

The links between rural and urban development in Africa and Asia

Cecilia Tacoli
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What this presentation will cover

- Some stylised context: patterns of urbanization in Africa and Asia
- Mobility: different drivers but common trends
- The growing importance of remittances
- How the role of urban centres in rural development is still largely ignored by planners
- Issues for policy

Patterns of urbanization in Africa and Asia

- Both regions had the world's most rapidly increasing levels of urbanization in 1950-2000 (14.7 to 36.2% in Africa; 16.8 to 37.1 in Asia), but:
- With significant intra-regional differences
- No recent censuses in several African nations
- Changes in definitions: e.g. China's urban population in 1999 would be 23.9% (pre-1982 definition), 73% (1982) or 30.9% (1990)

Africa: slower than expected urbanization

- Urbanization without economic growth – or rather a severe lack of reliable data?
- Falling urbanization levels in the 1980-90s, both national and/or localised
- but urban growth has remained high due to high natural growth rates
- Narrowing of rural-urban gaps in income and access to basic services has resulted in urban-rural migration
- The aggregate service sector share of GDP is higher than agriculture's, but dominated by the 'informal' sector

Asia: export-led industrialisation and peri-urbanization

- High rates of economic growth in many nations, linked to high levels of spatial concentration and emerging extended metropolitan regions
- Combined with widening rural-urban gaps, a key driver of rural-urban migration and other forms of mobility (commuting and short-term circular migration)
- Peri-urban regions: typically unplanned, with no integration between infrastructure provision and population, and growing environmental and social problems
- Management systems and processes are an emerging issue

Migration and mobility: the policy view

- Rural-urban migration seen increasingly as a problem (increase rural and urban poverty; spread of crime and disease; pressure on urban areas through urban growth...)
- Policy responses are geared primarily to reduce or prevent it (51% of low-income nations in 1996, to 73% in 2005), while ignoring economic and natural growth factors
- Migrants' access to housing and employment is worse than non-migrants' only where there are discriminatory policies in place

Growing circular and temporary movement in both Africa and Asia

- Eludes national data, but increasingly a key element of rural and urban livelihoods, overlapping with income diversification
- Essential to maintain asset bases and safety nets in different locations – especially user rights to rural land
- In Asia, temporary movement is increasingly towards urban centres and non-farm employment (in northern Bihar from 3% in 1983 to 24% in 2000)
- In export manufacturing, low wages and poor working conditions encourage further mobility (China)

Growing circular and temporary movement in both Africa and Asia (c'd)

- In Africa, circular migration is traditional in drought-prone areas (and affected by climate change)
- But its scale is underestimated (urban-rural movement was 61% of rural-urban in Malawi 1976-77, and 76% in Botswana 1980-81)
- Limited infrastructure and transport links make movement costly and therefore people may move for longer periods (not only seasonally)
- Economic and political insecurity in urban centres reinforces links with (and investment in) rural home areas, and supported urban-rural movement in the 1990s

Remittances and multi-local, multi-activity households

- Remittances are a growing proportion of rural households' incomes in both Africa and Asia
- Driver of social change? even in the most traditional areas, young women are allowed to move independently – as long as they send remittances
- In China, in 2004 remittances overtook earnings from farming in rural households' budgets
- Remittances are important for the poor, but perhaps even more so for wealthier groups
- But the obligation to remit may increase migrants' vulnerability in the cities – especially single women's

Urban centres, agriculture and rural development

- Domestic urban markets and demand stimulate food production far more than export markets (eg West Africa and Vietnam), especially by small-scale farmers
- Non-farm incomes finance investment in intensification and diversification
- Access to markets is ensured by local traders, but these are often ignored in agricultural policies
- Local traders whose activities are based in small towns and villages stimulate rural development through economic diversification

Rural industrialisation

- Or mainly industries based in small towns, large villages, peri-urban corridors?
- In Asia, rural industries are mainly micro, small and medium sized enterprises that employ large sections of the population (especially the poor) and contribute to GDPs (e.g. 41% in Vietnam)
- But are negatively affected by trade liberalisation
- And also contribute to environmental degradation because spatial dispersion and low capital mean they often cannot afford to comply with regulations

Issues for policy

- A blurring of the rural-urban divide, rather than clear-cut transitions, with reciprocal and positive links between rural and urban development – but also emerging challenges
- Mobility and migration can increase social polarisation and access to natural resources
- Occupational diversification can increase environmental degradation
- Local governance systems are crucial, but often lack capacity and national governments' support and have limited accountability