

End of project popular science description

Introduction

The overall objective of the RUT research project was to provide a comprehensive understanding of development dynamics of Emerging Urban Centres (EUCs) in Tanzania. Central to the research was to understand governance practices and challenges of these fast growing urban areas characterized by complex in-and out migration and rapid changing economic processes. EUCs are located in rural regions and are characterized by diverse livelihood opportunities and social-cultural factors resulting from migration and mobility. EUCs function as hubs for rural transformation; they provide economic opportunities for the majority of the rural population both in farm as well as non-farm activities. Understanding rural transformations is crucial in Tanzania just like in other African countries in planning for sustainable economic development. This is partly because the majority of the population reside in rural areas (65% of total population in 2020). However, EUCs potential for rural transformation has not been fully used due to limited understanding of the dynamics despite general observations of the growth within the EUCs. Four EUCs, in Tanzania, Ilula, Igowole, Kibaigwa and Madizini were selected for in depth analysis of the rural transformation dynamics. Structured interviews (including questionnaire surveys), land use mapping as well as qualitative data collection methods (including focus group and key informant interviews, transect walks) were conducted in the study sites. The research project had five (5) specific objectives: 1. To analyze how the forms and roles of institutions (formal and informal) have developed in support of the transformation; 2. To identify how governance practices (public and private) in relation to land, water and waste management have developed in support of the transformation; 3. To identify how the rural-urban connectivity influence markets, business networks and employment creation in the EUCs; 4. To identify livelihoods and the role of mobility practices in the EUC; 5. To develop human resource capacity to research on development dynamics of EUCs. The research has provided insights on how the growth of EUC in terms of population and economic activity led to major governance challenges. It has also shown how these challenges have impacts on rural transformation that is the physical and socioeconomic transformation of EUCs from villages into township authorities¹.

Results

The project has provided an understanding of governance in EUCs beyond the government administrative structures. The four studied rural villages have undergone dramatic changes over time. These, include changes land uses, population growth, economic activities as well as diversity of livelihood opportunities, are important dimensions of rural transformation. A crucial observation and one of the challenges is that the changes take place in an environment that contains both rural and urban characteristics, hence the term “governance in-between²”. An additional challenge is the time lag to installation of the required administrative structure in already gazetted townships. This has to a large extent limited the capacity (including both human and financial resources) of local government institutions to respond to the rapid changes and the implications to the citizens relying on informal institutions. The transformation of these rural areas towards more of an urban character has necessitated changes in resources access as well as utilization. In the case of land, on which there is a prominent interest by local government authorities, agricultural land is increasingly being surveyed and designated for residential or commercial purposes. Governance practices for water and waste management have shown dominance of informal systems. The capacity of the informal systems is limited and do not fulfil or meet the growing demands of the growing population and activities in the EUCs. EUCs should receive institutional support (formal and informal) that matches their increasing urban governance needs. The research shows ways in which institutions, buildings, and transport infrastructure display important material dimensions of urbanism, and how urbanism is planned

¹ In rural areas, Tanzania mainland; there are district councils, and village councils, and township authorities. Ideally, in the rural setting hierarchy, villages transform into EUCs than township authority. A township authority is higher than a village (may comprise several villages) and meant to be in process of being transformed into a town (urban setting)

² Co-existence of both rural and urban institution for example governance of water resources

and aspired to. Diversification of livelihood opportunities in EUCs, to a large extent is a result of business development and employment opportunities in EUCs. These are important for rural poverty reduction, both from an income generation and food security point of view. However, the low level of organization and support to business development that is mostly informal, limit further growth of business opportunities in EUCs; evidently missing in support of business development includes marketing information, and organization of transportation systems. This growth of the non-farm economy and employment opportunities through business development contribute to rural transformation and poverty reduction. The research project has also contributed in developing human resources capacity to research on development dynamics of EUCs at postgraduate level (three PhDs and 6 MSc). As part of their postgraduate studies candidates (Tanzanian and Danish) had an opportunity to conduct research in different topics (including ‘governance’, ‘business networks’, and ‘livelihood and mobility’) in EUCs. In this way they were exposed to relevant literature, analytical methods as well as reporting skills.

Conclusions

Emerging Urban Centres (EUCs) are hubs for rural-urban transformation. Through mobility and migration EUCs have become centres of attraction for the majority, not only neighbouring, but also distant rural as well as urban population. Evidence has shown that EUCs are attractive due to possibilities for both farm and non-farm economic activities. Growth of non-farm opportunities through business development and business networks that extent to rural hinterlands as well as urban areas are crucial for livelihoods diversification and the increasing dimensions of ‘urbanism’ in the EUCs. Livelihoods diversification contributes to rural transformation and poverty reduction through creation of employment and income generating opportunities within the EUCs. The governance of EUCs is coined here as ‘governance-in-between’ because these places show both rural and urban character and are not officially categorized as urban centres - they exist in an environment of governance in-between. The time period to upgrade the EUCs to urban category is often unknown and too long resulting into co-existence of rural as well as urban governance practices. It is argued here that the opportunities for growth of EUCs have missed the eyes of the policy makers beyond appreciating their existence. The RUT research project has through consultations with responsible national and international institutions has been an ‘eye-opener’ and created awareness of the development dynamics within the EUCs. This has been done through publications in peer reviewed international journals, presentations at national workshops, policy workshop, international conferences, stakeholder platforms and consultations within the research sites. The capacity built through postgraduate training will contribute into further supporting the national as well as international institutions to critically analyze and understand the role of small urban centres in the process of rural transformation for economic development and poverty reduction. Based on the RUT project research and supported by the policy workshop it is suggested that the governance challenges in supporting EUC development is raised to the top of the government policy agenda, at local, regional and national levels.

Recommendations

The local government authorities need to building institutional capacity for rural transformation. As development hubs EUCs need the right governance structures to transform. The first step required is the Presidents’ Office Regional Administration and Local Government (PO RALG) in collaboration with development partners and private sector to identify all villages that have grown to the level of EUCs (criteria to be clearly stipulated in relation to but not limited to population growth, livelihood opportunities, social and economic services). Secondly, to identify the opportunities for further growth and potential development partners. These two will act as baseline information for bringing up the EUCs to the top of the development agenda to be presented to the Ministries and later to parliament through PO- RALG. This process will lead to i. Recognition of EUCs as rural development hubs ii. Review of policies in support of rural transformation e.g. land policy, and iii. Review of urban planning protocols which address challenges such as for waste management and land use changes.