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' SURVEYORS NEED FOR PROGRESS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

**REGIONAL PLANNING; IS IT RELEVANT FOR PAPUA
NEW GUINEA?**

by

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Abstract

Over the last 25 years planning moved from highly centralised function to that bordering public participation under the New Organic Laws on Provincial and Local-level Governments. Planning in Papua New Guinea is highly polarised towards the national considerations and those at the provincial and local government levels. In most cases more conflicts in planning have and continue to occur leading to over and under use of scarce resources at the expense of peoples' welfare. This paper discusses a number of considerations from a settlement perspective and proposes regional reorganisation and reconstruction of settlements is one way for governments' greater involvement to facilitate broad-based growth towards achieving national development objectives.

INTRODUCTION

Regional planning is primarily concerned with broad concepts of planning at sub-regional and regional levels and is less concerned with detailed planning. Regional planning is also concerned with the application of social and economic concepts of development and examines regional development theories that might better account for past conditions and explain the present operations of urban and regional systems that we are presented with in this country. Regional planning implies the execution and transmission of a combination of developmental processes within specific guidelines that emanate from higher political and administrative decision making. The execution and transmission of development processes assume functional linkages via a well planned settlement hierarchy is strengthened and such processes transmitted through them and/or located in them so that the people reach the sources of production of goods and services. In this paper I will reexamine a number of regional planning considerations at the national, provincial and local level government levels and propose possible implications of future development trends.

POPULATION TRENDS

One of the most telling features about development in whatever its form are those related to population, its structure and composition. They measure size and density of various groups, determine the levels of demand for future provisions of goods and services, serve as indices for most planning problems and justify use of adequate use of resources over time to produce goods and services that are sustainable to improve incremental changes in peoples' lives. The likely demographic conditions present major short and medium term challenges to the country. First, the Papua New Guinea must ensure the increasing number of children reaching school age are provided with education of a sufficient quality to ensure their ability to work productively is enhanced, and quality of labour force thereby improves. Second, Papua New Guinea has to pursue social and economic policies that might increase those who finish education find productive employment.

Third, Papua New Guinea has to contend with a range of policies potentially available to all levels of government to more directly effect demographic trends.

In order to achieve these three considerations, Papua New Guinea must ensure that its population is closer or below the projected year 2020 mark of 7.5 million people at an estimated growth rate of 2.3 per cent per annum would require effective implementation of a wide range of social and economic services at a level above current provisions. These services to be provided preferably at selected strategic locations at the regional and, of individual provinces and local government council areas. In general, if push for economic development deteriorates under demographic pressures or failures of planning at national, regional, provincial and local levels, then development prospects would worsen. Therefore, the push for sound regional economic development proposals and its impact to the provincial and local level governments in terms of policy agreements on how they should participate is essential. Hence, on population projections alone, the country will continue to encounter social and economic policy vacuums. Such economic policies can be preferably addressed through regional forums. The onus is now on the regions to undertake responsible development policies and growth capabilities supported by good regional governance that will sustain a growing regional population.

SETTLEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES AND UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT

To describe and propose a range of settlement policies for Papua New Guinea, is not an easy task. Development (or lack of it!) primarily relates to changes of peoples' lives from one level to another and include nominal per capita incomes, provisions of health, education, housing, amenities, transport and communications, physical infrastructure networks and so on. A significant factor that is taken for granted is that development processes occurred and will continue to take place at different locations, rates and time. We are reminded every now and then about the country, provinces, districts and local government councils not having equal share of tangible benefits and/or are lagging

behind for reasons related to traditions, history, economics and politics and are further compounded by far too many plans for areas that have similar geographical traits.

Inequalities in development processes are spatial in origin, determined to a large extent by the physical environment, free market forces and decision making. We talk about development without giving serious considerations to where they have occurred, where they are implemented now, and where they will be implemented in the future. In our haste to produce and delivery the provision of goods and services, we forget how, where and why such goods and services should preferably be located so that the flow on of benefits are continue to reach the people. Spatial development and reconstruction policies are now more important than the last 25 years. Many would argue and quite rightly point out that our settlement development processes is quite satisfactory and meets a wide range of requirements without due consideration. Statements of these nature are too simplistic to say the least, bearing in mind that the whole history of development and subsequent urbanisation process in this country is one that is dominated by foreign economic forces, urban centres structured to meet their needs, that has failed miserably to satisfactorily meet the requirements of local people.

To a large extent, the physical layout of the country characterised by its pattern of resource endowments and its exploitation over the years, and development of settlements that support them, is one good example of inequalities in the design and execution of well meaning development proposals. If current spatial policies are not urgently reexamined with a view to change them, then the past trends will continue to prevail to the detriment of future spatial and development policies. Past attempts to decentralise economic development and the public service via a range of policies including industrial centres are some of the good examples of promoting regional centres. In the regions, the onus is now on its political leaders to seriously review such examples, and take bold steps to undertake experiments of spatial reorganisation and reconstruction to such an extent that appropriate regional settlement policies formulated to form the basis to promote equal development. Regional settlement planning ought to be strengthened particularly at

the political level to a range of development proposals that promote equal distribution via a selected strategy (ies) of settlements identification, upgrading, and new ones created.

REGIONAL SETTLEMENT PLANNING FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Settlements define a particular economic relationships between the people and their environments. Social and cultural considerations, are determined to a large extent by different forms of organisation, use of the environment and the production processes attached to them. The patterns and forms of different sized settlements in effect, is a map of economic, social and political system of Papua New Guinea. The visible patterns of settlements of various sizes correspond to the different patterns of economic activities throughout the country. The evolution of settlements can only be analysed, if its links to the hinterland and other centres that support physical development are understood. The economic and employment base of the regions can be strengthened in one of the four ways:-

1. Increase demands for goods and services from the people and from those located nearby (who usually derive their living from primary production).
2. Review the current financial mechanisms so that the financial autonomy to the provincial governments is increased to fund selected growth and service centres.
3. Increase public funded provisions of services and facilities to serve both strategic centres and the surrounding population.
4. Locate new business (based on resource endowments) to meet a growing (or unmet) demand originating from the regional hinterland.

Settlement policies and programs serve no useful purpose unless it is part of an explicit regional policy addressing social and economic development objectives. Spatial development policies can and should play a vital role in efficiently promoting and implementing a wide range of development proposals. The regional settlement programs which have not been framed to serve explicit economic development goals and to mesh

with each centre's local and national considerations and resource base have rarely succeeded in promoting a wide range of policy and development objectives in this country. Thus it is imperative that different regions identify specific development roles for various settlements in the context of physical, social and development plans. These roles can be further divided into those relating to provisions of infrastructure and services, resource mobilisation and economic development.

REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORKS

When we talk about regional development, we are tasked with being able to identify a range of development proposals that might be accepted for implementation. National, Provincial and Local Level Governments are immediate stakeholders and subsequent beneficiaries of development proposals. The number of development proposals must be small and command strategic attributes. The development proposals must have capabilities to transmit development processes that preferably overlap different boundaries. Once these are identified, can the regions begin to deliberate upon regional development attributes. In order to bring about the processes that contribute to regional development, the development and maintenance of key infrastructure provisions are deemed essential. Regional development or lack of it in the regions have, and continue to lag behind the implementation of regional infrastructure networks. Much of the regional infrastructure provisions are non existent, and are national or provincial in nature. The regions must agree in consultation with key National Government line agencies what provisions make up regional provisions of infrastructure networks, where they are located and what purposes they serve. Thus, a full inventory of infrastructure networks examined and declared by legislation as regional assets so that each region can become responsible for their upkeep. Such regional infrastructure provisions must form and become part of the national and provincial networks.

Key infrastructure networks ought to compliment board regional economic proposals in mining, fisheries, agriculture and livestock, forestry, conservation, eco-tourism, river

basin and power development and other cross regional development proposals. On the political front, regions must address and vigorously push for, and in some cases, to direct where such development proposals would be staged with well researched economic justifications. Regional development is about creating vital functional linkages, and thereafter maintaining them. Along these routes, development processes would begin to occur (and filter through), enhance current and/or promote new opportunities for development. Each region has a potential to participate in a more meaningful regional infrastructure planning, development and implementation so that it can exploit its vast regional resource endowments.

SPATIAL INTERGRATION OF REGIONAL SETTLEMENT POLICIES

Regional planning is not only about broad development concepts. It is also about how such concepts might be elaborated and implemented at the national, provincial and local government councils. The considerations cited above highlight the need to promote and diversify regional factors with the provinces and local level governments that they compliment and re-enforce each other. This inevitably takes us back to planning. Planning at the national level, in the provinces and the local governments is good but need to be strengthened, relaxed or new ones created. This is particularly true in our abilities to merge different plans, and how they should be expanded into implementation phases with sustained budgetary support. In order to complement different types of planning, and the manner in which these plans ought to be strengthened, relaxed or new ones created we should consider spatial dimensions of planning and systematically integrate them into national, regional, provincial and local development plans.

An understanding of all parties involved to agree to the importance that regional planning is essential, and indeed vital. Without this agreement, future forums of regional planning and development is meaningless. There is a need to prepare an appropriate regional planning and development policy framework to integrate the good examples of urban/rural planning, decentralisation and political reforms, social and economic

development proposals, cultural and environmental considerations that are already entrenched in the development goals and objectives of Papua New Guinea. A new approach is now inevitable. Consistent to the National Development Plan (and in what ever form it may be) the National Government and the four regions undertake to prepare spatially agreed upon framework of selected growth and services centres to strengthen the key linkages between the local level governments and the provinces, the region and ultimately to the rest of the country. Such a plan will also complement other equally important plans of social, economic, infrastructure, environment, culture and management that have weak spatial emphasis.

A key factor of such a plan is to propose a six-tier (or less and where applicable) central place hierarchy adopted. The adoption of such a strategy implies a strong political will (as it is not legally binding except for planning reasons!) and commitment at the regional level, but more so at the national, provincial and local government levels. The specific objectives of such a regional settlement strategy are:-

1. Create focal points of growth and development at the regional level and link them to the provincial, district and local government centres.
2. Further improve, simplify and strengthen the decentralisation of political and administrative governance so that the production of goods and services are available in selected growth and services centres where people can have access to and participate in the development opportunities supported by a wide range of goods and services.
3. The region agree and prepare budgets to finance the development of growth and services centres suitable to their developmental requirements taking into consideration relevant national and provincial development policies.

4. At the regional level, a regional centres program is proposed. The focus on the managing the development and growth of selected centres be part of the new regional development focus to complement the national urbanisation plan. Development in this context is urban or rural as an individual sector, but also comprises the linking of urban and rural sectors in a complementary manner. A subsequent program should place its emphasis on the services functions (as opposed to their growth functions) are required in the provinces. The long term aims amongst others include, the implementation of key regional development policies that will complement the selected growth and services centres particularly in the under-serviced and marginal areas of the provinces.

ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF GROWTH AND SERVICE CENTRES

The current political reforms undoubtedly imply that the National Government rely on provincial and local level governments as the most effective levels of government machinery that implement national plans and policies. Centres of government authority, planning and execution functions are located and administered from small and intermediate growth and services centres. The recognition of this factor would no doubt begin to bring to the attention of the decision makers, a wide range of development opportunities at local, provincial and regional levels. There are a number of important roles and functions that can be performed at this level.

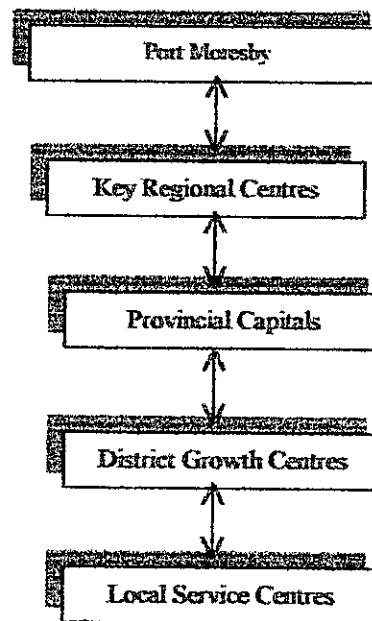
1. Better planned settlements form the basis of sound investment policies and set priorities for the region should be co-ordinated to integrate with the social and economic development plans of provincial and national governments.
2. Decentralisation of development tasks to local level governments increases their work loads. Institutional support for local governments in the planning and implementation of growth and services centres is now more important than ever before, as they will greatly enhance the attraction of productive investment proposals.

3. Local governments can mobilise resources and provide capacities for development opportunities and raise revenue in growth and services centres. This will include sector policies and structural changes made to effect public intervention to maximise employment and income generation in lower order settlements
4. Special government policies strengthen the economic base of settlements in the regions should complement and not work against national and provincial policies such as maximising employment generation and increasing comparative advantages in commerce and industry.
5. Macro-economic policies should be reviewed to analyse and correct, and where necessary unintended spatial biases favoring large urban settlements. Where possible public investments proposed to improve provisions of infrastructure and facilities for broad-based development in local government centres be made on careful assessment of individual settlement's potential.
6. Special programs to stimulate development in local government centres must rely fundamentally on local initiatives with careful mix of local skills, local resources and local constraints.
7. New settlements in the region be planned for expansion of economic activities into unexplored resource areas. Improved settlement development strategies starting at the regional level have potential to attract donor funding to support development efforts in less developed or marginal locations.

Each of these centres be developed on common resource endowments. Such centres require deliberate regional political support and commitment from all the stakeholders including provinces. In almost all cases, the proposed centres would be located in

marginally developed areas of the regions. Diagram 1 below highlights a preferred national and regional strategy for growth and services centres.

Diagram 1: Preferred Regional Settlement Strategy



TOWARDS SPATIAL RECONSTRUCTION

Regional planning in Papua New Guinea had been experimented in different forms. In almost all cases there have been more failures than successes. Along the same line of thought, planning in the regions have different degrees of successes and failures. Current planning supported by legislation of several types are geared towards national and provincial planning that link districts and local governments. These processes of planning have over the years eroded away the good attributes of regional planning. Regional planning as a tool to support geographically balanced development is rarely discussed seriously let alone used. In fact over the last 25 years of national and provincial planning, I am of the opinion that the development and prosperity of this great country lies in how our regions are developed. Perhaps it is only proper that I swear my allegiance to one

Papua New Guinea, and that regional planning is not an ideal avenue to break-up this country, however, remote this may seem. The collective desires of good and sound planning would require spatial re-construction, and should preferably aim to decentralise and redistribute resources and the provisions of the production of goods and services. By undertaking these actions, appropriate mechanisms would be developed in other areas so that they may lead to the minimisation of a wide range of urban/rural problems and all the related issues that revolve around them.

However, the policies of good spatial planning are frequently (if not in all cases) thwarted or opposed by policies of economic development whose primary aim is the achievement of an efficient self-sustaining economic base. Planning in the past and sadly todate, has and continues to be directed towards best developed, more accessible parts of the country. All the regions and provinces have become enclaves of development and growing urban primacy. The question now before all of use is how to ensure (in terms of definition and implementation structure) strengthen development processes from the region down to local government councils but at the same time take into account national considerations. A number of possible solutions are proposed.

1. Town and regional planning are used as tools to prepare physical development plans with a view to pacify strong functional linkages that are present and those that may occur within the region and the provinces be vigorously pursued.
2. Planning in the regions and in all levels of government, administration and decision making bodies account for such functional linkages, and thereby implement social, economic and related regional policies to promote sound and sustainable development proposals so that the people can have access to the production of goods and services.

3. The concepts related to growth and services centres (however unconvincing they may seem) are considered as options to pursue the decentralisation and distribution of resources with a view to increase the production of goods and services.

In these instances, it is highly recommended that different avenues be examined to take on board new policy ideas as experiments of spatial re-organisation and re-construction so that urban/rural linkages are modified and new ones created to support and sustain development efforts.

What Future Lessons ?

By now everyone of you is bored and rightly so, and a lot of you will be asking, if at all, this paper has to offer to this important forum. Where do region go from here? Let us consider a number factors. Each region has, and continues to contribute in many ways to the development of this country. Let me give an example, at the regional level, the Momase Region is placed or sandwiched between the combined Highlands/Papuan/New Guinea Islands Regions. In is placed in a geographically advantaged position with access to current and potential resource and market areas (such as the Bismarck Sea) and enjoys even higher comparative advantages available to it (e.g. links to the Highlands Region where up to 45% of the national population lives), which if developed properly will enhance and contribute significantly to the processes of national development. This is a unique regional opportunity and ought to be exploited to its maximum. However, this can only be achieved through sound regional development policies, and more importantly such policies can be implemented in the provincial and local government levels.

Regional planning provides an ideal opportunity to reorganise, reconstruct, experiment and implement broad-based development policies which can contribute to, and further strengthen the processes of national development. It is not necessarily a question of how to implement regional development policies, rather is one of when to start implementing these policies. Regional development policies are somewhat conflicting and contradicting

national and provincial plans. Thus it is argued that macro and micro policies are not complementing each other. This is understandable, however, the time is now right to apply the tools of regional planning, prioritise and implement development proposals. Regional planning policies attempt to simplify development processes from a variety of spatial perspectives that eventually integrate into the national economic space and development proposals in the regions are not only crucial but essential. Some of the regional plans to be prepared include provisions of key infrastructure networks, land use, urban/rural development, resource exploitation, fisheries, eco-tourism, development of marginal areas, river basins, power development and so on.

Much of the political debate in the past and into the future about development have strong spatial bias with linkages that need exploring. There are serious considerations about projected regional populations, unemployment and underemployment, urban and rural development, rural and urban migration, resource extraction and depletion, compensation, land tenure, land alienation, law and order issues, people not having access to a wide range of goods and services because growth and services centres and settlements in general are under developed or built in wrong locations. When we try to make some sense out these regional issues, we arrive at a number of predetermined (yet rarely agreed to) conclusions that (either by default or design) have strong spatial emphasis. There are many spatially good attributes that require review from now on but the four critical one are:-

1. Location of goods and services.
2. Improved access to goods and services.
3. Creating new opportunities for broad-based social and economic development at strategic locations.
4. Improving lifestyles in general everywhere.

Of national and regional significance, we need to know and understand the dynamics of many key linkages and how these are manifested over time and

space. Once we have fair ideas about them, we can then begin to make and arrive at rational decisions so that in the end, such decisions can better serve to promote the lives of the majority of our people.

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