 'building blocs' for agricultural transformation have by and large been maintained over time – and there is a trend towards a return to the basic colonial model although the former public support to peasant farming is removed.

- How do the agricultural models interact with other change dynamics in forming actual regional agricultural transformation?
- How are new commercial investors entering the agricultural sector, supported by state funds given to commercially viable medium-sized farms, and to what extent are these developments challenge the peasant/smallholder farmer model?
- Will the renewed focus on commercial farming stimulate local rural economies? And will such 'new' rural economies be sufficiently dynamic and labour-intensive as to absorb small-scale and subsistence farmers and landless labourers in non-farm employment?
- This later is clearly a desirable outcome, but it should not be assumed that it is the inevitable result of the growth of export-oriented, large-scale production. Indeed, much evidence suggests that this is unlikely to be the case. Can appropriate policies compensate for these market failures? And if so, what policies are effective and replicable, what institutions and governance systems are necessary for their implementation?

Rural livelihoods and mobility

Mobility and migration of Africa's rural areas are not characterized by a uni-directional movement from rural to urban alone but also include people's temporary movement, whether daily, weekly and/or seasonally. Agricultural transformation, among other things impacted by globalization, and related policies have mixed effects on rural household's mobility strategies. Structural Adjustment Programmes and Poverty Reduction Strategies have had considerable, although varied, impacts on rural and urban livelihoods and thus influenced mobility patterns. Women are increasingly seeking paid employment and therefore taking more prominent part in mobility and migration. The migration literature of Sub-Saharan Africa is biased towards a transnational perspective that underestimates the magnitude and importance of domestic migration and mobility. Among a variety of processes that have a bearing on current human mobility in sub-Saharan Africa, three key drivers are identified for the entire region: the processes of urbanization, agricultural transformation and globalization. In addition, specific national-level policies – often triggered by internationally driven regulations, requirements and guidelines – are of vital influence for domestic spatial and temporal patterns of mobility.

- How do rural households respond to agricultural transformations and what roles do migration and mobility play in these?
- What role do rural-city livelihood connections play in supporting rural livelihood dynamics – how do remittance practices support rural investments?

- Will there be particular gendered livelihoods effects of changing or sustained economic dynamics in the researched agricultural regions?

Cities: growing rapidly, but not providing adequate services to their residents

Urbanization rates and urban growth vary considerably between Ghana, Cameroon, Rwanda and Tanzania, not least due to varied colonial and post-colonial histories. Although rural-urban migration continues to contribute to urban growth, the importance of natural population growth explaining growth of urban areas is increasing. Urban livelihoods are increasingly dependent on informality and mobility within the city. The youthful nature of urban populations highlights the need to gain an understanding of the priorities and prospects of urban youth. Reliable data on urbanization are limited. Urban service provision is very insufficient: with regard to sanitation, key challenges include lack of tenure security, demolitions, over-crowding and lack of services such as piped water supplies that can enable better sanitation. Municipal governments have limited capacity to deal with sanitation; in this power vacuum a complex range of stakeholders have emerged.

- What will more recent census data and spatial analyses display about the role of rural-urban migration and natural growth in explaining city growth, and how do major and secondary cities vary in this respect?
- How do informality in housing and/or employment impact on livelihood opportunities and strategies in the cities?
- How does mobility within the city, in its varied form, form urban livelihood practices in the cities?
- How do city-rural connections, including migration networks and temporary migrations, impact on urban livelihoods?

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy challenges

During this first phase of the research, policy dialogue meetings have been conducted in Tanzania, Rwanda, Cameroon, and Ghana. These meetings have shown that there is clearly great interest among policy-makers on 'how to get urbanization right', especially in those countries with rapid urbanization rates and where population distribution is seen as a policy issue of high importance. Likewise, policy makers express their considerations for how and if agricultural transformation and rural development, and the political efforts put into the stimulation for rural development will be successful in curbing urbanization. Regarding the later, Rwanda stands out as placing particular expectations for urban growth and positive feedback mechanisms between rural and urban transformation. A crucial aspect is the need for more extensive and reliable information on critical concerns in relation to land, urbanization patterns, and urban poverty and migration. This will be discussed in more depth in the RurbanAfrica Policy Brief No. 2, to be published in spring 2014.

RESEARCH PARAMETERS

The overall objective of the African Rural-City Connections (RurbanAfrica) project is to explore the connections between rural transformations, mobility, and urbanization processes and analyze how these contribute to an understanding of the scale, nature and location of poverty in sub-Saharan Africa. The RurbanAfrica project will advance the research agenda on rural-city connections in sub-Saharan Africa by addressing a range of crucial components: agricultural transformations, rural livelihoods, city dynamics, and access to services in cities. In this respect the project challenge a number of generally accepted 'truths' about rural and city development, and the importance and implication of migration in shaping these. It thereby questions the overall negative interpretations of the economic role of rural-urban mobility and migration in sub-Saharan Africa and generates new insights into the relationship between rural-city connections and poverty dynamics. Research is organized into six work packages: Agricultural transformation, rural livelihoods, city dynamics, access to services, knowledge platform and policy dialogue, and synthesis, dissemination and management. Central to the approach is the on-going integration of policy research, policy dialogue, knowledge sharing and empirical research.

PROJECT IDENTITY

PROJECT NAME RurbanAfrica: African Rural-City Connections.

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FUNDING SCHEME

FP7 Framework Programme for Research of the European Union – Collaborative project – Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities.

DURATION

April 2012 – March 2016 (48 months)

BUDGET

EU contribution: 2 694 863,75 €.

WEBSITE

www.rurbanafrika.ku.dk

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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FURTHER READING

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