

BOOK REVIEW

The Rural-Urban Interface in Africa:

Expansion and Adaptation

Seminar Proceedings No. 27, The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, 1992, 320 pp.

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This book publishes the proceedings of a conference held in Gilleleje, Denmark, in September 1990. Entitled "Small Towns and Rural Development in Africa under Conditions of Stress: Adaptive Strategies and Survival Mechanisms," this conference was organized jointly by the Scandinavian Institute of African Studies (SIAS) and the Centre for Development Research, Copenhagen.

Through sixteen chapters (mainly cases studies from various parts of Africa, Sudan, Somalia, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Botswana, Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda), this book emphasizes the close interdependence of the rural and urban sectors, especially under conditions of stress. Major issues are raised concerning the role that small towns may have as agents for rural improvement, the impact of deteriorating environmental conditions on the urban process, the critical influence of indigenous entrepreneurs and NGOs on small towns' development and, finally, the survival strategies of urban dwellers, particularly the growing development of urban agriculture.

The first two chapters are theoretical approaches. David Simon and Anders Aeroe outline the conceptual and theoretical contexts regarding the role of small towns in development. They both highlight the fact that small towns play a decisive role in the regional development process and that regional policies should support local production networks centralized in small towns.

The second section of the book focuses on the linkages of small towns de-

pending on their rural hinterlands and proximity to larger towns. Hassan Abdel-Ati analyses the development of a small Sudanese city in the Red Sea province. He explains how the city has progressively lost its developmental impact because of depletion of the resource base (wood and livestock) in the hinterland and the comparative advantage of Port Sudan, a larger town. Today, the city functions as a refugee centre for the drought-affected nomadic population and a relief centre run by governmental and nongovernmental organizations. Peter Little reveals the close rural-urban linkages in pastoral regions such as southern Somalia. He demonstrates the changing functions of small and large towns during the year related to seasonal movements of livestock and people in the hinterlands. Poul Ove Pedersen explains why agricultural processing and marketing functions that are too centrally-controlled (through the marketing boards) have few benefits on the development of Zimbabwe's small towns.

A very interesting section is devoted to the major role of indigenous entrepreneurship in small town development. Jonathan Baker attempts to explain how a relatively small but economically important ethnic group, the Gurage of Ethiopia, have come to assume a dominant position as small and medium-size entrepreneurs and traders in towns. The author suggests that their economic position is mainly supported by the maintenance and development of urban-rural networks. Through an historical account of entrepreneurship in Botswana, Elvyn Jones-Dube highlights the constraints and obstacles overcome by indigenous entrepreneurial development during the colonial period. Jesper Rasmussen illustrates how local linkages and well functioning networks can provide success for individual entrepreneurs in a small Zimbabwean town. Sally Burrows reviews urban development processes in Ghana and demonstrates the major role of indigenous nongovernmental organizations in supporting the development of very small-scale enterprises in the smaller towns and their rural surroundings.

Four contributions are related to diverse individual strategies adopted by urban workers and urban migrants in order to improve their living conditions. In the context of the two northern Nigerian towns of Kano and Kaduna, Gunilla Andrea reveals the rural links of urban textile workers faced with a severe deterioration in job security and income. Keeping access to rural land is a way of coping with adversity. Part of Margaretha von Troil's chapter is devoted to the situation of urban workers who have migrated from rural areas to the northern Tanzanian town of Arusha and outlines the close links they keep with their villages. Urban employment is not seen as a break with an earlier way of life but as complementary. Mogens Holm investigates survival strategies of urban migrants in Tanzania and finds out that urban survival is partly based on a rural subsistence economy. Jerome O. Gefu presents an interesting case study related to urban-based university staff in Zaria, Nigeria, and the way they supplement their incomes through part-time farming.

The final section of the book mainly investigates urban gardening, one survival strategy adopted by the urban poor to meet their food requirements. Drakakis-Smith, Mlozi, Lupanga and Mvena describe the development of urban agriculture in Tanzania as a survival strategy to earn or supplement incomes as a consequence of the near collapse of the economy. Despite many constraints faced by urban farmers, urban agriculture is still developing. The author recommends governmental assistance and support for urban agriculturalists.

In the final contribution by Jossy R. Bibangambah, which is a case study of Kampala, Uganda, the author argues that the ruralization of urban areas through subsistence urban agriculture is part of the informal sector, which must be viewed as a collection of survival strategies of the urban poor as a result of economic decay and crisis. ■

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