

How to Overcome Regional Gaps and Unequal Development? —The Perspective of the Endogenous Development Theory—*1

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Abstract

In today's world, both North-South gaps and regional gaps (urban-rural) have been widening. The paper proposes the ways by which these gaps can be overcome for underdeveloped peripheral regions. One way is to associate with the Center and proceed in the way of semi-peripheral development: the way followed by newly industrializing economies. However, this way is limited to certain countries in which certain historical, economic, geographic and other conditions were met. The sustainability of this type of development is also questionable. For majority of the regions from which basic factors of production outflow to the Center, the possible way can be that of endogenous development. The paper examines its examples in China and ASEAN countries, in particular, in Thailand. There are examples of local/community development, based on local initiative and local resources, with participation of inhabitants. These models of endogenous development emphasize the role of local/regional culture and the concern for environmental protection. In this sense, the endogenous development is accompanied by sustainable development, human and social development and participatory development. This grass-root type of bottom-up development model constitutes one of the realistic alternatives to the globalization, which promotes everywhere the top-down type of development policy under which various gaps have been widening.

Key words: endogenous development, grass-root development, top-down development, sustainable development, community development, globalization and regional gaps, unequal development

Introduction

In today's world, regional gaps have been widening both internationally and domestically. It may be derived from unequal development, rooted in the unequal pace of capital accumulation on the global scale as well as regional level. However, this unequal development is not necessarily related to natural inequality in development, but rather to the social construction of development. This is our first hypothesis and we will consider a semantic as well as a theoretical examination of the notion of development.

There are two meanings to the concept of development. Originally, the word "development" was defined by German philosopher Friedrich Hegel. He named the unfolding development of civil society in the feudal system as "Entwicklung" and believed that this terminology showed the progress of Reason, which incarnated itself

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the progress of history. In this sense, development was used as an intransitive verb to explain the evolution of civil society. However, this terminology will be used shortly in another sense, i.e. as development work conducted by the state and some authority. In this case the transitive verb is used. In Japanese, two different terminologies are used to indicate the different definitions: the former is “*hatten suru*”—the intransitive verb, and the latter “*kaihatsu suru*”—the transitive verb which needs the direct object. When we talk about “unequal development”, this inequality might be interpreted as stemming from either the difference in the natural progress, or from the consequence of some act conducted by some agent in the development work. If we realize that modern development work has been conducted both by the state and by business enterprises, we might believe that this inequality in development is rooted in the act of development, rather than the spontaneous result of the evolution of each unit.

So far, we have seen that there are two interpretations of the term development in the occidental tradition—the intransitive verb and the transitive verb. Japan has adopted the second notion of development in the process of modernization and economic growth that is why, in official literature, the terminology “kaihatsu” (in Thai, *pattana*), has been used. However, I would like to add that in Buddhist thought, there is another interpretation of development that was translated into Japanese as “kaihatsu”. This means the self-awakening to the truth or the opening of one’s mind to the universal truth (dharma). This is another use of the terminology related to development, since “kaihatsu”—the transitive verb comes originally from the intransitive verb “kaihatsu” (*pavanā*) in Buddhist literature. The feudal lords adopted this terminology from Buddhist writings when they proceeded to open new rice fields: this is the typical sense of the transitive verb in development work.

For the time being, we will treat the word “development” as having the two different notions of the intransitive verb and transitive verb. Unequal development, which has generated the regional gaps, is related to the second notion—development conducted by the government and/or private business enterprises, and the notion of development work from above denies the endogenous development of local inhabitants/communities, in the sense of the intransitive verb. If the top-down type of development has generated unequal development and regional gaps in the modern world system, then the authentic way to overcome regional gaps and unequal development should be to reestablish the notion of development from within, both in the Hegelian and in the Buddhist sense. We will call this turning of the notion of development from the transitive verb to the intransitive verb “endogenous development”.

Since we have defined the major terminology to be used in this paper, we will turn now to verify our second hypothesis, i.e., the authentic development for the people and of the people to reduce regional gaps and unequal development which will depend on how they transform their notion of development from the sense of the transitive verb to that of intransitive sense and how they realize endogenous development.

Now, we will verify our hypothesis examining the cases of Asian countries, including China and ASEAN, in particular, Thailand. In both of these regions, the trial of correction of regional gaps has been started. We will analyze these efforts. For marginalized and peripheralized regions in the world and regional systems of develop-

ment, there are two ways to correct these income and wealth gaps: one is the associative development with the center, that I call a semi-peripheral development and other is the way of endogenous development. The former can be realized only by a limited part of the system, while the latter requires us to transform our notion of development from the top-down method to that from within. To make this transformation, we need to reexamine our value system which has been formed through materialistically oriented capital accumulation system to a much more diversified value system which will find that our well-being is not necessarily found in a materially abundant life, but rather in a spiritually fulfilled life, including cultural and social relations (Nishikawa 2000A).

1. Development in the Contemporary World

Our world, where regional gaps and unequal development are generated, is the capitalist world where the capital accumulation and economic growth constitute the central axis of the system.

In this system, inevitably, the stratification of the world system occurs, since economic growth requires the concentration of productive resources in some particular area of the system, which is called the "center". The constitution of the center, where capital, technology, management skills, labor and natural resources are concentrated and accumulated, necessitates the transformation of other regions, from where these resources are drawn. These regions are called the "periphery", since these areas are often turned into scarcely populated and ecologically devastated areas where community life has been destroyed.

The North-South gaps, which have risen sharply in this half of the century represent such stratification in the capital accumulation system, since, in the colonial era, the division of labor between industrial centers was monopolized by the metropolitan countries and raw material and food supplying peripheral colonies were formed and developed. This division between the center and periphery historically forged unequal development and has constituted the origin of today's North-South issues.

People often say that the South or developing regions are "undeveloped". However, according to our interpretation, it is not so. Today's Southern countries, mostly former colonies, have "developed", but very unevenly compared to today's developed countries and to one another. Unequal development is the characteristic of stratification inside the system.

Therefore, the developing countries have consistently achieved rather high economic growth of on average 5-6% in the four or five decades since independence, just as they did during the colonial time. However, through this rather high economic growth, the stratification in the system has been further progressed. We have to realize that, in the South, we also see a new stratification of the system/sub-system and much unevenness has developed.

In today's world system, we see three types of gaps have developed: first, the North-South gaps, which has largely inherited the historical stratification of the center and periphery; second, South-South gaps, which indicate large income and other economic and social gaps among developing countries and also those existing even within one country such as the gap between the rich capital city and the deprived rural area;

third, the Urban-Rural gaps, as the growth has been based on industrialization and urbanization, the rural areas have turned into peripheral ones in this process within one country.

The immense world-wide Rich-Poor gaps, which would be surprising even to an alien arriving to this globe, are rooted in this unequal development between countries and regions, as well as in the uneven distribution of power, resources and the fruits of economic growth among them.

These gaps have been appearing in our contemporary world in three forms. First, an increase in poverty. According to the World Bank (2000), the poor population in the world reached around 1,198 million people in 2000. In other words, a quarter of the population in the South is classified as "poor"(whose income is one PPP dollar a day). The World Bank has adopted this criterium of poverty since the mid-1980s. And, in their report on poverty published in 1990, they estimated the number of poor to be 1,116 in 1985 (The World Bank 1990). It seems that the number of poor people has slightly increased during these fifteen years. However, if we take into account the fact that, during this period, the world income had increased from 18 trillion to 30 trillion US \$, i.e., an increase of 70%, we are astonished to see how the fate of the bottom 20% of population had not improved.

The second expression is related to the North-South conflicts. In the early 1990s, when globalization appeared, we tended to believe that the North-South issues which characterized the international relations after 1960s were almost overcome because of the development of the global issues and concerns. However, on the contrary, the North-South opposition still appears as one of the major items of the global issues. This can be seen in the failure of the Cancun negotiation of the WTO ministerial meeting in September 2003, which discussed the liberalization of trade, where the interests of the North and South sharply opposed each other. In recent years, more and more, ODA from developed countries to the South have tended to be oriented towards social development rather than economic growth, which has been commissioned to the private sector in the tide of globalization. This reflects also the rivalry between the North and the South, where the former is much more concerned about the social situation worsening in the latter, which might sharpen the discord of these different international groupings.

The third expression is concerned with the deterioration of the environment as well as the ecological system. The environmental deterioration has been an issue of concern since the end of the 1960s and, that is why, the first UN conference on development and human environment was convened in 1972 in Stockholm. However, since then, with the industrialization in developing countries, pollution and deterioration of environment have been very visible in every part of the South, manifested in air and water pollution as well as in the proliferation of slum/squatter areas in the urban parts and in deforestation, desertification and the constant occurrences of natural disasters such as droughts and floods in rural areas and nation-wide. The recent proliferation of Newly Transmitted Diseases (NTD, including AIDS/HIV, BSE, SARS, fowl influenza, etc.*²) also reflects this deterioration of the environment, the unreflected pursuit of profit at the cost of human health, and the disruption in social relations.

All these expressions of regional and social gaps, poverty, the North-South conflicts and environmental deterioration, are visible in three examples that we would like to

examine in this paper.

Before moving on to describe the case study of these gaps, I would like to make the following three points.

The first is that, under globalization, which has been progressing since the 1990s, these gaps tended to be widened, since globalization is based on marketization, which accelerates the world-wide capital accumulation and economic growth.

The second is that various moves toward checking the effects of globalization mentioned above have been appearing in recent years. These anti-globalization movements can be seen on three levels: one is regionalism, such as formation of the EU or East Asian Community. This move has been promoted by governments. Another is the rise of civil society, which advocates debt cancellation to help the poorest nations, the Tobin tax to check the uncontrolled flow of international capital, the urge for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), and the human rights protection for socially weaker and marginalized populations, etc.

The third is terrorism, supported by quite a different type of civic groups, which intend to stop globalization by causing violence and terror, as was shown in the 9.11 attacks in New York/Washington, D. C..

The alternative to the increasing regional gaps and unequal development that are being examined in this paper, for the moment, does not come under any of the above-mentioned three types of anti-globalism. Rather, it is related to reexamination of development which has been applied from the top and which will suggest the endogenous way of alternative development.

Now, we will examine the concrete cases of China, ASEAN and Thailand.

2. The Development and Regional Gaps in Asia

China*³

The Chinese government announced a Large-scale Western Development Policy in 1999. Since her open-door policy of 1979/80, China has been realizing tremendously high economic growth rates which range from 7 to 8% a year in over two decades. However, this economic growth was very uneven and we know that there have been remarkable differences of development between the coastal area and inland area.

It is called the "East-West Issues", where the East represents the coastal area and the West the Inland area. We see that the high growth and prosperity of the coastal area has been supported by the inflow of natural resources and workforce coming from the West.

Even capital and trained manpower are pulled into the Eastern part. Here, the Center-Periphery theory that we mentioned in explaining the unequal development in the world system applies perfectly to the Chinese case. The West has been losing valuable resources for the sake of Eastern development and its ecological system has been deteriorating due to deforestation and desertification.

Now it seems that the Western Development Policy has been accelerating that phenomenon. WDP consists of the following factors: ①development of infrastructure, such as airports and highways, ②development of natural resources, in particular, oil and natural gas and their transfer to the East ("The Western gas should be transferred to the East"), ③"return the cultivated slope to forest" policy, which suspends the cultivation of

land where the slope is over 25 degree, as the Beijing government realized that the huge flood in the Yantze river area in 1998 was related to the deforestation of the upstream highland area in the West. The government encourages turning agricultural fields into forest in the Western mountain area from where the Yantze as well as the Yellow rivers originate, and ④the development of higher education and science in the West. However, WDP was basically conceived to sustain high economic growth in the East, supplying resources from the West. The infrastructure has been developed for this purpose. Of course, the huge injection of money in WDP will increase the per capita income of Western inhabitants in the decade (though its distribution is still uneven, the majority has been received by big cities, while farmers have been receiving a small amount of allowances in the form of compensation for their withdrawal from the steep slope cultivation and/or a wage in the public work for some sectors of the population). However, after the compensation (fixed for eight years) and the public work are over, the sustainability of development is questionable.

Because, ① and ② combined have accelerated the transfer of valuable natural resources in the West while deteriorating its environment, the central government now proceeded to turn water, one of the most valuable resources, from the West to the East by constructing massive three canals from the Yantze river to the Yellow river in order to ensure the continued industrialization of the latter. Whenever I visit the Western provinces, I am always reminded of the old proverb which says: “The poor who live on the mountain which is full of treasure”, indicating the Arab people before the first oil shock in 1973. The same remark can be applied to the top-down development policy in China.

As for the “return the cultivated slope to forest” policy, there are two schemes: one is administered by the Forestry Department, replanting baby trees on a large scale; another is administered by local governments. Both of them forbid inhabitants to enter the mountain to ensure the survival of the reforestation. The efforts of reforestation have been tremendous, however, in many parts. After several years of reforestation, the erosion of soil is visible, as these areas are not necessarily maintained by the care of local inhabitants. However, there are areas where local people participate in maintaining the greening, while they adopt a combined agriculture and husbandry system, where domestic animal waste is used either for fertilizing the soil or for producing methane gas energy, while farmers diversify their products. They also transform a part of the replanted area into the production of fruit and economical tree products and then market these fruits, nuts and other products. This is called an “ecological agricultural area”, the concept of which was first raised by researchers in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences to protect the ecological system. After experimentation in some villages in the suburbs of Beijing, the trial has been widely developing in the country including in the Western part with governmental endorsement. This type of “recycling society” needs local people’s active initiative and participation, where conservation is assured by community development.

It is my view that WDP, large-scale development policy from the top, will be limited in its trickle down effect on growth, while development with participation of grass-roots people is more apt to realize sustainable development. We will call the latter trial, “endogenous development”.

In China, people say that there are two levels of differentiated development: the coast and the inland. However, in my view, there are not two levels, but three levels of differentiated (unequal) development, which have been going on under the current high growth and WDP policy: the coast, the inland big city, and the inland backward rural villages. The official interpretation of the two level development theory is based on the trickle down theory that the “coast will become rich first, followed by the inland”. Since the open door policy, certainly, the coast (in particular the big cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Tientsin, Kwantong, Daliang, etc. and the surrounding rural area) has developed tremendously. However, the gaps between these coastal cities, inland big cities and inland backward rural villages have rather been widening through this high economic growth and, in fact, the latter supports the prosperity of the former. WDP policy has the effect of perpetuating that. The overall development is far from being realized.

ASEAN

ASEAN countries have a reputation, like China, of having realized high economic growth in recent decades. However, the effects of growth have been very uneven. We might classify the ASEAN ten countries into three groups: the high income group which consists of Singapore and Brunei, where the national income per capita ranged from 25,000 to 30,000 US\$ in 2001, the middle income group, in which Malaysia and Thailand belong, and where per capita income ranges from 2000 to 3800 US\$, and the low income group, in which the six countries, the Philippines (1000 US\$), Indonesia (740 US\$), Indochina three countries and Myanmar (all between 300–400 US\$) are counted, and where per capita income is between 300 and 1000 US\$.

We see clearly differentiated or unequal development among ASEAN countries.

However, the unevenness clearly exists even within one country, i.e., between the primate capital cities (Bangkok, Jakarta, Manila, Singapore) versus the localities.

In the Mekong-Menam river areas, Thailand can be considered the center, while surrounding poor countries, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam assume the role of supplier of raw materials and even human resources to Thailand ensuring the prosperity of that country (in fact, of Bangkok).

The high economic growth of certain countries in ASEAN has been realized through their integration into the world market, the former exporting labor and resource-intensive products to the latter. However, this high growth has been accompanied by its own costs. The concentration of population in the primate cities, the exodus of manpower from the rural to the urban area, the proliferation of the slum/squatter area, migrant workers including sex workers, propagation of NTDs, pollution, deforestation, abnormal weather, the threat to the rural area with the progress of WTO round and FTA, etc. At the same time, many of the middle-income countries were severely hit by the currency and financial crisis, which took place in 1997–98. All are very visible in the case of Thailand—a middle-income country and regional center. So, we will see, how correction of unequal development has started in Thailand in recent years.

Thailand

The development of Thailand, accompanied by social and regional imbalances was realized under the typical development-oriented dictatorial regime headed by the military in the 1970s. Under the top-down development (*pattanā*) policy, the income gaps between Bangkok and other regions was widened (Thai per capita national income

was on average 2,000 US\$ in 2001. However, Bangkok was over the 5000 US\$ level, while the income level of many other local areas ranged between the 300 and 700 US\$ level. The tribal people living in the mountain area are the most deprived. This income gap is accompanied by various social gaps and the environmental deterioration mentioned above.

The correction of these gaps started in the rural area where Buddhist monks worked to reassess development. They rejected the top-down development, which encourages an acquisitive mind, the wasteful consumption-oriented life and egoism. On the contrary, they advocated opening one's mind to find spiritual fulfillment through the observance of basic precepts, meditation and the pursuit of wisdom. Their action was accompanied by the development of the learning environment, the greening of the neighborhood and the protection of rivers and forests. They encouraged participation in community life, setting up micro-credit schemes, processing rice and locally produced food and direct deals with cooperatives in Bangkok and abroad. Some of them gathered orphans to set up cooperative factories, others the terminal care hospice for AIDS patients who were alienated in society. These trials of the reconstruction of the local community, which had disintegrated through modernization and economic growth, at the same time regenerated the deteriorating environment. Today, in the North and Northeastern part of Thailand, the villages where these development monks work can be easily identified from afar by the naked eye as these villages are covered in green, since Thailand had previously lost a considerable area of forest due to forty years of the *pattana* policy: in the 1960s over 40% of the land was still forest, while it diminished to less than 20% in 1990, causing droughts and flooding every year. However, in the area where the monks have initiated the grass-roots based development work (they call it in Pali *pavanā*, self-awakening, another name for development from within), they have had very few natural disasters. This is another example of endogenous development, in which people validate traditional culture, knowledge and wisdom, and participate actively in the process of development through their own initiative. (Nishikawa and Noda 2000B)

Together with these local initiatives to correct the negative effects of the top-down development policy, in 1992 we saw the strong demonstration of the civil society in Bangkok, which brought the shift of the power from the military to civil government. This transfer of the power resulted in the 1997 New Constitution, the drafting of which civil society participated for the first time in Thai history. The New Constitution, which emphasizes the conservation of national patrimony, constituted the basis for democratization, decentralization and protection of human rights, which all characterize today's political process in Thailand and other ASEAN countries.

The actual Taksin government initiated also the "one tambon, one project" movement which was said to have been inspired by the Japanese "one village, one product" movement. However, in fact, it followed the example alluded to previously of development monks in the rural area.

All these efforts of grass-roots based development are related to correct imbalances between regions and social strata, while conserving nature. We call this endogenous development.

Conclusion

The orthodox modernization trickle-down theory believes that the economic growth generated in the center can be transmitted to other areas, causing over-all growth. However, in our analysis, the trickle-down effect is mainly limited to the surrounding areas (semi-periphery) and regional gaps will be widened because of rural exodus and resources transfer from backward areas.

In fact, many developing countries have adopted different strategies of development, while simultaneously using the orthodox method. The alternative strategy that Southern countries have adopted consists firstly of the establishment of their right to development: NIEO (the New International Economic Order) strategy.

The main factors of NIEO strategy are as follow:

- (1) establishment of sovereignty over natural resources and encouragement of its local use.
- (2) Import-substitution industrialization
- (3) Increase in value-added and export-substitution from raw materials to manufactured goods. Export-promotion will also be made.

Up-to-now, the majority of developing countries have pursued industrialization according to this scenario. I have to note, at this point that, in the example of the Chinese West discussed in this paper, the use of locally produced natural resources by local community has started in recent years in several localities such as Yan-an, Yulin and some other cities. Their use is still very limited, but it seems that this may constitute the first step towards the establishment of sovereignty by local communities.

In any event, as we already maintained, the industrialization and capital accumulation strategy geared on the center has, in its turn, generated regional gaps and unequal development, followed by social and environmental imbalances in every part of the South.

Here, the role of endogenous development (ED), emphasizing multicultural nature of development and the necessity of environment conservation, intervene.

Following the above-mentioned NIEO strategy,

- (4) development of local culture will be encouraged.
- (5) Together with cultural development, local people should participate in environment conservation, which leads to sustainable development.
- (6) Socio-economic development should be supported by networking with other areas, including culture, knowledge, experiences, market and others. Endogeneity does not mean isolation. On the contrary, through contact with other people and the community, one's confidence in one's own identity together with one's cultural roots or tradition should be confirmed.
- (7) On the basis of this active exchange with other communities, human resources will be developed and knowledge-intensive development—the basis of the proactive society, becomes possible.

When we reflect on the nature of development, we understood that there are two ways of development: one is the top-down approach, which is related to the modernization ideology mentioned above and which is conducted by the centralized state in combination with multinational enterprises. This approach has its historical root in mobilizing resources for achieving a higher accumulation of capital and economic

growth. However, it has become clear that this approach also has its own failures and limitations. In the world system, where the center is constituted by the state and business enterprises agent, two-levels, three-levels, or multi-levels of unequal development are usual, i.e., regional and social gaps are the necessary form for achieving prosperity in the center, providing the basis for accumulation of resources and capital in the latter. The cases that we examined for the North-South gaps, China's East-West Problem, ASEAN and Thailand, all confirm that fact. The regional gaps and unequal development exist both in international and domestic scenes and we understand that the gaps are expressions of unequal development, which constitute the instrument for capital accumulation and high economic growth. In this system, the trickle-down effect exists, but its effects are variable: positive and/or negative. The positive effect can be seen in some regions surrounding the center, which might be turned into the semi-periphery. They might realize rather high economic growth, exporting their products to the center, and attracting capital from the latter. However, their economic basis is not necessarily stable, as their growth is heavily dependent on the center. The center might shift their purchase source at any time to other regions or their investment might go in different directions. This we can see in the case of Newly Industrializing Countries (NICs), whose economy has been stagnating in recent years, or regions neighboring the center. The negative effect of the trickle-down or the backwash effect, if we used the terminology of Gunnar Myrdal, consists of the outflow of both natural and human resources from the peripheral regions and the consequent depopulation and deterioration of the environment in the latter.

On the other hand, there is another approach to development: development which is realized by people's participation, in which people pursue not only material wealth (here, material wealth does not mean extravagant consumption, but rather satisfaction of basic human needs, such as nutrition, health, clothes, housing, education, enough income to sustain one's and one's family's life, etc.) but at the same time spiritual fulfillment which is related to good cooperative social relations and to a sane environment. The aim of this approach is to realize human well-being, in which one enlarges the range of her/his free choices, constantly developing her/his capabilities. This is the development from within, which is manifested in the formation of the pro-active person and pro-active society, full of self-confidence and initiative. This is the process of empowerment, which promotes human and social development.

In today's globalizing economy, the regional gaps have steadily been widened both on the international as well as on domestic levels. These gaps have created massive poverty and unprecedented environment deterioration on a global scale. The peripheral and marginalized regions and social strata are always being created and proliferated in this system, where both human beings and the environment are considered merely tools for capital accumulation. For these regions and social strata, the authentic way of development is the way to establish their own identity, to develop their capabilities, to make full use of their resources and to enlarge their opportunity for free choice. This is the process of human and social development. We see in this trial of reestablishing people's sovereignty and dignity the rise of civil society, which is sensitive to their active participation in the correction of various gaps and strengthening of human rights. This rise of civil society itself can be seen as the process of development from

within, that we call endogenous development. Thus we understand that endogenous development constitutes one of the authentic alternatives to globalization which promotes the top-down type of development through marketization and which has been creating regional gaps together with social and environment imbalances on the global, regional and domestic level.

(NOTES)

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- *² STDs recently propagated among domestic animals might have been related to industrialization of husbandry/stock-raising. BSE originated in artificial animal feed; SARS might be related to uncontrolled economic growth in which wild animals are marketed, while the sanitation situation lagged largely behind; the fowl influenza or carps herpes virus might also be related to over-crowded breeding situation of these fowls/fish, that rapidly propagated the disease.
- *³ This section is based on the materials collected during our research on "Western Development Policy: Its Impact on Regional Economy and Environment". conducted in 2001-03 and financed by the Monbukagakusho Research Grant. The findings of this research project will be published in 2004.

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