

2.12 Downward Transitional Areas of Rapidly Changing Regions: The Development of Backwardness in the Rural Peripheries of the Gampaha District A case study

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ABSTRAT

Regional disparity of development has been the focus of many discussions on development issues in the developing world during the past four decades. The economic growth and modernization are skewed in favour of the metropolitan core area in the Western Province of Sri Lanka, due to numerous historical and geographical factors.

The widening inequalities at local levels have caused disintegration of socio economic system even within fast changing areas like the *Gampaha* district of Sri Lanka. The present paper is an analysis of the prevailing spatial inequality of development in the District and an exploration into causes and consequences underdevelopment of peripheral rural areas.

These ongoing socio-economic processes have generated internal inequalities of the development in the district. Within the district, DS Divisions of *Mirigama*, *Attanagalla*, *Weke* and *Divulapaitiya*, Which remain as relatively backward and stagnating, amidst the growing urban and industrial sector in the Western part of the area, will be the foci of the study.

The weakening of the agricultural base in the district as a whole was experienced during the last few decades. However, the dependency on small farm sector in certain areas has been a major characteristic of the economy. The weak backward linkages and insufficient services and poor infrastructure facilities are attributable to the prevailing backwardness in these study areas, according to the survey.

This study closely observed micro-level variations in the villages of Akaragama East, Radwadunnna Pahala, Ethaudakanda and Kirimatiyawatta, with special reference to spatial patterns of poverty, migration, land tenure, caste and employment structure that are related with the peripheral backwardness. Land use changes associated with industrialization and suburban growth and concentration of services into few centers are among key areas of the discussion. Validity of available theoretical and empirical knowledge in explaining ongoing spatial changes in the study areas are evaluated in the conclusion.

Key words: Downward Transitional Area, Backwardness