



**URBAN
TRANSFORMATIONS
IN SIERRA LEONE**
**KNOWLEDGE
CO-PRODUCTION
AND PARTNERSHIPS
FOR A JUST CITY**

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Urban livelihoods

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Introduction

This chapter¹ presents a succinct summary of research findings on the livelihoods of the residents of informal settlement and their role in the wellbeing of Freetown's residents. It seeks to disaggregate the ways that different groups of women and men participate in, and benefit from, these livelihood activities, as well as their impact on the wider settlements and city. The chapter considers how these findings relate with theory on informality and the governance of informal economic activities.

The focus of this study on *informality* encompasses both the distinction drawn between informal and formal settlements (a spatial dimension) and between informal and formal economic activities (economic dimension).

Informal settlements/slums have been approached in quite different ways in terms of their treatment in city development strategies. These often prioritise conformity with technical masterplans over the lived realities of many poor citizens. Such approaches typically still deal with slums/informal settlements through processes of eviction (Fahra, 2011). Such evictions are often justified either on the basis of the need to clear land to make space for infrastructure development (with land occupied by informal settlements normally the easiest to clear and the cheapest to acquire); or more directly, with the rationale of eliminating informal settlements as intrinsically unruly or unsafe spaces, which are seen as a blight on city development (Bahn, 2009; Watson, 2009; Bahn, 2016).

On the other hand, there are consolidated approaches that focus on upgrading slums by improving the conditions and lives of people living in them, rather than by improving these spaces by removing slum dwellers (Payne & Majale, 2004; Burra, 2005; Boonyabanha, 2009). Such in-situ

approaches to informal settlement upgrading have encompassed a range of approaches linked to housing and settlement upgrading, including special planning zones and dual building standards; state and civil society support to housing upgrading; community-led upgrading that leverage residents' own resources and capacity, enabling private housing markets to meet the needs of the poor, or, the incremental extension of basic infrastructure.

The informal economy has been broadly defined as 'the diversified set of economic activities, enterprises, jobs, and workers that are not regulated or protected by the state' (ILO, 2002). However, if we apply this to the broad definition of informality, it would encompass most of the Sierra Leone economy, where self-employment and working for a family member make up 87.7% of the labour force. Note that although not all family work is necessarily informal, it is a good proxy for informal employment. This definition also throws up several issues. One is the extent to which boundaries between the formal and the informal can in practice be drawn. For example, economic activities may be regulated in some ways (e.g. taxation) but not in others (e.g. social protection of workers or quality control of output). Moreover, even where economic activities are *officially* regulated by the state, this may not be applied in practice, drawing a distinction between formal regulation and de facto informality. In many contexts this de facto informality is accompanied by the increasing informality of the de jure governance regimes, where public officials govern in ways that contradict formal laws and procedures (Meagher, 2007, p. 406). Another blurring of the boundaries can be found in the institutional and spatial 'sites' of informal economic activities. Much informal employment now takes place in 'formal' enterprises (Williams & Lansky, 2013). On the other hand, informal economic activities can be widespread in formal areas of the city, while, equally, formal economic activities and employment may be based in informal settlements (e.g. official public employment of teachers or officials in slums). Our findings interrogate the utility of the in/formal urban divide and explore in/formal relations.

Research approach and methodology

The research combined the sustainable livelihoods framework, a people-centred analysis of value chains, and gender analysis. The research aimed at exploring how economic relations work as systems, and how women and men negotiate these systems. The research standpoint was to approach formality and informality as characteristics of different elements in an interconnected system.

An influential approach to understanding economic systems and their impact on people's lives and wellbeing is the analysis of livelihoods. Livelihoods are defined as comprising '...people, their capabilities and their means of living, including food, income and assets', including both tangible and intangible assets (Chambers & Conway, 1992, p. ii). A key element of livelihoods analysis is examining how 'capital assets' (natural, social, physical, financial and human) are used in livelihoods strategies, as well as how they may be built or depleted by livelihoods strategies or context-specific processes.

The concept of livelihoods helps paint a picture of the ways in which people construct a living, putting women and men, and their agency, at the centre of analysis. At the same time, it examines the context that poor women and men need to navigate. It aims to pinpoint and understand resources or capital (such as economic, social and symbolic resources), activities and strategies that lead to the construction of household livelihoods, as well as the challenges which affect the sustainability of livelihoods in the face of economic troubles and severe household shocks (Scoones, 1998; Carney, 1999, 2002; Farrington, Rasamut, & Walker, 2002; Rakodi & Lloyd-Jones, 2002).

Livelihoods analysis also provides a holistic understanding of intra- and inter-household relationships and their impact on livelihood activities. Livelihoods in urban spaces utilise, amongst other things, an array of social networks, land, financial capital and technology to earn income and access goods.

Another approach to understanding local economic systems and how women and men negotiate them, is the analysis of value chains which focuses on products or sectors of production. Tracking these sheds light on the activities and outcomes of groups of women and men involved in sectors of production. Value chains are also a way to understand how the city is produced through interactions of formal and informal practices (Palat Narayanan & Véron, 2018). In this vein, a value chain describes 'the full range of activities which are required to bring a product or service from conception, through the different phases of production (involving a combination of physical transformation and the input of various producer services), delivery to final consumers, and final disposal after use' (Kaplinsky & Morris, 2002, p. 4).

Mapping value chains helps to identify the chain's links and actors, their functions, degrees of power, and relationships. Visualising the stages of production and the flows between these stages enables an exploration of the livelihood system beyond its core value chain to include a wider set of relations, including regulations and connections to other sectors

and dimensions of people's lives. As such, a value chain analysis adds a comparative dimension of the different groups of women and men engaged in a sector and explores the way that relations between them are structured. In contrast, a key focus of value chain analysis is to identify inequalities between nodes in value chains – in terms of decision-making power or profit generated – and to highlight that high- and low-value nodes are often associated with different categories of people.

The analysis of livelihoods systems presented in this chapter engages with the ways that livelihoods are structured around social and political power relations, which may offer structural advantages to some while keeping others in poverty. The analysis includes an understanding of the capital assets available to people working within the systems and the relationships and flows between actors at different nodes in the value chains. Building on this context, we explain the livelihood strategies of people in terms of their agency (the decisions and choices that they make about how to engage in livelihoods) and their circumstances (the specific connections and opportunities that influence these decisions). We then explore the various outcomes of these livelihood systems and the choices of women and men working within them. Cutting across all these areas of analysis is gender relations and a consideration of how each area of analysis plays out across different (individual, settlement and city) scales. In particular, we use value chain mapping to track power relations between different actors, daily activity charts to track time spend in different activities, and life histories to reveal the gendered nature of these livelihood sectors.

The research focused on four informal/slum settlements in Freetown (embedded cases) which were selected from among the 68 settlements identified as slums which formed the initial sampling frame. These included two coastal settlements: Cackle Bay and Portee-Rokupa from the West and East of Freetown respectively; and two hillside/hilly settlements: Dworzark and Moyiba, also from the West and East of Freetown, respectively. In terms of the value chains/livelihood systems selected in the settlements, we focused on sectors that characterised the settlements in that they were typical forms of livelihood and/or linked to the collective identity of the settlement, and because they employed large numbers of people, specifically poorer residents. This chapter will present in some detail only two sectors (stone quarrying in Moyiba and fishing in Portee-Rokupa) but will draw on evidence from all the sectors (sand mining in Cackle Bay and stone quarrying in Dworzark) in the overall findings.

The livelihoods systems

Stone quarrying in Moyiba

Moyiba is situated in a hilly area on the eastern side of Freetown, 5 km from the city centre. The settlement has approximately 37,000 residents of which half are young people. It was a farming community until 1966 when a large-scale, mechanised stone quarry was established. This closed in 2002 due to the civil war. Since then, self-employed informal workers have taken over quarrying activities, where a significant section of residents (women, men and children) derive their livelihood. Work in the quarry is sometimes suspended by public authorities, for example in 2014 after an accident, or the following year due to a land dispute. At times, quarrying activities are suspended due to heavy rains. Nonetheless, the booming Freetown construction activities make quarrying an attractive livelihood.

As outlined in Figure 4.1 and Table 4.1, this value chain links several actors and activities, starting with the initial extraction of rock and ending with the use of the stones and gravel produced in local and citywide construction projects.

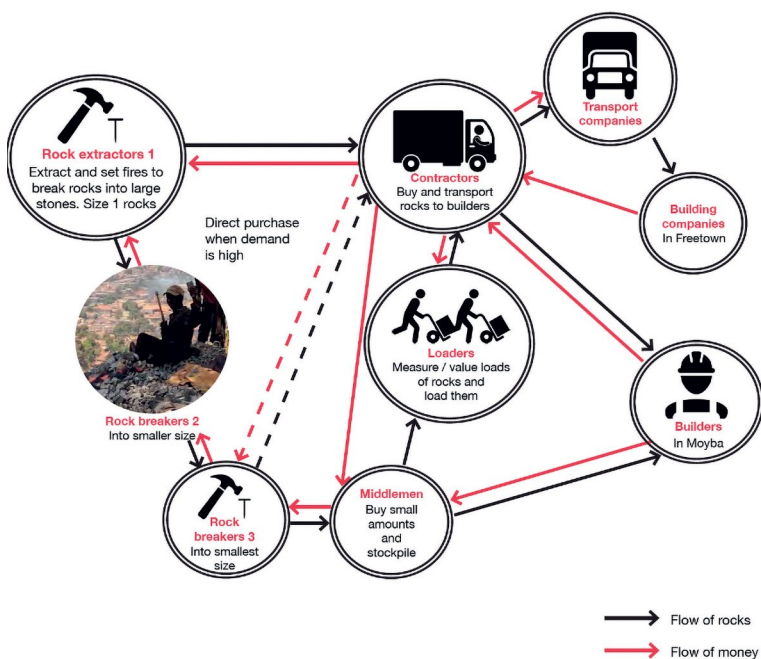


Figure 4.1 Stone quarrying value chain in Moyiba (Freetown).

Source: © Authors

Table 4.1 Actors and processes in the quarrying sector in Moyiiba. Source: © Authors

Stages	Actors	Processes and relations
<p>‘Boss-Boss’ Breaking a large boulder into rocks that can be transported from the site. It requires an investment of at least USD 260 for the purchase of the required tools.</p>	<p>Men, particularly young able-bodied men.</p>	<p>An agreement is made that Boss-Boss stone extractors will receive a share of the processed stones from the women stone breakers. Boss-Boss men then sell on the processed stones to contractors or to petty buyers.</p>
<p>‘Cut-Cut’ Breaking up the large rocks into stones which are small enough to be worked on by women and children.</p>	<p>Men, often on a part time basis – for example, students or people with other jobs (e.g. drivers, carpenters, security guards).</p>	<p>The women engaging in subsequent stages bring large rocks from the Boss-Boss site, and ‘hire’ the Cut-Cut men (who work individually or in groups), i.e. pay them cash to break stones to a size that they can the work on themselves.</p>
<p>Three quarter: breaking down stones to large gravel.</p>	<p>Mainly done by women and children (age 7-68) who have few other opportunities for support.</p>	<p>The women acquire rocks from Boss-Boss men or petty buyers, process the gravel to the size requested by the rock owners, and in payment are given a share of the rocks. If they are given the rocks in large Boss-Boss form, they pay the Cut-Cut men in cash to break them down to a manageable size for processing. The women then give a share of the processed gravel back to the original rock owners, and sell their own share to contractors or petty buyers. Petty buyers may also lend women money on credit, which is repaid with gravel.</p>
<p>Half inch: breaking down stones to medium sized. Millimetre messeh messeh: breaking down stones to fine gravel</p>		

Stages	Actors	Processes and relations
<p>Load men These workers are paid (USD 0.06 per head pan) to move loads of rock/building gravel from processing or store sites to contractors trucks.</p>	<p>Men, normally students or people with other jobs, who do this work to supplement their income.</p>	<p>Load men are self-employed and paid cash by contractors. There is a load man association which is registered with Freetown City Council and only those registered with this association are allowed to work as load men in the quarry.</p>
<p>Petty buyers Buy, stockpile and trade the different sizes of gravel and stone to sell at a profit.</p>	<p>Only five petty buyers in the community, as it requires USD 910-1,040 start-up capital, which is a considerable amount for the settlement. Of the five, only one is a woman.</p>	<p>Petty buyers buy different sizes of gravel from women or Boss-Boss men to sell to contractors. They typically sell to contractors at a small mark-up (e.g. buying three quarter gravel at USD 0.33 per head pan and selling the same amount to contractors for USD 0.35) . They may also buy large stones directly from Boss-Boss men and commission women to process it into gravel by arranging to share the processed stone with them at 70-30% or 60-40%. Petty buyers have enforced a rule that restricts women from selling gravel directly to contractors if they have been advanced stones by petty buyers.</p>
<p>Contractors Transport and sell stones and gravel to building companies. They visit construction sites around the city with samples of the different sizes of stone and gravel to secure contracts. They then hire vehicles to transport the building gravel to the construction sites.</p>	<p>Contractors range in age from 20-70 years old. They are mainly men but there are a few women. <i>“We do not have huge capital as people think but lean on our good relationships to get our daily income.”</i></p>	<p>Contractors buy stones and gravel from petty buyers (or, at times of high demand, they may buy direct from stone processors) . They pay load men cash to load vehicles. Payment for transport is deferred until after the gravel has been sold. Contractors may give advanced payments to petty buyers.</p>

The connections between the nodes in the chain are not arranged in a standard form, or indeed in a linear structure. In contrast, nodes may be bypassed as a result of direct local demand involving direct sales by rock breakers, or extra nodes may arise as a result of fluctuations in demand. For example, the rock extractors and breakers may at times sell directly to local builders or households involved in self-construction at a higher price rather than through middlemen or contractors. On the other hand, while rock breakers sell directly to contractors when demand for stone is high, when it is lower, they may sell rock to local middlemen who will stockpile rocks and sell when demand increases.

The main 'flows' in the value chain are of rocks, labour (e.g. the work of loaders) and of money between the different actors, though frequently money flows are delayed, or indirect via systems of trust, credit and agreed shares of processed rocks. The value chain is more complex because different nodes may be undertaken separately by different groups or, in some cases, the whole range of processing phases may be undertaken by the same person: for example, a rock extractor also breaking down rocks to fine building gravel rather than passing it on to other rock breaker groups.

While mining activities are not appropriately licensed in Moyiba, they do appear to be regulated to some extent by the authorities. In addition, while there is no formal registration of artisanal miners, several groups have occupational associations registered with Freetown City Council. These associations play a role in managing disputes across the sector and setting up mutual welfare societies. Research participants explained informal community bylaws that regulate work in the sector, generally implemented by the police and related for the main part to disputes over payment, mining in sensitive sites (such as road mining) and appropriate behaviour. Penalties for breaking such bylaws are fines, which are used by the community to fund infrastructure projects such as road maintenance. Petty buyers also appear to regulate the sales practices of women working in smaller stones processing, prohibiting them from direct sales of gravel if they have been provided stones by petty buyers.

Fishing in Portee-Rokupa

Portee-Rokupa is a coastal community of about 7,000 people, 10 km from the city centre. Due to the shortage of land and high housing costs, the incoming population reclaimed land from the seafront. The settlement is characterised by tenure insecurity and high levels of poverty. Over the years, the settlement has become one of the largest fishing communities

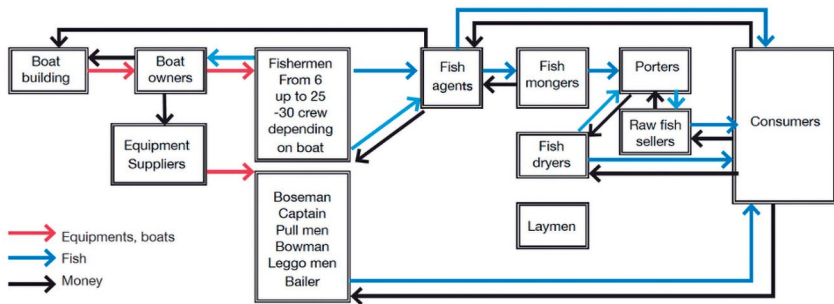


Figure 4.2 The fishing value chain in Portee-Rokupa. Source: © Authors

along the coastline in the east end of Freetown. The fishing sector includes the processing of fish through smoking, and the sale of both raw and smoked fish. People come from all over the city, and even from other provinces, to buy fish from Portee-Rokupa and the local women fish sellers also sell their fish in the main markets elsewhere in the city.

In Sierra Leone, the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources has sole jurisdiction over managing and conserving fishery resources. However, the management and development of the artisanal fishery sector in Sierra Leone was devolved to local councils in 2004. Larger boats used in Portee-Rokupa are considered semi-industrial and remain regulated by the ministry. Local councils working with fishermen’s associations award licences. These associations have been instrumental in enforcing fishing gear regulations to mitigate fishing of juvenile fish stock.

Discussion

Complex sectors with a gendered division of labour

The sectors we investigated presented fairly structured value chains with a complex organisation of relationships that have developed over many years and have evolved over time, often driven by the growth and expansion of the city. The actors in various chains have created their own mechanisms of cooperation, which are made possible by the high level of trust between actors who have worked in the chain for long periods of time. Such cooperation mechanisms allow the actors to fulfil larger orders, cope with difficult times of oversupply when prices collapse, and ill health.

These sectors are organised in value chains able to operate with little cash due to consolidated relationships of trust developed over long periods of time. The livelihood systems that we studied appear to

Table 4.2 Actors and processes in the fishing sector in Portee-Rokupa. Source: © Authors

Stages	Actors	Processes and relations
<p>Boat builders Buying of materials and building of boats.</p>	<p>22 boat builders in the community who are mainly healthy and abled-bodied men, the majority were apprenticed into the profession through family connections.</p>	<p>An agreement in advance on boat price. Buyer's advance payment for some of the work and materials (timber, nails, and money for the feeding of the boat building team). They also get fish from boats that they build or repair as a way to keep a strong relationship with boat owners and fishermen.</p>
<p>Boat owner Commissions fishing crews. He/she must buy the boat and contract a Boseman who assembles the crew, and contract an agent for the sale of fish (often a female relative).</p>	<p>Around 100 boat owners. From young adults to elderly people, mainly men, though there are some women. Need to have enough money to pay for the boat.</p>	<p>Need to advance payments for the construction of the boat. The catch is divided, and the boat owner receives the larger share of the catch in payment, but is responsible for fuel and boat maintenance. Boat owners pass their share of the catch to an agent who will sell the fish and subsequently pay them.</p>
<p>Fishermen A range of roles: <i>Boseman</i>: head of the crew and responsible for all logistics and hiring the crew. <i>Captain</i>: controls the engine. <i>Leggo man</i>: responsible for the anchor and cleaning of the boat. <i>Bow man</i>: looks for fish at sea. <i>Pull men</i>: responsible for dropping and pulling the net. <i>Bailer</i>: empties water from the boat.</p>	<p>All men, ranging in age from around 25 to 30. They mainly come from fishing families.</p>	<p>Fishermen are paid by the boat owner with a share of the catch. The size of their share depends on where their role is in the hierarchy of jobs.</p>

Stages	Actors	Processes and relations
<p>Agents Use their social networks to find customers (including fish mongers) to sell fish to. One person can be an agent for up to ten boats.</p>	<p>There are over 50 agents. These are all women, most often the wives of boat owners.</p>	<p>Agents negotiate fish prices to fishmongers, who they attract to the boat side, and sell to them. They keep 10% of the sales value and the rest goes to the boat owner/crew.</p>
<p>Fish smokers (dryers) Buy fish from the agents at the boats, smoke it at their homes using a dryer with assistance from laymen, pack it for sale in markets and sell direct to wholesalers.</p>	<p>Fish smokers are from fishing families. They are mostly women with very few men. They need some capital to buy equipment and fish to start up.</p>	<p>Purchase their fish from agents, pay labourers to carry the fish to their smoking houses and laymen to lay out their fish for smoking. They sell the smoked fish to wholesalers.</p>
<p>Labourers Carry the loads of fish from the boats to the road junction, houses of fish smokers, or markets.</p>	<p>Around 60 labourers who are mainly young men, school dropouts and students.</p>	<p>Paid in cash by fish smokers or fish mongers, based on the distance and the weight of the load.</p>
<p>Laymen Wash and clean the fish and lay it out on the grid for smoking.</p>	<p>Young people, mainly young men and boys, often students, some women who are usually relatives of fishers.</p>	<p>Laymen are paid in cash by fish smokers. Sometimes, only paid once the fish is sold, or not paid because they are relatives of the fish smokers.</p>

Stages	Actors	Processes and relations
<p>Net menders Making and mending nets of different sizes and shapes.</p>	<p>Over 30 net menders in the community who are all men with skills in net-mending.</p>	<p>Hired by boat owners to make or mend nets. When new nets are to be made, the boat owners provide the materials (lengths of netting). They pay the net menders for their work. If the boat owners have a very big catch, they may give the net menders a share “<i>just to keep us close and to be flexible with them when the nets need maintenance or repairs.</i>”</p>
<p>Retailers There are different types of fish sellers, including raw fish sellers (fish mongers) and wholesalers. Fish mongers also wash and prepare the fish for sale.</p>	<p>Raw fish sellers are mainly women. They often come from fishers’ families.</p>	<p>Fish mongers and wholesalers buy fish directly from agents or from fish smokers to sell directly to consumers. When they sell in market they have to pay market dues for a pitch/site.</p>

strengthen systems of trust and reciprocity within the community by establishing multiple relationships of interdependence between different actors in the value chains.

In the livelihood systems analysed, many stages are characterised by a clearly gendered division of labour. Women tend to work in stages of the sector where they can combine reproductive and productive work, but these are also the lowest paid stages and they have little power in the system.

When women do have power in livelihood systems, for example when they play key brokering roles, they tend to be women whose male family members (husbands or fathers) also have important roles in the system. For instance, when the wife of a boat owner is a prominent fish agent. Age is also important, as younger women do not generally have powerful positions in a livelihood system and often work at the lowest stages due to school dropout linked to teenage pregnancy.

Social protection of last resort

Findings demonstrates that these informal livelihoods sectors provide what the formal sector and the state are unable to do: employment and strong networks of trust and mutual assistance relationships. These sectors have two important characteristics: they are labour intensive and offer ease of entry to the very poor. The technology of production prioritises the use of labour rather than substituting it with capital-intensive productive processes. This onerous work maximises employment, offering a fundamental social function that supports the wellbeing of an expanding urban population.

Some stages of these value chains are 'open' (based on common property resources with relatively open access) and entry into the sector (based on limited tools and skills) is easy. As one stone quarrier in Moyiba observed: 'Everybody is free to use the quarry. You only need to declare yourself to the existing members and they will willingly indoctrinate you.' This means that a wide range of people can engage in these productive activities. However, competition is high and thus income levels are low, with many participants only earning enough to subsist.

In many cases, people entered the low stages of these sectors when they faced challenges in life. The sectors also involve effective systems of mutual social protection to cope with the high level of uncertainty. These can be horizontal, such as saving groups, or vertical, such as cash advances from brokers in exchange for loyalty. In this sense, these sectors contribute to building a social protection of last resort.

The contribution of these sectors goes beyond providing a livelihood to those involved. They allow ‘formal’ economic activities to be viable, particularly in the absence of state capacity to adequately regulate and promote economic activities. For example, these sectors provide the construction industry with materials such as stones and sand. These sectors also contribute to broader objectives by offering employment to a large number of young people. They support social cohesion, help diffuse social conflict, and prevent violence (Finn & Oldfield, 2015).

Coproduction of governance arrangements

In the context of post-civil war Sierra Leone, with the state slowly developing its capacity, different types of collective action become autonomous processes of self-governance to fill the state’s gaps. The livelihoods sectors where informal settlement residents work establish self-managed informal institutions with complex and evolving regulations that contribute to coproducing effective hybrid governance systems. These institutions regulate and enable the operations of these sectors, for instance, through local by-laws on mining and fines whereby revenues are used to improve shared road infrastructures. For example, a contractor in Moyiba told us that workers were fined for fighting or using abusive language. The money collected was used for road improvement projects in the community.

These forms of autonomous collective action create horizontal bonds and trusts which is a further enabler of these sectors. They operate in a cash scarce system and therefore transactions take place on trust that people will be paid. Moreover, in these ‘informal’ governance arrangements, government often plays a role.

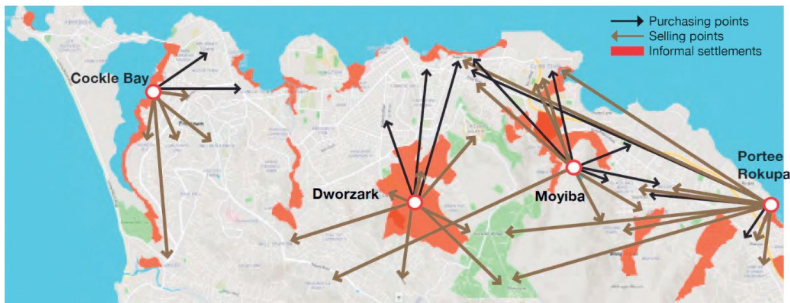


Figure 4.3 Relationships between livelihood sectors of informal settlement residents and the city. Source: © Authors based on OpenStreetMap. <https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright>

Wellbeing of the city

The self-employment sector accounts for nearly 85% of the country's workers and the informal sector, especially the informal service sector, is the backbone of Freetown's economy. A spatial analysis of where the livelihood sectors considered in this study purchase tools and other inputs and where they sell their products attests to the strong connection of these sectors with other parts of the city (see [Figure 4.3](#)). Therefore, there are strong connections between the economy of informal settlements and the wider city economy. The analysis shows, for instance, the importance of stone supply to the construction industry and how the fish supplies wider parts of the city. Moreover, formal economic activities and the workers they employed would not be able to perform their duties without supporting services provided by workers in the informal sector. These services range from transport to lunches, trading, housekeeping and childcare. This indicates that even the most formal sectors are dependent on more informal activities. In short, these livelihoods sectors contribute to the wider city through the provision of key goods and services to formal economic activities, as well as to social security and employment to many residents. They further help make up for limited state capacity by deploying complex, hybrid forms of self-governance and self-regulation of these economic activities.

Conclusion

The livelihood activities of informal settlement residents make an important contribution to the settlements and the wider city. The sectors analysed in this research provide livelihoods to a large number of people and contribute to other key sectors of the city economy, while operating with limited capital. In stone quarrying, 70% of stone transactions take place without money being exchanged immediately, meaning that such sectors are built on trust relationships cultivated over long periods of time and on informal institutions. In a fragile and cash-scarce city economy, the sectors that develop in informal settlements where a large part of the population resides are key to the overall economy, cohesion and wellbeing. Moreover, these informal institutions regulate local economic activities by filling a governance gap left by city and central government authorities.

These sectors function as an employment of last resort for most people and have mechanisms of mutual assistance. Therefore, they help compensate for the lack of social protection services from the state.

That said, some of these livelihood sectors contribute to environmental degradation and workers may be subject to exploitative conditions. They also have little potential for expansion due to their dependency on limited natural resources.

Any disruption due to evictions, relocations or major regulatory changes may affect the supply of key goods to the city and cut the livelihoods and social protection to a large number of people. Therefore, labour-intensive livelihood alternatives must be put in place before pushing people away from livelihoods that are not sustainable in the long term. Urban planning and economic strategies should be developed through open policy dialogues with the participation of residents of informal sectors and the organisations that support them. It is important that national policy interventions in these sectors carefully consider all stakeholders to ensure the most vulnerable are not adversely affected by proposed changes. NGOs could also participate in developing alternative labour-intensive sectors that are not reliant on finite natural resources; supporting settlement-scale governance of livelihoods and the use of natural resources; and engaging informal settlements in city-scale economic planning.

This chapter also contributes to a broader body of literature that challenges dichotomic perspectives on formality and informality and calls for a change in policy towards informal livelihood activities which are currently criminalised and obstructed across cities in Africa. We question the idea that formality and informality are part of clearly defined, distinct spaces or economic activities in the city, by demonstrating the way in which informal activities are organically part of complex value chains across the entire city. We call for an understanding of the hybridity of in/formality as part of urban practices undertaken by all actors across the city as the basis of an African urbanism that acknowledges existing urban realities. The label of informality should not be politically applied to justify the elimination of 'less desirable' economic activities, which we have demonstrated to be the backbone of the city. Going beyond the in/formal divide and demonstrating the relational nature of the connections between the livelihoods of the residents of informal settlements and the broader city economy means that latent power relations can be addressed.

Note

- 1 This chapter draws on a research project funded by Comic Relief. Some of the data has already been published in a more extensive research report: Koroma, B., Rigon, A., Walker, J., & Sellu, A. (2018). *Urban livelihoods in Freetown's Informal Settlements*. Freetown. Sierra Leone: Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre. Available here: https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10062427/7/Rigon_latestversion_urban_livelihoods_in_informal_settlements_-_report_web_quality.pdf The research was conducted with the field research support of Austina Sellu, who no longer works at SLURC, but whose work we want to acknowledge.

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'By prioritising collaboration in different forms, this book showcases how engagements between and among academic, practice, civic and public institutions can foster a better future for communities.' *Taibat Lawanson, University of Lagos, Nigeria*

'... a living knowledge piece that points us to the future possibilities and extension of knowledge frontiers in Sierra Leone's urbanisation journey.' *Shuaib Lwasa, International Institute of Social Studies, The Netherlands*

With a population of over one million, Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, faces serious challenges around provision of services, housing and infrastructure, all exacerbated by climate change. Already, a large share of the Freetown population lives in informal settlements and as many as 70 per cent of the city's residents are employed on an informal basis.

In 2015, the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC) was established to engage with urban challenges in Sierra Leone through research, capacity building and advocacy activities in areas such as health, land, housing, resilience, livelihoods and mobility. SLURC has become a platform for dialogue among urban stakeholders to negotiate the future of the city.

Urban Transformations in Sierra Leone aims to share SLURC's journey so far, articulating the key findings generated by its various research projects, while also reflecting on the partnerships it has enabled. By bringing together research from different sectors, the book makes a significant contribution to knowledge on Freetown and demonstrates the potential of transdisciplinary work.

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