

AUDRC Research Note

Urban growth models for Gulu Uganda



What are the most contextually appropriate models of urbanisation for Gulu, Uganda?

Background

- Uganda has one of Africa's fastest urban growth rates, compounding urban challenges, including urban sprawl, the proliferation of informal settlements, decrepit housing, and the privatisation of urban development without providing public open space and transport connectivity.

- In 2011, the Ugandan National Development Plan nominated Gulu (in northern Uganda) as one of the four 'regional cities' to be developed to accommodate the nation's surging population.

- In response, this project considered generic models of urbanisation that could be applied in Uganda. This evaluation is conducted through a suitability analysis, informed through unique and inclusive co-design workshops held in Gulu.

- The models of urbanisation were concentric zones (compact growth around an existing city), satellite cities (urbanisation in nodes distributed around a central city), transportation corridors (development along major radial transportation routes) and dispersed sites (low-density development).

Key findings

- This suitability analysis (informed by the workshops) indicated that, in broad terms, transportation corridor development on suitable roads, combined with limited satellite centre and concentric zone development, is the most appropriate pattern of urban development for Gulu.

- This form of corridor development on elevated land preserves Gulu's extensive wetland systems, which deliver flood mitigation and water quality benefits, as well as substantial reserves of public open space. Secondly, the model preserves land for agriculture, running adjacent to the wetland systems. Embedding urban agriculture is vital as it is critically important in Gulu's post-conflict economy.

- In Gulu, the corridor urban model could enable this synergy between the urban and the rural, which balances local economic and productive self-sufficiency, landscape character, biodiversity, and urban development aspirations.

Links to related publications

- Using suitability analysis, informed by Co-Design, to assess contextually appropriate urban growth models in Gulu, Uganda, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13574809.2021.1968295>

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