Gakarara - A Study in the Development of Underdevelopment

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PREFACE

The Disaster Research Unit was formed in December 1973 and is a research group within the Project Planning Centre for Developing Countries at the University of Bradford. Unit members are:

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This series of Occasional Papers will contain the results of the Unit's work. An Index of the Occasional Papers is included on the inside back cover.

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Despite a growing awareness about the problem of underdevelopment the problem still grows. The Pearson Report (1969) presented some useful evidence of what was happening in the underdeveloped world between 1950 and 1967. 22 per cent of the world's population had an annual growth in income per capita of less than 1 per cent; 48 had one and two per cent and 30 per cent had a growth rate of 2 per cent or more. The industrialised countries were not standing still and their figures moved to 4.3 per cent annual growth in income per capita. As Pearson noted,

'By far the most important of the external conditions for growth is the opportunity to expand participation in world trade'. (1969, 45).

World trade did grow by 6.9 per cent annually between 1953 and 1967 but the volume of exports from the underdeveloped countries rose by only 4.7 per cent and their share dropped from 27 per cent to 19 per cent without compensating increase in the home markets (Hellen, 1971).

The tension generated by such a situation wherein the underdeveloped countries experience both a revolution in rising expectations and a general inability to meet these expectations has produced an attitude of overt distrust towards the formulation of development policy. The rehearsals for a Third World War, staged in Vietnam, Angola, Mozambique and, more recently Chile, indicate that, despite altruistic mutterings, the developed world seeks to control and, therefore, to restrict development (Worsely, 1964; Buchanan, 1972). It is with such a confrontation in mind that the geography of development will be reviewed.

It is a truism that it is difficult, if not impossible, to make generalisations about underdevelopment without specifying the type of underdevelopment. Poverty is the sole common denominator of underdevelopment. However, as Hodder indicates, it is possible to describe
probable characteristics of underdevelopment (1973). These can be summarised as,

1. Low life expectancy at birth, high infant mortality rates, poor health through the incidence of endemic and epidemic disease and a generally low standard of education.
2. Low per capita output coupled with poverty and indebtedness.
3. The paramount importance of subsistence production for the majority of the population.
4. Non-diversified economies geared to primary production for export to developed areas; the primary production is often a single extractive industry or an agricultural monoculture.
5. The absence of a manufacturing industry and the predominance of a service sector demonstrating the dualistic nature of the economy.
6. Increasing rural-urban migration and the predominance of the primate city and the metropolitan areas which highlights rural-urban income disparities.
7. The narrowness of traditional markets and the control of entry into the international markets by the developed monopolies.
8. No large scale application of technology to agriculture or industry.

It is difficult to generalise about economic development without becoming a prisoner of economic theory. Myint clearly argues this when he writes,
'Beyond the common fact of poverty, it is rarely safe to make generalisations ... without specifying the type of underdeveloped country one is considering' (Myint, 1964, 14).

In fact, Myint suggests that conventional economic theory is likely to be out of focus, if not largely irrelevant, for what he considers to be the central problem of underdeveloped countries which is to initiate and accelerate take-off into sustained growth (1964). Many of the development variables have been discussed by Ginsberg and mapped in an atlas to indicate some commensurable components and to show the world pattern of distribution of these components by country (Ginsberg, 1960). In the same volume Berry performs a factor analysis on development variables to illustrate the impossibility of classifying or categorising underdevelopment; he demonstrates that while it may be true that underdeveloped countries are high on a demographic scale and low on the technological scales there is no clear break in the spectrum between the less developed and the more developed countries. Kates (1974) examines what he terms 'Development Approaches for the Environmentally Constrained' under the assumption that the factors of underdevelopment vary from place to place.

It is interesting to note the role of western science in this process of development. Initially, the abundant vegetation of the tropics was taken as an indication of boundless fertility but now the pessimistic view of the natural resources of the underdeveloped countries is well established. Of late, there has been a reaction which considers that the problem of natural resources is not that they are particularly rich or particularly poor, but quite simply that our knowledge, our western scientific knowledge is limited (Hodder, 1973). Few authors would suggest, however, that indigenous ethnoscientific knowledge was an important consideration which seems a serious omission in the light of
continuing underdevelopment.

The models of economic development that are employed by geographers tend to be derived from economists; these models generally eliminate all except the purely economic variables. The model that has attracted most attention is that of Rostow (1960). It is a conceptual model of development based upon descriptive classification. The base level, the traditional economy, is an age of limited technology, of pre-Newtonian science, in which a population is held in a static and hierarchical social structure. With the investment of social overhead capital and the formation of a new social and political elite, the second stage, the preconditions for take-off, are reached. Take-off occurs when economic growth is steady and sustained, when a rise in the productive investment and the development of a substantial manufacturing industry exists and when a new social and political framework emerges. The penultimate stage, the drive to maturity, is a stage in which growth is transmitted to all parts of the economy. Finally, there is an age of mass consumption when there is a shift in market emphasis from the durable to the consumer good, the formation of the welfare state and the search for international power.

Three major questions are immediately posed by such a model (Chorley and Haggett, 1967). First, is it possible to build such a model? The answer to this is a qualified 'yes' ... qualified because, although the search for pattern is acceptable, economic development is not explained by a few variables. Growth patterns vary too much between countries. Secondly, is the model a good model? Most economists would suggest that it is not because the crucial variable, the leading sectors, is not testable; there is no definition in the model of successive stages of development that admit identification (Cairncross, 1961). Thirdly, is it merely descriptive? Again, most critics of the model accept that it is
descriptive and argue that the logic and analytical content of the model are minimal. Despite these criticisms, the model has been adopted in geographical studies and mechanistically applied in the description and explanation of economic development.

Parallel to the Rostowian stages of growth is the concept of the development continuum (Hodder, 1973). Although such a concept holds that there need be no dichotomy between agricultural and industrial growth, it still accepts that economic growth per se is the panacea for development. Yet, as Connell indicates,

'Growth, as booming GNP, may merely result in an increased concentration of income in the hands of the urban minority, unmanageable migration to the cities, the growth of unemployment, modern sectors more closely linked with overseas countries than with their hinterlands and great rural-urban disparities'. (Connell, 1971, 259).

Growth it seems is not development. Growth has occurred widening the gap between rich and poor and strengthening the reality of economic dualism, a dualism that implies control of one section of the population by another, not a dualism of separate interests. Rowland (1973,12) described the effects of this dichotomy when he writes,

'Out of these conditions the losers emerge. Those in economic ghettos and the deprived areas, the dispossessed, the alienated, the no-chance people'.

A growing awareness among social scientists of the inapplicability of standard economic models to the study of development because they do not consider human involvement and consequences has resulted in a search for alternative theory. Much of what has appeared as new theory in the past few years is essentially neo-classical economics dressed in new verbiage. The central concept behind the new theory is that of modernisation. Lundquist (1972) states that there is no adequate definition of modernisation but that it implies a gradual transition from traditional to modern societies. Brookfield (1973) defines modernisa-
tion as a more total social process, a process of change towards those types of social, economic and political systems developed in Western Europe and North America. Deutsch (1953) suggests that some specific uniformities might be apparent in the modernisation process, namely,

1. The shift from subsistence to exchange economies.
2. Social mobilisation of rural populations in core areas.
3. The growth of towns and of social mobility within them and between rural areas.
4. The growth of basic communications networks linking rivers, towns and trade routes in a flow of transport and migration.
5. Differential accumulation and concentration of capital and skills.
6. The awakening of ethnic awareness and the emerging of the different awarenesses with political compulsion.

Slater (1973a, 1973b) has emphasised that the uncritical adoption of such concepts from the other social sciences has not produced a viable alternative framework for the geographical study of development. He argues that the adoption of modernisation theory has produced three modes of spatial analysis that are utilised in such a manner as to conceal the underlying assumptions and premises that have informed their content, structured their application to social reality and which represents their ideological bias. The three modes of analysis are,

i. SPATIAL DIFFERENTIATION,

ii. SPATIAL DIFFUSION,

iii. SPATIAL INTEGRATION.

Spatial differentiation is normally the starting point for geographic interpretation. Surrogate variables are used as indices of change and the data, handled by factor or principle components analysis, is then
mapped in pre destined spatial impress of the modernisation process. Ridell (1970) suggests,

'Modernisation is spatial diffusion process, assuming patterns of varying intensity and rate. Its origins are localised to specific regions or zones, indexing a contact situation, and patterns of change move like waves across the map and cascade down the urban hierarchy as they are funnelled along the transport system'.

According to Friedmann (1967) the third mode of analysis, spatial integration, is national development achieved through the political, social and economic integration of the effectively settled area of a nation. Slater (1973a) summarises these modes by saying that the first establishes the typical characteristics of development and reveals their spatial variation. The second mode is concerned with how these characteristics are allegedly diffused from the developed society and the third reveals how the characteristics described in the first and diffused according to the second are to be integrated into the underdeveloped areas.

These modes of analysis are derived from models in other social sciences particularly theories of dualism and modernisation. The pioneer of dualism was Boeke (1953) who in his research on Indonesia put forward the idea that there was a cleavage between an imported western social system and the indigenous culture. Frank (1969) treats a similar situation in terms of a metropolis-satellite syndrome arguing that

'Dualism is not only theoretically inadequate because it misrepresents and fails to analyse the capitalist system on the international and the local level but because it fails to adhere to the standards of holism, structuralism and historicity ... dualists contravene holism in explicitly setting up two wholes to confront a single social whole which they can not or will not see'.

Dualism is only adequately explained in terms of the expansion and penetration into these societies of mercantalist-capitalist system which, through control, creates monopolies and satellites at both the regional and local levels within the capitalist society, the society itself being
a satellite of the capitalist metropolis on the international level. Slater (1973b) neatly summarises these criticisms levelled against dualism when he says that it is a static and an ahistorical model that fails to analyse the crucial relationships between the two supposed sectors and that it neglects to analyse the origins and the persistence of inequalities in development. Similarly, the centre-periphery concept may be analysed and parallel conclusions drawn.

Modernisation theory is utilised in all these modes of analysis but especially with respect to spatial diffusion. In terms of spatial differentiation, the theory has influenced the choice of development variables; the second mode has been characterised as a modernisation diffusion; modernisation and spatial integration have similarly been linked analytically. Lerner (1958) argued that the transition from traditional society to a modern one implied the adaptation of western values and systems of organisation but Barrington Moore (1969) has indicated that modernisation does not have to follow a western route. In fact, Barrington Moore's argument illustrates the fact that modernisation theory gives no history to the undeveloped and this point is emphasised by Rodney (1972) when he writes,

'Several historians of Africa have pointed out that after surveying the developed areas of the continent in the 15th Century and those within Europe at the same date, the difference between the two is no way to Africa's discred'. (1972, 81).

It is this willingness to avoid the reality of development by adopting opaque theories of development that allows the creation of euphemisms to describe what is actually a process of underdevelopment. The literature of development studies has disguised the process of underdevelopment by describing the Third World as Developing, Less Developed and the LDCs: it assumes that underdevelopment is a static state not a dynamic negative condition.
If one considers the Taffe, Morill and Gould model (1963) which views the expansion of the transport network of Ghana and Nigeria as a process of spatial diffusion, one appreciates that development is defined essentially as the number of roads and railways. These transport networks, however, were built for the purpose of foreign enterprises and they did not, as Baran (1957) remarks, evolve into pulsing arteries or productive activities, they merely disintegrated the rural peasant economy. Adams (1970) raises a useful point when he argues that the same model also indicates the diffusion of alcoholism, prostitution, venereal disease and psychological disorder. Frank (1969) argues that throughout the history of capitalist development, the developed countries have always diffused to their dependent colonies the technology which serves the interests of the metropolitan powers, a factor which is often omitted in consideration of modernization.

Modernization theory suffers from an inability to appreciate the historical context of development and, therefore, it becomes ethnocentric. As the diffusion of the institutions, including values and skills, technology and capital is essentially what is considered as modernization, then the resultant dependency relationship between the developed and the underdeveloped nations must be stressed. Modernisation it seems is not development.

The situation described, at the start of this paper, the growing disparities between rich and poor nations and the inability of conventional western social science to explain this phenomenon, indicates that an alternative explanation must be sought. Baran (1957) has provided the most realistic explanation when he argues that underdevelopment is actually generated by capitalism. The metropolis-satellite system ensures the extension of the expropriation of surplus from international, national, regional and local levels. Far from promoting industrial
capitalism, this process has strengthened mercantile capitalism and, consequently, increases the dependency relationship between the developed and the underdeveloped. Frank emphasises this point when he writes,

'For the generation of structural undevelopment, more important still than the drain of economic surplus is the impregnation of the satellites' domestic economy with the same capitalistic structures and its fundamental contradictions'. (1969, 34).

These contradictions are the expropriation of the economic surplus from the masses because of the control of resources by the few and the polarisation of the metropole and the satellite with their inherent sectoral imbalances. The economic surplus expropriated from the peripheral satellites generates economic development in the metropolitan centres which appropriate that surplus. Such a process has been termed neocolonialism (cf. Amin, 1973) and highlights the contradiction that underdeveloped countries can make few realistic decisions about economic development despite political independence (Buchanan, 1972). Frank (1969) illustrates three of the contradictions observable in underdevelopment namely the contradiction of expropriation/appropriation of economic surplus, the contradiction of the metropolis/satellite polarisation and the consequent contradiction of continuity in change. This historical model developed by Frank is based on Baran's analysis (1957, 87).

Geographers have recognised that a resource is a social and technical appraisal; resources 'become' (Firey, 1960). Materials and people become natural and human resources only when there is the appropriate technology and social form to utilise them (Harvey, 1973). It is possible to argue, therefore, that because of the dependency relationship that exists between the developed and the underdeveloped world, the underdeveloped countries can be said to be resourceless when they are exploited by the developed world. This argument is not as tortuous as
it looks for a dependency relationship, particularly in terms of imported technology which restricts indigenous development, ultimately means that a society, irrespective of its scientific knowledge, is reliant upon the provider of technology; thus, for example, the multinationals are able to control development without apparently dealing in political machinations. This is the neocolonialism that underdeveloped countries know and fear. In fact, dependence is to be seen as the result of the historical development and contemporary structure of world capitalism to which the underdeveloped countries are subordinated and the economic, social, political and cultural policies generated by the resulting class structure, especially by the class interests of the dominant bourgeoisie. It is important to understand that dependence is not simply an 'external' relation between the underdeveloped countries and its world capitalist metropolis but equally an internal, an integral, condition of underdevelopment itself (Cockcroft, 1972). Continuing dependency can only increase the lack of basic resources in the underdeveloped world.

Marx's analysis of development identified that the expropriation of surplus value created by the producers allowed for industrialisation and the development of capitalism. (It is important to emphasise that Marx also argued that British colonialism, especially in India, was an indirect way of taxing the British people for the benefit of the British upper classes; ultimately it was Britain not only India, that was exploited by the ruling classes (Avineri, 1969). This argument emphasises the nature of dependency relationships.) Baran (1969) emphasises that this expropriation generated both development and underdevelopment and indicated that the non-realisation and unavailability of surplus for investment is due to the very structure of capitalism. Rodney (1972) and Amin (1973) have reviewed the process of underdevelopment in Africa
against this background. Such a background, the recognition of a
dynamic, negative process of underdevelopment, is the interpretation of
my study in Gakarara. Development itself is defined as an ecological
process in which a society increases jointly its capacity for dealing
with the environment. This capacity for dealing with the environment
is dependent on the extent to which it understands the laws of nature
(science), on the extent to which it puts the understanding into prac-
tice (technology) and on the manner in which the society is organised
(Rodney 1972, 10).

The actuality of the development of underdevelopment is best
illustrated by a case study. This short discussion describes the
results of fieldwork carried out, during 1972, in a Kikuyu area of
Kenya and it attempts to place the research findings within a broader
economic context. Basic data was gathered at household level, assumed
to be centred around the married male, because this was the basic unit
of socio-economic organisation.

Research was carried out in the village of Gakarara, a village
in classic ridge-valley Kikuyu country (Figures 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3). The
village lies between 5000 and 5500 feet and, although the environmental
potential of the area is great, the village economy is regressing from
a cash crop to a subsistence base. At first, it seems that one could
easily explain this phenomenon by stressing that the village has a site
that is too low for adequate tea production and too high for adequate
coffee production. Such an incisive generalisation is, however, illusory,
for the very agricultural subsistence economy to which the village re-
turned is actually decreasing in terms of both output and value. The
process of economic degradation is paralleled by a process of ecological
degeneration, namely soil erosion. The process thus becomes a downward
spiral in which the very resource base, the soil, is destroyed. To give
a clearer demonstration of this process; the economy of the village is discussed more fully.

The volcanic bedrock underlying much of Kikuyu country provides a rich soil, Kikuyu Chocolate Loam, which receives an adequate rainfall spread over two seasons within one calendar year. Although some slopes exceed 15 degrees, most of the land is cultivable. In areas above and below Gakarara intensive cash cropping occurs for tea and coffee respectively. An examination of the land tenure pattern reveals that both the traditional and the current land divisions are models of spatial efficiency. Similarly, the allocation of different crops to different slope angles and the emphasis of intensive cultivation on the valley bottom are traditionally accepted and strengthened by the implementation of the Swynerton Plan (1954). One major change has occurred with disastrous results: briefly, it is the fact that the tenurial system has shifted from that based on concepts of communal tenure to one based on statutory control. Such a change means that the land divisions, which were evolved on the basis of customary tenure, are not applicable to the present distribution of land. If one regards the linear landuse pattern of Kikuyuland as the strategy evolved in a complex man-environment game, played according to the rules of customary land tenure that maximises the return to the peasant, then one can readily appreciate that, as the rules change to those of statutory tenure, a different optimum solution needs to be found. Such a change to statutory land law has produced difficulties, notably the problem of inheritance and consequent land fragmentation and the inevitable peasant indebtedness. Both sets of problems stem from the fact that land has been made alienable. With 62.5 per cent of the village households having less than one acre of land and little likelihood of gaining more, the village has small command of a resource base.

It is obvious from field enquiries that colonial legislation to
encourage and increase peasant agricultural production enjoyed little success. The present situation is that although Gakarara is officially classified as a coffee producing zone, the ratio of the cash crop, coffee, to the staple maize, is 1:4 in terms of unit areas planted. Only the elite of landowners, those possessing more than 3.5 acres of land, could afford to grow, and therefore sell, the cash crop. Farmers with less than 1.5 acres of land had no choice, they had to grow maize. In fact, the distribution of maize growers closely parallels that of land ownership. It is evident that land is underutilised yet little lies fallow; the work rate of the village population compares favourably with other African peasant agriculturalists. The small-holder's environmental knowledge is, however, rarely fully utilised as the holding is meagre. With the accumulation of land by the richer members of the village, as a form of personal security, the creation of a landed gentry is inevitable. In itself, this situation would not be disastrous if there were some other agricultural outlet available to those who possessed less than six acres of land. Such an outlet does not exist except in the 'opportunity' provided by urban employment.

When one considers the population data gathered during the survey, it is apparent that there are complex implications inherent in the population pressurizing system. These problems may be summarised as:

1. The high population density of the area.
2. Human adjustment to the situation which tends to take the form of outward migration of adult males in search of wage employment.
3. Further adjustment is evidenced in the adoption, by female adults, of piece rate employment offered by the white coffee estates nearby.

The age distribution is heavily skewed in favour of the dependents
within the village. The dependency implies ties, responsibilities and care that the adult population bears towards the siblings in the community. Emotional and material demands can not be met if the members of the community are deeply involved in a basic struggle for survival; this struggle can not be won within the present constraints of the village's economy and so the village attempts to build external linkages, to seek alternative employment. Should the head of household obtain employment in one of the urban areas, then he immediately faces a drain upon his income because he has to support two households. Such a situation means that there is less ready money to pay debts, taxes and school fees, the three major expenditures per household. Of these major expenditures, it is the last, the school fees of his children, that will be foregone. Education does not guarantee future employment but lack of education virtually means unemployment.

There is no adequate machinery for expressing the situation or for rectifying the imbalance. The central administration of the country is all pervasive, but it does not effectively reach grass root level. For this reason, there is little prospect for developing indigenous infrastructure, such as rural credit, markets etc., that would alleviate the problems of the village economy. Such a situation has not particularly disturbed the villagers and, of their own initiative, they have developed several self-help schemes. The fact that bureaucratic procedures hinder development is quietly accepted for, if the bottleneck were not attributable to the Government, then it could be blamed upon the powerful elite, the residue of Mau Mau who are distinguished by their age and religion, existing within the village. Individually, households attempt to discover an answer to their own problem of survival but, should one find an external income, then the ties of immediate family, family and kinship will make heavy demands on that income.
The situation described is essentially an open system in disequilibrium. Because of the lack of available agricultural land, the community is forced to seek external sources of income. The available external employment is largely situated in the towns so that the head of household has to establish and run a second home in an urban area. This process means that many of the male population are effectively removed from the village labour force and, because of their expenditure in the urban area and the necessity to meet certain debts, they can contribute little to bolstering the village's economy. The women, meanwhile, prefer the piece work labour on the coffee estates to running their own farms. Thus, more labour is drained away from the economy of the village. Only mothers with young children and the old people are permanently part of the village's economy. The land, however, requires careful cultivation if the ecology of the area is not to be destroyed. Little labour is available to maintain old terracing let alone build new ones. The introduction of maize as the staple crop and the continued use of coffee as a cash crop has led to the destruction of much of the former undergrowth; this undergrowth is essential to stop the soil erosion which naturally occurs because of the steep slopes and heavy rainfall. The lack of labour means a reversal to subsistence agriculture but the continued depletion of the labour reserves may jeopardise even this precarious existence. Such a process can only be viewed as ecological devolution or degradation for the inherent value of the environment is decreasing and the human population is not gaining from that decrease.

In the context of Gakarara it seems pointless to consider such grandiose economic concepts as profit maximisation where the peasant farmer is seen as optimizing the relationship between marginal costs and returns. Furthermore, the concept of opportunity cost is only applicable in a negative and, therefore, limited form. If one returns to
basic definitions of economics, one appreciates that the situation is not a choice between scarce resources because alternative decisions are constrained; unless the household has access to more than three acres of land, it must seek an external income. Should the household successfully occupy gainful external employment, then the farm will deteriorate.

The process described emphasises that the urban wage drain encourages ecological degradation. Such degradation demonstrates that the village society has not increased its capacity for dealing with the environment; its science, technology and social organisation prove inadequate in furthering the ecological stability of the area; it is underdeveloped. This underdevelopment is emphasised by the fact that 27 per cent of the population suffered protein-calorie malnutrition on the basis of comparison weight for age with the WHO standards. Such a level of malnutrition would normally be expected in semi-arid areas (O'Keefe, 1974).

With an understanding of the development process as the development of underdevelopment, it is possible to re-interpret the situation of Gakarara. The population dynamics of this community emphasises that it is underdeveloped and the urban linkages that drained the population away from the village emerge critical variances in the village economy. Rural-urban migration and urban unemployment are, in fact, both facets of early capitalist development. The nature of the development administration prohibits easy planning and data from the landuse and farm output surveys highlight the fact that the area is turning back from a cash crop economy into a subsistence economy. This whole process is negative development.

The normal relationship between man and nature is one of commensalism. Man discovers the most productive sites for his agriculture and nature provides him with food and clothing. In order for this situation
to continue, the man/nature complex is parasitic, to a certain extent, upon its food supply; a parasite is defined as an organism which obtains sustenance from another without providing anything in return. Successful parasites often become commensals and both organisms survive. In Gakarara, man is essentially a predator, a predator being defined as an organism which destroys the organism from which it gains resources. In Gakarara, man as a predator is encouraging the extinction of finite resources.

The village is not isolated. In fact, the village's position vis-a-vis the capital, Nairobi, is mirroring the relationship between Kenya and the developed world. The constraints upon the development of Gakarara are imposed by the government of Kenya. Their unwillingness to concentrate upon the rural areas, to reform the Land Law, to encourage a self-sufficient economy and to face the reality of social injustice, stems from their willingness to depend upon developed countries. Such dependency prohibits development for it does not allow for the development of indigenous science and technology and it eventually destroys the social organisation by the creation of a western orientated elite. Such associations with the developed world not only allow for the expatriation of resources, the permanent depletion of resources and the real possibility that, without the supplied western technology, a resourceless society would be created, but they also encourage a dependency that will build, not simply a Third World, but an underdeveloping world.
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