

Negotiating Livelihoods and Scale in the Context of Neoliberal Globalization: Perspectives from Accra, Ghana

Ann M. Oberhauser and Kobena T. Hanson

ABSTRACT:

This paper investigates livelihood strategies in the context of neoliberal globalization through a case study of a peri-urban area in Ghana. Existing literature on urban livelihoods suggests that adjustment policies and other neoliberal reforms both impact and are affected by socio-economic and material resources available to households. Our discussion explores the dynamic nature of urban livelihood strategies in the face of increased integration into the global economy. The study provides background information and in-depth analyses of how individuals, households, and communities make a living in the face of structural adjustment and more recent neoliberal reforms. Through a triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methods, the research examines economic strategies as well as the broad processes affecting these livelihoods in the context of globalization. The findings indicate that livelihood strategies in the capital city of Accra are linked to economic shifts at the national and international levels. Finally, this study addresses policy implications and suggests measures to expand the sustainability of household livelihoods in urban environments.

Key words: urban livelihoods, neoliberal economic reforms, Ghana

INTRODUCTION

In developing regions, livelihoods are strategic socio-economic practices that increasingly operate in the context of neoliberal globalization (Rakodi 2002; Beall 2002; Bebbington 2000; Ellis 1998). Structural adjustment programs (SAPs) and more recent neoliberal reforms both impact and are affected by these livelihoods at both the individual and household scales. Moreover, the complex interplay of historical and geographical factors provides an important perspective on the various livelihood patterns that are emerging in the developing world. This paper discusses the shifting nature of urban livelihood strategies in the