1. How to understand sustainable development in Peripheral Rural regions?¹

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Introduction

While it is true to say that the sustainable development concept grew in popularity in the 1970s, and particularly with the 1992 Earth Summit (World Conference on the Environment and Development) in Rio de Janeiro, it was, in fact, known still earlier, since its roots can be traced back to the end of the 19th century, when foresters began to take note of the irreversible nature of certain ecological processes arising out of over-exploitative forestry management [Fritz, Huber, Levi 1995]. In turn, in 1922, the German urban planner Cornelius Gurlitt launched a debate on "the modern development of the city", proposing that the implementation of programs for the development of construction in a city should take account not only of purely technical matters, but also of social and cultural aspects not only from a historical point of view, but also by reference to ongoing transformation processes [Gurlitt, as cited by Petzold 1997: 19]. The postulates put forward by Gurlitt constitute an inseparable element of today's definition of sustainable development [Hauff 1987].

From the 1980s onwards, sustainable development began to be regarded as one of the main development paradigms, as well as a fundamental component of regional policy. An exponent pointing to the need for – and means of – introducing the principles of sustainable development was in turn a famous document published by the UN in 1987 entitled *Our Common Future*. The report from the World Commission on the Environment and Development headed by Gro Harlem Brundtland accepted that the Earth's resources were running out to the extent that the opportunities for future development of the planet and humankind would depend on wise and rational utilization and management of the said resources. A further attendant assumption was that the environment should be managed in such a way as to curtail any further dramatic changes in it and its further impoverishment. A pointer given here concerned the role of humankind, and

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necessary changes in ways of thinking about day-to-day (ad hoc) interests and investments in the economic sphere.

A challenge for the development policy thus was and remains the means of introducing the sustainability concept in peripheral regions, in which the key problems to be resolved concern nothing less fundamental than the daily existence of resident populations.

The sustainable development idea

Notwithstanding the elaboration and publication over the last half century of countless official publications invoking a need for sustainable development principles to be put into effect, a host of scientists, politicians and planners continue a (heated) debate on the significance of contemporary society's understanding and heeding of the principles in question [Petzold 1997]. An idea proposed several decades ago has become one of the most important paradigms in development policy, and a key to analyses of directions to development on different spatial reference levels. Indeed, the theoretical and planning-related discussions on the subject are participated in by representatives of different scientific disciplines, notably geographers [Gutry-Korycka 2005]. Therefore, it might seem that the identity of the issue under discussion is well known and understood, which means that now we know what sustainable development entails.

It was with such a conviction as to the existence of some broad knowledge of sustainable development among the inhabitants of today's world that a decade of education in its name was launched by UNESCO, with this period in fact coming to an end officially in 2014. This would logically imply that the last ten years have already seen a broadening of society's knowledge on the subject, its objectives and the effects of its implementation. Indeed, all age groups should have found themselves brought within an educational process allowing us all to face up to and address the challenges associated with sustainable development that have been identified at international fora.

The sustainable development idea in fact assumes that the socioeconomic development ongoing in the contemporary world will proceed in such a way that key existing features of our natural (but also our social and cultural) environment, and hence our "surroundings" in the broader sense, will remain in such a state of preservation that the generations coming after us will be in a position to use and draw benefit from them just as we have. While this relatively well-known assumption seems clear and obvious, certainly it does not make full reference to achievements in science and technology which may, as time goes by, alter our understanding of criteria like durability, persistence and sustainability itself, when it comes to various elements of the environment – up to and including the conditions underpinning the development of agriculture.

However, the real truth is that now, as from the outset, the discussion on sustainable development has entailed many and various conceptualisations and

ways of understanding the very concept, let alone its manifold aspects, which are treated differently at both the interpretation stage and when actual procedures or activities are put into effect. These differences are such as to ensure that quite disparate directions can be followed as efforts to achieve sustainable development move forward.

One clear and readily noticeable evolution of the concept has proceeded from approaches entirely (or almost entirely) focused on the natural environment and the need to protect or secure its air, waters, soils and natural resources [Czerny 2005] in the direction of approaches that now seek to integrate many different tiers of life and types of human activity, in particular assigning value to (and hence encouraging the protection of) elements of our heritage, be this natural, cultural or even political.

Another division into the approaches of sustainable development entails an analysis of local and regional potential where the stimulation or continuation of growth is concerned. What it therefore ushers in is a critical analysis seeking such means of proceeding and applying techniques and technologies which will cause the least modification to natural environmental conditions and also (in theory at least) to existing social and cultural conditioning.

We thus arrive at issues of the dynamics of socioeconomic change, proceeding in doing so from a priori assumption that a given fragment of territory experiences such changes constantly, with the result that geographical space also undergoes a change. A very simple diagram can help show the relationships pertaining in a territorial system which is defined in this way.

In this understanding the territory and its natural conditions are given, and they most often change over long periods of time. However, as will be noted later, the territory involved in given considerations can also be treated as a variable where development is concerned. In any case, in the simple model of development, the two most important factors determining the trajectory, dynamics and structure of favorable changes in a given region or territory are seen to be human capital on the one hand, and economic capital on the other.

A more complex model of development will bring in a series of further variables, including those of importance to sustainability, like historical conditioning (the tradition of a historic region), psychological and emotional features (not least prejudices and schemes where ways of thinking are concerned), and cultural conditioning (within it religious conditioning can be of key importance in determining, setting or shaping models of living and types of conduct).

The question is whether a return to a simple development model is still possible, as consideration is given to the structure of sustainable development and its main actors. In general, yes, though with the proviso that the actions of both human capital and economic capital should be in line with sustainable development principles. What should this then entail? Answer:

1. Awareness (among all members of a given society) that any kind of a human action (or intervention) in whatever geographical space causes change to – and in extremis the destruction of – the existing natural environment.

- 2. In all kinds of human activity the use of those techniques and technologies that do least to change the character of the given region, this extending to its environment, obviously, but also the skills of its inhabitants, customs and habits, and so on.
- 3. Financial (economic) capital invested in a given region that first and foremost takes care of the interests, wellbeing and living environment of the inhabitants of the said (or any) region.

In the face of the above, can the sustainable development concept be adhered to as we seek to develop peripheral regions (in which by definition raised income levels and an improved quality of life are called for)?

Peripheral regions

The term "periphery" carries various connotations and can be understood in different ways depending on the function ascribed to thinking on it, and the way in which it is perceived or conceptualized. It is most frequent for geography to refer to the location of a given region in respect of the center of a country, be that in the geometric, economic or political understanding of the term. "To be peripheral" thus relates to both distance and status. In each case, the terms periphery and peripheral entail a comparative element. By definition a periphery can only exist if there is also a center somewhere else. The geographical connotations often also link up with psychological matters, in that "a region lying at the periphery of a country is poorly developed" (Janicki Łopuszna) a contention that need not be true, even if it is mostly imagined to be. It is thus clear that relationships between the center and remaining (more or less peripheral) regions, or else between a more literally (geographically) defined center and a periphery indicate unequivocally the situation a given area finds itself in. The concept of the center and the relationships that make possible its definition have been written on at length by K. Handke [1993]. According to that author: "the center fulfils functions that we conceive of as central, while the region is situated somewhere beyond the relationships that are thought of in this case. Historically, what was met with more often was the contradistinction between the capital and the provinces or the capital and the periphery" [Handke 1993: 105].

Yi-Fu Tuan in turn puts emphasis on the importance of words like "close" and "distant", which attest to relationships between people that also extend in the directions of friendship or hostility, as well as closeness in the geographical sense of familiarity with a given area [Tuan 1987].

In the view of Handke [1993], any schematic depiction of what is not the center, and is thus the periphery, has as its components:

- 1. Horizontal spatial elements, i.e. a subordinate place in the system (at some distance from the center or the zero point);
- 2. Vertical spatial elements, i.e. some position in a hierarchical system, always lower than the most elevated (below the top on the axis);

- 3. Evaluating elements, i.e. subordination to the center, often extensive in spatial terms, but of lesser independence or entirely deprived of independence, and also with lesser authority and prestige;
- 4. Such linguistic elements which emphasize subordination [ibidem: 117].

"The very relationship of center *versus* non-center is universal in nature, because such a configuration is generated in every social space, if with the process of delimitation involving the content and nature of the main component parts (...). In societal practice and looked at from the perspective of history, the system undergoes many and varied modifications, since the essence of the center is based first and foremost on authority, strength, prestige and money (...)" [ibidem].

Alongside markedly geographically relationships \rightarrow being at the periphery and being peripheral, there are also cultural and psychological connotations influencing the way a given region or part of given territory is perceived. The term is associated with a presence on the margins of the main currents to economic political and social life, and hence with features of being weaker, not taken seriously or underrated.

Analyses carried out in relation to developing countries do not offer an unequivocal definition of what the periphery might be. In line with the original concept of the center versus the periphery arising from the discussion on dependent development taking place among Latin American intellectuals and economists (with Raul Prebisch to the fore), the world has regions that are highly developed economically (the center) as well as regions that are only poorly developed (and hence peripheral), but which do supply the former areas with their main raw materials [Rościszewski 1974]. Analyzing the situation Latin American countries find themselves in, Prebisch states that the underdevelopment of the region is structural in nature, reflecting circumstances first put in place in the colonial era, and entrenched from the 19th century onwards – i.e. from the time countries in this part of the world gained their independence and headed off along the path towards the diversification of international economic relations.

Among the countries whose positions as regards commerce with and investment in Latin America were highest were: the USA, the UK, France and (from the end of the 19th century) Italy and Germany. From that day to this, many countries of South America like Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Chile have continued to assign a key role to the export sector, whose structure continues to be dominated by raw materials and primary products, be these mineral, natural or agricultural. At most these are augmented with articles that have been processed to a limited degree [Prebisch 1959]. The directions the economic development of peripheral countries has followed are thus the ones subordinated to the demand exerted – and the strategies for development pursued – by countries of the "center." This means that the center-periphery relationship has been unfavorable for the countries forming the latter, from the point of view of the development and diversification of their economies.

However, from the point of view of further research into underdevelopment, the contribution made by geographers proved to be important, since these workers stressed that the center-periphery scheme repeated itself and had become entrenched in the spatio-economic and social structure of the South American countries [Czerny 1980]. Of pioneering significance in this area was the work of Milton Santos, which inspired a discussion on internal disparities to levels of development [Santos 1971]. As early as in 1974, M. Rościszewski wrote that "In the countries of the Third World, the greater part of the territory, inhabited by a majority of the population, would need to be assigned to peripheral space. Matters of the development of the countries under discussion here also mostly extend to a remodelling of socioeconomic relations of just this peripheral space. From these points of view, research into the nature, functions and internal differentiation of peripheral space, and (...) the latter's linkages with central space is also of great importance (...)" [Rościszewski 1974: 13]. In the Polish geographical literature of the 1980s, this train of thought was inter alia developed by M. Czerny, as she wrote many times on the spatial disparities that characterize development within given national territories [Czerny 1980, 1985, 1986].

Since the 1980s, disparities in levels of development within given Latin American states have started to widen. Beginning to appear alongside what are unambiguously "central" regions - most often countries' capital cities - there are regions that have come within the orbit of world trade thanks to globalization, their relationships with the external market in turn becoming stronger than those binding them within the country. Urban centers have also been involved, whether these be industrial or service-related, or offering their products on the global market and modernizing rapidly the production process on farms almost entirely geared to the global market (for example through super-automation of the production of wine, meat and cheeses, fruit and vegetables designated either directly for the world market [in the case of avocadoes, apples, melons, pears, American blueberries, artichokes and so on], or else for processing in the factories of the large multinationals like Dole, Heinz, Del Monte and others). The appearance of such enclaves of modern agriculture differing from the large latifundia from earlier times that were more engaged in extensive than intensive agricultural production has only served to widen the gap between regions in which the farming is relatively up-to-date and those in which there is a continued prevalence of subsistence agriculture to meet farmers' own needs, with only limited use made of modern techniques and technologies, to the extent that the main thrusts to development have somehow passed them altogether. Regions in which this kind of farm production holds sway may obviously be regarded as peripheral [Czerny, Córdova 2014].

The analysis of the socioeconomic situations of rural regions ought to offer an answer to a question as to why they have remained peripheral. Of course, peripherality may be also ascribed to regions where mining is carried on, but perhaps to a declining extent; or where other kinds of industry from the Ford era were in place but have since collapsed.

However, it is the purpose of this article to focus on rural areas, and there the focus will remain. In fact, studies and opinions on the causes of under-

development in this sphere are seen to be exceptionally wide-ranging and multifaceted. But here the author seeks to engage in the more systematic organization of causes which have in her view helped determine the peripherality of rural areas of the Andes, most especially in Peru.

The peripherality of rural areas in the Andes

Several decades of research and analyses devoted to Latin America allow the author to arrive at certain conclusions regarding underdevelopment, and especially the marginalization and peripherality of rural areas. While the list is not exhaustive, and is subjective, it is generated on the basis of what has been read, as well as interviews carried out.

The causes of uneven development need to be looked for among factors of an environmental, political, cultural, social and finally also economic (or more correctly a technical) nature. Beyond that it is clear that it would be difficult to ascribe disparities to the impact of any one of these factors. There are a host of possible and actual interactions and feedbacks between the factors mentioned that ensure each region a unique image in general terms and as regards spatial management.

The natural environment offers opportunities for development, with conditions different at each location ensuring a diversity of forms of agricultural use around the world. The inhabitants of rural regions tend to make optimal use of the environmental conditions they are exposed to as they seek to meet their needs. From this point of view, the environment may not be regarded as a factor hindering development - for in those places where human beings make use of their environment there are by definition conditions in which food may be produced. Those rather few places that do not allow food to be obtained are uninhabited. In these circumstances it becomes paradoxical that the natural environment is the factor most often invoked as a primary obstacle to development, though there are of course many recognized reasons why this should be so. One of these concerns the fact that environmental conditions are subject to variability that reduces output and sometimes leads to outright hunger. The climate may vary, as well as soil conditions, conditions as regards water resources and so on, these all being elements that can determine amounts of food produced in a very marked way. If issues arise in this sphere, the talk then is of conditions unfavorable for agriculture. Abrupt, unexpected and in fact unpredictable natural events ensure that conditions for human management can become altered even in an environment that is and has been occupied. Historical descriptions of situations of this kind characterizing South America are in fact many in number, and relate to the times of the pre-Columbian civilization (most notably the well-known fall of the Maya due to far-reaching change in an environment that had been managed rather intensively), as well as to modern-day climate change genuinely giving rise to the destruction of crops and places of habitation alike. In such ways an apparently well-rooted socioeconomic structure in a given area needs to alter as a result of the environmental change. However, the assigning of value to these changes is not something to be attempted here.

Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that the main causes of developmental disparities that characterize and have continued to maintain a mosaic of betterand worse-developed regions are of a political and cultural nature. Since colonial times complex ethnic relations between indigenous peoples and incomers from Europe have been giving rise to marginalization, first of the said native peoples. and later of slaves from Africa and their offspring. Feudal-type relations were maintained into colonial times, and their non-reform in the newly-independent states arising in the 19th century has continued to ensure a place on the margins of socioeconomic life for the greater part of the population in what was previously Spanish America, Discrimination, usury and disdain for everything of indigenous origin were for decades markers of the relationships between different social groups in this part of the world. And it is a sad fact that these problems have come through to the present day in some areas. Regions inhabited by indigenous peoples thus remain poorly developed, to the extent that (without state assistance, at least) they have no chance of joining the global market. Certainly, things might have been (or still be) different if the state had been (or now is) interested in the sale of mineral resource concessions to international concerns (as in the case of the Conga Mine in Peru). However, the effect here is merely to worsen an already tragic situation faced by local people, with a further fall in agricultural output in areas encompassed by mining activity, as well as emigration of the rural population to the cities (this most often ends in the depopulation of regions in poverty by farmers deprived of the means they need to live, expelled from their land, or left with no alternative but to sell it).

Further causes of the maintenance of peripheral rural regions are a lack of structural change in agriculture – not only a lack of effective farm reforms (for which most countries were not prepared politically when some decided to embark upon them in the 1960s), but also a failure to create effective legal and financial mechanisms that would allow small farmers to increase farm sizes, join in with the commercial production of food, and modernize production. These matters arose repeatedly as field work was being carried out in the Andean states. Political clientelism, strong solidarity within groups in society (an origin in the same place, proximity of residence, affiliation with the same ethnic group, etc.), frequently occurring corruption and ongoing illiteracy (especially among women) all combine to ensure a lack of development impulses among the region's entire population. Some are even deliberately pushed to the margins of political and social life in order that they might be left in no position to benefit from any possible economic attainments, should these eventually arise in the region.

Ultimately, there is nothing more than a small group of inhabitants of each region that are able to hold sway over each region from the economic point of view. In Latin America these are the descendants of Creole families whose wealth arose from the mere fact of the ownership of huge areas of land, as well as the

possession of large labor forces and access to raw materials and resources. When Latin America began to experience a modernization associated with the development of capitalism, part of the old colonial elite was in a position to invest in the developing industry. At the same time, new investors from other European countries (beyond the old colonial metropolises) were able to locate their capital in the ports or capital cities of the Latin American states. Location policy was then a reflection of the link between the supplier and the external market. Whole areas of different countries began to represent some kind of raw-materials-related, agricultural and livestock-rearing hinterland for the trade with Europe and North America. The capital cities and ports were in turn bridgeheads for foreign investors, who bought here the raw materials turned into manufactured goods in the factories of the north. Relationships between centers and peripheries thus took on the form of internal dependences and economic links between the main economic center of the given country and its remaining parts. Thus, for example, in the 1970s, Mexico City concentrated more than 54% of Mexico's industrial output, and almost the same proportion of its entire industrial workforce [Czerny 1985].

A serious obstacle to the reduction of disparities in the level of economic development between regions was constituted by poorly-developed infrastructure, most especially roads. For example, in the mid-1970s, Bolivia had just a single hard-surfaced road some 300 km long, while in Colombia as recently as in the late 1970s a car could only be taken along two asphalt-covered roads running north-south (i.e. one that led south from Bogota as well as a little to the north, and a second that followed the Cauca Valley from Medellin in the north to the border with Ecuador), as well as one running east-west which linked Bogota with Cali. To this day there is no section of the Pan-American Highway that would link Panama with Colombia, and at the same time facilitate the flow of information, not so much about the resources and opportunities this region has to offer, as about the violence and unjust treatment meted out to indigenous peoples by the old and new political/military/economic elites that control the land and the access to all resources.

The peripherality of the Sierra de Piura from the point of view of environmental, political, cultural, social and economic-infrastructural factors

The peripheral nature of a given study region manifests itself in terms of various features. In the case of the region under study here these are both physical features – a location on the margins of the national territory in northern Peru, and others of a social or economic nature.

In the case of indicators of social and economic development it is only possible to compare the existing situation in the area under study with values reported for the country as a whole. However, it needs to be recalled that many indicators at national level do not meet criteria for a high level of development and so might be also considered to represent features otherwise typical for peripheral areas.

One of the key indices where peripherality and marginalization are concerned is the one relating to the level of education attained. Given below are data obtained in the course of fieldwork as regards the level of illiteracy in the communities studies, as well as the proportions that have completed either primary or secondary education.

Table 1. Level of education in three regions of Frias District, 2012

Level of education achieved (%)			
Level of education	Sector Bajo	Sector Medio	Sector Alto
Illiterate	3.17	9.21	6.2
Non-completed primary	30.2	32.26	22.6
Completed primary	22.22	20.01	17.4
Non-completed secondary	12.82	8.41	4.5
Completed secondary	8.05	8.91	9.23
Higher	4.05	8.1	8.46
No response	19.45	13.05	31.5

Source: Questionnaire-based research, December 2012 in: Córdova-Aguilar [2013: 42].

The table reveals that more than half of the population in the area studied has education to primary level at best. Furthermore, the interviews carried out make it clear that those claiming to have non-completed primary education are often unable to read and write.

In the course of the interviews, local people complained about the quality of teaching – the lack of assistance, difficult conditions present in schools, and poor teachers with inadequate preparation to do their job. The three main postulates regarding an improvement in quality of life mentioned by respondents include raising of the level of education.

According to data from Peru's statistical office [Compendio Estadístico del Perú 2011, vol. 1: 134], as of 2010 Frias District had one doctor's surgery and seven medical rooms. This number is insufficient to serve all the residents of the district's villages, all the more so when reaching one of the medical rooms may be a process taking several hours to achieve. The crisis of medical care is further deepened by the fact that these potential treatment points are lacking both equipment and medicines.

In the circumstances of lack of efficient medical care, diseases (including those of parasitic origin and with insect vectors) can spread effectively. There is a high mortality rate among infants and young children, as well as an under-nourishment problem among infants that is first and foremost the result of an inappropriate diet lacking protein and vitamins. Average life expectancy in Frias District is 67, as compared with 69.4 in Piura region and 72 in Peru as a whole [ibidem].

Among the economic factors which attest to peripherality is a prevalence of subsistence agriculture over other forms of economic use. In these circumstances,

the crop structure is dominated by food plants grown to meet families' own needs. A poor state of roads makes any commercialization of agriculture difficult, such that the few attempts made to achieve this are the exception rather than the rule, with farmers who need also to overcome many challenges and obstacles of an institutional or bureaucratic nature if they wish to stay in business. In the course of discussions run with them, farmers complain about the role of "middle-men", who buy at times of a glut in production and often therefore offer prices that fail to cover production costs incurred.

Conclusions: rural peripheries – problems and opportunities for development in Peru

When it comes to the criteria of peripherality presented above, all are met by the region in the north-western part of the Peruvian Andes selected by us to serve as an example.

- 1. To begin with the simplest (geographical) criterion, it can be noted how the region is at the edge of the country, not far from the border with Ecuador. It is thus literally peripheral in respect of the center, which is the Peruvian capital Lima. Peripherality thus denotes a great distance from the center, and hence a marginal location.
- 2. The consequence of such a location far from the capital and in a natural environment quite different from that characterizing even the seat of the regional authorities (with Piura located on the Pacific Lowland) is neglect as regards education and environmental protection. Doctors are absent, and the level of education is very low, inter alia because there is also a shortage of teachers.
- 3. A poor system of infrastructure (most especially as regards roads) makes it difficult to incorporate local producers into global supply chains, and even to have them meet requirements on the domestic market as regards ontime deliveries, freshness and continuity of supply.

The further conclusion arising from the analysis is that circumstances of shortages and shortfalls are combined with a low quality of life to hinder the incorporation of sustainable development principles into the local economy. While the slogan is currently popular among local politicians and authorities, it is seen to mean very little in practice. Only once a certain level of development is achieved, as well as increased awareness and an entrenchment of the idea at middle levels (including also in agriculture) will it be possible to commence with a discussion on the introduction of sustainable development principles. At any earlier stage, this will just be a slogan that inhabitants will fail to respond to.

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