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## ENDOGENOUS DEVELOPMENT; A CONCEPT IN SEARCH OF A THEORY

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**Abstract:**

*Following partly the lines as defined by Benvenuti, Slee states that endogenous development indeed emerged as a powerful idea in development thinking, but that a thorough theoretical underpinning is still lacking. The problems as related with the required elaboration of new theoretical models are discussed.*

**Keywords:**

RURAL DEVELOPMENT, RURAL AREAS, RURAL SOCIOLOGY, RURAL POPULATION, HUMAN RESOURCES, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS, DEVELOPMENT POLICIES.

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Endogenous development has emerged as a powerful idea in development thinking, but in the absence of any clearly identifiable theoretical roots, at least in the discipline of economics, the concept should be subjected to careful scrutiny. The question should be asked whether economic theory to date has largely failed to identify certain important features of development, encapsulated in the term 'endogenous development' or whether 'endogenous development' is an illusion, rooted in bourgeois liberal responses towards the perceived failure of many past development strategies?

Endogenous development might be considered as having a number of distinguishing characteristics. These include local determination of development options, local control over the development process, and the retention of the benefits of development within the locale. But, rather than constituting a model of development with clearly identified theoretical roots, endogenous development is more readily characterised as an idealised descriptive contrast to frequently observed patterns and processes of development. Endogenous development is locally determined, exogenous development is transplanted into particular locales and externally determined; endogenous development tends to lead to high levels of retained benefits within local economies, exogenous development tends to export the process of development from the region; endogenous development respects local values, exogenous development tends to trample over them.

## Definitions of development

Economists have often been uneasy about development as a concept and have often opted for instead of exploring growth. Whilst it is possible to measure growth in a unidimensional manner (not always without difficulty), measuring development is more problematic, involving trade offs between growth and equity, between productive and social investment and between short term growth and sustainability. Thus Leftwich (1991) asks whether democracy should be regarded as a necessary condition for development and Batie (1989) has noted the tardiness of agricultural economists in absorbing ideas about sustainability into their thinking.

Some attempts to grapple with the concept of rural development pay more than lip service to the complexities of the concept. Thus Dower (1990) differentiates growth and development, arguing that development might be seen to embrace self-determination and sustainability in addition to increased economic activity and output. Stern (1989) notes that "the desired end-state (of integrated rural development) will certainly include income and jobs but also other social, cultural and environmental goals, such as adequate housing and social facilities, and various forms of cultural expression."

A further important point is whether development is an end point or a process. This raises many questions about means and ends. If development is an end state does it matter by what means that end has been attained? Many of the countries that have achieved high rates of economic growth have done so with the support of undemocratic regimes (eg. South Korea, Taiwan). Normally development is regarded as a process but this in turn raises the question of whether development is the process of developing or the process of being developed. If the process is one of developing, is it of significance whether the process is facilitating or controlling?

Development is not only a contested concept amongst academics and practitioners but is also contested between developer (often in the form of a development agency) and those who are experiencing development.

*"At the local level, aspects of traditional culture and quality of life may temper attitudes on the nature of economic development. Intermediate technology may be preferred to sophisticated technology. Migration to cities may be resisted. Local control and small indigenous business may be seen as essential for local integrity. All these features and many more may represent a conscious choice between local values, small-scale development and, from the grassroots perspective, a superior quality of life rather than higher per capita incomes."* (Wenger, 1982: 13)

The development agency operating in the region studied by Wenger has effected significant changes in its policy and whereas it could legitimately be argued that in the early 1980's it discriminated against indigenous firms, this was replaced by the late 1980's by an increasing emphasis on support for indigenous businesses (Stern, 1989).

## Economic theory and endogenous development

This section examines the concept of endogenous development in the context of selected contributions from economic theories concerning development. Particular attention will be paid to the roles of the rural sector in the overall process of development. The theories and models selected for scrutiny will be representative rather than comprehensive and will include both liberal/capitalist and Marxist thinking on the subject.

The array of theories and models that have sought to illuminate economic aspects of the process of development are largely devoid of reference to endogenous development or related concepts. Reference to a *standard economic text on agriculture and economic development* such as Ghatak and Ingersent (1984) reveals critical scrutiny of a number of models to explain the role of agriculture in economic development. The models discussed are typically premised on the assumption that, in a variety of ways, agriculture nurtures the process of development. The agricultural sector is seen as a provider of food at non-inflationary prices; as a source of increased purchasing power to fuel sales in the industrial sector; as a source of investment capital for the industrial sector; or as a potential source of foreign exchange earnings to support the development process (Ghatak and Ingersent, 1984).

Most models of the development process postulate a dynamic relationship between a modern industrial sector and a traditional sector. Dual economy models are a typical example of this approach. Lewis postulated a process of labour shedding from a traditional sector, replete with surplus labour, to the urban industrial sector. He envisaged successive rounds of capital investment in the industrial sector drawing more and more of the surplus labour out of the rural sector until the commercialisation of agriculture was triggered (Ghatak and Ingersent, op.cit.:100). The significance of this model lies not in its explanatory power, but in its clear identification of the process of agricultural and rural development as being exogenously determined by the capitalistic industrial sector.

Within the broad array of Marxist thought, rural areas are also viewed as largely incapable of endogenous development. The pre-capitalistic rural economy is characterised by an inward looking self-sufficiency. Rural communities are viewed as enslaved beneath traditional rules, living an undignified, stagnant and vegetative life. Outside the early industrialised capitalist economies the transformation effected by capitalistic development on rural areas leads to the replacement of self-sufficiency with export-oriented crop production and the substitution of imported mass-produced goods for locally produced craft products. These changes again stress the exogenous nature of the development process. Indeed the whole terminology of Marxist thinking on development is replete with references to the subservience of rural areas to the capitalist core. Colonial relationships between centre and periphery directly imply an exogenous set of forces operating on the region (see eg. Baran, 1973; Frank, 1969).

Both approaches reinforce the conception of rural development as dependent development. Within the capitalist paradigm much attention is given to the means by which modernisation can be speeded up. Thus, emphasis is placed on the provision of capital and finance in the rural sector (to get around the problems of exorbitant interest rates charged by local lenders), the introduction of new technology (to overcome the disadvantages of customary practice and primitive technology), and the provision of infrastructure (to link the area more effectively to the external world). Such changes are all likely to increase the extent of external control and incorporate rural areas more fully into national and international markets. Within the Marxist approaches the predominance of external control is self-evident. The globalisation of markets and the associated concentration of power will ensure that exogenous forces prescribe the nature of development.

### **Developments and modifications of traditional thinking**

The conventional wisdom on development has been substantially modified by both theorists and practitioners. From both the liberal and the Marxist approaches new ideas have emerged which offer new perspectives on the contribution of endogenous factors to development processes.

Within the liberal approaches a number of different strands of thinking have developed. Three particular strands are explored further: First, the potential for spread effects to diffuse outwards from the initial locus of development will be examined; second, the extent to which local culture can be seen as a modifying influence on development processes will be explored; third, the contribution of practising development agents will be highlighted.

The assertion that spread effects will arise as a result of development in a particular location is implicit or explicit in most liberal formulations of the development process. These spread effects can arise either naturally, as in the Myrdalian conception, or can be contrived through the location of growth poles in regions where it is intended to stimulate development artificially.

It might also be asserted that an alternative form of spread effect arises as a result of remittances being sent back to rural areas, or of reverse migration where the primary motive is not financial. Rather than the agricultural sector being a source of capital for the developing urban sector, it may become a destination for capital and wages earned in other sectors. Increasingly this capital is used in affluent industrialised countries to acquire environmental commodities (as positional goods), as well as being used to provide sources of capital for an agricultural sector that has neither accumulated profits nor the capacity to acquire credit from commercial sources. Thus, a fragile agrarian sector may be bolstered by apparently irrational injections of capital, either directly by means of contributions to family members engaged in farming, or indirectly through increasing the value of rural property as a result of demands for retirement or vacation use. It is recognised that this process of reverse migration can create

tensions between the recipient community and the incomers, especially where the incomers are unconnected to the indigenous population (Forsythe 1982). The significance of this process is twofold: first, it implies a reversal of the normal direction of capital flows and the introduction of capital to support 'traditional' ways of life; second, it is recognised that the reconstituted rural community can modify development pressures and mediate the development process.

A second set of modifications of normal development models can be found in the work of anthropologists and ethnographers (eg. Strathern 1984; Cohen 1982) who argue that local culture mediates the development process, even within an apparently homogenous culture like that of the UK. Furthermore, local culture is seen not as a residue or as an anachronism but "the persistent 'production' of culture and attribution of value becomes an essential bulwark against the cultural imperialism of the political and economic centres, and thus provides fundamental means by(sic) keeping the communities alive and fruitful" (Cohen, 1982: 6). If economists ignore "the enormous significance with which people invest their cultural distinctiveness" (Cohen, op cit :2) they will fail to fully understand patterns of development. Not only can development occur where neither market forces nor policy instruments have directed it, but the characteristics of development can take on specific forms. Thus, a remote island community in the Northern Isles of Scotland is able to resist the general pattern of decline and establish a strong fishing industry, albeit with support from a regional development agency (Cohen, 1987). The initiative for the development was firmly rooted in the local community and the style of the development reflected key features of local culture. Equally, in a north Pennine Valley distinct differences in approaches to development are discernible in two neighbouring communities (Quayle 1984).

The third modification of traditional liberal thinking comes from the largely atheoretical observations of development activists and practitioners. Perhaps, the clearest statement of this is found in the work of Chambers (1983), who, highly sensitive to the failings of both liberal and Marxist agendas for development, offers a set of practical proposals and guidelines to enable development intervention to operate more effectively. Chambers' 'balanced pluralist approach' (Chambers, op.cit. :44) suggests that development agents should engage in a dialogue and learn from the intended beneficiaries of development. Chambers' solution is bottom-up development, a challenge to established procedures, breaking down top-downwards thinking, participating in decision making with the poorest, helping them to articulate their demands for services and rights and learning by acting on the ground in development actions with those that most need help (Chambers, op. cit. Ch.8).

Here there is evidence not so much of endogenous development but evidence of local values being considered as a desirable ingredient in the development process. The change agent is still external; the development process still exogenous but development is not so much imposed as negotiated. This recognition of the need for a development dialogue between developer and developed is reinforced by Stern (1989).

The Marxist approaches have been modified in three ways that might impinge on the question of endogenous development. First, it has been argued that "there is no iron law that compels capitalist agricultural development to take precisely the same course in other (than NE Scotland) settings" (Carter, 1979). Second, the assertion that family units comprise a transitional class has been subjected to considerable debate (Friedmann, 1986; Winter, 1984) which has implications on the nature of development in certain regions. Third, the debate about capitalist restructuring and the capacity for rural regions to be affected by this spatial restructuring also has implications for theorising about development.

The suggestion that the commonly described Marxist model of agrarian development should operate uniformly has been challenged by Carter (1979). He argues that the existence of a peasantry in north east Scotland that provided cheap inputs into the expanding capitalistic sector of the industry, actually enabled capitalist farming to develop in its own idiosyncratic form. Whereas in other parts of lowland Britain the proletarianisation of peasant farmers took place relatively rapidly, in north east Scotland the process took much longer. Thus, while it is possible to use Marxist analysis to explain the extraordinarily rapid agrarian development of the region, it is unreasonable to expect that the development of capitalistic agriculture will always take the same form. Therefore, it can be asserted that local factors mediate and differentiate the development process, and models and theories which fail to identify this may offer weak explanations of observable patterns of development.

The extent to which peasants and small family farms have survived the ingress of capitalism into the rural economy has led to much debate about the status of family farms where the functions of management and ownership of capital *and* provision of labour are carried out by the farmer and his family. Farming is by no means a unique example of a small enterprise with family labour. Indeed many rural businesses are small. Tourist businesses, other service businesses, some food manufacturers (e.g. French rural bakers) are characterised by their imperfect fit with the idealised Marxist model of the mature capitalism.

Within the mode of production described by Friedmann (1986) as simple commodity production, the small firm can be linked into more advanced capitalism in all ways except its use of labour. Although some (Winter, 1984) have asserted that the peculiar nature of land explains this 'incomplete' form of capitalism, this fails to explain why other sectors of the economy, operating without land as an organic input, possess similar structural features. The failure of normal capitalist structures to develop in these sectors may reflect the limited or uncertain returns to particular forms of economic activity, and the utility of this 'incomplete' mode of production to mature capitalism. Thus, in rural tourism the part-time tourist provider offers accommodation in economic space that is unexploitable by normal capitalistic firms. This occurs because, in a period of economic difficulty, the family unit can partially disengage from the market, or reduce its rewards for labour to levels that would not be tolerated by hired labour.

Ironically simple commodity producers may have greater autonomy than firms where capital and labour are clearly separated. Decisions as to what product to produce, say farm produce or farm tourist 'produce', may be conditioned not just by external opportunities but by characteristics of the family life cycle, and autonomous decisions by the farm household. To the extent that such decisions are made within the (farm) household they are endogenous, although it is probable that many small family businesses are locked into wider circuits of capital (by credit arrangements etc.). The extent to which development decisions are genuinely autonomous may therefore be questioned. What is unquestionable, however, is the existence of large numbers of simple commodity producers in the least advantaged sectors and regions.

The third elaboration of Marxist thinking concerns the spatial manifestations of mature capitalism (Urry 1984; Allen and Massey 1988). The struggle for profit forces firms to exploit labour pools that have hitherto been unexploited and thus it is possible that areas remote from the capitalist core can be economically activated by decisions made literally thousands of miles away. Thus, in rural Ireland cheap female labour is used to process North American insurance claims. A relatively unsophisticated product like a bicycle can now have major components manufactured in Japan and the US and be fitted together in locations with cheaper labour markets, like Taiwan. In the struggle to keep production costs down rural economic space is increasingly used in many countries. Where 'development' proceeds by this route (by creating new employment opportunities and increasing economic activity in rural areas) it cannot be regarded as endogenous development. This branch-plant approach to regional development has often been criticised for ignoring the needs of the locale and for failing to establish economic activity which has a local entrepreneurial base. Firms associated with this type of economic activity are likely to be footloose and be all too ready to exit the region during recessions (Firn 1975).

These elaborations of Marxist thinking are not mutually exclusive. Carter's (1975) assertion (of the different forms of capitalist development) is supported by evidence of the differential responses of different regions to economic change, both in a historic and a contemporary context. Whilst some regions may be dominated by simple commodity production, others may be affected by the centrifugal movements of capital into cheap rural labour markets. However, what is significant is the extent to which endogenous decision-making and local control can be retained under simple commodity production, whereas, in the restructuring model, development is exclusively externally controlled. The passivity of rural workers may be seen as an asset to be exploited in the struggle for international competitiveness.

There are parallels and contrasts in the liberal and Marxist reformulations. Both acknowledge the existence of 'spread' effects, albeit within different conceptual structures. Both acknowledge the existence of a bundle of factors that influence the course of development. However, the extent to which endogenous development can be postulated is restricted to its identification as a cultural variable within the liberal formulation or a local effect within the Marxist formulation. Within simple commodity production it is possible to postulate a degree of endogenous development, although



this mode of production still operates in association with other more normal capitalistic forms. Chambers' liberal plea for bottom-up development represents a *crie de coeur* on behalf of the least advantaged, which tends to reaffirm the contention that exogenously controlled development often ignores the interests of the least advantaged.

Endogenous development thus hovers in the shadows of some of these reformulations but rarely occupies a position of prominence. Endogenous development is not so much a concept with clearly defined theoretical roots but more a perspective on rural development, strongly underpinned by value judgements about desirable forms of development.

### **Residual questions**

The principal question facing economists is to explain how a concept which has been so marginal to mainstream thinking in economics should have acquired such centrality in the activities of development practitioners. Endogenous development strategies are currently being activated in locations as different as the ghettos of Atlanta and the rain forests of Amazonia.

Two principal explanations can be offered; first, it can be argued that endogenous approaches to development are rooted in the responses of marginalised groups to pressures for their assimilation into wider social and economic structures; second, it might be asserted that endogenous development has become a tactic in effecting the economic subordination of particular groups or regions.

The first argument, that economic, social and cultural pressures on certain groups lead to a clearer articulation of their differences from wider society, and the incorporation of these differences in economic behaviour, has been used to explain the reaffirmation of Samish identity in northern Scandinavia (Snell and Snell, 1975). However, the emergence of movements to articulate Samish interests were a direct result of the liberal welfarist responses of the nation states of the region, which created opportunities both for assimilation into the 'normal' modes of development and for the reassertion of ethnic identity as a framework within which economic activity could take place. Cohen's (1987) observations on the Shetland Islands tend to support to this hypothesis, that actions by development agencies can create opportunities for locally-based development.

The second assertion, that the support of endogenous development is a tactic for achieving more effective assimilation of groups that have often been marginalised from mainstream economic activity, has been put forward to explain the policies in Ireland towards the Gaeltacht areas of the west of the country (Williams, 1990). The support of the ethnic identity of the western areas is funded by national and international flows of funds from the capitalist core.

Both of these explanations expose the myth of genuinely endogenous development. Autonomous vernacular development represents a challenge to the nation state and to

perhaps the advance of capitalism possibly. However, the liberal nation state may inadvertently precipitate a dynamic process of negotiated development whereby individuals and groups are given resources over which they have some allocative responsibility. For example, the decision of a number of development agencies to support a group of crofters (small part-time farmers) in their bid to acquire ownership of a large estate in the north of Scotland indicates the potential for development agencies to challenge the status quo.

More often, 'endogenous' development is a means of achieving more effective development of a conventional type. The difficulties of creating enduring benefits to regions that operate under significant handicaps of peripherality have long been recognised. Development agencies have been established to aid the development process. Often in the past the development agencies operated with very top-downwards styles, encouraging at times a significant amount of inward investment, but not a great deal of locally-based entrepreneurship. The principal development agency in the north of Scotland, Highland and Island Enterprise, (formerly the Highlands and Islands Development Board), had a very top-down approach to development in its early years of operation and attracted a great deal of public and academic criticism (Carter, 1975). The subsequent metamorphosis of the agency's strategy for development to one which was more focused on the support of endogenous entrepreneurship may have been influenced by the bitter experience of bad debt arising from major projects associated with external investors. Many agencies now have a much better understanding of the factors that inhibit endogenous development and are prepared to act in ways to reduce the inhibitory factors by providing a variety of business and community support services.

The processes of capitalism generate uneven development. The potential successes of endogenous development strategies lie less in their ability to resist these processes than to work with them. Certain attributes of mature capitalism may offer opportunities to areas and groups that have hitherto been largely ignored by the processes of development. For example, the growth of demand for soft tourist products, craft products and for regionally-specific foods are all signs of a public dissatisfaction with mass-produced goods and a desire for differentiated products. The pursuit of global markets by trans-national firms may leave unexploited niches in economic space. Artisan production may be able to survive or even expand in these niches, but is likely to be the victim of predatory raids from larger firms should the niches expand. Simple commodity producers are likely to be less amenable to predation than larger capitalistic firms and may be able to survive by adapting to new markets. Whilst it may appear that the adjustment strategies of simple commodity producers appear to comprise endogenous development it should be recalled that both their past survival and future prospects depend on their incorporation within a wider framework of capitalism.

Development agencies have thus adapted their *modi operandi*, without altering their fundamental aims and objectives. They have recognised that long-run development gains are likely to be secured more effectively by encouraging local entrepreneurship than by inducing footloose branch-plants into the area. The same packages of

infrastructure development, grant-aid, loan finance and business and community support services are still in evidence, but the agencies have learned to adapt these elements to the local social and cultural context.

In addition to recognising the need for a development dialogue with the recipient community it has also become apparent that proliferating agencies must interact effectively amongst themselves. In developed countries there are often conflicts between central and local government and between agencies with overlapping functions. Thus, in the recent past the farmer diversifying into rural tourism in England could receive grant aid and advice from at least three agencies, the agricultural advisory service, the Rural Development Commission or the Regional Tourist Board. No formal mechanism existed for ensuring an integrated view of rural development was being pursued, (Slee, 1990). A number of development projects have been pursued which show the benefits of agency collaboration (e.g. Parker 1989).

A further strategy which has been pursued by many agencies is the use of animateurs and networkers. These individuals usually operate over a relatively restricted area, often have networking responsibilities in that they try to achieve collaborative action by agencies, and endeavour to maximise the amount of indigenous activity. They provide communities with a conduit to external support services and aim to catalyse development by helping communities to recognise the options confronting them.

It must, however, be emphasised that these changes from a branch-plant strategy to local entrepreneurial support, from single agency activity to integrated action and from a traditional bureaucratic support structure to the creation of animateurs with networking functions, does not alter the fundamental nature of development. External forces will be the principal determinants of development. Endogenous forces may colour the nature of the process.

## **Conclusions and Discussion**

Rural areas will continue to be affected by developments and modifications in mature capitalism. The effects include those arising from global restructuring processes and from amenity-seeking behaviour, the latter more especially in the most developed economies.

The unevenness of development is an inevitable concomitant of capitalist processes. At time efforts have been made to reduce this unevenness by policy measures and agency activity. The nature of agency activity has been modified, principally because of the perceived failures of top-downwards development strategies. The modifications in strategy have often sought to foster greater levels of local entrepreneurship and to generate developments which encompass social as well as economic changes.

It would be erroneous to describe these changes in development practice as a substitution of endogenous development for exogenous development. Both are

examples of dependent development, although exogenous development strategies may provide rather more opportunities for locally-based social, economic and cultural circumstances to shape the development processes.

The significant differences in development strategies pursued offer opportunities not so much to refine development theory but instead to apply known economic techniques to assess the effects of the different strategies. Comprehensive audits of development projects are to be preferred to intuitive appraisals, ideally embracing cultural, social and environmental effects as well as the economic dimension. The potential contribution of economists is considerable. The local, regional and national multiplier effects of projects can be estimated, the cost-effectiveness of different agency strategies can be explored, and the distributional consequences of particular actions can be assessed. Intuitively it might be expected that 'bottom-up' endogenous development strategies would perform favourably under the scrutiny of economists. Unfortunately, the evidence to date is still too fragmentary to be able to offer any generalisations.

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