

Martin Minogue is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester. From 1984 to 1996 he was Director of the University's International Development Centre. He has published extensively in the area of comparative public policy and development, and has undertaken consultancies for the United Nations Development Programme, the Asian Development Bank, the British Council, the UK's Department for International Development, and the UK Economic and Social Research Council.

Philip Woodhouse is Senior Lecturer at the Institute for Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester.

1

Critical Perspectives on Development: An Introduction

UMA KOTHARI AND MARTIN MINOGUE

What We Are Trying To Do in This Book

Development is ridden with paradoxes. The first is that, while it appears on the face of things to be very much characterized by a set of highly practical concerns, few subjects are more bedevilled by contested theories. The second is that while development undoubtedly takes place in some places, as measured by shifts in economic growth, relative poverty and inequality have also increased. Perhaps a third paradox is that the more precisely we try to identify coherent theories and measure practical changes, the less confidence we have in the predictability of future events, particularly on a global scale.

The development agenda has changed dramatically in the last few decades, as is clear from a perusal of Leeson and Minogue (1988). The latter text examines the contributions made to development analysis by the various social science disciplines (economics, politics, sociology, anthropology, history), and an attempt is made to examine the problems of interdisciplinarity and to suggest ways forward in the pursuit of a distinctive cross-disciplinary perspective on development thought and practice. The emphasis, though, is undeniably theoretical and draws attention to the intellectual conflicts that characterized most development studies literature in the 1980s. As the introductory chapter shows (*ibid.*, 1988), the bulk of this literature presented two main paradigms (one neo-Marxist, the other representing neoclassical economics), between which there was a tremendous gulf, with each camp talking past the other. At the same time each camp was

characterized by significant internal differences, and these intellectual divisions divided the development literature into specific disciplines. At the time Leeson called for efforts to construct a more cohesive interdisciplinary perspective, but it is worth noting in the light of subsequent developments his prescient comment that 'the role played by Marxism in ... development studies should not ... cause nervous colleagues to have sleepless nights' (ibid., p. 41).

Perhaps it is the World Bank and other major players in the development industry who should cause us sleepless nights now, since while they may appear to accommodate different views of what should constitute development, they give active support to a particular, capitalist-friendly, neoliberal version. The present development agenda is very much the practical agenda set out in the programmes of major multilateral and bilateral aid donors. Few of the issues on this agenda could be said to be entirely new: economic growth, poverty reduction, the reform of trade regimes, the reduction of international debt, decentralization, democratization, social development and environmental issues have been standard priorities for at least three decades. More recent priorities, such as good governance, privatization and economic transition, owe more to the political collapse of socialism than to clearly thought out intellectual perspectives. Efforts to reconceptualize the field have arguably led to some shift in perspective by practitioners in relation to, for example, gender, environmental sustainability and social capital. The contemporary development agenda is therefore a combination of old and new, but it might be seen as being realized within a global framework that in political terms at least has changed dramatically.

The chapters in this book present the main issues on the agenda, and analyze the dominant framework within which the development agenda is articulated and implemented. They also seek to explain the persistence of old orthodoxies and the construction of new ones, while presenting the case for alternative approaches where the dominant orthodoxies (whether old, new or in combination) are open to criticism either for their partiality or their ineffectiveness.

Has Development Failed?

In this book we do not assert that development has been a success, rather we argue that there has been a failure of the postwar development project. As Sachs (1992, p. 1) writes,

The idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape. Delusion and disappointment, failures and crime have been the steady companions of development and they tell a common story: it did not work.

Despite some gains in social and economic development, the persistence of poverty and inequality, particularly in the midst of economic affluence, continues to be one of the most problematic issues in development today (Hanmer *et al.*, 1997). The balance sheet of human development (Table 1.1) highlights the fact that while progress has been made in some social development spheres for some people, for others there has been increased deprivation and inequality in the distribution of benefits.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the increasing income inequalities between rich and poor countries. What the figures clearly demonstrate is that while development has occurred in terms of absolute growth, the disparities between countries and between the people within them have widened. At the very least this should cause us to question the particular notion of development with which we are working and the criteria used to assess success.

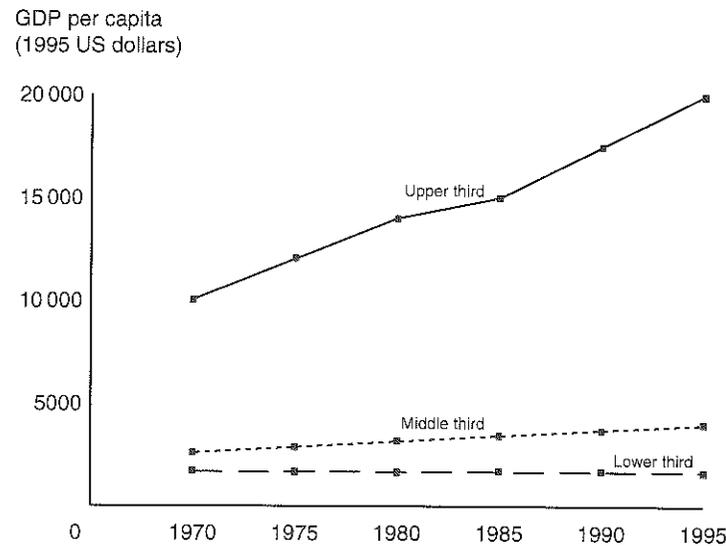
Despite the optimism and confidence amongst officials in bilateral and multilateral agencies that 'aid matters' and can bring about successful development (see Therien and Lloyd, 2000), there have recently been challenges to this consensus, particularly in relation to the links between poverty and development. These critiques have largely been brought about by the recognition that much development planning has failed to reduce inequalities and alleviate poverty (see Thomas, 2000). Schuurman (1993) suggests that development reached an impasse in the mid 1980s because of a crisis at two levels: a crisis in the Third World in terms of increasing levels of poverty, exclusion and inequality; and a crisis in development thinking, with the dominant theories and paradigms that had dominated our understandings and explanations of the world being challenged and subsequently losing their hegemony (Schuurman, 1993, 2000). The critiques of these hegemonic discourses, articulated in much development theory, arose partly because of a commitment to orthodox ideas of development that were too deterministic and dogmatic. Schuurman (2000, p. 9) writes:

In the 1980s development pessimism had already set in because it was realized that the gap between poor and rich countries continues to widen, that where economic growth had occurred it had

TABLE 1.1 *A balance sheet of human development, 1990-97*

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Development</i>	<i>Deprivation</i>
Health	In 1997 the people of 84 countries enjoyed a life expectancy of more than 70 years, up from 55 countries in 1990. The number of developing countries in the group more than doubled from 22 to 49. Between 1990 and 1997 the share of population with access to safe water nearly doubled from 40 per cent to 72 per cent	During 1990-97 the number of people infected with HIV/AIDS more than doubled from less than 15 million to more than 33 million. Around 1.5 billion are not expected to survive to the age of 60. More than 800 million people lack access to health service, and 2.6 billion access to basic sanitation
Education	From 1990-97 the adult literacy rate rose from 64 per cent to 76 per cent. During 1990-97 the gross primary and secondary enrolment rate increased from 74 per cent to 81 per cent	In 1997 more than 850 million adults were illiterate. In industrial countries more than 100 million people were functionally illiterate. More than 260 million children are out of school at the primary and secondary levels
Food and nutrition	Despite rapid population growth, food production per capita increased by nearly 25 per cent during 1990-97	About 840 million people are malnourished. The overall consumption of the richest fifth of the world's people is 16 times that of the poorest fifth
Income and poverty	During 1990-97 real per capita GDP increased at an average annual rate of more than 1 per cent. Real per capita consumption increased at an average of 2.4 per cent during the same period	Nearly 1.3 billion people live on less than a dollar a day, and close to one billion cannot meet their basic consumption requirements. The share in global income of the richest fifth of the world's people is 74 times that of the poorest fifth
Women	During 1990-97 the net secondary enrolment rate for girls increased from 36 per cent to 61 per cent. Between 1990-97 women's economic activity rate rose from 34 per cent to nearly 40 per cent	Nearly 340 million women are not expected to survive to the age of 40. A quarter to one half of all women have suffered physical abuse by an intimate partner
Children	From 1990-97 the infant mortality rate fell from 76 per 1000 live births to 58. The proportion of one-year-olds immunized increased from 70 per cent to 89 per cent in the same period	Nearly 160 million children are malnourished. More than 250 million children are working as child labourers
Environment	Between 1990 and 1997 the share of heavily polluting traditional fuels in total energy use fell by more than two fifths	Every year nearly three million people die from air pollution and more than five million die from diarrhoeal diseases as a result of water contamination
Human security	Between two thirds and three quarters of the people in developing countries live under relatively pluralist and democratic regimes	At the end of 1997 there were nearly 12 million refugees

Source: UNDP (1998b).

FIGURE 1.1 *The incomes of rich and poor countries continue to diverge*

Source: Adapted from World Bank (1999).

catastrophic effect on the environment and that the end of real-existing socialism had removed socialist-inspired development trajectories from the academic and political agendas.

Schuurman (1993, p. 10) posits a number of reasons for this impasse, including the following:

- The growing gap between rich and poor.
- A preoccupation with short-term policies aimed at debt management.
- The devastation of the environment in the pursuit of economic growth.
- The deligitimisation of socialism.
- The fact that the global economy could not be approached through national policies.
- The recognition of differentiation, which reduced the usefulness of global theories or metatheory.
- The advances made by feminism, postmodernism and post-colonialism.

It is now widely acknowledged in the development industry that the postwar development strategies have failed to bring the intended benefits to much of the world's population, and hence there is a need

to devise new meanings, agendas, processes and targets for development. This is evident from the unevenness of the development process over time and between and within countries, and from distorted development in terms of the coexistence in some places of economic development and social deprivation. In addition there is increasing uncertainty about the global environment from the perspective of many developing countries (Hanmer *et al.*, 1997). Furthermore 'anti-development' and 'postdevelopment' proponents (see Sachs, 1992; Escobar, 1995; Rahnema and Bawtree, 1997; Rist, 1997) suggest that 'Development ... is rejected not merely on account of its results but because of its intentions, its world-view and mindset' (Pieterse, 2000, p. 175).

What is needed is a clearer understanding and explanation of the reasons for and forms of this failure so that we can begin to resolve the problems, rethink development strategies and look to the future. Most importantly we need to explore ideas about what development constitutes and the important relationship between theory and practice.

Our starting point, which diverges from that of those who analyze the failures of development in terms of factors external to the ideas/concepts of development (see Rahnema, 1997), is that the problems of development theory and practice are firmly located within the dominant, almost universal ideologies that have long shaped and continue to inform development theory, policy and practice.

Modernization: The Metatheory of Development

While not wanting to deny that the history of the development discourse over the past 50 years has been complex, we assert that the modernization project continues to underlie any apparent change in the development project. That is to say, the mainstream, dominant and powerful development ideology remains within the framework of neoclassical economics. In response to the question of whether neoliberalism is simply a reformulation of modernization theory, then, we would have to answer 'yes', even though we recognize that they propound different roles for the state and the market and view the relationship between them differently. Despite widespread development failures and sustained critique, the principles of modernization theory and neoclassical economics have remained intact (Simon and Narman, 1999, p. 270). While not wanting to present this dominant paradigm as monolithic, and acknowledging the existence of divergent views even amongst those who promote neoliberalism,

the basic tenets of modernization and the notions of progress that underlie them endure.

Simon and Narman (*ibid.*, p. 271) suggest that the reasons for the survival of modernization theory are complex, but they offer four general points:

- It remains consistent with the dominant neoclassical economic ideology of development within the US and most of Western Europe.
- It is a very simple and universalistic formulation.
- There have always been sufficient apparent successes to point to as sources of vindication.
- The astonishing speed and inventiveness with which the Bretton Woods institutions rally to its defence, even in the face of overwhelming odds.

The dominant discourse of neoliberalism, that continues to argue that the development project has been successful, remains fundamentally unchallenged, and with the collapse of socialism there appear to be few alternatives, so the orthodoxy persists. Indeed we can go further and say that with the demise of socialism the neoliberal development project has expanded beyond the 'developing world' into a much larger domain, which now encompasses the former socialist states, known tellingly as the 'transitional economies', made up of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics. The development project is expansionist and has found new territory.

While postmodernist convention requires us to suggest that everything is diverse, complex and differentiated, we would like to restate the notion that there is a singular, though not always homogeneous, development project that propels us towards modernization.

Having said that, there have been sustained critiques and debates within the field of development about the dominance of a particular ideology, the exclusion of certain groups of people from the project (because of gender, ethnicity, religion or class) and the processes and procedures of development (for example top-down, bottom-up, participative). Some of these have been presented as development alternatives and have played a significant role in drawing attention to some of the problems of development. John Brohman's book *Popular Development: Rethinking the Theory and Practice of Development* (1996) is divided into two parts: the first deals with mainstream theories and practices, and the second with alternative theories and practices, leading to a new framework that he calls 'popular development'. In this way he sets up a false dichotomy, by suggesting that

there is a clear distinction between the mainstream and alternatives even though it is now evident that the adoption of alternative approaches by the mainstream has led to a blurring of the boundaries between them.

Development alternatives have not remained alternative for long – many of them have been successfully and often quite rapidly absorbed into the mainstream. The alternatives are presented as popular and people-centred, including approaches such as gender and development, participatory development and sustainable development. In Pieterse (1998) there is an interesting discussion of the relationship between mainstream and alternative approaches to development. Pieterse argues that there is no alternative development paradigm, but rather that the key elements of alternative development – which is concerned with introducing alternative practices and redefining the goals of development – have successfully been incorporated, adapted and co-opted by the mainstream. Hence there are no simple dichotomies between mainstream and alternative, modern and antimodern. Pieterse stresses that:

Alternative development has been concerned with introducing alternative practices and redefining the goals of development. Arguably this has been successful, in the sense that key elements have been adopted in mainstream development. ... By the same token this means that alternative development has become less distinct from conventional development discourse and practice, since alternatives have been absorbed into mainstream development (*ibid.*, p. 344).

As we can see from successive World Bank reports, forms of alternative development have become institutionalized as part of mainstream development and some have been developed further within the mainstream discourse (see Chapter 9 of this volume). It might be said that the alternative development approaches have often been co-opted to the point where there remain few real alternatives.

A series of modifications have been made to official mainstream policies in an effort to:

Overcome past shortcomings and to meet changing perceptions or priorities ... so as to project a progressive and responsive image. Ironically and probably inevitably, however, the selective adoption of radical alternatives has seen their emasculation, rendering them increasingly less radical and more accommodationist (Simon and Narman, 1999, p. 271).

An important question that Pieterse (1998, p. 345) raises is whether alternative development really presents an alternative way of achieving development; that is, whether it broadly shares the same goals as mainstream development but uses different means that are participatory and people-centred. If this is the case, then alternative development does not redefine development but instead questions its modalities, agency and procedures.

The pendulum is beginning to swing back towards softer, more socially sensitive and nuanced approaches, but there is little sign that the fundamental ideology of development embodied by the multilateral agencies and some major donors is changing (Simon and Narman, 1999, p. 271).

It is still ultimately about the achievement of Western modernity by developing and transitional countries.

We believe that it is important to dissect, explain and challenge the ways in which this modernization orthodoxy has been constructed and translated into powerful policies and practical interventions. It is particularly important to mount this critique because of the contradiction between its triumphalist claims and the evident facts of development failure. Each of the chapters in this book examines a particular area of development theory and practice, presents a critique of the dominant model in that area, and suggests alternative approaches. While each of the authors may take a different approach to the understanding of development failure, common themes emerge among the chapters.

There is a considerable body of recent literature that charts the history of development from the establishment of the Bretton Woods institutions, through growth and modernization theory, dependency and world systems theories to neoliberalism and so-called 'alternative' development approaches (see Hettne, 1990; Preston, 1996). In the present book, rather than provide a comprehensive history of the development discourse we have selected particular issues that we feel bring out the tensions between theory and practice in general, and specifically between the dominance of the neoliberal paradigm, and the achievement of social progress and poverty reduction. Furthermore the issues covered in this book reflect the increasing attention paid to social development issues since it was recognized that development is about much more than economic growth, and that while progress in social development and economic growth have often been assumed to be positively correlated, this has not always been borne

out and there is no automatic causal link between the two. Many of the approaches discussed here emerged out of a need to challenge the dominant economic focus in development thought and practice and to question the historical and theoretical underpinnings of development. However they have subsequently been co-opted onto the development agenda, where they now appear in the mainstream despite the fact that some have their origins in radical discourses. This process of conscription of critical discourses into the mainstream has often been accompanied by a watering down of the challenges and political commentary that went with their construction. It is the consequences of this process that are highlighted in this book. The focus is on the continual need for public engagement and critique of development orthodoxies, whatever their origins, as 'nothing seems more legitimate than to spotlight what a discourse has been trying to hide, or take a position on the consequences flowing from it' (Rist, 1997, p. 3).

We also feel that there is little to be gained from struggling through the different definitions of development to arrive at some overarching meaning, and instead acknowledge that the various actors in development have divergent conceptions and interpretations and attach different meanings to development. According to Rahnema (1997, p. ix) there are at least three different sets of actors, each with their own aspirations and interests: leaders and elites in Third World countries, the masses within those countries, and former Western colonialists who seek to maintain their economic and geopolitical dominance/presence in other parts of the world.

Within the development industry itself there are a variety of actors who also inevitably have divergent agendas, although these may operate broadly within certain (modernist) boundaries. This makes it even more necessary to interrogate the relationship between theory and practice, and to investigate how theories are converted into practice.

This book, then, takes as its starting point the continuing dominance of the neoliberal paradigm within development, and the practical possibility of achieving the Development Assistance Committee targets for 2015, as agreed and supported by its members (OECD, 1996).

- Reduce extreme poverty by one half.
- Ensure universal primary education and eliminate gender disparity in education.

- Reduce infant and child mortality by two-thirds and maternal mortality by three-quarters, while providing universal access to reproductive health services.
- Implement worldwide national strategies for sustainable development and reverse the loss of environmental resources.

We interrogate the orthodoxy from different perspectives and argue that it is unlikely to result in the achievement of these ambitious targets. Furthermore the very existence of these targets is in part a further expression/indication of the past failure of development and the modernization project. They further reflect the futurist approach to development, which has consistently avoided the messy and problematic present, and has been slow to feed the lessons learned and best practice into future development design. Instead it has quickly moved on to formulate the next plan, develop policies for the future and implement the next project. In this respect the development agencies are highly unreflexive. There is little evidence of present (mal)practice informing future policy and even less likelihood of it influencing theoretical and conceptual frameworks of development.

Vattimo (quoted in Pieterse, 1998, p. 349) goes as far as to suggest that this is the case even with 'alternative' development, which continuously 'replicates "the value of the new" reflecting a pathos of modernity; alternative development then partakes of the momentum of modernity and the everlasting hope that the future will redeem the present'.

Whose Development?

Development is an idea, an objective and an activity. These are all interrelated. When we examine the idea of development we are exploring an area of theory. When we attempt to establish objectives we are delineating the process by which the ideas are turned into practice. An examination of actual practice entails detailed analysis of the activities. Such an analysis should tell us whether the objectives have been met, and in turn whether the theory has been realized.

But this rational formulation conceals a host of difficulties. First, it is clear that there is not one idea or theory of development but a plurality. What constitutes the 'idea' of development is disputed territory, much fought over. This affects our perception of both

objectives and activities. The objectives of development must be incorporated into the idea of it; different ideas produce different sets of objectives. Similarly, different objectives will produce different practices. So we are faced with the possibility that not only is there more than one theory of development, but there is also more than one practice. Practice is not a given; it is the outcome of the attempt to realize a particular idea.

This brings us to the notion of 'agency'. By this is meant the network of institutions and actors that through their actions and interactions 'produce' development. The analysis of agency is crucial because it allows us to capture the complexities of the process by which ideas are mediated into objectives and translated into practice. We are then in a better position to understand which ideas and objectives prevail over others, and why they do so. In relation to practice, the analysis of agency also directs us to actors who are often neglected: the recipients of development interventions, who may be either beneficiaries or victims. The concept of development agency is most valuable in revealing the 'open secret' of development, that its character and results are determined by relations of power, not by the rhetoric of fashionable populist labels such as 'participation', 'civil society' or 'poverty reduction'. As Korten (1990, pp. 144, 214) says: 'The heart of development is institutions and policies. ... The most fundamental issues of development are, at their core, issues of power'.

How might we represent the interaction of development agency with development ideas to throw light on the complexities of practice? One approach is through a development triad or triangle, representing the crucial components as state, market and community or civil society. Development is the product of collaboration and interaction between these three sets of institutions. The three alternatives might then be labelled 'state-led', 'market-led' or 'community-led', indicating alternative models for development practice. Crudely these would correspond to traditional state-planned modernization, neoliberalism and economic globalization, and alternative populism.

The devil lies in the detail, or perhaps in the crudeness of the categories. The concept of 'the state' has been as variously interpreted as the concept of development. Marxist theory, for example, assigns an insignificant role to the capitalist state as mere superstructure, while modernization perspectives assume that the state will be the lead player. Neoliberalism wants the best of both approaches, reducing the direct responsibilities of the state but retaining its responsibility for supporting market institutions.

But as Pieterse (1998, p. 356) suggests, development, 'even though it hinges on theory as the beacon of policy, is more concerned with policy than explanatory frameworks'. It may therefore be acceptable to limit analysis of the state, initially at least, to the development strategies and policies that are designed and implemented by state agencies. This may still give us evidence for an estimation of dominant discourse (and theory) if we agree with Korten (1990, pp. 113–14) that it is 'impossible to be a true development agency without a theory that directs action to the underlying causes of underdevelopment ... an organization cannot have a meaningful development strategy without a development theory'. Since the state must engage with the economy, and take up a position in relation to the non-state sector, this will produce an array of policies and actions that will reveal a network of interactive relationships, and will also allow some perception of relations of influence and relative power. This is not a new thought – Myrdal (1968) identified such relations as a crucial dimension of effective development policy over thirty years ago in his notion of the 'soft state'. But it is just as essential now to identify these relationships, which are expanding and branching into ever more complicated institutional networks, partnerships and contractual arrangements in ways that give greater weight to 'market' agency in the process and practice of development policy.

What of the third element of the triad: 'community' or 'civil society'? Despite the considerable attention paid to this element in the development literature and the substantial recognition afforded to it by official development agencies, it is difficult to think through what would be the positive and collaborative relationship the community would have with the market, given the ample evidence across all types of political economy of the deeply damaging effects on communities of market failures and imperfections. It was precisely to remedy such damage that the state was given a leading role in development in the past, but with the new formulation of the state-market partnership, who will protect the community?

An alternative formulation would see the triad of state, market and community dissolved in favour of a representation of the means by which theory is converted into practice, with institutions acting as a bridge between the two. There would be no particular need to define the boundaries between state, market and community; the focus would be on real development policies and strategies, their implementation by a wide array of competing or collaborative institutions, including community institutions, and upon the real effects and

results. This would enable some estimation of developmental change and its impact on communities, while still permitting some attention to dominant ideas and the degree to which they are translated into practice.

Any of these representations of development theory and practice seem likely to be more productive than the rather tired rehearsal of historical antagonisms. It is surely preferable to link theory and practice on the basis of more grounded analysis and agreement on a common agenda of development issues, even if the appropriateness of the solutions on offer remains contested.

This book is organized around a number of key themes or issues that might stand as a set of 'key words' for the field of development studies, as distilled from current preoccupations in development theory and practice. The next chapter provides an overview of contemporary debates on globalization in order to set the context within which the other chapters are located. This exploration of global processes and the ways in which they are understood and analyzed, together with the implications for development, offers a macro-level framework for reading the subsequent chapters, which focus on specific spheres of development thought and practice.