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Article

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RURAL AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT: DIALECTICAL LINK AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Urban and rural areas differ in economic, social and environmental terms. Despite these known disparities, it has been discovered over the years that these disparities can be bridged if the right approach is adopted. Yet, the development literature on rural and urban development has continued to view them as being mutually exclusive mostly to the detriment of rural development, especially in the developing countries. This paper examined the linkages existing between rural and urban areas in the context of spatial and sectoral relationship. The Paper equally undertook a conceptual analysis of the major concepts such as rural, urban, rural development and rural-urban linkage where some methodological and theoretical problems were unearthed. In an attempt to do that, the tools to bridge rural-urban disparity such as local government, agriculture as well as infrastructural development were examined. Dependency theory and Social Exchange theory provided relevant insights into the issue of rural-urban linkages. Based on the observed gaps, it was recommended among others that an integrated development approach based on the understanding that the interdependence and synergy between rural-urban areas is inevitable should be adopted, Investment in rural infrastructure (e.g., feeder roads, storage facilities) to ensure agricultural producers in peri-urban areas have access to urban markets should be prioritized.

Keywords: Development, Rural Development, Urban Development, Comparative Analysis.

Introduction

Rural-urban linkages are often articulated in the nature and forms of migration, production, consumption, financial and some investment linkages that occur within the rural-urban realm. The exchange of money, goods, visits including social activities, and communication with relatives and friends can all be used as indicators of rural-urban linkages. In most developing countries, especially low-income ones, urban areas symbolize a number of good things. They offer better jobs, respite from toiling on a farm without a decent income, safe

drinking water, shorter distances to medical doctors and healthcare facilities. The focus in this paper is to provide greater clarity and awareness about rural-urban linkages as well as their impact on development and livelihoods across the two areas. The emphasis is on how urban and rural areas intersect and how these linkages can be mobilised for both urban and rural development. Thus, the objective of this paper is to examine the notion of rural-urban linkages and come up with measures to ensure the reduction of poverty and inequality, enhance inclusive development, and economic growth.

Conceptual Literature

The methodological and theoretical problems in the definition of the concept rural are similar to those in the definition of urban. According to Alkali (1997), three types of criteria generally define a rural society, viz: the number of inhabitants; the ratio of inhabitants to open land; and economic activities, such as agriculture, fishing, food production, and exploitation of raw materials. However, governments do not use the same statistical criteria of rural for urban populations. For instance, in Japan, any cluster of fewer than 30,000 people is considered rural, a definition that would make almost all of the Arctic rural, except a handful of the largest towns. Nordic countries use various demographic criteria and various concepts to distinguish rural from urban. Statistics Norway (Statistisk Sentralbyrå) differentiates between densely and sparsely populated areas. Densely populated areas are settlements with more than 200 people and less than 50 metres between the houses. Any agglomeration larger than 200 is registered as an urban settlement. In Northern Norway there are 8 urban settlements with more than 8000 people; the largest is Tromsø with 60000 people. Another problem defining rural from urban is that the transition from urban to rural is not abrupt, but gradual (the rural-urban fringe). Consequently, there are schools recruiting pupils from both urban and rural areas (Von, 2010).

Development can be defined as the general improvement in economic, social and political conditions of the whole society in terms of reduction or elimination of poverty, inequality, injustice, insecurity, ecological imbalance and unemployment within the context of a growing economy (Filani, 2000). Development in the very general sense is the perceived increased effectiveness of social and economic activities and functions of the society or situation and in the range of options open to people. Ultimately, development is perceived as the improvement in the quality of life, even when this means fewer goods and services (Rodney, 1972). Development has equally been described as a many-sided process in human society. At the individual level, it means increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, self-discipline and so on (Rodney, 1972). At the societal level, development encompasses an overall approach in which a particular society becomes capable of realizing its potentials in several spheres of life: political, economic, social and so on. Seers (1973) saw development as being multi-dimensional and accepts the economic meaning to be central as having radical implications on the political, social and cultural aspects. This implies that development may be equated to economic growth provided that the latter leads to the combating of social and political problems. In his article 'The meaning of development' he identified three fundamental questions to be asked about development of a country. These are: what happened to poverty, what happened to unemployment, what happened to inequality? If these variables are on the decline from high level, then beyond doubt there has been a period of development of the country concerned. But if one or two of these central indicators are going worse, it will be strange to call the result as development even if the national income has doubled, like in the case of Nigeria.

Rural development can be viewed as the development of the moral, social, political and economic potentialities of rural communities to enhance their self-reliance through the provision of appropriate infrastructure such as pipe-borne water, electricity, good roads and small scale industries. Increase in political consciousness and participation, promote moral and social well-being, which will result in tolerance, good discipline, justice, fairness, kindness, love and peace (Alkali, 1997). Similarly Okoye (1997) cited in Filani (2000) defined rural development as the process of making life more satisfying and fulfilling for millions of people who live in rural areas. Rural development provides rural dwellers with the opportunities for gainful employment as well as the expansion of social services which could enhance the welfare and security of rural people. A further definition by Lele (1992) cited in Filani (2000) is that rural development is the improvement of the population living in the rural areas on a self-sustaining basis, through transforming the socio-spatial structures of their productive activities. Rural-urban linkages can be seen as the structural social, economic, cultural, and political relationships maintained between individuals and groups in the urban environment and those in rural areas (AAH, 2012). Rural-urban linkages can also refer to spatial and sectoral flows that happen between rural and urban settlements. Spatial flows refer to movements of people, goods, money, technology, knowledge, information, and waste. By contrast, sectoral flows include movements of agricultural produce to urban areas, and goods from urban manufacturing areas going to more rural areas (Bah *et al.* 2003).

Rural-Urban Development: Bridging the Gap

The analysis of linkages between rural and urban areas matter because rural and urban livelihoods are interconnected. As incomes from agriculture decrease, rural households are forced to develop new and more complex forms of livelihood strategies which include both agriculture and non-farm incomes as well as remittances from migrants. New spatial and sectoral patterns have emerged along the rural -urban continuum as a consequence of migration, road accessibility, information technologies, and production flows. Therefore, the existence of a web of interrelationships and networks that link both urban and rural spaces blur the distinction between rural and urban spaces. Indeed, labour migration, flow of information, and services such as education and healthcare, enable people to keep one foot in the rural economy and the other in the urban economy. Indeed, rural women tend to be particularly active in rural-urban trade. They bring rural produce to urban markets and take consumer articles back to their villages (Okonkwo, 2010). This proves that rural and urban spaces are increasingly intertwined and that positive rural-urban linkages can contribute to more equitable development. However, it is worth noting that the conventional dichotomy between rural and urban spaces still dominate the development thinking. Specifically, most development theories and practices are still implicitly or sometimes explicitly based on the dichotomy between rural and urban areas. Likewise, policies tend to reflect this division along spatial and sectoral lines, with town and regional planners usually concentrating on urban nodes and giving scant attention to rural spaces. Rural development planners tend to ignore urban centres and define rural areas as consisting only of villages and their agricultural land (Wandschneider, 2004).

The relationship between rural and urban areas is increasingly changing throughout the world. Rural and urban areas are no longer mutually exclusive. Farming areas and the megacities coexist along a continuum with multiple types of flows and interactions occurring between the two spaces. Typically, it is now widely recognised that there exist economic, social and environmental interdependences between urban and rural areas (Von, 2007). For example, rural areas depend on urban areas for university education, credit, agriculture-led

services such as farm equipment and advice, hospitals and government services. By contrast, urban areas sometimes depend on rural areas for water resources, food production, and waste disposal. Urban waste can be used as a source of organic matter or as source of nutrients for agriculture which can help rural farmers to restore degraded soils and turn unproductive land into valuable agricultural land. Rural communities are responsible for the stewardship of ecosystem services that are essential for human survival and wellbeing such as clean air and water, flood and drought mitigation, pollution mitigation, bio-diversity, and climate stabilization. Therefore, the management of rural-urban linkages is necessary for the maintenance of environmental resources (Okonkwo, 2010). Metropolitan areas provide concentrated markets for rural goods and services. They are the source of non-farm jobs and other economic opportunities for young people offering varied experiences, higher levels of skills, and higher incomes and various specialized services, such as health care, high end retail, as well as legal and financial services (Alkali, 1997). Again, most cities benefit intensively from their proximity to rural areas as they draw heavily on their surrounding rural areas for fresh water resources, dispose their waste on surrounding rural and peri-urban areas.

It is worth noting that at an administrative level, the physical boundaries of the urban built-up areas often do not coincide with their urban boundaries and therefore do not respect the rural-urban dichotomy. Accordingly, the relationship between urban and rural areas has been changing all over the world due to a number of factors including new settlement patterns which can be linked to economic and social transformations occurring throughout the world. Therefore, rural-urban linkages exist on a continuum of various types which are increasingly interconnected. Likewise, rural and urban areas must be seen as two ends in a spatial continuum (Wandschneider, 2004). In-between rural and urban areas are peri-urban areas where urban and rural areas are spatially intermingled and interactions are most intense. That is to say, it is also useful to see in the middle of the continuum between rural characteristics and urban characteristics a rural-urban interface in which there are complex mixes of rural and urban characteristics. Economic growth is not evenly distributed within the rural-urban continuum. Areas surrounding urban centres generally benefit from their proximity to the urban centres but are also more affected by urban air pollution. In fulfilling their important function of providing food for urban consumers, the proximity of some rural areas to urban areas lowers the costs of transport and storage. Overall, within the rural-urban continuum, rural areas are not homogenous as they differ in their potential and capabilities. Proximity to the town or city matters as rural farmers that are located closer to cities can exploit their proximity to urban markets. Generally, villages that are closer to urban markets tend to be relatively more developed and exhibit stronger rural urban linkages. Farms that are closer to metropolis tend to be more land intensive in their production, more diverse, and more focused on high-value production. By contrast, villages that are located far from urban markets tend to be less developed and exhibit weaker rural-urban linkages. Again, rural areas that are more linked to urban markets tend to grow commercial crops while those that are not integrated to urban markets tend to grow traditional crops. For more isolated villages lack of infrastructure exacerbate poor access to urban markets.

The Dialectical Link

Migration: Historically, migration has been a central factor in the interaction between rural and urban areas and a key factor in shaping Africa's settlement patterns and livelihoods (Alkali, 1997). For example in Mali, Nigeria, and Tanzania, between 50 and 80 percent of

households have at least one migrant member. In Nigeria, migration is considered essential to achieving economic and social success and young men who do not migrate or commute to town are often labelled as idle and may become the object of ridicule. Therefore, migration helps decompose the neat rural-urban dichotomy (Von, 2007). The contribution of migration to livelihoods highlights the link between migration and labour markets. Prior to 1970s, migration was primarily seasonal and comprised of individual males from agriculturally-based rural families who sought non-agricultural, temporary urban employment to sustain family subsistence (Von, 2007). By contrast, today's urban migrants are more demographically diverse and engage in a wider array of urban activities, social networks, and institutional forms of urban community than their earlier counterparts. These changes in migration patterns highlight new ways to theorize about population mobility. In South Africa, migration is seen within a particular framework of economic growth and against the backdrop of the high rate of unemployment and especially in rural areas. For example, South Africa's urban areas account for over 80 percent of the country's gross domestic product (Von, 2007). Greater employment opportunities in the cities are a major contributing factor that attracts people from rural areas to larger towns and cities. Typically, urban areas accommodate over 60 percent of South Africa's population (Von, 2007). Seasonal migration has been noted in Asia and Africa. More importantly, it can be welfare enhancing. For example, in Vietnam, seasonal migration resulted in an annual increase of about 5 percent of household expenditure, and 3 per cent decrease in the poverty headcount.

Small Towns as Entry Points for Policy Interventions and Investment

Secondary cities and small towns are more likely to have close links with the rural areas and therefore can play an important role enhancing rural linkages. Generally, rural households depend on small towns for various services such as improved healthcare, banks, and government offices for the provision of both private and public goods. Much economic activity in small and medium-sized towns is closely interrelated to the surrounding village economies through consumption, production, employment, and financial linkages (Wandschneider, 2004). Therefore, small towns including medium-sized towns are an integral part of the rural local economic landscape. When rural development frameworks focus only on village-level issues and neglect small towns in rural development they can undermine the development potential of small towns in rural economies. Small towns provide larger markets than those available in rural villages for both agricultural and non-farm goods. The need for approaches to poverty reduction that cover both large and small urban areas on one hand, and rural areas on the other hand has increasingly gained urgency in the face of increasing disparities in the levels of economic opportunities, and quality of life between these areas. Poverty reduction in rural and urban areas require integrated approaches which provide rural populations with access to urban opportunities such as urban markets for rural products. While rural areas are glaringly more agricultural in their outlook, there is limited agro processing at town level. This can be explained by low levels of good quality produce, relatively low levels of local demand, difficulties in accessing distant markets and competition from outside sources of supply (Wandschneider, 2004).

Towards Policies that Sustain Rural-Urban Linkages

There are compelling reasons why rural-urban, divide must be eliminated. It is a source of inequality, and a potential source of both social and political instability as well as vital Indicator of economic inefficiency. Focusing on linkages between rural and urban areas help reframe our understanding of how development occurs in these areas. It helps us frame our

terminology in ways that do not reinforce separateness, stereotypes, and mislead policy development and analysis. The Global Monitoring Report (2013) has identified four broad policies that can improve the interdependence between rural and urban spaces. The implementation of these policies will require inter-institutional and inter sectoral coordination. These include, local government; agriculture, and innovation; infrastructure development; small towns and local economic development.

Local Government

Local government can play an important role in facilitating positive interactions between rural inhabitants and urban markets thereby making markets increasingly work for the poor and spatially marginalized people in the urban-rural continuum. More specifically, local governments, play an important role in promoting local economic development as part of their efforts in enhance inclusive development and social inclusion. Therefore, local governments are best placed to support integrated development, widen alliances between formal and informal organizations, and participate in the provision of essential services. Institutions that produce knowledge and transfer technology can improve the performance of local governments in this regard. It is important to identify successful practices that promote rural and urban development and reduce poverty using rural-urban linkages and to build capacity of local governments to review and adopt such practices. Indeed, local governments can increasingly connect good practices to policy development. More importantly, the relationship between elected local government and traditional authorities is critically important where there are tensions between the statutory rights system of land tenure and the customary system. This conflict on the one hand, is the result of interest of traditional chiefs who often attempt to retain control over lands including sale of private land under customary rule. On the other hand are elected governments whose responsibilities include the provision of infrastructure such as roads and sanitation for which access to land is essential.

Agriculture and Innovation

Agriculture remains critical lever to strategies that are aimed at rural development. However, while rural areas are glaringly more agriculture in their outlook, there is limited agro-processing. An increase in irrigated land can increase both agricultural production and transform subsistence agriculture to cash based and more market-oriented agricultural economy. Like the Indian experience has shown, irrigation and commercialisation can transform cropping patterns and enhance greater crop specialisation (Pundir and Singh, 2001) This major transformation can enable the economic base of the locality or region to move away from subsistence farming towards a form of agriculture that is intensive and high value. Small-holder farmers may find new production opportunities and transform to new patterns of production particularly high value produce. As village inhabitants grow commercial crops, they will increasingly consider farming as a business. Science, technology and innovation are vital policies that can enhance positive outcomes in rural-urban linkages. It must to be noted that public research and extension had been projected as sole sources of innovation that could trigger development in the agricultural sector. Investments in science and technology may increase knowledge but may not necessarily spur innovation culture in the whole system. Farmer innovation needs to be included in agricultural knowledge systems. Therefore, a more holistic and comprehensive framework will enable the analysis of the innovation process, the roles of science and technology, and emphasize wider

stakeholder participation, linkages with the institutional context within which innovation occurs.

Small Towns and Local Economic Development

Interactions with small towns constitute an important aspect of village-level livelihoods and enable rural households to meet their economic, social and political needs which cannot be met by their local villages. For example, the inadequate provision of healthcare services at the village level explains the high level of dependency on local towns for accessing these services. Again, the visits to local towns by the villagers to sell their surplus production highlight the limited marketing opportunities at the village level (Sheng, undated). Indeed, secondary cities and small towns have close and stronger linkages with rural areas (Wandschneider, 2004). Therefore, they can play an important role in poverty reduction. There is a need to develop capabilities of small towns to play an increased role in poverty reduction and rural development. That is to say, there is a need to strengthen the production structure of small towns in order for them to play an increased role in local economic development. The potential ability of small towns to positively shape the production, employment, and marketing opportunities available within the local economy and thus act as catalysts for local economic development is intimately linked to the quality of available infrastructure and the local enterprise sector (Wandschneider, 2004).

Infrastructure

The role of infrastructure in rural-urban linkages remains critically important. Infrastructure works as a bridge between rural and urban worlds and between agricultural sectors and other sectors of the economy (Von, 2007). Again, the significant importance of infrastructure is its role in integrating rural economies to national markets or trade networks. Government investments in infrastructure such as electricity and roads contribute to socio-economic development. In particular, road infrastructure enhances access to urban markets as well as health and educational facilities which have significant impact on socio-economic development. Road infrastructure can enable rural commuters to access employment in town. That is to say, a more important role for infrastructure will be in enabling access to local urban centres which can provide employment to their surrounding rural areas. This form of movement remains a vital livelihood strategy for the poor who may be too poor to migrate over long distances. Furthermore, road infrastructure can enable local farmers to link up with food processing industries. Typically, these linkages can transform cropping patterns towards cash crops and emergence of new associated activities. Good infrastructure ensures smooth flow of inputs and outputs, facilitate access to markets and strengthens the foundations of agriculture. Overall, infrastructural facilities such as roads enhance both economic development and foster stronger urban-rural linkages. By contrast, weak infrastructural facilities affect access to health and education and hamper economic development that lead to weaker rural-urban linkages.

Theoretical Framework

Both the dependency theory and social exchange theory provide relevant insights into the issue of rural-urban linkages. Dependency theory posits that underdeveloped countries like Nigeria are dependent on developed countries for resources, and this dependency perpetuates underdevelopment (Frank, 1967; Cardoso and Faletto, 1979). Similarly, rural areas in countries are dependent on urban areas for resources and opportunities, which perpetuates underdevelopment. The concentration of resources in urban areas attracts

people from rural areas in search of better opportunities, creating a vacuum in rural areas. This migration of people further exacerbates the underdevelopment of rural areas, perpetuating the cycle of rural-urban dependency. Dependency theory emphasizes the need to reduce this dependence on urban areas by developing rural areas and diversifying the economy to reduce the concentration of resources in urban areas. Therefore, the theory suggests the need for policies that prioritize rural development, such as investment in infrastructure, education, and healthcare, to reduce the dependency of rural areas on urban areas. The dependency theory has been used to explain the phenomenon of rural-urban dependency.

According to the theory, rural areas are dependent on urban areas for economic, social, and political resources, which has led to underdevelopment and poverty in rural areas. The concentration of resources in urban areas has led to a vacuum in rural areas, leading to the migration of people in search of better economic opportunities (Owolabi, 2018). This cycle of rural-urban migration has perpetuated the dependency relationship between rural and urban areas, with rural areas being left behind in terms of development and progress. On the other hand, social exchange theory posits that individuals and organizations engage in a give-and take relationship in which they exchange resources and benefits (Blau, 1964). In Nigeria, for instance, rural-urban migration is driven by the desire for better economic opportunities, which suggests that rural areas are not providing the necessary resources and benefits to retain their population. Social exchange theory emphasises the need to increase the benefits that rural areas offer to their inhabitants to reduce rural-urban migration. This can be achieved through investment in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and job creation, among others, to increase the opportunities and benefits available in rural areas. In turn, this will reduce the dependence of rural areas on urban areas for resources and opportunities. The application of these two theories suggests that to address the issue of rural-urban dependency, policies and programs should focus on rural development, diversification of the economy, and improving the benefits available in rural areas to retain the population. Such policies may include investing in infrastructure such as roads, electricity, and water supply, and promoting access to education and healthcare. Additionally, there is a need for job creation in rural areas to improve the economic prospects of rural inhabitants and reduce the need for migration to urban areas. Social exchange theory suggests that such policies should be geared towards increasing the benefits available in rural areas to retain the population, such as improved access to services, economic opportunities, and social amenities.

Conclusion

The analysis of rural-urban linkages highlights a clear departure from the existing debate of rural-urban divide and seeks to enhance the generation of more inclusive development policies for both rural and urban inhabitants. Despite different economic activities that occur within the rural-urban continuum and varied policy instruments that are required to enhance the contribution of rural-urban linkages in enhancing inclusive development, their success is linked to access to markets and proximity to urban centres. Likewise, a better understanding of rural-urban linkages matters as it provides the basis for greater understanding of the social and economic linkages between rural and urban areas as well as policy measures that can improve the well-being of both urban and rural inhabitants. The positive impact of rural-urban linkages on rural livelihoods can be greatest where rural and urban development is mutually dependent and integrated. However, rural-urban linkages should not be assumed to be beneficial in all circumstances. In some cases, they can increase

inequality and the vulnerability of those groups with least assets and especially where land ownership is highly unequal. Rural-urban linkages play an important role in the analysis of the ways in which livelihoods are constructed. However, the traditional dichotomy between 'rural' and 'urban' development theory and practice has underplayed their significance.

Recommendations

- i. Integrated Planning: National and local governments should adopt integrated rural-urban development plans that enhance connectivity, especially in transport, ICT, and markets.
- ii. Market Access: Invest in rural infrastructure (e.g., feeder roads, storage facilities) to ensure agricultural producers in peri-urban areas can access urban markets efficiently.
- iii. Inclusive Governance: Create multi-stakeholder platforms to ensure rural and urban voices are both represented in regional development planning.
- iv. Data and Monitoring: Establish systems for tracking rural-urban migration, trade flows, and livelihood changes to inform dynamic policy interventions.

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