SEMESTER 4

CONCEPT AND CLASSIFICATION OF REGION

The concept of region has been used by different people to mean different things. The concept of region is generally linked with space and has spatial dimensions. It is also sometimes used as something subjective (a mental construct) or spaceless. However, the widely accepted concept of region treat region as an objective reality linked with space and defined in terms of space. The major problem associated with this concept is the delimitation of spatial boundary. The spatial dimension may be as small as village to as large as continent. Moreover, there is also the problem of overlapping of boundary. However, this ambiguity can be reduced by clearly mentioning the purpose of one’s enquiry.

The criteria for delimiting a region can broadly be grouped into three broad categories:

1. Homogeneity
2. Nodality or Polarization
3. Programming or Policy oriented

Thus, it can be said that there are three basic types of region: homogeneous, nodal and programming.

1. Homogeneous or Formal region:

A formal region is a geographical area which is homogeneous in terms of some specific criteria. The criteria may be of:

* Geographic criteria : similar topography or climate
* Economic criteria: similar per capita income levels, similar production structures, similar consumption patterns, uniform unemployment situation etc.
* Social and/or Political criteria: e.g. party allegiance

2. Nodal or Functional region:

A functional region is a nodal region which emphasizes intra-regional spatial differentiation. Thus, it is composed of heterogeneous units such as cities, towns and villages which are functionally interrelated. The functional interrelationships are usually revealed in flows of people, factors, services, commodities or communications.

3. Programming or Planning regions:

Programming or planning region is mainly concerned with administrative coherence or identity between the area being studied and available political institutions for effectuating policy decisions.

Keeble defined planning region to be an area that is large enough to enable substantial changes in the distribution of population and employment to take place within its boundaries, yet which is small enough for its planning problems to be viewed as a whole.

The best definition of planning region must consider the factors of homogeneity, nodality and administrative convenience. According to P.D. Malgavkar and B.M. Ghiara the planning region should have following features:

* Geographically, it should be a contiguous unit though it could be subdivided into plain, hilly track, coastal belt, lake area etc.
* The people of the region should have social and cultural cohesiveness.
* The region should be a separate unit for data collection and analysis.
* The region should have an economic existence which can be assessed from statistical records.
* It should be small enough to ensure local people’s participation in its development.
* It should be under one administrative agency.
* Its geographical size should be big enough to exploit resources and avoid duplication.
* It should have fairly homogeneous economic structure,
* It should have one or more growth points.
* There should be common appreciation of local problems and common aspirations and approaches to their solution.

However, as noted by Meyer, these three categories of region (formal, functional and programming) are not mutually exclusive. Thus a programming or policy region is essentially homogeneous in being entirely under the jurisdiction of some one or a few specific government or administrative agencies. Similarly, a nodal region is homogeneous in that it combines areas dependent in some trade or functional sense on a specific centre.