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Partie I les expériences françaises et sud-africaines dans le mouvement universel de recomposition territoriale

Maano RAMUTSINDELA (University of CapeTown):

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Statements on governance and sustainability: the territorial logic of apartheid and the (South) African challenge

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The territorial dimension of governance: the (South) African challenge

Challenges of governance facing a post-apartheid South Africa can more appropriately be understood in the contexts of state building and governance in Africa and other parts of the South. A gamut of literature on state formation in Africa has focused on the impact of colonial rule and the appropriation of that rule by post-liberation African leaders, and the struggle for control over resources. There are, though, views that present the challenge from a predominantly geographical perspective. Such views are readily discernible from Herbst’s (2000) argument that “the fundamental problem facing the state-builders in Africa - be they pre-colonial kings, colonial governors, or presidents in the independent era - has been to project authority over inhospitable territories that contain relatively low densities of people ... relatively low population densities in Africa have automatically meant that it always has been more expensive for states to exert control over a given number of people compared to Europe and other densely settled areas”. From this position, a gap approach is employed to illustrate how Africa is different from Europe in terms of conditions for successful state building and governance.

While the link between population densities and governance cannot be ignored, a more helpful analysis should shed light on the fractured nature of the state in Africa. Mamdani (1996, 2001) has convincingly argued that the colonial state contained a duality: “two forms of power under a single hegemonic authority. Urban power spoke the language of civil society and civil rights, rural power spoke the language of community and culture”. Thus, the dual nature of the state was bolstered by forms of powers that operated in different spatial settings. That duality obtained in the apartheid state where urban space symbolised the crucibles of western civilisation and white power and privileges that had been far removed from the indigenous populations in rural areas. The question that needs serious interrogation is how far and

by what means South Africa can overcome the rural-urban duality of governance. This question is more crucial for two main reasons: experiences in Africa and the impact of apartheid rule in rural areas.

Many post-colonial states failed fundamentally to reorganise their territories internally, despite the rhetoric to want to do so. That is to say, African nationalists denounced internal differences while at the same time embracing divisive territorial arrangements. As Mamdani (1996) has noted, “no nationalist government was content to reproduce the colonial legacy uncritically. Each sought to reform the bifurcated state that institutionally crystallised a state-enforced separation, of rural from the urban and of one ethnicity from another. But in doing so, each reproduced a part of that legacy, thereby creating its own variety of despotism.” The implication of this for post-apartheid South Africa would be to guard against processes that reproduce dual forms of governance and to deal with questions of ethnicities.

Any meaningful transformation in post-apartheid South Africa will be measured by contours of governance and development in the rural areas of the former bantustans. Though bantustans have been formally incorporated in the new state, the legacy of governance in those areas pose a serious challenge. To assume that the collapse of the bantustans renders them empty containers would be to ignore the very legacy of apartheid that requires serious attention. As Marks and Trapido (1987) reminded us, “sham or not, the bantustan policies had by the late 1970s created ‘new facts’. New political institutions and the deliberate use of welfare to give reconstructed ethnic identities a material reality have conflicting interests which now have to be taken into account in any struggle for the transformation of South Africa”. These ‘facts’ include the entrenchment of the powers of chiefs and the socialisation of people into space. No wonder that there have been contestations over traditional authority boundaries and fierce debates about the future of chieftaincy in the new political dispensation.

The manner in, and methods by which, South Africa will handle the duality of territorial arrangements and associated governance is not only important for resolving the colonial and apartheid legacy, but will go some way towards illuminating theories of the post-colonial state.

Dimensions of development and the territorial logic of apartheid

The spatial legacy of underdevelopment presents a vexed question of how the new government could implement development programmes while eschewing reproducing the apartheid map, all the more because any unintended reinforcement of that legacy would be a serious drawback on transformation. On the one hand, there is an urgent need to deal with the legacy of the hitherto Janus-faced development planning without frustrating new national goals and objectives; more especially meeting the basic needs of the impoverished majority. On the other hand, the contours of territorial spaces and economic logic dictate the need for development trends that are most likely to keep the spatial legacy intact. The question that arises is a classical geographical one of whether space matters. We need to honestly ask the questions of whether we should worry about the spatial legacy or whether we should be concerned with improving the quality of life of the poor wherever they are (i.e. in the townships, former bantustans, and so on). Examples could be used to illustrate the nature of the problem and contradictions conditioned in part by apartheid: In the Population Policy for South Africa (South Africa, 1998, p35), the government alludes to bringing about ‘changes in the determinants of the country’s population trends, so that [these] trends are consistent with the achievement of sustainable human development.’ A closer reading of that policy document reveals elements of anti-urbanism. For example, the policy suggests ‘increasing alternative choices to migration from rural to urban areas through *the provision of social services, infrastructure and better employment opportunities in the rural areas* within the context of rural development programmes and strategies’ (South Africa, 1998, p 39).

There is nothing wrong with giving people alternative choices, but the question is the direction of location that development projects suggest. It is a well-known fact that apartheid used development projects to channel people to particular directions and localities. The suggestion here is not that the new government should follow the example set by the apartheid logic – otherwise the organic development of socio-spatial relations would be impaired. Rather, it is to call for clear development policies that would meaningfully change the apartheid legacy.

Understandably, there is a high demand for basic services and infrastructure in the former bantustans. While apartheid governments channelled resources to those polities in order to promote separate development, the present government cannot shy away from improving the wellbeing of people in the former bantustans. Despite the same spatial trend, the logic behind the provision of housing, say, in the bantustans, is very different from that of apartheid. The new policy is certainly directed towards meeting basic needs in impoverished areas. It is worth noting that apartheid housing policy espoused urban rather than rural housing for political reasons. Against that background, the new government’s emphasis on both rural and urban housing represents a significant departure from the apartheid housing trend. Nevertheless, the spatiality problem remains untouched. For instance, rural housing is still very much associated with ethnic and/or tribal divisions. That is, housing projects are usually meant for specific language groups who occupy state land designated for those groups. In fact, there are no concerted efforts on the part of the government to encourage intergroup housing, despite the availability of state land for such housing schemes. Thus, in the quest for development in rural areas, the spatial distortions inherited from apartheid could be entrenched in a non-racial South Africa. Questions that arise from these examples are: what spatial dynamics would result from development schemes that replicate the geography of the past? Should a spatial policy guide development efforts or are development projects/schemes able to change the apartheid facade in the long term? Does the apartheid legacy constrain alternative paths to development?