



HABITAT III ISSUE PAPERS

10 - URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES

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ISSUE PAPER ON URBAN RURAL LINKAGES

KEY WORDS

poverty and inequality reduction, jobs and livelihoods, peri-urban, urban sprawl, market towns, spatial development, urban / regional and territorial planning, land, rural urbanization, human settlements continuum, transport, infrastructure and services, mobility, climate change, migration and refugees, inclusive cities, city region food systems, changing diet, partnership, ecosystem services, ecosystem connectivity, national urban and rural policies, green infrastructure.

MAIN CONCEPTS

- Urban-rural linkages refer to complementary and synergetic functions and flows of people, natural resources, capital, goods, employment, ecosystem services, information and technology between rural, peri-urban and urban areas.
- City Region Food Systems encompass the complex network of actors, processes and relationships of food production, processing, marketing, and consumption that exist in a given geographical region. The regional landscape comprises an urban centre, its surrounding peri-urban and rural hinterland across which flows of people, goods and ecosystem services are managed.¹
- Urban-rural partnership is the mechanism of co-operation that manages linkages to reach common goals and enhance urban-rural relationships. Depending on the purposes of the partnership, the actors involved can vary from public sector, civil society organization, private sector and other stakeholders².
- Migration recognizes the cyclical movement of people and their families between rural and urban areas. Reasons for migration can be categorized into “push” and “pull” factors. “Push” factors are the reasons that cause people to leave urban or rural areas, such as famine, war or unrest, poverty, and climate related challenges such as drought or flooding. “Pull” factors are those which draw people to urban or rural areas, such as access to employment and improved access to health, education, and basic services.
- Peri-urbanization expresses the urbanization of former rural areas on the fringe, both in a qualitative (e.g. diffusion of urban lifestyle) and in a quantitative (e.g. new residential zones) sense³.

FIGURES AND KEY FACTS

1. The Habitat Agenda, adopted at Habitat II in 1996, firmly established the precepts of the urban-rural linkages. The agenda states that, “policies and programmes for the sustainable development of rural areas that integrate rural

¹ <http://cityregionfoodsystems.org/>

² OECD, 2013

³ UN-HABITAT, 2012



regions into the national economy require strong local and national institutions for the planning and management of human settlements that place emphasis on rural-urban linkages and treat villages and cities as two ends of a human settlements continuum.” A number of resolutions have advanced the Habitat Agenda including HSP/GC/17/10⁴, requesting for “urban-rural interdependence”; HSP/GC/19/10⁵ requesting for “dissemination of good practices and policies on mutually beneficial urban-rural development relationships” and most recently Resolution SP/GC/25/L.9⁶ that calls for “strengthening the capacity of rural service centres, and small, intermediate and secondary towns to attract populations, increase investments, create jobs and reduce reliance on primate cities, as a strategy to promote decentralized growth.” Intergovernmental discussions within the UN Open Working Group (OWG) on the Sustainable Development Goals towards the Post 2015 Agenda and towards Habitat III have further confirmed the reinvigorated will of the international community to address urban and rural development in a complementary and mutually reinforcing manner.

2. While the urban population almost trebled during the industrialization of the twentieth century (UN-HABITAT, 1996), small and intermediate cities suffered numerous developmental challenges as opportunities and provision of services favored large agglomerations. Today, more than 50 percent of the world’s population lives in urban areas and this figure is projected to rise to 66 percent by 2050 (UN DESA, 2014). It is estimated that in emerging economies, secondary cities of over 150,000 inhabitants will deliver nearly 40% of global growth by 2025, more than the entire developed world and emerging market megacities combined⁷.
3. At Habitat I in 1996, the World urban population was 37.9%, against 41.5% in 196. It is projected that in 2016, the World urban population will be about 54.5%.
4. Urban areas accommodate more than 50% of World Population occupying only 3% of earth surface while generating 80% of global wealth. By some estimates, urban areas consume up to 76% of the earth natural resources and produce 60% of its greenhouse gas emission and 50% of its waste.
5. Cities will accommodate up to three billion more people in the next 35 years. In 2007, rural population made up 51% of the global population and contributed only 20% of the global Gross Domestic Product⁸.
6. Cities and towns with over 100,000 inhabitants are anticipated to expand outwards by 170 percent by 2030 (Angel, Parent et al., 2010), drastically affecting their rural and peri-urban areas. The geographic expansion of cities into rural areas often results in the reclassification of rural villages and small towns to urban annexes. This expansion may appropriate prime agricultural land as a result of low density expansion, blocks green and blue corridors that maintain ecosystem health and connectivity, disrupts rural livelihoods, affect food supplies and threatens the environment through increased carbon emissions, pollution and energy use.
7. With increasing urbanization, greater mobility and connectivity, the linkages between urban, peri-urban and rural areas intensify and differences are reducing. This is precipitated by the increased flow of knowledge, economic activities and information between urban and rural areas. In this respect, rural populations are becoming increasingly urbanized (Rodriguez, 2014), with virtual connections playing a defining role in influencing political,

⁴ http://mirror.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/9688_1_593495.pdf

⁵ http://mirror.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/9658_1_593465.pdf

⁶ <https://papersmart.unon.org/habitatgc25/sites/papersmart.unon.org.habitatgc25/files/K1501234.pdf>

⁷ McKinsey Global Institute, 2011

⁸ McKinsey Global Institute, 2011



social religious and cultural views. At the same time, urban populations are taking up activities that are considered rural, like agriculture and livestock keeping.

8. At the same time, non-communicable diseases or diet related illnesses, such as diabetes and obesity, are more prevalent in urban areas. The transition from hunger to obesity can be in just one generation in many fast growing, rapidly urbanizing countries.
9. It is surmised that smallholder farmers provide 80% of the food consumed in developing countries. Smallholder farmers also manage over 80% of the worlds estimated 500 million small farms (IFAD, 2013). This has a significant contribution to boosting food security in rural and urban regions and reducing poverty. Nonetheless, the effects of climate change, land use change, land degradation, unsustainable land management, marginalization of rural areas and adoption of non-farm activities among other challenges threaten this source of livelihood and food production, particularly for small holders.
10. Globally, it is estimated that one-third of total food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted across the supply chains each year⁹. Retail and consumer waste accounts for 34% of these losses. Food lost is an increasing issue in peri-urban and urban areas with an estimated one-third of food produced for human consumption lost or wasted globally each year. This places unnecessary pressure on natural resources and city region food systems. In 2011 the FAO estimated the yearly global quantitative food loss and waste at roughly 30% cereals, 40-50% root crops, fruits & vegetables, 20% oilseeds, meat and dairy products, and 30% for fish. (FAO, 2011). Strengthening infrastructure and connectivity between urban and rural areas, access to market, storage and food literacy could reduce such waste.
11. The varying level of poverty captures the duality between urban and rural livelihoods. While the urban poor experience much higher costs of living, especially for low-income groups living in informal settlements, the opportunities and capabilities available to them are higher than in rural areas. In contrast, of the 1.4 billion poor people who live on less than US\$1.25 a day, 78% of them live in rural areas, and nearly two thirds of the extremely poor are engaged in agriculture (World Bank, 2013; IFAD, 2013). The urban-rural gap can also be seen in health statistics, sometimes persisting from generation to generation. Furthermore, 40% of all violent conflicts in the last 60 years have been linked to natural resources (UNEP 2014).
12. Urban and rural areas depend on each other. Urban centers depend on rural areas and the rural sector for a range of goods and services, notably food, clean water, environmental services, and raw materials among others. For example, wood fuel represents more than 80% of domestic energy consumption in Africa and it is expected that it will continue to be the main source of energy for the next decades. Rural areas in turn typically depend on urban areas for access to services, employment opportunities, and markets.
13. The focus on the growth of larger urban areas has made attracting investment, creating jobs, meeting the housing demand, and providing access to key infrastructure and basic services an increasing challenge in intermediate towns and rural areas. In some instances, rural areas are becoming depopulated, often leading to the degradation of previously productive landscapes. The role of small and medium sized towns is integral as they frequently provide a bridge between rural dwellers and urban centers, strengthening the economic opportunities, providing a market and access to basic services. Urban and rural areas vary depending on the geographical context. For instance, countries with large land mass, small island states, countries with strong networks of intermediate cities. In each of these cases there are different opportunities and challenges regarding urban-rural linkages.

⁹ FAO, 2011a



ISSUE SUMMARY

14. Urbanization is a process that profoundly reshapes peri-urban and rural areas and has the ability to both positively and negatively affect their economies, inclusiveness and sustainable development. In order for urban and rural areas to be sustainable, the current discourse of a political, social and geographical dichotomy must evolve to that of collaborative development and function linkages throughout the territory. Considering the ongoing urbanization, inequality and poverty, there is a renewed interest in delivering complementary and mutually reinforcing rural, peri-urban and urban areas as an integral part of both the Post 2015 development agenda and the New Urban Agenda.
15. The interdependencies between urban and rural areas, their flows and functions are demonstrated through the local and national economic dynamics, social-cultural links and environmental synergies that occur across the human settlements. These include financial remittances, access to food, migration, prevention and reduction of food loss and food waste, ecosystem services, goods, social services, transport, employment, energy and markets. While the specific context and priorities of these flows, interdependencies and synergies may differ, they are an undeniable reality in both developing and developed countries. For example, changing diets shape demand for certain foods and can impact urban and rural development and the food value chain.
16. Disparities in spatial development form the crux of why strong urban-rural linkages are essential in distributing equal opportunities and benefits of the urbanization process. Given the global trend of economic growth in cities and towns, urban areas tend to draw the majority of domestic and international resources (public and private). This can have adverse effects on universal access to resources, services and opportunities, and warp the equitable distribution of economic and other benefits observed in the urbanization process. Balanced outcomes across urban and rural areas are a vital objective of sustainable development that leaves no one behind and should include investment in smallholders in rural areas. Rather than competing for scarce resources, the discourse needs to evolve towards understanding the synergies that can be obtained from sustainable, balanced investments and managing tradeoffs to achieve a shared destiny. Setting priorities and identifying the drivers could help reduce disparity throughout the territory.
17. The expansion of urban areas into peri-urban land consumes the most valuable agricultural land and related ecological resources, such as waterways, fisheries and forests. This growing threat underscores the need for territorial planning and validates the adoption of the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning¹⁰ and the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Land, Fisheries and Forests. These Guidelines provide a reference framework to support sustainable territorial development and serve as a source of inspiration and a compass for decision makers that will inform the New Urban Agenda and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Developing and implementing guiding principles, frameworks and indicators can facilitate effective and inclusive links by assessing trends and addressing issues such as sustainable management of natural resources, adequate infrastructure and service provision, equality and social inclusion, environmental pressures and the flow of capital, goods and people to form productive and resilient urban and rural places.
18. Urban-rural linkages have the potential to transform sustainable human development for the benefit of all. Integral to this is knowledge generation and management as well as capacity development, which can provide an enhanced understanding of how functions and flows operate. It is critical to understand existing parameters that exacerbate

¹⁰ HSP/GC/25/L.5 of April 2015 <http://unhabitat.org/gc25/>



the dichotomy between urban and rural areas and those that promote linkages. Globally, there is insufficient knowledge on the dynamics of small and intermediate cities where half of the world's urban people live, making them a missing link in understanding the dynamic of urban-rural interactions (Brian and Hohmann, 2014, UNESCO). Additionally, knowledge of ecosystems and environmental geography has improved our understanding of water cycles and climate phenomena. Land mosaic approaches have developed practical tools manage complex landscapes.

19. There is an urgent need to bridge knowledge and capacity gaps in relation to crucial urban and territorial challenges such as climate change, safety and security, disaster resilience, ecosystem connectivity, green infrastructure, food security, health, diet and nutrition. Green infrastructure can provide the backbone of these linkages by taking a natural approach, where interdependent elements support each other to ensure long-term sustainability. Documenting and disseminating inspiring experiences, tools, practices and strategies in urban–rural linkages in collaboration with research institutions, academia, civil society and policy-makers can assist in developing capacity, addressing development challenges and strengthening linkages between areas.
20. Policy interventions characterized by an integrated and complementary approach should be adopted to avoid exacerbating the dichotomy between urban and rural issues. Correspondingly, government agencies with specific mandates should engage and collaborate to strengthen and identify linkages. Cross-cutting synergies that are operationalized can encourage cooperation amongst actors involved in various thematic issues relating to urban-rural linkages and in turn, facilitate integrated development outcomes. More effort is needed to develop legislative frameworks to strengthen urban-rural linkages and to ensure they serve an agenda of balanced sustainable and inclusive development.
21. It is imperative to establish multi-actor partnerships and engagement at global, national, regional, metropolitan and local scales as urban-rural linkages encompass a broad range of themes, actors and contexts. In garnering support from all partners involved, within their respective mandates, expertise, efforts and interventions can be shared and complement one another on urban-rural issues and linkages. This extends to effective partnership and networking within and across government at all levels, international agencies, research and academia, civil society and the private sector among others. Mapping actors, their assets, knowledge, available tools, policies and other means of implementation will strengthen the capacity of actors and address the gaps between urban and rural areas.

KEY DRIVERS OF ACTION

22. Focusing on territorial and spatial planning for balanced and inclusive urban and rural development. This should include strengthening the capacity of small and intermediate cities to attract and manage population sustainability, increase investments, create jobs as a strategy to reduce reliance on primate cities, foster innovation, reduce their environmental impact and act as a suitable host for persons affected by disasters, insecurity and conflicts.
23. Developing policies , tools and approaches to enhance and support urban-rural partnerships such as National Urban Policies, City Development Strategies, the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning and effective decentralization processes focusing on community-driven development (IFAD, 2014; UN-HABITAT and Cities Alliance, 2014).
24. Improving governance mechanisms can reduce poverty and increase economic growth (FAO 2011), therefore developing and adopting principles and legislation can assist in strengthening government institutions and processes. Adopting principles that are applicable in both an urban and peri-urban context, such as the Voluntary



Guidelines for the Responsible Governance of Land, Fisheries and Forests, can help promote urban rural networks, enhancing access and use of common property natural resources and improve inclusive access to opportunities for rural and urban women and men living in poverty.

25. Implementing vertical and horizontal evidence-based interventions by public, private and civil society actors, which tackle food waste and loss. This should include multi-stakeholder dialogue to enable food recovery, redistribution and knowledge transfer; prioritization and coordination of interventions by governments, private sector and civil society; resource mobilization and infrastructure provisions through public–private partnerships; implementation capacity to address an increasing social demand; tools for monitoring and evaluation that provide guidance also on food safety and quality (including human nutrition) and that capture further data on the four dimensions (availability, access, utilization and stability) of food and nutrition security.
26. Addressing urban and rural marginalization through good governance, with specific attention to social inclusion, redressing inequalities and including vulnerable groups such as women, youth, indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities. Raising awareness in both rural and urban areas on their respective value and relationships. Tools such as ecological footprints, happiness indices, and other social tools can help behavioral change towards sustainability. Engaging youth groups, farmer guilds, slum dwellers, women groups, proponents of public spaces, and other similar groups will help to bring alternative voices to the discourse.
27. Promoting the urban patterns for green economy, particularly working with nature, leveraging on density, clustering of competitiveness and optimizing infrastructure (UN-HABITAT, 2012). For instance, Investing in Green Infrastructure (GI) can provide the unifying framework for creating a continuum between the green elements of rural and urban landscapes. Ensuring a sustainable future for cities requires urban forestry, urban agriculture, horticulture, biodiverse gardens and parks, public space, bioengineering, bio filters, phytoremediation, and other disciplines to be strategically integrated. Modelling territorial and scenario analysis may help to understand how to work and live with nature.
28. Promoting inclusive investment, finance instruments and systems to support both urban and rural areas and reduce disparity in the provision of sustainable infrastructure and services between urban and rural areas, particularly in energy, transport, health, education, water, green spaces and sanitation.
29. Empowering inclusive value chains using methods such as impact pathways as a key bridge between rural and urban areas, something which is critical in creating improved urban rural synergies and providing urban and rural areas with increased opportunities for growth. Functional agricultural supply chains can boost rural-urban connectivity and offer opportunities for small scale producers, while protecting high value ecosystems.
30. Developing control measures to safeguard agricultural land from urban sprawl while encouraging sustainable urban agriculture where appropriate. Measures that protect, or compensate for damage to, the livelihoods of rural households and communities living in proximate and hinterland agricultural areas that may result from urban sprawl should accompany this. The environmental impact of agriculture on human settlements and vice versa must be considered, particularly for market towns.
31. Facilitating connectivity and low carbon mobility through the improvement of transportation networks and communication between urban and rural areas to allow universal benefit and access to quality public services, which tend to be concentrated in urban areas due to population density and economies of scale.
32. Strengthening city-region food systems through the inclusion of efficient and accessible markets and distribution systems in urban planning and design. In addition urban and peri-urban agriculture involving technologies such as hydroponics, vertical farming and low cost/energy greenhouses can serve as alternative to bring food producers



closer to consumers. This will improve food security, nutrition and take into consideration the changing diets of urban populations as well as increase employment and income generating activities. .

33. Protecting high value ecosystems and promoting spatial flows through territorial planning that establishes connections between urban- rural hinterlands areas while ensuring complementarity. In parallel, encouraging overlapping spatial flows and the breakdown of false dichotomies, in turn strengthening urban – rural linkages and connectivity.
34. Reducing environmental impacts, including air and soil pollution, protecting forests, water and water sheds, avoiding land fragmentation and defending ecosystems and biodiversity. Efforts should be made to use planned city extensions and infills, low-carbon and smart cities and other strategies that promote density and compact human settlements. Investing in innovative and sustainable rural infrastructure should also be a priority, such as decentralized power networks based on renewable energy, long-lasting roads, well-organized periodic services such as markets, health clinics, and long-distance education.
35. The urban-rural linkages agenda promotes complementarities and networks of places, rather than segregation. It aims to highlight the differences and comparative advantages of places in order to enhance linkages. This dynamic relationship is reflected in large cities, which have significant economic advantages and opportunities, and smaller towns, which play important functions in the development of their surrounding rural regions and support a more diverse local economic base. Meanwhile, despite rural areas being a source of unprecedented migration, they are also peaceful and harmonious areas to live in, providing “water towers” and cultural relief for citizens, if managed sustainably.

PLATFORMS AND PROJECTS

- 10 Year Framework Programme on Global Action Towards Sustainable Consumption and Production : <http://www.unep.org/10yfp/>
- Cities Alliance (<http://www.citiesalliance.org>)
- City Region Food Systems Collaborative Platform, www.cityregionfoodsystems.org
- The Global Land Tool Network - IFAD - UN-HABITAT Partnership to improve tenure security of the urban and rural poor <http://www.glttn.net/index.php/projects/international-fund-for-agricultural-development-ifad>
- Balancing Rural and Urban Development through Improved Linkages in Indonesia, Laos and Nepal http://www.fukuoka.unhabitat.org/docs/publications/pdf/accommodating/Chapter_VIII.pdf
- Committee on World Food Security, <http://www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-home/en/>. Accessed 30/04/15.
- ICLEI CITYFOOD network, <http://www.iclei.org/our-activities/our-agendas/resource-efficient-city/cityfood.html>
- Food for the Cities Network, Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), <http://www.fao.org/fcit/fcit-home/en/>
- United Nations University Migration Network, United Nations University, <http://migration.unu.edu/>
- IFAD-World Bank study of international remittance flows to Asia <http://www.ifad.org/pub/post2015/english/1.pdf>
- Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction (also called SAVE FOOD), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), <http://www.fao.org/save-food/en/>



- National Urban Policy Platform (<http://unhabitat.org/partners-launch-global-exchange-platform-on-national-urban-policies/> /)
- UNESCO Chair on Intermediate Cities. <http://www.unesco.org/en/university-twinning-and-networking/access-by-region/europe-and-north-america/spain/unesco-chair-in-intermediate-cities-urbanization-and-development-823/>
- United Cities and Local Governments – UCLG- (<http://www.uclg.org/>)

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