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Author

Friedmann, John

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John Friedmann

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INSTITUTE OF URBAN AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
University of California
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REGIONAL PLANNING FOR RURAL MOBILIZATION IN AFRICA

John Friedmann *
University of California, Los Angeles

In the following pages, I should like to offer a brief discussion of the problematics contained in the principal terms of the title: rural, region, mobilization, and planning. From this discussion some useful things may be learned for application in the African context. I will not extensively document actual experiences with rural developments on the continent; this would require a much deeper knowledge of specific instances than I have. All the same, to gain some clarity about key concepts is to move forward (Cohen 1980). It is primarily clarification, therefore, that I will seek in the first part of this essay.

In the second half, I will discuss a number of issues that must be dealt with in designing a strategy for rural mobilization in Africa. They include the constraints on state action, the question of incentives, the application of a social learning paradigm, the development of appropriate organizational structures, and a regional framework for rural mobilization.¹

I. The Concepts

Rural. The rural population of Africa can be variously defined; here it means that fraction of a population that is either directly or indirectly dependent for its livelihood on "primary" production in agriculture, cattle raising, tree cropping, lumbering, fishing, or small-scale mining. This population may live in dispersed or clustered settlements, or it may be nomadic. It may also be engaged in

non-primary activities, such as trading, processing, tool making, or construction, so long as the activity is closely tied to the primary sector. "Rural" can therefore also refer to the population of small towns that mediate between primary production and a world that is predominantly metropolitan, global in its reach, and cosmopolitan in culture.

Rural in this sense does not imply traditional. The word tells us nothing about how work is organized such as the degree of mechanization, the levels of productivity, or the forms of exploitation. At the same time, the rural economy can no longer be understood in isolation from the metropolis. Few stone-age communities are left in Africa. Throughout the continent, in different degrees, the trend is toward metropolitanization, large city populations growing at two to three times the rate of the rural sector. This differential is largely accounted for by rural to urban migration.

Together, metropolitan and rural economies compose the national economy which is itself a politicized fragment of the international economic system. With the coming of the independent nation state to Africa, the predominant economic objective has been to achieve high rates of economic growth *per capita*. Other common objectives include the assurance of a sufficient food supply to the entire population and the satisfaction of other basic needs, especially in health and education.

The rural sector, then, has to fulfill certain functions in a national strategy for economic growth and the satisfaction of basic needs. First, it must adequately feed the

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people.² Second, it must become a major source of capital accumulation, including foreign exchange.³ Third, it constitutes the principal market for domestic manufactures.⁴ Fourth, as the source of most of the country's population increase, the health, education, and political practices of rural people will to a large extent determine the future quality of national life.⁵

Region. Region refers to a geographical area larger than that occupied by a single village or rural town and smaller than the nation. Regional planning, then, suggests a form of subnational planning.

In the context of planning, region designates an area for administrative purposes whose boundaries are usually (though not always) of an *ad hoc* nature. Sometimes, regions are defined for the administration of single programs; at other times, they are meant to facilitate multiple or "comprehensive" programs. In countries with a federal structure, such as Nigeria, regions are also defined politically, enjoying a measure of self-government. In this case, regional may be assumed to be identical with state and/or provincial planning. Finally, regions may be administratively defined for special program emphasis, as with a river basin, a militarized border region, or a new capital city.

In these several meanings, regions appear as a device for achieving a closer fit between program design and local resources. Inserted into the planning and decision-making framework, the regional level reflects the existing diversity of a nation in terms of its economic resources, production possibilities, cultural and historical conditions, the limits of central information-processing capacity, and the finite control span of central authority.

Regions also allow for interfacing central and local purposes and for resolving contradictions in priorities. On the other hand, the fact that regions exist at all means that, as politically organized forces, they can demand a larger share of total national resources. Such claims tend to be reinforced whenever a region coincides with a cultural-historical area and/or where it is a self-governing political entity within a federative framework.

Not all regions, however, are devised to facilitate the central coordination and control of programs. There are many instances where regions are formed "from within" as a result of region-making activities. An example would be the construction of an urban-industrial complex capable of changing the character of surrounding activities and reorienting them with respect to itself. The opening of a new transport link would be another instance. Region-forming activities are constantly at work. Administrative or planning regions tend to get quickly outdated, as they are undermined by new activities that create their own environments.

Mobilization. Mobilization is a military term, but in the present context, it has specific reference to rural people. In standard usage, to mobilize means "to marshal, bring together, and prepare people for action." Implied is the presence of some external force that accomplishes this bringing together. In planning, that force or agency is usually the state.

For what purposes would mobilization be carried out? Three possible yet very different emphases need to be distinguished. The first is mobilization for purposes of the state by incorporating the peasantry through both voluntary and coercive measures into central-government schemes for rural development. Alternately, the peasantry is mobilized for its own self-development, *i.e.*, for purposes decided by the peasantry alone. And finally, the peasantry may be mobilized for its own self-development *within an explicit framework of national objectives*. In the first case above, peasants are exploited for the benefit of a metropolitan "class" (Lipton 1977; Friedmann 1980b). In the second instance, though in charge of its own livelihood, the peasantry remains within its own mode of production, with the result that there is neither significant capital accumulation nor "modernization" (Sahlins 1977; Hyden 1980). In the third instance, finally, an attempt is made to combine two contradictory purposes: on the part of the state, to expand and develop the capitalist or socialist mode of production and, on the part of the peasantry, to evolve within its own mode of production. In this encounter, the state has a clear historical priority: it must attempt to transform the peasant mode of production

into a surplus-generating mode. The peasantry may be expected to resist such an attempt (Hyden 1980). The overcoming of this resistance requires planning and mobilization by the state.⁶

Planning. Planning has gone through several theoretical phases, from blueprinting to the currently fashionable "social learning" approach (Korten 1980). What blueprinting means is clear: it is the charting of future courses of action, usually by central planners who have no authority to act themselves in the division of labor but undertake to plan for others. The meaning of social learning is less easily described. It involves an iterative process linking knowledge to action, where to act is always primary. The critical questions in the social learning paradigm are these: who are the relevant actors, and in whose interest do they act?

Building on the foregoing discussion, certain conclusions are possible. The relevant actors in rural mobilization are both the peasantry and the state. Likewise with the interests concerned. Whereas the peasantry follows its own understandings, state organizations act in the interest of national development and economic growth. Two planning processes must accordingly be brought into conjunction: those from below and those from above. The state is here assigned a very special role: to give political direction to the entire effort; to mobilize the peasantry for its own development; to set the technical framework for local planning and development; and to support and facilitate local development efforts.

Conclusions. The previous discussion has shown that it is impossible to extract a single, unambiguous meaning from the phrase, "regional planning for rural mobilization." It is hoped, however, that the discussion has helped to clarify some meanings relative to the central purpose of the paper:

- The rural population can no longer be defined apart from the metropolitan sector; both are necessary for national development.
- The rural sector fulfills certain essential functions in national development; it must provide for basis sustenance; it must generate part of the capital to help finance the overall development

effort; potentially, it constitutes a mass market for domestic manufactures; and it is the source of the bulk of the labor power of national development.

- Regions are both administrative devices and an expression of desired political autonomy on the part of culturally distinctive population groups. They allow for a better determination of purposes (in relation to specific characteristics and needs of each region) and for the better coordination of centrally directed programs. Above all, regions provide the basis for interfacing top-down planning with bottom-up approaches to development.
- Mobilization must set in motion a contradictory process: to achieve peasants' own purposes while advancing the purposes of the state. This project is made especially difficult where the state requires, as it usually does, a transformation of the peasant mode of production into a capitalist or socialist mode.
- Planning must be structured as a learning process for both the peasantry and the state apparatus, as each strives to resolve the contradictions arising from the clash between their very different powers.

II. The Issues

From the discussion in Part I it is apparent that the ultimate clarification of concepts depends on their use in the context of a particular strategy of national development. But such a strategy itself depends on the resolution of a number of problems which are posed, at least in part, by the conceptual framework adopted. The result is that neither a theoretical resolution of issues nor conceptual transparency can be achieved apart from a political practice under specific historical conditions. Lacking a definition of the situation as given in practice, this paper can only pose some questions; for the most part, it cannot answer them.

In the following pages, I propose to discuss the five issues mentioned in the introduction, issues that will arise in any attempt to give a practical, *i.e.*, a political, meaning to the title of this essay.

Constraints on State Action. Three types of constraint limit state action in rural mobilization: the extreme shortage of economic and technical resources available to the state; in many parts of Africa, the low density and physical dispersal of much of the rural population; and the difficulty of arranging for the logistical support of a national effort at rural development.

Because most countries in sub-Saharan Africa are very poor, their actual economic condition must be the starting point for thinking realistically about rural underdevelopment. More critical even than a shortage of economic resources, however, is the lack of technically skilled cadres who are prepared and willing to work for extended periods of time among the peasantry in rural areas.

At this point, it may be useful to recall that Africa's rural population comprises between 70 and 90 percent of national totals. There is no way that the state can maintain significant contact with this massive population. In fact, the state has typically responded to this situation by ignoring all but the corporate or estate sector in agriculture, because that sector is the most productive overall and often responsible for major export earnings (Bayliss 19979; Cowie 1979; Ewinetu 1980). The result has been a type of economic development that consistently favors state/capitalist enclaves at the expense of the remaining and vast majority of rural people.

If this were the inevitable outcome of poverty, there would be no need to talk about rural mobilization. The fact is that there are other ways by which the state can overcome its technical and resource limitations, among them the following:

- Centering development among the rural population itself: the state offers political guidance, leadership, and logistic support, but rural people in their traditional communities make the critical decisions and carry out the appropriate actions.
- Building up organizational structures from below in line with experience and in accord with a proven capacity for expanded and more complex operations.
- Mobilizing the labor time and savings of rural populations for capital formation of direct benefit to local populations; the state supports and supplements this effort with technical resources, additional economic resources, and related public works, but does not replace it.
- Recruiting rural cadres by training eligible young people who have been democratically selected from within their own communities. Eligibility criteria would include a combination of educational attainment and practical experience.

What I have in mind here is a kind of "bootstrap" development. But bootstrap development comes up against the second constraint, or the low density and dispersed settlement pattern in many parts of rural Africa. Socialist countries, such as Tanzania and Mozambique, have tried to overcome this constraint by programs of rural resettlement (villagization), but these ambitious programs have not met with unqualified success (Blue and Weaver 1977; Boesen *et al.* 1977; Ghai *et al.* 1979; Verhagen 1980; Friedmann 1980).

In view of the problems encountered, should the densification of population be regarded as a precondition of rural development? And even if this were the case, should resettlement be made a top priority in government programs for rural areas?⁷

Table 1 contains three sectoral models of agricultural development in South-East Africa. Following this typology, we can say that during their initial phases, both the Tanzanian and Mozambiquean villagization programs attempted to transform the household sector primarily through its physical relocation. In this way, it was believed that production might be reorganized along cooperative lines, basic services might be efficiently extended to the rural population, and the state bureaucracy would be better situated to control the processes of agricultural modernization. Yet physical relocation proved to be so costly (in face of latent peasant opposition) that few resources remained for supportive work within the villages themselves. Besides, the modern sector was regarded as so essential for national development, that it

Table 1

*A Model of Agricultural Development Sectors
in South-East Africa*

Household Sector	Village Sector	Modern Sector
dispersed settlement	village/district settlement pattern: cooperative organization	enterprise as basic unit: state and corporate farms
extensive/shifting agriculture; no long-term increases in productivity	intensifying, permanent agriculture; medium increases in productivity	capital-intensive agriculture; high and sustained increases in productivity
growth in production: 0-2 percent per annum	growth in production: 3-4 percent per annum	growth in production: 5-7 percent per annum
basic subsistence	subsistence plus food surplus for cities; some production for export	industrial & export crops
no industry; rudimentary household crafts	village and district level industries: agricultural processing; tools; fertilizer; construction; wage goods; putting-out system	workshops; processing; and packing incorporated as part of estate production
familial mode of production	transitional mode of production (cooperatives plus familial mode)	capitalist or state socialist mode of production; wage labor or rural proletariat

Note: This three-sector model is extremely simplified. Not only may each sector be further divided into a number of subcategories, but there are *mixed* sectors that would probably warrant separate recognition. For the present, however, this model is sufficient. It underlies the policy discussions in a number of African countries. Should dispersed populations be concentrated? How much importance should be assigned to the modern (estate) sector? What programs should be directed at the village sector, and how should the village sector be organized?

was usually assigned priority in the central allocation of resources.

Rather than engage in the herculean task of resettling millions of farm households in collective villages, often by force, governments might well consider shifting their emphasis to work within the already existing village sector. As dispersed and less productive peasant households observe results in terms of improved living conditions, they may eventually move of their own accord, without the direct intervention of the state.

The third constraint concerns the problem of logistics. Dispersal of rural populations is aggravated by the difficulty of gaining year-round access to rural communities, but also the reverse of this, of having rural communities gain access to urban-metropolitan resources. This dual aspect must be constantly kept in view. The difficulty arises from the poor physical conditions in the countryside. Traditionally, the answer to this situation has been isolation and local self-sufficiency at low levels of productivity. With a national development that requires the expansion of economic and political space and the generation of a surplus from traditional activities, this answer is no longer tenable. Rural isolation must be overcome.

This will require time. Here, then, are some of the ways by which the problem of inadequate logistical support may be approached:

- Restructuring economic space on a regional basis, by moving from household and village to self-sufficiency at the regional level. This would involve diversification of the regional economy through local resources development, and the integration of regional projects with metropolitan resources. Each region should be focused on at least one metropolitan center that now becomes the support base for the rural mobilization effort.
- Constructing all-weather roads that link regional metro-centers to each other (primary roads) and each metro-center to local districts (secondary roads). District centers should be so spaced that rural people can reach them on foot in about half a day's journey (six hours). Thus they should be spaced no

further than 60 km apart.

- Developing district centers as the focal points and staging areas for rural mobilization. Farm organizations would be headquartered there. Warehousing and storage facilities would facilitate the marketing of agricultural products. Research and education would diffuse outwards from these centers to the entire population. Credit institutions would support local producers. And rural industries would process district products as well as producing both wage goods and tools for the local population.⁸
- Connecting district towns to each other and to metro-centers both by air transport and by radio.
- Rotating rural cadre among the four hierarchical levels of village community, district center, metro-center, and national capital. In this way they would gain breadth of vision, their learning capacity would be enhanced, new ideas would filter both up and down the hierarchy, and recruitment into cadre positions would be facilitated.
- Readying a support system of services to back up rural mobilization campaigns.⁹ Unless it is able to respond to peasant demands for tools, machinery, fertilizers, seeds, irrigation equipment, storage facilities, transport equipment, medical supplies, and technical assistance, rural mobilization turns into empty rhetoric and is discredited. Support systems require organization, correct location, and correct timing. They require a commitment on the part of the state to reach the masses of the rural people and harness them to national development.

Incentives for Rural Mobilization. As we have seen, rural mobilization proceeds as an initiative of the state. The dominant purposes around which mobilization is to occur are therefore also the state's. They include, in the first instance, an increase in production beyond the immediate needs of the rural population. In socialist states, such as Tanzania or Angola, the furtherance of cooperative action in rural areas may be a second major objective.

These goals come into conflict with the traditional village population whose principal aim is to reproduce itself, together with its accustomed way of life. The conflict can be quite simply stated. Why should peasants make common cause with "national" objectives (*i.e.*, with the purposes of the state) where state and nation are both remote abstractions?

B. F. Galjart (1976) distinguishes between what he calls *mechanical solidarity* (sacrifice for shared aims) and *organic solidarity* (sacrifice to maintain the unity of the group). Rural populations living under conditions of scarcity tend to be informed by a strong sense of loyalty to the group (Scott 1976). The relevant collectivity here is the village where traditional patterns of reciprocity ensure the group's survival. Peasants' identification with the state will thus be minimal. For its part, the state expects peasants to make common cause with national objectives.

Unless certain conditions are met, the state's expectations in this regard are likely to come to grief. One of these concerns the realization of benefits. The solidarity of the village community (and of the tribal group) hinges on the question of survival (Scott 1976). Where this question is "solved" (*e.g.*, because a safe margin of food surplus is consistently available), an economic calculus takes over, and peasants, like other folk, start acting in accord with their material self-interest (Popkin 1980). Assuming then that basic security can be extended to the village community—a rather tall order to start with and taller still if it means meeting the true "basic needs" of a population—the second condition can be activated, namely, that mobilization is a function of perceived self-interest (Galjart 1976). Accordingly, the state's objective in increased production and the realization of a surplus must be ultimately read by peasants as a benefit to themselves.

This benefit may take two forms: it may be realized individually in the form of higher incomes plus access to desired commodities, or collectively. As a collective benefit, it assumes the form of a "collective good" such as a small irrigation dam, a school house, a farm-to-market road, in short, facilities that cannot be individually

appropriated.

Collective goods can be provided either locally or regionally. They can be provided nationally as well (*e.g.*, the armed forces), but the perception of national investment as a benefit to oneself is at best problematic. In any case, mechanical solidarity with national projects will tend to be much weaker than the projects at local and regional levels.

This distance effect can to some extent be overcome by involving local people in project selection at all levels of planning (through village assemblies in the first instance, and through a system of delegation at all other levels). But clearly it is the region that appears as the critical area for developing those physical structures and services that will support production and well-being at village and district levels.

B. F. Galjart (1976), whose conclusions are based on a study of land reform in Chile, summarizes his findings in very similar language:

Peasants mobilize primarily for reasons of self-interest. To put it in somewhat more general terms, they mobilize in the prospect of local objectives. They wish to achieve a desired situation for themselves, for their own locality. This is so because peasants' interests are of a local-territorial nature and because mobilization assumes contact and interaction (p. 20).

Unless peasants can perceive a direct relation between effort and reward, attempts at rural mobilization will end in disaster.

Social Learning. Because the state's presence cannot be ubiquitous, and because the peasantry cannot at one stroke be transformed into a rural proletariat (and if it could, would anyone really claim that the dispossession of the African peasant is desirable?), it is the direct producers themselves who will have to be the principal actors in carrying out the state's purposes—as well as their own. It is the direct producers—the peasants—on whose ability to learn from practice economic growth and national development—the generation of a surplus—will depend. The state, of course, must also learn or, to be more precise, specific actors

working for the state must learn to be fast learners. But overall, it is the peasantry's capacity for learning that is crucial.

In this connection, it is important to note that all members of a village community should have relatively equal access to learning and thus to one of the principal bases of social power. (Other bases include social and political organizations, good physical health and the tools of production, relevant information, social networks, and financial resources.) If equal access to social learning is not assured, in other words; if certain groups of peasants are systematically excluded from participation in decision making about specific economic projects to be undertaken, major inequities are likely to result; for differential learning capacity translates into differences in the configuration of economic and social power. And with the appearance of major inequities in social power, the process of rural mobilization itself will be threatened.

Ensuring that access to the bases of social power remain approximately equal is largely the state's responsibility. Equally important is the formation of relevant organizations on the peasants' own initiative, organizations to which all peasants or other pertinent categories such as young people and women should have equal access. One of the principal purposes of these organizations—to be more fully discussed in the next section—is to pressure the state continuously in the furtherance of their demands. Without mobilization and political pressure, traditional "top-down" planning cannot achieve an optimal allocation of resources. At the same time, without organization, the peasantry cannot be mobilized. And at least some peasant organizations must be independent of the state (Blair 1978; Harris 1980).

The planning process must, therefore, be locally organized, at the same time that it is structured as a process of social learning. This means planning "from below." Planning "from above" is less problematical; it will meet and link up with local efforts at both district and regional levels. The successful meshing of purposes, however, depends very much on the state's willingness to support capital accumulation at local levels, from the village to the region.

Organizing planning as a form of social learning requires active organizations extending from territorial localities to the upper reaches of the state, organizations that are open, inclusive, and controlled by its membership (Friedmann 1981). It also requires access to experts skilled in various aspects of rural development who are trusted by the people, and others who can correctly transmit information on national and regional strategies of development as frameworks for local planning.

Finally, there is the need to create a social environment in which it is possible to learn from error, to admit and analyze mistakes that have been made and to restructure action in light of this analysis. An experimental process of continuous learning, of testing, verifying, and reformulating, is essential to rural mobilization for development. It is a process that must be structured collectively.

Appropriate Organizational Structures.

Rural mobilization conjures up a vision of platoons and regiments of peasants lining up to be enlisted in the efforts of the state. But such a vision would be wrong. Regardless of how it comes to be defined, development is a conflictful process, and peasants are most effectively mobilized not into an army, top-heavy with officers and bureaucrats, but into organizations that will amplify their voice and link each household into larger regional and national structures.

Successful rural development appears to require a high density of such organizations. This is the basic message of a study conducted by Norman T. Uphoff and Milton J. Esman (1974, pp. xi-xiii), who write:

... local organization is a necessary if not sufficient condition for accelerated rural development. . . . [It must be seen as a] *system* of institutions performing various functions in the rural sector of a particular country. We found no case where only one institution was carrying the full responsibility for rural development or where *complementarities* among institutions were not as important as what the institutions themselves did. Of key

significance was the extent and effectiveness of *linkages*, between and among institutions, horizontally . . . at the same level and vertically between local organizations and structures at the center of government. . . .

On the whole, rural people are more capable and responsive than the paternalistic model of social change suggests, but less able to change their lives autonomously than the populist model presumes. . . . What should be developed is an institutionalized system that is neither just top-down nor bottom-up nor exclusively governmental.

What is involved here is a means for empowering people to act on their own behalf. People, of course, cannot do this alone, and the state's agency is needed to give support and direction to the effort. But specifically in the case of rural mobilization, which in part involves the organization of the peasantry around their own interests even as it provides for their integration into the national project, the role of the state should be to inspire, empower, guide, facilitate, promote, assist, and support. It should not be to plan, command, administer, or implement projects of its own, unless these projects clearly exceed the capacity of the organized peasantry and are to serve a truly national interest.

David C. Korten (1980, p. 499) arrives at similar conclusions:

The blueprint approach commonly assumes that the knowledge required for the preparation of program designs can be generated independently of the organizational capacity required for its utilization. This is reflected in its sharp differentiation between the roles of researcher, planner, and administrator—often assumed to be from different organizations—which inevitably separates knowledge for decision from action. . . .

Such separation is not found in the success cases examined. Especially in the early stages all three roles were combined in a single individual or a close-knit team. Even as the organizations grew, the mode of operation stressed their integration. Researchers worked hand-in-hand with operating implementation, and top management spent substantial time in the field keeping in contact with operating reality. The process of rapid, creative adaptation essential to achieving and sustaining the fit on which effective performance depends clearly demands such integration. . . .

In fact, the effectiveness of a given program design is at least as dependent on the presence of an organization with a well developed capacity to make it work than on the specifics of the design itself.

With appropriate rural organizations, mobilizations shifts from traditional planning *for* people to an emphasis on self-management *by* them.

To accomplish such a shift will not be easy. States are usually immune from the consequence of their errors and persist in top-down planning, even where it has proven ineffective. In just this way, Tanzania's *ujamaa* approach to rural development is today being threatened by what has been aptly called a misuse of power from above (Verhagen 1980). Empowering people to help themselves is a delicate business. The outcome cannot be readily controlled. At least in the perspective of national planners, it introduces greater uncertainty into a situation, because there are now more independent wills and more deciders. Yet it also creates more structure in a situation and, in the end, it is only an organized peasantry that can be effectively incorporated into national development. The unorganized remain peripheral to it.

The Regional Framework. As important as peasant organizations is the organization of rural development in space. We start

with the household, the primordial unit of rural life, all of whose members contribute to the production of their life together. From the standpoint of mobilization theory, then, the problem is to give the household an effective voice in the political decisions of more encompassing territorial units.

The village community is the first-level aggregate of households, and thus the first level as well for potentially collective practice. The special importance of the African village stems from the fact that in many parts of the continent it exercises substantial control over the access of households to land and water—the basic resources on which the survival of the community depends. Yet the village is too small, its resources are too limited, and the unexploited opportunities (given technology) are too few to warrant its designation as the optimal unit for development.

Two spatial levels *above* the village are relevant for planning: the collection of adjacent villages which I shall call the “agropolitan” district and the multi-district region. Both are formed through a political practice in whose gestation the state will have a major part (Friedmann 1978, 1981; Friedmann and Weaver 1979).

Agropolitan districts are constituted as a collection of adjacent villages that, where possible, are centered on an existing market town. As suggested in the earlier discussion of accessibility constraints, district boundaries should be so drawn that they allow peasants to reach the central town on foot within half a day’s journey. Following this criterion, and depending on the overall demographic density, total district population may range from 20 to 60 thousand.

The district is intended as a scaled-up unit for rural self-governance, with a territorial assembly selected from its component villages. Common problems of resources development can be addressed here, and the scale is appropriate for relatively innovative measures. Small industries related to rural needs can be set up at the district center to provide off-farm employment. Cooperative institutions, such as for credit or storage, can be conveniently established here. Water and energy resources can often be developed most efficiently at district levels, although

the region may offer still greater advantages. Reforestation and forest management involve cooperative association between village and district. And basic services, such as medical care, secondary education, and agricultural research, can be most readily provided at the district scale (Rondinelli and Ruddle 1978).

All rural innovations require some form of state participation. At the same time, the state’s priorities must be related and meshed with the priorities arising from the needs of particular districts, specific needs being defined in political discourse among the peasants meeting in assembly (Friedmann 1979).

The agropolitan district, then, is one of the major points of encounter between “top-down” and “bottom-up” decision making and planning. Without formal peasant participation, it remains a purely administrative concept, lacking vitality. It is the construction of the agropolitan district as a political unit in which the people’s assembly plays the decisive role that allows dynamic action to occur.

At the next higher territorial level, we come upon the region, which is a collection of districts focused upon a “metro-center” or regional capital. Here the village/district relationship is replicated but the scale is bigger, and the component units are now the agropolitan districts themselves. Compared to the district, regions provide for even greater flexibility in the disposition of common resources and significant economies of scale. If we assume that a region is made up of 15 districts of average size, regional populations would exceed half a million.

Ideally, the region, like the district, should be constituted as a political unit. In practice, it will often remain an administrative area. It is at the regional level that projects generated in the district are best evaluated from a national perspective and aggregated into coordinated programs of development. Whereas territorial-political organizations (the assemblies) are of greatest importance in the districts, functional organizations such as producer cooperatives will tend to have greater weight in the regions. In thus attempting to articulate local resources and needs with national purposes,

the region becomes the fulcrum for rural transformation.¹⁰

III. Conclusion

Rural mobilization for development must achieve the difficult task of meshing planning "from above" with planning "from below." But even prior to this, a way must be found to activate the peasantry politically, to give it voice. This involves two separate approaches: first, the encouragement of functional organizations to express specific interests peasants may have, particularly among the poorer strata; and second, the formation of territorial assemblies where problems common to a group of adjacent villages can be discussed.

Although central state and local interests are brought face-to-face at all the pertinent levels, the critical process of interfacing occurs primarily between district and region—with locality interests predominating in the former, while the state commands the dominant presence in the latter. In all, planning is seen as a highly conflictive process. At district levels, the emphasis will be on project selection and on measures directly pertaining to questions of livelihood and survival. This is the fine-grained planning that arises from the close interaction between specific social groups and the immediate environment which supports them. At the regional level, the emphasis will be rather on programming and the coordination of projects tailored to national objectives and constraints.

But the planning system in its entirety extends beyond these intermediate levels, *down* to the village and the individual household, and *up* to the whole nation at the point where it intersects with the world

economy. Politics, of course, is present at all levels, though in most parts of Africa it is national politics that dominates. If the rural population is to be mobilized, however, the politicization of peasants must be pursued wherever decisions affecting them are made, beginning with the village and the district. As it moves up and down the different levels of spatial integration, the contributions of planning are linked to this political process. At the level of the direct producer, planning specifically assumes a form of social learning, losing the more formal character it displays whenever it is centralized. Whether formal or informal, planning for rural mobilization must, at least initially, be directed by the state. As the state sets out to promote a politicized form of planning as a means for "capturing" the peasantry and harnessing its efforts to the national purpose of surplus generation and modernization, the state itself will have to proceed according to a generalized learning model, such as the one recently proposed by David Korten (1980, p. 500). In this model there are three overlapping stages in program learning:

- I. Learning to be *effective*
- II. Learning to be *efficient*
- III. Learning to *expand*

Each stage is critical for achieving the peasantry's full mobilization. Yet the strength of the model is that it allows for the entire process to unfold in time. Accordingly, initial efforts should be small and carefully monitored, and results should be periodically assessed. Underneath this learning process lies a commitment to a form of social change in which benefits and costs are widely shared and in which it is the people themselves who are seen as the progenitors of their own history.

NOTES

1. Although I have had occasion to look into the rural development literature on Asia and to some extent on Africa, I do not consider myself an expert in the field. I have neither made an extensive study of particular instances of rural development in Africa, nor followed the growing literature on "modes of production" in the African context, in particular on the so-called peasant mode of production. But I have thought long and hard about the methods of development planning in poor countries, and I have worked on questions of regional policy in Latin America, Asia, and to some extent also in Africa. It is this perspective that I bring to the assignment.
2. Like all the other "functions" assigned to rural populations by national planners, this one is highly contentious. Neoclassical economic logic argues for the optimum international division of labor in terms of "relative advantage." If a country is good at producing peanuts and cotton (*e.g.*, Senegal), why not concentrate resources on these commodities, sell them in export markets, and import the necessary foods from, say, France? The line of reasoning that must be used to arrive at the counter-intuitive policy of self-sufficiency is long and complex. It will not be attempted here.
3. There are those who will argue that capital accumulation should occur primarily in trade and industry (urban-based activities). The point, however, is that in the early stages of industrialization, all sources of capital accumulation must be tapped. To achieve a five-percent growth rate, national savings must rise to at least 20 percent and remain indefinitely at that level. Such a rate is inconceivable without holding down consumption, particularly in agriculture, and without siphoning off a growing surplus for the national investment fund.
4. There exists an alternative export-base theory of economic growth according to which an underdeveloped economy of small to intermediate-size initiates its growth primarily by serving export markets. Unquestionably, such economies must spend a large part of their resources in just this way. Ultimately, however, the major part of national production must be directed to national needs. Under capitalism, these "needs" are defined primarily in terms of an urban middle class; the corresponding market is small, high-cost, and elitist. Under socialism, people's basic needs have first priority. And where the masses are rural, it is *their* purchasing power that must be built up before luxuries can enter the market in a significant way.
5. In principle, there is no argument against this "function;" it is a statement of fact that the bulk of the future population in a rural society will be of rural origin. Beyond that, it is a matter of persuasion whether to emphasize the provision of services to that population or to concentrate instead on urban populations. In any event, some trade-offs will have to be made.
6. I am following Hyden's (1980) conceptualization of the peasant mode of production (PMP). Although precapitalist (presocialist), it is not a feudal or "Asiatic" mode. Its basic characteristics are a concentration on social reproduction and autonomy from the state. It is Hyden's contention that for much of Africa this is still the dominant mode (and way of life, from which it is indistinguishable). In this case, peasants can be expected to resist being "captured" by an intruding system. Even so, the ultimate transformation of the PMP into the CMP or SMP is inevitable. This inevitability will range the forces of the state against the peasantry.
7. It must be emphasized that logistic considerations were only part of the reason for the regroupment of peasant populations in villages. The villages were to be more than dense clusters of people; they were to be *ujamaa* villages or *aldeias comunais* in which collective (cooperative) production would be introduced under the guidance of party cadres and state bureaucrats. Villagization was thus considered not merely a precondition of rural development but, more importantly, of a society based on socialist principles.
8. This approach reduces to a problems of "centering" or service location among a hierarchy of central places. The idea has been current since E. A. J. Johnson's work

in the 1960s (cf. Johnson 1970; Rondinelli and Ruddle 1978; and Rondinelli 1980).

9. There is some question of whether mobilization campaigns are desirable or whether, instead, rural development should be organized as a continuing and balanced process. Campaigns are expensive; they upset normal procedures; they arbitrarily divert staff and resources from one use to another; and they produce political tensions. This, of course, is precisely why they bring results. More "balanced" approaches require bureaucratic organization and have all the vices and virtues that are attached to this method. Although I tend to favor the unbalanced, politicized approach to rural development, I would not deny the importance of more permanent arrangements to ensure follow-up and a structural bias in favor of rural interests expressed through pricing policy, taxation, and similar instruments of state action.

10. From a formal administrative standpoint, each region might have a Governor appointed by the Head of State, and a Governor's Council composed of the principal field officers of central state services. Attached to the Governor's Council would be a Planning Secretariat under the technical supervision of the national planning organization. The Secretariat would be charged with drafting the regional program and plan in consultation with district-level assemblies, sectoral field offices, and the National Plan. A Citizen Advisory Board to the Governor's Council might additionally be constituted and would represent the District Assemblies of the region as well as peasant organizations, political parties, and other influential interest.

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