

Agropolitan Development : An Alternative for Regional Development in Asia*

-Mike Douglass**

I. The Issue

In rural areas of densely-populated Java peasants without work wait until night to surreptitiously harvest crops for a big farmer without having been hired for the job. In the morning the peasants who had been promised the work will come only to find the nocturnal workers demanding the pay they had expected to earn.¹ Here even the "povertysharing" sustaining life in an involuting economy² has begun to lose its moral claims as the last vestiges of communal life give way to competition for survival.

In Calcutta "informal" sweat shops turn out bicycle seats, the price of which multiplies after a well-known bicycle maker stamps its name on them; the keen competition among the small shops makes it imperative to bribe the salesmen of the big company to

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1. I. Palmer, "Rural Poverty in Indonesia with Special Reference to Java" in ILO, *Poverty*, 1977.
2. C. Geertz *Agricultural Involvement; the Processes of Ecological Change in Indonesia* (Berkeley: UC Press 1963.)

buy products made by workers receiving below subsistence incomes.³ In this same country children are indentured to creditors by their parents for the duration of their youth, creating a lineage of human collateral which may never be broken and, considering the alternatives, may even be looked upon as a blessing.

People in the barrios of Manila falling real incomes by weighing cruel choices: food or school, health or shelter. The rags they sell to the big paper maker never increase in price, although the selling price of paper made from them has doubled in recent years.⁴ The children of the barrios, like the slum children in every other big city in Asia, ply the streets selling small goods such as cigarettes by the stick in the daily congestion of traffic. Although frequently harassed and imprisoned during city beautification drives aimed at heightening tourism from abroad, the families say that life in the metropolis is better than life in the countryside a claim made and verified elsewhere as well.⁵

In the bountiful Central Plains of Thailand, the area of focus for both government and private attention to the expansion of irrigation facilities and to a transformation toward capitalist modes of production, small farmers and landless labourers are finding that traditional patron-client relationships have been shifting toward greater benefit for the patron and decreasing benefit and bargaining power for themselves. Indebtedness, fixed rents, tax used for money and credit even for subsistence production- have made traditional forms of reciprocity "virtually meaningless"⁶ Landlessness has appeared where it

3. A. N. Bose, *The Informal Sector in the Calcutta Metropolitan Economy*, (Geneva: ILO 1974.)
4. M. Holnsteiner and M. Lopez, "Manila: The Face of Poverty," in Social Science Research Institute (ed.), *Asia Urbanizing* (Tokyo: Simul Press, 1976), pp. 69-86.
5. Bose *op. cit.* foot Note 3; M. Magahar, "Income Inequality in the Philippines: A Decomposition Analysis," in JERS and CAMS, (eds.), *Income, Distribution, Employment and Economic Development in Southeast and East Asia* (Tokyo: 1975) pp. 286-340.
6. S. Piker, "Sources of Stability in Rural Thai Society," *J. Asian Studies* Vol. 27 (1968), p. 138.

did not exist before. Frontier lands in the periphery are almost exhausted. The poorest region in the northeast is becoming an ecological disaster area, quickly flooded and easily parched as the valuable forest areas which covered 50 percent of the land area two decades ago now only cover about 25 percent of the total area of the country. Although the peasantry is nominally credited with the destruction of the forest preserves, it is no secret that large-scale log poaching is primarily conducted by well-armed timber merchants who sell their goods to the Bangkok and international markets.

The details are somewhat different in each case, but throughout the market oriented economies of Asia the theme is consistent: the economic growth recorded in all of these countries is a product of an integrative process which pits poor against poor, accrues political and economic power to rural and urban elites, dissolves communal and other sources of accountability over the uses and distribution of resources, creates syndromes of self defeating survival choices, and leaves in its wake impoverished people and "lagging" regions.⁷

The course of these events, summarized as unequal development, has been paralleled by the rapid rise of development planning carried out in the name of the state since World War II. The progress of this planning, like that of unequal development, has had its own shared logic. Import-substitution industrialization beginning in the 1950's was easily combined with the theme of urbanization as the leading force in development, which gained currency in the 1960's, to form the basis of the strategy of accelerated urban industrialization adopted throughout the Third world. Regional development planning traced similar roots and, after a time lag in adopting the approaches

7. J. C. Scoot, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*. (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1976). T. Onchan and L. Paulino, *Rural Poverty, Income Distribution and Employment in Developing Asian Countries : Review of Past Decade* (Bangkok : Kasetsart University, 1977) C. J. Dixon "Development, Regional Disparity and Planning : The Experience of Northeast Thailand", *J. Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 8 (March 1977) pp. 210-223.

formulated in the North and exported to countries in Latin America, it came of age in Asia in the early 1970's and was entered into formalized national plans as nationally coded versions of the growth pole strategy of concentrated decentralization.⁸ In line with the urban-industrial metaphor for development, regional development was seen, first, as a task of building up urban nodes in the periphery to attract industry (and people) away from the primate cities—i. e. to respond to the dictum that regional development is a problem of the location of the firm⁹ and secondly, as a framework for coordinating central line agency operations in the field. On both counts, the regional development policies have been naively conceived and weakly endowed with any authority to put them into practice.

The policies have been naively conceived for a number of reasons, most of which revolve around the by now discredited assumptions concerning the ability to induce diffusion down rudimentary urban hierarchies and out to rural areas where the vast majority of the people live.¹⁰ The naivete is also tied to a much more fundamental failure of regional development thinking: the posture of treating regional development as a technical exercise in spatial economics and better coordination while remaining silent on the nature of the state and the distribution of political and economic power. Dunham, in speaking on the disturbing topic of what regional planners do after midnight when their Cinderella imagery is finally revealed in its own poverty, summarizes the result of accepting the

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8. K. Salih *et al.*, "Decentralization Policy" in F. Lo and K. Salih (eds.) *Growth Pole Strategy and Regional Development Policy* (London: Pergamon, 1978), pp. 79-119.
 9. W. Alonso, "Industrial Location and Regional Economic Policy in Economic Development," in J. Friedmann and W. Alonso (eds.), *Regional policy: Reading in Theory and Application* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1975), pp. 64-96.
 10. M. Moseley, *Growth Centres in Spatial Planning* (London: Pergamon, 1974); J. Friedmann and C. Weaver, *Territory and Function* (Los Angeles: UCLA press, 1978); W. Stohr and F. Toddling "Evaluation of Regional Policies—Experiences in Market and fixed Economics," in N. Hansen (ed.), *Human Settlement* (New York: Ballinger, 1977) pp 85-119.

political realities surrounding regional planning exercises:

The conventional literature on regional development and regional planning became firmly based in the logic of capitalism ... and it paid scant regard to the kinds of social issues- to patterns of ownership, to problems of poverty or more generally to the distribution of income and wealth- which have been the subject of increasing concern in development studies.¹¹

The further result of this neglect has been to push regional development planning into a conservative position in concept and in practice, both of which reflect not the potential contribution of the field, but rather a default to the unequal distribution of political and economic power. As such it is no surprise that the formulation and implementation of regional development policies do not act to contravene the basic patterns of unequal development. Cast in top-down, centrally orchestrated efforts to induce a redistribution of urban industry at the margin to a few "countermagnets"¹² the outcome of the newly adopted regional development approaches is unlikely to be different from the effects of the pursuit of the accelerated industrialization strategy. At best it may record a statistical lowering of coefficients of interregional inequality, but most of the periphery especially rural areas and rural people will continue to experience low levels of growth. Furthermore, intraregional inequalities can be expected to increase as the growth pole produces few spread effects within the reign in which it is located.

More importantly, the emphasis on spatial disparities failed to speak of the ultimate and more legitimate problems of social disparities. To quote Dunham again:

They (regional planners) focused on problems of regional inequality and regional imbalance, and they failed to raise the more embarrassing issue as to whether it was spatial or social inequality that was really important.¹³

11. D. M. Dunham, "What Do Regional Development Theorists Do After Midnight ?" "Public lecture given at the Universidad de los Andes, Bogota, March 7, 1978.

12. H. W Richardson, *Regional and Urban Economics* (London Penguin, 1978).

13. Dunham, *op. cit.* foot note 11, *Ibid.*, p. 5.

This "embarrassing" issue is precisely the one which any re-formulation of regional development doctrine must address; the fundamental concern for an equal social development needs to be placed before the often misplaced ones over urban biases, poor regions, polarization reversals, and uneven spatial development. If this position is accepted, alternative regional development proposals would be acceptable only to the extent that they contained a compelling logic aimed at assisting an equal social development.

This returns the discussion to that suggested by the opening paragraphs to ask how a regional or spatial development concept can align itself with the purpose of giving greater political and economic power to those for whom human progress has become less accountable and both relatively and absolutely less beneficial. The argument to be made is straightforward: efforts towards achieving this purpose require reconstruction of territorial relations at a sub-national level; to pursue spatial development policies without simultaneous progress in equalizing access to productive resources would, however, be naive at best and great folly at worst. Naive for the same reasons that the top-down decentralization schemes are naive; folly because local tyranny is more intimate and unrelenting than that of a distant metropolis which houses the functions of the nation-state.

II. The Ugly Facts

Before discussing the argument for a regional development being proposed as an alternative to that being widely pursued in Asia, a brief chronicle of the "ugly facts"¹⁴ associated with contemporary development trends is inserted here. This is done to show that the opening remarks of Part I are not mere anecdotes; they are the personal experiences imbedded in broad patterns of increasing inequalities. The perspectives emerging from a review of these patterns also serve as the context for the design of the proposed alternative.

In an initial effort to construct an alternative regional development concept¹⁵ elaborated in part III of this paper, unequal develop-

14. K. Griffin and A. R. Khan "Poverty in the Third World: Ugly Facts and Fancy Models," *World Development*, Vol. 3 (1978) pp. 295-304.
15. J. Friedmann and M. Douglass, "Agropolitan Development: Toward a New Strategy for Regional Planning in Asia," paper presented at the Seminar on Industrialization Strategies and the growth Pole Approach to Regional Planning and Development: The Asian Experience, 1975, 4-13 Nov., Nagoya, Japan.

ment was described as creating seven interrelated crises:

1. hyperurbanization with increasing rural densities;
2. polarization of high growth 'modern' activities;
3. rising un- and under-employment;
4. increasing income inequality and poverty;
5. persistent food shortages;
6. deteriorating material conditions of farm populations;
7. external dependency.

To this list a discussion of the likely impact of the observed transition of the world economic order was added to suggest that differential commodity price inflation and a general recession in the economies of the North would work to create falling terms of trade for traditional primary product exports and increasing protection against manufactured exports from the South.

In the short but turbulent time since the writing of that paper no new information has been brought forward to seriously challenge these observations. The burst of research on the listed manifestations of unequal development has only served to confirm the analysis.¹⁶

In looking at the first item on the list, the term hyperurbanization puts the stress on the growth rates rather than on absolute urban size or primacy. The capital cities of Asian countries, with the exceptions of Colombo and Kathmandu, have been growing at rates which double their population sizes every 7 to 15 years. Most of these cities have become virtually unmanageable: housing stock is deteriorating in supply per household and in quality, basic services are not being extended to large areas of the cities; slum and squatter formations account for more than one-quarter and as much as two thirds of the household (Table 1): air pollution, traffic congestion are of such proportions that one regional economist has suggested that Third World urbanites must have a higher tolerance than their counterparts in the North for diseconomies of scale.¹⁷

16. Onchan and Pauline, *op. cit.*, foot note 7; ILO, *Poverty and Landlessness in Rural Asia*, Geneva, 1977 F. Lo K. Salih, and M. Douglass 'Uneven Development, Rural urban Transformation, and Regional Development Alternatives in Asia', paper presented at The Seminar on Rural urban Transformation And Regional Development Planning, 1978, Oct. 31-Nov. 10. Nagoya, Japan.

17. Richardson *Op. Cit.*, foot note 12.

Table 1 : Metropolitan Asia: Population Size, Growth Rates, Urban Share and Slum Areas

Country	City	Year	Population	Growth Rate %	As % to Total Urban Population	Slum/Squatter Households as % Total Households	
Southeast Asia							
Indonesia	Jakarta	1960	2900853	5.12	23.41 (1970)	1961	25
		1970	4778840			1978	26
Malaysia	Kuala Lumpur	1961	400000	6.93	30.97 (1971)	1968	30
		1971	782000			1973	35
Philippines	Metro Manila	1960	2119000	4.10	27.05 (1971)	1968	33
		1970	3159429			1972	35
Thailand	Bangkok & Thonburi	1970	3051000	6.68	67.00 (1970)	1976	30
		1976	4496290				
South Asia							
India	Bombay	1961	4152056	3.70	5.47 —	1967	25
		1971	5970575			1971	45
	Calcutta	1961	4404703	4.79	6.45 —	1961	33
		1971	7031382			1971	67
	Delhi & New Delhi	1961	2620953	4.44	3.71 —	1970	36
		1971	4048824				
Madras	1961	1729141	3.63	2.26 —			
	1971	2469449					
Sri Lanka	Colombo	1961	1192000	2.55	51.83 (1971)	1963	44
		1971	1470000				
Nepal	Kathmandu	1961	121019	2.20	32.56 (1971)	1961	22
		1971	150402				
Pakistan	Karachi	1971	3428000	7.04	29.57 (1975)	1968	21
		1975	4500000			1971	23
East Asia							
Korea	Seoul	1970	5525000	9.47	51.63 (1975)	1969	29
		1975	8684000				
Taiwan	Taipei	1970	1769568	2.92	19.85 (1975)	1966	25
		1975	2043318				

Source : Lo, *et al.*, 1978.

Most, if not all of the spectre of massive urbanward migration is, however, a view from a single metropolis. Urban areas in the periphery, especially small towns, are often growing at rates lower than natural population growth rates, indicating that they are net suppliers of migrants. As Table 2 shows, rural population growth rates in many cases higher than the growth rates of small towns. Table 3 confirms this view in the case of the Philippines by showing that net migration is either distributed toward the capital region of Southern Luzon or is primarily rural-rural towards the frontier zones.

The limited absorptive capacity of metropolitan areas— even at very high rates of growth— and the stagnation of rural towns marking a decline in local accessibility to urban functions and to off-farm employment has meant increasing rural densities and increasing demographic pressure on agricultural land (Table 4). The urban-industrial model, in taking attention away from agriculture, has exacerbated the problems of increasing rural densities. Rather than assisting an intensification of production, increases in output have largely been made through extensive expansion of agriculture into uplands, forest areas, and remaining frontier areas. The result had been the destruction of fragile ecological balances, increasing problems of soil erosion and desertification, and increasing human effort to maintain existing levels of production per area of land.¹⁸

The polarization of development in one or a few centres, besides being reflected in patterns of population redistribution, is most easily seen in terms of concentration of non-farm activities and in levels of per capita output. In Korea, for example, the share of total manufacturing employment accounted for by Seoul jumped from 23 to 30 percent between 1960 and 1975; its share of the national population increased from 10 to 20 percent. Manila registered 60 percent of all fixed assets in large-scale manufacturing in 1967; between 1964 and 1972, 48 percent of all public expenditures on infrastructure were made

18. In a survey conducted in the prosperous Central Plains of Thailand, small farmer were found to be incurring debt to buy fertilizer not to increase production but merely to continue producing at subsistence levels (Douglass, 1979).

Table 2 : Urban and Rural Population Distribution and Redistribution in Selected Asian Countries

	% Urban		Urban Growth rate 1970-75	Rural Growth rate 1970-75	Growth rate of lower order centers		% urban growth from migration 1970-75	% net migration absorbed by the capital city
	1970	1975			1960-70	1970-75		
Southeast Asia								
Indonesia	17.8	19.1	4.7	2.1	n.a.	39.5	28 (1971)	
Malaysia	27.3	28.7	4.7	1.9	2.0	36.0	28 (1957-70)	
Philippines	33.1	35.8	4.8	2.0	0.9	35.0	17 (1965-70)	
Thailand	14.8	16.4	5.3	2.6	2.0	41.9	n.a.	
South Asia								
India	19.2	21.4	3.8	1.6	1.9	31.5	n.a.	
Nepal	4.6	5.0	5.6	2.5	n.a.	34.4	n.a.	
Pakistan	15.9	17.0	5.3	2.7	n.a.	32.9	n.a.	
Sri Lanka	21.9	24.2	4.3	1.6	2.7	38.0	n.a.	
East Asia								
Korea	40.0	46.1	4.9	0.5	0.1	61.8	37 (1965-70)	
Taiwan	60.0	63.5	5.6	0.1	n.a.	41.2	38 (1971-75)	

Source : Lo, *et al.*, 1978.

Table 3 : Philippines : Regional Period Migration Rates, 1960-1970
(per thousand)

Region	In-Migration	Out-Migration	Net-Migration
More Urbanized	77.1	69.4	+7.7
Central Luzon	47.3	66.7	-19.5
Southern Luzon	151.4	33.2	+118.2
Western Visayas	22.5	83.3	-60.8
Central Visayas	38.5	130.7	-92.2
Less Urbanized	34.4	87.3	-52.9
Ilocos	38.3	93.8	-55.5
Bicol	37.0	67.5	-30.5
Eastern Visayas	28.5	106.7	-78.2
Frontier	103.9	44.2	-59.7
Cagayan	56.6	41.0	+15.6
Western			
Mindanao	76.6	45.5	+31.1
Northern			
Mindanao	106.9	49.2	+57.7
Southern			
Mindanao	145.7	40.0	+105.7
Philippines	80.8	80.0	0.0

Note : The base population is the average population during the decade.

Source : E. M. Pernia, "Urbanization in the Philippines : Implications for Population Distribution Policy" in ICP, *The Dynamics of Migration* (Washington, D.C. ; Smithsonian Institute, 1976), pp. 77-132.

Table 4 : Rural Densities and Land Concentration, Selected Asian Countries.

	Population Density (Persons/Km ²) 1976		Rural Population per Km ² Arable Land 1975		Agricultural Land/Worker		Annual Rate of Change		Gini Coefficient of Land Concentration	
			Year	Year	Year	Year	Year	Year	Year	Year
Southeast Asia										
Indonesia	71.1	1055	1963	1970	1.04	0.99	-0.70	1960	1974	.47
Malaysia	37.3	192	1963	1970	1.88	1.76	-0.94	1960	1974	.57
Philippines	144.3	344	1963	1970	1.55	1.59	-0.80	1960	1974	.44
Thailand	84.8	314	1963	1970	1.12	1.04	-1.05	1960	1974	.54
South Asia										
Bangladesh	560.9	n.a.	1963	1970	0.66	0.63	-0.66	1960	1974	.60
India	185.6	312	1963	1970	1.26	1.22	-0.46	1960	1974	.47
Pakistan	90.0	478	1963	1970	1.95	1.88	-0.52	1960	1974	.59
Sri Lanka	209.3	571	1963	1970	1.20	1.14	-0.73	1960	1974	.63
East Asia										
Korea	363.1	882	1963	1970	0.38	0.39	0.05	1960	1974	.32
Taiwan	452.7	634	1963	1970	0.59	0.60	0.20	1960	1974	.32

Source: Lo et al., 1978.

in the two regions containing and surrounding Manila. Bangkok and its surrounding Central Region increased their share of GDP from 52 to 60 percent between 1960 and 1970. The three metropolitan areas of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras accounted for 60 percent of total value added in manufacturing, 1969-70. Kuala Lumpur, a non primate city in early post-colonial years when Singapore was part of the Malaysian state, had the highest GDP per capita in the nation and, along with its surrounding State of Selangor, accounted for 36 percent of the GDP in manufacturing in 1975. And so it goes.

In line with the characterization of regional planning doctrine sketched in Part I, many regional planners would be content to stop the analysis here, the point at which the problem and the solutions appear primarily in spatial terms. The problem would be how to reverse trends of polarized development; the solutions could easily be couched in terms of decentralization of industry and urban functions from the centre into the periphery-growth poles. But a closer look at the data reveals the embarrassing issues. How would a spatial development address the contradiction of increasing demographic pressure on land occurring simultaneously with increasing concentration of land ownership as shown by the Gini Coefficients in Table 4 ? Of increasing income inequality in the face of increasing per capita GDP (Table 5) ? How would a regional development concept address the findings that inequalities are not only urban-rural, core-periphery but also by income class within rural areas (Table 6) ? Can an urban-oriented policy of polarization reversal also work to absorb small farmers cum landless labourers at a pace to reverse the direction of their declining real wages (Table 7) ? How would a spatial development policy internalize the task of producing and distributing basic goods and services and thereby reversing the observed decline in welfare to below life-sustaining levels (Table 8) ?

The answers to these questions require a rethinking about the nature of development processes themselves, especially with regard to the interrelationships between a spatial polarization of development and emerging class formations in both the city and country. The basic proposition in this regard is that these are mutually facilitating trans-

formations. The forces which yield increasing political and economic power to national and international core areas require a dissolution of system of reciprocity and territorially organized sources of social accounting in the periphery in order to accelerate transformations of production for use to production for exchange, to generate specialization and therefore surpluses which can be transferred to the metropolis and abroad, and to generate supplies of (cheap) labour for urban production.

Table 5 : Income Inequality and Per Capita GNP,
Selected Asian Countries

	Year	Gini Coefficient	Real Per Capita GNP (SUS, Base year 1970)	Growth Rate Per Capita GNP 1965-74
Southeast Asia				
Indonesia	1964/65	.35	75	4.1
	1971	.46	83	
Malaysia	1957/58	.53	231	3.8
	1970	.51	380	
Philippines	1965	.50	185	2.7
	1971	.49	216	
Thailand	1962/63	.41	144	4.3
	1971/73	.50	212	
South Asia				
Bangladesh	1966	.34	77	-1.9
	1974	.44	66	
India	1961/62	.41	95	
	1968/69	.43	102	
Pakistan	1968	.34	100	2.5
	1970	.33	100	
Sri Lanka	1968	.38	99	2.0
	1973	.35	118	
East Asia				
Korea	1970	.37	250	8.7
	1975	.41	373	
Taiwan	1964	.33	288	6.9
	1975	.30	600	

Source: Lo, *et al.*, 1978.

Table 6 : Rural Income Distribution by Size Class and Percent of Urban Income, Selected Asian Countries

		Rural Income as %					Urban Income (c. 1970)
		Lowest 20%	Lowest 40%	Middle 40-60%	Highest 20%	Highest 5%	
Southeast Asia							
Indonesia	1964/65	7.7	20.1	16.5	40.5	n. a.	75.2
	1969/70	8.7	21.3	16.6	39.8	n. a.	70.0
Malaysia	1957	7.2	19.1	16.2	42.2	16.9	55.9
	1970	4.3	13.5	14.1	51.2	24.5	46.0
Philippines	1961	5.3	15.9	14.8	47.4	20.5	48.0
	1971	4.3	13.1	13.7	51.5	22.9	
Thailand	1962/63	6.2	14.9	13.1	50.9	21.8	42.5
	1970	5.6	14.3	13.3	51.1	22.0	40.7
South Asia							
Bangladesh	1963/64	7.8	19.2	15.5	43.1	17.2	
	1968/69	10.4	23.6	16.6	37.0	13.1	
India	1964/65	7.5	19.3	15.4	44.6	21.9	50.0
	1970/71	6.4	17.1	15.1	46.6	n. a.	
Pakistan	1963/64	6.8	18.0	16.5	43.0	17.0	66.0
Sri Lanka	1963	3.7	12.5	14.1	51.0	21.7	57.0
	1973	5.6	17.1	16.5	43.0	16.5	
East Asia							
Korea*	1970	9.2	23.5	18.8	32.9	n. a.	67.1
	1975	4.4	14.6	16.7	43.4	n. a.	78.9
Taiwan*	1966	7.9	20.2	16.3	40.8	n. a.	71.1
	1973	9.4	23.1	17.5	26.4	n. a.	76.1

* Farm income

Source : Lo, et al., 1978.

10000.127

Table 7 : Index of Real Wages of Rural Labourers in Selected Asian Countries

	Southeast Asia			South Asia				East Asia		
	Malaysia	Philippines	Thailand	Bangladesh	India	Punjab	Sri Lanka	Korea	Taiwan	
					Uttar Pradesh	Haryana				
1960	—	100	—	93	100	103	98	90	—	
1961	—	95	—	102	95	—	99	90	95	
1962	—	92	—	96	101	118	98	92	101	
1963	—	93	—	106	88	118	99	95	96	
1964	—	82	—	120	88	—	98	102	95	
1965	—	79	100	100	101	100	100	100	100	
1966	100	81	100	86	94	127	99	153	102	
1967	96	84	100	86	98	99	98	166	105	
1968	99	82	—	92	121	115	107	185	119	
1969	101	75	—	100	116	138	150	200	142	
1970	100	66	—	101	121	149	96	215	147	
1971	95	61	—	—	—	149	96	227	157	
1972	93	59	100	72	118	136	110	235	164	
1973	91	50	—	71	100	—	93	—	—	
1974	—	40	(100)	64	—	—	—	—	—	

Source: Lo, et al., 1978.

Table 8 : Poverty and Nutrition, Selected Asian Countries

	% Total Population with Income below Poverty Line ¹	Rural Poor as % Rural Population ²	Per capita Daily Energy Supplies as % Nutritional Requirement 1967-71 1972-74	
Southeast Asia				
Indonesia	55	62*	91	94
Malaysia	40	45	112	114
Philippines	57	64	85	85
Thailand	44	40**	103	104
South Asia				
Bangladesh	58	94	84	84
India	67	48	92	89
Pakistan	58	74	93	92
Sri Lanka	64	30	98	n. a.
East Asia				
Japan	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.
Korea	10	n. a.	115	117
Taiwan	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.

* Java only

** Central Region Rural only

1. World Bank estimates figures for Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Korea are for 1975 and are based on income necessary to purchase nutritionally adequate diets. All other figures are for 1969 at \$US75 per capita.
2. Rural poverty (per annum) is defined for the different countries as follows: Bangladesh-based on a food bundle of 2,000 calories and 45gm. of protein; India— Rs. 369; Indonesia— Rp. 16,500. Based on a minimum daily food intake of 2,150 calories and 50gm. of protein; Malaysia (West)— M\$300; Pakistan— Rs. 250 (at constant 1959/1960 price); Philippines— based on a food threshold for a family of six, P3,000; Thailand— based total household income per person, Baht 1,725. The figures refer to the following years: 1973/1974, Bangladesh; 1970/1971, India; 1969, Indonesia; 1970, Malaysia (West); 1971, Philippines; and 1968/69, Thailand.

Source: Lo, *et al.*, 1978.

At the same time, class formations characterized by asset transfers from peasants to big farmers, landlords and small town creditors, and resulting in a division between a capital-losing and a capital-accumulating class have been dependent upon and facilitated by legitimization given from the centre to rural elites. National laws and regulatory devices sanction the usurpation of productive resources once held in communal trust and selectively work through rural development programmes, cheap credit supplies, and publicly created rural capital to accrue advantage to these elites.

As national integration proceeds, the generation of cheap labour supplies in the countryside bridges with unskilled labour pools in the city to form a lower circuit of seasonal and permanent migrant workers living at or below subsistence wages. The benefits of increasing per capita output accrue to an upper circuit of rural and urban elites; although life in the metropolis may appear to be better for those in the lower circuit, this may be because real incomes available to them in the rural areas are sinking and not because their real urban incomes are making noticeable gains.¹⁹

The more difficult proposition to argue is that a solution to these transformations toward increasing unequal development requires the restructuring of a territorial basis for political and economic relations. The difficulty arises from several sources, as Stohr has argued in his discussion of a change from a centre-down growth-led development paradigm to a participatory non-deterministic development from below, one apparent difficulty is that :

Development "from below" ... means defining a diversity of structural objectives and transition paths— not determined by the possibility and necessity of world-wide commodity and factor interactions, but rather by the totality of the regionally available resource endowment, of historically grown social structures, the

19. M. Douglass, "Regional Development for Rural Development: the case of the Central Plains of Thailand," in W. Stohr and D. R. F. Taylor (eds.), *Development from Above or Below? A Radical Re-appraisal of spatial planning in Developing countries* (London: Wiley, 1979); Lo, *et. al.*, *op. cit.*, foot note 16.

value system and objectives of the respective regional and national communities.²⁰

Thus in suggesting the necessity for a more equal development there exists a logical contradiction in assigning a normative basis other than imputing a positive value to participation itself—for such a development. The call for self-reliance, basic needs full employment and poverty eradication as the “new” meaning of development must address and resolve this contradiction.

A second difficulty is the lack of resolution over the means and the methods for creating a territorial solution to unequal development. To some this lack of consensus is part of the nature of a “paradigm shift” which has reached a point of rejection of received doctrine but is struggling in an unchartered frontier of theory and in a vacuum of experience to formulate an alternative²¹ or “another” development.²² In particular, a confusion has emerged over the concepts of “regional closure” and “planning from below”, a confusion which is profoundly related to an important debate over territorial disengagement versus continued and perhaps even accelerated integration of the periphery into its own national core and into a world system.

This second difficulty leads to the third which is that territorial solutions have historically failed in most cases to generate social solutions. Thirty years or more of national independence has witnessed few – but important exception, to the more general transformations toward increasing social inequalities. This is the critical issue concerning proposals to create greater regional self-reliance and control over decisions made in the public realm through policies of regional closure. If national independence has primarily meant a passing of the sceptre from a colonial power to a metropolitan or even a rural elite, can a devolution of power from centre to periphery be expected to be any different in nature? For several reasons, the answer to this question is a mixed one and is a central issue in the

20. W. Stohr, “Development from Below ; the Bottom-up and periphery Inward Development Paradigm” (1978, Draft).

21. Friedmann and Weaver, *op. cit.*, foot note 10.

22. *Development Dialogue*, “What Now ; the 1975 Dag Hammarskjöld Report”, Vol. 1 (1975) .

argument for an agropolitan development to be taken up in Part III below, which also addresses both of the aforementioned difficulties in designing a regional development alternative in Asia.

III. An Agropolitan Alternative

The point of departure in initiating discussion on an alternative regional development is to draw the distinction between a spatial and a territorial development concept. Spatial development has generally been defined in terms of measured progress toward achieving desired distributions of specific among sub-national regions via processes of urbanization and hierarchical diffusion. The identified functions are primarily economic, although for "equity" purposes the lower end of the urban hierarchy is sometimes designated to act as a set of convenient, well-distributed places for the allocation of welfare services. Administrative and political boundaries are viewed as noisome interference to the nodal geometry of space.²³

A territorial development concept contrasts with the spatial one in at least two ways. First, it is more concerned with the development of specific areas than with urban systems. As such, it calls for explicit consideration of events in both rural and urban sectors of the area. Second, it is also explicitly used to indicate a concern for political as well as economic functions. The logic of spatial relationships becomes one component informing rather than the principal constituent giving life to the regional concept. The agropolitan concept outlined below is one designed for a territorial development.²⁴

The design for an agropolitan development begins by taking account of specific prevailing conditions in many Asian countries: low levels of urbanization, often less than 25 percent (Table 2);²⁵ high and rising rural

23. Richardson, *op. cit.*, foot note 12.

24. Friedmann and Weaver, *op. cit.*, foot note 10, p. 360, argue that a territorial framework is one which arises at the intersection of three (cultural, political and economic) abstract spaces, each with its own attributes and describing a different dimension of communal life."

25. Actual levels of urbanization are, of course, sensitive to the definitions used: in the Philippines and Korea urban areas often cover large areas in agriculture which, in other countries, are often considered to be rural.

densities, which in densely settled agricultural areas are in excess of 200 people per square kilometre (Table 4);²⁶ a settlement pattern of clustered villages and towns, few of which are of a size to qualify as counter-magnets or intermediate size cities; and widespread poverty and physical deprivation. Extreme centralization of political power and high levels of interaction in a global capitalist system reaching deeply into rural areas were also included as prevailing conditions forming basic elements of the problem of unequal development.

In incorporating these prevailing conditions in both their positive and negative dimensions, the agropolitan framework was constructed for the task of replacing the top-down model of regional development—linked to the strategy of accelerated industrialization—with a regional development allied with a participatory, accelerated rural development strategy. The practical problems concerned:

.... how to engage in the development process the millions of rural households dispersed throughout the countryside, each a residential and production unit simultaneously; how to coordinate “sectoral” development in rural areas to achieve the broad purposes of (rural development); how to define, as a basis for accelerated rural development, spatial units larger than a single village; and how to organize on a territorial basis the new planning and development functions.²⁷

That is, if “trickling down” mechanisms cannot be expected to work, if atomized households cannot serve as the basic units for the organization of an accelerated rural development, the problem concerning the scale of organization was seen as a critical issue in designing a regional development strategy.

Throughout Asia the typical response has been to create village-level development programmes; yet along with the capitalist penetration into village production, the bases of communal life especially in the richer agricultural regions—have been eroded.²⁸ In most areas villages as

26. Densities which are higher than those of suburban areas in the United States, Friedmann and Douglass, *op. cit.*, foot note 15, p. 24.

27. Friedmann and Douglass, *op. cit.* 15.

28. Scott, *op. cit.*, foot Note 7.

'communities' have largely become a myth. If the fragmented groups, representing emerging class as well as other interests within the village, were to be able to reach out and join with similar groups elsewhere on a scale which assisted the accumulation of their own social power to effectively bargain for the uses of resources and control over production, a larger territorial unit would be required.

In most cases, the national scale is too large for these purposes. Not only is the enlarged national space more easily spanned by and organized for the benefit of elites, systems of centrally-determined techno-bureaucratic forms of planning for and implementation in the periphery likely to be replicated. Local conditions are unlikely to be fully understood, and the essential nature of development as a learning process dependent upon combining the richness of locally derived ways of knowing with more abstract understanding of "science-based" knowledge would be missed.²⁹ Perhaps most importantly, just as the less mobile poor and disenfranchised are unlikely to gather countervailing power against urban and rural elites, there would be no effective mechanism for the periphery to stem the "backwash," the "leakages" or the flows of capital to the national core and abroad. There would be no way to effect what Friedmann has called the fundamental concern of regional planning :

..... to achieve a better integration of spatially organized economies on a basis of interdependence (and reciprocity) rather than dependence (and exploitation).³⁰

The search for an appropriate scale of a territorial development is thus a simultaneous search for an organizing framework designed to overcome the mutually reinforcing interplay between spatial and social inequalities in access to the means and the benefits of development.

The advocacy for the formation of "agropolitan districts" as basic units for a territorial development is based on these considerations.

29. Y. Hayami and V. Ruttan, *Agricultural Development : An International Perspective* (London : Johns Hopkins, 1971); J. Friedmann, *Reinventing America* (New York : Doubleday, 1973).

30. J. Friedmann, "Regional Development planning. The Progress of a Decade" in J. Friedmann and W. Alonso (eds.) *Regional Policy : Reading in Theory and Applications* (Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, 1975).

The elements to be included in the designs of these districts are both rural and urban, but instead of bringing rural people to the metropolis through exclusive investment in large-scale (capital intensive) industry, investments would be made in rural districts in which urban elements are introduced and adapted. Existing small towns would be used to facilitate the formation of agropolitan districts. In physical terms, the rural-urban formations would be expected to be set on a scale large enough to encourage a diversification of local economic activity—especially for the production of basic wage goods, agro-industry expansion, and inexpensive technologies—but small enough to provide easy access to political and economic functions many of which would be located in the principal town :

In purely formal terms, agropolitan districts might be defined as rural areas that have an effective population density of at least 200 per square kilometer. A town of 10 to 25 thousand inhabitants would normally be found within the district, and district boundaries would be defined by a 'commuting' radius of (approximately one hours travel time by commonly available modes of transportation). Such dimensions would yield an overall size of population ranging from 50 to 150 thousand, of whom a majority would initially be engaged in farming.³¹

The geometry is not meant to be a strict one. The densities are observed facts and represent a latent potential for the growth of urban-like functions—the latency being a product of the transformation to production based on "comparative advantage" leading to extreme specialization in primary cash-crop exports, the ability of metropolitan and foreign manufactured goods to successfully drive out local non-farm production, to poverty itself which does not raise demand for central place functions, and to transfer of surpluses from the periphery to the metropolis preventing local capital formation for local development. Depending upon actual effective densities and commuting range, the size of the population within the district may possibly be greater than that suggested above. Given findings which suggest that the impact of urban-based development impulses—innovations, multipliers, employment, service provisions—are unlikely to extend beyond commu-

31. Friedmann and Douglass, *op. cit.*, foot note 15, p. 43.

ting thresholds,³² the emphasis on setting district boundaries within the commuting range for the centre would appear to be the indispensable principle.³³ Boundaries are also likely to be flexible with regard to linguistic and religious considerations, ecological complementarities, and existing patterns of interaction with traditional market towns.³⁴

More important to the task of initiating an agropolitan development than the exact calibration of district boundaries is the treatment of each district as a single territorial unit which symbiotically integrates urban with rural development and which has substantial political endowment for self-government. This means a transformation of the essentially parasitic relations of both the state and the city with the rural periphery toward facilitative and supportive efforts for an accelerated rural development at a scale which allows for a local accounting of the progress of this development.

This basic outline of the concept begins to insist upon answers to questions not raised by the top-down accelerated industrialization model. What is the role of the state? Should regional integration be pursued or halted? How is a participatory rural development to be financed? How can an agropolitan development avoid the confusion between equal spatial and equal social development? Is a scale based on access principles adequate for the stated economic development purposes? In a multi-public, non-deterministic development are there identifiable objectives to act as guidelines for action taken in the public realm? Because of the difficulties discussed earlier, there are no easy

32. Moseley, *op. cit.*, foot note 10.

33. In rural Thailand, for example, it was found that landless workers were reluctant to go beyond a one or two hour journey for either employment or health services. M. Douglass, "Regional Development for rural Development: the case of the Central Plains of Thailand" in W. Stohr and D. R. F. Taylor, (eds.), *Development from Above or Below? A Radical Reappraisal of Spatial Planning in Developing Countries* (London: Wiley, 1979).

34. D. R. F. Taylor "Spatial Organization and Rural Development," in M. Fry (ed.) *Freedom and Change* (New York: McClelland and Stewart, 1975).

answers to these questions. A significant point might be, however, that they are being raised at all within the domain of regional development planning. The following responses to these questions are given in this spirit— not necessarily to drive definitive answers but to push forward a dialogue on the topics themselves.

III. 1. Centre-Agropolitan District Relations

What would be the role of the central government in an agropolitan development ? It has already been stated that it would be to facilitate an accelerated rural development, but what does this mean in practice ? In part it means an end to many practices now being followed : command planning from the metropolis, technical solutions to social and political problems, the setting of terms of trade against agriculture, the singular pursuit of import-substitution industrialization, creating institutional arrangements ensuring that only rural elites qualify for development assistance, and efforts directed at control over development of the periphery.³⁵

This does not mean, however, an elimination of centralized authority. An agropolitan development requires a national commitment to change current patterns away from those of dependence upon external demand, external technology, external advice, external supplies of basic commodities and unequal international relations toward a more inward-looking, self-sustaining development. This would be an unlikely possibility if left to the powers of small districts cum "mini-nations." There would also undoubtedly be a continuation of projects involving more than one district and, similarly, transfers between districts would require higher offices to facilitate them. In particular, a

35. In concurrence with the theme that development allocations follow the spatial distribution of political power, it is revealing to note that much of the official expenditures for Rural development in the periphery are directed to areas such as Mindanao in the Philippines or the extreme Northeast of Thailand where anti-government movements are concentrated. As stated, these development efforts are primarily ones to gain control rather than to develop the periphery. G. A. Hoeger, *The politics of Underdevelopment* (London : Macmillan, 1974)

source of appeal to a national authority may be necessary to prevent excesses in the uses of sub-national territorial power such as the hoarding of grain surpluses in one area while neighboring areas experience drought and famine - a not unheard of occurrence in certain federated nations of South Asia.

Just as the centre takes on the role of monitoring and redirecting external and internal territorial relations, it also is a source for legitimizing the accumulation of power by those who have been yielding it to rural and urban elites. Instead of passing legislation to ban or effectively prevent cooperative action, unionization or even the gathering of large crowds of the landless, the marginal farmer and the urban unskilled worker as is the general case now, legislation would be passed that would apply to every district to guarantee rights to assembly, access to public discourse, the formation of political interest groups and to counter tendencies toward either territorial or class tyrannies.

But given that the state itself has generally worked to serve particular class interests, there has to be simultaneous efforts to effectively redistribute the economic bases of power before there can be any expectation that the uses of power in the name of the state would work toward the type of development being advocated here. Land reform would be quintessential in most, but not all, districts.³⁶ In lieu of land reform, or where land reform itself is inadequate to the task of redistributing assets to the landless because of their sheer numbers in relation to land resources control over rural assets created through public works programmes may be delegated to them.³⁷

To ask about the role of the centre is also to ask about the type of powers to be given to agropolitan governments. They would

36. In the Northeast Region of Thailand where 40 percent of the national population lives, for example, there is virtually no tenancy or landlessness.

37. K. Griffin and A. K. Ghose, "Growth Impoverishment in the Rural Areas of Asia," paper presented at the Seminar on Rural-Urban Transformation and Regional Development Planning, 1978, 31 Oct.-10 Nov. : Nagoya, Japan.

necessarily include control over local taxes and public expenditures, authority to devise and carry out development programmes, significant power to affect the territorial and social distribution of capital held by banks and other financial institutions, controls to prevent if not eliminate such debilitating forms of control over production as absentee landlordism. Most, but not all, of these powers would fall under the category of preventing "leakages" out of the districts. As with the powers given to the central government, there would also have to be local juridical systems to maintain equal access to the bases of social power. Finally, there would have to be local control over the uses of productive resources and the marketing of surpluses to ensure both the production of basic goods and services and a retention of required levels of supplies within the district. This could be accomplished either by local pricing policies or outright public ownership of the means of production.

The details of the division of power between the centre and the agropolitan governments would have to be worked out in practice; the essence of the argument is that the districts be able to effectively bargain with external powers such as the central government over the uses and allocation of productive resources for the purposes of local development.³⁸ Further, this bargaining power must be evenly shared within the districts as well.

III. 2. Regional Closure and Planning from Below

The issue of centre-periphery division of power leads to an emerging debate among regional development theorists: should further integration into a global capitalist order be pursued or halted? The debate has focused on the term "regional closure"³⁹ The term itself, however, has

38. In China, for example, the centre enters into contractual arrangements with the *hsien* (communes) which specify fixed levels of transfers of surpluses to the centre over ten-year periods. The centre is not allowed to take surpluses in times when they fall below levels required by the *hsien* and, equally important, surpluses produced above the levels agreed upon are to be retained by the *hsien* for their own investment.

39. Stohr, *op. cit.*, foot note 20; Friedmann and Weaver, *op. cit.*, foot note 10.

not been clearly defined, especially when qualified as "selective" regional closure. If it means greater power at local levels to bargain over the terms of integration into the larger world order, then there is no disagreement with the concept here. But if it is used as the word itself implies - to close off regions from interaction with external markets, higher levels of economic and political organization and self-determined access to technological innovations - then the concept is rejected. Perhaps the problem is a semantical one, but the agreement is with Uphoff and Esman who, in their study of local organization in rural Asia, found that local autonomy in isolation provides little leverage for development.⁴⁰

A unidirection "from below" development is likely to face similar limitations. Multiple channels and a high frequency of both top-down and from-below development impulses are more conducive to an accelerated rural development than either a continuation of top-down or its replacement with one way from below commands. In considering both regional closure and from-below development concepts the position taken here is that integration of territorial units into broader political and economic spaces has specific advantages; the question is on whose terms and for what purposes this integration is to proceed.

III. 3. Toward an Equal Development

Some of the difficulties in setting forth a list of the purposes for further integration under an agropolitan development have been mentioned above. The purposes of accelerating rural development, of reaching and engaging rural households as protagonists in this development, of managing and maintaining ecological balances and of retaining surpluses for local development financing from the practical demands of the design for an agropolitan development, but they should not be confused with the over-riding normative objective of achieving a more equal development process. Neither should the call for the satisfaction of limited and specific human needs be separated from this essential concern over increasing the capacity of people to determine the course of social transformations called development. Seen in this perspective, the replacement of the GNP standard with a social accounting of production capable of providing

40. N. Uphoff, and M. J. Esman, *Local Organisation for Rural Development in Asia* (Cornell University, 1974).

goods and services other than those produced according to relative exchange values should be taken to mean that issues such as basic needs are to be resolved through public discourse, reciprocal arrangements, and a shared morality - all of which are made possible and acceptable by an equalized access to sources of political and economic power themselves. This is the overriding purpose of the territorial development strategy advocated here.

III. 4. Financing an alternative development

The question of financing an agropolitan development has several dimensions. First is the fact that high levels of financial resources are currently being transferred out of rural regions. In Thailand, for example, rice premiums collected in the metropolis reduce the domestic price of rice to one half of the international price; receipts at the farm gate are of course less than this, and they are further reduced by rents close to 50 percent of production going to landlords, one-quarter or more of whom may live outside of the district. In this same country commercial banks provide less than one percent of their total deposits for agricultural purposes even though 65 percent of all branch offices are located in rural regions. On another plane, the typical policies to induce transnational firms to locate in Third World countries usually include tax holidays and the construction of protected export zones which accrue few financial benefits for local development but do inhibit local production of the same goods and accrue substantial profits to foreign firms. Most of these policies would be abandoned and public policy would be used to limit if not reverse the direction of the transfers.

Secondly, there is the question of appropriate technologies and their costs, seasonally underutilized manpower in rural areas, and the inefficiency of rural production under current land distribution patterns. Rural development in the form of expensive showcase land consolidation projects using foreign experts and having virtually no impact on either general levels of production or on the distribution of productive resources would have to be abandoned in favor of simple and labour-intensive technological changes which use local labour and local resources. In addition, land redistribution toward a small farm "unimodal" production basis would be likely to lead to increased output per unit

of land as small farmers apply more labour and have higher incentives to produce more per hectare than do large farmers.⁴¹ Incentive and labour-intensive technologies and the increased efficiency of small farm production would all serve to lower the financial costs of an accelerated rural development.

Finally, there is the long-held proposition that the rural poor are not sufficiently entrepreneurial: they do not save and are either incapable or uninterested in investing their own resources to increase production.⁴² The implications of this are also that the rich do invest more for the indirect purposes of local development. Although there is some truth to these arguments, an equally competing argument is that lack of assets, tenancy conditions and cruel survival choices either make capital formation impossible or make investment incentives too low to be worthwhile in face of the received returns. Conspicuous consumption and capital flight to Hong Kong also question the thesis that the rich are the true entrepreneurs of national or local development. The proposition, which will not be elaborated here, is that rural people, once given the security and the opportunity to rise out of immiserizing conditions and given the opportunity to receive a substantial return for the efforts will be able to save and will invest to improve even meagre resources.

III. 5. Territorial scale and production

The remaining question returns to the areal size of the agropolitan units suggested at the outset of Part III. In invoking an access principle rather than an economic efficiency criterion, is there any guarantee that the units can be made viable and can sustain the type of diversified economic structure being advertised for it? The response

41 B. Johnston and P. Kilby, *Agricultural and Structural Transformation Strategies in Late Developing Countries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975)

42. This is, of course, the underlying proposition of the econometric exercise which produced the World Bank's *Redistribution with Growth* which sought to calculate just how much might be redistributed to the poor without creating intolerable decline in per capita growth rates of production. H. B. Ghenerly, *Redistribution with Growth*, IBRD 1974.

to this is twofold : first, there does exist historical experience with diversified economic production managed within areas of the expected size of agropolitan districts; second, given the emphasis on the districts as sub-national units rather than as mini-nations, agropolitan units, while significantly more self-reliant and capable of producing basic-wage goods, would continue to specialize in certain commodities, and trade among districts and internationally would be expected to continue.

To elaborate on the first point, Stohr has argued that the existence of small, viable self-reliant territories has been perhaps as common historically as larger territories with economic activities concentrated in large urban centres.⁴³ In contemporary China the ancient counties (*hsien*) which served historically as the basic administrative units of the country have been transformed into basic development units. Numbering more than 2000, each contains a city of between 5,000 to 20 000 and appears to have an average population of around 300 000 (Wu, 1978). These have been the primary units for rural industrialization programmes emphasizing medium and small scale light manufacturing. In Vietnam a similar transformation of basic administrative to production units has been promoted. The development districts number 252 in the North, and each contains a capital of between 5,000 to 10 000 and a hinterland population of between 100,000 to 200,000 people. The district capitals are to act as the centres for transactions between the state and the collectives and as the sites for major commercial, communications and transportation facilities. They are to act as the link between the national and the local economy, between manufacturing and agriculture, and between production and circulation.

Concerning the second point calling for a diversification of production on a local scale, the traditional export base model of regional growth simply does not work well in practice in the rural peripheries of Asia. Production on the elusive principle of comparative advantage has resulted in a type of over-specialization which witnesses large scale environmental destruction, a subjection of regional economies to powerful external shocks due to commodity price fluctuations - especially for pri-

43. Stohr, *op. cit.*, foot note 37.

poses of acting, regional development planning has not escaped a scrutiny which has left doubt as to whether it can be salvaged as a relevant branch of development planning. With the loss of the convenience of trying every other objective on the tail of the kite of soaring growth rates comes the embarrassing questions concerning the position of regional development doctrine on social inequality. With the question comes the admission that the doctrine has carefully avoided elbow-to-elbow contact with either the politics or the inequalities among classes of people directing the course of development.

After reviewing the ugly facts as they have been compiled for Asian countries; a case has been made for an alternative formulation of the "regional problem" in terms of social and political as well as spatial and economic questions. An agropolitan development framework has been suggested as an appropriate territorial development framework accounting for prevailing conditions of Asian countries. Its purposes and physical dimensions were sketched, followed by a brief discussion of issues related to both the logic and the normative basis of the concept. Reduced to a few words, an agropolitan development seeks to facilitate a participatory and more equal development which has as high priority the identification, production and equitable distribution of basic goods and services. This is to be accomplished by putting development on a territorial "agropolitan" basis through an assembly of policies to devolve substantial political authority to agropolitan districts, to accelerate rural development, to generate and retain local capital, to diversify production, and link rural and urban functions within single territorial units. In all of this the caveat remained that such a development could not proceed without simultaneous redistribution of productive assets from the richer to the poorer groups.

A temptation remains, perhaps, to dismiss the territorial argument in favor of a singular pursuit of redistributing the means of production to approach head on the issue of social inequalities. If the findings of research on rural development are to be listened to, however, this would be a mistake:

We found no successful case of rural development in the absence of both effective local organization and reasonably

widespread distribution of the ownership of assets.⁴⁷

To redistribute assets without also organizing for and giving attention to the difficult and complex tasks of increasing agricultural production of creating forums for public discourse, and creating social and physical networks to accelerate a rural development would defeat the purpose of the redistribution of assets itself.

Just as the problems of unequal development appear as a Gordian knot of economic, spatial, and political forces, so do the solutions. The question of where to begin has no easy answer. It will not be found, however, in theories or policies for "polarization reversal", for locating branch plants of corporate enterprises in the periphery, or for better coordination of central command systems in the field. It cannot be dismissed by "equity" or basic needs allocations channeled through rural service centres - even if they could reach the "target groups", which they rarely do.⁴⁸ It can only be found by addressing the more fundamental task of empowering people to make the transformations called development accountable to them, to make production benefit the producers and respond to their needs.

An agropolitan development in Asia ? Elements and possibilities exist. But before the alternative is agreed upon, the nature of the issue at hand is in need of consensus by regional development theorists. This is the first assignment; some doubt that it will be accepted :

So what will regional development theorists do after midnight, when the chips are down and we see the social implications of what they are doing ? will they continue unabashed in their old directions, or shall we see the emergence of a new kind of theory which takes social and political factors more into account ? Do they have

47. Uphoff and Esman, *op. cit.*, foot note 40.

48. The "target group" approach becomes fatuous and inoperable when the "groups" begin to account for more than half of the population (Table 8) as they do throughout Asia under even superficial income determinants of poverty.

the kind of political consciousness and the conviction to take up the challenge, to look anew at their problems and start thinking afresh ? For me these are the central issues for regional planning and I am by no means sure it is able to make the change.⁴⁹

Others disagree; the paradigm shift is happening. Now. It is the form of a re-assertion of territorial over functional modes of development planning.⁵⁰ In Asia, regional development planning is less than a decade old; the problems of unequal development are not. The regional development doctrine being advocated in Asia is essentially the same one being rejected in Latin America because it could not solve and was, in fact, abetting similar long-standing problems of unequal development. If this same course is to be avoided by Asian regional planners, a careful reappraisal is in order. Whether this increases the momentum toward an agropolitan-like territorial development concept cannot at this point be foreseen. First the reappraisal itself must begin.



49. Dunham, *op cit.*, foot note 17, p. 19.

50. Friedmann and Weaver, *op. cit.*, foot note 10.