

Editorial Introduction

This is the ninth volume of *Regional Development Studies (RDS)*, a journal of the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD) which focuses on various problems of regional development in developing and transitional economies. The articles in this volume, eight in all, cover a wide range of issues in a number of very different types of developing economies, from the People's Republic of China (hereinafter, China) to Jamaica, and from four countries of Sub-Saharan Africa to Cambodia. As with previous issues of this journal, not all the articles relate directly to ongoing areas of research at UNCRD but all are concerned with various aspects of the planning dimension of regional development.

The eight articles group themselves neatly into two distinct sections; the first of which concerns aspects of human security — coincidentally, one of the chief research project areas of ongoing work at UNCRD. The four articles in this section comprise studies on the changing face of social welfare in Eastern and Southern Africa; human security, specifically relating to the health situation in Nepal; social welfare and the human security context in the Indian state of Kerala; and problems of food insecurity in rural Cambodia. The second section is a collection of wide-ranging studies which cover topics such as business supports and private sector development in Viet Nam; tourism development in Jamaica; historical regional disparities in China; and territorial management in relation to the concept of “the knowledge society”.

Edwin Kaseke has written the opening article which is based on the findings of a regional social security research project conducted in four Sub-Saharan countries in Africa. Entitled “Informal Social Security in Eastern and Southern Africa,” the author surveys Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe and argues that formal social security systems in these countries do not provide any useful security for the vast majority of the populations, which are largely constituted of the poor. Citing the research findings, he notes that informal social security is of two distinct types — traditional support systems (mostly based on extended family relations) and self-organized mutual support systems. The latter have evolved, and continue to evolve, due to the gradual withering of the former, resulting largely from the dual processes of industrialization and urbanization. Among his suggestions for strengthening informal social security systems are to, firstly, increase the memberships of self-organized schemes; secondly, to provide leadership training to mutual aid groups; and thirdly, to establish linkages between informal and formal social security systems. His conclusion that “Confining government efforts to formal social security will only serve to exacerbate existing inequalities between the rich and the poor” should serve as a wake-up call to all those involved in the provision of social security in Sub-Saharan Africa and beyond.

Ek Raj Ojha, in “An Analysis of the Health Dimension of Nepal's Development and Recommendations for Improvement” then takes a close look at the situation regarding the provision of health services in this land-locked Himalayan country. In his well-referenced analysis, the author discusses the factors which are contributing to the current backward state of health care in Nepal, listing such difficulties as inadequate financial resources, access problems (particularly in the remote rural re-

gions), weak institutional framework, and poor policies and programmes. In noting the considerable development disparities in the country, the author notes the drawbacks of the current system which seems to concentrate resources in more prosperous regions and devotes too much attention to sophisticated installations in privileged urban areas at the expense of large-scale primary health care infrastructure across the country. His conclusion vigorously advocates reversing these trends.

The third article in this volume of *RDS* focuses on the Indian state of Kerala. Written jointly by Annemie Maertens and Annelies Deuss, the article explores "Kerala's Development Achievements from a Human Security Perspective". According to the authors, "...Kerala represents a paradox in that it enjoys a high level of social development while at the same time suffering from low economic development." They set out to show that while low levels of economic development undoubtedly pose a threat to the continued good performance in social welfare indicators in this southwestern state, the "Kerala Model" is not unsustainable as some observers have suggested. By enhancing education levels through a focus on contemporary "knowledge-based and service industries," in other words following the strategies successfully adopted in other Indian states — notably neighbouring Karnataka — Kerala would be able to achieve a more economically secure future for its inhabitants and in so doing continue to guarantee their human security.

The next article, and the last in the human security section of the journal, is by Bashiru Mohamed Koroma and describes a UNCRD research project in Cambodia which sought to determine levels of food insecurity in four rural settlements. Employing participatory action research (PAR), four villages were identified for study and detailed interviews conducted. The article describes this process and notes the importance of high quality communications with the respondents. Detailed results of the interviews/discussions are included, in matrix form, and the various types of problems and vulnerabilities together with the form of coping mechanisms employed by the villagers are outlined. Among the project's findings were the identification of such self-reinforcing human crises as lack of mutual assistance among villagers, inadequate access to land, pervasive health risks resulting from unfavourable climatic conditions, unsafe drinking water, and prevalence of diseases. The author recommends instituting cost-effective irrigation systems, and widening access to agricultural land, credit facilities, and subsidies. He also feels that a high priority should be accorded to new/improved crop varieties, better farming techniques, and improved access to markets and government extension services. A particularly interesting aspect of the study is the identification of various types of households resulting from Cambodia's recent tragic past. The author cites returnees' households, those headed by war widows, and the presence of orphans as further complicating the policy measures required but adds that capacity-building of local leadership could pave the way for community organization and mobilization. He concludes on a positive note, viz, "...the greater opportunity from the lessons learned is that commune and village chiefs can serve as catalysts and community organizers to mobilize participation among the villagers."

Section two of this *RDS* begins with an article by Justine Bornstein ("More Like US? Japanese Efforts at Small and Medium-Size Enterprise Development in Viet Nam, 1995-2001") which discusses attempts by Viet Nam to promote a private sector via small and medium-size enterprise development after the mid-1990s. As a framework for her discussion, the author makes a comparative analysis of two re-

ports — from the Government of Japan and the United Nations Industrial Organization (UNIDO) — and compares the differences in their approaches. While noting that each sought the same objective, i.e., “development of a vibrant, competitive private sector” the strategies advocated to achieve this objective differed markedly. In a well-sourced and informative article, the author notes the Government of Viet Nam’s earlier preference for supporting huge state-owned enterprises, and traces the increasing importance given to private sector-led development, particularly after the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s, as a result of donor/investor efforts. While Japanese Government recommendations for private sector growth were based largely on its own post-Second World War development experience, the approach taken by UNIDO envisaged a much smaller role for central government and emphasized the improvement of existing institutions rather than the creation of new ones. Her concluding section focuses on the implications for other developing countries which might consider instituting the Japanese-style approach to expanding their private sectors and cautions that capacity-building should proceed incrementally.

The sixth article is written by Nikolaos Karagiannis and focuses on Jamaica and the potential to further develop its tourism industry taking the “developmental state approach”. In “Tourism, Linkages, and Economic Development in Jamaica: The Challenge of the Developmental State Approach,” readers are given an overview of the country’s recent development and a detailed background to Jamaica’s tourism industry and learn that although the industry constitutes one of the most promising areas for the country’s future economic growth, the way the industry is structured has led directly to Jamaica’s further dependence on outside elements. In turn, this external dependence has led to increased vulnerability to outside “shocks” and produced an overdependence on foreign exchange. The author conducts useful comparisons with Japan’s economic development approach after 1945 and while cautioning against attempts to transplant the Japanese style of economic development to Jamaica, notes that “To begin to be successful will require a high quality of state intervention and a certain degree of commitment by the Jamaican Government to domestic development” — lessons gleaned from the Japanese experience. In listing actions to enhance the competitiveness of the tourism sector, the author emphasizes the need to increase regional coordination and cooperation, particularly in the area of air transportation.

In “Quantitative Analysis of Regional Economic Development Disparity in China from 1952 to 2000”, Xu Jianhua *et al.*, enquire into why research into various aspects of disparity in China’s economic growth over the last 30 years has led to such a diversity of conclusions. The authors analyse various research results and data to obtain a clearer overview of China’s economic development since 1952 and refer closely to research results in the existing literature. Their research indicates that from 1952 to 1979, regional economic disparity assumed an upward trend (apart from during the Great Leap Forward period of 1958-60). Following the economic opening-up of 1978, disparities began to show a downward trend, but after 1990 resumed their upward movement once more. An interesting comparative analysis is made between the richest and poorest parts of the country, namely, Shanghai Municipality and Guizhou Province “...to discover the evolution of the absolute inter-provincial disparity”. After using rescaled range (R/S) analysis, results were derived upon which a number of conclusions were based. Intriguingly, the authors indicate that two of these conclusions, that China’s pre-1978 policy of balanced regional

development did not really bring about a reduction in regional disparity, nor did the lopsided development path pursued since 1991 contribute to an expansion in disparity, suggest the presence of a new research field to explain these phenomena.

The final article in this *RDS* is a complex and original conceptual work entitled "Knowledge Society, Social Knowledge, and Territorial Management". Sergio Boisier, in an article with copious references, having declared that:

...the knowledge concept has fully entered the field of productive systems, competitiveness, and positioning within the territory itself, but the truly social knowledge, an almost tacit knowledge, has still to be articulated within the structure of the development proposals generally formulated at the regional level...

sets out to present arguments designed to assist such an articulation. Among the many ideas contained in this article, the author's characterization of a "new world culture" is particularly interesting; stemming from this new world culture are new technological and social paradigms, new multidimensional international order, new territorial economic growth factors, new territorial development factors, and new action-oriented mental models. Each concept is accompanied by a schematic. Drawing comparisons between Europe and Latin America, the author finds much at fault with the development patterns of the latter. Noting that "...shared knowledge resulting from collective learning becomes the best protection and the best strategy to promote change," the author's synthesis states, powerfully, that:

...the development of a given territory...is not achieved by technocrats, bureaucrats, or policymakers. It is achieved by the people, by flesh and bone individuals who do not levitate...who feel daily that progress is there, but that it is running away, partly because they do not have the knowledge necessary in today's world, partly because they do not have the power to change things, and mainly, because they have not yet discovered that collective knowledge and collective power are nothing other than the two sides of the same coin.

It is certainly to be hoped that this collection of articles is a useful addition to the field of regional development studies. If the brief insights into each contribution, contained in this editorial introduction, stimulate readers into delving deeper into the contents, then its purpose will be satisfied.

Editor's endnote: With the release of volume 9 (2003) of *RDS*, publication of this annual journal will be suspended until further notice. We apologize for any inconvenience caused.