

# 14

## DEVELOPMENT

*Julian Culp*

Many international development organizations like the World Bank and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) tend to be populated mostly by economists, political scientists and lawyers. Moral and political philosophers represent at most a small minority in such institutions. Arguably, this is because most of the members of such international development organizations believe that their work consists mainly in identifying and implementing the most effective means for realizing given ends.

They may think this because development constitutes the overarching goal that their work must realize. They may point out that to put into question the desirability of development involves a contradiction in terms, because development simply stands for change that is socially desirable. Therefore there is no need for normative reflections and justifications of the philosophical kind. This kind of reasoning apparently explains why such organizations rely almost exclusively on personnel of the above-mentioned sort who are capable of responding to the instrumental, or technical, questions as to how one achieves development.

This chapter will show that – contrary to this reasoning – the work of international development organizations requires a constant reflection of the moral and political philosophical kind. A major reason for this is that while people agree that the abstract concept of development, in its normative usage, indeed, simply means social progress or good, or desirable, social change, they disagree profoundly about what social progress consists in exactly. There exists a normative disagreement about the conception of development that expresses best how social progress ought to be defined in concrete terms.<sup>1</sup> For example, should we really think of social progress only in terms of economic growth, that is, in the accumulation of goods and services? Or should we instead, for example, think of it in terms of the eradication of extreme poverty? Or in terms of yet something else, like the expansion of options for human choice?

The next section begins by articulating more clearly how to define a normative conception of development and in which way such a normative conception relates to what this chapter refers to as the “development practice”. The three following sections go on to differentiate the very influential normative conceptions of economic development, human development and sustainable development. The subsequent section exposes them to the radical critique of post-development theorists who argue that any normative conception of development is parochial. The final section concludes by explaining why the normative debate about who is responsible

### *Development*

for achieving development is likely to receive a lot of scholarly attention in the near future – owing mainly to the nascent multi-polarity in the global economy.

### **Normative development conceptions**

When we use the concept of development descriptively, such as when we speak about how this month's weather has been developing, then we simply utilize the ideas of "transition", "changeover", "trend" or "change" Thereby – that is, only in virtue of the usage of the concept of development – we do not make an evaluative statement about the recent changes in weather. However, when we use the concept of development normatively, then we make the evaluative statement that something has changed in a desirable manner. For example, we may say that a company made a significant development in order to express our positive assessment of the changes that a company has undergone. In particular, when we talk in a normative sense about the development of a social arrangement, we usually refer to the idea of human or social progress (Lebret 1960: 1, in Goulet 1995: 6; Chambers 1997: vi; Dower 2000: 44; Nuscheler 2006: 225; Hopper 2012: 3). Consider, for instance, that the Human Development Report 2010 of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) states explicitly that its approach to assessing development "is the best way of thinking about human progress" (United Nations Development Programme 2010: 11). Normative conceptions of the development of social arrangements thereby determine how one ought to conceive of human or social progress by arguing for a particular set of conditions whose fulfilment amounts to the realization of such progress.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter differentiates three distinct normative conceptions of development that claim to have universal validity and which are therefore able to guide policy-makers of a global development practice. As further explained below, international development organizations like the World Bank as well as governments and non-governmental organizations that aspire to promote development constitute a development practice of global scope. Normative development conceptions are of great practical importance, because it is in light of such a conception that the members of the development practice orient their policies and decision-making processes.

The development practice emerged as a distinct field of world politics together with the creation of the United Nations in the aftermath of the Second World War (UN 1945: articles 1 (3), 55, 73, 75). In hindsight, Harry Truman's inaugural address as President of the United States in 1949 represents the kick-off to the development practice's project of realizing development everywhere. In the fourth point of his "Four Point Speech", Truman (1949) emphasizes the global dimension of a necessary international effort to promote development:

[W]e must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. This should be a cooperative enterprise in which all nations work together through the United Nations and its specialized agencies wherever practicable.

Before 1945, by contrast, border-transcending development policies were restricted to some of the colonial powers' endeavours within their colonies and were mainly directed at securing the economic exploitation of natural resources (Arndt 1981: 462–63; Fischer *et al.* 2008: 15; Lepenies 2009). Nevertheless, it would be obviously false to hold that the development practice would be disconnected from the colonial endeavours.<sup>3</sup> The fact alone that many governmental development bureaucracies often originated from their former colonial administrative offices is very telling indeed.

*Julian Culp*

The institutions that are assumed to be involved in the development practice today are, first of all, the actors that participate in the practice to give and receive official development assistance (ODA). The DAC (OECD 2011c) defined ODA in 1969 as follows:

[ODA consists of] those flows to states and territories on the DAC List of ODA Recipients and to multilateral development institutions which are: i. *provided by official agencies*, including state and local governments, or by their executive agencies; and ii. each transaction of which: a) is administered with the promotion of the *economic development and welfare of developing countries* as its main objective; and b) is *concessional in character* and conveys a grant element of at least 25 per cent (calculated at a rate of discount of 10 per cent).<sup>4</sup>

The inter-state provision of ODA is the aspect of the development practice that is usually referred to as “bilateral aid”. In 2011, the donors belonging to the DAC provided a total of US\$134 billion ODA. ODA includes humanitarian aid, which amounted to nearly US\$10 billion in 2011 (OECD 2012b). In addition, there are further donors who do not belong to the DAC. These include emerging donors who have close relationships to the DAC (e.g. the Czech Republic), providers of South–South cooperation like Brazil, and Arab donors like Kuwait. These non–DAC donors provided between \$12 billion and \$14 billion ODA in 2008 (Smith *et al.* 2010).

The second pillar of the development practice consists of the international organizations that have the primary purpose of promoting development. These institutions include most prominently the World Bank Group, the European Development Fund, the Asian and the African Development Banks, the United Nations Funds and Programmes and the Global Fund to fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria. This part of the development practice that promotes development via international institutions is commonly labelled the system of “multilateral aid”. In 2011, the multilateral aid amounted to almost \$55 billion, roughly 40 per cent of total ODA (OECD 2013a). The third pillar of the development practice is “private aid” provided by philanthropic foundations and non–governmental organizations like *ActionAid*, *Eurodad* or the *Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation*. Estimates range between \$32 and \$58 billion for the total volume of private aid in 2011 (OECD 2013b; Center for Global Prosperity 2013: 12).

### **Economic development**

For nearly half a century after the inception of the development practice, *economic development* has been the most influential normative conception.<sup>5</sup> Its central thesis is that the increase in a country’s production of goods and services, which is measured by the country’s growth of its gross domestic product (GDP), expresses a country’s development.

The fact that this particular conception of development has been so influential for so long may be easily overlooked because scholars of different sorts have disagreed profoundly about the proper means for achieving economic development. Structural economists, dependency theorists, modernization theorists and adherents of the Washington Consensus argued fiercely about how to bring economic development about. Nevertheless, they have never put into question what development in the normative sense actually means. They all accepted that development consists simply of economic growth. The reason why these scholars were considered development scholars – and not just economists of different sorts – is that they all assumed that countries with a very small GDP need to adopt a set of developmental policies distinct from that of countries with greater GDPs (Sen [1988] 2008: 159).

### *Development*

Along these lines *structuralist economists* like Rodan-Rosenstein, for example, argue that economic development in poorer countries requires a “Big Push” in the form of heavy investments in the productive capacities.<sup>6</sup> Other structuralist economists emphasize that international economic structures constitute obstacles to the progress of the poorer countries. Most prominently Singer and Prebisch predicted in 1950 that under existing arrangements the terms of trade for poorer countries would worsen (Prebisch 1950, H. Singer 1950). This is because in a global environment of economic growth, the sellers of manufactured products benefit overproportionally from trade compared with the sellers of natural resources. This results from the discrepancy in the income-elasticity of the demand for manufactured goods relative to that for natural resources. As countries become richer, the more prone their inhabitants become to consume manufactured products rather than natural resources. This, of course, is to the detriment of those who sell only natural resources. One central conclusion of the analysis of these structuralist economists is that poorer countries have to rely on a so-called import substitution strategy. This strategy consists in erecting barriers to imports of manufactured goods and in subsidizing domestic companies in order to stimulate the internal production of such goods.

*Dependency theory* is an offspring of structural economics but adopts several elements of Marxist economic theory. It claims that the global capitalist order serves to exploit the labour of poorer countries in the periphery in ways that provide the richer countries in the centre with economic surpluses (Baran 1957, Frank 1967, Amin 1976, Cardoso & Faletto 1979). Thereby the global capitalist order is said to engender the “development of underdevelopment”. Later, in a less deterministic fashion, some dependency theorists stressed that although the global capitalist order strongly influences the shape and pace of domestic economic development, there are alternative ways for countries to deal with the exploitation by the global capitalist order that includes the possibility of “dependent development”. Cardoso and Faletto (1979: xi), for instance, claim that while dependency does not hinder economic development, it conditions and constrains it.

It is easy to mistakenly believe that dependency theory views development as the ceasing of the domination occurring at the global level. Its major concern, in fact, is to overcome the dependency of the world’s poorer countries – especially their dependency on the international markets’ demand for natural resources. But one must note that dependency theory emphasizes that halting domination at the global level is simply a very effective *means* to facilitate economic growth on the domestic level (Greig *et al.* 2007: 73).

Like the dependency theories, modernization theories attribute to the state the role of organizing and directing the structure of the domestic economy and society (Rostow 1960, Inkeles 1966). Unlike dependency theory, however, modernization theory strongly emphasizes *endogenous* prerequisites for development, such as certain sociocultural characteristics of the population and the availability and quality of infrastructure. Paradigmatic for modernization theory, Rostow’s *Stages of Economic Growth* (1960) describes economic development with a linear five-phase model through which societies would have to pass in order to develop and become modern before industrialization eventually permits a high level of output. Non-modern, traditional societies need to gradually overcome deficiencies of several kinds: their lack of technological knowledge, of a scientific understanding of the world, of entrepreneurial individuals, of a centralized administrative political power and of decentralized, market-based financial institutions.

Like modernization theory, the “Washington Consensus” (Williamson 1990) holds that development has its way when societies transform internally. Hence the genuine novelty of the Washington Consensus consists in its reliance on the market mechanism to effectuate development. *Market-led* development is meant to reduce the government’s role in society, promising to increase economic efficiency. Accordingly, the Washington Consensus belongs to the influential “neo-classical” paradigm of economic thinking.

*Julian Culp*

## Human development

The so-called capabilities approach to human development formulates a normative development conception that is fundamentally different from the conception of economic development. Its core claim is that people's effective freedoms or "capabilities" and not the economy must be at the centre of development.<sup>7</sup> This normative development conception arose in the 1980s and soon gained considerable influence on the development practice. From 1990 onwards, the United Nations Development Programme has published an annual report on human development in all countries. The first Human Development Report in 1990 expressed the transition from an economic to a human development conception as follows: "People are the real wealth of a nation" (United Nations Development Programme 1990: 9).

The conception of human development calls into question the conception of economic development for merely concentrating on the amount of goods people hold rather than their effective freedoms to do things and to experience certain states of being that they have reason to value (Sen 1999; Nussbaum 2000, 2006, 2011a). Therefore this conception is also referred to as "development as freedom". Goods can count only as a means of development, not as an end in and of themselves, because goods can only be valued instrumentally in enabling people to choose among certain options (Sen 1984: 510).

Thereby this conception places people's *capabilities* onto the centre stage of development and argues that capabilities are the only appropriate metric, or "informational base" (Sen 1999: 55) for assessing development. "Capabilities" refer to the effective freedoms to realize so-called *functionings*, which represent the various "beings" and "doings" that an individual may experience or exercise. So the real opportunity of being healthy or riding a bicycle is a capability. And the various combinations of functionings that an individual has the effective opportunity to choose constitute her capability set (Sen 1992: 39–54).

Nussbaum and Sen also make clear that goods are very poor proxies with regard to the capabilities that people actually enjoy (Sen 1992: 28–30, 36–38; [1980] 1997: 364–67; 1999: 70–71; Nussbaum 2000: 60–61; 2011a: 47–50, 56–58). This is because the possibilities of individuals to convert goods into capabilities vary greatly depending on their internal characteristics – such as their metabolic rates or cognitive capacities – and their external circumstances – such as the social, political and natural environment in which they live. So even if economic conceptions of development are considered as accounts of the means rather than of the ends of development, they are still deficient, because they neglect that the heterogeneity of people and their social and environmental contexts render goods an unhelpful and misleading indicator of the capabilities that people actually enjoy.

Despite Nussbaum and Sen's agreement on the inappropriateness of economic growth as a measure of development, their conceptions of human development are very distinct. The first difference is that Sen is reluctant to determine which particular capabilities should enjoy priority in cases of conflict between alternative realizations of different sets of capabilities (Sen 1999: 33–34). Nussbaum's conception, by contrast, argues that some capabilities are of special moral importance. She defends a list of *ten central capabilities* that, she argues, are necessary elements of a life worthy of human dignity<sup>8</sup> (Nussbaum 2000: 70–86; 2003; 2006: 69–81; 2011a: 31). These central capabilities are viewed as constituting an account of a "minimally flourishing life" (Nussbaum 2011a: 33) and enjoy priority over other capabilities.

The second major contrast between Nussbaum and Sen is that Sen refers to his approach as a "perspective of freedom" and sometimes appears to endorse freedom as a meta-good that can be instantiated in various ways by different sorts of capabilities (Sen 1999: 13–34, *passim*; cf. also Nussbaum 2003: 44; 2006: 297; 2011a: 70–74). For example, he argues that development

### *Development*

should be “seen as a process of removing unfreedoms and of extending the substantive freedoms of different types that people have reason to value” (Sen 1999: 86). Accordingly, the goal of development, according to Sen’s version of human development, appears to consist in the extension of people’s capability sets.<sup>9</sup> Nussbaum, by contrast, clearly rejects the view that any expansion of people’s capability sets will count as development. She emphasizes that what matters above all is that every single one of the ten central capabilities on her list is realized.

Arguably, the reason for this difference is that Nussbaum, but not Sen, explicitly follows the basic ideas of Rawls’s *Political Liberalism* (2005) and offers a “political” rather than a “comprehensive” justification of the measure of development (Nussbaum 2000: 76–77; 2003: 42–43; 2006: 79, 297; 2011a: 19; 2011b). A *political* conception is different from a *comprehensive* conception in two ways: first, the scope of validity of a political conception is restricted to normative questions about the fundamental justice of a social order. A comprehensive conception is broader and may include normative questions about personal relationships or relations within a narrower association as its subject matter. Second, the validity claim of a political conception is that of public justifiability, which is to say that a political conception is meant to be acceptable for everyone, regardless of which particular, reasonable view about the good life one may hold. A reasonable comprehensive conception does not claim to be publicly justifiable because it accepts that the world is characterized by a plurality of reasonable but incompatible comprehensive views about the good. This is because, as Rawls puts it, “the burdens of judgment” (2005: esp. 56–57) make it the case that within free institutions, the free exercise of reason makes such a plurality a permanent feature of the social world. These burdens of judgement include that people undergo different experiences throughout their life, differ on which empirical information they deem relevant for practical judgement, and have to rely on interpretations of moral and political concepts that are necessarily underspecified.

Following these basic ideas of political liberalism means to recognize, however, that it is inappropriate to base a conception of development in a “perspective of freedom” that endorses a particular, comprehensive and not publicly justifiable view regarding what constitutes the good life. A person may reasonably reject the idea that her conception of the good ought to consist in an expansion of effective freedoms. However, a development conception should be able to orient public decision-making and, consequently, ought to be based on a justification that aims at redeeming the claim of public justifiability.

Given the fundamental importance of political liberalism, Nussbaum’s version of human development appears more compelling than that of Sen. However, one may question, of course, whether or not there may be a way of substantiating development through the lenses of a political conception that is more democratic and less fixed than Nussbaum’s list of ten central capabilities (cf. Crocker 2008: 297–337).

### **Sustainable development**

The conception of human development is compelling because it does not confound means with ends. It places human beings’ effective freedoms at the centre of the assessment of development and ascribes only derivative importance to economic growth. However, this conception seems to have two blind spots that the conception of sustainable development promises to avoid. The first one is that the conception of human development apparently fails to take into consideration future generations; the second one is that it has an anthropocentric bias because it neglects the moral importance of non-human animals as well as non-animal nature.

The United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) articulated the politically most influential conception of sustainable development in *Our*

*Julian Culp*

*Common Future*, the so-called Brundtland Report, published in 1987. The Brundtland Report defines that development is sustainable if “it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED 1987: ch. 2 (1)). It further specifies that it understands needs as “essential needs ... for food, clothing, shelter, [and] jobs” (*ibid.*: ch. 2 (4)). Hence this conception of sustainable development is concerned with some of the standard needs of human beings in modern times.

This conception of sustainable development aligns itself to the human development conception and its critique of the economic development conception. As the Brundtland Report clarifies: “[S]ustainable development clearly requires economic growth in places where such needs are not being met. ... But growth by itself is not enough. High levels of productive activity and widespread poverty can co-exist, and can endanger the environment” (*ibid.*: ch. 2 (6)). In addition, the first principle of the Rio Declaration, which resulted from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (CED) in 1992, emphasizes: “Human beings are at the center of concern for sustainable development” (CED 1992: principle 1).

Nevertheless, sustainable development envisions a distinctively novel development conception, because it emphasizes the importance of being able to satisfy human needs in the future. It thereby adds the further normative dimension of sustainability to development, which according to Brian Barry means “that there is some X whose value should be maintained, in as far as it lies within our power to do so, into the indefinite future” (Barry 1997: 50).

But of course one can also argue that the conception of sustainable development only makes explicit what is implicit in the conception of human development. To the extent that scholars of the capabilities approach like Nussbaum and Sen ascribe fundamental moral importance to effective human freedoms, it seems natural to think that such freedoms possess moral value whether they exist now or in the future.

The second blind spot of the conception of human development mentioned above is that it only ascribes moral value to the effective freedoms of human beings, and neglects the potential moral importance of non-human animals as well as nature as such (Dower 2000: 41–42). However, it is also distinctive of the conception of sustainable development, at least in the way in which it is defined in the Brundtland Report, that it contains an anthropocentric bias. The preservation of non-animal nature and of non-human animals is not viewed as something that is intrinsically valuable and constitutive of sustainable development. As the report makes clear:

Every ecosystem everywhere cannot be preserved intact. A forest may be depleted in one part of a watershed and extended elsewhere, which is not a bad thing if the exploitation has been planned and the effects on soil erosion rates, water regimes and genetic losses have been taken into account.

(WCED 1987: ch. 2 (11))

The preservation of non-animal nature and of non-human animals is only valuable conditional on its contribution to enabling the fulfilment of essential human needs.

Therefore some theorists, for instance Dower, argue that a novel meaning of sustainable development is needed that also ascribes moral importance to non-animal nature and to non-human animals. Dower argues that there is no clear divide between human animals, non-human animals and non-animal nature. Rather, human animals are part of nature and historically evolved from other animals. Therefore, so the argument goes, it seems plausible to consider not only human animals as constitutive elements of development but also non-human animals and non-animal nature, that is, the “biotic community” (Dower 2000: 48), as a whole.

### *Development*

It is questionable, however, whether Dower is proposing at all a re-formulation of a *conception of development* because such a conception is meant to substantiate the idea of human or social progress – and not the idea of progress in non-animal nature and the non-human animal world. Therefore Dower’s proposal of widening our understanding of development may be viewed simply as a suggestion about how to concretize the demands of sustainability but not as a suggestion about how to conceive of sustainable development.

Furthermore, one needs to resist the temptation to argue that whatever protects the current state of non-animal nature and non-human animals is desirable. This is because it is flawed to believe that this current state represents a scientifically explainable inherent harmony or balance that requires protection. After all, evolution is characterized by constant change and the extinction of species. And therefore measures that simply protect the environment in its current state cannot be viewed at all as the conservation of some inherent harmony or balance. In addition, the very idea that one could gain insights into moral requirements solely by scientifically explaining the functioning of non-animal nature and of non-human animals commits a naturalist fallacy. Just because non-animal nature and non-human animals function in a certain way does not justify that human beings are responsible for ensuring that they continue to function in that particular way.

Hence the best way to incorporate concerns about the environment into a conception of development may be by acknowledging an anthropocentric bias while at the same time urging that human beings have morally important interests in the preservation of certain natural resources. Indeed, one may even argue that the enjoyment of preserved natural resources constitutes an essential human need. Thereby one can ascribe moral importance to certain parts of the environment on the basis of the conception of sustainable development articulated in the Brundtland Report.

### **Post-development**

After this survey of three prominent normative conceptions of development, this section will present the challenge that post-development theory poses for all of them despite their diversity. Post-development theorists argue – quite radically indeed – that it is necessary to avoid expounding any normative conception of development (cf. Sachs [1992] 2010, Rahnema & Bawtree 1997, Ziai 2007). They hold that every normative conception of development is parochial and thereby undermines societies’ political autonomy. Therefore they search for an *alternative to development* rather than justifying further, as they put it, “development alternatives” (Escobar 2012: xiii).

Post-development theorists come to the view that any given normative conception of development is parochial by analysing how the discourse about development emerged in the decade after the Second World War and has been maintained thereafter. They assume that certain norms are constitutive of the development discourse and that the interests of the more powerful actors in world politics have created and shaped these norms in the discourse’s formative period. The norms of the development discourse are, for instance, that economic poverty, that is, a lack of material goods, must be viewed as an international political problem and that only a capitalist mode of economic organization is apt in order to solve it (Escobar 2012: 21–55; Rahnema 1991, [1992] 2010; Rist 2008: 8–24). The formulation and recognition of such norms, for instance by Harry Truman in his Four Point Speech cited above, is said to serve the interests of powerful actors like the United States. Such interests include the expansion of export markets for goods and services, the access to natural resources in the so-called Third World, the possibility of making foreign investments there, and the possibility of exerting political influence in order to win the



*Julian Culp*

Cold War (Escobar 2012: 31–34). Thus post-development theorists view the notions of a Third World and of underdevelopment as a “regime of representation” (*ibid.*: 6) and as conceptual “inventions” (*ibid.*: 31) that enable the more powerful actors to exert power through, and to benefit from, a certain kind of discursive practice: “The production of discourse under conditions of unequal power ... entails specific constructions of the ... Third World subject in/through discourse in ways that allow the exercise of power over it” (*ibid.*: 9).

The parochialism of the discourse about development and, consequently, of any normative conception of development belonging to it, traces back to the fact that the norms which characterize development are Western norms that are part of a “Western epistemological order” (*ibid.*: 7). After all, the development discourse “is the process by which, in the history of the modern West, non-European areas have been systematically organized into, and transformed according to, European constructs” (*ibid.*).

In a similar vein, Esteva holds that any normative conception of development is necessarily parochial, because the very usage of the *concept* of development goes along with a flawed, deterministic – or teleological – philosophy of history of the kind propagated by Hegel and Marx. This philosophy of history has it that all societies must pass through the same, predetermined stages of development (cf. Esteva [1992] 2010: 3–6).

The fact that the concept of development is associated with a deterministic philosophy of history is no coincidence, of course, given that this concept has its origins in biology. In biology development describes the sequence that an organism follows in its unfolding of its inherent potential. So some social theorists have simply transposed the necessity that natural laws impose upon the biological sequential unfolding of an organism to their conceptualization of social development. The upshot is that they regard certain social changes as unavoidable and ascribe to social science the task of identifying the “laws” governing these changes.

The effect of this conceptualization of development is that whenever some societies are further ahead in development and, correspondingly, others are further behind, then those societies that are further behind *must and will* move forward to the stage in which other societies already are. Post-development theorists like Esteva hold that all normative conceptions of development are therefore necessarily parochial because they all claim that the norms of some developed societies are *ipso facto* valid for all of the other societies (*ibid.*: 5). Thereby development creates “an image of the future that is a mere continuation of the past: that is development, a conservative, if not reactionary, myth” (*ibid.*: 21).

Some development scholars attack post-development theorists for solely criticizing the status quo (Pieterse 2000: 188). However, post-development theorists also contribute in several ways to the formulation of action-guiding alternatives to development. Their recognition of the moral importance of the political autonomy of societies is accompanied by a great appreciation of grassroots social movements, decentralized, local decision-making and a sweeping scepticism regarding the claims of “Western” science and of experts of all sorts. Therefore they advocate a form of radical democracy, of the kind that Laclau and Mouffe (2001) propose, which is incompatible with representative forms of democracy and which foresees the democratization of all spheres of social life to be realized on a small scale through direct democracy (cf. Ziai 2004: 1056–57).

This raises the question, however, whether post-development theorists actually formulate an alternative to development rather than simply another normative conception of development. It seems obvious that the ideal of radical democracy cherished by many post-development theorists could be viewed as a substantiation of the abstract notion of development understood as social or human progress. Thus, post-development theorists seem to propose a way of assessing social or human progress based on the perspective of radical democracy.

### *Development*

If post-development theorists are plausibly understood in this way, then their critique of the *concept* and the discourse of development that constructs it is flawed, because it confounds a normative conception of development with the concept of development. This implies that these critiques question merely the normative conceptions of development which subscribe to a teleological philosophy of history and which endorse a conception of economic development that benefits predominantly the more powerful actors in world politics by enabling them to exercise power in certain ways. After all, a normative idea of human or social progress is conceivable without endorsing such a philosophy of history and without committing oneself to an economic development conception. In fact, the conceptions of human and of sustainable development have already transcended the alleged conceptual boundaries that the post-development theorists claim that the development discourse imposes.

In sum, while the post-development perspective helps to keep in mind the decisive challenge to avoid a parochial formulation of what development means, its radical imperative to avoid the usage of the concept of development is ill-founded. This is because the abstract meaning of the concept of development, namely in the sense of human or social progress, is more narrow than the post-development theorists assume and thereby avoids the problems that these theorists associate with it.

### **Who is responsible for development?**

In conclusion, I would like to draw attention to a question that is gaining more and more importance: “Who is responsible for development?” We are now living in an increasingly multi-polar world with several economically very powerful countries in the global South. As a result, it is no longer possible – if it ever was – to provide only an account about what development means and then go on to assume that the more powerful countries of the global North possess the major responsibility for realizing it.

To elaborate, consider that in the second half of the previous century the question as to who is responsible for development, for instance along the lines of the conception of sustainable development, which requires the satisfaction of essential human needs in the present, seemed to be answerable rather easily. The rich countries were much richer than the poor countries<sup>10</sup> and almost all of the world’s poor people (in terms of income per day below US\$1.25) were living in poor countries. In 1990, for example, 93 per cent of the global poor were living in low-income countries (Sumner 2010: 1). Because of the small size of the economies of the poor countries and the large degree of poor people among their population (52 per cent in 1981: Chen & Ravallion 2012: 2), it probably seemed evident that these countries could not possess the major responsibility for realizing essential human needs, because this would burden them too heavily.

By contrast, in light of the rich economies’ prowess it was widely believed that a relatively small effort of the rich countries would be sufficient to facilitate development elsewhere.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, the widely shared principle of mutual aid (or of humanity or of beneficence) alone – according to which one is obligated to avoid the suffering of someone else if one is capable of doing so at a relatively low cost to oneself – was thought to be sufficient to morally justify the richer countries’ moral obligation to promote development.<sup>12</sup> Consider, for instance, that the former World Bank president McNamara affirmed in 1973 that “The whole of human history has recognized the principle – at least in the abstract – that the rich and the powerful have a moral obligation to assist the poor and the weak” (McNamara 1973: 8). The argument of some moral and political philosophers to the effect that promoting development was a *duty of justice* of the rich countries, thus, simply over-determined the moral justification of the duty to

*Julian Culp*

satisfy the essential human needs (Beitz 1999a: 172–73; Pogge 1989: 256 n.18, 264–65; Moellendorf 2002: 61).

In the early twenty-first century the situation looks very different (cf. United Nations Development Programme 2013). Although global interpersonal inequality is rising, inter-country inequality has decreased significantly (Milanovic 2012: 12–13) and nearly three-quarters of the world’s poor lived in middle-income countries in 2008 (Sumner 2012: 7). There are also a relatively low number of “aid-dependent” countries, that is, countries who heavily rely on ODA (Klingebiel 2012). In addition, the absolute number of poor people living on less than US \$1.25 per day has decreased from 1.94 billion in 1981 to 1.29 billion in 2008, and the share of poor people in low-income countries decreased from 52 to 22 per cent in the same period (Chen & Ravallion 2012: 2). Furthermore, development economists like William Easterly argue compellingly that there is little empirical evidence that ODA contributes significantly to the economic growth of the poorer countries (Easterly 2006; see also Moyo 2009). This may also put into question that ODA is effective in supporting the satisfaction of essential human needs.

The upshot of the increasing multi-polarity of the global economy and the problem of the apparent ineffectiveness of the development practice is that it has become very questionable that the high-income countries, that is, the donors belonging to the DAC, are responsible for development beyond their borders. Middle-income countries that oftentimes provide development funds themselves, like Brazil, China and South Africa, can no longer be viewed as overly burdened by this task of achieving certain kinds of development at home. Moreover, given the problem of the development practice’s apparent ineffectiveness, the high-income countries probably would have to invest much more than they have so far in order to contribute to the realization of development. Hence the provision of ODA can only be justified, if at all, on the basis of the principle of mutual aid for the few cases of the low-income aid-dependent countries. Consequently, the question as to whether the high-income countries have a *duty of justice* to promote development abroad, which would be binding on them even if its fulfilment would require incurring relatively high costs, is currently becoming practically very relevant. Therefore the question as to who is responsible for development in this increasingly multi-polar constellation is likely to arouse considerable scholarly interest.

## Notes

- 1 For the distinction between concept and conception, see Rawls (1971: 5), who relies on Hart (1961: 156). Dower (2000: 44) also distinguishes between the concept and different conceptions of development.
- 2 Subsequently “normative conceptions of development” refers to normative conceptions of the development of social arrangements.
- 3 The Colonial Development Act was enacted 1929 in the UK and set up a Colonial Development Fund. Similarly, the Fonds d’Investissement pour le Développement Economique et Social was created by France in 1946 (cf. Hopper 2012: 4).
- 4 For the DAC List of ODA Recipients of 2009 and 2010, see OECD 2011d. The DAC ascribes to countries the status as a developing country on the basis of its gross national income (GNI) per capita.
- 5 Greig *et al.* (2007: 73–99) and Rapley (2007: 13–34, 63–86) provide helpful overviews of this conception.
- 6 For a recent revival of the *big push model*, see J. D. Sachs (2005). Former World Bank chief economist Lin (2012) argues for “new structural economics” as a model for reconsidering development. For a similar, though more complex idea of a “cumulative causation model” that explains how processes can move in the direction of promoting or hindering development, see Myrdal 1957; and for the related idea of a vicious poverty circle or “poverty trap”, see Nurske 1953.
- 7 Sen coined the term “capabilities” in his 1979 Tanner Lecture on Human Value that he delivered at Stanford University, titled “Equality of What?” See Sen ([1980] 1997).

*Development*

- 8 The ten central capabilities are life; bodily health; bodily integrity; sense, imagination and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; contact with other species; play; and control over one's environment.
- 9 Alkire (2005: 2, emphasis added) posits that the capabilities approach to development "argues that the goal of ... human development ... should be to *expand* the capability that people have to enjoy 'valuable beings and doings'".
- 10 Following Milanovic (2012: 13), inter-country inequality decreased from 65 Gini points to 55 Gini points in the period between the 1960s and 2006: that is, inter-country inequality has dropped by roughly one-sixth. Gini points range between 0 and 100 and indicate the level of inequality.
- 11 The 1970 United Nations General Assembly called for the provision of merely 0.7 % of the GDP of the DAC donors for ODA and "recognized special importance of the role that can be fulfilled only by official development assistance" (UN General Assembly 1970: paragraph 43).
- 12 Scanlon (1998: 224) refers to this principle as the Rescue Principle. It is similar to what is often called the principle of "mutual aid", for instance by John Rawls (1971: 109).

Taylor & Francis  
Not for distribution