

Regional Development

Migration has implications for regional development.

Regional development—including agricultural and rural development—is a dominant theme in Professor Mabogunje’s works. Regional challenges include development disparities, rural-urban inequality, and urban primacy (Gore 1984). Regional development also encompasses top-down and bottom-up strategies. An example of the former is the growth pole strategy, which he popularized in both academic and policy circles (Okafor and Honey 2004). The latter consists of various approaches collectively labeled as neo-populism by some authors (Gore 1984).

The growth pole strategy is based on the assumption that regional development and rural growth depend on urbanization and industrialization. However, the failure of urbanization and industrialization to stimulate regional development led to the emergence of the neo-populist strategies that seek “. . . to reverse the urban bias in current planning practice, to promote greater equality and the satisfaction of the basic needs of the majority of the population, to re-establish local and regional communities and to avoid the centralization of economic and political decision-making” (Gore 1984, p. 161).

Professor Mabogunje’s works emphasize the importance of the spatial dimension of the development process. Traditionally, development was thought of in sectoral terms, not spatial. Development planning focused on resources, rather than places or regions. One of the objectives of an international conference he organized in 1977 was “to deepen awareness among those concerned with planning for economic development in the various African countries of the growing problems of regional inequalities and, more particularly, of the increasing disparity between urban and rural areas” (Mabogunje 1977, p. 3).

His work on regional development is in tandem with a mandate of the International Geographical Union's Commission on Regional Systems and Policies. This mandate is "... to gain better understanding of the complex phenomenon of development within a spatial and regional setting" (Mabogunje 1981, p. 1). The issues discussed in this chapter include the following:

- Cities as growth poles for regional development
- Rural development
- Geographic perspectives on development

CITIES AS GROWTH POLES FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This section discusses Professor Mabogunje's papers on regional disparities: *Migration Policy and Regional Development in Nigeria*, *Regional Planning and the Development Process*, *Growth Poles and Growth Centres in the Regional Development of Nigeria*, *Regional Spaces in Regions: A Critique of the Concept of Popular Participation*, and *Last Things First: Re-appraising the Fundamentals of Nigeria's Development Crisis*.

Growth Poles and Regional Planning

Professor Mabogunje examines the efficacy of growth poles in the Nigerian context¹. The

purpose of the study is "... to examine regional development in Nigeria with a view to indicating the extent to which growth pole tendencies are already operating in the country ..." (p. 1). He defines a growth pole as a town or city with an agglomeration of propulsive industries that stimulate growth. The rationale for the growth pole strategy is that: "The absence of an automatic relation between growth in a major centre and development in the complementary region is the reason for the attention currently paid to the strategy of using growth pole concepts in regional economic planning" (p. 6). However, he notes that growth poles can also result in regional inequality and ultimately fail.

He makes a distinction between regional differentiation and regional inequality, arguing that "... by 1950, whilst the country began to show clear evidence of regional differentiation, regional inequality could hardly be said to have become significant ..." (p. 14). Regional differentiation resulted from the production of agricultural and mineral exports during the colonial era. There was also a social dimension, the north-south difference in educational development. While economic growth did occur during the colonial period, it was limited and resulted in regional inequality. The country's urban system also had an impact on regional development.

By the 1970s, major changes in the Nigerian economy and development of the transportation network gave locational advantage to some parts of the country. Manufacturing was a major element of the structural transformation. Port cities, such as Lagos, had a disproportionate share of the manufacturing industries. The impact of the emerging growth centres on regional development was “that some degree of linkage is starting to develop among different sectors of the Nigerian economy. These linkages, however, are still rather weak where they ought to be strong . . .” (p. 49).

Nigeria did not have a coherent regional policy until the adoption of the Second National Development Plan (1970–74). As he puts it, “the growth pole concept as a strategy of regional development can hardly be said to have received any attention from economic planners in Nigeria” (p. 70). He supports the potential of growth poles to promote regional development in spite of their limited success in Nigeria. Among other reasons, this is because “the growth-pole concept offers developing countries a possibility of thinking of development in specific locational or spatial terms. By doing this, it turns their gaze slightly away from the national accounting view of their developmental performance to more concrete concern with spatial structural transformation in different parts of the country” (p. 79).

Migration and Regional Development

Professor Mabogunje’s work recognizes that migration also has implications for regional development². He focuses on the pattern of migration flows in Nigeria, and he suggests policies to make migration impact positively on regional economic development. Okun and Richardson’s (1961) model of regional migration highlights the flows between different regions. However, the model ignores the possibility of migration flows “from high to low growing income areas or from growing to stagnant areas. This is clearly the sort of situation arising in the opening up of frontier regions in a country, or in efforts to resuscitate stagnant regions” (pp. 245–246). The migration flows in Nigeria are primarily from high to lower income areas.

Demographic, social, and economic factors are responsible. From the demographic viewpoint, the rate of natural increase is higher in high income areas despite lower birth rates. This is due largely to lower death rates. From the social perspective, high expectation fuels intense competition for opportunities, leading to migration to less developed areas where opportunities to earn higher income are better because of less competition. The economic viewpoint reinforces the social one, but sees competition in the context of trade. Both the correlation analysis and the multiple regression

model were employed to verify the validity of these hypotheses. The results of the analyses were largely supportive. For example, there was an inverse relationship between per capita revenue and the number of migrants. The inverse relationship was also evident in the multiple regression analysis, confirming that people generally migrate from more developed to less developed areas. Overall, the 11 variables used in the analysis explained about 70 percent of the variation in the distribution of migrants.

From a policy perspective, migration to less developed areas "has been a most important means of intensifying the utilization of resources, which would otherwise remain idle or poorly utilized. . . . Its long-term effect is therefore to raise the level of economic activity and therefore of per capita income in the receiving area, thereby reducing the differential between it and the relatively more developed area within the country" (p. 258). Migration policy should create conditions that encourage movements, including easy access to land and reasonably long tenure. It should also ensure that the interests of local people are not prejudiced and foster regional economic development.

Spatial Dimension and Development Planning

Professor Mabogunje's works on growth poles and migration³ highlight the importance of

spatial dimension in the development process. He blames the weaknesses in Nigeria's development plans on a failure to recognize the significance of space in development planning. The First and Second National Development Plans do not incorporate the spatial dimension in the planning process and investment decisions. Both plans "were conceived essentially as an exercise in making financial allocations between different sectors of the economy" (p. 5). Regional plans must recognize conditions in different parts of the country and garner political support. Nigeria's iron and steel mill is an example of what happens when space and location are not taken into account in development planning. The economic advantages of alternative sites were not explored and "the proposition that it should, in consequence, be located where its economic impact would be greatest in the interest of all was hardly examined" (p. 5).

Popular Participation

Regional planning must include consultations with all tiers of government and rely on locational decisions to generate economic development. Increasing employment is most feasible in the agricultural sector, but "it may be necessary to identify the frontier areas where underutilized land exists, to make legislative and other provisions to ensure that this land can be

made available to willing labour, and to create conditions that would encourage labour to move into these areas” (p. 8). He makes a strong case for regional planning and the use of data systems in all regional planning: “all developmental activities take place in geographic space, and their distribution can make an important difference in terms of both their general economic impact and their nation-unifying influence” (p. 15).

Incorporating the spatial dimension in development planning is necessary, but public participation is also critical. Participation is an important element in bottom-up development strategies and he examines⁴ why it has not been an operational aspect of development planning. Participation has three components: “first, the involvement of people in decision-making; second, the eliciting of their contribution to development programmes; and third, their participation in sharing the benefits from the development process” (p. 100). These levels of participation require communication, representation, activation, and delegation. Popular participation is characterized by two-way communication flows through public hearings, forums, workshops, and so on. Representation is an important element, but can be the most difficult because representatives of the poor are easily intimidated by bureaucrats and the elite. Activation is about mobilizing people and making them physically and financially en-



Fruit market in Lagos

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gaged in development activities. Finally, delegation requires the devolvement of authority to local leaders who owe allegiance to their traditional groups.

The devolvement of authority raises the question of the appropriate spatial units within which to mobilize effective participation. In his words, “this is essentially a spatial issue whose detailed consideration is often glossed over in most discussions of popular participation” (p. 103). Growth centres, metropolitan districts, development regions, and resource frontier zones “. . . are unlikely to provide an appropriate institutional framework for mobilizing the vast majority of low-income and

underprivileged people for participation in their own development” (p. 105). Nigerian states engage in regional development planning, but meaningful popular participation has not been achieved at the state or local level. Small and intermediate territorial units, which can mobilize the participation of small groups, have proven to be important catalysts of rural development. The challenge is to define, formally recognize, and organize these territorial entities. As he asserts, “what is critical in this paper is the search for the basic building blocks of territorial organization within which effective mobilization can be attained, especially of the rural population and their real participation in the development process” (p. 112).

Professor Mabogunje’s merit award lecture⁵ blames Nigeria’s development crisis on the fact that its national development strategy did not establish the right priorities. He cites a number of examples. Nigeria’s industrial development strategy was based on import substitution industrialization. However, this approach increased the country’s dependency on imported capital goods, technology, and semi-processed raw materials. The strategy failed to generate significant growth in other sectors of the economy, intensified urban-rural inequalities, and saddled the country with foreign debt. More importantly, it led to the establishment of industries that had few linkages with the rest of

the national economy. As he observes, the strategy “paid less than adequate attention to one of the fundamental elements of any development strategy, namely, a commitment to an extensive and intensive exploration, exploitation and economic utilization of our own natural resources” (p. 6).

The disappearance of the Kano groundnut pyramids is an example of Nigeria’s failed development strategy. Professor Mabogunje contends that a major reason was the diversion of resources away from the real farmers (i.e., the peasants) who are responsible for the bulk of agricultural production in the country. Instead, a disproportionate share of government resources went into farm settlement schemes, government-owned plantations and food production companies, among others. Engaging the peasant farmers in agricultural and rural development initiatives requires a governance system that brings government closer to the grassroots. Here again, government efforts have fallen short. As he notes, these efforts have “taken the form of periodic reforms of local government. However, the emphasis in many of these reforms was not to establish what was acceptable to the rural population themselves but rather what the bureaucrat considered as economically viable” (p. 12). He proposed much more emphasis on local communities, which constitute the basic level of societal organization and are more enduring.

Rural areas in Africa are characterized by deplorable living and environmental conditions.

The East Central State that emerged after the Nigerian civil war is a key example.

He asserts that enhanced productive output should be the basis of organization at the local level and that community-based organizations are a means of achieving this objective. Communities should elect leaders who are directly accountable to them and recognized by government.

The paper concludes by challenging the Nigerian government to take appropriate measures “through effective organization both to harness our abundant natural resources and to mobilize our teeming human population . . . it is the organization of the human population, particularly in the rural areas, that would indeed unleash the social and economic revolution for which the country yearns” (pp. 19–20).

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Professor Mabogunje’s works on rural development focus on different aspects of rural society and the rural economy. He believes that agriculture and access to land are critical. So, too, is the ability of rural communities to mobilize and take collective action.

This section discusses his following works: *Geography and the Dilemma of Rural Development in Africa*, *Rural Development in Nigeria*, *Traditional Institutional Radicalization as a*

Development Strategy, and *Agriculture, Rural Development and the Post-Colonial State*.

Rural Development Initiatives in Africa

His paper on rural development in Africa⁶ focuses on the government’s inability to design, organize, and implement rural development programmes. Rural areas in Africa are characterized by deplorable living and environmental conditions, as well as a lack of infrastructure and social services. Because urban poverty is so widespread, targeting is not a realistic option. Therefore, “designing a rural development programme for this population is nothing more or less than planning how to transform the national situation” (p. 75). Rural impoverishment is the result of land ownership systems that make the offer of credit to farmers risky. Land fragmentation, rural labour shortages, and the lure of higher wages in urban areas are also factors. An effective rural development programme requires substantial social restructuring, not just infrastructure development.

Effective rural development also requires the full mobilization and participation of the rural population. Professor Mabogunje calls for a holistic approach that emphasizes decentralization and devolution. He proposes six programs to rectify Nigeria’s situation: land reform, agrarian reform, infrastructure development,

provision of social amenities, institutional development, and political participation. As he notes, in many African countries “the strategy of implementation pursued up-to-date is predominantly of the investment type” (p. 80), which serves the interest of powerful groups.

He proposes “the territorial organization of farmers into small area units within which a new socio-economic and socio-political culture of production, consumption and exchange is developed” (p. 83). Small groups are more effective for voluntary collective action. “The territorial basis of such organization is critical because many of the benefits required from group effort are location-specific and, for farmers with their restricted range of mobility . . . involves a high degree of spatial propinquity” (p. 83). Small, territorially defined rural com-

munities can make new rural institutions, such as cooperatives, more feasible and effective.

What has been the impact of rural development initiatives on rural populations? He addresses this question in his study of the Funtua Integrated Rural Development Project.⁷ The purpose of the study was “to evaluate how far this particular strategy offers a definitive way out of the contemporary impasse in rural development in Nigeria” (p. 179). High urban wages and urban consumption patterns had depressed the Funtua region’s agricultural economy by diverting agricultural workers to cities and undermining the price of local farm produce.

The study identified conflicts between project objectives and national goals and policies. The government’s food import policy, which was designed to ensure cheap food for urban residents, had the effect of undermining local producers. The government did not adopt a selective spatial closure strategy to protect domestic producers—such as farmers, who are in the minority—in the short term. In the process, “incipient class differentiation within the community was reinforced if not initiated” (p. 210).

Farmers in two of the villages studied, Danja and Maska, made marginal gains through the application of agricultural inputs. Their incomes were augmented and they acquired consumer durables. However, their lives and production systems did not fundamentally improve. There was also a mismatch between



Curt Carnemark/World Bank

A typical slum shack

the high cost of the rural development strategy and the results achieved. Only maize production has productivity increases; the productivity increase for other crops was only marginal. Finally, the project focused on large-scale benefit. As he notes, “whatever the grand design of the project, its tendency to positively reinforce existing socio-economic inequalities within the rural communities has serious implications for future development in the area” (p. 221). The study reinforces the importance of effective territorial organization and community mobilization as a *sine qua non* for rural development. He concludes that “the Funtua Integrated Rural Development Project has succeeded in providing a model which sets in bold relief what should and should not be done in the search for self-sustaining solutions to problems of rural development. An alternative strategy must build on these strengths and weaknesses” (p. 237).

Role of Institutions

Professor Mabogunje’s seminal work on institutional radicalization⁸ assesses “the opportunity for real development that could come from deliberate efforts at understanding, using, and in the process, transforming institutions in which so much of the ideas and thinking of particular societies find expression. . . .” Deriving its definition of institution from North (1989), the paper states that a system of prop-

erty rights is as much an institution as a family. The role of institutions “in every case is to reduce uncertainty in human interaction through helping to form expectations which each person can reasonably hold in dealing with others” (p. 3). Both the transaction cost and collective action approaches were used to analyze how institutions function and operate. The two approaches are complementary, and “in both, the role of government as a third party particularly with respect to enforcement . . . of rules is emphasized” (p. 5).

He stresses that institutional radicalization differs from institutional change and institutional transformation. Although the distinctions appear hazy, institutional change refers to institutional modification or substitution, while institutional transformation refers to altering an institution’s character or function. On the other hand, institutional radicalization retains an institution’s form, but radically transforms its substance. Land is an example of an asset constrained by institutional arrangements in need of radicalization. Land is a key factor of production, but it is constrained by property conventions that keep it the realm of kinship relations and outside the market. He describes these and other institutional arrangements as dysfunctional, in that they can have the effect of undermining development. For this reason, “the state must find ways and means of getting involved with how to break

the constraints which have hampered the socio-economic transformation of the rural areas and free resources which up till now have been shackled down by increasingly dysfunctional institutional arrangements” (p. 7).

The Awe Descendants Union is an example of an experiment in institutional radicalization. The President of the Descendants Union was named as Chairman of the newly established Awe Development Corporation, a traditionally recognized institution that was configured to promote development at the community level. The government recognized the development potential of community institutions and “. . . the Awe experiment . . . grew out of the belief that the institutional basis for organizing and mobilizing rural communities exists . . .” (p. 11). Radicalizing property conventions was seen as a way to free the factors of production, particularly land, and to improve access to them. This could be facilitated by community banks that would ensure that rural communities had easier access to credit. On a final note, the paper points out that institutional radicalization is likely to encounter resistance since it alters the status quo and “forces development planning to be more historically and socially specific” (p. 17).

Agriculture and Rural Development

Professor Mabogunje’s paper on agriculture and the post-colonial state⁹ highlights the most

pressing issues facing African leaders today. The agricultural and rural crises are a result of policy failures and inadequacies. Limited access to important resources, especially land and credit, exacerbate the situation. For example, access to land is constrained because land is not commoditized. Policy measures, such as the embargo on commodity imports, have helped increase local production. However, not all policy measures have had a positive impact. Structural factors also undermine the responsiveness of agricultural production to policy initiatives.

The availability of labour is still a major constraint on agricultural production. This is blamed on educational development, among other factors. School attendance keeps children from working on farms and educated children abandon work in agriculture. High urban wages also attract workers away from rural areas. Although some labour-saving technologies have been introduced, “it is evident that what is technologically efficient and feasible is not necessarily organizationally acceptable or available” (p. 9). A related issue is the modernization of agricultural production in Africa. African agriculture remains largely embedded in traditional kinship systems and generally operates outside the market economy. Yet, increased agricultural and rural productivity is dependent on the market economy, which requires that all means of production be com-

modified and tradable. This contradiction is a major weakness of the post-colonial state and a major challenge for African leaders.

GEOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPMENT

In *The Development Process and Development Failures in Africa*, he offers a glimpse of his shift from modernist to post-modernist approaches.

His paper on development failures in Africa¹⁰ explains why the Western model of development failed, but does not go so far as to assert that the era of development in Africa is over.

The paper traces the shift from totalizing discourses or paradigms of development to more contextual discourses. Professor Mabo-gunje was part of the quantitative/theoretical revolution associated with the totalizing discourses in human geography. In human geog-



Marian Yunusa/UN-HABITAT

Street scene in Minna, Nigeria

raphy, the various location theories were found to be inadequate for policy prescription. Similarly, growth poles do not always generate spread effects. The shortcomings of positivism and the scientific method as well as the theories and discourses they spawned became widely acknowledged.

Development discourses were criticized for not being historically and geographically specific. Consequently, geographers and other development practitioners, including Professor Mabogunje, embraced the political economy or Marxist perspective on development. It became clear that "what all the modernization theories that underpinned the development strategies of most African countries failed to take into account is the cultural and historical foundation on which the development of any people or society has to be built." Even Ujamaa in Tanzania failed in part because "it ignored problems of traditional property ownership and those of joint labour supply."

The failure of the modernist approach led to renewed interest in local or community-based institutions. In Africa, these institutions are noted for transparency and accountability, and have a good record of mobilizing people and sparking local development initiatives. Home-town associations are among the most successful of these local institutions. It is suggested that these institutions should be radicalized by incorporating more productive activities into

their agendas. An example of institutional radicalization is the community banking system in Nigeria, which incorporates elements of the traditional rotating savings system found in many communities. These institutions should be recognized and used to promote development. The spirit of the paper is captured by the observation that "... African governments cannot hope to develop their countries on the basis of theories that operate as if Africa had no society, no traditional culture and no institutions of its own before the modern period."

Professor Mabogunje's book on the development process¹¹ is one of his major works and offers an important Southern perspective. He asserts that the failure of the development process in Africa and other developing countries is a clear indication that we do not really understand development or how to bring it about. He blames the failure on the fact that "in development discourse . . . the South does not represent itself; rather, it is represented by Western academics, experts, professionals, bankers, and government officials" (Routledge 2003, 312). Finally, the book brings a spatial perspective to bear on development discourse. Ignoring or downplaying the spatial perspective in development planning is partly responsible for the failure of the development process.

Although developing countries are heterogeneous and diverse, the diversity is simply a reflection of "... the differing surface manifes-



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Aerial view of a market in Lagos

tations of underdevelopment . . ." (p. 15) and the essential character of underdevelopment remains the same. The changes in the paradigms of analysis of underdevelopment are discussed. The concept of environmental determinism initially dominated development discourses. This concept regards development (or lack of it) as a function of natural environmental conditions, especially climate and natural resource endowment. The industrialization/moderniza-

tion perspective and the Marxist/political economy perspective then came about. The Marxist perspective is said to encourage an appreciation of the spatial perspective on the development process. Professor Mabogunje dwelt on class analysis and the relation of class structure to the development process at some length in different parts of the book. But as indicated in Chapter 1, this analysis did not appear to inform his prescriptions, which can-

not be adjudged to be radical in the Marxist tradition.

Different definitions of development are discussed. These include defining development as economic growth, which as Professor Mabogunje observes, “. . . gives priority in the development process to increased commodity output rather than to the human beings involved in the production process” (p. 37). On the other hand, when development is defined as modernization, it is part of a much wider process of social change. The definition of development as distributive justice emphasizes poverty reduction, the satisfaction of basic needs, and access to goods and services. Finally, development can be defined as transforming a society's modes of production. It is argued that questions of distribution and social justice cannot be considered independently of production modes. He regards this definition as being influenced by Marxism, which could imply a revolutionary transformation. However, he does not embrace such a radical prescription.

The book shows how development led to the disorganization and increasing inappropriateness of traditional structures in Africa. Industrialization not only failed to tackle the problems of urban unemployment, environmental degradation, and social alienation, but exacerbated them. It proposes strategies aimed at creating new structures more consistent with development goals and expanding synergies

between urban and rural areas. Urban centres also received some attention, particularly the three-fold urban crisis of unemployment, environmental degradation, and social alienation. Industrialization failed to tackle these problems, but instead exacerbated both urban and rural problems. Strategies for establishing national urban systems that would produce beneficial synergies between urban and rural areas were proposed.

National integration entails regional specialization and divisions of labour, increased geographical mobility, and enhanced information flows and increased internal trade. The development of transportation networks and communication facilities is central. For example, increased internal trade is contingent on regional specialization, and both depend on the development of a transportation infrastructure. As Professor Mabogunje has it, “the other consequence of colonial transport development was the broad patterns of regional specialization that it induced within countries . . . significant internal movements of commodities were generated between different parts of the countries in the wake of rudimentary colonial network of transportation . . .” (p. 281). However, the lack of rural feeder roads contributes to the backwardness of rural areas in many developing countries. The mobilization of national populations is also critical to development, a theme that features in many of his works.

Against the backdrop of the failed development efforts in Africa, the book represents “a serious reappraisal of ideas and thoughts about the development process” (p. 11). By highlighting the spatial characteristics of development, it provides a distinctive interpretation of the development debacle in Africa and offers policy prescriptions that differ substantially from those that are commonly held.

ENDNOTES

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