

Regional Development and the Transition's Dilemmas in the Third World: The New Debate and Search for Alternatives

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Introduction

RESUME: Les stratégies de développement ont reproduit au cours des trente années écoulées les mêmes rapports structurels d'exploitation entre les entités sociales et les entités territoriales. Dans quels types de structure politique le pluralisme régional et le développement local centralisé sont-ils possibles? La réalisation des objectifs socio-spatiaux ainsi que des objectifs de croissance et de développement passe nécessairement par un changement radical des stratégies économiques et spatiales tant actuelles que révolues.

Les nouvelles théories sur le régionalisme remettent en cause les principes fondamentaux des théories de modernisation et plus précisément la thèse de l'effet d'entraînement progressif et elles préconisent une nouvelle répartition du pouvoir entre toutes les entités socio-spatiales, que ce soit à l'échelle nationale ou sous-nationale. Le contrôle des ressources locales ainsi que leur affectation sont essentiels dans ce cadre et pour y parvenir, il est indispensable de se défaire des structures politico-territoriales centralisées et dominantes qui favorisent quelques-uns et de leur substituer d'autres structures qui garantiraient des obligations réciproques entre les diverses entités socio-spatiales qui constituent une nation. Le nouveau débat est soutenu par la question fondamentale de savoir s'il existe un seul socialisme ou s'il y en a plusieurs. Au cas où il y en aurait plusieurs, lequel faut-il retenir? Quel est celui qui favorise le plus l'avènement du pluralisme et un développement local auto-centré?

As a response to the failure of the older center-down paradigm of modernization theories at the national level and that of the growth pole theory at the subnational level, new theories of regional development and planning in the Third World emerged during the late 1970's and early 1980's.

But despite this theoretical progress in this field during the last decade or so, government policies continue generally to be based on older theories and the conventional center-down paradigm of development. Government bureaucrats, as well as most theorists in this area, still find it difficult to accept **basic needs, agropolitan development and decentralized spatial policies that advocate develop-**

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ment from below rather than from above. For many, these new theories advocating rural and regional development from below are not development, but rather, a new and unacceptable form of utopianism.

The objective of this paper is to explore some of the ramifications of this new debate about what is called in the literature the regional question, or what I would call the question of transition at the sub-national level. First, I will present a brief review of some of these new theories. Then, I will conclude by a summary of the major criticisms of these as a means to better understand why they have become (in the English speaking world at least) the object of so much criticism and even polemics.

The Agropolitan Development Approach

One of the most popular-and controversial--alternative approaches proposed as a response to the failure of the growth pole approach is the "agropolitan approach", as is reflected in the most recent literature on the subject in the English-speaking world¹. Introduced first by John Friedmann², it was published in a more extensive form in 1978³, and elaborated further since⁴.

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- 1 See for example: A. Gilbert and J. Gugler, *Cities, Poverty and Development, Urbanization in the Third World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); Ch. Gore, *Regions in Questions: Space, Development and Regional Planning* (London and New York: Methuen, 1984); E.W. Soja, "Regions in Context: Spatiality, Periodicity, and the Historical Geography of the Regional Question", *Society and Space*, No 2 (1985) pp 175-90; idem. "Territorial Idealism and the Political Economy of Regional Development", *City and Region: Journal of Spatial Studies*, N 6 (1983) pp. 55-73.
 - 2 J. Friedmann, "A Spatial Framework for Rural Development: Problems of Organizations and Implementation", *Economie Appliquée*, Nos 2-3 (1975) pp. 519-44.
 - 3 J. Friedmann and M. Douglas, "Agropolitan Development: Towards a New Strategy for Regional Planning in Asia", in L. Fu Chen and K. Salih (eds.) *Growth Pole Strategy and Regional Development Policy: Asian Experience and Alternatives Approaches* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1978) pp. 163-92.
 - 4 J. Friedmann and C. Weaver, *Territory and Function. The Evolution of Regional Planning* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979); J. Friedmann, "Basic Needs, Agropolitan Development, and Planning from Below", *World development*, No 6 (1979) pp. 607-13; Idem., "The active Community: Toward a Political-Territorial Framework for Rural Development in Asia", *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, No 2 (1981) pp. 235-61, Idem., "Urban Bias in Regional Development Policy", *Working Paper*, 29, School of Architecture and Urban Planning, UCLA (1981); Idem., "Regional Planning for Rural Mobilization in Africa", *Rural Africana*, Nos 12-13 (1982) pp. 3-20, and idem, "Political and Technical Moments in Development: Agropolitan Development Revisited", *Society and Space*, No 2 (1985) pp. 155-67..

As a strategy of "accelerated rural development" designated originally for rural areas in Asia⁵, the approach is an attempt to deal with all the problems, the practical as well as the political ones, created by the transfer of the growth pole approach in developing countries⁶. And in this respect, the approach is in complete opposition with the growth pole approach.

In order to understand this fundamental opposition, it is important to understand, I think, the whole philosophy upon which the agropolitan development approach is based. To begin with is the rejection of the old paradigm of development, the unmodified pursuit of which would be "suicidal"⁷? This rejection is, of course, concerned with the spatial as well as with the non spatial dimensions of development. Second is the adoption of the basic philosophy of the emerging new paradigm of development, which is "no longer economic growth but social development, with focus on specific human needs"⁸. Also, according to the new paradigm, priority attention must be given to rural development; the planning for this rural development "must be decentralized, participatory and deeply immersed in the particulars of local settings". This planning, therefore, "will have to be based on qualitative judgments as much as on quantitative techniques, and qualitative judgements as much as on quantitative techniques, and its style will have to be transactive"⁹.

Based on, these premises; J. Friedmann and M. Douglas's objective "is to propose a spatial policy for the emerging paradigm"¹⁰. After a survey of past development strategies in several Asian countries and an analysis of their failure, Friedman and Douglas propose a new approach, of which the major features can be summarized as follows:

-Contrary to the growth pole approach, and this is one of the most important features of the agropolitan approach, basic needs are given an absolute priority rather than a "complementary" role. Related to

5 And subsequently for Africa (Friedmann, "Urban Bias...") and all agrarian societies of the Third world (Friedmann, "Political and Technical Moments...").

6 For an overview of this issue, see: E. Moudoud, "The Fall and Rise of the Growth Pole Approach", *Discussion Paper, N 89*, Department of Geography, Syracuse University, November 1986.

7 Friedmann and Douglas, op. cit., p. 164.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

this, and although the diversification of the rural economy through the development of rural industries is required¹¹, the development of agriculture is central to the strategy.

-These two socioeconomic objectives are related to a third objective: the stabilization of the rural population and the reduction therefore of rural-urban migrations. In order to do so, an attempt is made to transform the countryside by introducing and adapting elements of urbanism to rural areas. This can be done by redirecting investments in urban centers to these rural settings transforming them in "agropolises" or "cities-in-the-field".

-The spatial framework of the strategy is organized upon these "agropolises" or villages. Above the village, there is the central territorial unit of the agropolitan approach: the "agropolitan districts". The agropolitan districts are constituted as a collection of adjacent villages and are centered on an existing market town. Above the agropolitan districts there are the multidistrict regions, which constitute the national territory. The population of each agropolitan district varies according to local conditions from 50 000 to 150 000 people and at the multidistrict region level from 0.5 million to 5 million people¹².

-Finally and most important of all, each agropolitan district is treated as a "single, integrated, and self-governing unit" which has "sufficient autonomy and economic resources to plan and carry out its own development"¹³. Thus, self-sufficiency and self-government are considered the keys for the success of the agropolitan development approach. These two basic requirements are needed to protect the districts from any form of external exploitation. Here again the approach is in complete opposition with the growth pole approach. Since disparities exist not only between core and periphery itself, a policy of "selective territorial closures" is needed. This policy is defined as

... a policy of enlightened self-reliance at relevant levels of territorial integration: district, region and nation. This condition flies straight in the face of the ideology of free trade and comparative advantage and the attempts of transnational enterprises to organize a functionally integrated world economy under its tutelage... It means to

11 Friedmann, "Active Community...", p. 164.

12 Ibid, p. 252; and Friedmann and Douglas, op. cit., p. 185.

13 Ibid.

rely less on outside aid and investment, to involve the masses in development, to initiate a conscious process of social learning, to diversify production, and to pool resources. It means to say 'we' and to assert a territorial interest¹⁴.

This policy of "selective territorial closure", however, does not mean that the approach advocates a pure policy of "autarky". Friedman is very clear about that: "Closure' does not mean, 'autarky', but would help protect weak, peripheral regions against their domination and ruthless exploitation by more powerful core region interests¹⁵". In other words, this does not mean that the agropolitan district

...has complete autonomy over its own affairs, something close, say to political sovereignty. It is not, after all, a closed social formation, even though a large and perhaps a major part of its basic needs are furnished from its own production... The idea is not to create miniaturized agropolitan states (the classical anarchist solution) but a robust, humanly adequate, interdependent, and articulate political community --a social formation that gives full scope to individual and collective powers¹⁶.

In this scheme of development, "which is rooted in the household economy, the village, and the agropolitan district", the role of central government is defined as follows:

... central government must act to inspire, to empower, to guide, to facilitate, to promote, to assist and to support. It must not plan, command, administer, or implement projects of its own unless in support of the entire effort and therefore beyond local capacity¹⁷.

Here are very briefly, what seem to me the major features of the agropolitan development approach, which as a strategy of rural and regional development has its roots in a "federalist" political philosophy. It is interesting to note in this respect that in arguing that "in agropolitan development the age-old conflict between town and

14 Friedmann and Weaver, op. cit., P. 195.

15 Friedman, "Urban Bias...", p. 18.

16 Friedmann, "Basic Needs...", p. 610.

17 Friedmann, "Active Community...", p. 267.

countryside can be transcended", Friedmann and Douglas in a footnote state:

This is not as crazy as it sounds. Under a capitalist framework, it has already been achieved in countries such as Switzerland and Germany, where the contrast between rural and urban has virtually disappeared. Rural, or rather "agropolitan" life there has become simply another "lifestyle"¹⁸.

The two countries given as examples both have a federalist political system. But Friedmann is aware of the problems that could face the approach in countries with "Jacobin", very centralized administrative and political systems, such as almost all former French protectorates and colonies. In countries with this type of administrative and political systems, the success of the strategy will depend on the good will of central governments as Friedmann observes:

Those who look for simple answers will be disappointed. Though necessary, the agropolitan framework does not, by itself, ensure results for accelerated rural development. A framework provides the context within which development occurs; it is not itself that development. The framework, of course, should be facilitative, and it should direct the stream of development activities in the desired direction. But how well it does its work will depend on other circumstances, not least on the commitment of the central government. Action must be locally based and motivated, but the state must prepare the right environment for action¹⁹.

In another paper, Friedmann expresses, however, a much more skeptical, even pessimistic view :

Unfortunately, political approaches to development are not particularly welcome. Because they assume a different distribution of power, they challenge the existing structures. And since they are merely the writings of scholars, politicians can safely ignore them²⁰.

18 Friedmann and Douglas, op. cit., p. 183.

19 Friedmann, "Active Community...", p. 260.

20 Friedmann, "Urban bias...", P. 18.

The Territorial Development Doctrine

Following Friedmann and Douglas, the agropolitan development approach has been expanded by different authors such as Lo Fu-Chen and Kamal Salih²¹, and in a more historical perspective, by Walter Stohr²². But it is Clyde Weaver who, after a first contribution²³, has transformed the approach into a political model of regional development. Using a "quasi-anthropological perspective"²⁴, Weaver elaborates in fact a new doctrine: "the territorial development doctrine"²⁵. Weaver's main objective is to provide a new framework for rethinking the "regional question" and his central argument follows:

My basic theme is that continued functional integration of the space economy, with its attendant territorial division of labor and polarization of economic and political power, is a major cause of such problems as urban congestion, regional inequalities, rural poverty and political rebellion. Despite the conventions of inherited regional development theory, and the emphasis of recent neo-Marxist criticism, I will argue for the potential benefits of territorial development through selective regional closure. Growing regional consciousness, major settlement pattern changes, and the proliferation of regional liberation movements may well provide the necessary incentives, if

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- 21 L. Fu-Chen and K. Salih, "Growth Poles, Agropolitan Development and Polarization Reversal: The Debate and Search for Alternatives", in W. Stohr and D.R.F. Taylor (eds.) *Development from above or below? The Dialectics of Regional Planning in Developing Countries* (New-York: Wiley, 1981) pp. 123-52.
- 22 W. Stohr, "Development from Below: The Bottom-up and periphery-Inward development Paradigm", in Stohr and Taylor (eds.) *op. cit.*, pp. 39-72.
- 23 Friedmann and Weaver, *op. cit.*
- 24 W.J. Coffey and M. Polese, "Local Development as Element of Regional Policy: An Exploratory Analysis" (paper presented at the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Canadian Regional Science Association, University of Ottawa, 7-8 June 1982).
- 25 C. Weaver, *Regional Theory and Regionalism: Towards Rethinking the Regional Question*, School of Architecture and Urban Planning, UCLA, 1978, *idem*, "Development theory and the regional question: A Critique of Spatial Planning and its Detractors", in Stohr and Taylor (eds.) *op. cit.*, pp. 73-105; and *idem*, *Regional Development and the Local Community: Planning, Politics and Social Context* (New York: Wiley, 1984).

*properly perceived and acted upon, to usher in a new era of decentralization and regional self-determination*²⁶.

As we can see, Weaver is going far more of what Friedmann and Douglas have proposed in terms of decentralization. Based on the premise that "regional development is above all an ethical/political question²⁷", territorial development is defined in these terms:

*Territorial development simply refers to the use of an area's resources by its residents to meet their own needs. The main definitives of these needs are regional culture, political power, and economic resources. Territorial development can be compared and contrasted to the idea of functional development, i.e., the narrow exploitation of a region's potentials only because of the role these play in the larger international economy*²⁸.

Now, how can this be achieved? Weaver's response: "The animating force behind territorial development -the thing that makes it possible - I have called wilful community²⁹". But what does this mean?

*This means clarifying and transforming the shared heritage within regional communities in regard to the things they value and want to accomplish, and using this new feeling of purpose and unity as the basis for bold new initiatives and actions. Two of the major substantive components of territorial development are selective regional closure and strategic regional advantage*³⁰.

As we can see we have here a political doctrine of regional development, the heart of which are: "wilful community action" and "selective regional closure". But why is this so important for Weaver? Weaver's response:

Trade theory, one of the foundations of regional science, makes the presumption that transactions between economic actors take place on the basis of equal ex-

26 C. Weaver, *Regional Theory and Regionalism...*, P. 2 (emphasis in the text).

27 C. Weaver, *Development Theory and the Regional Question...*, p. 93.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

change. Even the briefest reflection upon the daily newspaper will quickly dispel such quaint notions, however, and this acceptance as the basis for self-interested economic policies is only in the advantage of those in favored positions of economic and political power. Regions cannot specialize in "what they do best" and expect to get equal return for their efforts, because the "resources at the disposal of some other areas and the transnational corporations give them an undeniable bargaining edge. So for the weak, the "lagging", the disinherited, the only feasible solution is to refuse to play the game by rules that, by definition, will beat them"³¹.

Now, how can the territorial development doctrine, in terms of regional planning, be applied? Weaver provides a list of some of the key components that such an approach should include. Here is a brief summary of these actions:

- the creation of jobs through meeting regional needs;
- the use of residential activities as the key to growth;
- the development of region-serving infrastructure and community facilities;
- the development of a network of services and community institutions;
- the promotion, and this is crucial in the approach, of regional identity and historical regional values through education; (there is no room here for "Jacobin", centralist education systems that teach all children of France, for example, that they are all descendants of the Gaulois!
- the development of local control and a decentralized political system, too, are of a crucial importance in order to insure that the concepts of wilful community and territorial control of the regional economy (this means a control over the capital accumulated in the region and over the multiplier effects of economic activities, as well as the control over extraregional linkages) are a reality;
- at the spatial level, decentralization is also necessary in order to achieve a spatial mix of rural-urban activities. A growth centers doctrine must be replaced by a model of overall territorial development.
- Finally, for natural resource development to contribute to territorial development, three conditions must be met: (1) the proportion of resources allocated to earning foreign exchange should be

31 Ibid.

critically scrutinized and regulated; (2) the bulk of resources should be used to meet regional production needs; and (3) restraint and conservation should be the bywords³².

We have here the whole argumentation of the approach and of the philosophy upon which it is based. And as we can see, it is in fact a political project. But it is not however, as the agropolitan approach, a "classic anarchist solution". Weaver does not neglect the role of central government, although "regional development is a regional project"³³. And in this respect it is clear that his theory is deeply influenced by the work and ideas of Patrick Geddes, Peter Kropotkin and of course Pierre-Joseph Proudhon³⁴. Weaver himself recognizes the "utopian" character of his theory, given the nature of most political regimes in developing countries. He argues, however, that:

It is no use trying to dream away the power of transnational corporations. They exist. It is no less futile attempting to deny the realities of the centralizing nation-state. But accepting their ideologies is a matter of belief. There are many worlds and many realities - it is for us to choose - and this choice is the paramount fact of regional life. Functional power is dependent upon suppression of regional consciousness and the will of territorial communities. The fate of a community of destiny lies in the common beliefs and values of its people. To mention only a few striking examples, think of the Irish in 1920, India in 1945, Algeria in 1960. Who would predict their success? Their political victories were a matter of will. What has not been sufficiently recognized is that the economic world is analogous. All technocratic propaganda notwithstanding, economy is, indeed, political economy³⁵.

32 For further details, see Weaver, *Development Theory and the Regional Question...*, pp. 93-98; and idem, *Regional Development and the Local Community*, chap. 8, pp. 140-59.

33 C. Weaver, *Development Theory and the Regional Question...*, p. 95.

34 C. Weaver is the only American regional scientist I know, who has tried to integrate in his work the great heritage, but completely unknown, of Proudhon in the American tradition of regional development and planning; see Weaver, *Regional Development and the Local community...*, see especially chapter 3, pp. 31-56.

35 C. Weaver, *Development Theory and the Regional Question...*, pp. 96-97.

And then he concludes:

*In its broad outlines territorial development through wilful community action cannot help but appear less "practical and realistic" than the established orthodoxies... But this apparent utopianism will quickly fade as more information comes to light on the history of regionalist thought and the numerous regional movements now in full swing in many parts of the world come to fruition. As it becomes more fully elaborated the territorialist doctrine can provide a vital response to the regional question and a workable strategy for development from below*³⁶.

The Transformational Development Approach

The third major new approach I would like to review is Dennis Rondinelli and Kenneth Ruddle's regional development strategy³⁷. In line with the "development from below" school, Rondinelli and Ruddle, as a response not only to the failure of the growth pole approach but to the whole traditional economic and spatial strategies of the past, propose a strategy that advocates economic and spatial integration from below. Rejecting the assumptions of conventional economic theory, they express the central argument upon which their strategy is based.

*For us, the essence of development is expansion of participation in economic activities through the creation of social and economic systems that draw larger numbers of people into processes of production, exchange, and consumption, that involve greater numbers in entrepreneurship and employment, that increase levels of income for the poorest group and reduce disparities between rich and poor so that a larger majority of people can obtain basic goods, save and invest, and gain access to services necessary to enrich the quality of their lives. Development is a process of expanding the productive capacity of public and private organizations, large and small firms, rural and urban regions of a country at a steady pace*³⁸.

36 Ibid. p. 98.

37 D.A. Rondinelli and K. Ruddle, *Urbanization and Rural Development: A spatial Policy for Equitable Growth* (New York: Praeger, 1978).

38 Ibid., p. v.

Based on this central idea, the strategy calls for local participation and a "deliberate policy of economic intervention and spatial planning of investment" in order to reduce social and spatial disparities³⁹. What characterizes first, Rondinelli and Ruddle's regional development approach, is that, as noted by Friedman, "The authors go further than almost anyone in advocating a regional approach to rural development"⁴⁰.

And indeed, chapter after chapter, Rondinelli and Ruddle provide in a very detailed manner all the social, economic and political - institutional components of their approach. Here is a brief summary of some of them:

- The socioeconomic components include: the rationalization of marketing structures; the development and improvement of agricultural credit and financial institutions in general; the development of basic physical infrastructure; the development of community service; the development of rural industrialization in combination with farming development; the use of appropriate technology; and the development of education and training.

- The political-institutional components are: the development of local organizational capacities and local support services; the development of local capacities of project planning and implementation through the creation of local implementing organizations and managerial and technical labor power; the existence of real political commitment to decentralization and local participation; finally and most important of all, the use of regions as the base for national development is seen as the sine qua non condition of the approach's success.

Here are then, very briefly summarized, some of the major nonspatial components of the approach⁴¹.

But although rural development is the central component of the approach, it does not neglect urban development. Contrary to the growth pole approach, an attempt is made here to integrate rural-urban development in a unique regional economic policy. That is why special attention is paid to all the linkages between economic activities, social, physical infrastructures, and rural-urban settlements at different levels. And the concept of "transformational development

39 Ibid., p. 58.

40 Friedmann, "Urban bias..."; P. 9.

41 For further details, see Rondinelli and Ruddle, op. cit., chapters 4, 5 and 6.

approach" is used here as the process of a gradual and continual economic and spatial integration of existing human communities and their productive activities⁴². Contrary to the growth pole approach as well as to the agropolitan approach, the approach of Rondinelli and Ruddle in avoiding the "urban-industrial" bias, does not fall in the "trap" of what can be called the "rural bias"⁴³. Rondinelli and Ruddle express this position in these terms:

Large cities and rural communities both play crucial roles in the development process. The whole spectrum of human settlements-villages, market towns, intermediate cities, and metropolitan areas-must be strengthened and integrated into a mutually sustaining network of national production, distribution, and exchange centers. Basic structural imbalances are the primary obstacles to achieving growth with greater equity, and the dualism that now characterizes most developing societies must be radically reduced⁴⁴.

So here, as a "bottom-up" approach and although special attention is given to lower order spatial units such as villages, market towns and small cities, their strategy does not neglect the developmental role of larger urban centers such as intermediate cities or regional centers.

Continuing his efforts, Rondinelli, in several other publications, focuses his attention on these intermediate cities, which play a crucial role in the spatial strategy he advocates with Ruddle⁴⁵. It is in the frame of that strategy that Rondinelli develops further his research on the different factors and dynamics of the growth of these cities and the ways of strengthening their role in regional and national

42 Ibid., P. 159.

43 See Gilbert and Gugler, op. cit.

44 Rondinelli and Ruddle, op. cit., p. 52.

45 See D. Rondinelli, "Intermediate cities in developing countries: A comparative Analysis of their demographic, social and economic characteristics", *Third World Planning Review*, N 4 (1982) pp. 357-86; idem, "The Dynamics of Growth of Secondary Cities in Developing Countries", *The Geographical Review*, No 1 (1983) pp. 42-57; Idem, *Secondary Cities in Developing Countries* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1983); Idem, "Towns and Small Cities in Developing Countries", *The Geographical Review*, No 4 (1983) pp. 379-95; Idem, "Population Distribution and Economic Development in Africa: The Need for Urbanization Policies", *Population Research and Policy Review*, No 2 (1985) pp. 173-96; and idem, "The Crisis of Urbanisation in Asia: Finding Alternatives to Megapolitan Growth", *The Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies*, N 1 (1985) pp. 69-86.

development. It is in that frame that their role has to be understood. In this respect, Rondinelli observes that

*Secondary city development strategies are also a reaction to the failure of growth pole policies that attempted during the 1950's and the 1960's to transplant modern, large-scale export-oriented, capital-intensive industries in a few regional centers. Programs for strengthening the network of secondary cities seek instead to build on the existing economic base and reinforce the dynamics of development in intermediate urban centers*⁴⁶.

So, here, a regional policy based on an integrated rural-urban development and focusing more specifically on the crucial role of these intermediate spatial units of the spatial system, is not a simple replication of the growth pole approach. What Rondinelli advocates here, is a secondary city development strategy, which

*... must go beyond creating a few urban "growth poles". Unless development policies seek to strengthen indigenous economic activities and to diversify them in appropriate ways, they will either have little impact or be perverse. Unless the economies of secondary cities are integrated with those of their regions, through appropriate linkage with small cities, towns, and rural villages, their growth may generate strong "backwash effects" that drain their hinterlands of resources*⁴⁷.

In brief, what Rondinelli advocates in the framework of the development strategy he has proposed with Ruddle is a more balanced and integrated spatial development strategy, in which secondary cities and towns could play, through appropriate economic and spatial linkage, their development role. Writing about Africa, Rondinelli, after having analyzed the failure of past economic and spatial development policies in the continent wrote:

All of this suggests that widespread economic growth, a more balanced distribution of population, and more diffuse patterns of urbanization, are unlikely to be achieved by investing heavily in a single metropolitan area and expecting spread and trickle-down effects automatically to raise average levels of income and reduce high levels

46 Rondinelli, *Intermediate Cities*, P. 1.

47 Rondinelli, *Secondary Cities...*, p. 14.

of poverty throughout the country. If African governments want geographically widespread economic development and a more balanced distribution of the population, they

*will have to invest in a more geographically dispersed manner*⁴⁸.

Conclusion

As a response to the failure of modernization theories in general and growth pole theory in particular, new theories of economic and spatial development in Third World countries have emerged during the late 1970's and early 1980's. This paper presented a brief review of some of them.

In this review, I have tried to show how some authors, who are in the forefront of the current debate about regional development and planning in the Third World, have tried to address the problems created by past and present economic and spatial development strategies. Despite their divergences, all of them, it is important to stress, agree on one basic fact: that past and present economic and spatial strategies must be radically changed if both social and spatial, as well as growth and development objectives are to be achieved.

Now, one may ask: why these three alternatives? Why has the focus been on so limited number of alternatives? The focus on only these three alternatives has two reasons: (1) these three alternative approaches are the only most comprehensive and most elaborated alternatives. They deal with economic, political and spatial problems in a holistic and integrated manner. All other propositions I can find in the literature, although very useful, are, however, partial, fragmented and deal with one or few aspects of the problem⁴⁹; (2) As attested to by the literature of the last five or six years, the alternative approaches reviewed here have become, in the English-speaking world at least, the base for the current debate and even for controversies

48 Rondinelli, *Population Distribution...*, pp. 187-88.

49 See for example: Fu-Chen and Salih in Stohr and Taylor (eds.) op. cit.; D.R.F. Taylor, "The role and Functions of Lower Order Centers in Rural Development" *Working Paper*, No 79; UNCRD, Nagoya (1979); and his attempt to conceptualize his propositions in "Conceptualizing Development Space in Africa, *Geografiska Annales*, No 63 (1980) pp. 87-93.

on regional development and planning in the world in general and in the Third World in particular⁵⁰

I have no desire here to get into these controversies. But I have to discuss, even very briefly, this very important aspect of this new approach about the question of the transition at the subnational level and therefore some of the criticism addressed to the alternative approaches reviewed here and state in few words my own position.

The criticism I mentioned came, interestingly, from both non-Marxist and Marxist (I would say "classic" Marxist) side. The agropolitan development approach, for example, was dismissed as "Utopian" and "naive and superficial"⁵¹. Its main author was accused of liking "to dream and romanticize". Marxists critiques - and these are I believe the most serious and powerful critiques - on the other hand dismissed the "new territorialism" for its:

*overly romantic and utopian presentation of regionalism, regional planning and the territoriality of social life, and for its obfuscating interpretation of the history of capitalist development, the role of the state, and the nature of territorial politics*⁵².

Another author simply dismissed all three new approaches as "neo-populist". Because, it was argued, they failed to deal with class interests and because their objective, in focussing on spatial rather than on social change, is to maintain the "status quo"⁵³.

As I said I have no desire here to get into these controversies. But this criticism, and this is the least I can say, is not only unfair, but and most important, misleading. It is a simplistic interpretation of the fundamental key elements of these new approaches. Moreover, it is a dangerous "obfuscation" of the real nature of the debate on the regional question in general and that of the question of the transition at the subnational level in the Third World. As we have seen, in all the new approaches the issue of power (I mean by this political as

50 Again, I would like to stress that I am aware of the work of other researchers in other parts of the world: Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. It is, however, beyond the scope of this paper to review all the current literature on this question (in different languages) in the world. Secondly, and despite all my efforts, it is almost impossible to keep track of all the newly published work - in at least the francophone world - from the United States.

51 See Friedmann, "Political Technical Moments...", op. cit., p. 156.

52 Soja, "Regions in Context...", op. cit., p. 176.

53 See Ch. Gore, op. cit., chapter 5, pp. 146-171.

well as economic power) is central. By challenging the basic tenets of modernization theories and more explicitly the trickle-down doctrine, they assume a redistribution of power between all socio-spatial entities at the national and the subnational levels. So here the control over local resources and their allocation is fundamental. Again, it is not my intention to engage in polemics. And in fact, the authors of the new approaches have responded themselves to these accusations⁵⁴. My comments are addressed to the heart of this new debate. And I would in this respect limit them to Marxist criticisms. And my own answer would be this very simple question: "Comrades, Marx or Proudhon?". In other words: "Comrades, do we need, when For all those who are familiar with the debate that has and continue to oppose "Marx and Proudhon", and are still concerned about the forms of the transition towards a genuine and democratic socialism - a feasible socialism - the answer to these questions are of a vital importance for the clarity of the debate on the question of "planning" the transition today in the Third World and this at the regional as well as at the national levels⁵⁵.

I have recently by analyzing the historical and political roots of regional disparity in an African country - Tunisia - over the last 100 years, attempted to show that the real issue behind this new debate is not to replace "Humpty Dumpty by Dumpty Humpty" (or "Bonnet Blanc" by "Blanc Bonnet"), but rather, and especially, to find the ade-

54 See Friedmann, op. cit.; D. Rondinelli, "Regions in Questions; A Critical Review", *Third World Planning Review*, No 3 (1985) pp. 263-68, and Weaver's review of "Regions in Questions", in *Society and Space*, No 2 (1985), pp. 265-70.

55 For further discussion on this so vital question, see among others: H. Lefebvre, *La Proclamation de la Commune* (Paris; Gallimard, 1965); G. Gurvitch, *Proudhon, sa vie, son oeuvre* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965) and Idem, "Proudhon et Marx", *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, Janvier-Juin (1966) pp. 7-17; B. Veyenne, *Le Fédéralisme de P.J. Proudhon* (Paris; Presse d'Europe, 1973) and idem, *Histoire de l'Idée Fédéraliste: Les Lignes Proudhonniennes* (Paris; Presse d'Europe, 1981), J. Langlois, *Defense et Actualité de Proudhon* (Paris; Payot, 1976); La rue (Revue Culturelle et Littéraire d'Expression Anarchiste) *Autogestion* (Special Issue) No 29 (1981); Pierre Kropotkine, *l'Etat: son rôle dans l'histoire* (Paris; Publico, 1983); Fédération Anarchiste de Paris, *Centralisme et Fédéralisme* (Paris; Publications de la Fédération Anarchiste, 1983); C. Weaver, "Romance of the Roses: A Discourses on the Path to Regional Reconstruction", *Society and Space*, No 2 (1985) pp. 239-58; R. Williams, "Towards Many Socialisms", *Socialist Review*, No 85 (1986) pp. 45-65.

quate political structures within which regional pluralism and decentralized local development can be achieved⁵⁶. This can be done, I argued, only by the redistribution of power between the state and the region and all other socio-spatial entities from the urban communes to the rural communes. This, of course, was not intended to suppress the state, but to reduce it to its necessary, and unfortunately inevitable, minimum. The fundamental objective of my propositions in this study was to create a political-territorial structure of a federalist type that would guarantee, first, a system of reciprocal obligations between the different socio-spatial entities that constitute nation, as well as the stability of the whole system by getting rid, once and for all, of centralized and centralist political-territorial structures that began, in most francophone Africa, for example to seriously threaten the stability and unity of many countries despite now more than three decades of development and "nation building". It is up to each country, to each society, to find the ways to build these new political foundations. And these, as Ahmed Baba Miske has superbly put it in his "Lettre ouverte aux Elites du Tiers Monde", must be "rooted in the way of life of this society, in its realities and felt as its own"⁵⁷. By adopting the ideological, political, economic and spatial tenets of modernization theories - and this is whether these come from Moscow or Washington, D.C. - most development strategies adopted during the last 30 years or so perpetuate the same exploitative structural relationship between social and territorial entities. And that is the fundamental merits of the alternatives reviewed in this paper. They don't propose recipes, magic formulas or a kind of a blueprint applicable universally, but a new analytical framework and a new basis upon which, and according to each context, something new can be build. In this new framework, everything starts, and not ends, when we get rid of "centralization" and all "hegemonic" structures that favor the very few, the elites. And this is whether these adopt "capitalist" or "socialist" rethoric.

Now, and I can hear it, "Jacobism" and "Stalinists", alike will oppose the same old argument: "You Prodhonists are hopeless! Always coming up with the same eclectic "foolishness"; or that "...regional equality requires a strong centralized socialist state with strong redistributive powers"⁵⁸. I really don't know how to explain to the

56 E. Moudoud, *Modernization, The State and Regional Disparity in Developing Countries: Tunisia in Historical Perspective 1881-1982* (Boulder: CO, Westview Press, Special Studies on Africa, forthcoming).

57 Ahmed Baba Miske, *Lettre Ouverte aux Elites du Tiers Monde* (Paris: Editions Le Sycomore, 1981) p. 87.

58 Weaver, "Romance of the Roses...", op. cit., pp 244 and 249.

"unshakable" Jacobin-Stalinist that the issue here is not to replace the capitalist state by the socialist state (I say this at the risk of playing the devil's advocate!!!), but to have a genuine and truly democratic socialism. Is a "strong centralized state" a guarantee to more justice, to self-regional and local development and above all to what John Agnew has called a "strong democracy"⁵⁹?

Furthermore, the final question I would like to ask (because it addresses the fundamental underlying issue of this debate - a very old debate, indeed) is this: is there only one socialism or many socialisms? If there is only one, and only one, then, there is no debate at all. But if, as I believe, there are many, the questions to be asked, then, are: which one to choose? Which one is more conducive to regional pluralism and self-local development? That of Marx or that of Proudhon?

The debate will continue. But and whatever my "Proudhonism", I cannot think in this regard, of a better conclusion than Hermassi's remark, more relevant than ever in his *The Third World Reassessed*, that

It is no longer possible to claim with any plausibility that the industrial societies hold up to the Third World the image of its future; the future of the Third World remains to be invented and in this endeavor, the need for an imaginative social science is as compelling as ever. What is in part expected of it is neither to simply layout the failings of non-western cultures nor to merely decry the overwhelming constraints of the world capitalist system, but to show how, despite inner flaws and outer assaults, Third World people are still capable of making their own history⁶⁰.

59 See John Agnew, "The Intellectual Devaluation of Place and the Possibility of "Strong Democracy", *Occasional Papers Series*, N 5, Center for the study of Citizenship, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, October 1985.

60 E. Hermassi, *The Third World Reassessed* (Berkeley: University of California, 1980) p. 209.