

Editorial Introduction

Volume six of UNCRD's annual journal, *Regional Development Studies (RDS)*, contains eight articles which focus on widely differing aspects of regional development, although the unifying theme of planning for regional development is present in most of them. From a geographic perspective, the volume is neatly divided in two sections as four of the articles focus on countries of South Asia (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka). The remaining articles range from macroviews, *viz.*, developing countries of the Commonwealth, to microstudies, *viz.*, a small town in Japan and a small island country (SIC) in the Pacific, Palau. In between are region-based articles from the US and the People's Republic of China (hereinafter, China).

This *RDS* continues the policy of providing a channel for UNCRD research and training staff as well as a platform for outside contributors to disseminate their research findings. As such, four of the articles in the current issue are wholly or partly from current or former UNCRD personnel.

The opening article in this issue of *RDS*, by Dele Olowu, adopts a broad-based approach to the topic of metropolitan governance. Taking the developing countries, principally those of the Commonwealth, as his focus, the author begins by examining the contrasting viewpoints of the explosive urban growth taking place across much of the developing world. Whereas much of the literature views this growth in a negative light, the author, in contrast argues that it represents an "institutional challenge" to policymakers. He sees the "...absence of effective governance systems in many cities in developing countries" as being among the most "...critical problems confronting these countries today". He considers the primary task of governance in the metropolitan regions to be the improvement of public welfare and advances a model of urban/metropolitan governance which is built around the twin objectives of firstly, identifying institutional, human, and financial resources to be used for developing and sustaining metropolitan infrastructure; and, secondly, mobilizing these resources to provide and maintain it. In his view, the main obstacle to building effective metropolitan governance is the excessive centralization of government in many developing countries and, having observed that, "A decentralized governance model has a greater potential to synergize the capabilities of the state institutions with those of nonstate institutions/actors," concludes the article by listing the essential attributes which decentralized metropolitan governance must include.

Following on directly from this macroview of metropolitan governance is a study which investigates a demand orientation in water and sanitation delivery using the emerging Indian metropolises of Ahmedabad and Bangalore as cases. Listing the shortfalls of the hitherto-practiced supply-oriented planning in water supply and sanitation services, the author, Devyani Mani, argues that, in contrast, a "...demand orientation is potentially more economically efficient, as demand-oriented infrastructure delivery consists of competitive markets, and broader participation of the private sector..." The situations in Ahmedabad and Bangalore are examined in detail and, regarding the former, Mani observes that "Recent strategies aiming to provide services for the poor are effectively incorporating a demand orientation such as the slum-networking programme..." The author notes the importance of achieving a demand-oriented pricing system and of forging successful partnerships for efficient

service delivery. Her conclusions contain both policy recommendations (which, among other things, reiterate the importance of community involvement in project planning) and a training agenda for demand orientation which is considered as being of extreme importance as "...public agencies responsible for service delivery are built around a supply orientation."

The geographic context now shifts from India to China, with Haishun Sun's in-depth study of economic growth and the factors responsible for the widening regional disparity between the Eastern (coastal) and the Western (far inland) regions of China. Sun observes that the dualistic growth pattern of the two regions stems chiefly from the industrial structure, different degrees of openness of the economy, and investment structure. He also notes the importance of historical factors to the growth of regional disparity. The Eastern region has clearly benefitted far more from the open door economic policy pursued after the late 1970s when it was realized that openness is an important mechanism for steady economic growth. Although both regions made progress in opening their economies, by 1995 only 3.1 per cent of total output in the Western region was for export whereas the Eastern region was exporting 17 per cent of its output. Further investigation of divergent regional economic growth is conducted through regression analysis which indicates, among others, that domestically-financed investment is the most important determinant for economic growth in both regions. In summing up the growing disparity between the Eastern and Western regions, Sun concludes that Chinese policymakers need to "...rethink the growth pole strategy that has been pursued since the early 1980s". He then lists some useful pointers for policymakers to begin this process.

Continuing from regional disparity in the world's largest developing country, the next article presents a case study of regional development in the world's largest industrialized country. Mami Futagami's article on the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and its development of energy resources in the context of the transformation of the local economic and natural environments is a well-documented study which closely examines the historical development of this internationally-famous entity. The author traces the way in which the TVA exploited energy resources, identifying three distinct stages of energy development, i.e., hydropower, coal-fired, and compound power generation, with the latter incorporating an element of nuclear power since the 1980s. Her account of how the lengthy disputes of the 1970s forced the TVA to become more accountable to public scrutiny makes interesting reading and has relevance to the environmental debates concerning large-scale projects of the late 1990s. In addition, her assessment of the TVA programme in terms of the development of the regional economy and the sustainability of the natural environment will be of interest to anyone involved in the long-running struggle to ensure that environmental considerations are incorporated into the development process. She concludes the study by delineating the uncertainties which cloud the future of the TVA.

The fifth article focuses on regional development at a level far removed from the giant TVA programme of the previous article. Masatoshi Kitagawa, in an intriguing study, highlights the problems facing a declining regional town in central Japan, Kiinagashima, and compares them with the development context of a SIC in the Pacific, viz., Palau. Despite their apparent contrasts in almost every detail, the author draws some surprising parallels in their experience and shows that each can derive lessons from the other in drawing up effective revitalization plans. Kitagawa notes the importance of improving the educational opportunities in both places and shows

that in terms of economic revitalization, some type of ecotourism development could be a potential way forward for both Kiinagashima and Palau. But perhaps his most important observation is that no matter what development strategy is adopted, increased collaboration and partnership initiatives with surrounding entities are indispensable for both.

The final three articles in this issue of *RDS* are all from South Asia, although their areas and scales of concern differ considerably. Muhammad Ziaulhaq Mamun and A. T. M. Nurul Amin address the problem of settlements and agricultural activities in flood- and erosion-prone areas of Bangladesh. In a minutely researched case study of an erosion-prone *thana* in Barisal district along the Meghna river, they argue that well-planned water transport provision between safe residential land and rich, though insecure, agricultural land would promote ecologically sustainable development in riverine Bangladesh and help facilitate a drastic reduction in the damage and loss of life which occur during the devastating flooding which regularly affects the country. In their conclusion, they add that, "Fast-moving water transportation services bear significant potential to alter the prevailing risky settlement pattern in this large and volatile riverine area." It is asserted that by increasing the density of human settlement in the safer areas, more diversification of economic activities will take place which would, in turn, increase the potential for nonfarming employment. The authors regard such a diversification as essential for the future of Bangladesh.

Jayant Kumar Routray's article addresses the topic of local development planning in Nepal and provides an expansive background to the methodological and operational issues at the district and subdistrict levels. Having established the consensus regarding the concept of local development planning, i.e., that it is "...to promote and sustain development involving people at the lowest level of planning," the author goes on to expound on the principles of local development planning, the main planning issues, and the content of local development plans. He also describes the participatory, strategic, and integrated approaches to planning, providing a useful schemata of the latter. The role of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in local-level (district) planning in Nepal is well-covered as is the administrative framework within which district planning takes place. His adoption of SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis of the country's district plans provides a rapid appraisal technique with wide-ranging applicability. He concludes that the methodological and operational issues centre "...on planning data base, developing greater levels of planning professionalism...internalizing the planning process, and expanding local development funds, among others". In a realistic finale, he observes that although "...the current planning process looks both impressive and promising...there is room for further improvement and modifications in the years ahead."

The eighth and final article focuses on Sri Lanka where Wimal Rankaduwa and N. S. Cooray conduct an econometric analysis with the aim of determining the degree of economic dualism in the island economy. The authors contend that "the degree of dualism" or the extent to which export and nonexport sectors are integrated into each other, can be "...considered an indicator of the level of overall development". Following lengthy analysis through the utilization of advanced tests of causality, the authors are able to determine from their results that "... Sri Lanka has not yet achieved a satisfying degree of internal economic integration in which the growth of exports and nonexports is mutually reinforced." In interpreting any positive or

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negative implications for the Sri Lankan economy as a whole, the authors employ considerable caution.

It is to be hoped that with this new collection of articles on pertinent aspects of regional development, *RDS* will have strengthened its original objective of bringing issues of topical concern to a wider audience.