

Rural–Urban Interaction in the Developing World

Kenneth Lynch

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Routledge Perspectives on Development

Rural–Urban Interaction in the Developing World

Sustaining the rural and urban populations of the developing world has been identified as a key global challenge for the twenty-first century. *Rural–Urban Interaction in the Developing World* is an introduction to the relationships between rural and urban places in the developing world and shows that not all their aspects are as obvious as migration from country to city. There is now a growing realisation that rural–urban relations are far more complex.

The book takes rural–urban relations as its focus, rather than considering them as only a part of either urban development or rural development. It examines a range of interactions between the rural and the urban by considering these interactions as flows that can take place in either direction. It considers migration as just one of a series of flows between the rural and the urban, rather than only focusing on the phenomenon of rural-to-urban migration as a strong and highly visible indicator of urbanisation. Each of the flows of people, food, the environment, money and ideas has its own chapter. The book steps back from accepted orthodoxies by considering the flows as interactions that may take place in either direction, across space as well as within sectors. These flows are also considered within the context of development theory.

Rural–Urban Interaction in the Developing World uses a wealth of student-friendly features including boxed case studies, discussion questions and annotated guides to further reading to place rural–urban interactions within a broader context. It promotes a clearer understanding of the opportunities, as well as the challenges, that rural–urban interactions represent.

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Kenneth Lynch



First published 2005
by Routledge

Published 2017 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an
informa business*

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Typeset in Times New Roman by
Florence Production Ltd, Stoodleigh, Devon

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record of this book is available from
the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN 978-0-415-25870-8 (hbk)
ISBN 978-0-415-25871-5 (pbk)



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Acknowledgements

Although one name is on the cover of this book as author, many people have contributed to the writing with or without knowing. Colleagues and students at Kingston University have influenced some of the ideas that have emerged in this book, through their influences on my interests, my research and my teaching over an enjoyable decade. Thanks to the various colleagues who have read or heard versions of these ideas, for their questions and comments; and thanks, in particular, to Tony Binns, as Series Editor, and Andrew Mould and Anna Somerville at Routledge. Claire Ivison, of Kingston University, has been enormously patient each time I turned up at her office with ‘just one more illustration’. I am also grateful to the two reviewers who remained anonymous but whose comments helped to produce a more readable and more useful book. I also have to thank my physiotherapist, Paul Miller of Surbiton Hospital, because without him stepping in to treat the early stages of tendonitis, this book would have been much later than it was.

Thanks to Nigel Poole, Imperial College, for permission to use the photograph in Figure 2.7 and Andrew Mark Bradford, Royal Holloway, for permission to use the photographs in Figures 3.4 and 3.5. All other photographs are the author’s own. Thanks to the authors, organisations and publishers who have given permission to reprint their materials in the book. The sources are indicated where appropriate throughout.

Finally, I must thank Ronan and Clare. To have had the patience to put up with a reclusive writing father and husband is bad enough,

but to have this happen during the first year of Ronan's life has been difficult for them. Clare has also read every word and her comments have made for a more readable book. I dedicate the book to Ronan and his generation. They will have to continue the work that we, and previous generations, have started in tackling the world's great challenges. I hope they are able to hand on to their children a better world than the one we hand on to them.

However, in spite of numerous helpers and supporters, at the end of the day the ideas and the mistakes in this book are my own responsibility.

Surbiton
May 2004



Introduction

This book sets out to reunite the urban and the rural areas in the study of development across the developing world. Most approaches in development studies – both theoretical and empirical – are based on the premise that there is a clear distinction between the urban and the rural. However, this distinction has been challenged. There is research on ‘rural’ activities in ‘urban’ spaces, urban activities in rural spaces, and on the changing interface between urban and rural spaces and on the increasing interdependence between these two realms. There is therefore a need to bring these disparate themes together in one volume.

Some of the earliest works on the interaction between city and country in the developing world focused on modernisation diffusion (Gould, 1969; Rostow, 1960). These were developed into spatial models that may be pessimistic, for example Friedman’s (1966) core–periphery model, or optimistic, for example Vance’s (1970) mercantile model. These influential theories are primarily focused on settlement hierarchies rather than on the interaction between town and country, suggesting an urban focus, although they are used to theorise about rural–urban interaction. Although not the originator of this concept, Lipton (1977) made a considerable impact on development studies later, presenting a thesis on the ways in which urban-based industrialisation policies can have an adverse impact on the development of rural areas. Subsequently, a number of studies looked into Lipton’s ideas of urban bias, some agreeing that urban bias undermined rural development, some arguing that the distinction between urban and rural areas was rather crude and did not reflect

the complex reality. More recently, however, the theory of the distinction between urban and rural development has been questioned in the context of a number of disparate themes. This questioning has been particularly strong in the field of demography and migration studies. The impact of the economic crises of the 1980s has also prompted research on the differentials between cities and rural areas. Continued urban growth has prompted concerns about the environmental impacts on the countryside. In consequence regional development initiatives have been based on small towns, and analyses have emphasised the importance of maximising rural–urban interaction for development. Disparate critiques have begun to coalesce into a stronger body of research in recent years.

This book does not necessarily break new ground but serves to collate a wide range of research and theory which has relevance for this question of interactions between urban and rural areas. The book makes much of this material more easily accessible to a wider audience; in particular it is aimed at second- and third-level undergraduate students of geography, development studies, sociology, economics and planning. It is also of relevance to postgraduate students.

The current emphasis of research appears to be moving away from the study of the physical interface between urban and rural, in favour of a stronger focus on the relationships between them. This is even the case in recent approaches to the peri-urban interface where rural and urban come into contact (Tacoli, 1998a). Even in the physical space where the urban and the rural meet there is an emerging consensus that the physical location of these linkages is less important than the way they are constructed and structured (see the discussion of the importance of institutions to an understanding of natural resource management in the peri-urban interface in Chapter 3). This book therefore focuses on flows between urban and rural areas. This encourages a consideration of the movement of goods, people and ideas across the interface between cities and the countryside.

This theme of flows and linkages recurs throughout the book. In spite of the challenge of the fluidity and fragmented identities that play a role in the lives of the people who communicate, exchange and travel across the urban–rural divide, a key contention is that this fluidity is often a deliberate strategy of those living in rural and urban areas in order to maximise their livelihood opportunities. This focus on flows and linkages is part of the philosophy that has been adopted in the

structuring of this book. Chapter 1 introduces the approach adopted by this book, explaining how it will focus on the flows that link the areas rather than the structures or processes that separate them, as this provides a more useful and more powerful analysis of the relationship between city and countryside.

The remaining chapters therefore each focus on an aspect of these flows. Chapter 2 focuses on flows of food, specifically on the supply of food to the city from the countryside, as well as on the interaction with urban-based food procurement strategies which may include urban as well as rural production. Chapter 3 focuses on systems of the natural environment and resources, including the systems that provide cities with their raw materials and energy. This chapter also examines the implications of obtaining these resources from rural areas and the extent of their ecological impact, raising the question of how far a city places its environmental burden beyond its own boundary. Chapter 4 examines human strategies and how these impact upon people's residence and movement from urban to rural or rural to urban areas. Chapter 5 examines the importance of ideas and information. Finally, wealth flows are discussed in Chapter 6.

As most studies of development tend to take place in either urban or rural locations, there is much in this book that is relevant to students of both areas. There is also much that relates to the topic of this book which is published elsewhere in the Routledge Perspectives on Development series. This book therefore contains many references to these other texts, in particular where they provide appropriate examples.

1 Understanding the rural–urban interface

Summary

- **Past approaches to development studies have tended to focus on either urban or rural spaces.**
- **New development paradigms consider networks and flows, so it is important to reconsider flows and linkages between rural and urban areas.**
- **Some rural–urban links can favour one area or the other, but it is important to be aware that the net benefits can flow both ways, resulting in change both over time and from one place to another.**
- **Urban–rural links have been important to development theory although this topic is rarely a focus of development research.**

Introduction

This chapter introduces key ideas that will be the building blocks of the later chapters in the book. It sets out to explain why it is important to understand urban–rural relations in the developing world, how they relate to the broader evolution of development theory and how such study might help us understand the problems of development and poverty in some of the world’s poorest countries. The chapter concludes with a brief explanation of the rationale of the way the subject has been divided into the chapters in this book.

Why it is important to study rural–urban interaction

The rapid population growth of Third World cities gives rise to concerns about the changing nature of the relationship between urban and rural. The evidence for this is in a growing number of recent publications, research reports and policy documents of international organisations, which emphasise key development concepts such as decentralisation (see also Table 1.1 and Box 1.1). The UNCHS (1999) estimated that the world's urban population would be 2.9 billion in 2000, accounting for 47 per cent of the global total. This is an increase on the 30 per cent in 1950; the urban population is likely to go over 50 per cent in 2007.

Table 1.1 *Summary of international agency initiatives on rural–urban linkages*

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Weblinks for details</i>
World Bank Economics Division	Research papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Lnweb18.worldbank.org/essd/essd.nsf/ruraldevelopment/portal – http://www.worldbank.org/urban/urbanruralseminar/
UNFPA	Chapter in <i>State of World Population 1996</i>	– http://www.unfpa.org/swp/1996/ch5.htm
DFID Peri-Urban Interface	Research projects in Kumasi, Ghana, and Hubli-Dharwad, India	– http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu/pui/
IIED	Urban–rural linkages research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – http://www.iied.org/rural_urban/index.html – http://www.unhabitat.org/HD/hdv5n1/contents.htm
UNCHS	Promoting rural–urban linkages	– http://habitat.unchs.org/home.htm
OECD Club du Sahel	Research on regional integration and the development of local economies (ECOLOC)	– http://www1.oecd.org/sah/activities/Dvpt-Local/DLR9.htm
FAO's Food into Cities Programme	Food links research and policy recommendations	– http://www.fao.org/ag/ags/agism/SADA/SADAE-5_.HTM

Note: DFID = Department for International Development. IIED = International Institute for Environment and Development.

Source: adapted from World Bank (2002).

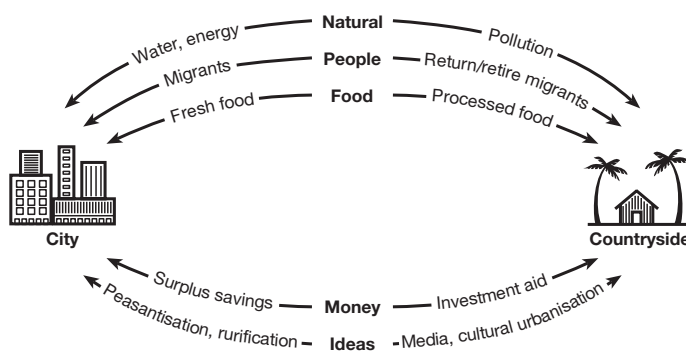


Figure 1.1 *Rural–urban interactions.*

Figure 1.1 illustrates schematically the way rural–urban flows have been organised in this book. However, the figure has limitations, as most two-dimensional representations of complex systems have. One of the key ideas the figure presents is the possibility of each of the flows to work in either direction. Under certain conditions one-way flows may dominate, or the emphasis may change over time or from one context to the next. The flows of people and food and natural flows are represented above ground to acknowledge their visibility. Money and ideas are less tangible and involve service sectors in delivery, so are represented below ground as they are less obvious. One of the main limitations of the figure is that it represents city and countryside as clearly separate. This ignores more problematic issues such as definitions of the rural–urban interface, where distinctions between city and countryside can become blurred. Another important theme that is discussed in this book is the role of intermediate settlements, which are not represented in the figure. Finally, examples of the types of flows provided in the arrows are selective. More detailed examples are discussed later in the book.

Until relatively recently much rural–urban research has focused on a single city and its hinterland. However, the increasing importance of international links and the process of globalisation have an impact on rural–urban relations. In addition, cities throughout the world are often caught between the pressure to be included in the world economy, on the one hand, and on the other the need for links with their rural hinterlands. Such tensions raise issues that have not been considered until recently. This tension is paralleled in the competing processes of globalisation and decentralisation.

A further reason for writing a book that focuses on the relations between urban and rural areas relates to the fact that these relations have been important throughout history. Many major world developments have been linked to the relations between urban and rural realms. For example, on coming to power in 1949, the revolutionary Chinese government was faced with one of the world's greatest urban–rural dilemmas. It was made up of politicians largely from peasant backgrounds and with peasant support, but it took control of a country already struggling to cope with the demands of its many large cities. By 1950 Shanghai was already estimated to number 5.3 million people, Beijing 3.9 million, and Tianjin 2.4 million (UNCHS, 2001). Some of the earliest government actions were designed to impose state-controlled marketing of agricultural goods and rationing of urban food consumption, and to control the movement of people – especially rural–urban migration. In addition, the level of land scarcity experienced by rural dwellers convinced the Chinese government that urban-based heavy industrialisation was the only way the country would be able to support its population which was 541 million in 1952, of whom 57.7 million, or 10.6 per cent, were urban (Knight and Song, 2000). One of the issues that worried the Chinese government was that in 1964, the second census under communist rule found that the urban population had grown to 129.3 million, or 18.4 per cent. Such rapid growth, both nationally and in the cities, alarmed the government, which decided that there was a need to control population growth and to create employment for the urban population.

The hostility of external global powers meant that foreign investment was unlikely. Therefore the only possibility of producing savings to invest in industrialisation was to extract surplus from rural agricultural production, resulting in a bias of policy towards the urban rather than the rural areas. The result was that the State Purchase and Marketing Cooperative's main function was to 'extract as much of the harvest as possible from the peasants' (Knight and Song, 2000: 11). The Cooperative also supplied agricultural inputs and the state controlled the banking. The state therefore mediated all rural–urban flows of goods and capital other than household remittances. The pro-urban bias was compounded by the agricultural tax which amounted to approximately 30 per cent of farm proceeds (Knight and Song, 2000). The Chinese government therefore funded its industrialisation by mobilising the rural areas to produce and save more in order to provide the capital and the tax revenue for investment.

Box 1.1

Comparing international organisations' approaches to rural–urban linkages

A number of national and international aid agencies are beginning to revisit the issue of rural–urban interaction. There appears to be considerable convergence in the thinking and approach at this level. For example, much of the intervention in which the World Bank engages is guided by separate rural and urban strategy documents. However, a recent workshop arrived at the following overarching themes (World Bank, 2000):

- the need for a broad analytical framework that can integrate the processes and approaches that span the realms at various scales;
- the need to consider the role that spatial dimensions play, along with the dynamics, vulnerabilities and movements in and out of poverty;
- the importance of a long-term perspective in relation to shifts in settlement and economic patterns;
- recognition that local economies advance and decline and that different approaches may therefore be required, and the need to understand the linkages and their role in the changes;
- the need to recognise the importance of the trend towards decentralisation;
- the need for approaches that facilitate working across sectors;
- the need to recognise the heterogeneity of constructs of town and country and the divisions between them, including agriculture in towns and non-farm activities in the country.

The UK's governmental aid organisation, the Department for International Development, has supported some research in this area. A recent summary sheet outlined the major challenges for rural–urban linkages as:

- The poorest areas may have little more than consumption linkages
- Production linkages emerge in more diversified settings, such as where rural-based workshops start to supply urban-based factories
- Financial linkages appear in all settings, but with different outcomes for rural economies
- The rise of network societies may contribute to bypass effects, when financial flows link rural areas directly with distant, larger cities at the expense of local towns.

(ODI, 2002)

Common ground is emerging here. There is a consensus that more flexible approaches are required, that flows may wax and wane over time, that the role of small towns in

rural–urban interactions must be considered and that interventions in either rural or urban areas have implications beyond their locality. One of the challenges appears to be that it is not always clear which department or division should be responsible for the agency approach, with some agencies considering an issue from a rural-focused division and others from an urban-focused division.

In a recent report Mutizwa-Mangiza (1999), Planning and Coordination Officer for UNCHS, highlights past views on the rural–urban divide as either pro-urban or anti-urban. According to Mutizwa-Mangiza, these biases have underpinned much development policy and intervention affecting both urban and rural areas. However, he argues that promoting rural–urban linkages offers considerable potential for developing the entire rural–urban continuum. He highlights the importance of this balanced approach, referring to its place in the Habitat Agenda agreed at the Habitat II Conference organised by UNCHS in Istanbul in 1996.

- (a) ‘To promote the sustainable development of rural settlements and to reduce rural-to-urban migration . . .’ (para.165);
- (b) ‘To promote the utilization of new and improved technologies and appropriate traditional practices in rural settlements development . . .’ (para.166);
- (c) To establish ‘. . . policies for sustainable regional development and management . . .’ (para. 167);
- (d) ‘To strengthen sustainable development and employment opportunities in impoverished rural areas . . .’ (para.168); and
- (e) To adopt ‘an integrated approach to promote balanced and mutually supportive urban–rural development . . .’ (para.169).

(Habitat, 1996, quoted in Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1999: 6)

According to Mutizwa-Mangiza, achieving these objectives will require:

- i) strengthening of rural–urban linkages mainly through the improvement of marketing, transportation and communication facilities;
- ii) improvement of a number of infrastructure components which, while enhancing rural–urban linkages, are also essential for economic growth and employment creation (both farm and non-farm) within small urban settlements and rural areas themselves, especially roads, electricity and water;
- iii) bringing private and public services normally associated with cities to the rural population; and
- iv) strengthening of sub-national governance at the regional, rural-local, and city-region levels.

(Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1999)

While the Chinese example illustrates a deliberate policy of exploiting rural areas, Hodder (2000) argues that inevitably rural agricultural sectors and urban industrial sectors play strategic roles in each other's development. He identifies six key reasons for these close links between the two sectors (2000: 80–82):

- 1 Agriculture depends on manufactured goods both for the transformation of produce (for example, farm tools, machinery, inputs) and for the consumer goods which are in demand as agricultural incomes rise (such as radios and bicycles).
- 2 As agriculture incorporates more technology in its activities, labour becomes a less significant factor. More technologically advanced agriculture releases capital and labour which move into the urban industrial sector.
- 3 Agriculture provides raw materials for some industries, such as tobacco, cotton and sisal.
- 4 Agriculture for export can earn foreign exchange which is important for purchasing items which are vital to industrial processes. These include commodities such as petroleum, chemicals and technology which is not produced locally.
- 5 There is an important balance to be struck in incomes, prices and taxation between the urban and the rural areas. For example, high food prices provide rewards to farmers and incentives to increase production, but may mean high prices in urban areas which can lead to poverty and unrest. Taxation in the agricultural sector may be necessary to raise revenues to finance public expenditure, but may act as a disincentive to farmers, particularly if much of the expenditure is urban or industrial focused.
- 6 In rapidly urbanising countries agriculture produces strategically important food for the growing number of urban residents, thus ensuring food security at prices that are affordable.

International and national agencies are beginning to realise that their programmes of urban and rural development intervention have impacts on each other and that there is a need to integrate some of the thinking behind them (see Box 1.1).

The six reasons listed above explain the key interdependencies between rural and urban areas. While the discussion has so far concentrated on the flows between the urban and the rural, one of the main reasons for the separate approaches is the attempt frequently made to identify the defining characteristics of what is 'urban' and what is 'rural'. However, Rigg (1998a) cautions against 'pigeon-