

Abstract

This study is on the role of rural-urban linkages in urban and regional development, a case study of spatial interaction of Municipality of Machakos (MoM) and its umland. Spatial interaction analysis is used as the basis for explaining the rural – urban linkages. It is manifested through movement of people, goods, energy and information between places. This study observed that rural-urban linkages in terms of spatial interaction enhance urban and regional planning. The study examined the nature and extent of spatial interaction between the MoM and its umland; types of linkages and effect of levels of spatial interaction in its spatial economy. The study also appraised the regional planning strategy of Kenya as it relates to rural-urban linkages and provided a framework for strengthening linkages in rural-urban areas for urban and regional development.

The study used both primary and secondary sources of data. Purposive sampling and stratified random sampling procedures were employed in the collection of primary data. Data analysis utilized by this study is both descriptive and inferential in nature. The descriptive statistics used include: percentages, frequencies, bar charts, and tables. The inferential tools utilized are: rank size rule, nearest-neighbour analysis, correlation and regression.

From the analysis of types of linkages and/or interactions between MoM and its umland, the study revealed continuous and enduring relationship in terms of economic, politico-administrative, socio-cultural and family-based interactions. The examination of the nature and extent of spatial interaction between the MoM and its umland has revealed her share in the overall urban hierarchy depicts a core-periphery model, a system associated with under development in literature. A further analysis of spatial distribution and/or occurrence of small urban centers in the district has revealed characteristics of central places (uniform distribution). The results of the analysis of rank-size and nearest-neighbour technique show that a major characteristic of the hierarchical organization of Machakos District urban network is the draining of umland income, population, and resources by the highest-level center. The centers are connected by a very poor transport and communication network. This reinforces the incompleteness of the hierarchical organization of the urban network. An appraisal of Kenya's regional planning strategy as it relates to rural- urban linkages has shown that, while the topic of rural- urban relations has a long history in development theory and planning, there is no consistency in its adoption and utilization by past policy approaches. The impact of this on Kenya's spatial economic development has led to disparities both at regional and interpersonal scale.

Several conclusions have been drawn from the major findings of this study. It is evident that a core-periphery type of development pattern exists in Machakos District with MoM being the core and the rest of the district being the periphery. Urban and regional planning in Kenya would succeed in controlling this development pattern by understanding space economy focusing on policies of rural-urban linkages. It is recommended by the study that, such an approach to rural-urban interaction places at the centre of the debate policies for strengthening Small and Intermediate Urban Centres (SIUCs). The SIUCs potentially fulfill an important role in integrating urban and rural functions into national spatial systems. Lastly areas which the Government of Kenya (GoK) need more information and/or need to consider doing things differently are recommended. Further research is recommended on local transport impact studies, diffusion studies in terms of more detailed investigations of transport, mass media and telecommunication and studies on the role of distance in the migration from rural to urban areas and rural accessibility.

