

Rural-urban linkages: a short history of a dichotomy and its changing nature

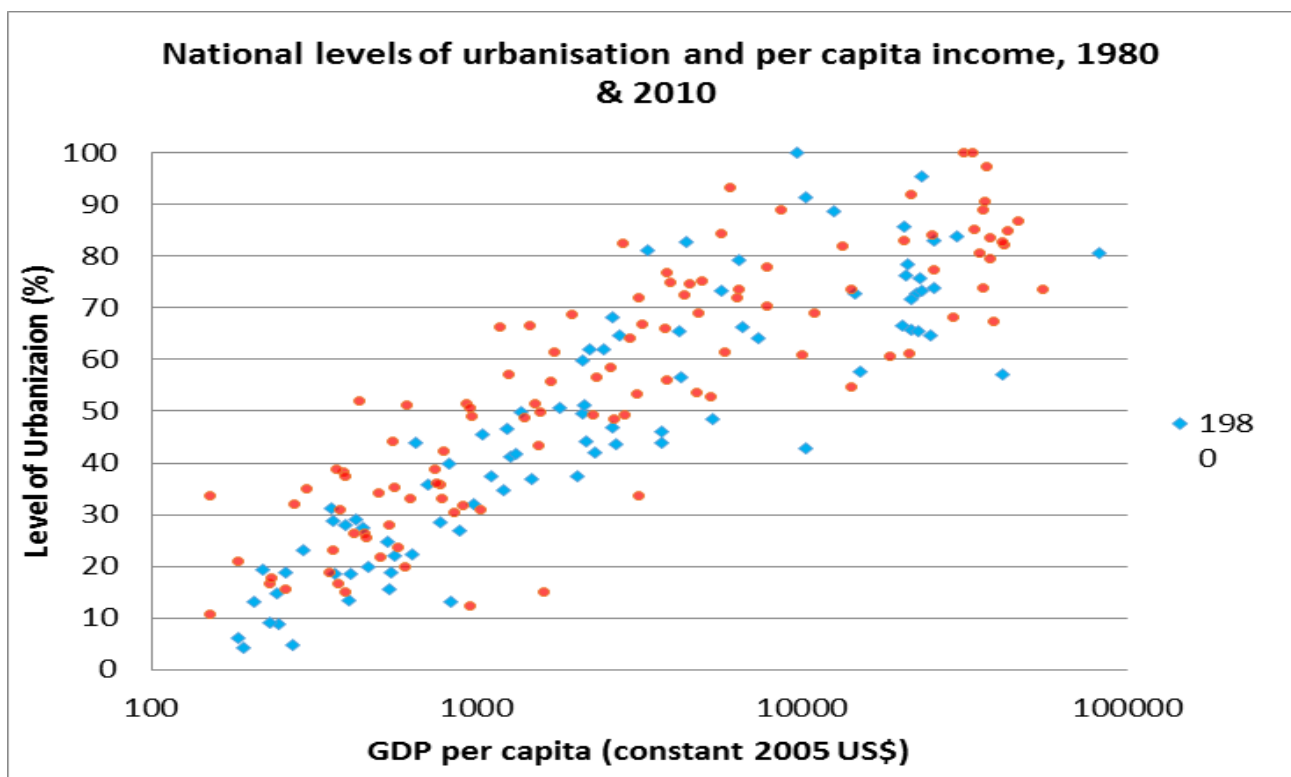
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13th April 2015

Urban vs rural?

- 1970s: 'urban bias' (neglecting intra-rural and intra-urban inequalities?)
- 1980s: Structural adjustment policies (mainly aimed at agricultural production)
- 2000s: New Economic Geography (and the WDR 2009) – emphasis on urbanisation as driver of economic growth

Urbanisation and incomes (averages!)



But still, the narratives do not meet...

- Structural transformation in rural areas: people need to move out of farming (and out of rural areas?)
- Concerns about rural-urban migration
“among 185 countries with available data in 2013, 80 per cent of Governments had policies to lower rural to urban migration, an increase from 38 per cent in 1996” 2013 World Population Policies report

A 'first generation' slum in Bangalore



A notified slum in Bangalore



Transformations in rural areas

- People moving out of farming?
- In West Africa, 50% of food consumed in rural areas is purchased
- Similar proportions in other regions
- High incidence of income diversification (and/or migration)
- Poverty reduction more likely with income diversification and migration to local small towns than by migrating to mega-cities (see Bangalore)

Small towns: a key gap?

- Lack of knowledge: a very large category (10,000 to >500,000) but with limited data
- Crucial for rural transformation and poverty reduction (non-farm employment; market nodes; provision of services; rule of law...)
- Central in the 'virtuous circle' of urban-rural development (but not many successful examples of it)

A different approach?

- A need to re-think governance and planning: rural-urban linkages are not linear.
- A network approach may be more useful and better reflect reality
- Local/regional integration?
- A need to re-think what we mean by 'urban' (and rural), recognising and supporting the role of small urban centres
- Where local governments in many cases lack technical capacity, financial revenue and accountability to their citizens