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Chapter

No Sustainability without Planning for It: Scope and Dimensions for Sustainable Rural Planning in Zimbabwe

Innocent Chirisa, Jeofrey Matai and Tafadzwa Mutambisi

Abstract

This chapter explores and discusses the instrumentality of planning in the pursuit of rural sustainability using Zimbabwe as a case study. This is against the background that there is a growing bias towards urban areas in terms of planning for sustainability even though there are still more people living in rural places than in urban areas and that urban areas largely depend on rural areas for resources. The chapter argues that sustainability in rural areas is a function of deliberate planning. It engages the qualitative research approach, making use of document reviews and key informant interviews as data collection instruments. It is revealed that sustainability in rural Zimbabwe can remain a pie in the sky if the current approaches to planning are not revisited. Sustainability being plural and multidimensional concept, planning for it requires a multi-stakeholder approach, transcending rural and urban areas, the public and private sector, civic organisations and the rural communities as well as strong institutional arrangements that provide for transparent governance.

Keywords: sustainability, planning, economic, social, strategy, rural, Zimbabwe

1. Introduction

Development trends point to the fact that the global population is urbanising [1] and that more than 50% of the world's population is now urban [1, 2]. Whilst this is the global reality, in Africa, more people are leaving in the rural areas [3]. These people are exposed to several challenges, most of which are a result of the urbanisation process. For example, they compete for food, land, water and other resources [4]. The rural areas are also the recipients of waste that is produced by the cities. Climate change, on the other hand, is making farming which is the major rural economic activity, difficult as yields are continuously reducing owing to extreme weather patterns. This exposes the rural communities to high levels of poverty and distress and also to exploit the natural resources in an unsustainable manner. In light of the aforementioned issues, and the need to meet global goals of eradicating hunger and poverty, achieve food security, make human settlements safe, inclusive, resilient and sustainable [5], there is need to rethink approaches to rural

development; a paradigm shift from the old paradigm guided by modernisation to a new paradigm that is driven by the quality of life and sustainability [6]. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) [7] recommends that such an approach requires the integration of the various actors and stakeholders who are involved in the development of rural places; planning is one tool that can integrate multiple actors and stakeholders towards the attainment of sustainable rural development [8].

Several studies have been conducted on rural development and planning in Zimbabwe [9–11]. These studies are critical in the literature of rural planning and development. However, they are silent on the relationship between sustainable rural development and planning. For example, PlanAfric [11] is more evaluative on the rural development approaches in Zimbabwe. Davies [9] analyses the trends in rural planning pre and post-independence in Zimbabwe whilst Hahlani [10] looks into factors that hinder integrated rural planning. This chapter emphasises the instrumentality of planning in sustainable rural development and argues that sustainability in rural planning is a product of deliberate planning. It further argues that without planning, rural areas will not be able to cope with the prevalent issues of climate change particularly considering that most rural areas in Zimbabwe are agro-based. The chapter has eight sections. Following this section is the background and overview. This is followed by a section on the theories that inform the study, literature review and methodology. The results are presented in the proceeding section from which a discussion and recommendations section follows. The last section is the conclusion of the chapter.

2. Background and overview

Rural development has been at the centre of development for most countries across the globe. However, the assumed model of developing rural places was inspired or guided by the modernist philosophy whose focus was mainly hinged on, among other processes, capital investment, the application of science to production and urbanisation [6]. This approach was also materialistic in its conceptualisation of development; hence, little consideration was paid to qualitative aspects of development such as improved quality of life and access to basic services. The modernist approach to the development of rural places resulted in the bias towards urban areas as it was generally assumed that urbanisation of rural places was an indicator of development, thus, as put forward by Rao [12], more attention was put to industrialisation than the agricultural sector, hence the rural suffered. Development was also top-down in approach [6]. The resultant effect of this approach to development was increased poverty in rural places [13, 14], unsustainable exploitation of raw materials from the rural areas as inputs for industrialisation in urban areas, environmental degradation and the consequential effects such as climate change.

After observing that the modernist approach to development was associated with several problems, there was a paradigm shift to a sustainable centred approach to development. According to [6], this approach paid more attention to agricultural development and a participatory approach to development programmes. Following a series of global goals for sustainable development, for example, the World Commission on Environment and Development [15], the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals, the need to use resources within the regenerative capacity of the environment was put at the centre of developmental goals. In addition, the need to combat the effects of climate change and eradicate poverty and hunger has made it necessary to revisit the approaches to development

planning, rural areas included. The UNDP [7] has observed and placed planning at the centre of sustainable development because of its coordinative and integrative capacity.

In Zimbabwe, rural development has been the centre of development policy since independence. According to Davies [9], it has been politically motivated; the aim being that of redressing disparities caused by colonial policies. Several policies, for example, the Growth with Equity and the Growth Point Policy, were put in place to ensure that rural development was realised. The model to rural development, however, reflected the modernist approach as key among the policies, was the development of growth points that were to lead the industrialisation of rural places. However, the effectiveness of the policies in addressing the problems of disparities is debatable as little progress has been made [16]. Like most rural places across the globe, Zimbabwe's rural places are experiencing a myriad of challenges that range from social, economic and environmental [11, 17]. Food insecurity, poverty, income inequalities and the lack of employment opportunities reinforce each other in a vicious cycle by eroding human capital and decreasing labour productivity, thereby perpetuating poverty and social inequalities [18].

Despite having multiple interested stakeholders in rural planning, the approaches that have been adopted to guide and encourage rural development are disintegrated and are characterised by gaps and overlaps [10, 11], necessitating an approach that integrates the various activities and programmes of the multiple actors in rural planning and development [6, 16]. Planning is important in achieving sustainability as it helps to cover the social, political, environmental and physical issues that affect the prosperity of rural areas [7, 19]. Against this background, the chapter examines the instrumentality of planning in enhancing sustainability in rural development and planning in Zimbabwe and shows that without planning for it, sustainability in rural development will not be achieved.

3. Theories informing the study

This study is informed by the sustainability theory and the style/models of planning theory. These models seek to highlight how planning is done and its procedures. This section also seeks to highlight the multi-dimensions of planning as well as the importance of planning in different scenarios and in promoting sustainable development.

4. Sustainability theory

The theory of sustainability is derived from the concept of sustainable development which is premised on the notion of maintaining or improving the state and availability of resources or materials over the long term [20]. It entails meeting fundamental human needs while conserving the life support systems of the earth. This implies that chasing the sustainability goal should aim at maintaining, improving or sustaining conditions that are beneficial to people, their communities and the environment [21]. Sustainability is preoccupied with the long-term treatment of the biophysical environment and the resources therein, social systems and people in ways that are consistent with human wellbeing and the stability of a dynamic system [20]. However, Bossel [22] outlined that the sustainability of human society is now at stake because the change of the environment is so fast that there is inadequate time for adaptive response. This overwhelming rate of change affects the ability of the ecological system to respond,

consequently making the system to lose viability and sustainability. In this study, the theory of sustainability plays a critical role in justifying the need to plan for sustainability in rural areas. The reasons, according to the sustainability, include the desire to improve maintain and improve the social, economic and environmental conditions of the rural areas within the development process of rural places. The rational is that, by planning for sustainable rural development, both rural and urban areas become sustainable because of the rural-urban relations [1, 2, 14].

5. Literature review

This section reviews the literature on the key aspects of rural sustainability, planning for rural sustainability, the actors in the sustainability of rural places as well as their role. It also looks at the factors that enhance or hinder planning for sustainability in rural areas. Rural sustainability is defined by Bryant and Granjon [23] as the development strategies that maintain and produce healthy rural communities. Such communities will have compatible economic, political, socio-cultural and environmental values that respond to any requirements in these dimensions in the long run. Rural sustainability is dynamic as information, conceptualisation and values about the different dimensions of sustainability change with time [23, 24]. As such Bryant and Granjon [23] recommend that in planning for sustainability there is a need to take account of the fact that what is appropriate at a given place in time maybe inappropriate in the same place as changes occur. For example, the nature and extent of rural-urban links have changed [25, 26]. This significantly affects the approaches to rural sustainability planning. Similarly, what is appropriate in a place at a given time may not be appropriate in another place at the same time. Rural places that are closer to cities have a different set of needs compared to rural places that are further away from cities.

Sustainability, whether urban or rural, maintains the same characteristics, goals and dimensions. Bryant and Granjon [23] highlight those previous conceptions about sustainability in rural places focused on the ecological imperative, giving less attention to socio-cultural, economic and political issues. However, with a continued evolution in the concept of sustainability, and changes in social and economic aspects in both rural and urban places, sustainability is now fundamentally the same, with differences only seen in the environments, population density and activities between the rural and urban places. This entails that certain characteristics of the rural places influence sustainability planning in rural contexts. Some of these characteristics are linked to the biophysical environment which is considerably important for rural communities who depend largely on its resources for livelihood activities. Thus, for most people in the rural places who are mostly small holder peasant farmers, availability of arable land, fertile soils, sufficient water, good climatic conditions and the presence of flora and fauna are important. Land availability and favourable climatic conditions for example, are significant biophysical factors for successful farming [27].

The natural resources that are entrenched in the biophysical environment are an important source of many livelihoods in rural places. Bryant and Granjon [23] observe that besides farming-related activities, there are other livelihood activities such as sand mining and gravel extraction as well as forestry and woodland management. Rural communities are also characterised by small communities that can be concentrated into small villages, dispersed or both. However, rural places that are close to cities and towns have certain characteristics that differentiate them from those that are distant from the cities. Resources in such places are critical for the well-being of the population in cities as well.

Planning for sustainability should therefore take account of the characteristics of the rural places and the relationship between the rural places and the urban areas since these are interlinked systems [8, 23, 25]. However, focusing on rural development and sustainability tend to treat the rural places as homogeneous places [28] and as independent from urban areas [29]. A comprehensive approach is required for the realisation of sustainability as both a process and a goal, hence, the United Nations, [30] and Marsden [24] argue that planning is key if sustainability is to be attained.

Scholarly and policy works have identified several factors that affect planning for sustainability [9, 20, 23, 24, 31]. One of the factors that impact on planning for sustainability and its subsequent realisation is state policy [31]. His argument is informed by Lipton's [14] urban bias theory which, among other issues, argue that states act to protect the interests of cities and to discriminate against the interests of the rural places. In this instance, financial, human and productive resources are deliberately moved out of the rural places to benefit urban dwellers. Douglass [32] argues that, on top of providing food and natural resources to cities, rural places have pronounced poverty and hunger with relatively low income; they continue to experience out-migration and environmental degradation. State policies in this instance are discriminatory and lead to the extraction of resources from the rural places. This incentivise urban areas resulting in a reduced supply of labour in rural places. This in turn, endangers the sustainability of rural places [31, 32].

The continued separation of rural and urban places in terms of policy and planning is another factor that affects rural sustainability planning [33]. This continued separation of focus between the rural and urban places in the face of changing rural and urban relations [26] has a negative influence in the planning and realisation of sustainability [23]. To address the problems associated with the separation, [33] recommends that plans that transcend rural and urban places whilst protecting the natural and urban activities are required.

Planning for sustainability involves multiple actors which range from the public institutions, private organisations, civic organisations, non-governmental organisations and the local people who participate in the planning processes and activities. The public sector usually provides a framework for sustainable development through the various arms and tiers of the government. The private sector is usually involved in the implementation of sustainability programmes through investments while the civic organisations and non-governmental organisations play a variety of activities that ranges from advocacy to supporting and mobilising the local people. With such a range of actors, [33] recommends that there is a need for strong institutional frameworks that coordinates the plans and activities of the various actors that are involved in the planning of sustainability. Failure to coordinate the plans and activities of the various actors and the rural and urban places results in chaotic and complex spaces that make sustainability difficult to plan for and achieve [34]. Thus, without planning for it, sustainability will remain a pipe line dream.

Several approaches have been put in place to address sustainability challenges across the globe. At the global level, ratifications have been put in place and international goals set to ensure that sustainability. The Brundtland Commission of 1987 marks the dedicated commitment towards sustainable development. The Millennium Development Goals and the current Sustainable Development Goals are some of the international efforts towards sustainability. These frameworks have been adopted by different countries in a localised manner to plan for sustainability. The adopted approaches and strategies are not uniform across the globe [35]. The approaches are linked to the main challenges to sustainable development that places face, hence, priority also differs among and between nations. The approaches include strategies earmarked to deal with poverty, environmental

deterioration, marginalisation, water and sanitation, safe, resilient and sustainable human settlements as well as climate change issues among others [5, 28, 30, 35]. To address the challenges, some countries have developed sector-specific programmes and projects. States have developed policies that aim to trigger planning towards sustainability in different contexts, for example, climate change policies, housing policies and economic blueprints. However, scholarly work shows that most of these approaches are planned and implemented in silos, making planning for sustainability insufficient [11, 29, 34].

In summary, scholarly work shows that the sustainability of rural places is key to the attainment of sustainability in both rural and urban areas. There is also clear evidence from scholarly work that the approaches to sustainability planning generally lack comprehensiveness, making the efforts disintegrated and less effective. The question that remains to be answered is, what should planning-for-sustainability, particularly in the rural context, take?

6. Research methodology

Research methodology is the specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select, process and analyse information about a topic [36]. The research methodology allows for a critical evaluation of a study's overall validity and reliability. The study made use of the case study approach, which is an approach that is used to generate an in-depth, multifaceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context [37, 38]. Planning for sustainability is being discussed and analysed looking specifically at rural areas in Zimbabwe. Binga, Mbire and Runde rural districts. The study also made use of document reviews. Document review is a systematic collection, documentation, analysis and interpretation of data as a data collection method in research. Documents review include, e-books, journal articles, policy papers as well as relevant planning statutes. Key informant interviews were conducted in the study to get a clear assessment of sustainable rural development and planning in Zimbabwe. Key respondents included key stakeholders in Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs) and rural district councils.

7. Results

According to the population census of 2012, the rurality of the population is measured based on three criteria. It classifies any settlement with more than 50% of the population engaged in agriculture and less than 2500 inhabitants as rural. Rural areas in Zimbabwe generally have poor economic and social conditions. Food insecurity, poverty, income inequalities and the lack of employment opportunities reinforce each other in a vicious cycle by eroding human capital and decreasing labour productivity, thereby perpetuating poverty and social inequalities across generations in rural Zimbabwe [18].

Rural planning may usefully be seen as comprising three crucial elements. The first concerns the content of rural planning that is the strategies and policies that underlie what rural planning seeks to achieve. The second may be termed the institutional framework within which rural planning operates, especially the agencies and actors involved and how they interact. The third aspect can be called the approach to rural planning and is often seen in terms of the polarities of a top-down, blueprint approach or a bottom-up process approach [39].

8. Composition of the rural population and livelihoods in Zimbabwe

According to the 2016 ZimVac Rural Livelihoods Assessment (RLA) the 2015/16 and 2016/17 are projected to be the two poorest consumption years since 2009. During the first quarter for the 2016/17 consumption year, 987,000 people could not meet their annual food requirements which was an increase from last year when 151,000 people were estimated to be food insecure during the same period. A large share of the rural poor still depends on low-productivity subsistence farming for their livelihoods. The poorest rural households lack access to productive assets and often rely on income from wage employment. Of the 300–500 million wage workers in agriculture [18]. Concern among state legislators about rural development and rural land use is not new. In many states, agriculture remains an important feature of the economic, cultural, and political landscape [29].

Adopted from: NFP Co-ordination Unit [4].

From **Box 1**, it can be noted that development in rural areas is mostly centred on land use, environmental and physical planning. It has been stated previously that

<p>Physical planning in rural areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Activity was largely undertaken by the Department of Physical Planning (DPP) within the MLGNH.• DPP acts for local authorities but hopes to devolve more planning functions to them.• DPP provides technical support to provinces and RDCs which are the lead planning agencies for development planning at the district level. <p>Environmental planning in rural areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undertaken by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in the Ministry of Mines, Energy and Tourism (MMET) in partnership with RDCs. District environmental action plans (DEAPs) are funded by UNDP.• The relationship of DEAPs to other planning systems is not clear. <p>Land-use planning in rural areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The lead agency for land-use planning is the Department of Agriculture and Extension (AGRITEX) situated within the Ministry of Lands and Agriculture. AGRITEX works closely with the RDC and traditional leaders.• The water catchment process is led by the Department of Water Development in the Ministry of Rural Resources and Water Development (MRRWD). This will pass to the Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA) when it is established. The programme has strong donor inputs from GTZ, Dutch aid and DFID.• National park plans are led by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management (DNPWLM) and it has established a stakeholder consultation group including RDCs, representatives from CAMPFIRE (Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources) and others.• A planning unit has been established within DNPWLM supported by World Bank, JICA and UNDP.• Forest action plans are led by the Forestry Commission and other stakeholders (especially rural district councils, RDCs) and supported by GTZ and DFID.
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Box 1.
Actors in rural planning.

rural livelihoods mostly come from agricultural produce in Zimbabwe. Therefore, proper land use planning is the corner stone of sustainable social and economic development in rural areas. Physical factors mostly threaten the sustainability of rural livelihoods and way of life. Therefore, many factors threaten rural well-being such as urbanisation or urban growth. Urbanisation has been the major cause of rural to urban migration which has led to the loss of human resources for rural areas. More so, the relative decline of farm prices, for example, has eroded farm profitability and led to bankruptcy. Soil erosion degrades soil productivity and escalates the need for chemical additives. Nutrient and pesticide runoff degrades waterways and ground-water aquifers. Declining rural populations have closed rural schools, hospitals, and other public facilities. In short, eroding farm profitability, soil erosion, environmental degradation, and loss of public services represent far greater threats to rural health than urban growth [29]. High inequality in the rural sector, in particular in the distribution of assets such as land, water, capital, education and health is an obstacle that needs to be addressed to enhance food security. The underlying issue of discrimination in the rural sector, including against women and children is also another social aspect in need of planning to make rural areas sustainable communities.

Achieving sustainability in rural areas means entailing the integration of four pillars: social development, economic development, environmental management, and urban governance [40]. Therefore, planning is never a unilateral venture by one actor but involves many stakeholders, leaving no stone unturned on matters that matter (**Figure 1**).

Rural development aims to improve livelihoods by implementing comprehensive development for rural areas where a majority of people in poverty live. Pillars of sustainability are an accurate presentation of comprehensiveness in planning. Comprehensive plans have become common for many regions because development is complex, development decisions are interrelated, and the development process could be improved through careful analysis, foresight, and planning. These conditions now hold in rural areas, too. Successful rural development requires that agricultural infrastructure and property markets facilitate farming at its most efficient scale; that safeguards are in place to protect the integrity of environmental systems; and that critical education, health care, and other social services remain fiscally viable. Equally important is system interdependence. Large scale farms, for example, pose greater

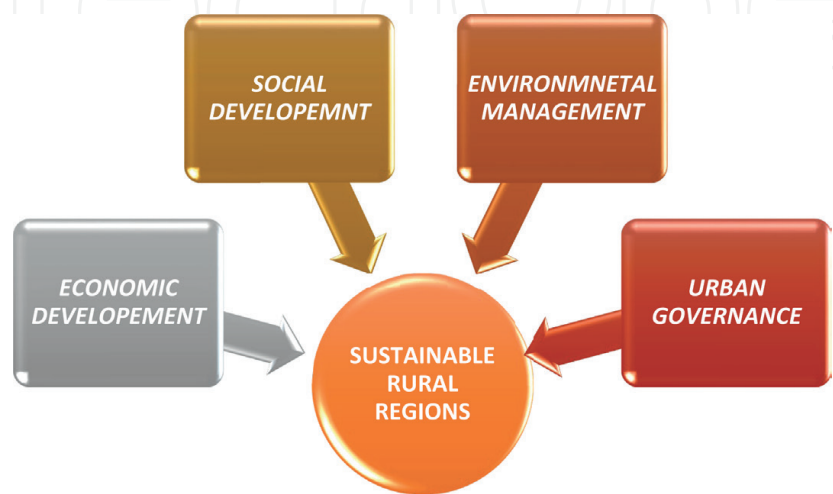


Figure 1. Pillars of sustainable rural planning. Adapted from: *The Department of Economic and Social Affairs* [40].

threats to environmental systems, require more non-resident, high skilled labour, and place greater demands on social service and health care systems [29].

9. Planning approaches in rural areas

Planning and sustainability are for the people'; therefore, many development programmes in rural areas have been seen to be participatory. That is planning by the government as well as NGOs have implemented projects using the bottom up approach. This approach as implemented after the realisation that the top down approach in rare cases met the demands of the rural people [41]. Therefore, many project plans in rural districts use the public participatory approach. When policies are evidence-based there is a greater chance of success [42].

10. The REDD+ project in Mbire district

Planning is multi-dimensional and lateral. Therefore, Planning policies even though they are specific they should also consider the dimensions of society. This is so as the REDD+ plus project is an environmental project plan that was meant to help the people in Mbire District to conserve the environment, build their economic fabric through carbon sequestration as well as to give them a path to growing their knowledge in plant and biodiversity preservation. The REDD+ project is a bottom-up approach that allows local people to use their Indigenous Knowledge formulate ways to minimise deforestation and enable carbon sequestration to minimise the rate at which emissions affect the ozone layer.

The REDD+ Conservation Project I aimed at providing sustainable livelihood opportunities for poor communities. This is aimed at reducing forest deforestation, land degradation, poverty and drought. This strategic plan involves the education of techniques that increase their productivity substantially and reduce the need to cut down more trees. This initiative involved a multiple stakeholder approach as it is community based. It used the participatory approach as it worked there was community participation from the local people, the rural district council, the government as well as the carbon asset management. The multi stakeholder approach in planning is critical in promoting sustainability as it allows many stakeholders to have a multi-faceted view of social, economic and physical issues of a specific problem or solution. Carbon credits are an economic solution to an environmental problem and they boost the social life of the community. Carbon credits from the REDD+ program also help to physically develop the Mbire District. Therefore, planning is everything in sustainable rural development.

11. WASH programmes in Runde district and Chivi district

Water is essential for life. Without water, humans can survive only for days. Water comprises 75% body weight in infants to 55% in elderly and is essential for cellular homeostasis and life (World Health Organisation 2013) Water represents a critical nutrient whose absence can be lethal to humans in days [43]. Water is important in framing sustainability in rural areas as it also has a direct impact on women and children as they are responsible for etching water in rural areas as well

the health of the community. The importance of incorporating a gender-based perspective in WASH programmes is vital based on the fact that women and girls are the primary users of water in their households and are guardians of household hygiene. The government and NGOs such as the World Division have been implementing various wash projects. This has been seen through the construction of boreholes and wells. Areas such as Chivi experience dry spells more than other rural districts. Therefore, supplying water assists in eradicating the issues of dehydration and promotes good health and sanitation. Irrigation schemes have also been introduced in these districts. Most of the water comes from the Runde River. This River has helped supply rural districts with water that has helped them increase their agricultural produce. They have booted economic independence of various villages in these districts as it gives them food and a source of income.

An improvement in rural livelihoods has a direct impact on the increase of the Gross Domestic Product Of the country. These sentiments are in line with those of [43] when he states that The establishment of new water point sources has improved the livelihoods of the Runde as they can now access a basic right to clean water. In addition, the availability of water for productive purposes has increased the incomes of households that rely on agricultural production as a form of livelihood. It can be seen that development programmes are important in promoting sustainability in rural areas. WASH programmes in Zimbabwe are important as most rural areas are facing frequent drought spells due to the ever-changing climate change. This is also evidence that the linkages and causal relationships between the pillars of sustainability show that planning is important in achieving sustainability it allows the planning for all dimensions of rural livelihoods. Taking the case of rural communities' access to water resolves gender inequality issues, economic livelihood, and health as well as sanitation problems.

12. Discussion and recommendations

The rural economy holds significant potential for creating decent and productive jobs and contributing to sustainable development and economic growth. This is why the government adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development embraces the three dimensions of sustainability economic, social and environmental [18]. However, much remains to be done to adequately adjust the British-modelled urban and rural planning system to suit local conditions. Rural planning should be iterative with a balance of top-down and bottom-up approaches with clear national policy guidelines coming down and local needs and priorities filtering up [44]. A broad-based rural development strategy has to include infrastructural investments to better connect producers to output markets, including in rural-urban linkages and the improvement of distribution systems and storage facilities. Social protection mechanisms, including social safety nets, must also be part of a broader rural development strategy to facilitate access of low-income households to food [40]. They are also required to better connect producers and smallholders to output markets, including rural-urban linkages. A broader rural development strategy should also include social protection mechanisms, including safety nets, to facilitate access of lower-income groups to food, in particular during economic shocks. Agricultural extension services need to be further supported, with a particular focus on growing crops appropriate to the land, and on sustainable environmental management [45].

13. Conclusion

In conclusion, the key aspect in the evaluation of multiple planning scenarios and for the definition of sustainable transition pathways is key in rural development. Sustainable development must inevitably be based on long-term planning and must consider relations among other actors. Rural development is critical for an integrated approach to sustainability and for reducing poverty. Ensuring wider and inclusive access to public services can reduce rural/urban inequalities, disaster risk and food insecurity, as well as strengthen networks between cities and villages.

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