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A COMMENT

S. M. RUGUMISA

Periphery Capitalist Development—A Case Study of the Tanzanian Economy

Dr. Tschannerl's paper is part of the slowly but steadily growing body of literature on Tanzania seeking to unravel the social and economic structure of the country. The original paper from which the present one is developed, was written with the specific intent of demystifying the population alarmists' cries. The present paper is a streamlined and substantially edited version, with a more express purpose: to outline concretely the features of the "peripheral capitalist structure" of Tanzania. The author seeks to bring this out by a skillful use of available statistics, interpreted with Samir Amin's framework of analysis. This note does not pretend to review Dr. Tschannerl's paper, which is indeed required reading for all those concerned with Tanzania's development. Rather, it will merely point out some of those issues regarding approach hinted at in the first footnote. We propose to raise again those issues as food for thought and not to belittle the immense dedication which must have gone into writing the paper.

Dr. Tschannerl adapts Samir Amin's four-sector model (1) Exports (2) Mass Consumption (3) Consumption of luxury goods (4) Capital goods. The model encapsulates the dynamics of self-centred and periphery capitalist systems. In the former system the determining relationship is between mass consumption goods and the capital goods sector, while the peripheral system is characterised by the disjuncture between (1) and (4) and a specific connection between (1) and (3). The paper attempts to concretise this four-sector model for Tanzania.

The first issue concerns the link between the economic structure as revealed by economic indices and class structure. From the class structure and its evolution one can discern the dynamic of an economy and predict its likely course. Statistical indices, describing the economic structure, are unable to perform the task. Therefore, all such analysis should be firmly based in class analysis, to have interpretative and predictive value. Forgetting this leads to a mechanistic, quantitative interpretation, which the author very rightly and effectively debunks in the section on the three-sector classification. One should doubly guard against this tendency, since statistics over-ride theory these days and contribute to the poverty of economics.

The second set of issues have a less profound concern. The four-sector model of Samir Amin is a very rich but terse schema. It is a generalisation
dealing with a typical peripheral capitalist system. Hence there are bound to be problems in particularising from a "typical" case and concretising from a general abstract level of analysis. Tanzania may have the characteristics of a peripheral capitalist system, but she has certain particular peculiarities. For instance, from a quantitative point of view the share of mass consumption goods is more than a modest one—(41%) and the luxury goods sector small (13%). And arguing that the latter is "small but pronounced" smacks of a verbal trick. Might these uneasy facts be explained by examining Tanzania's peculiarities rather than attempting to straitjacket the facts into a scheme. Perhaps one would look into Tanzania's former dependency relation on the Kenyan sub-metropole for the "mass" consumer goods, which over the sixties were increasingly produced domestically. And certainly curbing some of the excesses in luxury consumption, a political necessity in accordance with Tanzania's class structure and socialistic leanings, would explain the modest level of luxury consumption. This admission does not diminish the role of the state bureaucracy in haranguing the working population for more export production efforts.

Lastly, Dr. Tschannerl was faced with an enormous problem in making use of the available statistics, which are not obviously designed to ferret out such information. He has ingeniously classified the four categories by using given output rather than value added in each of the sectors in order to catch all the intermediate activities which go into production of each of the categories. It is the classification, however, which is bedevilled by problems of definition. The trickiest classification regards the distinction of consumer goods into luxuries and mass consumption goods. A stereo-player is obviously a luxury. *Sembe* is a mass consumption good. But what about a two-band Philips radio? The classical definition of a consumer luxury as a consumer item bought out of the profit part of income is not very helpful. One would have to disentangle from the statistics that portion of *sembe* which is bought from the proceeds of profit. In the end one must use the rough and ready distinction between "necessities" and "luxuries". One other useful way is to distinguish between those consumption products which are amenable to simple methods of production and those which are made by capital intensive methods and scarce resources—e.g., very skilled labour—usually these are consumer durables.

All in all one would have to agree that Dr. Tschannerl provides us with the order of magnitude of the various categories of Samir Amin's four-sector model for Tanzania. He does also enlighten us considerably concerning Tanzania's peripheral characteristics. His chief contribution is to introduce to us concrete analysis—in place of idle speculation—which we so obviously urgently need in furthering fruitful debate on the Tanzanian situation.
UTAFITI FOOTNOTES


3. See p. 46.


5. See section 3.