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Urban-Rural-Interrelationship for Sustainable Development

Keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the 2nd FIG Regional Conference in Marrakech, Morocco, 2nd Dec. 2003

1. Cities and Rural Areas – the Problem and the Discussion

Dr A. Tibajuka expressed herself recently in the last issue in the series Habitat Debate for September 2003 on the Number 1 theme in the following words: “According to UN-Habitat estimates, 60 % of the world’s population will be living in urban areas by 2015... It is further estimated that 90 % of the population increase between now and 2015 will be in urban areas. And most of that increase will be in the inner-city slums and squatter settlements of developing countries.”

She followed with a plea to invest in these cities, in the first place and above all with “sustained investment in safe water and basic sanitation”.

There can be no doubt that urgent action is required here. But what is the position in the case of rural areas? Should or must they look on helplessly, as they go ever more empty-handed or – and this is how it appears to the political representatives of rural areas – become a plaything or areas which cities may use at will? I still well remember how the Director General of the UN-FAO Jaques Diouf at the World Congress rural 21 at Potsdam in 2000 called for more efforts and more investment for and in rural areas (Diouf, 2001). The Second European Conference on Rural Development, which was held by the European Commission three weeks ago in Salzburg in Austria, expressed itself in the same sense and addressed itself above all to the future member States in Central and Eastern Europe.

The interested but not directly involved observer might well ask what is going on. Is it a matter of more urbanisation, of more ruralisation, or of more urban-rural inter-relationship? From where do the present reservations come, on both sides, which cannot be overlooked and which block the solutions so urgently required, or at least make them very difficult of realisation? Although the Habitat II Conference in Istanbul in 1996 addressed itself to all human settlements in both urban and rural areas, this overall approach broke up a little later into sectoral action, as is shown for example by the separate meetings of urban 21 and rural 21 which took place in the year 2000.

Professor Töpfer, the present UNEP Chief and at the time of urban 21 and rural 21 also UN-Habitat Director, put his finger on the spot three years ago (Töpfer, 2000):

“Since the industrial revolution in Europe and the concomitant acceleration of urbanisation, there have been two dominant views regarding the rural-urban divide, an anti-urban view and a pro-urban view. These both views have persisted up to the present, albeit in modified form, and have significantly influenced national human settlements policies.

The anti-urban view idealises and regrets the disappearance of rural life. Urbanisation is seen as a destructive process, leading to the break down of social cohesion.

The pro-urban view sees urbanisation as a progressive process and as one of the key forces underlying technological innovation, economic development and socio-political chance.”

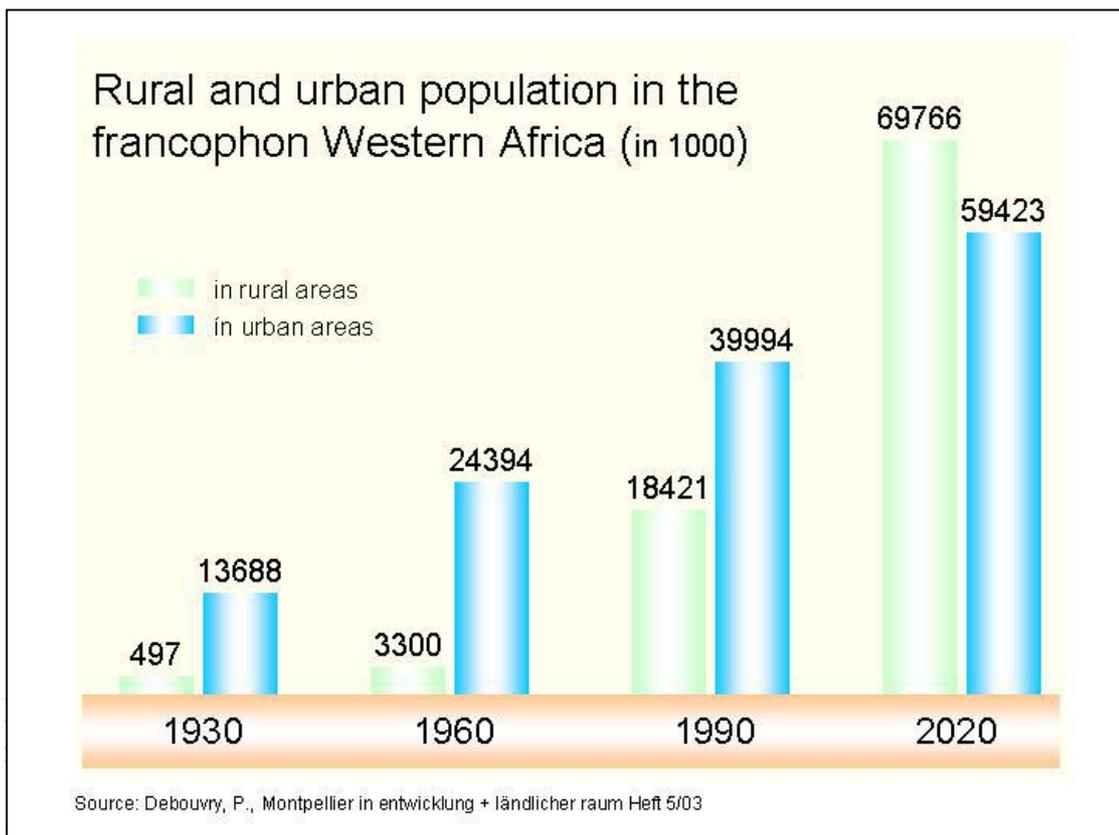
Töpfer concedes that even “among international development agencies, for example, investments in rural and urban areas have sometimes been seen as mutually exclusive and competing”.

Some of this “exclusive and competing” could perhaps be more readily reconciled if what is understood by “urban” and “urbanisation” were first clarified. Are only the big or even mega cities to be understood here, or are we to include the many small towns, market towns and other centres situated in rural areas, and which are so often essential for them. Reference is often made to the urbanisation of rural areas in the sense of the enlargement or even new construction of individual urban areas, i.e. small towns which serve as a centre, as for example in China. In Jamaica a large village in a rural area has been described as an urban centre.

Finally, urbanisation of rural areas is often also understood to mean the adoption of city ways of living and increasingly of city ways of thinking. Here the famous keyword of the “urban villager” coined by the two MIT Professors N. Negroponte (cited in Töpfer, 1997) and M. Dertouzos (cited in Rowe, 1996) comes to mind. In Germany for example, and not only there, there is increasing discussion above all of a city region or even of the composite city which covers both urban and rural areas and which seeks to achieve a common regional or even national competitiveness by inter-communal cooperation. Against the background of these developments and discussions it is not surprising that UN-Habitat and UNEP call for an end to the rural-urban dichotomy. There is instead a need to promote rural-urban linkages. “This is a fundamental policy lesson that we must carry into the twenty first century. It is in recognition of this fact that the Habitat Agenda (in Section 10 of Part C) sets the strengthening of rural-urban linkages as one of its fundamental goals” (Töpfer , 2000).

Apparently this policy has not established itself as had been hoped. It may be that the message of the UN authorities, according to which “rapid urbanisation

should be accepted as inevitable”, has also led to a certain resignation and lack of action in and for rural areas. There are now intensified efforts to place this urban-rural relationship on the top list of international conferences, as has been the case of many UN conferences in the last two years. From all over the world, as for example from Japan at the OECD High Level meeting in Martigny, Switzerland 2003 (OECD, a.a.O.), from Hongkong, Mexiko or from the UK etc., come an acknowledgement of the need to strengthen the urban-rural interrelationship. This was said quite clearly by the Secretary General of the UN ECOSOC Session 2003 (a.a.O.) in Geneva: it is necessary, “after a period of neglect to bring back rural development to the centre of the development agenda, noting that the world’s rural areas are where the needs are greatest and the suffering most acute.” This message is particularly important for Africa, because this is where for a long time to come the majority of the population will live in rural areas. There are indeed prognoses according to which in francophone West Africa a considerable increase of the population in rural is expected by the year 2020 (Debouvry, 2003) (see diagram).



ummary it can be said: the urban-rural interrelationship is a theme world wide – the problems vary however from place to place (here the exodus from the cities, there the exodus from rural areas) and have to be resolved by different, ie individual policies, strategies, programmes, measures and in part also methods.

2. What can we learn and what can be done?

I want here to deal only with fundamental aspects, and I should like here, in connection with possible contributions by our various FIG commissions, to refer to the subsequent lectures at this conference. For the moment I should just like to say: both in urban as well as in rural areas and above all in connection with urban-rural interrelationships it is world wide always or perhaps particularly a matter of such themes as regional planning policy, physical planning, land policy and land tenure, land administration and land (resource) management, sustainable land use planning, use of Spatial Information Management, GIS and Spatial Data Infrastructure, conflict solution, development in urban und rural areas, Agenda 21, capacity building etc. This list is by no means complete. It represents however a representative cross-section of the answers of my post-graduate students from 20 countries at the Technical University Munich. They clearly show how closely involved with each other urban and rural areas are, both in a positive and negative sense – whether it is an exchange or provision of jobs, resources, goods and merchandise, life styles, education and services, environmental pollution, technologies etc.

There is no doubt that the FIG, to a varying extent but always with great competence, can make essential contributions to an inter-disciplinary and comprehensive analysis and solution of problems.

Basically I should like to make the following comments:

- a) Before action can be taken at all, there must be a fundamental acknowledgment in the countries concerned as to whether all areas are to be developed equally. In the case of the Federal Republic of Germany, for example, this is a constitutional requirement.
- b) There is no longer any alternative to a decisive rural and urban policy. Rural representatives and rural areas see and need the towns as “centres or engines of economic growth”. Cities for their part should see and need rural areas as indispensable and independent living spaces. Both should practice equal partnership. Wherever, often for political reasons, one-sided development has been encouraged or permitted, equilibrium has been lost. The alternative Nobel prize winner, Professor Leopold Kohr of Austria, spiritual father of the philosophy “Small is Beautiful” once said on this matter (Kohr, 1989): “It is contrary to the balance of nature, when large towns begin to swallow small villages and every thing that is small”. What I want to say here is this: we need urban and rural governance principles to be in the heads and on the desks of those responsible, we need poverty reduction in urban and rural areas, basic infrastructure in urban and rural areas, secure tenure in both areas, urban renaissance and village renewal programmes, sustainable land use and

resource management in urban and rural areas! Let me demonstrate and cite the UK Government (2000): “Urban renaissance has an impact in rural areas, as where the regeneration of inner cities – currently a hot issue in many countries! – reduces the pressure for city dwellers to move to the country.”

- c) In all countries, urban centres or central places should wherever possible be promoted, developed and opened up in rural areas. In technical language we call this decentralised concentration. This makes for greater stability and corresponds better to natural ecological principles. One-sided megacentres are mostly the result of a lack of such stable network structures in rural areas. They are more and more becoming places of widening divisions between fenced-off islands of the “have” people and the growing slums of the “have not” people. In these circumstances no one should be surprised at increasing criminality.
- d) Urban centres and rural communities should speak openly and without preconceived ideas about how they can support, supplement, relieve or strengthen each other, e.g. in the context of transport and environmental problems, in controlling the using up of open spaces, in promoting renewable energy, in joint economic and tax policies to attract the necessary investors and capital, etc. The OECD (2003) has clear ideas on this: “Increasing the competitiveness of regions involves improvements in both urban and rural areas”. It is thus a matter of having a joint location policy! Of working together instead of working against each other, as has for so long been the practice. The European Regional Development Concept EUREK formulated the matter in a conciliatory manner: it is a matter of developing a balanced and polycentred urban system and of a new relationship between town and country.

The much practised instruments of the sometimes little loved regional policy and regional development policy continue to be indispensable – but they should in future be used less as a means of compulsion but increasingly – on the basis of personal conviction - voluntarily and informally.

Against this background it becomes increasingly clear that improved cooperation between urban and rural authorities and institutions can substantially contribute to sustainable development in the sense of the Rio-Trias. Positive effects can be achieved in central contexts: in the economic sector (e.g. reciprocal strengthening of rural and urban product sales and markets, increasing the wealth creation chain), in the ecological sector (e.g. better land use through joint land use planning or reduction of non-renewable energy by increased production and use of renewable energy) and in the socio-political field (e.g. through the joint sharing of natural beauty and revitalisation of countryside and nature or by the coming together of the urban and rural population e.g. through farmers’ markets in the

towns or excursions into the countryside with visits to country restaurants and public houses, museums, farm holidays).

Central and local governments have a central role in this structural and substantive improvement of rural-urban linkages (Töpfer, 2000): “The most important functions of government are:

- a) firstly, to provide the framework necessary for the formulation of pro-active policies for strengthening rural-urban linkages, including incentives for encouraging the full participation of the private sector, non-governmental and community-based organisations as well as for coordinating the implementation of all related activities.
- b) secondly, to ensure adequate and equitable access to land as well as security of tenure, thus enabling development activities within rural service centres and small towns and in the surrounding agriculture areas to progress securely.
- c) thirdly, to ensure the availability of appropriate technologies, particularly for the improvement of infrastructure components such as power, water supply, sanitation and transport (see also Tibajuka in Habitat debate, 2003).
- d) fourthly, to ensure availability of and access to finance, which includes both facilitating the mobilisation of financial resources and the setting up of lending institutions with flexible lending rules appropriate to urban or rural areas.

We see more and more that in future it will increasingly or entirely be a matter of the enabling approach of government. The role of the State as “Father State” is changing dramatically. It is increasingly a matter of the “activating State”. To a great extent than hitherto, investment, activities and decisions will have to take place outside the public sector, and no doubt increasingly not subject to its control. Individuals, households, communities, businesses and voluntary organizations will increasingly (have to) assume responsibility for the development of their communities and their living space and thus also for the further shaping of rural-urban linkages (see diagram). This radical change in politics, economy and society has in many countries already been under way for a long time!

Institutional Framework for promoting rural-urban linkages

Sector	Agencies	Functions
Public	central government; local government; regional government; regional development agency; association of local governments	providing enabling framework; formulating regional development policy; putting in place incentive packages and regulatory framework; coordinating policy implementation; land policy and management; infrastructure provision (roads, water, power and telecommunications); promoting infrastructure technology; facilitating mobilization of and access to finance; providing information on markets and labour; providing social and extension services (educational, health agricultural, non-farm enterprises)
Community	NGOs	mediating between government and community; influencing government policies; advising, organizing and implementing development, focusing on infrastructure (water, sanitation, power), technology diffusion, mobilization of resources assistance to supply and marketing cooperatives; providing information on markets and labour
	CBOs, cooperatives	provision and maintenance of feeder roads, water supplies, power supplies, refuse removal services, permanent markets, and periodic markets; agricultural marketing and supply cooperatives; provision of some social services (educational and health); community-based finance and credit organizations; providing information on markets and labour supply
Private	companies	provision of transport services, water supplies, telecommunications, and refuse removal services; wholesaling, retailing; financial services; supply of agricultural inputs; agricultural implements repair workshops; schools and health services

Source: Klaus Töpfer: Rural Poverty, Sustainability and Rural Development in the Twenty-First Century: A Focus on Human Settlements. ZKL, Heft 3/2000, S. 103

3. About the role of surveyors associations

I see here as President of the FIG a clear co-responsibility on the part of our NGO. We are prepared to play our part! On the occasion of the recent 75th anniversary celebration of the Land Surveyors' Association Jamaica, and in astonishing coincidence with me (Magel, 2001), the prominent Caribbean economist Professor Neville Ying of the University of West Indies called for a strengthened political and social role for surveyors, whether it was a matter of engagement for truly balanced sustainable development or poverty reduction, secure tenure, disaster management or the right land use planning. He made it clear to the chartered surveyors of Jamaica that ultimately all macro and micro economic successes, and consequently their business, are endangered if the framework conditions for a socially just and democratic State are no longer valid.

NGOs such as the FIG have against this background a three-fold role in connection with the theme of urban-rural linkages for sustainable development in cooperation with our global, national and local partners:

- a) FIG and its members associations can be **enablers**, that is they can act as community developers, organisers or consultants alongside Community Based Organisations

- b) they can be **mediators** between people and the authorities that control access to resources, goods and services
- c) they can be **advisers** to State institutions on policy changes to increase local access to resources and greater freedom to use them in locally-determined ways, and that also includes rural-urban linkages (Töpfer, 2000).

Urban-rural interrelationship for sustainable development is from the point of view of the FIG a central theme of the worldwide idea of good governance. This idea is not new. We only have to give it new life and put it actively into effect. In the early 14th century – long after the famous Kutubija Mosque, representing the peak of Islamic architecture had been erected and the “Red City” had experienced its first great golden age – Ambrogio Lorenzetti painted his two immortal allegories about “Effects of good government and bad government in the city and in the country” in the Palazzo Publico of the Tuscan city of Siena, just in the place where they belonged as a permanent warning: in the centre of municipal activities, in the town hall! Lorenzetti had foreseen at this early date and drastically depicted what many of the world’s cultures have always known: it is a matter of equilibrium between town and country, guaranteed by good governance. Today we say: “Town and Country – Hand in Hand”. When this equilibrium is present, everyone will have a worthy home and thus – to quote a famous Moroccan proverb – heaven on earth.

That is why FIG is deeply interested in the full success of this 2nd Regional Conference, and that is why I should like to thank all our UN partners and all those in our Moroccan member association and the Moroccan Government for having initiated and for supporting this important topic. That finally is why the FIG will further be more strongly committed to continue its contribution in helping to achieve a better and more sustainable world in cities and countryside.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the 2nd Regional Conference in Marrakesch, Morocco is herewith opened.

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