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BOOK REVIEW

**THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS: A SPATIAL PERSPECTIVE BY AKIN L. MABOGUNJE,
ROUTLEDGE LIBRARY EDITIONS: HUMAN GEOGRAPHY. TAYLOR & FRANCIS ROUTLEDGE,
2017. ISBN: 9781138998810. 380PP.**

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ABSTRACT

This book is about development process; it is written from developing countries' perspective and its author discusses the development process from a spatial viewpoint with a focus on the evolution of the intra-national space-economy. In his book Mabogunje argues that, development is a process and that it requires both a restructuring of human organizations particularly in rural areas and a fundamental spatial re-organization of the underdeveloped countries in question. He argues further that, in order for underdeveloped countries to improve the conditions of life of their populations, they must encourage a kind of urbanization and modernization that does not leave the rural areas and their associated populations aside. It was necessary to review this book in order to assess its applicability in today's circumstances given socio-economic changes happening globally. The review has established that, the book is still an important resource for university lecturers and students especially those pursuing economic development, development studies and rural development courses.

Key words: Development, economic growth, economic development, poverty, Africa.

Paper type: Book Review

Type of Review: Peer Review

1. INTRODUCTION OF THE BOOK AND ITS AUTHOR

Akin Ladipo Mabogunje is a Nigerian Professor of geography who in 1999 became the first African president of the International Geographical Union. He is a well-known scholar, who has published more than 15 scholarly books. In 1980 he wrote his first edition of the "Development Process: A Spatial Perspective" published by Hutchinson & Co. Publishers Ltd, London. This volume is a Library Editions on Human Geography published by Taylor & Francis Routledge November 28, 2017. This edition like the first one is written from developing countries' perspective and it discusses the development process from a spatial viewpoint with a focus on the evolution of the intra-national space-economy. In his book the author has put more emphasis on African nations. The book offers a distinctive interpretation of the current situation and policy prescriptions differing significantly from previous literature in the area. In the first part of the book the author discusses the importance of having a clear definition of development; he differentiates between "economic growth and development" and discusses development as modernization as well as a distributive justice. He also discusses effects of colonialism, heterogeneity of underdeveloped countries and changing paradigm of analysis whereas the nature of rural development is

discussed in part two of the book. The last two parts i.e. part three and four are on urban development and national integration respectively.

2. A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE BOOK

Concerning the effects of colonialism Mabogunje argues that, developing countries all over the world are characterized by the retreat of colonialism. This has resulted to increased poverty among underdeveloped countries and poor living standards. In his own words, “.....the most important global preoccupation, particularly of the last three decades, has been the question of the relatively poor living standards and the degrading quality of life of the vast majority of the populations of the world” (p.13). Likewise, the author has noted the heterogeneity of underdeveloped countries; according to him, underdeveloped countries are not homogeneous they differ in terms of size, population and natural resources availability. Development initiatives ought to be context specific, what worked in South Korea may not work in Tanzania.

Concerning definition of development, he differentiates between economic growth and development and describes development in terms of modernization, distributive justice and socio-economic transformation. Mabogunje seriously contests the definition of development as economic growth which defined development as; “a rapid and sustained rise in real output per head and attendant shift in the technological economic and demographic characteristics of a society” (p.36). He argues that, this conceptualization of development certainly gives priority in the development of process to increased commodity output rather than to the human beings involved in the production (p.37). He argues further that, this conception of development makes it possible to think of development as easier to achieve under a tyrant or dictator who, with coercion and violence, can make the life of his people unbearable while taking away most of their production as savings investment surpluses (Ibid).

According to the author, nations exploit their people tyrannize them in the name of economic growth. Indeed, the author here is in line with Mwalimu Julius Nyerere’s argument on development as people centred (Tandon, 2018; 257). Tandon (2018) further argues that, development in the eyes of Nyerere is that which cares about people not things. In his own words, Nyerere argues that, “when we tried to promote rural development in the past, we sometimes spent huge sums of money on establishing a settlement, and supplying it with modern equipment, and social services, as well as often providing it with a management hierarchy . . . All too often, we persuaded people to go into new settlements by promising them that they could quickly grow rich there, or that Government would give them services and equipment which they could not hope to receive either in the towns or in their traditional farming places. In very few cases was any ideology involved; we thought and talked in terms of greatly increased output, and of things being provided for the settlers.What we were doing, in fact, was thinking of development in terms of things, and not of people.....As a result, there have been very many cases where heavy capital investment has resulted in no increase in output where the investment has been wasted. And in most of the officially sponsored or supported schemes, the majority of people who went to settle lost their enthusiasm, and either left the scheme altogether, or failed to carry out the orders of the outsiders who were put in charge - and who were not themselves involved in the success or failure of the project... (Nyerere, 1973)”.

Mabogunje further argue that, development is a process and that it requires both a restructuring of human organizations (enabling organizations) particularly in rural areas and a fundamental spatial re-organization of the underdeveloped countries in question. He states that, in order for underdeveloped countries to improve the conditions of life of their populations, they must encourage a kind of urbanization and modernization that does not leave the rural areas and their associated populations aside; in short, development ought to be inclusive. The author was concerned about the growing gap between urban and rural areas. Poverty is location specific, most poor people nowadays live in rural areas and about 75% of them depend on under-developed agriculture as their source of livelihood. Rural poverty has resulted into increased rural-urban migration which has caused shortage

of manpower in rural areas and overpopulation of most urban areas. Rural-urban migration is a serious developmental issue and should be checked if inclusive development is to be attained.

Mabogunje's arguments are supported by the Lewis-Fei-Ranis model of rural-urban migration¹ which states that; underdeveloped economies like Tanzania consists of two sectors, i.e. traditional subsistence sector which is predominantly rural and a high productivity modern industrial sector (urban). The model assumes also that, people normally move from a traditional subsistence sector to modern urban industrial sector for economic reasons (jobs, better salaries/wages, markets etc). It also assumes that; traditional subsistence sector consists of zero or very low productivity and surplus labour (discouraging factor) while modern urban industrial sector is characterized by high productivity and employment opportunities (encouraging factor). Lewis-Fei-Ranis model further assumes that, when people migrate from the subsistence sector (rural) to the modern sector (urban), the wages should be higher in the urban sector than in the subsistence sector by a small but fixed amount. According to this model, people are more likely to migrate from Mukono to Kampala or from Mlandizi to Dar-es-salaam in search for better life than otherwise. However, the theory has been criticized by many scholars concerning its assumption on wage rate.

The theory assumes constant wage rate in the capitalist sector until the supply of labour is exhausted from the subsistence sector. This is unrealistic because the wage rate continues to rise over time in the industrial sector of an underdeveloped economy even when there is open unemployment in its rural sector. Others like Subrata (2003) and Ercolani and Wei (2010) have argued that, this is a one-sided theory because Lewis does not consider the possibility of progress in the agricultural sector. As the industrial sector develops with the transfer of surplus labour, the demand for food and raw materials will rise which will, in turn, lead to the growth of the agricultural sector.

The author argues further that rural development is the only viable approach to development. In his own words; Mabogunje emphasizes that, "after many years of inadequate emphasis, during which pride of place was given to industrialization, it is now becoming generally recognized that rural development represents perhaps the only logical way of stimulating overall development" (p.94). He conceptualizes rural development in terms of projects and programmes directed towards improving the condition of life of rural poor. He outlines programmes and projects such as those directed towards agricultural development of cash crops in Kenya, Agricultural Marketing Co-operative Societies (AMCOS) in Urambo Tanzania, the Mali Cotton Production Project of 1950s. Today the project approach is well taken on board by most governments for instance in Tanzania we have the Tanzania Rural Roads Authority (TARURA) a grand project aimed at developing the rural roads network countrywide and the Rural Energy Authority (REA) geared toward electrifying the rural areas. However, care must be done in management of these projects to ensure specifically value for money is realized. While I agree with the author on project approach, I should emphasize that rural development is more than mere introduction of a project; even industrialization and human resources development are part of efforts to develop the rural areas. Governments need trained personnel to be able to manage the projects in rural areas, most projects during 1960s failed due to lack of qualified manpower.

On similar note, Mabogunje considers the importance of land reform in facilitating rural development. In his own words, he argues, "it is perhaps necessary to deal first with the land and then to consider the appropriate settlement and community systems that goes with it.....nonetheless, the spatial reorganization of land must aim, first, at ensuring that rural lands enter into the stream of current societal assets and can be used and treated as capital in all senses of that word; second, at doing away with small, scattered holdings of farmers so as to facilitate the introduction and adoption of more appropriate systems of agricultural production and management; and third, at preventing smallholder cultivators from being easily dispossessed by emerging class of rural capitalists (p.105-106). Talking on "land dispossession" the author is raising a critical issue which today is widely known as

“land grabbing”. Scholars and policy makers alike agree that land grabbing whether internally originated or externally originated is a serious developmental issue which may affect the environment, economy, social welfare and human rights at large. Land grabbing is the control - whether through ownership, lease, concession, contracts, quotas, or general power - of larger than locally-typical amounts of land by any persons or entities - public or private, foreign or domestic - via any means - ‘legal’ or ‘illegal’ – for purposes of speculation, extraction, resource control or commodification at the expense of peasant farmers, agroecology, land stewardship, food sovereignty and human rights (Batterbury and Ndi, 2018).

Commenting on protecting the local communities against land grabbers Cotula, *et al.* (2009:7) argues that, many countries do not have in place legal or procedural mechanisms to protect local rights and take account of local interests, livelihoods and welfare. Even in the minority of countries where legal requirements for community consultation are in place, processes to negotiate land access with communities remain unsatisfactory. Lack of transparency and of checks and balances in contract negotiations create a breeding ground for corruption and deals that do not maximize the public interest. Insecure use rights on state-owned land, inaccessible registration procedures, vaguely defined productive use requirements, legislative gaps, and compensation limited to loss of improvements like crops and trees (thus excluding loss of land) all undermine the position of local people. The problem according to Palmer (2013) is that there is no political will to do this. In fact, many African governments have embraced the shift to large-scale farming, and are making land available to agribusiness on favourable terms. Policies in recipient countries, not just global market forces, have favoured the land rush.

Mabogunje’s arguments on rural development are well supported by Chambers (1983) though in a different way. Mabogunje argues more on the use of rural development as an approach for a broad-based inclusive development whereas, Chambers in his book “rural development putting the last first”; argue more on the “rural neglect”. He put five major things critical for rural life: poverty, physical weakness, isolation, vulnerability and powerlessness. According to Chambers all are important but vulnerability and powerlessness deserve more recognition and analysis. Chambers argue that rural areas in underdeveloped countries are neglected. He explains the neglect of the rural areas using the six biases. According to him, we can only develop the rural areas if we avoid biases. These biases are: Spatial biases; the project bias; person bias; dry season bias; diplomatic biases and professional biases (Chambers, 1983:13). For example, commenting on ‘dry season bias Chambers argue that, experts normally go to rural areas during the dry season the reasons they give is that roads are impassable during the wet/rainy season, food prices are high, it’s time for cultivation and infectious diseases are prevalent (Chambers, 1983:17).

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main objective of this book review was to critically assess the suitability of the book for various purposes and its applicability in today’s circumstances given socio-economic changes happening globally. The review has established that, the book is a very good resource for university lecturers and students especially those pursuing economic development, development studies and rural development courses. It is an important resource book for researchers on underdeveloped economies and policy makers. It is important to note that, despite its focus on developing countries, the book is of immediate relevance to Africa. This is evidenced by its examples and case studies. This book should continue be used in teaching at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels in Africa and the Global South at large.

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Endnotes

¹ The model was created by Nobel Laureate Prof. W. Arthur Lewis in 1954 and formalized by Prof. Gustav Ranis and John Fei in 1961. [<https://www.slideshare.net/MangasiniKatundu/rural-urban-migration-56549119>]