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Modernization and Modes of Production in the North Atlantic:

A Critique of Policy Formation for the Development of Marginal Maritime Communities

By J. I. PRATTIS *

ABSTRACT. *Marginality* and *development* of North Atlantic maritime communities are viewed in theoretical perspective. The *ecological*, *technological* and *community* circumstances are similar, while the *political* and *economic* frameworks within which the communities are incorporated vary. The components of *modernization* are discussed and the process of structural differentiation is stressed as it produces a heterogeneous set of economic sectors thereby establishing the conditions for the evolution of marginality. The properties of traditional as opposed to modern systems are examined in a critique of the standard orthodoxies of *development planning*. A position is developed which states that a restructuring of the ties of economic *interdependence* is a necessary prerequisite for effective development. *Tradition* and its persistence in the North Atlantic are viewed as an adaptive response to a situation of persisting disadvantage.

I

INTRODUCTION

STRETCHING ACROSS the North Atlantic is a belt of marginal maritime regions which have many features in common. From North Norway in the east through Faroes, the Highlands of Scotland, the west of Ireland westward to the Atlantic provinces of Canada, with Iceland

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and Greenland to the north, numerous small-scale marginal communities exist which exhibit similar characteristics in terms of economic activities, population structures, terrain, climate and resources.

In varying degrees these communities (with the exception of Iceland) are marginal enclaves incorporated within predominantly modernizing societies of Canada, the United Kingdom, Denmark and the Irish Republic. This particular feature of interdependence and incorporation is an important common factor for comparative purposes.

The population in these enclaves is scattered through relatively small coastal settlements located on rugged or deeply fjorded coast-lines that are adjacent to continental shelves. The ocean waters above the shelves have traditionally provided a diverse and plentiful supply of marine species both for household consumption and for markets (1). The surrounding land is generally not highly arable and farming has a marked subsistence orientation in addition to a commercial purpose. Seasonally pluralist economic activities are pursued, as frequently no one activity can support a family unit adequately or reliably.

While there are many similarities across the North Atlantic there are important differences, especially with regard to the organizational alternatives used to modernize and develop the enclaves. So although the ecological and technological situation and community circumstances are often very similar, the political and economic frameworks within which the populations are located vary.

This is what makes the North Atlantic such a fertile area for sociology. Academic interest in the North Atlantic, however, has not taken the comparative steps that the situation has perhaps demanded. This may be due to lack of agreement among scholars as to an appropriate framework for analysis. In this article I will attempt to provide a theoretical framework for North Atlantic comparative sociology in terms of a perspective on modernization and marginality which discrete community studies in the region may then validate or disprove.

Thus I am not concerned with discrete empirical communities but with a theoretical framework that will perhaps account for their variation. First of all I will try to clarify the factors that produce economic marginality. This involves a discussion of the processes involved in modernization and an examination of the properties of traditional as opposed to modern systems. Then I will be concerned with the effectiveness of policies designed to eradicate marginality, to see if the assumptions of planners adequately reflect the causes of mar-

ginality. In this discussion the orthodoxy of planning priorities based on the thesis of economic dualism will be challenged as this view rests on inaccurate conceptions of economy, society and adaptation. The persistence of traditional modes of organization and production alongside contemporary economic trends will be explained in an argument which seeks causes in present and past socio-economic relations rather than in speculations about cultural lags or traditional reluctance to change. This section of the article posits to tradition an adaptive function *vis-à-vis* the structure of modernization in the North Atlantic.

II

MODERNIZATION AND THE ORIGINS OF MARGINALITY

UNDERLYING A GREAT DEAL of development literature is the notion that modernization is a process exported from western industrialized nations to non-western industrializing nations. Furthermore there is an implicit assumption that the inhibiting effects of traditional structures are a problem for the developing newly-industrializing nations of the world and not for the already industrialized nations, whereas resistance to technological change and modernization can be observed at all socio-economic levels.

It should be pointed out that Norway and the United Kingdom are no more homogeneous than Nigeria or Malaysia, in that each polity exhibits internal variations in relative development, attitudes to work participation and adaptation to the use of modern technology. In relative terms the U.K. is much more industrialized and differentiated than Nigeria. But both contain sectors that exhibit the most modern industrial organisations, while other sectors have the properties of work organizations more appropriate to an early phase of industrialization, and yet others remain almost traditional in structure. It is certainly the case that the relative size of the "traditional" sector is very small in the U.K. and very large in Nigeria, but the point I want to make is that no society in the world today is a totally homogeneous entity with regard to modernization.

Hirschman has pointed out that once economic growth appears in a specific locality there is a tendency for market forces to concentrate further growth at this locality (2). Operators and entrepreneurs concentrate on the opportunities available at particular growth areas and neglect opportunities that could arise elsewhere. This sets in motion a concentration of interests—trade, investment, labor—that gives a

competitive advantage to the already expanding areas. Ever-increasing internal and external economies then sanctify the growth of such a sector so that more capital movements, trade and investment cycles cluster round the growth area simply because the return to capital and labor investment is thought to be so much higher than could be expected in regions that have not experienced such economic growth. These latter regions experience relative economic stagnation; and in a sense this is an inevitable concomitant of growth itself.

So once economic growth is established in one region of a polity it sets in motion particular kinds of relationships with the other regions. The progressive economic sector becomes highly diversified and with its relatively greater prosperity and profitability it denudes the neglected economic sectors of investment capital and entrepreneurial talent, and the marginal region develops as a specialized appendage to the progressive economic sector.

The lack of diversification of the marginal economy and the extent to which it is subject to external control make it particularly vulnerable to commodity price changes and market shifts that are decided upon outside the region. This vulnerability and dependence leave the marginal region particularly open to boom and bust cycles. These cycles occur when a particular resource can be extracted on a low value basis from the marginal area and be converted to higher value commodities by firms in the modern sector. Once the resource has been exhausted or demand for the commodity alters, entrepreneurs in the modern economic sector turn their capital and investment interests elsewhere, and because of the diversified nature of the modern economic sector they can adjust to changes in commodity supply and demand. The specialized marginal economy, which was the resource base for the boom, does not have the luxury of diversification and without a replacement economy being instigated it simply goes bust. This cycle of decline in a former boom area has disastrous consequences for community morale, attitude to innovation and so on.

Thus the course of modernization focused around economic growth centers necessarily divides a polity into modern and marginal regions. These economic inequalities will persist and be relatively amplified by the free play of market forces. This implies that the only effective counter to regional inequalities is massive intervention by government to curb and redirect market forces, because once regional inequality

has evolved there is very little that encourages the transmission of growth from a progressive region to a marginal one.

Government intervention in the form of regional development plans, however, often has its locus of capital and decision-making defined according to the interests of the modern sector. Regional development is often undertaken in the national interest either to buttress a sector that is a vital resource base to the overall economy or to defuse political discontent and social unrest in the peripheral areas. That is to say the type and scale of regional development is informed by the central government's definition of what is necessary and expedient in national terms.

Regional planning and policy priorities do not, however, always operate in ignorance of factors that create and perpetuate marginality. Planning and policy by government may be continually circumvented, whatever its intentions. This is because the investment priorities of the economic system, and the appropriate locations for those investments, largely constrain the shape and extent of regional development policy *irrespective of government intentions*.

Wallerstein has remarked that

Capitalism as an economic mode is based on the fact that the economic factors operate within an arena larger than that which any political entity can totally control. This gives capitalists a freedom of manoeuvre that is structurally based (3).

Given the lack of effective political controls at the disposal of nation States it may simply be too difficult to redirect or restructure ties of economic integration effectively and marginal regions must simply hope that the lottery of history and resource use will at some point in time come their way.

Even this, however, would be a minimal panacea if left entirely to the workings of capital. Given that capital is more mobile than labor, it frequently occurs that capital will flow to the periphery in situations where huge resources and labor reserves are to be found. This export of capital to the periphery does reproduce patterns of reinvestment and wage labor dependency, conditions considered as "normal" to industrial capitalism. One should observe, however, that the size and shape of whatever investment takes place is determined by the requirements of capital accumulation at the center. This is inevitable unless different levels of government assume responsibility for directing investment patterns.

Given this argument, it comes as no surprise that capital on the periphery is concentrated in the extractive sector (mining, agriculture, oil). This produces an unbalanced division of labor and trade on an international scale, and thus it is that peripheral areas overwhelmingly rely on raw material outputs that fuel industrial expansion at the center (4).

III

THE STUDY OF MARGINAL ENCLAVES

DEVELOPMENT AND MODERNIZATION studies, by and large, consist of the analyses of the effects (planned or otherwise) of the most modern sectors on the least modern enclaves. One must realize, however, that at the same time both sectors are caught up in an ongoing process of modernization that reproduces the conditions whereby the industrial capitalist mode of production remains the dominant economic structure. Yet this dominance also reproduces, under certain conditions, articulations with other modes of production (feudal, traditional), provided the subordinate mode of production has adaptive functions both for the population concerned and for the continuing reproduction of the conditions conducive for the operations of industrial capitalism.

Given that marginal enclaves are products of a particular structure of economic integration, there are then a number of obvious implications. First of all the argument supports the notion that the process of capitalist development creates regional economic inequalities with capital control, industry and effective decision-making located in a progressive modern sector. The free play of market forces consolidates the primacy of the more progressive sectors and perpetuates the marginality of the backward areas. One consequence of concentrating capital at the center of the economic system is that the population on the periphery tends to form a large "underclass" of poor farmers, marginal fishermen and self-employed artisans who occupy a niche on the fringe of the capitalist labor market, surfacing all too frequently as an unemployment statistic (5). This semiproletariat is, however, a satisfactory solution for capitalism, as a pool of surplus labor is kept "in situ" or otherwise involved in community solidarities and non-capitalist work relations, which secures their potential mobilization in the event of industrial expansion. A considerable proportion of the productive members of peripheral populations exchange their labor power for a wage either on a seasonal or temporary basis, or even on

a permanent cycle of work that permits them to spend only part of every year in their home community. In this manner migratory labor and occupational pluralism are different consequences of a similar cause. They also constitute a particular kind of structural tie with the wider economic system; a functional integration that serves the interests of capitalist expansion if and when it should occur.

Lord Hailey's statement about migrant labor in Africa is pertinent to this question of functionality.

From the point of view of the employer and of the economy which he represents, the migrant labour system has several advantages. First of all it provides a large reservoir of unskilled labour from which the employer can select the able bodied and the fit and reject the aged and infirm. Secondly the labour force is too unstable to exert an effective collective bargaining power. Thirdly it has a supplementary source of income in village subsistence production, which can be used to support the worker's family or the labourer himself when unemployed or on holiday. This may permit the individual to accept less than a full living wage. Fourthly the tribal (community) connections provide an independent system of social security which enables the employing economy to avoid direct liability for maintaining the unemployed worker (6).

This perspective on migrant labor points to an uncomfortable truth: the existence of marginal regions, pools of surplus labor, etc., are more than mere end products of a particular structure of economic interdependence. Marginal regions may in fact be much more important, in that they are instrumental in *sustaining* the continued expansion of the modern sector. In other words marginal regions are not just deterministic consequences of industrial capitalism, they constitute a vital cornerstone of the entire economic system (7).

Properties of modern systems are held, by some scholars, to exhibit patterns of work participation, family organization, occupational and geographic mobility and values that are distinctly different from those found in more traditional systems (8).

Sociological orthodoxy *vis-à-vis* modernization studies maintains that the transition from a traditional to a modern system involves increased structural differentiation whereby productive and exchange types of activity are removed from the extended kinship-community complex and located in firms and markets. Problems of control and integrative exigencies which were formerly handled by kin and community become the functions of formal organizations, bureaucratic structures and voluntary associations that are part of a wider, centralized political

system. There is thus a breakdown in the extended family system in favor of the nuclear family and a shift in attitudes and motivation with regard to work participation and labor mobility.

Although it is possible in general terms to draw distinctions between traditional and modern systems, one must not make the mistake of assuming that the properties of these two systems are discrete. They are not, especially when we consider that within highly industrialized systems there are enclaves which make a significant contribution to gross economic output but where the labor force relies on patterns of association, family structure and views of work similar to those found in traditional systems. Particular occupational enclaves (fishing, mining, logging, docking) and many working class enclaves use extended kinship organizations and patterns of male association as major domains for the loci of satisfaction and status. In the occupational enclaves mentioned above there is a common pattern of work which frequently permits an individual to control the extent of his participation in the work force. Work is an activity either conducted with kinsmen and friends, or one which does not involve strict supervision of work schedules. Solidarity within the work group is accompanied by a "carry over" into other areas of social participation, and there is not the marked discontinuity between work and other spheres of activity that is generally associated with work participation in modern systems.

The extended family and organizations of male peer groups (which reinforce sexual differentiation) operate as an adaptive response to a situation over which the urban industrial worker, particularly the unskilled, has little control. Factors such as vulnerability in an anonymous labor market, the uncertainty of continual work participation and the alienation produced by powerlessness to control the work situation create a set of conditions whereby it is an adaptive advantage for the unskilled industrial worker to rely on social structures—extended kinship and patterns of male association—that provide an alternative source of gratification and support and operate to alleviate stress in situations of crisis. High labor mobility is not a common property of many working class neighborhoods and this is not surprising given the frequency with which newly-married couples take up residence in the same area as the parents, and the type of social organization that often predominates in these areas (9).

The traditional properties within these enclaves can thus be viewed either as an undifferentiated pattern of activity in specific occupations,

or as an adaptive response by unskilled working class families to the uncertainties and disadvantages of the industrial situation. Nevertheless, the enclaves within which these properties are to be found are also integral parts of the modern sector. This symbiosis implies that we consider traditional and modern properties not merely in terms of the transition of the former to the latter but as a continuous intersect in social life.

The maintenance of systemic discreteness while useful for heuristic purposes is arbitrary when one accepts that the wheel of history has incorporated both modern and traditional systems within one overall dynamic—that of the market economy based on the industrial capitalist mode of production. Given this, it is not really possible to maintain clear-cut distinctions between modern and traditional systems. It is only possible to distinguish a category of relatively modern properties as distinct from a category of relatively traditional properties (10). From the discussion so far it is evident that I view modernization not in discrete systemic terms but as an intersect of different kinds of properties, which one must then relate to considerations of modes of production and the conditions and consequences of their articulations.

This somewhat lengthy and abstract discussion of traditional and modern properties is necessary as it is all too easy to think of the different North Atlantic communities as somehow isolated from the industrial world. They are not, and what goes on in the enclave cannot be understood without reference to the wider industrial system of which it is a part. The traditional/modern mosaic, boundary-maintaining mechanisms and the use of traditional activities as an adaptive mode (see below) are all part of an uneasy dependency that incorporates the marginal enclave within a wider system that has different properties.

IV

DUAL ECONOMIES, PRODUCTIVE MODES AND ADAPTATION

THE VIEW SHARED by many social scientists and policy makers is that marginal regions in the North Atlantic remain poor because their semi-traditional economies are isolated from the market forces that regulate the modern economic sectors of their constituent societies. This view draws on the thesis of economic dualism (11) which stipulates that within the confines of any system (nation State, empire, globe) there exist two economic structures. A modern economic sector operates on capitalist principles—“This sector is commercially sophisticated, linked

with international trade and dominated by motives of profit maximization. Opposed and separated from this sector is the traditional peasant economy which is conservatively oriented, interested in security rather than change, oriented towards the satisfaction of social needs rather than market forces and incapable of engaging dynamically in trade and commerce" (12).

The thesis of economic dualism owes much to the work of J. H. Boeke—an influential theoretician on colonial economies. His argument was that the peasant sectors of colonial countries operated so differently from modern commercial sectors that economic theory could not provide any significant understanding with regard to their internal dynamics.

Frank (13) points out that Boeke's views are still widely held, at present, and are to be found in some form or other in many theories of development and discussions of peasantness (14); and consequently most development policies and planning contingencies are framed in terms of the axioms of economic dualism. Boeke's analysis of colonial economies, however, made a number of fundamental errors. The first was to assume that economic boundaries were coincidental with cultural boundaries. In the colonial situation that traditional culture was easily distinguishable in terms of differences in color, custom and values in contrast to the colonial political and economic system where a white minority elite group controlled power. The presence of this intrusive power-wielding minority was often predicated on there being a resource in the colony that could be exploited under conditions of minimal cost and maximal profit. The colony and its economy were quickly incorporated within the imperial economy. Colonialism was an incorporative political economy and despite obvious cultural differences between the different sectors, the peasant traditional economy was in fact integrated closely to the demands and needs of the imperial economy.

It is important to emphasize that cultural boundaries are not necessarily isomorphic with economic ones. This conceptual error is made time and time again by scholars and policy makers when they refer to the problems of persisting marginality. They note a population with a different language and a distinctive peasant-like, semi-traditional culture, and assume that this profile signals some sort of economic distinctiveness. It does not; it signals cultural distinctiveness as Barth's material on ethnic boundaries so aptly points out (15), but it is not an indication that a separate economic system exists. The product

of interaction across the cultural boundary that separates populations in marginal regions from populations in the wider society is a series of stereotyped patterns of behavior that convey a distinctly different set of attitudes to those held by members of the wider society. That there are symbolic signals across a cultural boundary does not also indicate that these are exchanges across an economic boundary.

The theory of dual economies and its subsequent refinement (16) has a long tradition and great creditability in anthropology. It permits one to view marginality and economic backwardness in terms of a particular region's incomplete integration with modern economic systems. Furthermore it posits traditional culture and systems of relationships as obstacles to the full realization of the economic potential of the region. Given these overviews, derived from assumptions about economic duality, agency policy to develop a marginal area is then straightforward. The semi-traditional marginal region must simply be exposed and opened up to modern market forces and it will necessarily develop once traditional modes of activity are replaced by modern modes. Development strategy, based on this neoclassical viewpoint, becomes an exercise whereby ways and means are devised to transfer to the marginal area the economic principles that govern the modern sector.

This is the second fundamental error of policies based on the thesis of economic dualism. It is simply not the case that modern and traditional economic sectors are separated. They are integrated, often in terms of the balance of advantage accruing to the modern sector. This, however, is a question of relative power and competitive ability between sectors rather than a question of separation of sectors. Thus when we talk about peasant, semi-traditional, or transitional economies in the North Atlantic in terms of their being marginal to a modern economy we are not talking about lack of integration but about the *nature* of integration.

Given the arguments so far, it is evident that policies designed to develop the marginal region based on the strategy of increased exposure to modern market forces misunderstand that the existing marginality itself is a result of exposure to the particular structure of modern market forces. Furthermore, such policies will serve only to increase the relative marginality of the economically backward regions. In other words development policy is useless unless it is designed to *alter* the structure of relationships between the marginal region and

the modern sector. If there is to be a realistic solution to marginality, then it should be realized that development only follows upon changes in the structure of interdependence that links the market economy with its marginal sectors. Furthermore the extent of restructuring is an important evaluative criterion in assessing whether policies to eradicate marginality have in fact been successful.

The persistence of traditional value systems and modes of transaction in many North Atlantic marginal regions often has the function of providing necessary and vital support structures for populations as they adapt to the uncertainties and disadvantages of the market economy. In addition traditional modes of production are retained as necessary subsistence adjuncts for the maintenance of household economies. I remarked earlier on the manner in which traditional properties such as the extended family and male peer group organizations were often used by the unskilled urban industrial worker as an adaptive response to a situation over which he had little control. A similar instance occurs where the market economy dominates formerly traditional cultures. The vulnerability of the local population in attempting to cope with a new situation that is often beyond their control, the culture conflict and stress that is involved, is alleviated if there are social structures and value sets that provide an alternative source of gratification and support in conditions of crisis and uncertainty. While these conditions persist one must expect that the local population will have recourse to traditional value sets even while it participates in the market economy.

Traditional values and structures in this instance persist as an internal cognitive model to provide the support structures necessary to adapt to the consequences of a mode of production based on industrial capitalism. The vast heterogeneity of these cognitive models, in their own right, has been the preoccupation of anthropologists since the discipline's infancy. The perspective that I prefer, especially in the light of Wallerstein's thesis that there is in fact a global market economy (17), is that this cultural diversity has common functional and adaptive properties.

As an internalized guide to behavior, culturally discrete values provide a level of meaning and support which in the context of modernization becomes part of the population's means of adaptation to a situation of uncertainty and disadvantage. The epistemology of local populations is a vital part of the adaptive process (18), and the avoid-

ance of total anomie and hopelessness is effected by the retention of segments of an indigenous epistemology while at the same time the population participates in a market economy. While there is also a great deal of stress and irreconcilable differences between traditional epistemologies and the requisites of a market economy, the overriding adaptive function of the epistemology *vis-à-vis* the market economy cannot be underestimated for populations unequally caught up in modernization.

Traditional modes of production for household consumption can be viewed in similar terms. A profile of peasantness—subsistence production, conservatism, particularism, pluralist economic activities, reciprocity and mutual aid networks—does not inform us that we have here a separate economy functioning with its own laws. “Peasantness” is an adaptive response made by populations as a protection or hedge against the disadvantages that accrue to them as a consequence of the way they are integrated with a wider economic system. In this situation, subsistence production and traditional networks provide an economic adaptation while the cultural value system provides a measure of worth and gratification that is not to be found in the provisions of the market economy.

V

CONCLUSION

IN THIS THEORETICAL TREATMENT I have discussed what I think to be the main components of the process of modernization as it affected North Atlantic communities. I emphasized the idea of one economy—an economy based on an industrial capitalist mode of production. Within this framework the discussion of marginality and modernization is intended to illustrate the manner in which the components of this one economy produce marginality and economic backwardness, while the emphasis on the adaptive properties of traditional modes of activity is to illustrate the manner in which populations cope with the end results and processes of modernization. In this way one can make sense of the traditional/modern mosaic that exists in many North Atlantic communities without recourse to theories about cultural lags, traditional conservatism or anachronistic economies.

A major point that was repeatedly emphasized was that the enclave, albeit marginal and semi-traditional, was in fact interdependent and closely integrated with a wider economic and industrial system. And

it was from this wider system that decisions on what to do with the enclave emanated. Thus it is not surprising that policies designed to eradicate marginality in the North Atlantic subscribe all too frequently to the thesis of economic dualism. I showed that policies derived from the axioms of economic dualism, by and large, have the effect of reinforcing pre-existing structures of economic dependency. Until it is understood that the development of a marginal area involves altering its structure of integration with the dominant economic sector, then the final prognosis on regional development policy in the North Atlantic may be that it has permanently established that relative economic decline and stagnation are the prime characteristics of the various regions supposedly being developed.

A comparative sociology of the North Atlantic forces one to rethink ideas about modernization and the role of tradition. Sociological orthodoxy must be abandoned in favor of examining the properties of the industrial capitalist mode of production, the relations it produces and the conditions under which it articulates with non-capitalist modes of production.

Furthermore, the mosaic of values that populations subscribe to in different situations, and the orthodoxies of development planning come under a scrutiny that should produce an emphasis on development priorities different from the ones presently subscribed to. In this way the North Atlantic may provide a corrective to many of our theories about societal change, adaptation and modernization (19).

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A 'Town-and-Gown' Assault on Urban Problems

IN MANY CITIES of the United States, for many years, the local university has sought to be of service to the local community in local society and in the local business community. 'Town and gown' relations, it was called.

But now the City University of New York has joined a few others in setting a new pattern for such service. It has set up a Joint Center for Labor and Urban Studies at one of its constituent colleges, Queens College, and at its Graduate School and University Center in Manhattan. It has also set up at its Graduate Center the City University Labor Forum, to bring together, on a periodic basis, policy makers and scholars to seek solutions of some of the problems which plague the American scene, particularly in metropolitan areas: inflation, unemployment, productivity, quality of work life and standard of living.