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# Internal colonisation, development and environment

PETER CALVERT

ABSTRACT *'Internal colonisation' is a poorly defined term, but no other phrase so accurately captures the full nature of the complex interactions involved. Here the term 'internal colonisation' is used in a broad but quite specific sense, to designate the process by which, on the pretext of 'development', large parts of many Southern states are still in effect being colonised by their own ruling elite. The process parallels in all important respects external colonisation and is in essence the same process, differentiated only by its geographical location. Just as towns formed a key link in colonisation, the use of political power to bring about enclosure and encourage the growth of settlements gives the elite the ability to develop both town and countryside. The urbanisation of the countryside and the expansion of towns are therefore each special cases of the desire to control land and use its capacity to generate wealth. The accelerated growth of urban settlements in the South has, however, serious implications for the environment. Thus the concept of internal colonisation helps explain the distinctive nature of environmental politics in the South.*

The term 'internal colonisation' is not new, but it has never been particularly well defined and as a result both it and the related term 'internal colonialism' have gained at least four rather different meanings.[1]

The earliest sense referred to physical conquest within, not across, political boundaries. 'Internal colonialism' was used in this way by Lenin in 1896 to describe the Tsarist autocracy's creation by force of the Russian Empire as an internal market for capital centred in St Petersburg and Moscow.[2] In a similar sense the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies used 'internal colonisation' in 1996 to refer to the physical conquest of the non-Han peoples in China by the government of the People's Republic.[3]

Both before and since, however, states have adopted the policy of colonisation of 'unoccupied' lands within their own national territory. By its advocates this has been called 'development' but it too has been termed 'internal colonisation'. As in Brazil in the 1960s and 1970s, such a policy can serve a dual purpose as a method of avoiding calls for effective reform of land ownership. The relationship of this idea to the colonial context was made clear by Adolf Hitler, when in 1925 he dismissed 'internal colonisation' as a solution for what he saw as the approaching Malthusian crisis of the Reich, which had lost its overseas colonies as a result of the Great War.[4] Instead he demanded *Lebensraum*, 'living

*Peter Calvert is in the Department of Politics, University of Southampton, Southampton S017 IBJ, UK.*

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space,' in which the German people could create a new external empire by establishing dominance over their neighbours in Eastern Europe. Since land that is of any use to support human life is very rarely genuinely unoccupied, this usage often implies the subjection of ethnic minorities to a dominant culture. The notion of 'internal colonialism' as the dominance of one race over another appears in a different context when Stokely Carmichael and Charles V Hamilton, writing in 1967, use it to describe the situation of black people in the USA, and even more recently in descriptions of the subjection of minorities in Africa, notably in Rwanda and Burundi.[5]

A third set of meanings derives from the dependency thesis and describes the way in which, within a single set of political institutions and a unitary market, a periphery could be subjected to an inferior economic staus by a dominant core. In this sense it was used by the US writer Michael Hechter in 1975 when in his *Internal Colonialism* he sought to argue that, in the division of labour within the UK, Scotland (and Wales and Ireland) had been denied full industrial development and been largely confined to the production of food and raw materials.[6] Although Hechter himself later modified this thesis, it has been comprehensively disproved: in fact Scotland took the lead in industrial development in the 18th century and engineering and shipbuilding placed the Central Lowlands at the 'core' and not the 'periphery' in the 19th century.[7] However, the thesis had already been adopted by some Scots Nationalists as an argument for separatism.

In recent years an interesting variant of the dependency thesis has emerged as ecologists have begun to use the term to refer to the 'enclosure' of the commons by the ruling elites of Third World states.[8] Under the heading 'From colonialism to colonialism', *The Ecologist* has noted how in India Nehru and his successors had rejected the Gandhian dream of agrarian self-sufficiency. They set out to industrialise India by export-oriented growth, and other new states in the course of time sought to do the same:

> A process of internal colonization, as devastating to the commons as anything that had gone before it, was thus set in motion. Using the slogans of 'nation-building' and 'development' to justify their actions, Third World governments have employed the full panoply of powers established under colonial rule to further dismantle (sic) the commons. Millions have lost their homelands—or the land they made their home—to make way for dams, industrial plants, mines, military security zones, waste dumps, plantations, tourist resorts, motorways, urban redevelopment and other schemes designed to transform the South into an appendage of the North.[9]

But of course the ruling elites who take the decisions have no intention of converting their countries into 'an appendage of the North'. In their eyes they are simply making use of the power the international market affords to consolidate their own position as an urbanised elite ruling a country still, after 50 years of independence, largely rural. It is in this last sense that the term 'internal colonisation' is used here, to designate the process by which large parts of many Southern states (and of the countryside in some Northern ones) are still in effect being colonised by their own ruling elite; whether for political or economic reasons does not matter, since the two are in fact inseparable.[10] This is not just a metaphorical usage, to be avoided because of the obvious risk that it will

detract from the uniqueness of the colonial experience.[11] It *is* a colonial experience, though in a new (or revived) guise, and it is such a useful term that its value deserves to be much more widely recognised. The fact is that no other phrase so accurately captures the full nature of the complex interactions involved.

Why 'internal'? Because, despite the widespread tendency among environmentalists to blame the forces of international capitalism for all that happens in Southern states, they could not act there at all if it were not for the active co-operation of the indigenous elites. The dependency theorists fully realised this. 'An economic class or group tries to establish through the political process a system of social relations that permits it to impose on the entire society a social form of production akin to its own interests; or at least it tries to establish alliances or to control the other groups or classes in order to develop an economic order consistent with its interests and objectives'.[12] The same processes of industrialisation, urbanisation and environmental degradation, moreover, took place in the former USSR and Eastern Europe, despite the fact that at the time they were not part of the world capitalist order.

And why 'colonisation'? There are three key reasons. It is the argument of this paper that: a) internal colonisation parallels in all important respects external colonization and that in fact they are in essence the same process, differentiated only by their geographical location (the 'blue water' fallacy); b) the key instrument of colonisation was the town or city and internal colonisation is founded on the relationship between development and urbanisation; and c) we need the term in order better to understand environmental politics in both the advanced industrialised countries (AICs) and the South. Let us look at each of these in turn.

## Internal colonisation as colonisation

Internal colonisation parallels in all important respects external colonisation, characterised as it is by settlement; extension of political control; relations of superordination/subordination; implied or actual use of coercion.

Although the term 'colonisation' actually derives from the Latin *colonus*, meaning 'a farmer', classical colonies were in fact daughter settlements of a self-governing city state. When they became cities themselves, they expected to gain their independence and in the earlier stages of the process, they generally did so.

In the modern age of colonialism, the notion of ultimate self-government seldom survived. Indeed, in large parts of the world until after the Second World War it was assumed that the tutelage and hence superordination of the colonial power would be maintained indefinitely. Only sparingly was actual coercion used, since the key to effective colonisation was still the city. The 'New Laws' of 1542 laid down rules for the layout and government of cities which formed the basis for the expansion and consolidation of the Spanish Empire. Later, the African port cities such as Dakar, Lagos, Cape Town and Durban and the Asian port cities of Bombay, Calcutta, Singapore and Saigon, among others, were to form the essential bridgehead from which the influence of the imperial powers

could be projected inland. By the 19th century these had become showcases of modernity, to be admired, envied and emulated.

In internal colonisation, the analogue of the colonial power is an elite, not a country. Decolonisation has left it in control of a relatively small territory, while the establishment since 1945 of the United Nations and regional organisations has created a world order in which expansion across national boundaries is severely restricted. It therefore has a strong incentive to make use of its political control to exploit the less-developed parts of its national territory, especially since it is likely to benefit disproportionately from doing so.

Characteristically the focus of its political power is a city, the primate city that almost invariably houses both the seat of government and the principal market for goods and services. The process of colonisation involves not only the subjection to central political control of provincial cities and the construction of new ones, but the more diffuse process by which the city itself expands. This is the steady spread of population into the countryside, both by the extension of the urban area by in-migration, and though the out-migration of the more well-to-do into suburbia. As settlement spreads, the central government takes steps to bring it under direct political control from the centre. While a degree of political freedom may be retained at municipal level, urban areas, needing to enhance services, outrun their tax base and become increasingly dependent on direct government grants. The middle tier of government, the province, is brought under direct rule. Classical federalism, involving a distribution of powers between federal and state governments guaranteed by a written constitution, seldom survives the pressure for centralisation.

In the AICs the process is almost complete and most high and upper-middle-income states are now predominantly urban. Some have very high rates of urbanisation indeed: Belgium and Kuwait 97% Uruguay 90%, Argentina 88%, Germany 87%, Chile 86%, Denmark 85%, New Zealand, the United Arab Emirates 84% and the UK 83%. More strikingly, of the 42 countries listed in these categories by the World Bank in 1997, only three—Mauritius, Oman and Portugal—were less than 50% urbanised.[13]

It is only recently that the concentration of population in this way has been questioned, despite the fact that it has implications for both the city and the countryside. Cities do offer in-migrants job opportunities, a wider range of experience, entertainment and leisure; in a word, 'civilisation'. In the past the city has been the accepted centre of political and cultural hegemony, given physical form in places of worship, cultural centres and seats of learning. The very term 'civilisation' reflects the classical notion that a full life is only possible in the city. In Northern Europe cities retained or regained their autonomy by a series of bargains with local warlords, but warlords founded dynasties and from the 12th century onwards settled permanently in cities, creating the notion of a capital. Government attracted culture, generated jobs, created new cultural centres (in the 16th century Madrid, in the 17th Versailles, in the 18th Washington DC, in the twentieth New Delhi, Abuja and Islamabad). The development of towns was initially the result of grain cultivation and the need for protected storage. Towns soon found themselves forced into alliance or conflict with local big land owners for political power. Towns need a rural

hinterland to ensure their feeding; what they can offer in return for an alliance is a reliable source of money. The long-term trend everywhere has been first the expansion of towns and then the urbanisation of the countryside, as the capital came through legislation backed by force to impose its ideas on the rest of the country. This was shown most forcibly at the time of the French Revolution, when Paris as the cradle of the Revolution imposed its will on the rest of France, breaking down the old provincial boundaries, imposing the will of the central government and paving the way for the centralised Napoleonic state.

But towns also provide an essential link between local elites and the globalised world of culture, diplomacy, banking and finance. It is through the social contacts possible within the city that these elites gain the ability to use their international contacts to pursue their own personal agenda. It is all the more ironic therefore that today in the AICs the tendency for people to seek the good life by moving out of the cities into the nearby countryside has been becoming more and more marked. The situation is at first sight quite different in the developing world of the South. There the most striking feature of the past 25 years has been urbanisation. The UN Population Fund report, *The State of World Population, 1989*, pointed out that 'The earth is rapidly becoming an urban planet'.[14] In 1950 only 29% of the world's peoples lived in cities; in 1990 three times as many people did so, and the proportion had risen to 43%. But, more strikingly, in 1950 only about half the world's urban population was in Third World cities. By the year 2000 the population of cities in the Third World was expected to outnumber that in the rest of the world by more than two to one: 2251.4 million to 946.2 million.[15]

Hardoy *et al* criticise the widespread assumption that in the Third World 'most of the problems (and much of the urban population) are in huge mega-cities'.[16] But it is hardly surprising that in the First World people tend to think of urban areas in the Third World as mega-cities. In 1950 there were only two cities, London and New York, with a population of more than eight million. In 1990 there were 20 such giant cities, and 14 of them were in the developing world.[17] However, it is also true that in 1990 only a third of the urban population of the Third World lived in cities with more than one million inhabitants. In fact in many of the smaller and/or less populous countries, half the urban population lived in cities with populations of less than 100 000. Such smaller cities have also grown rapidly in recent years, and it is this rapid growth, rather than the overall size of the cities, that is associated with the problems of urbanisation. The problems which urbanisation brings do not stem solely from the overall level of urbanisation, which varies a great deal from one region to another. The most urbanised part of the developing world is Latin America (73.7%) which is comparable with Europe (73.3%), but has some way to go before overall it reaches the level of North America (76.1%). Other parts of the Third World are much more rural: East Asia is only 36.1% urban, Africa 33.8%, and South Asia 28.4%, but this is not likely to last long.[18] Bangladesh is rural and has only 17.7% of its population living in cities. But it has in fact a higher population density (935/km$^2$) than The Netherlands (457/km$^2$), the most densely populated country in Europe, which has 88.9% of its population living in cities.[19] What is

most worrying, undoubtedly, is that countries that have the fastest rate of population growth overall also tend to have the fastest rates of growth of urban populations.

Urbanisation has effects both on the city and on the countryside. Cities on this scale, semi-planned and yet still growing at unprecedented rates, are a new phenomenon in human experience, and there would, therefore, be considerable doubt in any case as to whether such large concentrations of population are environmentally sustainable. Hardoy *et al* also criticise the assumption that 'the high concentration of population and production is a major cause of environmental problems'.[20] However, cities do affect the environment in a number of obvious ways, some more harmful than others. They sterilise agricultural land, raise local mean air temperatures by some 3°C, generate solid, liquid and gaseous waste in huge quantities, reduce rainwater runoff, but increase the risk of flooding, create the need for elaborate transport systems and, while offering job opportunities, also create an apparently insatiable demand for more cheap labour.[21] To take only one area of concern, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and United Nations Environment Programme UNEP) jointly published in 1992 a report on air pollution in 20 of 24 of the world's megacities. Every one of the cities studied had at least one major air pollutant that exceeded WHO guidelines, 14 had at least two, seven cities had at least three.[22] Historically, when the city has outgrown the capacity of its infrastructure, squalor has always resulted. But today the alarming levels of pollution that the new cities generate are not challenged because the city is seen as the only model for economic development. Besides, we know that rural as well as urban poverty is a major cause of pollution and environmental degradation.

The fact is that in much of the South the cities are not only bigger but are also growing faster than any city in Europe did during the period of most rapid urban growth, between 1850 and 1920. Moreover, much of this growth is in primate cities. In the year 2000 half the world's population reside in cities. In most countries this means that most people live in the capital, the centre from which political power is exercised. This is a matter of concern for political as well as environmental reasons. Politically, urbanisation strengthens urban culture against rural, reinforcing the domination of the capital and its tendency to treat the countryside and everything that is in it instrumentally. It also increases unpredictability. Increased population density leads to a sense of overcrowding and hence to organisational instability. Urbanisation therefore creates stress which is likely to be released unpredictably and the closer it is to the centres of political power the more impact it is likely to have.[23]

The fact that the problem is not confined to the primate cities is a strong argument that it forms only part of a much bigger process. The traditional view was that big cities were engines of development, because of their economies of scale. A perceptive critic has reminded us that this productivity could simply reflect the disproportionate investment that goes into large urban areas.[24] More could be done if the same income were to be distributed in small and medium-sized urban settlements.[25] There is no doubt that the consequence of these high levels of expenditure has often been to create imposing and comfortable habitats for human beings, and the Asian port cities all have in common the

fact that they became and continue to function as major centres of economic activity. But they also function as major concentrations of political power.

Three strategies have been used to try to resist the concentration of wealth and power in the capital city. The most drastic is to move the capital, as in the case of Nigeria changing its capital from Lagos to Abuja, but governing elites like their creature comforts and Brasília is still deserted at the weekend as legislators and government officials fly to Rio. Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal have also tried the second approach, consciously to try to develop a number of regional centres. Another strategy has been simply to try to stop migrants from coming in. However, none of these strategies has been particularly successful, and each tends to accelerate the urbanisation of the countryside.[26] Where development has been most rapid, countries suffer from both the problems of urbanisation and suburbanisation. For example, Penang in Malaysia, a relatively small island, has been transformed out of all recognition: 'Almost the entire island of Penang in Malaysia is now semi-urban: tourism, free trade zones, housing for expatriates, golf resorts, road and bridge construction have swept away the old villages and imposed upon Penang the aspect of a sprawling townscape which has drowned the elegant old colonial capital of Georgetown.'[27]

A third set of problems arises where, as so often happens in the South, there is a temporary breakdown of public authority. Even before the recent civil war, a chronic shortage of generating capacity meant that many parts of Freetown, Sierra Leone, were without electricity for much of the 24 hours (and also, incidentally, without refrigeration). The result outside the city was the accelerated degradation of the mangrove forests in search of fuelwood. But the impact of civil war brought a drastic and sudden increase in the population of the city as people fled the countryside, resulting in the total collapse of the infrastructure necessary to sustain them. Freetown's population has ballooned to more than a million, while large areas of the countryside have been left derelict, virtually without government and at the mercy of bands of former fighters who have had no training at all in the skills necessary to survive in an ordered society.

## The conquest of the countryside

However, the negative effects for the countryside stem from the environmental *causes* as well as the environmental *consequences* of urbanisation, since the two are linked. City growth is caused by the same factors that create other forms of environmental problem. Push factors include population pressure from displacement from the land, exacerbated by the concentration of land ownership, and the inability to compete economically with the new industrialised agriculture; pull factors include the demonstration effect, the search for work and the desire for the bright lights and heightened forms of experience. Cities grow because they attract in-migrants. Within the city, therefore, the ruling elite seeks to foster industrialisation. However, not only does this lock it into a tight spiral as the effort to provide more job-opportunities outpaces the relentless rise of population, but the increase in the population of cities is not just a simple matter of people drifting to town in search of work. Migration takes place gradually and piecemeal; new urban residents go back to places where they have come from.

There is a clear two-way link between urban poverty and rural poverty. With fewer hands available in the countryside, poverty increases, and the decline in income is only precariously offset where possible by remittances from those scratching a living on the edge of the urban economy of cities as far apart as Mexico City and Bangkok. The growth of cities directly affects the countryside. West Africa is one of the poorest parts of the world; it also has one of the highest rates of urbanisation. In West Africa generally much of the nation's manufacturing industry is to be found in the capital city; in addition the central government has tended to concentrate its investment there. The same is true of Mexico or Buenos Aires. However, in the latter cases significant regional centres had already emerged before the present century.

Conflict between the interests of city and countryside is in any case bound to arise from the fact that advanced industrial development is at least in part a *positional good*, that is, something whose desirability to others stems from the fact that only a few people at a time can have it.[28] Work does not just happen; nor are people either employed or unemployed. The informal sector, long seen as something to be stamped out, is now seen as source of entrepreneurial activity and governments are urged to encourage it.[29] However, the effect of such policies is to accelerate the drift to the cities without ensuring that the industrialists and shopkeepers who benefit from it are prepared to pay for the consequences. People migrate to cities for negative reasons: 'poverty, lack of land to cultivate crops, low wages; the increase in population in the countryside; natural disasters, floods and droughts; deforestation, the need to market crops at low prices because all growers bring their harvest to market at the same time; seasonal migration to supplement declining farm income.'[30] But they rationalise their need to move by pointing to the possibilities for self-betterment that the city traditionally affords. The urbanisation of the town and the urbanisation of the countryside are aspects of the process of enclosure. The urbanisation of the countryside and the expansion of towns is only a special case of the control of land and its capacity to generate wealth. The Industrial Revolution in Europe was preceded, and made possible by, an agricultural revolution which increased the productivity of a given amount of land dramatically. Control of political power was then used to take productive land away from country dwellers and to create or extend large estates owned by the ruling elite. From the point of view of farm workers, the 18th century enclosures in England, and even more in Scotland and Ireland, deprived them of their possibilites of independence and encouraged them to seek work in the new factories and towns.

Where necessary this process was backed up by force, as in the colonial settlement of Kenya or the Rhodesias (now Zambia and Zimbabwe). With the shift of political power to an indigenous elite, the postcolonial settlement which has allowed Europeans to continue to control large tracts of land in both Zimbabwe and South Africa is being challenged. At first sight the situation in Zimbabwe would appear particularly outrageous, since some two-thirds of the best farming land is still in the hands of some 4000 farmers of European descent, most (thought not all) of whom owe this advantage to the previous existence of colonial rule. When he came to power in 1980 President Mugabe promised each of his supporters a field and a cow. As recent events in Zimbabwe show,

however, that promise was not kept and the outcome is not at all likely to involve transferring the ownership of land to those who work it. Political pressures to reward the supporters of the regime in this case as in others run directly contrary to the ostensible economic goal of transferring the ownership of land to those who work it.

> Before this wave of occupations, the government [of Zimbabwe] redistributed land from some 270 white-owned farms, but the land was not given to war veterans or to the rural poor. Among the 400 beneficiaries were several notable Zanu-PF figures, including such implausible claimants as the attorney general, the mines and tourism minister, the speaker of the parliament, two high court judges and a retired general—none of them conspicuously either subsistence farmers or landless peasants.[31]

The process of enclosure continues, although the pace of it has varied depending on circumstances. Where the land is 'available', land colonisation is an invaluable alternative to a government to real land reform: in the Mexican state of Chiapas, for example. But enclosure has had, and continues to have, serious consequences, since this elite is generally one of town dwellers who tend both to fear and dislike the countryside and to seek their entertainment in what passes for an urban environment, or abroad in Paris or Las Vegas. The view from the capital involves the colonisation of the countryside, reducing it to orderly controllable form. The process was initiated by the processes of enclosure of the commons which began in Latin America as early as the 1870s, with the enactment of legislation empowering land owners to take over common land on the grounds that it was not being efficiently used, and has been continued in the postcolonial period by a variety of legislation facilitating the enclosure of 'unused' lands in Asia and Africa. Enclosure, however, is only part of a wider phenomenon of internal colonisation.

Resistance to this process has, as in the case of external colonisation, been met by force. As weak civilian governments were displaced or supplanted by the armed forces, military governments set about conquering their own countries. Southern armies typically saw the economic situation confronting them as a military emergency, imperilling their ability to defend the state against its enemies. Their militarism—whether in Asia, Latin America or Africa—displayed a pride in their prowess which did not necessarily derive from recent combat, as, in many cases, for geographical or other extraneous reasons, the opportunity for such combat had not arisen. However, the fact of independence implied an important historic role for the forces. They had the role of guardians of the state thrust upon them, in their opinion, because they saw themselves as the ones who had given birth to it. So when the civilians failed to run the country in the way that they expected, they used the excuse of national emergency to step in and to assume power. In Nigeria, for example, the military takeover of 1966 owed much to the persistence of tribal consciousness in the army, among the northerners who felt excluded by the commercially active and politically dominant Igbo (Ibo).[32] The fall and death of William V Tubman in Liberia in 1980 was born of resentment of the dominant tribes of the interior at the domination of Americanised settlers on the coast. As in the case of external

colonisation, in the event of resistance force can be and is used to ensure compliance with the dictates of a government in the actions of which those colonised have little or no say.

Of course in the case of Nigeria or Zimbabwe it is tempting to argue that what we see is the consequence of colonialism rather than of internal colonialism. The same cannot, however, be said of Brazil, which has now been independent for nearly 180 years and whose current president, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, was one of the earliest and most successful proponents of dependency theory. It is true that the conquest of Brazil begun by the Portuguese 500 years ago is still incomplete. Today, however, the striking thing is not that it continues in the form of internal colonisation, nor that the colonisation of Amazonia is being carried on by powerful interests with the approval of the government at Brasília, but that the means used so clearly represent the continuing attempt to impose on the countryside the requirements of towns. This emerges, clearly if coincidentally, from an article written by Jan Rocha on the occasion of the quincentenary:

> Successive Brazilian governments have seen the rainforest's unplanned exuberance as a challenge and tried to discipline it with roads and settlements, subsidising the burning of the forest to make way for cattle ranches; turning its giant rivers into waterways for huge grain barges; installing a free trade zone to swell the Amazon capital of Manaus with a sprawling circle of shantytowns, peopled by migrants from riverside villages.[33]

## Colonisation, decolonisation and internal colonisation

External colonisation in Europe began just as the first phase of unification of European nation-states reached a climax. Spanish settlers sought in the Indies the possibilities of glory and conquest which the taking of Granada had effectively ended at home. The completion of the unification of France in 1589 and of Great Britain in 1603 was similarly followed by a conscious royal policy of following in the footsteps of Spain and Portugal and exploring the glittering possibilities of extending their rule overseas.

Just as external colonisation was a response to the apparent end of the possibilities of internal colonisation, the reverse is also the case. The expansion of Europe was not intended to create dependencies but colonies, the principle alike behind Portuguese, Spanish, British or French colonisation being not simply the extension of territory or the exploitation of its resources but the actual replication overseas of the metropolitan social structure. With the collapse of the last of the European empires, however, colonisation did not cease. A long list of territorial claims reflects the fact that the new states are just as interested as their predecessors in extending the range of territory they control. Indonesia has claimed in turn Sabah, Sarawak, Brunei, Irian Jaya and East Timor; Morocco the Western Sahara; Ethiopia and Somalia the Ogaden.

However, given their numbers, most developing countries have had no alternative but to fall back on their own resources and to try to extract more wealth from the area that they already control. In the AICs the Industrial Revolution gave rise to transport systems which made possible the conquest of the countryside by town dwellers. Colonial powers similarly created transport

systems that enabled them to extend their powers of control, although in general they could rely on the networks created by entrepreneurs to export the products of farm, factory, mine and plantation, on which they became increasingly dependent. Decolonisation, paradoxically, accelerated this process. The new governments were led by the same logic as their colonial predecessors to seek to expand the production of minerals and cash crops for export. Only, unlike their colonial predecessors, they had much less choice about what to exploit and where to exploit it.

The nature and degree of internal colonisation, therefore, explains the very different effect it currently has in the AICs as opposed to the South. In the AICs the process is now so far advanced that the countryside can be regarded simply as a convenient and cheap place to plant new houses and new motorways to get people quickly from one town to another. With only 2% of the British population engaged in agriculture, the farmers themselves have little voting strength; their political power, when they have been able to mobilise it, stems from the historical fear of food shortages which has largely worn off. Their sudden militancy in September 2000 was effective because rising oil prices brought them urban and suburban political support.

In the South, too, as control by an indigenous elite has replaced external domination by European (or other) powers, it has been accompanied by the industrialisation of agriculture (agribusiness). The impact on the environment of the internal colonisation of the countryside can be plainly seen in the replacement of traditional subsistence agriculture by large farms or plantations managed for the export and/or commercial sale of a single product or limited range of products. This process was, of course, facilitated in the South by the fact that foreign colonisation had already take place. On the pretext of efficiency, colonial land ownership was concentrated in the hands of an elite, whose control both foreign and native owners had an interest in maintaining. Decolonisation often merely replaced foreign owners by local ones enjoying the key advantage of direct access to the centres of political power, and the vogue for socialist-style economies in the years following independence gave the ruling elite control over the assets that they did not themselves own.

But the problem with agribusiness is that it tips the balance between agriculture and environment decisively in favour of agriculture. Environmental change is not taken into account in assessing the cost, nor is there any need to assess in advance the limits of sustainable land use. It is true that (in theory) more food will be produced from existing land for a considerable time into the future. However, this is not a solution, for three reasons. First, it requires high inputs of energy which the world ecosystem is just not capable of providing. Second, it will exhaust the soil, and once that happens the situation will get steadily and irremediably worse. Lastly, in the meantime the existing levels of inequality will have to be maintained. Inequality of land ownership, on its own, does not have any direct relationship to the nature of a political system. But there must be concern that the concentration of ownership in the South has reached a new level in the past 25 years with the industrialisation of the countryside, accompanied in the AICs by policies to stimulate agricultural production that have resulted in heavy subsidies to farmers to accelerate its destruction.

The effect of this is the rapid destruction of rural habitat and ecosystems. This process has been even more rapid in the South. It has already reached an extreme in the area surrounding Manila in the Philippines, yet the past two years have seen the wholesale destruction of rural habitat in Southeast Asia and Brazil on a scale hitherto unparalleled—a principal driving factor of which has been the desire to convert the land to plantation agriculture for the benefit of a small ruling elite.[34] The ruling elite hardly notice it, as they have the wealth to ensure that they can go elsewhere. For them urbanisation brings only comfort and convenience. It is this urban perspective that lies at the basis of the environmental crisis of the South. However, it is only the relative wealth of the AICs that has enabled them so far to avert the ecological consequences of a process which is already well advanced for them also.

Power, of course, was the key to the conquest of the countryside. But in the process the international actors, TNCs, banks and lending agencies, had at all times the willing collaboration and even active encouragement of local commercial interests. Political elites, certainly, depended in a variety of ways on the establishment and/or maintenance of international trading patterns. In particular, the maintenance and indeed extension of plantation agriculture owes much of its vigour to the special role of land as a combined badge of social distinction, insurance against loss of income and hedge against inflation. The growth of cash crops for export is much more profitable than traditional subsistence agriculture and it does require access to international markets to work at all. The rulers of the South, therefore, are particularly sensitive to any alteration in the terms of trade, but not to the extent that they are willing to give up their power or their privileges, because their ability to make use of the outside world depends critically on their ability to colonise their own countries. 'Urban-biased policies seldom give much support to peasant cash-croppers: market prices are allowed to fluctuate or tend to be kept low (to satisfy the city-dweller voters) [so] that the producers get inadequate, insecure returns and may over-exploit the land to survive.'[35] The difference between what they do and what the rulers of the AICs do can be fully accounted for by the stage of economic development reached and the possibilities that are offered for the exploitation of the country's internal resources. If there are more attractive possibilities elsewhere they will be seized; if not, not.

## Conclusion

We conclude that in order to understand the relationship between environment and development we need to understand that between city and countryside, and to do both we need a unifying concept. We further conclude that this can be found in the notion of 'internal colonisation'. It has been argued that: a) internal colonisation parallels in all important respects external colonisation; b) just as the key instrument of colonisation was the town or city, internal colonisation is founded on the relationship between development and urbanisation; and c) the stage of internal colonisation reached explains the distinctive nature of environmental politics in the South.

Since the liberation of the countryside from urban domination seems not to be

a practical possibility, the problem for politics is to find some way in which the adverse environmental consequences of the process, for both town and country, can be mitigated.

## Notes

[1] A fifth, Habermas' thesis of 'internal colonisation of the lifeworld', lies outside the scope of this article. See Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, Boston, MA: Beacon, 1987.
[2] Vladimir Il'ych Lenin, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, reproduced in *Collected Works*, Vol 3, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1960.
[3] 'Civilizing the barbarians', Nordic Newsletter of Asian Studies, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 4 December 1996: http://nias.ku.dk/Nytt/tableoutline/html.
[4] Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Vol 1, London: Hutchinson, ch 4 'Munich'.
[5] S Carmichael & C V Hamilton, *White Power: The Colonial Situation*, New York: Random House, 1967. See also *inter alia* John Saul, 'The dialectic of class and tribe' in Saul, *The State and Revolution in Eastern Africa*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979; and Maria van Diepen (ed), *The National Question in South Africa*, London: Zed Press, 1988.
[6] Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975.
[7] See *Inter alia* Neil Davidson, *The Origins of Scottish Nationhood*, London: Pluto Press, 2000.
[8] The Ecologist, *Whose Common Future? Reclaiming the Commons*, London: Earthscan, 1993, p 39.
[9] *Ibid.*
[10] S Calvert & P Calvert, *Politics and Society in the Third World*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1996, pp. 158–159.
[11] G P Landow, 'The metaphorical use of colonialism and related terms', http://www/misc/postov.html, 1998.
[12] F H Cardoso & E Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America*, trans M M Urquidi, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979, p 15.
[13] World Bank, *World Development Report, 1997*, London: Oxford University Press, 1997, pp 230–231 Table 9, (Hong Kong excluded).
[14] UN Population Fund, *The State of World Population, 1989*, New York: United Nations, 1989.
[15] J E Hardoy, D Mitlin & D Satterthwaite, *Environmental Problems in Third World Cities*, London: Earthscan, 1992, p 29.
[16] *Ibid*, p 31.
[17] UN Population Fund, *The State of World Population, 1992*, New York: UNFPA, 1992, p 16.
[18] UNDP, 1994.
[19] World Bank, *World Development Report, 1999*, London: Oxford University Press, 1999.
[20] *Ibid*, p 31.
[21] J Abu-Lughod & R Jay, Jr (eds), *Third World Urbanization*, London: Methuen, 1977; and Josef Gugler (ed), *The Urban Transformation of the Developing World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
[22] World Health Organisation, 1992. *World Health Statistics Annual 1992*, Geneva: World Health Organization.
[23] M Leroy, *Population and World Politics*, Leiden: Martinus, Nijhoff, 1978, pp 71–72.
[24] A G Gilbert, 'The argument for very large cities reconsidered', *Urban Studies*, 13, 1976, pp 27–34.
[25] J E Hardoy & D Satterthwaite (eds), *Small and Intermediate Urban Centres: Their Role in National and Regional Development in the Third World*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1986.
[26] A T Salau, 'Urbanization and spatial strategies in West Africa', in Robert B Potter & Ademola T Salau (eds), *Cities and Development in the Third World*, London: Mansell, 1990, pp 157–171.
[27] J Seabrook, *In the Cities of the South: Scenes from a Developing World*, London: Verso, 1996, p 165.
[28] F Hirsch, *The Social Limits to Growth*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977.
[29] W Armstrong & T G McGee, *Theatres of Accumulation: Studies in Asian and Latin American Urbanization*, London: Methuen, 1985.
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[31] Isabel Hilton, 'Clinging to colonialism's wreckage', *Guardian*, 19 April 2000.
[32] R Luckham, *The Nigerian Military 1960–67*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971.
[33] Jan Rocha, 'White men bearing gifts', *Guardian*, 19 April 2000 (Society, p 4).
[34] P Brown, 'Man's greed fuels global bonfire', *Guardian*, 17 December 1997.
[35] C J Barrow, *Developing the Environment: Problems and Management*, Harlow: Longman, 1995, p 115.