

# Changing Rural Urban Linkages in Africa in a Globalizing Economy

<sup>1</sup>MFUNE O., <sup>2</sup>E. MUTISYA, <sup>3</sup>L. POPOOLA, <sup>4</sup>D. MUNGAI, <sup>5</sup>D. FUH & <sup>3</sup>O.E. OLAYIDE

<sup>1</sup>University of Zambia, Zambia, <sup>2</sup>University of Tokyo, Japan, <sup>3</sup>University of Ibadan, Nigeria, <sup>4</sup>University of Nairobi, Kenya, <sup>5</sup>University of Cape Town, South Africa

<sup>2</sup>Email: mutisya.emmanuel@gmail.com

## Abstract

The role of rural-urban linkages is critically vital for Africa's development in this era of rapid socio-economic transformation. A better understanding of cities and how they relate both to the rural and urban development is needed in view of the continuous changes in development. This paper argues that many of Africa's development problems such as poverty and food insecurity are best tackled through approaches that recognise the links between the two. Further, the paper proposes the "Kizuna" approach, which emphasises strong symbiotic bonds between rural and urban communities to addressing most problems that face the African society. Moreover, the paper argues that elements of 'Kizuna' are already evident in the various social networks and kinships that guide the interactions between rural and urban dwellers in Africa. However, these bonds still need formal recognition and deliberate policy interventions aimed at enhancing their potential to foster poverty reduction and sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Rural-urban-continuum, livelihood options, environmental damage, sustainable development, Kizuna

## **Introduction**

Rural-urban linkages in Africa are becoming more important in the wake of new demographic and socio-economic shifts that are transforming the region and reconfiguring the nature of interactions between the two spaces. These shifts are occurring against a backdrop of a range of problems confronting the African continent which include poverty, increasing inequalities, environmental stresses and shocks and food security challenges. Although traditionally, these problems have been approached as either rural, urban or even peri-urban problems, they transcend these binary categories. This paper focuses on how to use Kizuna approach, which argues for better shared efforts and strong bonds, to drive rural-urban linkage for sustainable development.

The Kizuna approach is an attempt to develop new approaches that examine cities as part of a continuum embracing the rural urban connection and in the process transforming the rural, peri-urban and urban areas. Thus, the principle objective of this paper is to deal with the question: why rural-urban linkages need urgent attention in development practice in Africa and how 'Kizuna' could provide an overarching framework for thinking about these linkages. At a time when the world is in dire need of new bonds (linkages) to better address the numerous problems that it is facing, 'Kizuna' emerged as central concept for thinking about such bonds at a symposium organised by the University of Tokyo in January, 2015. The overriding message at the conference was that the world needs a new "Kizuna" between various actors and institutions in order to resolve the various challenges it is facing and achieve sustainable development. Moreover, it was argued that sustainable development itself entails a "Kizuna" between social, economic and environmental goals. Drawing on this thinking, this paper finds no better arena where expressions of "Kizuna" are required than in the context of rural-urban linkages. Thus, in this paper, "Kizuna" is more than just a word, it is a new discourse.

This paper is mainly based on theoretical arguments, concepts, approaches and methodologies of the question under discussion through an appraisal of published analyses on rural -urban interactions in Africa. As a way of setting the context, the paper first provides an overview of how rural-urban linkages have been traditionally conceptualised in literature. The paper questions the traditional treatment of the concepts of rural and urban as discrete categories and a basis for addressing Africa's

development issues. This discrete and dichotomous approach to urban development as distinct from rural development no longer accords with reality. In addition, the paper examines the changing demographic trends in Africa and its unique features. Against this background, the paper then draws on a variety of literature to trace elements of “Kizuna” in rural-urban interactions in Africa and provides arguments why building this rural-urban “Kizuna” must be treated with a sense of urgency in order to accelerate poverty eradication and build sustainable African societies. The concept of “Kizuna” was chosen because it denotes ‘bonds’ and in particular bonds that are mutually beneficial or symbiotic. We propose the notion of “Kizuna” because we see the rural and urban as well as the peri-urban in Africa as an integrated system in as far as their livelihoods and social ties are concerned.

### *Conceptualising the ‘rural and urban’ in Africa*

Defining what constitutes ‘rural’ or ‘urban’ remains a challenging academic undertaking. Traditionally, scholarly and policy discussions have tended to treat rural and urban areas as two distinct spaces of human interactions (see Tacoli, 1998). According to Agergaard et al (2010), one approach often used to distinguish rural from urban areas is the livelihood and economy approach prevalent in some geographical literature (e.g. Rigg, 2007). In this approach, the rural is dominated by primary production and agriculture livelihoods while the urban is dominated by manufacturing and non-farm occupations. Thus in this conceptualisation, the two are treated as distinct spaces of production with different livelihood systems. While this position is dominant in literature, there are two fundamental challenges when such binaries are applied to an African context. First, the use of these binaries is inconsistent with evidence that show that what may be termed as rural or urban features tend to co-exist within the urban or rural areas (Allen, 2003). For example, non-agricultural activities (e.g manufacturing) are a wide spread feature of rural areas (Owuor, 2004) while urban agriculture is a prominent feature of African cities (Hampwaye, 2008; Bah et al, 2003). The phenomenon where ‘rural’ features are prevalent in ‘urban’ areas is now being referred to as the ‘ruralisation’ of urban areas. Although some literature treats this as a new phenomenon, Kruger (1998) argues that ruralisation has always been a feature of African urbanisation.

Secondly, the conceptualisation of the two, as either an agricultural space or manufacturing space, projects an image of the rural or urban areas

as being more or less homogenous and static. The reality, however, is that rural and urban settlements are never static and are often changing with changing circumstances. Further, they vary considerably in-country and across countries in Africa. For example rural areas in proximity to urban areas vary considerably to rural areas remote to urban areas. Thus, in analytical terms, the rural-urban dichotomy often proves inadequate for analysing issues in areas that cannot be classified as distinctly rural or urban such as peri-urban areas (Allen, 2003). Further, Allen (2003) notes that this artificial distinction misinforms the setting up of institutional arrangements and development planning practice. Planning tends to separate rural areas from urban areas. As Tacoli (1998) aptly puts it, urban planners tend to concentrate on urban issues and give little attention to agriculture and rural development while rural planners ignore urban issues. The result is that many issues that transcend this dichotomy are poorly treated in development planning processes.

As a departure from literature that emphasises these binaries, some approaches, particularly social and cultural approaches do not treat the two as distinct spaces of production, but as an 'idea' of rural and urban with social and cultural meanings (Agergaard et al, 2010). In this treatment, societies are viewed as in a state of flux such that it is difficult to tie either rural or urban areas to a specific economic activity as some rural areas have become *defacto* urban spaces in terms of production, consumption and social interactions. The emphasis here is on the blurring of an urban-rural divide (Tacoli, 2008). Thus as Agergaard et al (2010) note, since settlements are difficult to classify as either rural or urban, they are better seen as forming a rural -urban continuum.

In this continuum, farming areas and cities co-exist with multiple types of flows and interactions between them (Adel, 1999). According to Tacoli (1998), interactions between the two can be defined as linkages across space (i.e. in terms of flow of people, goods, money and information between them) and linkages between sectors (e.g agriculture and services). This theorisation of the linkage has often been deployed in many analyses of rural-urban linkages in Africa. Examples of these analyses include studies dealing with rural-urban migrations and those linking the livelihoods of urban dwellers with those of rural dwellers (e.g Kruger, 1998; Bah et al, 2003). The later sections of this paper returns to this subject to further explain why Kizuna is need in the rural-urban continuum.

### **Population and urbanization trends in Africa**

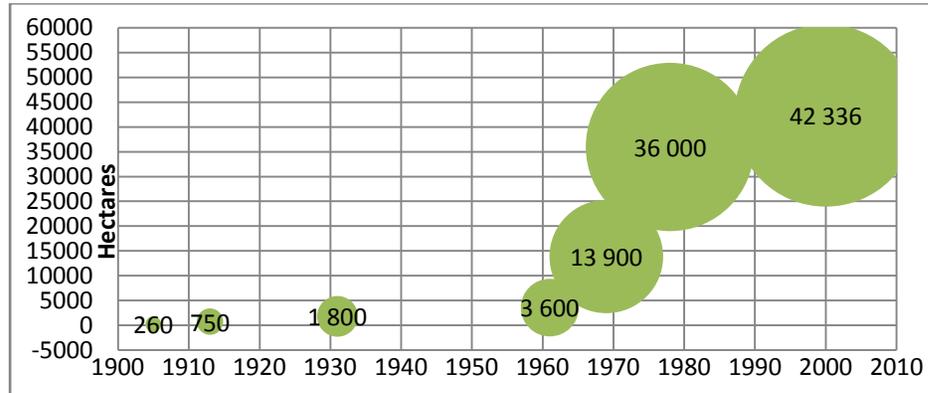
The image of Africa as a rural continent is fast changing with rapid urbanization. About 40% of Africa's population was urban in 2010 and this is expected to reach the 61.8% mark by 2050. The tipping point (that is the year when the population living in urban areas will be equal to that in rural areas) is projected to be 2030. Many sub-Saharan countries are experiencing rapid rates of urbanization. For this region, the urban population constituted 37.3% of the total population in 2010, but by the year 2050, the urban population will have risen to 60.5% of the total population. The proportion of urban population in eastern, northern, southern and western sub-Saharan Africa was 23.7%, 52%, 58.8% and 44.6% respectively. Projections show that by the year 2050, the urban populations will have increased to 47.6%, 72%, 77.6% and 68% in the eastern, northern, southern and western regions, respectively (UN-HABITAT, 2014). In Kenya for example, the urban population will increase fivefold - from 12 million people in urban areas in 2009 to about 63 million in 2055 (Mutisya, 2015). The rural population on the other hand will experience a stagnant growth and will account for about 22 million by 2055.

As we discuss Africa's urbanisation trends, we are aware that there are some academic works that demand that we treat Africa's urbanisation trends with caution. These works argue that urbanization hype in Africa is a fallacy (Potts, 2005; 2009, 2012) and draw our attention to counter-urbanisation trends in some parts of Africa such as the Copperbelt region of Zambia between 1990 and 2000 and urbanisation stagnation in Benin, Zimbabwe and Niger. Despite these trends, Jenkins (2003) and Potts (2005, 2009, 2012) aptly argue that urban centers in Africa are inevitably on the path of rapid population growth even if parts of the population opt for a full or partial urban existence. Indeed, the inevitability of this phenomenon is evidenced in the fact that by 2004, sub-Saharan Africa's urban growth rate per annum averaged 4.4 as compared to Africa's 1.5 % of the rural population (Braun, 2007).

What is important, however, is that urbanisation in Africa has to be viewed from its historical context. In pre-independence times, Africa's urbanisation occurred under a highly restrictive regime (Potts and Mutambira, 1990). In many Southern African countries such as Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa where racially based policy and planning systems were employed, movement of Africans to urban areas was highly

controlled (Williams, 1986). Urban areas were assumed to be largely spaces for European habitation and rural areas for natives (African populations). Thus most cities that are experiencing tremendous growth now are rooted in this colonial past, designed primarily for elite European populations (e.g. see Miller et al, 2008; Williams, 1986). In this regard, based on western planning ideas and colonial interests, the cities were planned to have very small regulated indigenous populations. This pool of black African labourers was, often maintained, to support Europeans' economic activities. These workers, according to the restrictive regime rules and regulations, had no rights to remain permanently in urban areas (Potts and Mtambira, 2003; Lesetedi, 2003). A consequence of this colonial legacy is that today, migrants to urban areas still regard themselves as part of their original villages and as such, many African households pursue a circular migration or are semi-permanently split between rural and urban areas by means of straddling (Tostensen, 2003). Further, according to Kruger (2000), urban dwellers in Africa still retain rural attitudes and lifestyles. Thus, in quantitative terms, while Africa is rapidly urbanising, the urban dwellers themselves are hardly disconnected from the rural (Kruger, 1998; Tostesten, 2004; Okkoyunlu, 2013; Potts and Mtambira, 1990). This is important as Africa's rapid urbanisation, is to some extent, still a function of in-migration. Another consequence of the colonial legacy is that urban planners such as is in the case of Lusaka, were highly short sighted and never anticipated the level of population increase being witnessed today. After independence, in some countries, there was a surge in urban population which was not matched by investments in new housing and other urban environmental services. Moreover, planning approaches remained western-centric and unable to respond to the new challenges brought about by the increase in urban population.

Urban planning's failure to respond to these challenge has resulted in widespread spatial expansion and uncontrolled urban sprawl. For example, in a recent study, Melbye et al (2015) show how the city of Dares Salaam's surface area has dramatically expanded since the 1960s due to population increase. They note that while in the 1960s, the maximum distance from the centre to the edge of the city was between 6 -10km and then 30km in the 1990s, today, it is up to 50km in some directions. Similar growth is occurring in Lusaka in Zambia. Where as in 1960, the surface area of the city was only 3,600 hectares, by 2010; the surface area had increased to 42,336 hectares. Figure 1 shows this increase in the surface area of the city.



**Figure 1: Increase in Lusaka City Surface Area since the 1900s**

Source: Chitonge and Mfuné (in-press)

Another significant feature of this African urbanisation process is that much population growth tends to be concentrated in peri-urban areas which are often the receiving nodes of rural-urban migrants. Many migrants tend to settle in the peri-urban areas because such areas often offer the cheapest housing and can sometimes be occupied illegally. As Gastorn (2013) notes, most urban poor live in areas where they have no legal rights to occupy. Consequently, the peri-urban fringes in Africa have been variously classified as zones of illegal or squatter settlements (Kalikiti, 2013), expanded rural-urban agricultural settlements (Briggs and Mwamfupe, 1999), health hazards (Chirisa, 2010) and other conceptualizations that characterize them as mainly a haven of the African urban poor. What is of importance to this paper is that, here, in these peri-urban areas, residents participate in both urban and rural economy (Kruger, 1998; Jenkins, 2003) and hence highlighting the importance of rural-urban linkages.

Further, the result of such a large concentration of poor people in peri-urban areas is the increased pressure on available housing and urban social and environmental services such as sanitation and clean water supply. Moreover, many of these urban poor are highly dependent on poorly paid informal sector-employed or unskilled formal sector jobs making it very difficult for them to pay for some of the services. Simply put, due the current rapid urbanisation processes in Africa, urban problems are increasingly becoming more complex and have far reaching implications for urban sustainability and governance systems. Given that reversing this urbanisation trend is challenging, it is clear that new development

mechanisms that are well suited to densely populated urban areas are required in order to deal with complex and challenging issues that arise out of this trend (JICA, 2007). Such mechanisms need to focus on how to foster the capacity of urban areas to absorb extra population from rural areas while at the same time to better create a balanced management of the rural-urban environment. Key areas of focus should include how to improve land delivery systems, secure property rights and provide cost-effective environmental infrastructure and services. To achieve this, new context specific knowledge that unravels the complexities and realities of Africa's ruralisation and urbanisation is required.

### **Urban and regional planning in Africa and the rural-urban dichotomy**

The treatment of rural-urban linkages, however, has not been unproblematic in both literature and planning practice. In fact literature presents us with several positions on the nature of linkages between the two areas. First, we have in literature, a theoretical position that views the relationship between urban areas and rural areas as largely hierarchical. In geographical scholarship, planning and regional studies, for example, the emergency of central place theory credited to Walter Christaller (1933 - 1966) saw an increased emphasis on cities as central places that provide central place functions to both city dwellers and the hinterland (Baker, 1992; Adel, 1999). Rural areas were viewed as highly dependent on urban areas. Equally important to the idea of cities as critical for rural development were theoretical works around the notion of growth poles or centres. Cities, in this thinking were theorized as growth centres which if well-developed would have a trickle-down effect on rural areas (Braun, 2007; Sharma, 1984). In some African countries such as Zambia, regional planning was heavily influenced by these ideas in the 1960s and 1970s. Central place and growth pole theories all encouraged urban bias in resource allocation. It is important to note here, that development and urban planners in Africa, especially the modernisation theory was also dominant in development thinking, broadly accepted that industrialisation, associated with urban areas would lead to improved productivity and hence encouraged governments to invest more in urban areas, with an anticipation of spread effects to rural areas (Potts, 2004; Sharma, 1984). This urban-growth nexus was portrayed as automatic and inevitable (Turok and McGranaham, 2013). This was the case in many East and Southern Africa countries. The result of such efforts, however, was the emergency of glaring inequalities between

urban and rural areas as investment concentrated in urban centres and the spread effects never emerged.

According to Potts (2004), in East and Southern Africa, attempts were made to correct these distortions created by an urban bias by redirecting resources (through structural adjustments programmes including liberalizing economic policies and privatization programmes) to rural areas while de-emphasising investment in urban areas. Again, the results were disastrous as urban-based public and private sector retrenchments occurred and the urban poor became increasingly excluded from important public services that were previously provided by the state and were now under private operators. Simply, these results show the challenges of embarking on development strategies that are based on false dichotomies. While the failures of either urban or rural bias in development practice are evident in literature, more recently, some authors have reported the resurgence of urban bias and city-centric thought in development literature and practice. Onyebueke and Ezeadichie (2011), giving the example of Nigeria, note that this is having two concurrent and contradictory trends: the foregrounding of urban centres as the 'epicentre of investment' or 'engines of development' and the once more relegation of the rural areas to the backwaters resulting in rural neglect and poverty. Today, it is argued that the vast majority of the poor in Africa (numbering 218 million in 2011) live in rural areas (Onyebueke and Ezeadichie, 2011).

Apart from this view that sees urban-rural linkages as hierarchical and thus more important for the survival of rural areas, there is also a theorisation that sees cities as 'parasitic' in their linkages with rural areas (Baker, 1992). Adel (1999) notes that rural development planners, for example, tend to view cities as parasitic and alien to rural interests. Cities are viewed as parasitic in the sense that they depend on rural areas for all their resources and are thus implicated in the depletion of these resources. As a consequence of this view, rural development planning has been characterised by a rural bias with no interest in attempting to understand how cities might be better brought into rural planning (Adel, 1999). Simply put, the co-existence of rural and urban areas, in this context, is seen as asymbiotic and hence unsustainable. Thus, just like their urban planning counterparts, rural development planners down play the generative potential of urban areas and fail to acknowledge the poverty reducing inter-linkages between the two spaces (Braun, 2007).

### **Why a “Kizuna” approach to rural-urban linkages?**

In this section, we deal with the question of why “Kizuna” must be at the centre of both theoretical and practical efforts to link rural and urban areas. We see, the bonds (or linkages) in terms of structural social relationships between individuals in urban areas and those in rural areas (Lesetedi, 2003). There are several reasons for arguing that building a rural-urban “Kizuna” has to be attended to with a sense of urgency in both development practice and research. These reasons are examined in depth here.

#### *“Kizuna” would help deal with inequalities.*

First, we need “Kizuna” because research shows that lack of economically optimal rural-urban linkages is bad for growth and development as it splits societies, promotes inefficiencies and is itself source of inequalities which are themselves growth inhibiting (Braun, 2007; Okkoyunlu, 2013). “Kizuna” would enhance growth because strong linkages have potential to alleviate poverty and spur growth by facilitating the flow of resources to where they have net beneficial effects (Okkoyunlu, 2013; Soliman, 2004). By approaching the rural and urban areas as a whole, “Kizuna” would thus help in addressing the current urban bias in regional planning. As Braun (2007) notes, rural-urban inequalities continue to increase mostly as a result of urban bias where health, education and physical infrastructure focus on urban centers. The inequalities are not only in terms of income but also asset and endowment and human development.

#### *“Kizuna” is important for the livelihoods of the poor (for the development of social capital)*

As seen in the preceding sections, past development approaches favouring either an urban or rural bias have not resulted in the development dividends expected by development theorists and practitioners. Partly, this stems from the fact that, although development problems have been treated as either rural or urban, this is hardly in line with the way both the urban and rural poor (who are targets of these development approaches) organise their livelihoods. These urban and rural poor are in fact, already practicing ‘Kizuna’ in the way they organise their livelihoods. As most studies have shown, many urban dwellers rarely sever their ties with rural areas and their livelihoods are more multi-spatial in nature than recognised by development practitioners (Braun,

2007; Lesetedi, 2003; Kruger, 1998). Much evidence of great interdependences between the two where they complement each other have been generated (Mutisya, 2015; Owuor, 2004; Bah et al, 2003; Thuo, 2013; Onyebueke and Ezeadichie, 2011). For example, urban poor people's livelihoods strategies often depend on resources in rural areas, just like rural people often depend on some resources from urban areas. Owuor (2004) further argues that urban dwellers have rural components to their livelihoods and retain strong links with rural areas to the extent that some keep their asset base in rural areas. Similarly, Kruger (1998) noted that in Gaborone, some urban dwellers continued to do farming activities in rural areas even when working in urban informal and formal sectors. This is also noted by Bah et al (2003) whose study on rural urban linkages in Mali, Nigeria and Tanzania, report strong livelihood links between urban areas and rural areas.

Kinships, community ties and systems of land tenure ensure that social and economic ties between urban dwellers and rural dwellers are maintained. Onyebueke and Ezeadichie (2011) call a 'somewhat curious culturally and economically integrated system'. For example, customary tenure systems ensure that rural land is still accessible to all family members (Lesetedi, 2003). Consequently, urban dwellers can draw on urban incomes while also utilising rural resources. Similarly, rural households draw on rural resources while family ties allow them to benefit from urban incomes (e.g remittances) as exemplified by most of the livelihood literature. Thus, we see, as Tostesten (2003) puts it, African households are translocated, rather than based on territorial co-habitation. Their multi-spatiality or straddling nature have to be understood if poverty reduction is to be achieved and this calls for taking rural and urban areas as an integrated whole. This multi-spatiality allows for diversified livelihoods. Moreover, research has already shown that successful households are often those who manage to diversify. Most secure households combine crop production with a variety of non-farm income generating activities while in contrast; the least secure are less diversified (Okkoyunlu, 2013; Baker, 1995; Bryceson, 1996). We can see then the role of "Kizuna", that rural-urban linkages in Africa are critical for both urban and rural dwellers livelihood strategies and poverty reduction efforts based on a 'stand-alone development strategy such as simply keeping rural dwellers on the farm are in fact unrealistic (Jenkins, 2003). Development planners need to understand that the everyday lives of the poor people they are targeting are played out within an integrated rural-urban space (Adel, 1999). There is

now great potential to enhance this “Kizuna” further, particularly with the emerging information revolution that is allowing rural communities’ access to communication technology and in the context of the time-space compression factor (Adel, 1999).

*“Kizuna” could help develop people’s resilience*

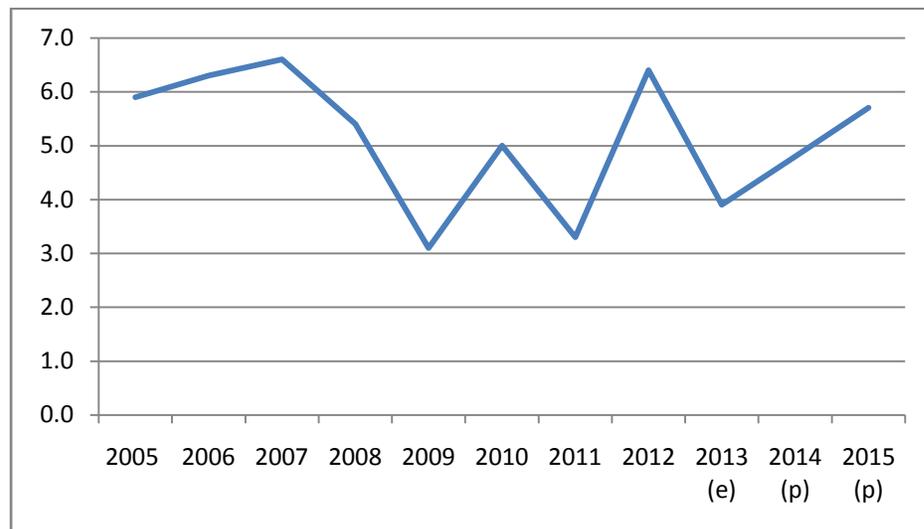
“Kizuna” is also a way of dealing with the livelihood uncertainties that rural and urban dwellers face. In the face of multiple crises that Africa is facing, such as unemployment, climate change and other problems, strengthening rural –urban bonds provides an opportunity to deal with these uncertainties. Again, many studies in Africa show that rural-urban bonds increase with uncertainties. While in times of climate related stresses such as drought or crop failure, rural dwellers rely on their urban links to survive, urban dwellers also deal with economic uncertainties by drawing on their rural links. As Lesetedi (2003) notes, rural-urban linkages are vital safety valves/nets and allow people to build resilience (also Adel, 1999; Kruger, 1998).

Despite much clamour about urbanisation, it is important to note that urban dwellers face many uncertainties particularly in the context of a limited economic base to fully absorb them into the urban labour system. In fact, Jenkins (2003) argues that much of Africa’s urbanisation is not based on strong demand for labour, but strong rejection for labour. Consequently, many urban migrants end up in peri-urban areas which have become labour dumping grounds where households can straddle between the urban and rural economies to enhance their survival (Jenkins, 2003). Urbanisation, according to Kruger (1998) does not reduce people’s social vulnerability or increase the sustainability of their livelihoods, hence the falling back on rural linkages in times of uncertainties. The maintenance of rural-urban linkages and of rural assets as an emergency reserve is said to be ubiquitous in Africa (Kruger, 2000) and is an important feature of ruralisation in the continent.

*Kizuna is important in the face of emerging challenges facing the rural-urban space*

Besides the demographic changes that urban and rural areas are undergoing, it is evident that African urban and rural areas are also undergoing rapid socio-economic changes. Some of these changes arise out

of economic changes sweeping across the globe. African countries are, in particular, experiencing the effects of globalisation which has triggered liberalisation of trade and the market. Writing in 2004, Potts noted that although African cities felt the chill of the winds of globalisation then, they were still marginal to the global corporate agenda. Africa then was seen as having been relegated to the fringe of the global economy (Pillay, 2002). A decade later, this situation is different as African cities are increasingly grabbing the attention of global corporate actors. The pouring in of investments, coupled with rising commodity prices have not only seen Africa post positive growth over the last decade as Figure 2 shows, but are also producing new spatial forms of rural-urban linkages.



**Figure 2: Africa’s GDP growth rate over the last 10 years**  
 Source: OECD, 2014

The growth driven by foreign investments is bringing a new social and economic vibrancy and changing consumption patterns that are transforming both the urban and rural areas in Africa. Indeed, as Miller et al (2008) point out, there is an increased resurgence of the market mechanism/private sector in land markets in African cities and other cities of the global market. Increasingly, this is leading to the commodification of urban space and services, triggering a reworking of rural-urban linkages. The new urban vibrancy and dynamics arising out of such trends are not only playing out in peri-urban areas but also in extended peripherals

outside city boundaries and sometimes several kilometres away in areas that are predominantly agricultural lands, marshlands or forests.

A good example of such development process that is transforming such areas is the emergence of private sector built towns which are creating new rural-urban landscapes far removed from the physical boundaries of the city with significant implications on sustainable rural and urban development. Driven by flows of international capital, lifestyle changes and deficits in housing and other infrastructure services, private 'satellite' towns are an important emerging trend in Sub-Saharan African countries. In Zambia, for example, three new private towns are under development several kilometres away from the Lusaka City boundaries in districts primarily classified as rural and where agriculture is the dominant land-use activity. The larger of the two towns is planned to have more than 8000 homes, two artificial lakes, a 40 acre park, a 4000 square meter shopping mall, a business and light industrial park, An American University, international schools, a teaching hospital, worship centres and other facilities. The developers define it as a place to live, work, learn and play. In Nigeria Eko Atlantic City is another example of a private satellite town close to Lagos. Located on the land reclaimed from the Atlantic Ocean, Eko city is planned to house over 400,000 residents (Phillips, 2014) most of which will result from rural urban migration. Kenya is putting up the Konza Techno City, a sustainable, world-class technology hub and a major economic driver for the nation, with a vibrant mix of businesses, workers, residents, and urban amenities. Privately developed towns are also emerging in other countries in Africa. Due to their locations, closer to or in rural areas, these towns and cities promote and enhance "Kizuna" between urban and rural areas.

Such privately built towns and cities are managed by private investment companies (foreign and local) and rely on privately secured finances to fund developments. While there has been much focus on such towns in East Asia (Percival and Waley, 2012; Webster et al, 2014) where this is increasingly becoming a common feature of large cities, for Africa, there has been little empirical focus on this trend. The phenomenon is still largely a focus of media debates and reports rather than academic research. The lack of focus on the subject owes much to the fact that in Sub-Saharan African countries, this is a more recent phenomenon and scholars have not yet begun to seriously engage with it.

While on the economic front, such projects are becoming centres of attraction for foreign direct investment and are partly seen as a solution to the large infrastructural and urban services deficits that confront many African cities, on the sustainability front, they raise numerous questions. Among them, include their potential to exacerbate inequalities between the small elite and the poor in both the city core and the rural areas in which they are set up. We have to note that these new 'enclaves of wealth' are being created against a backdrop of mass rural and urban poverty. In this regard, private satellite towns may occupy what others have termed as 'fictitious space', insulated from the troubles or poverty beyond their borders (Miller et al, 2008). Given this situation, we still have to ask what this new phenomenon means for rural-urban interactions in Sub-Saharan Africa and how this strengthens "Kizuna" in the rural-urban setup.

Further, just like the trends in South-East Asia (see Percival and Waley, 2012), these privately built cities are being set up on rural lands that are primarily reserved for agriculture and other forms of rural land-uses. In this regard, they are likely to have significant implications not only on the local ecology but also on the livelihoods of rural actors bordering such towns. Moreover, given that rural areas are multifunctional in nature, there are many natural resources (e.g water bodies along which such towns are founded) that may inevitably turn to be shared resources between the new comers in these new towns and the longstanding inhabitants. This could potentially be a source of contestations and conflicts. A better understanding of this new phenomenon and how it relates both to the rural and urban development is urgently needed. The development of these settler towns also increases the role of private and other non-state actors in urban and rural governance as new actors engage with functions normally reserved for state and municipal authorities. The nature of governance arrangements that emerge and their implications for sustainable rural and urban development in Africa is another area that still requires scholarly engagement.

*Sustainable development challenges emerging from shifting demographic trends need "Kizuna"*

The current massive demographic shift has enormous implications in terms of poverty, natural resources and environment management (El Sioufi, 2010). One of the important outcomes of urban outward expansion and heightened population in rural-urban fringe areas is the increased

demand for services and an expansion of business opportunities for residents who originally had to contend with small scale-farming or work as labourers. Hence, the villagers are now open to a wider range of income generating options and more opportunities for livelihood diversification. Such opportunities include service-oriented jobs like the sale of mobile phone recharge vouchers, operation of food canteens/restaurants, shoe repairs, sale of groceries and other menial jobs. Also, as new houses and small-scale industries are coming up in the area, there are also opportunities in the busy construction sector. A study by Kabbaand (2010) summarized the relationship between urban expansion and socio-economic variables as positive.

While there are some positive externalities associated with these demographic and social economic changes, urban expansion is also seen as being responsible for drastic environmental changes in many parts of the world. A major weakness of most research addressing environmental problems is that these problems are often taken as either urban or rural when in fact they transcend these dichotomies. When environmental issues are discussed in the context of rural-urban linkages, the focus is often on how environmental factors drive rural-urban migration. Concepts such as 'ecomigrants (UNEP, 2007)', 'environmental refugees' and 'climate refugees' have all emerged to discuss rural people who are forced out of their areas due to environmental factors (Geest et al, 2010). What research needs to do is to go beyond this focus and examine how changing demographics and socio-economic factors are generating new forms of externalities that affect both urban and rural areas. As McGranaham et al (2004) point out, as cities change and become more affluent, their relationship with the surrounding regions also begins to change. For example, while the environmental problems of low income cities' dwellers involve hazardous living and working conditions which have immediate impacts on the livelihoods and lives of the urban poor, the environment burdens of affluent cities' dwellers involve such environmental pressures as GHG emissions and resource depletion brought about by high consumption patterns and is also felt in the rural areas. Rural areas are sources of resources and their role in urban development is thus crucial. This is important as, according to Turok and McGranaham (2013), there is neglect in literature of the consequences of urban growth on poor communities and also on resource depletion.

A major environmental challenge associated with rural-urban "Kizuna" and which still requires scholarly attention is land use change.

Lambin et al. (2000) asserted that land use/land cover change is one of the major challenges that affect the natural landscape. It is also one of the main driving forces of global environmental change, and central to the sustainable development debate. Several authors (Thuo, 2013; Kabba, 2011; Bryant, 2013; ElSioufi, 2010; Albinus, 2008) have identified the implications of land use change occasioned by rural-urban interactions on rural livelihoods of people in affected areas and broadly on sustainable development to include: encroachment on agricultural land, environmental damage and health problems, and land fragmentation and diminishing productivity. The implications are further discussed as follow:

#### *Encroachment of agricultural land*

Rapid urbanization has implication on agriculture which is the mainstay in most rural economies in Africa. Cities' expansion has led to encroachment of agricultural land, particularly arable and valuable habitats. Urban expansion has today led to the displacement of many agrarian communities and has consequently been responsible for loss of jobs and primary means of sustenance among many rural inhabitants whose primary livelihoods depend on farming. This is because population increases in the rural-urban fringe areas increase pressure on the available facilities/resources among which is land. As a social system, such areas would normally adjust in order to accommodate or cushion the effect of such disturbance, the process which tend to trigger several construction activities such as housing, small factories and shops; and consequently, encroachment into agricultural lands and its attendant challenges of labour displacement among small holders and others.

Furthermore, as the rural-urban fringe becomes more urban than rural, the prospects of farming becomes bleak given that agriculture is rarely recognized as a part of urban land use by most African urban by-laws and other legislations. In addition, the springing-up of non-farm jobs within the immediate catchment of rural-urban fringe areas creates a serious labour shortage especially the non-paid farm labour. This with other related factors increases farming overheads and therefore, makes farming unviable as a commercial enterprise. For instance, Thuo (2013) described a scenario where non-farm residents complained of the foul smells from the stables of nearby livestock farms and due to increase in number of these residents in excess of the small holder farmers, they were able to influence decision making against livestock keeping in the area

thereby jeopardizing the continuity of the enterprise. This points to shifting power relations in the city fringes as non-farming households and farming households interact, areas which research in Africa has hardly started to engage with.

#### *Land fragmentation and diminishing productivity*

Increasing population in urban areas poses a great challenge to security of tenure for urban dwellers, especially for the poor and other vulnerable groups. The resultant fragmentation of land holdings make bush fallowing, a traditional time-tested farming system in Africa very difficult for farmers, hence, over-cultivation of the available piece of farmland. Decreased land productivity which arises in such situation deters meaningful socio-economic change and poverty reduction. Albinus *et al* (2008) corroborated this position when he observed decrease in land productivity in Mara in Tanzania due to fragmented land holdings among peasant farmers.

#### *Environmental damage and health problems*

Arguably, the recent global challenge of climate change is one of the direct outcomes of land use change arising from urban-rural inter-linkages. Rapid urbanization in fringe areas have in most parts of Africa and Asia led to deforestation and forest degradation leading to carbon emissions, loss of biodiversity, flooding and mud slides, thus posing a serious threat to sustainable development in emerging urban centres. In his paper on urban renewal debates and the challenge of greening urban environment in Nigeria, Popoola (2014) traced the recent flooding and overflow of *Dandaroo* River in Ibadan, and several other locations in Lagos State, Nigeria (Plate 1) to uncontrolled felling of forest trees in the region.



**Plate 1: Flooded community of Ajegunle-Owode (a suburb locality) in Kosofe LGA, Lagos State, Nigeria (as experienced in year 2010)**

The environmental problems presented here show how urban areas trigger environmental ills that affect both urban and rural areas. In this view, however, the analysis of environmental issues should not only focus on how cities transfer environmental burdens to rural areas, but also how cities through their access to financial resources; technology can foster efficiency in resource use and drive the enhancement of ecosystem services vital for both rural and urban linkages. In addition, research should also focus on environmental inequalities. Although this paper does not engage with this subject in detail, it is evident that Africa is faced with glaring inequalities in the provision of environmental services critical to human health such as water and sewerage services. Studies on urban environmental services show the urban and rural poor in Africa are still unreached by public environmental services such as piped water, energy services and sewerage systems. According to van Dijk et al (2014), in Tanzania and Uganda, piped sewerage services are still limited to the city centres and better neighbourhoods while slums and rural areas have to look for their own solutions. In fact, among city residents, 85% provide their own sewerage solutions (Dijk et al, 2014). In Lusaka city, for example, a JICA (2009) commissioned study shows that in the peri-urban areas, 93% depend on pit latrines without any treatment. Further, in terms of environmental services, research shows that the poor in urban areas and

rural areas (where electrification rates are still below 10%) rely on crude biomass fuel for their energy needs (Mfune and Boon, 2008; Mfune and Sakala, 2013; World Bank, 2005). What these trends indicate is that environmental services such as modern forms of energy, piped water and sewerage services remain a preserve of the urban elite. While there has been a focus on the health risks associated with lack of availability of such services, there is still a need for more work on the type of policy interventions that can reduce the inequalities in these services between the urban elite and the poor (in both rural and urban areas). This is important, as real Kizuna can only be achieved if these inequalities are addressed.

### **Rural-urban linkages and policy Interventions**

From the preceding sections, it is clear that there is a need for a “Kizuna” approach to dealing with a range of challenges that face rural and urban dwellers and for building a mutually beneficial inter-linkage for sustainable development. It is clear how people draw on kinships and community ties to secure their livelihoods. These ties are already elements of “Kizuna” which constitute ‘social capital’ that can be harnessed for sustainable livelihoods and societies. As Takeudi (2015) argues, bonds such as these should be supported with cross-scale coordination and multi-level governance systems. In some places, some of these ties are being broken hence “Kizuna” needs to revisit these bonds. This “Kizuna” is needed between actors (planners, policy makers, urban and rural dwellers) and within institutions. Among the areas that planners and policy makers need to focus on to strengthen (or in some cases rebuild) rural-urban “Kizuna” are:

- (a) Infrastructure gaps that are critical for reducing inequalities
- (b) Addressing institutional failure in urbanization dynamics and in rural stagnation.
- (c) Institutional gaps need to be addressed in terms of labour markets, information gaps, investment policies and negative environmental externalities engendered by urbanization (Braun, 2007)
- (d) Reforming governance and planning systems to allow for structures that build bonds between urban and rural areas.
- (e) Enhancing access to information through communication technology to enhance connectivity between the two.
- (f) Developing policies that strengthen people’s social networks and help rebuild broken ones.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has examined rural-urban linkages in the context of rapidly changing demographics and socio-economic factor in Africa. The paper argues that rural and urban issues in scholarly works on Africa have often been dominated by analyses that treat rural and urban areas as separate entities in themselves. While such analyses may be useful, they are often insufficient when dealing with the relationship between rural and urban areas in an African context. Moreover, such conceptualisations have either encouraged an urban bias or rural bias in development planning and practice. Today, as some authors have noted, there appears to be a resurgence of the urban bias in development practice. As Onyebueke and Ezeadichie (2011) argue, this is again, triggering a rural neglect and has potential to exacerbate inequalities between the two in terms of living standards, ill-health, lack of education and other factors.

The paper has highlighted, how, although development approaches tend to take an urban or rural bias in trying to foster development, rural and urban dwellers themselves tend to rely on both rural and urban resources in order to construct their livelihoods. In this regard, the paper has proposed the need to think about these linkages in the context of 'Kizuna'. This is because we are of the view that the interdependences or interactions between the two are crucial for fostering sustainable development. As such the variety in which these interactions exist, including the kinships, social networks and other local initiatives that facilitate and strengthen these interactions need to be understood in scholarly engagement if new knowledge that would inform development interventions is to be made available to development practitioners. This is important as these interactions are continually being reworked with intensifying globalisation and demographic processes.

It should be noted, however, that such interactions cannot be understood in the context of disciplinary restraints that still see urban and rural areas as discrete units. Clearly, the treatment of rural and urban areas as separate entities arises out of disciplinary traditions and restraints. Some disciplines, such as urban geography, rural geography, and rural sociology have all gained prominence on the basis of focusing on either the rural or the urban. This paper thus argues for approaches that recognise the fluid nature of human settlements in Africa and engage the complex interdependences between rural and urban areas. The view here is that

rural and urban areas should be seen and analysed as a complex integrated system characterised by social, economic, and ecological interdependences. A “Kizuna” approach would continue to provide a suitable framework for understanding such a system.

Given the evidence pointing to greater interdependencies between the rural and urban, it is critical for research to focus attention on the nature of these interdependencies. In particular there is greater need to focus on which ways rural-urban “Kizuna” can be enhanced to accelerate growth, build the resilience of the livelihoods of both urban and rural dwellers. Further, there is need for research focusing on how hurdles (such as institutional and infrastructural barriers) to these optimal rural-urban linkages interactions can be approached in order to achieve sustainable outcomes. More specifically, research should also pay attention to the role social relations such as kinships and community ties play in fostering such positive relations. It is also important to examine how these social relations, including the livelihoods they support are frequently being reworked in the face of demographic and social changes that are occurring in the region.

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