

Title: The Rural Sector and Wealth Creation – A Reading into the Developmental Dimension of the Rural Environment

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Abstract

The rural environment has been and continues to be a fertile field of study for all human sciences. When geographers began to study and analyze the existing relationships between humans and the natural environment, they turned towards rural areas to study the spatial distribution of human phenomena. Therefore, it can be said that the study of the countryside, wherever it may be, requires the attention of various scientific disciplines, and that rural issues cannot be separated from the issues concerning society as a whole. Rural development has traditionally fallen within the broader context of comprehensive development studies, which necessitates that we briefly consider development, given that development aims for a comprehensive advancement of society in all its components and formations, enabling it to meet the expanding basic needs of its members and achieve their welfare. The development process is carried out after identifying all available resources and setting a clear, goal-oriented, applicable plan within a specific timeframe.

Keywords: rural sector, wealth creation, developmental dimension, rural environment.

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Introduction

Planning aims to achieve economic growth or to advance the economy to higher levels of consumption and service provision. In this sense, development does not result from a spontaneous revolution, nor is it simply the outcome of consensus over the public interest. It is not limited to achieving models created by some experts, nor is it satisfied with mere moral appeals to meet human needs. Although some of these elements may contribute to reinforcing development, they cannot, by themselves, produce it. Development can only be the result of a genuine, determined project that arises from the convergence of real pressures.

Thus, development, in general, is a planned change process aimed at transforming society—rural or urban—from one state to another that is deemed better by its planners, whether they are professional or social experts or the intended beneficiaries of its programs and projects. The desired change may be partial or complete, local or national, rapid or slow, but the professional consensus remains that it is an intentional, aspirational, and desirable change that must be accompanied by the will to change to ensure the realization of development itself and its goals.

Despite the efforts of scholars and specialists to provide a more acceptable definition of development, the term remains—as defined by Long Truman—a confusing concept. Thus, we inevitably find ourselves needing to identify the core foundations and principles that scholars still agree upon, particularly in how the term relates to what it signifies in biological sciences, namely growth and maturity. Hence, it involves stages that are progressive and sequential.

On the other hand, social scientists often compare this term with the concept of growth, which they see as a continuous, incremental process occurring in a specific aspect of life—an automatic process that unfolds over a long period without human intervention.

How can development policies in rural areas contribute to advancing comprehensive development and creating the necessary genuine wealth?

First . Terms Related to the Conceptual Approach:

Anyone who follows the literature on rural development can notice the substantial efforts made to define it accurately and reflect its true content. The World Bank defined it in 1974 as: “A growth strategy aimed at a specific population group—the rural poor, including the destitute and small farmers. Therefore, rural development must be directed at addressing the causes of poverty and duality in rural areas,” such as addressing high birth rates, unemployment, underemployment, lack of agricultural inputs, low levels of education and health, and the absence of efficient rural institutions.

Research into rural development, a topic that has sparked increasing interest as an old-new trend, considers the countryside as a fertile area with all the potential needed for its advancement, provided we account for its specific characteristics and develop compatible projects. There is broad consensus that the countryside plays a role in economic growth. This requires us to revisit every stage we’ve gone through and the potential role of the rural economy in achieving comprehensive development. It also necessitates examining whether the development path prioritizes its achievement through the plans, policies, and strategies devised for that purpose.

1. The Rural Community:

The difficulties in defining a clear and comprehensive concept of the countryside compel us to pause and look at the origins of the word. It refers to (Rural), which means village. In Greek, “Rus” means the countryside, and when used in a possessive form, it becomes “Ruris,” which has two similar attributes: “Rustitus” and “Ruralis,” both meaning rural.

Therefore, in general discourse, the countryside primarily refers to a type of landscape in a land area cultivated by humans or at least used for farming or livestock. In this context, the countryside implies a productive occupation—whether it is a field or a plain.

Thus, the countryside is characterized by economic agricultural activity. It refers to anything related

to the countryside, and when applied to a person, it means someone who lives in the countryside and works in agriculture. The term “rural” can also be loosely applied to individuals who do not work in agriculture but live in the countryside. It has come to describe groups who depend on agriculture, possess distinct identities and interests, and uphold values that differ from those of urban residents.

In this context, we can cite Raymond Firth’s definition of the countryside: “It consists of producers for personal consumption.”

Dr. Abdel Majid Abdel Rahim defines the rural community as “a partial society based on directly exploiting the land or nature, and founded on kinship.”

Therefore, achieving balance between rural and urban areas is vital to the life of human societies. It is also essential for social development aimed at raising individual and group living standards in all aspects, encouraging effective participation to reach the broader goals of development programs—especially in societies where rural populations still make up a significant proportion of the social pyramid. As such, these societies are seen as enormous productive forces capable of bridging developmental gaps within a single society. Neglecting the countryside exposes the society to serious social upheavals that may escalate into high-level conflicts. It’s worth noting that rural populations are considered the main reserve supplying cities with their needs and represent a strategic resource for the state. Understanding the characteristics and features of the rural community enables the drafting of comprehensive development plans and programs to improve the standard of living for its population.

Primitive or early societies were rural societies, and until very recently, most of the world’s population lived in rural local communities. Rural communities are usually distinguished from urban ones based on size and occupational activity. If most jobs are connected to agriculture, logging, and agro-industries, the local community is classified as rural. Interaction patterns also help distinguish rural communities: “In this regard, the dominance of close, direct, and interconnected relationships, strongly linked to kinship ties, is one of

the most prominent distinguishing features of rural local communities from urban ones.”

There is no doubt that defining the term “rural” is quite difficult, as it is not clear where the countryside ends and the city begins. Does the rural group include non-farmers? Are all farmers rural? Despite this, the understanding of rural life characteristics has developed through attempts to distinguish between rural and urban areas. We would like to add the opinion that the economic activity of the population can be a basis for this definition: from this perspective, a city is where about 80% of the population is engaged in industrial and commercial work, while most rural people depend on farming and related economic activities.

According to sociologists, the influencing factors in society fall into two major groups:

A – Material factors primarily related to:

- Land and its surroundings or what it contains: water, air, heat, animals, and plants (geographic factor).
- Population (demographic factor).
- Production: since people are constantly in need of securing food, clothing, housing, and energy to overcome nature.

B – Spiritual and intellectual factors:

These are factors that dominate the lives of community members and affect their activities and relationships with others, such as religion, sect, prevailing customs and traditions, and political ideologies. These factors are connected to the community’s goals and aspirations.

Rural development does not result from a spontaneous revolution, nor is it a result of consensus on the public interest. It is not reduced to implementing models created by experts, nor is it merely a moral appeal to meet human needs—even if some of these elements contribute to supporting it, as previously mentioned.

Addressing rural underdevelopment has become one of the top priorities for governments, as it reflects the suffering of communities that have

historically experienced greater marginalization and exclusion. Hence, the state directs a significant portion of its investments toward development plans in these areas, aiming to bring about a qualitative shift for this important segment of the rural population. This stems from the truth that rural and urban areas are two sides of the same coin within the national society.

Thus, the concept of rural development—of which there are many definitions aiming to reach the best outcome—is considered by some to be comprehensive and reflects an ideology that includes criticism of economic and social institutions and policies.

As **Ibrahim Rizq** states, there are three dimensions of rural development:

1. **Broad participation:** reducing the necessary resources and ensuring they reach low-income individuals.
2. **Continuity of the development process.**
3. **Improvement of living standards** for the rural population.

Rural development is defined as a transformation in technologies, organizations, activities, and societal values. **Robert Chambers** defines rural development as a strategy designed to enable poor rural men and women to obtain what they need and want for themselves and their children.

Rural development is also defined as a process of developing and using natural, human, and technological resources, as well as key environmental elements, institutions, political organizations, and government programs to promote economic growth in rural areas. This aims to provide jobs and improve the quality of rural life necessary for survival, in addition to changing people's attitudes, habits, and traditions.

This concept incorporates all previous definitions and focuses on the active participation of rural residents in identifying and solving their problems and in developing the local community within the framework of the state's development policy. Its main components can be summarized as:

- Increasing agricultural production, establishing cooperatives, and focusing on guidance, marketing, and agricultural lending.
- Expanding job opportunities for rural residents.
- Achieving greater equity in income distribution among the rural population.
- Improving public services in rural areas such as health, education, and others.
- Enhancing the efficiency and skills of rural residents in various production fields by providing them with training and education to better contribute to and participate in the development of their communities.

Most definitions consider agriculture a fundamental component of the rural societal system. However, this does not exclude the presence of other non-agricultural activities undertaken by rural residents in villages or by specific individuals. This is illustrated by **Marcel Jollivet**, who says: "The specialization of rural people and rural areas in agriculture is not a modern phenomenon. We can say that the early pioneering forces are older than the first cities that later inherited dominance in industrial, artisanal, commercial, and cultural activities."

Accordingly, the rural area is a community where agricultural activity dominates its natural environment, including associated services—keeping in mind that agricultural work is a way of life above all. This aligns with the **Ibn Khaldunian** theory, which emphasizes that economic life is connected to the land, particularly in relation to the historical roots and foundations of this life. While there may be some independence from the land in urban life, cities heavily rely on human inventions.

2. The Development Plan:

It is a set of projections regarding the size and forms of future growth concerning a particular country, a region within it, a specific economic sector, or a certain social group. The development plan is prepared by specialized planning departments after consulting with directly concerned

entities such as ministries, central administrations, and local authorities.

3. Sustainable Development:

This concept emerged in 1987 and gained traction after the **Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992** (attended by heads of states and governments to identify threats to the global environment and ways to confront them). According to this concept, there is no genuine development unless it takes into account the interests of future generations.

Development is considered poor if it burdens future generations with the problems and difficulties of the current ones. Therefore, all countries—regardless of their level of advancement—must work to preserve the environment so that future generations inherit a healthy one. They must avoid consuming all natural reserves such as **non-renewable energy sources** (oil, natural gas, coal) and **mineral resources** (iron, copper, lead), and must avoid excessive borrowing from international institutions.

Second: The Social and Economic Dimensions of Rural Community Development.

Characteristics of the Rural Community:

The rural community depends on the agricultural economy and the general social, cultural, and psychological characteristics that follow from that.

A. Community Size:

The agricultural economy and the processes associated with it have led to the creation of small-sized rural communities due to the specific conditions of agriculture. This is also associated with low population density. Therefore, community size or population number is considered the second most important factor after occupation in distinguishing between rural and urban communities. Rural communities are synonymous with small-sized and sparsely populated communities.

B. Population Density:

Population density is significantly lower in the rural community than in the urban community. This factor is considered one of the most im-

portant distinguishing factors between rural and urban areas and is primarily driven by the specific requirements and conditions of agricultural work.

C. Natural Environment:

The natural environment is more prominent and clearer in the countryside than in cities, and direct contact with nature gives the rural environment certain advantages.

D. Social Inequality:

This refers to disparities in environments and social settings. The intensity and risk of this inequality increase in cities, which include a mixture of different cultures at both the local and global levels.

2. Approaches to Achieving Rural Development:

Rural development has recently gained increased attention from economists, planners, and sociologists, considering that it has several approaches to achieve integrated rural development:

A. First Approach: Minimum Package Approach

Activities are directed according to this approach to serve specific categories of rural residents, primarily small and medium-sized landowners who directly benefit from these activities.

B. Second Approach: Functional Approach

This approach focuses on scattered projects aimed at serving various categories of rural residents, including agricultural workers and tenants.

C. Third Approach: Integrated Rural Development

Although this approach is more costly and difficult than the previous two, integrated rural development cannot be achieved in isolation from comprehensive strategies, policies, and plans that include economic and social aspects. These aim primarily to benefit the vast majority of the population, meet their basic needs, and rely fundamentally on self-sufficiency in development.

3. Basic Principles of Developing Rural Communities:

Community development workers have reached a set of experiences, some or all of which can be used to address fieldwork. The following are the most agreed-upon principles:

A. Development programs must be implemented in accordance with the basic needs of community residents. It is important to identify these needs accurately, such as the need for food, education, health, etc., while determining the minimum and maximum satisfaction levels for each need. Due to potential difficulties in assessing the relative importance of these needs in relation to one another and to individuals' requirements, a key consideration must be taken into account: the initial projects should align with the needs felt by members of the local community.

B. Coordinating the efforts of service-based development organizations within the village is an essential requirement. The organic interconnection between various aspects of life has become an accepted reality, especially as many types of development institutions operate within the rural community.

4. Strategic Priorities for Agriculture and Rural Development:

Experiences have proven that the struggle to increase wages, under the conditions and circumstances of poor and underdeveloped communities, will not essentially lead to real improvements in their living standards unless this local, vital, and legitimate struggle is accompanied by an effective and collective contribution from workers and producers toward achieving comprehensive economic and social development in general—and agricultural and food development in particular—while ensuring their fair and adequate share of the outcomes of development.

The organic relationship between different economic sectors and the comprehensiveness of development makes attention to the agricultural sector of significant importance and necessity, considering it a vital pillar and a fundamental support in the economic structure. This is in light of the dialectical relationship and mutual influence

between the economic and social aspects of development, the importance of its class content, its human objectives, and its relationship with the prevailing socio-political system in society. Development efforts in the countryside require mobilizing all capacities and resources and integrating men and women into development, exerting efforts to intensify attention to rural development given its rich natural resources that are suitable for investment. Therefore, a sound strategy must be established to ensure the success of development in rural areas through:

- Encouraging sustainable rural growth in both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors.
- Supporting the rural investment environment through market connectivity and ease of access to investment capital and business consulting services.
- Enhancing agricultural productivity and competitiveness through innovation in agricultural research.
- Promoting social welfare, risk management, and reducing vulnerabilities by providing better tools for farmers to manage the risks they face related to price and climate fluctuations, and investing in essential public goods in rural areas.

Conclusion:

In light of the experiences presented, it has become necessary to search for mechanisms to reach a new formula for rural development that benefits from what has been gained from experiences, surpasses traditional methods and solutions, invests to the greatest extent in modern tools and technology, and propels development forward at a pace that eliminates backwardness and aligns with ambitious human goals.

Thus, we need what we call the "launch-based approach" to rural development, which is fundamentally based on the participation of all individuals forming the rural community as a basic principle for achieving effective human change. It also requires the integration of services to avoid social disintegration by involving local leaderships that interact with technical and professional leader-

ships to direct funds toward programs that achieve development with public benefit.

Therefore, one of the indicators of the success of development projects in achieving their goals is their ability to redistribute the population, bring about changes in population density rates, and create reverse migration — not only among people of rural origin but also by attracting others who are drawn to agricultural work and rural life, especially those who possess capital.

Based on that, what are the tools and mechanisms that can be employed to achieve this goal?

Rural development is a planned strategy aimed at improving the economic and social life of a specific group of people. Hence, it is necessary to provide the appropriate conditions for a decent and secure life by ensuring means of livelihood so that individuals can contribute to building the community and the region from which they originate.

When we speak of 'conditions,' we mean political, economic, individual, and collective conditions, in line with the principles promoted by international organizations within the framework of human development, which emphasize that the human being is the essence of development."

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