Urban Inhabitants’ Interaction With Port-city Infrastructure Development: A Socio-spatial Perspective Of Mombasa

Authors: Obakeng Tendani Molelu¹, Titus Jefwa Charo¹, Ngao Innocent Wanyonyi¹
¹Coastal And Marine Resource Development

E-mail Address: obakeng.m@live.co.za

ID: 12275

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Background
Coastal cities are experiencing the highest migration resulting in increasing coastal urban populations. Mombasa port-city recorded a stark increase in its population, shown in the census conducted in 2019 compared to the last census conducted in 2009. Mombasa derives its economic revenue from transport, port operations on the city side, tourism and fast moving consumer goods. Hence, a substantial percentage of the population is from outside the county, living and working full time, or commuting daily from Kwale county on the ferry or Likoni walking bridge. The migrating and indigenous population view Mombasa as a city of opportunity and a better life. The county government has embarked on various planning and policy initiatives to improve quality of life, provide basic services, and economic opportunities. Ongoing projects derived from the JICA master plan, and special economic zone (Donga Kunda) will propel Mombasa’s economic status once they are completed. These plans support the continuing port development, and operating standard gauge railway line.

Infrastructure development has pros and cons, which have an impact on the socio-spatial arrangements in the city. In light of the infrastructure developments that are ongoing in Mombasa the study seeks to understand and reveal the social implications. Hence the objective is to evaluate the impacts of port development and operations on urban socio-ecology, socio-economy and socio-spatial arrangements in the city.

Method
A household survey of Mombasa was administered using a data collection mobile application in November 2021. The geographic areas covered were within a 5km radius of the port. It must be noted that the port is linear stretching along the island from the Likoni bridge north towards the airport. Neighbourhoods such Chaani, Chamgamwe, Makande and Ganjoni were part of the 426 Households surveyed. Data was collected using the GeoODK mobile application. GPS coordinates and photographs of the landscape were taken from outside the households to assess the land-use and infrastructure development. The survey themes were: respondent and household demographics, livelihood strategy (especially those with a connection to the port), transport use, and life/living conditions in Mombasa.
Results
The key findings in the household survey show that 70% of the people living in the sampled areas are not originally from Mombasa but from neighbouring counties. Their livelihoods depend on the port i.e their customers are port employees, they work in the transporting cargo (truck drivers), derive casual work at the port. There are mixed responses in relation to infrastructure in the city and how they are benefiting. From an environmental and health perspective they complained about dust (new roads and routes under construction hence less tar roads), chemicals in the air affecting their eyes and the bad smell. Economically, their livelihoods have been highly affected by the implementation and operation of the Mombasa Standard Gauge Railway (SGR). The SGR was implemented to alleviate port congestion and truck congestion by moving containers from ship to railway to the container freight station in Nairobi. From Nairobi containers are picked up and taken to their respective destinations in the city/country or one of the seven landlocked countries dependent on Mombasa port for importing and exporting goods.

Conclusion
Mombasa is an important gateway port-city with road and rail links to land locked container handling facilities and countries relying on the port for their imports and exports. Infrastructure development in the past 10 years has changed socio-spatial planning, and had an impact on livelihoods. The dominant infrastructure development projects affecting residents in the household survey are roads, the SGR and housing. The outcomes of the study are being communicated with county and port authority, with the aim of creating a strategic framework of engagements to port development processes. The outputs will inform the county decision makers on the current impacts from port activities to the city.