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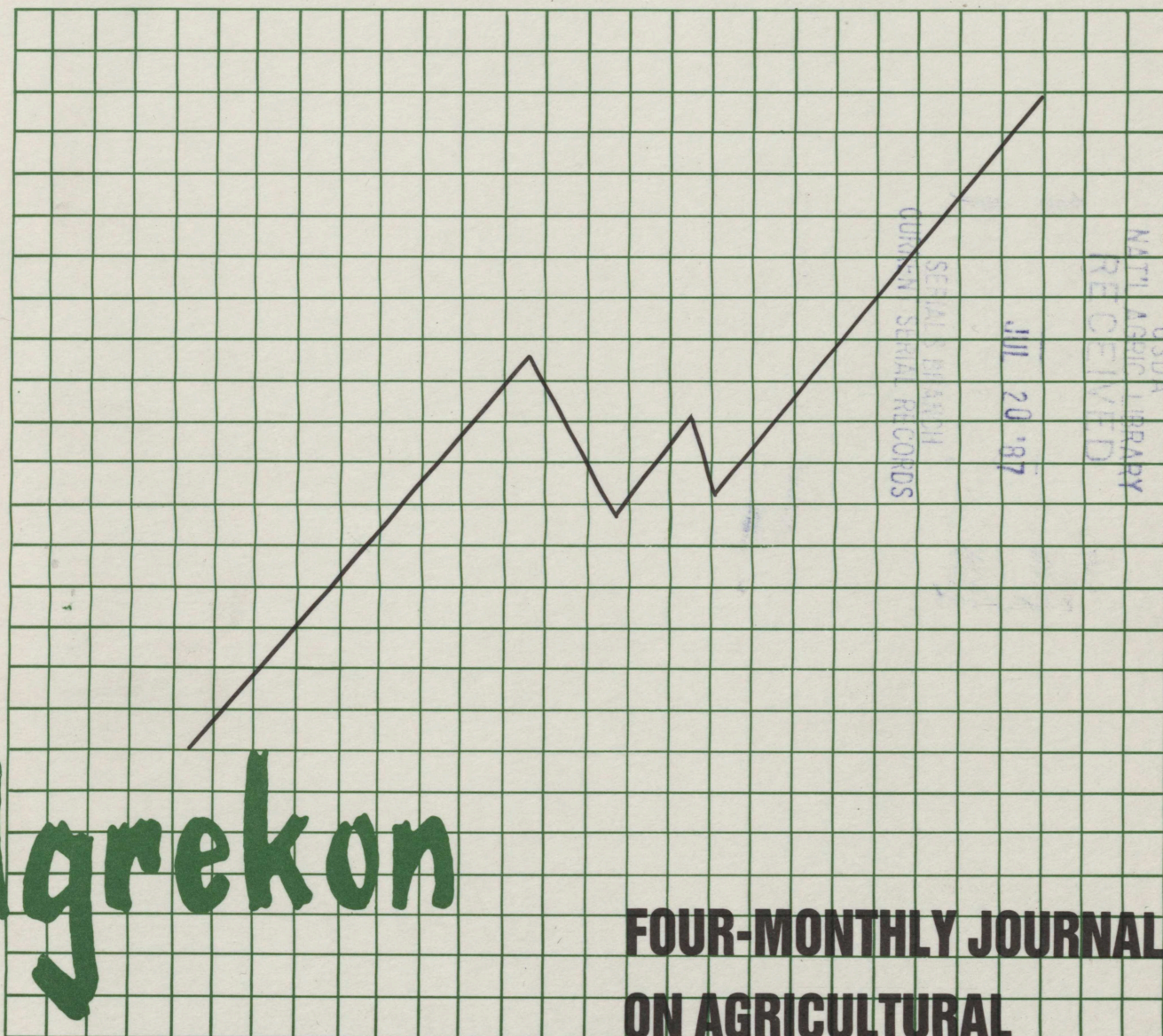
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# RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA

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Development Bank of Southern Africa

The introduction to the paper briefly sets out the constraints encountered in the formulation and implementation of programmes to address rural development. In the first section of the paper prominent features of the spatial economy in Southern Africa are described. These in turn, together with the prevailing general constraint on available resources for development in the Southern African development area, are offered as the main parameters within which the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) is addressing the problems of rural development. In the second section, DBSA's adaptive strategy for integrated rural development is outlined. Central to this strategy is the goal of development programmes to improve the lot of rural dwellers. Participation of the rural population in the fundamental long-term tasks of building organisational and technical capabilities and strengthening their capacities to meet their own needs is emphasised. Lastly, a warning is given that technical and tactical integration of development activities *per se* will not necessarily render the desired results.

## INTRODUCTION

Similar observations to those made by S.S. Brand on constraints in formulating policy and implementing programmes to answer basic needs questions in rural areas apply to rural development strategies as a whole, namely,

- "those inherent in the political, institutional framework applying in the rural areas;
- those arising from perceptions about development that exist among decision-makers within that framework;
- those related to the capacity to identify, prepare, implement and operate projects and programmes", and
- those arising from the controversies and uncertainties about what the applicable rural development strategies should be in Southern Africa.

The last-mentioned constraint is in fact an opportunity. As will be demonstrated below, consensus on applicable strategies is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the successful formulation and implementation of adaptive integrated rural development strategies in Southern Africa. The principal reason is the grossly divergent production, consumption and organisational conditions at regional and local levels. In fact,

uncertainties on a Southern Africa level provide the opportunity to concentrate on appropriate strategies at the local level. In the complex real world, both complementary and competitive relationships exist between production, consumption and organisation-oriented activities. Preoccupation with any single programme area is likely to be self-defeating.

Whatever form rural development strategies for Southern Africa may take, they are unlikely to be tidy in all respects. However, rather than being the result of some clinical process of theoretical constructs, they should more relevantly be the outcome of a continuing interplay of various interests and conscious choices made by political and other decision-makers in the economy and in society, in the closest possible interaction with the rural population of any one particular region.

## PROMINENT FEATURES OF THE SPATIAL ECONOMY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The spatial features of the economy of Southern Africa are a function of its political-economic structure, in which rural development strategies have to be designed.

Three types of areas are identified, viz the metropolitan core areas, the inner periphery and the outer periphery, each located in various parts of Southern Africa; at least some of both more and less developed sector activities are found in each of these areas. The eight regions (since October 1985, 9 regions: A-J) officially identified for the purposes of development planning all contain at least two of the types of areas identified, as well as both more and less developed sector activities. The interregional and intraregional differences observed depend principally on the presence and relative sizes of the types of areas in each region. It follows that regional disparities in the Southern African development area depend not only on the spatial distribution of the modern sector, but also on the distribution of the population as determined partly by economic and partly by political forces, as well as on the location of informal and subsistence activities. The economic imbalances between the core, the inner and the outer peripheries are depicted in Table 1.

The marked contrasts between the more developed and the less developed sectors of the economy contribute to the existence of economic imbalances between and within regions. The more

TABLE 1 - Economic imbalances between the core, inner periphery and outer periphery, 1955 to 1980

Area	Relative share of GGP (%)			Relative share of GGI* (%)			Relative share of the population (%)			Per capita GGP (R)			Per capita GGI (R)		
	1985	1970	1980	1960	1970	1980	1960	1970	1980	1960	1970	1980	1960	1970	1980
Metropolitan core areas**	72,2	68,6 (65,2)	67,2 (64,2)	96,6	95,2	92,9	31,6	31,0 (28,7)	35,8 (33,8)	408	1 183 (1 171)	3 675 (3 637)	386	758	2 903
Inner periphery**	25,2	29,0 (32,4)	28,8 (31,8)				42,6	31,6 (33,9)	26,7 (28,7)		430 (532)	2 112 (2 223)			
Outer periphery***	2,6	2,4	4,0	3,4	4,8	7,1	25,8	32,9	37,5	34	44	201	39	78	364
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	312	535	1 958	269	534	1 939

Sources: 1960 and 1970; Benbo (1976); SA Statistics, 1980; and 1970 Population Census: Department of Statistics, 1976  
1980: 1980 Population Census, Department of Statistics, 1982; Benso (1983)

\*The GGP minus net foreign factor payments. That of the outer periphery is calculated as income from GGP, plus commuter incomes, plus 20 per cent of migrant earnings

\*\*The top figures show the distributions when the three districts of Bloemfontein, Kimberley and East London are included in the metropolitan core areas. The bottom figures (in brackets) show the distributions when these three areas are included in the inner periphery

\*\*\*The outer periphery is defined as the TBVC countries and the self-governing states, as their borders are defined in the years under consideration

developed sector of Southern Africa is located largely within the RSA, excluding the self-governing states. It comprises the relatively large, sophisticated and growing manufacturing, construction and services sectors in addition to the mining and large-scale commercial agricultural sectors. Most secondary and tertiary activities are located within or close to the main metropolitan core areas, and the country's transport, power, communication and other networks reflect the dominance of these areas. Non-metropolitan South Africa contains virtually all the commercial farming activities and most of the mining activity. These areas are relatively well supplied with infrastructural services and service centres, and frequently have close links with the metropolitan areas for the provision of both services and other inputs, and for the sale of output. While these activities are organised largely according to market principles, State involvement in and support of them is important and significant.

The less developed sector is located primarily within the outer periphery and has two major components. It consists firstly of the small-scale, largely subsistence and non-commercial agricultural sector, and secondly, of the informal urban settlements and activities which have recently been growing rapidly. The output and productivity of this sector remain low, and its population has become increasingly dependent on income earned in the more developed sector. Agricultural output has grown only very slowly, or remained stagnant or even declined in the outer peripheral areas and the average proportion of output used for subsistence purposes has risen from 86,5 per cent in 1973 to 88,3 per cent in 1980. In 1980 the average per capita value of non-market agricultural output amounted to only R33.

The problems of poverty, unemployment and underemployment in the outer periphery are serious. It has been estimated that more than 80 per cent of households there earned less than the minimum subsistence level of income in 1980. Open

unemployment, especially among young school leavers, is increasing and was estimated to be about 20 per cent around 1980. At the same time, participation rates are low (35 per cent for men and 19 per cent for women) indicating the extent of underemployment and disguised unemployment. Together with these low levels of income, there is a lack of access to basic services such as health services, clean water supplies, education, transport and communications, especially in the rural areas. The high incidence of malnutrition and nutritional deficiencies, and the infant mortality rate of 130 per 1 000 births in the Transkei, are among the highest in Africa, all bearing further witness to the extent of the poverty that exists in these areas.

#### ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES FOR INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The above description of the spatial economy leaves no doubt as to where priority areas to be addressed through adaptive strategies are, namely in the outer periphery.

Within the constraints mentioned in the introduction above, the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) has, with regard to its involvement in rural development projects, adopted an integrated strategy towards rural development. The Bank views the process of rural development as essentially a learning process. This means that there is no underlying assumption that the Bank (or for that matter anyone else) knows which activities should receive priority and how these activities should be integrated to facilitate rural development. The DBSA has thus consciously avoided developing a "how to" perspective, but has opted for defining three essential elements, namely, production, consumption and organisation - within a broad framework - that direct attention towards the interrelationships between the major components of

an adaptive integrated rural development strategy. Therefore, in its appraisal of projects, the Bank considers systematically and explicitly those relationships that will improve the chances of a strategy resulting from a series of judgmental decisions being feasible and effective. Central to the DBSA's integrated rural development strategy is the goal of development programmes to improve the well-being of rural people. The determinants of well-being, however, are interconnected in ways that can make piecemeal interventions inefficient and often counter-productive to overall policy design. Therefore, the Bank's approach emphasises concurrent and mutually supportive programmes relating to the three essential elements of an adaptive strategy for integrated rural development, namely production, consumption and organisation.

The first element accepts that agriculture is and will remain the principal economic sector in rural areas. However, a more efficient utilisation of the relatively abundant source of human labour requires that agricultural development be broadly based. This means that the expansion of opportunities for productive employment, both within and outside agriculture and including self-employment in agriculture, must be a central objective of development.

The second element involves programmes to strengthen social services - education, health and nutrition as well as family planning. The importance of this element is widely acknowledged.

The third element concerns organisation programmes designed to enhance the institutional infrastructure and managerial skills needed for rural development.

One integrative feature that characterises the DBSA's adaptive strategies is the postulate that broad participation of the rural population in processes of technical and socio-economic change creates an environment that is relatively favourable to the changes in attitudes, motivation and behaviour required for effective implementation of programmes for integrated rural development. Limits to participation that are inherent in a stage of development are clearly recognised. Thus, the Bank's strategic perspective means using all available forms of social organisation - including political, market and traditional structures - for the tasks which they can be made to perform reasonably well, while preserving scarce administrative resources for focused intervention when and where it can do the most good.

From the above, it is obvious that the adaptive strategies followed by the Bank cannot mean a recommendation simply to adopt any or all programmes that may be advocated in the production, consumption and organisation areas, no matter how technically integrated these may seem. Nor does it imply tactical integration of all development activities. On the contrary, the Bank may suggest explicit separation of some activities and a close administrative co-ordination of others.

Apart from the fact that strategic choice also means choosing not to do a vast number of tactically attractive things, widespread and sustained progress towards improving rural well-being requires relentless focusing on programmes that strengthen indigenous capacities to accelerate the growth of output, expand employment opportunities, improve health and nutrition, and slow population growth. Impatience for immediate results may often encourage a relief-and-welfare approach to improving rural life. The Bank recognises the importance and place of short-term measures. These may and should indeed be undertaken in tandem with more fundamental long-term tasks of building organisational and technical capabilities and strengthening the capacities of local people to meet their own needs.

## CONCLUSION

In the absence of blueprint solutions for rural development in Southern Africa, it is concluded that given the myriad obstacles to improving the rural well-being and the long odds against any approach - including the one proposed above - the adaptive strategy to integrated rural development is more likely than its alternatives to promote broad-based rural development by emphasising concurrent and mutually supportive programmes relating to production, consumption and organisation. Adaptive strategies stress the desirability and feasibility of actions: to achieve broadly based advances in rural employment opportunities and agricultural development, to promote widespread rural coverage of social services and to improve the institutional structures and managerial procedures through which rural people resolve local problems and become interlinked with the broader social system.

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