

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

- POLÍTICA REGIONAL Y DESARROLLO ECONÓMICO*. By E. EGNER. (Bilbao: Ediciones Deusto, 1967. Pp. 197.)
- ACTION-ORIENTED APPROACHES TO REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING*. Edited by A. BENDAVID-VAL and P. P. WALLER. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975. Pp. 134.)
- CAHIERS DES AMÉRIQUES LATINES: NUMÉRO SPÉCIAL VILLES ET RÉGIONS EN AMÉRIQUE LATINE*. Edited by O. DOLLFUS. (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1973. Pp. 440.)
- PLANIFICACIÓN Y ESTUDIOS URBANO-REGIONALES EN CHILE Y AMÉRICA LATINA*. By A. AMMON, M. MORALES, H. SASSENFELD, AND G. VEGA. (Santiago: Instituto Latinoamericano de Investigaciones Sociales, 1973. Pp. 89.)
- MODO DE PRODUCCIÓN Y METROPOLITANIZACIÓN EN AMÉRICA LATINA*. Edited by L. PARISI. (Santiago: ILDIS, 1972. Two vols., pp. 229, 201.)
- LECTURAS EN PROBLEMAS URBANO-REGIONALES*. Edited by M. MORALES. (Santiago: ILDIS, 1973. Pp. 108.)

The scope of regional development studies has never been easy to define. Nowhere is this better demonstrated than in the collection under review. Represented here are the practical planner's handbook, the descriptive regional monograph, and the compendium of regional theory. Perhaps the only common element is the scale of analysis: all are concerned primarily with subnational areas, their internal characteristics, their evolution and future development, and their relationship with other areas within the same nation. In reviewing these books, therefore, it was inevitable that the advantages of such a wide range of approaches should be questioned. Was such diversity necessary given the kind of problems being tackled? Was it the result of too weak a research paradigm, or merely the outcome of the extended period (1967–75) over which the books were published?

Clearly, one answer was the spectrum of nationalities and academic disciplines represented among the authors; French, German, and Latin American influences were evident as well as the specialized approaches of the economist, the planner, the geographer and the sociologist. Perhaps such distinct intellectual traditions are bound to produce a wide range of approaches. On the other hand, if common processes and problems exist and are identified and if there is mutual awareness of the different kinds of academic contributions, it is not inevitable. Unfortunately, in this collection neither condition was satisfied: first, there were different ideological influences at work; second, there was little sign in the respective bibliographies of any deep acquaintance with the other approaches.

The real answer, however, was the weak paradigm underlying regional development studies. Only rarely have there been periods when a regional approach has had a precise meaning. One such period was during the twenties

and thirties, when geographers and others followed the example of Vidal de la Blache and examined the relationships between man and nature within a limited geographical area. A series of monographs produced during this period depicted the personalities of discrete regions and the evolution of their distinctive man/land relationships. Such an approach was only appropriate, however, as long as clear regional personalities survived; thus as national industries and interregional linkages developed, a more holistic approach was required.

When much later another paradigm emerged in the regional development field it was of this kind. In place of the idiographic/exceptionalist tradition with its descriptive monograph there developed a nomothetic/quantitative approach that sought generalizations about spatial processes and patterns. In this approach even the boundaries of the region were questioned and could be established only after sophisticated statistical analysis. The era of regional science and of regional development planning was based upon the supposition that techniques should be developed for world-wide use both to understand inter-regional relationships and to help overcome regional problems. Regional economists invented devices such as regional multipliers, input-output matrices, and industrial complex analysis, techniques that are still in common use and, in the right setting, a vital aid to regional development planning. Within Latin America the diffusion of the regional science paradigm started late and is still being adopted by many geographers, regional and urban economists, and government planners. But such a paradigm is unlikely to spread much further, for faith in the quantitative, quasi-functional approach is fading even in the developed countries. Fortunately, or unfortunately, a new paradigm has not yet developed and there is a vacuum in regional development studies.

The appearance of such a vacuum is ironic insofar as interest in the regional question has rarely been so acute. As separatist movements among such as the Basques, the Kurds, the Scots, and the Quebecois have modified national political realities, and as regional economic difficulties have failed to disappear, awareness of the need for a regional perspective has developed. This trend has been accentuated by recent shifts in the social science disciplines towards a greater concern with deprivation, inequality, and differentiation. Since Latin America suffers from acute regional problems but also possesses many competent social scientists concerned with related social and economic phenomena, interest in the regional question has spread rapidly.

But without a paradigm no commonly accepted methodology can emerge; as a consequence every discipline and even subdiscipline has developed its own approach to regional development. The only common methodology in sight is an adaptation of dependency "theory." Dependency and neo-Marxist approaches are increasingly dominating Latin American studies, and those interested in regional development are beginning to succumb. Certainly there are gains from such an approach: a greater emphasis upon social differentiation and class conflict, the adoption of the highly promising concept of the "mode of production." On the other hand, whether such a trend has much to offer policymakers is less certain; the current work describing regional development strategies in socialist countries, for example, seems to add little new to our planning

tool kit. But postulating about the new paradigm for regional development studies is not the main objective of a review. At the same time it does offer a criterion for judging the volumes under consideration: What do the diverse approaches contained in this wide-ranging collection offer either to our theoretical understanding of regional development or to our ability to plan for the future?

Unfortunately, the oldest work in the collection, that of Erich Egner, has little to offer future research. Ten years after publication it appears as a rather undistinguished and limited review of the contemporary regional development literature. The outcome of a series of lectures to both Latin American and German audiences, it offers nothing in the way of original empirical data. Nor in its advice to regional planners does it often rise above the platitudinous. Thus the conclusion to the first part of the book is that "regional economic problems cannot be resolved in a few years; rather they must be the subject of a long-term commitment" (p. 88). It also contains, perhaps inevitably, some insidious value judgments of its era, viz: "A special problem for these [urban] agglomerations is caused by the recently arrived migrant population that generally has not adapted to life in the city. This situation of so-called 'uprooting' produces disorientation and can easily make people a victim of radical politicians or of one or another form of social evils" (p. 78).

The book edited by Bendauid and Waller allows certain comparisons to be made with the earlier work since it also emerges from a German planning background. Its concern is to provide the practical planner with a new approach to regional development. Concerned by the gulf that divides the "comprehensive plan" from the oversimplified "project-based" plan, it argues the virtues of an intermediate "reduced planning approach." While the point is well taken, the theoretical chapters did not convince me that the concept was in any real sense original. This feeling continued through the case studies drawn from Peru, Madagascar, Ethiopia, Zambia, and Nepal. These country cases included some interesting experiences relating to the problems facing regional planners. Nevertheless, few planners will feel that there is anything here that will revolutionize their necessarily highly pragmatic art.

The French contribution shifts the focus of attention from practical planning to the study of relationships between urban areas and their surrounding regions. It also represents a disciplinary shift from economics to geography and contains a series of comparative studies carried out in different parts of Latin America over the past decade. The basic theme of this research was to examine the changing economic and social relationships between major cities and their dependent regions; in particular to consider the nature and origins of the exploitative relationship between the two. The succeeding chapters explore different aspects of this theme. Unfortunately, they describe similar aspects and processes but they do not use a common methodology. Thus, although they come to similar conclusions about the growing economic dominance of metropolitan centers, the detrimental effects of outmigration on rural areas, and the disruptive force of commercial agriculture on the rural labor force, their failure to employ a common methodology begs many questions and prevents direct

comparisons being made between the different study areas. In addition, there is a failure to justify vital assumptions underlying the volume; nowhere, for example, is it argued clearly how and why the relationships between urban and rural areas are detrimental to the latter. If the rural areas are exploited, how does this exploitation take place; is it through marketing relationships, through taxation, through governmental neglect, through commercialization of traditional agriculture, or how? Many of these possibilities are touched upon but there is no effort to weld the pieces into a systematic argument.

Of course, there are many interesting insights into spatial processes in different Latin American countries. The work of the Collin-Delavauds in Ecuador offers valuable descriptions of rural change in coastal Ecuador and identifies an increasing conflict between the needs and demands of subsistence and commercial farms that have replaced the large estates. Similarly Foucher's discussion of regional disparities in Argentina makes the important point that "the solution of the regional problem depends primarily less upon the management of space than upon a global development policy" (p. 352). The principal fault with the volume, therefore, lies not in its individual parts but in the failure to link these studies into the coherent theme that Dollfus' introduction promises. Its other main fault is its academic introversion. The French, no less than native English-speakers, tend not to read widely in foreign languages; in this case there is little reference to key English or Spanish works dealing with related themes. As a result of these two weaknesses, what could have been an outstanding volume offers little in the way of methodological advance or advice to the academic or to the regional planner.

Theoretical advance was the main object of the volumes edited by Parisi and by Morales. These represent the outcome of a seminar held in Santiago in 1972 organized by ODEPLAN and by DEPUR of the University of Chile. The specific aim of this seminar was to discuss and criticize the work underway in DEPUR concerned with the process of metropolitanization in Chile and Latin America. Unfortunately, while this may have been the aim of the seminar, it is not reflected fully in the volumes' contents. Rather, like so many seminar proceedings, most of the chapters were clearly produced prior to the meeting and bear little relationship to one another. While many have considerable merit they do not discuss directly the research project. The editors' own efforts constitute the main attempt to incorporate the process of metropolitan development into a wider theory of development; specifically to integrate it into a Marxist framework. The results of this ambitious task, only partially completed at the time of the seminar are, however, far from satisfactory. The several chapters devoted to this theme are thoughtful in places but generally tortuous in their argument. They are not helped by an uneven mixture of untested hypotheses and empirical results, and are worsened by the failure to tie the statistical results into the argument. In addition, some of the propositions about metropolitan development and some elements of the approach seemed rather obscure; my mind did not easily assimilate complicated methodological distinctions among deterministic, necessary, sufficient, and stochastic propositions and hypotheses. It was with considerable relief, in fact, that I turned to the less methodological, but

eminently more readable, contributions of authors such as Calcagno, Pedrao, Schteinhart, and Torres. By the end of their work I was almost convinced that the complex theory sought by Parisi and Morales had many of the elusive characteristics of the Holy Grail. Many gallant jousts would be fought along the road but such skirmishing would fail ultimately to achieve the cherished goal.

In sum, therefore, this collection of books seemed to offer few clear guidelines for future research. This was disappointing but perhaps not wholly surprising. What was rather disturbing, however, was the obvious failure on the part of most of the authors to read the literature relevant to their themes. Sometimes the main barrier was language but equally often it was one of ideology and purpose; for example, the planners did not read the Marxist literature nor the Marxists that of the planners. Perhaps when it comes to political action single-minded dedication is necessary, but surely academics should not close their minds to alternative approaches. As far as possible academics should read the work of other national and politically motivated groups. The other disappointment was that having read this mixed bag, I had no idea what policy recommendations should be made to planners. The practical planning contributions only offered minor variations on the old techniques that were said to have failed. The Marxist school attempted to explain how the regional problem and the process of metropolitan development could be incorporated into Marxist theory, but provided no practical policy guidelines. Indeed, even today there are few signs of an alternative regional and urban policy emerging from the growing body of Marxist writing and what little has appeared looks remarkably similar to that practiced in capitalist societies. But most writers following what looks like the nearest approach to a new paradigm do not even deign to comment on the future. Their concern seems to go little beyond explaining that regional disparities and problem areas arise out of the workings of the capitalist system. Amen to that, but what comes after the diagnosis?

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