

**CHANGING DEVELOPMENT DEBATES  
UNDER GLOBALIZATION**

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**Working Paper #276 – July 2000**

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## ABSTRACT

Development was long viewed in reductionist economic terms. Critical assessment of performance eventually led to making development debates multidimensional and multidisciplinary. It was belatedly recognized that development is a value-laden issue demanding explicitly ethical analysis.

Dominant patterns of development are not equitable; they must not be sustained. Sustainability is needed in economic, social, political, and cultural arenas. Ethically based development calls for a reversal of the inversion of means and ends by development actors. As the UNDP notes, economic development is a means to a broader end: qualitative human development. Pursuing economic development as an end leads to serious distortions. Correction requires using market competition as a social mechanism, not as an operating principle.

Globalization produces good and bad effects. The entry into arenas of development decision-making of new actors—NGOs and other agents of civil society—reframes the terms of development debates. There are growing demands from affected populations and institutional actors in civil society to define their own development. This challenges elite decision-making of dominant international financial institutions, great power governments, and large international business firms.

## RESUMEN

El desarrollo ha sido visto durante largo tiempo en reduccionistas términos económicos. Una evaluación crítica del rendimiento eventualmente llevó a hacer multidimensionales y multidisciplinarios los debates sobre el desarrollo. Se reconoció tardíamente que el desarrollo es una cuestión con relevancia valorativa que demanda un análisis explícitamente ético.

Los patrones de desarrollo dominantes no son equitativos; no deben ser sostenidos. La sustentabilidad es necesaria en las arenas económica, social, política y cultural. Un desarrollo éticamente basado una reversión de la inversión de medios y fines que realizan los actores del desarrollo. Como advierte el Programa de Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, el desarrollo económico es un medio para un fin más amplio: el desarrollo humano cualitativo. La persecución del desarrollo económico como un fin lleva a serias distorsiones. La corrección de esta distorsión requiere usar la competencia de mercado como un mecanismo social, no como un principio operativo.

La globalización produce efectos buenos y malos. La entrada de nuevos actores—ONGs y otros agentes de la sociedad civil—en los espacios de toma de decisiones sobre el desarrollo,

redefine los términos de los debates sobre el desarrollo. Crecientemente las poblaciones afectadas los actores institucionales en la sociedad civil demandan definir su propio desarrollo. Esto desafía la toma de decisiones de la elite de las instituciones financieras institucionales dominantes, de los gobiernos de los grandes poderes y de las grandes empresas internacionales.

## **Introduction: How to View Development**

After World War II development was viewed as a straightforward economic issue: identifying and quantifying the composition of economic growth packages. The Marshall Plan<sup>1</sup> aid programs to reconstruct Europe, along with the Bretton Woods institutions (IMF, IBRD) created to guide international economic policy, reflected that view. Over time it came to be recognized that numerous social, political, geographical, historical, cultural, psychological, and environmental determinants affect a nation's prospects for successful development. Most early theorists and practitioners, however, took it as self-evident that economic development is, everywhere and for everyone, a good thing; that technology should be harnessed to all human activities because it boosts productivity; and that specialized institutions are needed to foster modernization. The study of development was seen not as a philosophical inquiry into value change or a search for new institutions and rules of global governance but as technical examination of how to mobilize resources most efficiently and build the infrastructures best suited to growth. Development, in short, was the proper object of study for economics. Moreover, within the economic discipline it was the value-free 'engineering' stream of theory, methodology, and analysis that prevailed. As Amartya Sen notes:

economics has had two rather different origins, both related to politics, but related in rather different ways, concerned respectively with 'ethics', on

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<sup>1</sup> Roy Jenkins, Walt Rostow, Helmut Schmidt, James Chace, Charles Kindleberger, "The Marshall Plan and Its Legacy: 50 Years Later" *Foreign Affairs* May/June 1997: 157–220.

the one hand, and with what may be called 'engineering', on the other... The 'engineering' approach is characterized by being concerned with primarily logistic issues rather than with ultimate ends and such questions as what may foster 'the good of man' or 'how should one live.' The ends are taken as fairly straightforwardly given, and the object of the exercise is to find the appropriate means to serve them.<sup>2</sup>

Sen traces the ethics-related tradition to Aristotle, for whom, "[T]he study of economics, though related immediately to the pursuit of wealth, is at a deeper level linked up with other studies, involving the assessment and enhancement of more basic goals... Economics relates ultimately to the study of ethics."<sup>3</sup> Sen judges that "[T]he methodology of so-called 'positive economics' has not only shunned normative analysis in economics, it has also had the effect of ignoring a variety of complex ethical considerations which affect actual human behavior and which, from the point of view of the economists studying such behavior, are primarily matters of fact rather than of normative judgement."<sup>4</sup>

Development is above all else a question of human values and attitudes, goals self-defined by societies, and criteria for determining what are tolerable costs to be borne, and by whom, in the course of change. These are far more important than modeling optimal resource allocations, upgrading skills, or rationalizing of administrative procedures. Nor is development a harmonious process but rather a traumatic one full of contradictions and conflicts. Development is an ambiguous adventure born of tensions

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<sup>2</sup> Amartya Sen, *On Ethics and Economics*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1987, 2–3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

between *what* goods are sought, for *whom*, and *how* these are obtained. Innovations create strains between new demands for information, material goods, services, and freedom and the effective capacity of societies to meet these new demands.

Ethical judgements as to the good life, the just society, and the quality of relations of people among themselves and with nature always serve, explicitly or implicitly, as operational criteria for development planners and researchers. Development ethics is the interdisciplinary *ex-professo* study of such value-laden issues.<sup>5</sup>

The editors of a book series on “Development and Underdevelopment in Historical Perspective” consider that:

[T]he nature of the subject matter has forced both scholars and practitioners to transcend the boundaries of their own disciplines whether these be social sciences, like economics, human geography or sociology, or applied sciences such as agronomy, plant biology or civil engineering. It is now a conventional wisdom of development studies that development problems are so multifaceted and complex that *no* single discipline can hope to encompass them, let alone offer solutions.<sup>6</sup>

Development generates value conflicts over the meaning of the good life. Competing models of the good life are proposed in such works as psychologist Eric Fromm’s *To Have Or To Be?* the French novelist George Perenc’s *Les choses* (Things),

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>5</sup> Denis Goulet, “Development Ethics: A New Discipline,” *International Journal of Social Economics* 24 (11, 1997): 1160–71.

or Ursula K. LeGuin's science fiction novel *The Dispossessed*.<sup>7</sup> In the latter work two models of community vie for the loyalties of people. One is a society that prizes solidarity, political friendship, health, and a high degree of equality achievable only in a disciplined collaborative regime of resource use. The other model prizes individual comfort and enrichment and relies on competition and abundant material resources as its social motors.

A second set of value questions central to the development debate bears on the foundations of justice in society. Should civil and political rights ensuring individual freedoms enjoy primacy over collective socioeconomic rights to have needs met and the common good of society pursued? Are human rights themselves but instrumental goods or end-values worthy for their own sake?

A third value question embedded in development decision-making centers on the criteria to adopt toward nature. Should humans view nature simply as raw material for Promethean exploitation by them or as the larger womb of life in which humans live, move, and have their being and whose rhythms and laws they must respect? Should the dominant human stance toward nature to be extractive and manipulative or harmony-seeking?

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<sup>6</sup> Ray Bromley and Gavin Kitching, series editors' "Preface" to Gavin Kitching, *Development and Underdevelopment in Historical Perspective*, London: Methuen, 1982, vii.

<sup>7</sup> Erich Fromm, *To Have Or To Be?* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1976; Georges Perenc, *Les choses*, Paris: Les Lettres Nouvelles, 1965; Ursula K. LeGuin, *The Dispossessed*, New York: Avon Books, 1975, 20.



## I. Is Development Sustainable?

For the World Bank the “achievement of sustained and equitable development remains the greatest challenge facing the human race.”<sup>8</sup> It is evident, however, that equitable development has not been achieved: disparities are widening and new poverty is being produced faster than new wealth by economic growth. Clearly, therefore, the kind of development presently pursued must not be sustained.

The World Commission on Environment and Development defines sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”<sup>9</sup> The economist Paul Streeten, a former policy advisor to the World Bank, observes however that it is unclear whether one should:

be concerned with sustaining the constituents of well-being or its determinants, whether with the means or the ends. Clearly, what ought to matter are the constituents: the health, welfare and prosperity of the people, and not so many tons of minerals, so many trees, or so many animal species. Yet, some of the writings on the subject confuse the two. If, in the process of curing ovarian and other forms of cancer, the Pacific yew trees (or even the spotted owl) had to be reduced in number, in order

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<sup>8</sup> World Bank, *World Development Report 1992*, Oxford University Press, 1992, “Overview,” 1.

<sup>9</sup> World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, 89.

to produce the drug taxol, people's health must be given priority over trees.<sup>10</sup>

Matters are still more complex, Streeten adds, because the term 'sustainable development' has at least six different meanings. It can signify the 1) "maintenance, replacement and growth of capital assets, both physical and human"; 2) "maintaining the physical environmental conditions for the constituents of well-being"; 3) the 'resilience' of a system, enabling it to adjust to shocks and crises; 4) "avoiding burdening future generations with internal and external debts"; 5) "fiscal, administrative and political sustainability. A policy must be credible and acceptable to the citizens, so that there is sufficient consent to carry it out"; and 6) "the ability to hand over projects to the management by citizens of the developing country in which they are carried out, so that foreign experts can withdraw without jeopardizing their success."<sup>11</sup>

Whether sustainability and development are compatible is itself a disputed question. The economist Paul Ekins argues that:

the dominant trajectory of economic development since the industrial revolution has been patently unsustainable. There is literally no experience of an environmentally sustainable industrial economy, anywhere in the

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<sup>10</sup> Paul Streeten, "Future Generations and Socio-Economic Development—Introducing the Long-Term Perspective," unpublished ms. dated January 1991, 3. A shorter published version does not contain the citation given. It appears as "Des institutions pour un développement durable" in *Revue Tiers-Monde*, Tome XXXIII No. 130 (April–June 1992): 455–469.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 1–2.

world, where such sustainability refers to a nondepleting stock of environmental capital.<sup>12</sup>

Sustainability seems to require simple living in which consumption is limited. As presently conceived, however, development calls for endless economic growth, which may render sustainability impossible by depleting resources and polluting the biosphere beyond recovery.

No consensus exists as to how development can be rendered sustainable. And no consensus exists as to what strategies are best suited to achieve development. The economist Keith Griffin has evaluated six development strategies pursued before the advent of globalization: monetarism, open economy, industrialization, green revolution, redistribution, and socialism. Griffin assesses empirical results yielded by each strategy in different countries on six registers: 1) resource utilization and income level; 2) savings, investment, and growth; 3) human capital formation; 4) poverty and inequality; 5) role of the state; and 6) participation, democracy, and freedom. The indecisive results lead Griffin to conclude that: “[T]here is no best path to development.”<sup>13</sup>

What grows increasingly clear, however, is that regardless of the development path or strategy adopted, sustainability must be ensured in five domains: economic, political, social, environmental, and cultural. Long-term economic viability depends on a

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<sup>12</sup> Paul Ekins, “Sustainability First” in Paul Ekins and Manfred Max-Neef, editors, *Real-Life Economics*, London and New York: Routledge, 1992, 412.

<sup>13</sup> Keith Griffin, *Alternative Strategies for Economic Development*, London: Macmillan Academic and Professional Ltd., 1989, 242.

use of resources that does not deplete them irreversibly. Political viability rests on creating for all members of society a stake in its survival: this cannot be achieved unless all enjoy freedom, inviolable personal rights, and believe that the political system within which they live pursues some common good and not mere particular interests. Environmental sustainability requires the maintenance of abundant diversity of life-forms and biosystems, a restorative mode of resource use, and disposal of wastes within nature's absorptive limits. And if development is to be socially and culturally sustainable, the foundations of community and symbolic meaning systems must be protected. Otherwise, they will be steamrolled into oblivion under the pretext of submitting to the requirements of scientific and technological 'rationality'.

Providing satisfactory conceptual, institutional, and behavioral answers to the three value questions listed earlier—the good life, the just society, the sound relation to nature—is what constitutes authentic development. It follows, therefore, that not every nation with a high per capita income is truly developed and that only authentic development ought to be sustainable.

## **II. What Is Authentic Human Development?**

In a penetrating study of the evolution of the development idea the Swiss historian Gilbert Rist observes that:

the period from the end of the Second World War to the end of the Soviet empire was marked by two forms of 'development': the first kept up the stock belief that inspired the extension of market society and its colonial expression; while the second was more akin to religious messianism in its

voluntarist enthusiasm to establish at once the ideal of a just and affluent society. *Two parallel mechanisms were thus supposed to hasten the coming of a new era: the Welfare State in the North, and 'development' strategies in the South.*

These messianic stirrings died down in the early nineties; the 'globalization' that took their place may be considered a new manifestation of the same belief (adapted to postmodern culture) in which the real and the virtual merge into one. *'Development' now withdraws behind its appearances, and persists only in the form of an 'as If', a trompe-l'oeil whose verisimilitude is enough to make us forget its lack of reality. For the banished object is so important that it must be preserved for the time being, if only in the form of a delusion.*<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*, London and New York: Zed Books, 1997, 212–13. Italics are the author's.

Later in this essay it will be seen that, in surprising and paradoxical fashion, the convergence of critical streams of assault upon globalization has resurrected what Rist terms “these messianic stirrings.”

One early voice in defense of ethically based development is that of Louis-Joseph Lebreton, founder of the *Economy and Humanism* movement<sup>15</sup> and an influential voice in the crafting of *Populorum Progressio* and other papal documents on development. Lebreton defines development as “the series of transitions, for a given population and all the population groups that comprise it, from a less human to a more human pattern of existence, at the speediest rhythm possible, at the lowest possible cost, while taking into account all the bonds of solidarity that exist (or ought to exist) amongst these populations and population groups.”<sup>16</sup>

Normative expressions such as ‘more human’ and ‘less human’ are to be understood in the light of Lebreton’s distinction between *plus avoir* (‘to have more’) and *plus être* (‘to be more’). A society is more human or developed, not when its citizens ‘have more’ but when all are enabled or endowed with capabilities ‘to be more.’ Material growth and quantitative increase are doubtless needed for genuine human development, but not any kind of growth nor increase obtained at any price. In Lebreton’s view, the world as a whole remains underdeveloped or falls prey to an illusory antidevelopment so long

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<sup>15</sup> L.J. Lebreton and R. Moreux, *Économie et humanisme*, Numéro Spécial, Février/Mars, 1942.

as a small number of nations or privileged groups remain alienated in an abundance of luxury (facility) goods at the expense of the many who are deprived thereby of their essential (subsistence) goods. When such situations prevail, rich and poor societies alike suffer from an insufficient satisfaction of their ‘enhancement’ needs.

Lebret’s formulation of the requirements of authentic development—what Rist calls ‘real’ development<sup>17</sup>—although outlined decades ago, remains useful. This is due largely to Lebret’s insistence on basing his theories of development on observed empirical conditions and facts in widely diverse settings. Although Lebret died in 1966, he has left a development legacy that holds several important lessons for today’s globalized world setting.<sup>18</sup>

The first lesson is that development decisionmakers must study the expressed needs of populations for whose benefit they profess to work. Otherwise decisions are elitist, over-abstract, and risk being reductionist. As early as 1962 the late Max Millikan,

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<sup>16</sup> L.J. Lebret, “Editorial,” *Développement et civilisations*, 1 (March 1960): 3. See also Lebret, *Développement—Révolution solidaire*, Paris: Les Editions Ouvrières, 1967, 82, translation mine.

<sup>17</sup> “Our starting point here will be the dual meaning that ‘development’ immediately assumes in any debate. Why do supporters of cooperation always counterpoise ‘real development’ to ‘development *tout court*’? Are they just stressing that the promise of happiness remains even if it has not yet been kept, and arguing that new methods on offer discredit the ones previously thought up? Or do the two meanings reflect two kinds of belief in ‘development?’” Rist, *op. cit.* note 14, 212.

<sup>18</sup> Denis Goulet, “Une sagesse pour encadrer nos sciences,” *L’économie humaine et la dynamique du développement a l’heure de la mondialisation*, Centre L.J. Lebret, eds., Paris: UNESCO, 1998, 38–42.

a practitioner of econometric analysis in preparing development plans, had noted the importance of consulting the interested populace as to what value sacrifices it was prepared to accept under alternative courses of action. Writing in the US position paper prepared for United Nations Conference on the Application of Science and Technology for the Benefit of the Less Developed Areas, Millikan declares that:

[T]he process of arriving at a national plan should be one in which the planners present to the community for discussion a variety of critical choices showing for each alternative the consequences for the society of pursuing that value choice consistently and efficiently. It is only by this process that the community can clarify its individual and social goals.<sup>19</sup>

Lebret's preplanning studies offer a systematic way to engage in precisely such consultation.<sup>20</sup>

Lebret likewise insisted on linking micro issues to macro questions. His method of conducting overall surveys in multiple domains (geography, physical infrastructure, use of space, administrative and institutional arrangements, etc.) followed by micro and

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<sup>19</sup> Max. F. Millikan, "Planning Process and Planning Objectives in Developing Countries," in *Organization, Planning and Programming for Economic Development*, US Paper for the UN Conference on the Application of Science and Technology for the Benefit of the Less Developed Areas, Vol. VIII, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962, 33–4.

<sup>20</sup> A typical specimen is the study prepared by Lebret and his team for the Ministère du Plan, République Libanaise, *Besoins et possibilités de développement du Liban*, Liban: Mission IRFED, 1960–61, 3 volumes.



macro analyses led to arbitration among competing alternatives which protected experts from viewing development as simple, discrete, unconnected actions.

A third lesson from Lebert for the age of globalization is the priority of needs over wants or preferences (expressed by effective purchasing power). Like Mannheim, Barbara Ward, and Galbraith, Lebert understood that the needs of the numerous poor cannot be met by the free play of markets. Markets respond to purchasing power.

A market system, wholly uncorrected by institutions of justice, sharing, and solidarity, makes the strong stronger and the weak weaker. Markets as useful tools in a functioning social order have a positive and decentralizing role to play. Markets as masters of society enrich the rich and pauperize the poor.<sup>21</sup>

Lebert subscribed to Mannheim's distinction between an organizing principle and a social mechanism. In Mannheim's words:

Competition or cooperation as mechanisms may exist and serve diverse ends in any society, preliterate, capitalist, and noncapitalist. But in speaking of the capitalist phase of rugged individualism and competition, we think of an all-pervasive structural principle of social organization. This distinction may help to clarify the question whether capitalist competition—allegedly basic to our social structure—need be maintained as a presumably indispensable motivating force. Now, one may well eliminate competition as the *organizing principle* of the social structure

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<sup>21</sup> Barbara Ward, "Foreword," in Mahbub ul Haq, *The Poverty Curtain, Choices for the Third World*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1976, xii.

and replace it by planning without eliminating competitions as a *social mechanism* to serve desirable ends.<sup>22</sup>

There is today a growing recognition that markets are embedded, as a subsystem, in a larger societal system. It is this larger societal system that must provide the organizing principle of economic activity and the rules of governance for making market competition function as a social mechanism at the service of that organizing principle.

A fourth lesson drawn from Lebrét is that development is multidimensional: it embraces economic, social, political, cultural, environmental, and spiritual components of human well-being. Hence his insistence on achieving ‘balanced’ development. All dimensions of ‘human flourishing’ (the term favored by present-day philosophers when speaking of development) must be realized, even if tactical or strategic (and temporary) imbalances may need to be pursued along the way. Lebrét never tired of insisting that development was for “every person and the whole person” (“*tous les hommes et tout l’homme*”). As did the UNDP in its early annual *Human Development Reports*, Lebrét regarded economic growth as the means and human development as the end. Things go wrong when these are inverted: when economic growth is pursued as though it were the end and not the means. This inversion leads to distorted development and to excessive costs in human suffering and cultural destruction.

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<sup>22</sup> Karl Mannheim, *Freedom, Power and Democratic Planning*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951, 151.

The fifth lesson coming in Lebret's legacy is the need to globalize solidarity. His last book, published posthumously, bore the title *Développement = Révolution solidaire* (Development = A Revolution of Solidarity).

Decades ago another development theorist, the economist John Kenneth Galbraith, argued that the “final requirement of modern development planning is that it have a theory of consumption...a view of what the production is ultimately for... *More important, what kind of consumption should be planned?*”<sup>23</sup> A theory of consumption presupposes a theory of needs. And a sound theory of needs posits a hierarchy of importance and urgency around such categories as: needs of the first order, enhancement needs, and luxury needs.<sup>24</sup> Authentic development does not exist when first-order needs of the many are sacrificed in favor of luxury needs of a few. For this reason Erich Fromm judges that ‘affluent alienation’ is no less dehumanizing than ‘impoverished alienation’.<sup>25</sup> Nor is sound development present when enhancement needs are not widely met. For in this case numerous essential *capabilities*, in Sen's terms, needed for human flourishing are absent.

In 1986 (September 15–19) some sixty governmental planners, project managers, and social scientists met at a workshop on “Ethical Issues in Development” at the Marga

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<sup>23</sup> John Kenneth Galbraith, *Economic Development in Perspective*, Harvard University Press, 1962, 43. Italics are Galbraith's.

<sup>24</sup> For a detailed presentation and justification of this typology of needs, see Denis Goulet, *The Cruel Choice*, New York: University Press of America, 1985, 236–49.

Institute (Sri Lanka Institute for Development Studies) in Colombo, Sri Lanka. They reached a consensus that any adequate definition of development must include the following dimensions:<sup>26</sup>

- an *economic component* dealing with the creation of wealth and improved conditions of material life, equitably distributed;
- a *social ingredient* measured as well-being in health, education, housing, and employment;
- a *political dimension* embracing such values as human rights, political freedom, legal enfranchisement of persons, and some form of democracy;
- a *cultural element* in recognition of the fact that cultures confer identity and self-worth to people (although *ecological soundness* was not listed separately this was encompassed under the ‘cultural element’ as an essential component of sound development);
- a final dimension one may call the *full-life paradigm*, which refers to meaning systems, symbols, and beliefs concerning the ultimate meaning of life and history.

What is suggested here is that a sound development strategies will be oriented toward forms of economic growth whose production package centers on basic needs, job-

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<sup>25</sup> “Introduction” to Erich Fromm, ed., *Socialist Humanism: An International Symposium*, New York: Anchor Books, ix.

<sup>26</sup> No documents issued from the Marga seminar. This list is based on notes taken by the author at the Seminar.

creation (largely through the adoption of Appropriate Technologies),<sup>27</sup> decentralized public infrastructure investment aimed at producing multiple ‘poles’ of development, an adequate social allocation ratio of public expenditures devoted to what the UNDP calls ‘human priority concerns’,<sup>28</sup> an incentives policy to favor increased productivity in low-productivity sectors, and selective linkage and delinkage with global markets, with primary emphasis on domestic markets.<sup>29</sup>

In its report on *North-South: A Program for Survival* the Brandt Commission asserted that:

Mankind has never before had such ample technical and financial resources for coping with hunger and poverty. The immense task can be tackled once the necessary collective will is mobilized... Solidarity among men must go beyond national boundaries: we cannot allow it to be reduced to a meaningless phrase. International solidarity must stem both from strong mutual interests in cooperation *and* from compassion for the hungry.<sup>30</sup>

### **III. After Postmodernism: Defining One’s Own Development**

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<sup>27</sup> For a detailed analysis of how technologies favor, or impede, employment creation, see Raphael Kaplinski, *The Economies of Small, Appropriate Technology in a Changing World*, London: Appropriate Technology International, 1990.

<sup>28</sup> United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 1991*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, 5–6.

<sup>29</sup> For detailed justification and illustration, see Denis Goulet and Kwan S. Kim, *Estrategias de desarrollo para el futuro de México*, Guadalajara, Mexico: ITESO, 1989.

<sup>30</sup> Willy Brandt, *North-South: A Programme for Survival*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1980, 16.

The French novelist Léon Bloy (1846–1917) laments that “when those who love God try to talk about Him, their words are blind lions looking for springs in the desert.”<sup>31</sup> Although those who would speak intelligently and sensitively about development are not reduced to such total blindness, they are, nonetheless, saddled with a heavy linguistic burden. For development is both an ambiguous term and an ambiguous practice. And the term is used either *descriptively* or *normatively*: to depict a present condition or to project a desirable alternative. Descriptive usage prevails in the growing body of testimonial writings on development,<sup>32</sup> in statistical and policy reports issued by international financing agencies, and in the voluminous academic literature now appearing in myriad disciplines. Normative usage of the term is found in works of criticism and alternative advocacy,<sup>33</sup> whose authors employ value-laden language to criticize development as now

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<sup>31</sup> Leon Bloy, cited in Thomas Merton, “Frontispiece,” *The Tears of the Blind Lions*, New York: New Directions, 1949.

<sup>32</sup> Carolina Maria de Jesus, *Child of the Dark*, New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1962; Domitila Barrios de Chungara with Moema Viezzer, *Let Me Speak!* New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978; Hazel Johnson and Henry Bernstein with Raul Hernan Ampuero and Ben Crow, *Third World Lives of Struggle*, Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1982; James D. Sexton, *Campesino: The Diary of a Guatemalan Indian*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985; and Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Death without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992.

<sup>33</sup> Marshall Wolfe, *Elusive Development*, London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1996; Justinian F. Rweyemamu, *Third World Options*, Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House, 1992; Rosemary E. Galli, et al., editors, *Rethinking the Third World*, New York:

conducted or to advocate a different vision deemed ethically or politically superior. Moreover, the identical word ‘development’ refers either to the ends or to the means of social change. Development is simultaneously the vision of a better life—a life materially richer, institutionally more ‘modern’, and technologically more efficient—and an array of means to achieve that vision. These means range from economic planning to propaganda campaigns, from comprehensive social engineering to sectoral interventions of all sorts, with a view to altering values, behaviors, and social structures.

It is not only the terminology of development that is fraught with ambivalence, however, but its practice as well. A bewildering assortment of policy prescriptions parade under the single banner of development, among them:

- rapid and aggressive integration into competitive global markets;
- the adoption of Western social and political institutions and practices;
- the repudiation of Westernization in pursuit of ‘endogenous’ models of change;
- the structural adjustment of macro policies to favor private investment and liberalization;
- strategies based on small, locally controlled projects.

Both as a *vision* of a better life—comprised of material well-being, technological efficiency, and institutional modernity—and as a *process* by which societies advance

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Crane Russak, 1992; James Manor, editor, *Rethinking Third World Politics*, London and New York: Longman, 1991; James H. Mittelman, *Out from Underdevelopment*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1988; Nigel Dower, *World Poverty, Challenge and Response*, York, England: William Sessions Limited, The Ebor Press, 1983; David H. Pollock and

towards that vision, 'development' is tightly bound to modernity, usually considered as a desirable (if not obligatory) condition to be sought by all societies.

Postmodern thinking, operating both as epistemological norm and as exegetical study, repudiates modernity and challenges the legitimacy of development by denying the existence of universal values and the primacy of goals over processes.

Dominant development thinking has long argued the universal objective desirability of its vision of the good life and its model of the good society. Postmodernism provides a powerful critique of one-dimensional, economicist reductionism in societal goal-setting; elitist paradigms of research, analysis, and policy-prescription; and ethnocentric valuations of modes of life based on Western historical experiences.

Since development's early days, however, there have existed alternative streams of thinking, prescription, and modeling which promoted diverse visions and strategies of development in a nonreductionist, nonelitist, nonethnocentric mode. Postmodernist critiques have resurrected interest in these alternative paradigms which stressed the establishment of development goals from within tradition and culture, nonelite participation in development decision-making and action, and multiple specifications of the contents of the good life and the desirable society.<sup>34</sup> New images of the good life and

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A.R.M. Ritter, eds., *What Kinds of Development?* 3 Vols., Ottawa: Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, 1980.

<sup>34</sup> Denis Goulet, "¿Que es el desarrollo después del posmodernismo?" *Revista de Ciencias Sociales, Nueva Época* 6 (Enero de 1999): 42–62.



the desirable society have also arisen which, like the earlier alternatives, contest the still regnant mainstream development paradigm.

For new paradigms to emerge, authentic development now occurring in numerous micro arenas must gain purchase on the criteria of decision-making that prevail in macro arenas. This they must do in a world conjuncture radically different from that prevailing in development's infancy after World War II. That altered conjuncture is characterized by globalization.

#### **IV. Development Debates in the Age of Globalization**

Under the single banner of globalization are to be found multiple interconnected phenomena that provide the basic conjunctural setting for present-day debates on development. Although no agreement exists as to the precise definition of globalization, its importance is not questioned. Nor is it disputed that globalization connects all societies and individual persons on the globe to a degree and in registers never previously experienced. One perceptive analyst, Thomas Friedman, sees globalization as having its own logic: it is not viewed as a mere phenomenon or passing trend but a new international system. In his words:

Today it is the overarching international system shaping the domestic politics and foreign relations of virtually every country, and we need to understand it as such... Today's era of globalization, which replaced the Cold War, is a similar international system, with its own unique attributes. To begin with, the globalization system, unlike the Cold War system, is not static, but a dynamic ongoing process: globalization involves the inexorable integration of markets, nation-states and technologies to a degree never witnessed before—in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations and nation-states to reach around the world farther, faster, deeper and cheaper than ever before, and in a way that is also producing a powerful backlash from those brutalized or left behind by this new system.

The driving idea behind globalization is free-market capitalism—the more you let market forces rule and the more you open your economy to free trade and competition, the more efficient and flourishing your economy will be. Globalization means the spread of free-market capitalism to virtually every country in the world. Globalization

also has its own set of economic rules—rules that revolve around opening, deregulating and privatizing your economy.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1999, 7–8.

Globalization extends its reach into diverse realms: economics, finance, culture, technology, information, and governance. Economics is now viewed more in international than in national terms. And trade, investment, money, technology, ideas, consumer practices, recreational images, individual persons, organized group actions, and cultural goods of all sorts circulate across national borders with ever fewer restrictions and in rapidly increasing volumes.

Globalization is a two-edged sword whose observable results are mixed. Previously unimagined advances have been secured in numerous domains: wealth has been created; technology has been diffused; political solidarities around issues of human rights, women's equality, the defense of indigenous cultural communities, and ecological health have been consolidated. But globalization has also exacted a high price in the form of new and large inequities, the dilution of effective national sovereignty, and multiple insecurities. Among threats to human security arising from globalization the UNDP lists: economic insecurity, job and income insecurity, health insecurity, cultural insecurity, personal insecurity, environmental security, political and community insecurity.<sup>36</sup> The highly visible nature of these threats and inequities has given rise to powerful criticism, which recently found organized expression in public protests against the WTO (World Trade Organization) meeting in Seattle (30 November–3 December 1999).

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<sup>36</sup> UNDP, *Human Development Report 1999*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Protesters included disparate environmental, labor, and consumer groups. European and US consumer groups argued “that governments should put concerns about food safety above free trade.”<sup>37</sup> In this complaint they were joined by environmentalists, who see free trade as blocking the institution of necessary environmental regulations worldwide. Other groups expressed a more explicitly political concern over the absence of democratic voices in the institutions of globalization representing interests other than those of large corporations or powerful governments. In Seattle they protested “the closed-door nature of WTO’s decision-making, as well as what they see as its tendency to ride roughshod over the legislative process of local and national governments.”<sup>38</sup> Similar resistance to elite international bureaucratic decision-making had led, in 1998, to the postponement of MAI (Multilateral Agreement on Investment) at the OECD (Paris). Labor union groups, in turn, accused the WTO, which in Seattle served as the targeted culprit symbolizing the general workings of globalization, of encouraging dumping (which, unions claim, destroy jobs ‘at home’) and of failing to set “international labor standards that would prevent poor countries from using child labor, or lax labor laws, to lure jobs away from wealthy countries.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> “Seattle Is under Curfew after Disruptions,” *New York Times*, December 1, 1999, A 14.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

Environmental irresponsibility, favoritism toward rich and powerful elite institutions, placing higher value on profitable trade over consumer safety and health, the destruction of jobs, the dilution of state sovereignty (in particular, control over the national economy and financial system)—these represent the broad array of general complaints leveled against globalization. Champions of globalization, and of its central prescriptions and practices—free trade, liberalization, privatization—retort that these complaints are unfounded or exaggerated.<sup>40</sup> London’s weekly *The Economist*, a highly

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<sup>40</sup> Typical examples are C. Ford Runge with François Ortalo-Magne and Philip Vande Kamp, *Freer Trade, Protected Environment*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1994; Dani Rodrik, *The New Global Economy and Developing Countries: Making Openness Work*, Washington, DC: Overseas Development Council, 1999.

articulate and influential advocate of globalization, protests loudly that more globalization is needed, not less, and that those who are hurt most by obstacles to free trade are the poor. A recent editorial enjoins us “to be clear about who would stand to lose most if globalization really were to be pushed sharply backwards—or, indeed, simply if further liberalization fails to take place. It is the developing countries. In other words, the poor.”<sup>41</sup> The same editorial concedes that free trade is not a panacea and “is not likely to bring better welfare on its own.” But it denies that free trade enriches multinationals or destroys the planet. On the contrary, says *The Economist*, with free trade and its growth since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, “a new chance had arrived for the 5 billion poor to join the world economy and improve their lives. That chance remains. It must not be thrown away, amid the debris of Seattle.”<sup>42</sup>

It must not be assumed, moreover, from the temporary coalitions formed at Seattle that the interests of all protesting groups are compatible. Europe and America have sharp disputes over protectionism in agriculture and over free trade in cultural goods. And large divergences between rich and poor countries over labor standards remain. Poor countries “resist the inclusion on the agenda of labor issues, which they see as a pretext for rich-country protectionism.”<sup>43</sup>

Disputes over the benevolence of globalization bring to the forefront a set of three broader and interconnected disagreements over development’s present state: over the

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<sup>41</sup> “The Real Losers,” editorial, *The Economist*, 11 December 1999, 15.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

diagnosis to be made of the world's present uneven development, over evaluation of the merits and demerits of development pathways pursued in recent decades, and over prescriptive directions in which to aim policy decisions in the short-term future. Key disagreements center on four issues:

- Should free trade and maximum integration into global competitive markets be promoted, or is selective integration around locally/regionally/nationally/transregionally specific forms of endogenous (or autocentric) development be sought?<sup>44</sup> Widening economic, financial, and technological integration into competitive global markets has adversely affected not only countries that have been the direct victims of financial collapse but several developed countries as well, notably in their ability to create remunerative employment and to provide governmental welfare services at an acceptable level.

- Should rapid and high levels of economic growth continue to be pursued, on the assumption that it is necessary for development, or should growth be restrained, or qualitatively altered, in order to ensure environmental and social sustainability over the long-term? The dividing line, in economic theory, lies between advocates of environmental economics and those who see this (merely internalizing, and costing, what previously were treated as environmental externalities) as a palliative and who plead for a more biological, system ecological economics in which inter-relational vitality (nature,

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<sup>43</sup> "A Global Disaster," *The Economist*, 11 December 1999, 19.



humans, animals, technology) is the goal to be sought and not maximum economic enrichment (which they view as a not fully genuine form of wealth).<sup>45</sup>

- Should investment and resource transfer strategies be guided by global macroeconomic concerns, or should more alternative, bottom-up development be pursued, in recognition that these must not be confined to micro arenas but must gain

purchase (in harmony with values and institutional creations) on criteria of decision-making at work in meso and macro arenas? The question here is analogous to that raised by the British economist Raphael Kaplinsky, when studying what conditions are required for AT (appropriate technology) policies to be economically efficient as well as socially, politically, culturally, and environmentally appropriate. Kaplinsky concluded that state macro policies must themselves be AT-enhancing for the more micro AT actions to yield proper developmental effects.<sup>46</sup> Something analogous is required here: macroeconomic policies that promote integral sustainable human development, and not merely economic development, which may well prove to be not only unsustainable but humanly damaging

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<sup>44</sup> Christiane Gagnon, *La recomposition des territoires: Développement local viable*, Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1994; Bernard Dumas and Michel Séguier, *Construire des actions collectives: Développer les solidarités*, Lyon: Cronique Sociale, 1997.

<sup>45</sup> Anil Markandya and Julie Richardson, *Environmental Economics: A Reader*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992; Rajaram Krishnan, Jonathan M. Harris, and Neva R. Goodwin, editors, *A Survey of Ecological Economics*, Washington, DC: Island Press, 1995.

<sup>46</sup> Raphael Kaplinsky, *The Economies of Small: Appropriate Technology in a Changing World*, Washington, DC: Appropriate Technology International, 1990.

beyond tolerable bounds. Macro policies, including global policies, ought to be designed to be microdevelopmental enhancing, where the premium can (in the right conditions) be placed on local definition of needs and control in ways that are economically and socially efficient.

- Should internationally operating business corporations be viewed as the main agent or institutional actor in development, with governments, civil society organizations, and even international financial institutions viewed as their subordinate partners or facilitators? Or are novel constellations of horizontal partnerships, engaging NGOs, business firms, international agencies, and governments at several levels, and diverse civil society groups the actors best suited to promote authentic sustainable development?<sup>47</sup> It is far from certain that even ethically responsible conduct of business, even were it to become general practice, can produce sound development. Profit-seeking and selecting the ‘basket of goods and services’ to produce should be utilized by societal systems as stimulating and regulatory social mechanisms, not as organizing principles of economic activity. The entire realm of economic activity is instrumentally related to the goal of qualitative, multifaceted human development.

It lies beyond the scope of this single essay to formulate extended answers to these four dyadic interrogations. They are listed here to suggest what are the contours and

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<sup>47</sup> Denis Goulet, “Authentic Development: Is it Sustainable?” in *Building Sustainable Societies*, Dennis C. Pirages, editor, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1996, 189–205; “Defining Wealth, Rethinking Development, Achieving Sustainability,” *Humanomics* 15 (2/3, 1999): 42–59.

the content of development debates in the present era of globalization. For purposes of greater clarity, one may frame the key development questions in simple terms as follows:

- Is globalization good for development?
- If so, how much globalization, operating under what rules of governance, and in the pursuit of what ends?
- What kind of development does globalization, on the present model, generate—elitist, dependency-inducing, culturally destructive, socially disruptive, personally alienating, environmentally damaging development?
- Or, conversely, is globalization development that is participatory, emancipating, and liberating for the many, serving as a dynamic catalyst of regenerated cultural vitalities, conducive to social cooperation if not placid harmony, and environmentally sound for the long-term?

### **Conclusion**

Over the five and a half decades in which development has served as a propelling myth (in Sorel's<sup>48</sup> sense of a galvanizing idea that mobilizes people and institutions to make sacrifices in pursuit of it), the nature of development has evolved away from the quest for maximum economic growth, via targeted investment (public and private) and resource transfers. Investments and transfers were energized by state actions to plan, to provide incentives, and to create infrastructure around a threefold general goal: to

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<sup>48</sup> Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, New York: Collier Books, 1961.

modernize, to technologize, to specialize. Initially there was at least an implicit assumption that wealth would be created rapidly and that it would trickle down in accord with the later dictum that a rising tide raises all ships.

Eventually it was learned that wealth does not trickle down and that rising tides sink small boats. Moreover, even economic growth itself did not occur everywhere (because social and political conditions were not propitious, because cultural and psychological determinants were absent or weak, because population pressure on resources was too great). In addition, institutional and political modernization and even technologically driven economic growth did not necessarily create employment. Worse still, economic and social (and qualitative human) disparities became more pronounced. Nor was poverty eliminated, notwithstanding significant advances in some countries, some sectors, some classes, some population groups. Quite predictably, as the learning curve for development brought to light ever more numerous and ever more complex variables in the development equation—social, cultural, environmental, political, ethical—powerful assaults were launched on the very conception, the very project of development. Assaults were led in the name of postmodernism, of deep ecology, of liberation ideologies rejecting neofoms of dependency attendant upon globalization, and of ethically based resistance to the injustices and inequalities that seemed inseparable from the growth of some economic units. Notwithstanding the early rationales for growing inequalities provided by certain economic theorists, it became empirically evident over time that inequalities were not only durable but were growing wider. The most recent assaults on globalization have come from cultural voices troubled by the

apparent ineluctability with which globalization, and its attendant standardization, destroys cultural diversity and vitality and the possibility for human communities to be genuine subjects of their own social history. Instead communities are reduced to the status of objects, known and acted upon instead of actively knowing and acting. Hence their emphasis on local control, nay more, local decision-making reaching to the higher reaches of every people's putative 'right' to define its own development paradigm.

In the globalization age all these forces of assault, along with old and new forces of defense, converge. This convergence, rendered possible paradoxically by those same technologies that have enabled financial and economic globalization to spread, comes at a time when the old development model (duly 'corrected') is, in terms of available resources and institutional support (not least in the form of conceptual rationales), at its strongest.

On the development front there are now numerous new actors, or actors newly conscious of new roles for themselves (this is especially true of NGOs and what have come to be called institutions of civil society), as well as old actors rendered acutely conscious of lessened powers to influence events (governments) and others (business enterprises) become no less acutely conscious of their enhanced capacities to influence events in macro domains they had previously not aspired to affect. The late Willis Harman, founder of the World Business Academy, wrote in 1990 that:

Business has become, in this last half century, the most powerful institution on the planet. The dominant institution in any society needs to take responsibility for the whole—as the church did in the days of the

Holy Roman Empire. But business has not had such a tradition. This is a new role, not yet well understood and accepted.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Willis Harman, statement reproduced on back cover of *World Business Academy Perspectives* 7 (3, 1993).

Harman lamented that business firms were slow to accept the new role. A large constellation of other development actors, however, refuses to accept the new role as legitimate for business firms. In surprising fashion, it appears that a complete circle regarding how one thinks about development may now have been closed. Thirty years ago Paul G. Hoffman, the first Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and the operating manager of the Marshall Plan, the largest developmental resource transfer effectuated, wrote that:

just as politics is too important to be left entirely to politicians, development may well be too important to be left solely in the hands of 'developers'. Speaking both as the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and as a private citizen who cares greatly about the future of his world, I say that development cannot and should not be the exclusive province of the 'experts' no matter how skillful or well intentioned. It is too big, too complex, too crucial an undertaking not to merit the involvement—or at least the concerned interest—of the majority of people in every country on earth.<sup>50</sup>

Globalization has transformed into an empirical fact what Hoffman presented an ethically desirable goal. After countless evolutions, development has now become everyone's business.

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<sup>50</sup> Paul G. Hoffman, comment on book jacket of original edition of Denis Goulet, *The Cruel Choice, a New Concept in the Theory of Development*, New York: Atheneum, 1971. The Hoffman comment was written 18 months before the publication date.