

**DEVELOPMENT
ESSENTIALS**



THE DEVELOPMENT DICTIONARY

A Guide to Knowledge as Power

EDITED BY WOLFGANG SACHS

The Development Dictionary

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Wolfgang Sachs is an author and research director at the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy, in Germany. He has been chair of the board of Greenpeace Germany, a member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and is a member of the Club of Rome. Among the various appointments he has held are co-editor of the Society for International Development's journal *Development*; visiting Professor of Science, Technology and Society at Pennsylvania State University and fellow at the Institute for Cultural Studies in Essen. He regularly teaches at Schumacher College and as Honorary Professor at the University of Kassel.

Wolfgang Sachs's first English book, *For Love of the Automobile: Looking Back into the History of Our Desires*, was published by the University of California Press in 1992. Several of his works have been published by Zed Books. They include the immensely influential *Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (edited, 1992, 2010), which has since been translated into numerous languages; *Global Ecology: A New Arena of Political Conflict* (edited, 1993); *Greening the North: A Post-Industrial Blueprint for Ecology and Equity* (co-authored with Reinhard Loske and Manfred Linz, 1998); *Planet Dialectics: Explorations in Environment and Development* (1999); and (with T. Santarius et al.) *Fair Future: Resource Conflicts, Security, and Global Justice* (2007).

This edition is dedicated to the memory of Ivan Illich (1926–2002)
and José María Sbert (1945–2006)

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a guide to knowledge as power

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THIRD EDITION

ZED

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Preface, 2019

WOLFGANG SACHS

Development is one of those zombie categories that have long since decayed, but still wander around as a worn-out utopia. Apparently buried long ago, the concept's ghost is still haunting world politics. Despite the huge upheavals in world affairs recently, all the sudden *development* appears to have a great come-back. For authoritarian leaders are obsessed with old-style *development*. With the rise of national populism, however, the idea of development no longer plays an inspiring, forward-looking role, as it did in the days of decolonization of nation states and even at the time of deregulation of global markets. The Trumps and the Bolsonaros, the Ergodans and Modis of this world still believe in *development*, with large-scale projects, mass purchasing power and unregulated movements for corporations, but the idea has become stale and institutionally ossified. Therefore, it is not surprising that the national populists, besides authoritarian and xenophobic, are declared enemies of the environment. They promise their followers a roll-back of environmental politics; in fact, they are great fans of the brown economy, rejecting a green economy. Their image of *development* is shaped by fossil energy and, more generally, extractivism of natural resources, just as during the heyday of the development period. National populists are longing for the industrial past; they are not oriented to the future, but to the past.

However, there is a crucial discontinuity in the development agenda of national populists: they are ethnocentric and selfish. While since the Second World War *development*, for better or worse, was always conceived in the framework of multilateralism, with the inauguration of US President Donald Trump the wind has turned. "America first" is the battle cry of unilateralism. The interests of one's nation are of primary importance, those of others are negligible. His echo resounds, for example, with Matteo Salvini, currently the "strong man" of Italy: "Primi gli italiani" serves him to deny entry for refugees in distress at sea. In short, the zombie *development* continues to make all kinds of mischief, a long way from the insight that the Age of Development has long since been finished; by now giving way to worldwide efforts in technology and culture that can be understood in terms of post-development.

FLASHBACK

How naive we had been and a little pompous to proclaim the “end of the development age!” In the fall of 1988 at Pennsylvania State University, in the house of Barbara Duden, where we gathered our friends to Living Room Consultations, we began to draw up the outline of the *Development Dictionary*. On the track of Ivan Illich, who once had the plan to write an “archeology of modern certainties,” we wanted to explore the key concept of development, which, as we said then, stood as a ruin in the intellectual landscape. Let’s remember: in the second half of the twentieth century the notion of development stood like a mighty ruler over the nations of the southern hemisphere. It was the rallying cry of the postcolonial era. The concept seemed to be innocent, but in the long run it turned out to be detrimental; as a kind of mental infrastructure, it paved the way for the imperial power of the West over the world.

When did the development age begin? In our *Development Dictionary*, we stylized President Harry S. Truman as a villain. In fact, on January 20, 1949, in his inaugural address to the US Congress, he labeled the homes of more than half of the world’s population as “underdeveloped areas.” The development age was opened with this speech – the period of world history that followed the colonial age of the European powers. The development age lasted about 40 years and was replaced by the era of globalization. And presently there is another turning point: the rise of national populism.

What constitutes the idea of development? Consider four aspects. Chronopolitically, all nations seem to advance in the same direction. Imagine time is linear, moving only forwards or backwards; but the aim of technical and economic progress is forever fleeting. Geopolitically, the leaders of this path, the developed nations, show the straggling countries which way to go. The bewildering variety of peoples in the world is now ranked simplistically as rich and poor nations. Socio-politically, the development of a nation is measured through its economic performance, according to gross domestic product (GDP). Societies that have just emerged from colonial rule are required to place themselves in the custody of “the economy.” And finally, the actors who push for development are mainly experts of governments, multinational banks and corporations. Previously, in Marx’s or Schumpeter’s time, development was used for an intransitive subject, like a flower that seeks maturity. Now the term is used transitively as an active reordering of society that needs to be completed within decades, if not years.

What has become of this idea? To put it briefly, the notion had taken a direction not uncommon in the history of ideas: what once was a historical innovation became a convention over time, eventually ending in general

frustration. Nonetheless, we were premature at the time to assert the end of the developmental age; we had not expected the coma to drag on for decades. On the contrary, in the following years the development idea received a further boost. We had not considered enough that the development mentality would spread out by leaps and bounds, involving entirely new players. For just at the time when the first drafts for our Dictionary were due, in November 1989, the Berlin Wall came down. The Cold War was over and the era of globalization begun. The nation state had become porous, like a container riddled with bullet holes from external forces. Nation states had to submit to global powers, both economic and cultural. Goods, money, information, images, people poured across borders, creating a transnational social space where interactions take place over great distances, sometimes even in real time. In this process, other actors played an increasingly important role in development, with the nation state increasingly falling behind. For example, private foreign investment overtook official development assistance, television programs broadcast marginalized national narratives around the world, and global consumption replaced local craftwork. Development, erstwhile a task of the state, was now de-territorialized.

Moreover, transnational corporations appeared on the scene. With the end of the Cold War and the process of deregulation in full swing, there was no obstacle left for them to control the world. Generally speaking, even in the most remote corners of the Earth, the capitalistic goods economy has replaced countless subsistence economies with their traditional markets. And capitalism had changed, as John Kenneth Galbraith had already analyzed in the 1950s: from an economy dedicated to satisfy needs to an economy dedicated to instigated wants.

In such an economy, what counts is increasingly the symbolic power of goods and services. What matters is what goods say, less what they do; they are rather a means of communication. Goods are simultaneously rituals and religion. Moreover, corporations spread out in all corners of the world, and on every continent lifestyles aligned with one another: SUVs replaced rickshaws; cell phones superseded community gatherings; air-conditioning supplanted siestas. One can understand the globalization of the markets as development without nation states. From this, the global middle class, whether in Europe and North America or in Africa, Asia and Latin America, has benefited the most. They shop in similar malls, buy high-tech electronics, watch the same movies and TV series. As tourists they freely dispose of the decisive medium of alignment: money. Roughly speaking, already by the year 2010, half of the global middle class lived in the North and the other half in the South. Without doubt this has been the terrific success of development, yet it is a failure waiting to happen.

DECLINE

Development is a plastic word, an empty term with positive meaning. Nevertheless, it has maintained its status of global perspective, because it is inscribed in an international network of institutions from the United Nations to NGOs. After all, billions of people have made use of the “right to development,” as it is stated in the resolution of the 1986 UN plenary assembly. However, one can trace the remarkable transformation of the idea into our day. In 2015, for example, one could observe a thickening of the development discourse: the papal encyclical *Laudato si’* in June, the UN Sustainable Development Goals in September and the Paris Agreement on climate change in December. Are these international statements still committed to *development*? Or can one, to the contrary, consider them as a proof of post-development thinking?

The erosion of the development idea is now obvious in the UN Agenda 2030 program for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Long gone is the time when development meant “promise.” Back then, the talk was of young, aspiring nations moving along a path of progress. Indeed the discourse of development held a monumental historical promise: that in the end, all societies would close the gap with the rich and partake in the fruits of industrial civilization. That era is over: *development* is more often about survival now, not progress. The SDGs are designed to guarantee the minimum level of human rights and environmental conditions. No more and no less, but the sky-storming belief in progress has given way to the need for survival. While the politics of fighting poverty has been successful in some places, it has been bought at the price of even larger inequalities elsewhere; and at the price of irreparable environmental damage. The World Inequality Report 2018 confirmed that since 1980 the share of national income going to the richest 1 percent has increased rapidly in North America, China, India and Russia, and more moderately in Europe – 40 years of gold rush! In addition, the use of the Earth is drastically overstretched; according to the calculations of the Global Footprint Network, humanity consumes 1.7 times the biosphere every year. Plastic pollution in the oceans, mass extinction of insects and the melting of the Arctic ice shield are examples in point.

Climate chaos as well as the slow demise of plant and animal life have cast doubt on the faith that developed nations are the pinnacle of social evolution. On the contrary, progress has turned out to be regress, as the capitalist logic of the Global North cannot but exploit nature. From the “Limits to Growth” in 1972 to “Planetary Boundaries” in 2009 the analysis is clear: development-as-growth renders the planet Earth inhospitable for humans. The SDGs – carrying development in their title – are a semantic deception. The *Sustainable Development Goals* should really be called SSGs – *Sustainable Survival Goals*.

The geopolitics of development has also imploded. Back then, at the Millennium Summit in New York in 2000, the pattern of the last 50 years was reproduced: the world neatly divided into North and South, where donors hand down capital, growth and social policies to beneficiary countries to recondition them for the global race. This pattern is a familiar sediment of colonial history and was, just like the catch-up imperative, omnipresent in the post-war years. What happened to catching up, an idea so fundamental to the idea of development?

It is worth quoting a passage in the document that proclaimed the SDGs: “This is an agenda of unprecedented scope and significance. These are universal goals and goals which involve the entire world, developed and developing countries alike.” The SDGs claim to be global and universal, the Paris Agreement followed suit. You cannot express the mind shift more clearly: the geopolitics of development, according to which industrial nations would be the shining example for poorer countries, have been disposed of. All the planning and passion, the amount of resources and romance that went into realizing the dream of catching up! Bygone the age of secular eschatology! Just as the Cold War era faded in 1989, the myth of catching up evaporated in 2015. Rarely has a myth been buried so quietly. What point is there in development, if there is no country that can be called “sustainably developed?” Apart from that, the economic geography of the world has changed. Geopolitically speaking, the rapid ascension of China as the largest economic power on Earth has been spectacular. The seven most important newly industrialized countries are now economically stronger than the traditional industrial states, although the G7 still pretends to be the hegemon. Globalization has almost dissolved the established North–South scheme.

Furthermore, *development* has always been a statistical construct. Without the magic number, GDP, it was impossible to come up with a ranking for nations of the world. Comparing income was the point of development thinking. Only in this way could relative poverty or wealth of a country be determined. Since the 1970s, however, a dichotomy emerged in the discourse of development, juxtaposing the idea of development-as-growth with the idea of development-as-social policy. Institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO continued to bow to the idea of development-as-growth, while the UNDP, UNEP and most NGOs emphasized the idea of development-as-social policy. Thus the term *development* became an all-purpose glue, which could refer to the building of airports just as to the drilling of waterholes. The millennium goals as well as the SDGs are rooted in this legacy.

Over and over again, the relationship between social indicators and economic growth has revealed itself to be a thorny issue. On the one xiii

hand, Agenda 2030 recognizes the decline of marine and terrestrial ecosystems and the increase in social inequality, but on the other hand, it calls for economic growth, for the poorer countries even at least 7 percent. The contradiction between growth and sustainability is said to be overcome with “inclusive growth” and “green growth.” But it is by now common knowledge that inclusive growth, driven by the financial markets, is an impossibility because it constantly reproduces inequality. The same applies for the slogan of green growth. Even at the highest echelons of the G7 Summits, the fact that fossil-fuelled economic growth is not feasible in the medium run has done the rounds. In 2015, the industrialized countries envisaged the decarbonization of the global economy until the end of the century. However, all recipes for green growth rely on decoupling environmental degradation from growth even though absolute decoupling (increasing growth while decreasing environmental degradation) has never been achieved in history. In short, development-as-growth has historically become obsolete, even life-threatening. Nevertheless, Agenda 2030 fails to speak about prosperity without growth, not even for the old industrialized countries. By all accounts, the Pope is more forward-looking. Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato si'* advocates (in §193) degrowth for wealthy zones of the Earth.

DILEMMA

Mohandas Gandhi, leading India to independence, was a post-developmental long before the term was invented. He left to posterity a well-known quote, which summarized his thinking in terms of development succinctly: “The Earth has enough for everyone’s need, but not for everyone’s greed.” If you look at the quote more closely, its subversive trait becomes clear. No wonder that in present-day India, Gandhi is viewed as a patron saint in disregard, only brought out on ceremonial occasions. Gandhi believes that the resources of the Earth are not scarce, contrary to economic orthodoxy, but rather abundant, certainly enough to satisfy the needs of human society. In addition, he assumes that the needs are culturally shaped and more or less circumscribed, another contrast to received economic wisdom. This allows him to put avarice in the dock because systemic greed undermines the needs of the majority of people. Greed is the variable that decides if people have enough to live or not.

If the authors of the report of the Brundtland Commission, in 1987, had read their Gandhi accurately, they would not have come up with the classic definition of sustainable development: “... the development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Gandhi would have insisted that not all needs are

equally valid, so that, subsequently, the lack of distinction between survival needs and luxury needs would not have become one of the pitfalls of the meaning of sustainability.

In fact, lumping together human rights and consumer rights is the legacy of the concept of development, which is blind to class relations. How can one treat the basic social rights to food, housing and health at the same level as the consumer demand for SUVs, real estate and stocks? What do the Mapuche in southern Chile have in common with the Wall Street bankers, or the cotton workers in Mali with the start-ups in Shanghai? Not much, except that they are united in the mirage of development. But there a dilemma opens up. In a recent study O'Neill et al. (*Nature Sustainability*, 1, 88–95, 2018) confirm that there is an unbridgeable contradiction between social and environmental goals under the current development model. In countries where the physical SDGs (poverty, nutrition, health, energy) are reasonably satisfied – as in Europe, North America, Japan, Argentina, Chile, Thailand and the like – there is an ecological problem of huge magnitude. They all are crossing the planetary boundaries, like the emission of CO₂, nitrates and the consumption of phosphorus and freshwater. Adding indicators such as equality and democracy has reduced the number of countries that have, however, excessively surpassed the ecological limits. Conversely, where countries remain within their environmental frameworks, the social SDGs are largely unfulfilled. Roughly the double-bind is this: the higher the standard of living of a country rises, the more the biosphere tends to be degraded. And conversely, the less social human rights are guaranteed, the smaller the ecological footprint tends to be, at least in terms of carbon and materials. What a tragic result of development!

What weights more heavily, moreover, is the fact that more often than not the well-being of the global middle class depends on the poverty of others. There are plenty of examples: local fishermen lose out when large factory ships empty the oceans, smallholders are displaced when agricultural corporations massively buy up land, slum dwellers have to give way when city highways are built, long-established residents are evicted when gentrification has reached their neighborhoods. And workers are being subjected to repression if they want to exercise their trade union rights in factories in the global value chain. As Ulrich Brand and Markus Wissen have argued, the imperial mode of living often penetrates deeply into the lifestyles, institutions and infrastructure of the global middle class. Unrecognized and yet highly effective through a variety of complex economic structures and exploitation mechanisms, the overall result is dramatic: the well-to-do are living at the expense of the poor.

OUTLOOK

The *Development Dictionary* was published in coincidence of another book that made a worldwide splash in 1992: *The End of History and the Last Man* by Francis Fukuyama. While Fukuyama ultimately failed in his prophecy that the global market, including law and democracy, would represent the end of history, we felt that history would really start with the end of the development age. After almost 30 years since the publication of our *Development Dictionary*, the world appears to be in disarray; even chaos reign, fear and anger are widespread, contrasting sharply with the triumphalism of the 1990s. The rise of China, the decline of the West, the hegemony of the financial markets, the return of authoritarian states may serve as examples of the vagaries of contemporary history. If one had to find a word for the current atmosphere in the northern, as well as parts of the southern hemisphere, it would be: fear of the future. A fear that life prospects are shrinking and that children and grandchildren will be less well off. A suspicion spreads among the global middle class that the expectations kindled by development are not going to be fulfilled. The middle classes in formerly rich countries, thinned out by globalization, now call for protection and security. At the same time, large parts of the population in the emerging countries, alienated from their traditions, aware of Western living style through their smart phones, yet excluded from the modern world, are resorting to nationalistic pride. Everywhere there is a huge polarization between rich and poor. However, while in the nation states of yesteryear the losers were still capable of demanding corrections from the winners, they are no longer able to do so in times of globalization. The transnational economy, especially the financial sector, triumphs over the living conditions of each country. In response, national populism emerged—with its many facets.

National populism has many pitfalls, one of which is little noticed: its nostalgia for the industrial age. In addition to the love of the nation and patriarchy, it has nothing but contempt for ecology. National populists generally welcome drilling for oil in the sea, fracking, coal mining and deforestation. They consider climate change to be a finely woven list of the enemies of the national economy. They are so backward-looking that they glorify the plundering of nature. Except for their xenophobia, they could be considered as revenants of the developmental ideology of the 1950s. This adds to the anachronism of national populism.

Facing the turbulences of today's world, framing social problems as "development problems" is strangely outdated. If everything is not misleading, three narratives of social transformation can be identified: the narratives of fortress, globalism and solidarity. Fortress thinking expressed through neo-nationalisms

revives the glorious past of an imagined people. Authoritarian leaders bring back pride, while others are scapegoated – from Moslems to the UN. This leads to hatred of foreigners, sometimes coupled with religious fundamentalism. A kind of “affluence chauvinism” is widespread, particularly in the middle classes whose material goods need to be defended against the poor. In contrast, the narrative of globalism revolves around the image of the planet as its archetypical symbol. Instead of the fortress mercantilism of “America first,” globalists promote an ideally deregulated, free-trade world, which is meant to bring wealth and well-being to corporations and consumers. And they give more space to multilateral governance compared with the politics of neo-liberalism. The globalized elite may also worry about the future, but such difficulties can seemingly be overcome with green and inclusive growth and smart technologies. To a large extent, the UN Agenda 2030 with the Sustainable Development Goals fits into this frame of thought.

The narrative of solidarity is different. Eco-social ethic stands in opposition to fortress thinking as well as to the narrative of globalism. Above all, human rights – collective and individual – and ecological principles are valued; market forces are seen not as an end in themselves, but as a means to an end. Solidarity thinking promotes a cultural rather than technical change, at the local just as at the global level, underpinned by cooperative economic forms and public welfare policies. In contrast to globalism, the eco-solidarity ethic focuses on activists on the ground below the nation state and on the transnational cooperation of civil society. As expressed in the slogan “think globally, act locally,” a cosmopolitan localism is nurtured whereby local politics must also take into account wider needs. This means phasing out the imperial way of life that industrial civilization demands, and redefining forms of frugal prosperity. In sum, the basic direction of politics is at stake; this paradigmatic dispute will be on the agenda for decades to come. Thus, *development*, like monarchy or feudalism, is about to move further and further into the haze of history. To this end, we have written this book. We are looking forward to welcoming the new readers and fellow-travellers in post-development thinking which this third edition hopefully will bring.

Berlin, March 2019

Preface to the New Edition, 2009

WOLFGANG SACHS

Every time the Olympic flame is lit in front of the host country's president, the pulse of a nation quickens. But the Games have rarely been staged with more ambition to self-aggrandisement than in Beijing 2008, when China celebrated its arrival as a world power. Moreover, this message that in the summer of 2008 was broadcast to the world through the language of the Olympics will in 2010 be reiterated in the language of a world exhibition in Shanghai, in which China will present itself to the global public as a platform for the scientific achievements of the twenty-first century.

The Olympics and the World Expo are symbols of the secular shift that occurred around the turn of the millennium: the ascent of China – and other countries of the Southern hemisphere – to the exclusive club of global powers. It is scarcely possible to overestimate the significance of this shift for world history, and in particular for the people of the South. After centuries of humiliation, they finally see a Southern country on a par with the powers of the world. Countries once treated as colonial underdogs now measure up to their masters, and people of colour take over from the white man. Yet what amounts to a triumph of justice threatens to turn into a defeat for the planet. The desire for equity is largely fixed on development-as-growth, and it is development-as-growth which strains human relations and fundamentally threatens the biosphere. Indeed, China's success brings the dilemma of the twenty-first century into focus: politics is compelled to push either equity without ecology, or ecology without equity. It is hard to see how this dilemma can be resolved unless the belief in 'development' is dismantled.

A CHANGING ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

While discussing the end of the development era in October 1989, we the authors of this book were unaware that at that very moment 'development' had been given a new lease of life. For as the group of friends who eventually became contributors to *The Development Dictionary* gathered for what we called a living-room consultation in State College Pennsylvania, to review key concepts of the development discourse, on the other side of the Atlantic the events that brought down the Berlin Wall in November 1989 were coming

to a head. Like most of our contemporaries, we were stunned by the event but blissfully ignorant of the way in which the fall of the Wall would turn out to be a historical watershed. In hindsight it has become obvious that the events of 1989 finally opened the floodgates for transnational market forces to reach the remotest corners of the globe. As the era of globalization came into being, hopes of increased wealth were unleashed everywhere, providing fresh oxygen for the flagging development creed.

On the one hand, the age of globalization has brought economic development to fruition. The Cold War divisions faded away, corporations relocated freely across borders, and politicians as well as populations in many countries set their hopes on the model of a Western-style consumer economy. In a rapid – even meteoric – advance, a number of newly industrializing countries acquired a larger share of economic activity. They notched up growth rates far higher than those of the old industrial countries, playing their cards as energy suppliers (United Arab Emirates, Venezuela, Russia), as export platforms (South Korea, Thailand, China) or as sizeable markets (Brazil, China, India). In any event, quite a few Southern countries broke away from the group of money-poor economies and transformed into a new generation of industrial countries, narrowing the distance that separated them from the rich economies. For them, it is as if President Truman's promise at the birth of the development period in 1949 – that poor nations would catch up with the rich – had finally come true.

But, on the other hand, the age of globalization has now superseded the age of development. This is mainly because nation-states can no longer contain economic and cultural forces. Goods, money, information, images and people now flow across frontiers and give rise to a transnational space in which interactions occur freely, as if national spaces did not exist. Development thinking used to concentrate on nation-states' transition from agrarian to industrial societies. The state was conventionally considered to be the main actor, and the national society the main target, of development planning. For this reason, development thinking increasingly lost its way, as both the actor and the target of development withered away under the influence of transnationalization. With the state moving out of focus, the development concept looks strangely out of place in the era of globalization. Development, in short, became denationalized; indeed, globalization can be aptly understood as development without nation-states.

As a result of this shift, development came to mean the formation of a global middle class alongside the spread of the transnational economic complex, rather than a national middle class alongside the integration of a national economy. Seen from this perspective, it comes as no surprise that the age of globalization has produced a transnational class of winners.

Though they exist in different densities at different points around the globe, this class is to be found in every country. In the large cities of the South, glittering office towers, shopping malls filled with luxury brands, gated communities with villas and manicured gardens, not to speak of the stream of limousines on highways or the never-ending string of brand advertisements, signal the presence of high purchasing power. Roughly speaking, half of the transnational consumer class resides in the South, and half in the North. It comprises social groups which, despite their different skin colour, are less and less country-specific and tend to resemble one another more and more in their behaviour and lifestyles. They shop in similar malls, buy the same hi-tech equipment, see the same films and television series, roam the globe as tourists and dispose of the key instrument of assimilation: money. They are part of a transnational economic complex which is now developing its markets on a global scale. Nokia supplies it everywhere with mobile telephones, Toyota with cars, Sony with televisions, Siemens with refrigerators, Burger King with fast-food joints, and Time-Warner with DVDs. Western-style development, to be sure, continued spreading during the globalization period, but boosted the expansion of the transnational economic complex rather than the formation of thriving national societies.

DESIRE FOR EQUITY

It would be misleading to recognize only the desire for wealth in the scramble of countries and classes for income. Though it goes without saying that the time-honoured vices of greed and arrogance are omnipresent drivers in this scramble, it is also true that from the point of view of the South there is more to it. Behind the craving for skyscrapers and shopping malls, gigawatts and growth rates, there is also the desire for recognition and equity at work. A quick glance at China may illustrate the point. The ascendancy of China to the ranks of a world power is balm on the wounds inflicted during her two centuries of colonial humiliation. And the success of the middle class is a source of pride and self-respect that puts the Chinese elite on a par with social elites elsewhere on the globe. The Chinese example brings to the fore what has been part and parcel of development all along: the desire for justice is intimately linked to the pursuit of development.

Looking at *The Development Dictionary* today, it is striking that we had not really appreciated the extent to which the development idea has been charged with hopes for redress and self-affirmation. It certainly was an invention of the West, as we showed at length, but not just an imposition on the rest. On the contrary, as the desire for recognition and equity is framed in terms of the civilizational model of the powerful nations, the South has emerged as the staunchest defender of development. Countries in general do

not aspire to become more 'Indian', more 'Brazilian' or for that matter more 'Islamic'; instead, assertions to the contrary notwithstanding, they long to achieve industrial modernity. To be sure, the element of imposition has not been lacking since Commodore Perry appeared off the coast of Japan in 1853, forcing it at gunpoint to give access to goods from the USA. Self-defence against the hegemonic powers has been an important motive of the drive for development until today. Nevertheless, what might once have been an imposition has more often than not turned into a basis for identity. In this way, however, as indeed the book points out, the right to cultural self-identity has been compromised by accepting the development world-view. Despite decolonization in the political sense – which has led to independent states – and despite decolonization in the economic sense – which has made some countries into economic powers – a decolonization of the imagination has not occurred. Quite the reverse: across the world hopes for the future are fixed on the rich man's patterns of production and consumption. The longing for greater justice on the part of the South is one reason for the persistence of the development creed – even if, in this century, neither the planet nor the people of the world can any longer afford its predominance.

However, it is crucial to distinguish two levels of equity. The first is the idea of relative justice, which looks at the distribution of various assets – such as income, school years or Internet connections – across groups of people or nations. It is comparative in nature, focuses on the relative positions of asset-holders, and points towards some form of equality. The second is the idea of absolute justice, which looks at the availability of fundamental capabilities and freedoms without which an unblemished life would be impossible. It is non-comparative in nature, focuses on basic living conditions, and points to the norm of human dignity. Generally speaking, conflicts about inequality are animated by the first idea, while conflicts about human rights are animated by the second.

As it turns out, the demand for relative justice may easily collide with the right to absolute justice. To put it in political terms: the competitive struggle of the global middle classes for a greater share of income and power is often carried out at the expense of the fundamental rights of the poor and powerless. As governments and businesses, urban citizens and rural elites mobilize to forge ahead with development, more often than not the land, the living spaces and the cultural traditions of indigenous peoples, small farmers or the urban poor are put under pressure. Freeways cut through neighbourhoods, high-rise buildings displace traditional housing, dams drive tribal groups from their homelands, trawlers marginalize local fisherfolk, supermarkets undercut small shopkeepers. Economic growth is of a cannibalistic nature; it feeds on both nature and communities, and shifts

unpaid costs back onto them as well. The shiny side of development is often accompanied by a dark side of displacement and dispossession; this is the reason why economic growth has time and again produced impoverishment next to enrichment. The globally oriented middle classes, although they push for development in the name of greater equality, largely disregard the plight of the poor. No wonder that, in just about all newly industrializing countries, social polarization has been on the rise along with growth rates over the past thirty years.

To invoke the right to development for the sake of greater equity is therefore an untrustworthy undertaking. This is particularly the case when governmental and non-governmental representatives call for accelerated growth in the name of helping the poor. Most of the time, they take the poor hostage when garnering relative advantages from the richer countries, without much of an intention of guaranteeing the fundamental rights of economically disadvantaged communities. At the core of this cover-up – as this book argues – lies the semantic confusion brought about by the concept of development. After all, development can mean just about everything, from putting up skyscrapers to putting in latrines, from drilling for oil to drilling for water, from setting up software industries to setting up tree nurseries. It is a concept of monumental emptiness, carrying a vaguely positive connotation. For this reason, it can be easily filled with conflicting perspectives. On the one hand, there are those who implicitly identify development with economic growth, calling for more relative equity in GDP. Their use of the word ‘development’ reinforces the hegemony of the economic world-view. On the other hand, there are those who identify development with more rights and resources for the poor and powerless. Their use of the word calls for de-emphasizing growth in favour of greater autonomy of communities. For them, development speech is self-defeating; it distorts their concern and makes them vulnerable to hijack by false friends. Putting both perspectives into one conceptual shell is a sure recipe for confusion, if not a political cover-up.

A PARENTHESIS IN WORLD HISTORY

It is the legacy of the twentieth century that the desires of nations for a better tomorrow are predominantly directed towards development-as-growth. However, the multifaceted crisis of the biosphere turns this legacy into a tragic liability. As the book points out in a variety of ways, the development viewpoint implies both a chronopolitics and a geopolitics. In terms of a chronopolitics, all peoples on the globe appear to move along one single road, following the pacemakers who are supposed to represent the forefront of social evolution. And in terms of a geopolitics, under the

development gaze the confusing diversity of nations across the globe turns into a clear ranking order with the GDP-rich countries at the top of the pack. This way of constructing the world order has revealed itself to be not only obsolete, but also mortally dangerous. Assigning the Euro-Atlantic model of civilization to a vanguard position either along the course of history or across the social ranking order has by now lost any legitimacy: it is proven to be incompatible with the planet.

In retrospect it becomes clear that some of the very conditions that have been responsible for the rise of the Euro-Atlantic civilization are also responsible for its fall. Why was Europe able to leap ahead of the rest of the world in the early nineteenth century? An important part of the answer (as US historian Kenneth Pomeranz has shown) is to be found by looking at the resource base. At the end of the eighteenth century, both of the two major civilizations of the world – Europe and China – were constrained in their economic development by the scarcity of land available to grow food, supply fuel and provide raw materials. But it was only Europe – first of all England – that succeeded in overcoming this limit by tapping into new resources. It began massively to import agricultural goods such as sugar, tobacco, cereals and timber from America, and, above all, set out systematically to utilize coal for industrial processes. As foreign land replaced domestic land and carbon substituted for wood, the English industrial economy was able to take off. Put more generally, access to biotic resources from colonies and fossil resources from the crust of the earth was essential to the rise of the Euro-Atlantic civilization. There would have been no industrial society without the mobilization of resources from both the expanse of geographical space and the depth of geological time.

As the planet's biodiversity disappears, fossil-fuel resources dwindle and the global climate destabilizes, the conditions that brought about Europe's success are no longer available. Resources will be neither as easily nor as cheaply accessible. In particular, dwindling oil supplies and threatened climate chaos suggest that future historians will consider the past two hundred years of Euro-Atlantic development a parenthesis in world history. Indeed, it is difficult to see how the automobile society, high-rise housing, chemical agriculture, or a meat-based food system could be rolled out across the globe. The resources required would be too vast, too expensive and too damaging for local ecosystems and the biosphere.

Since the Euro-Atlantic model of wealth emerged under exceptional conditions, it cannot be generalized to the world at large. In other words, the model requires social exclusion by its very structure; it is unfit to underpin equity on a global scale. Therefore, development-as-growth cannot continue to be a guiding concept of international politics unless global apartheid is

taken for granted. If there is to be some kind of prosperity for all world citizens, the Euro-Atlantic model of production and consumption needs to be superseded, making room for modes of well-being that leave only a light footprint on the earth. Production and consumption patterns will not be fit for justice, unless they are resource-light and compatible with ecosystems. For that reason, there will be no equity without ecology in the twenty-first century.

RESILIENCE IN DIVERSITY

It is against this background that *The Development Dictionary* is of unbroken relevance. Breaking with ‘development’ as a habit of thought is part and parcel of an overdue decolonization of minds. We, the authors of the book, started with the premise that Western hegemony leaves its imprint not only on politics and economics, but on minds as well. Just as domestic furniture carries the imprint of its age, mental furniture is also marked by the date of its formation. In this respect, the development discourse is an outcome of the post-war era of fossil-fuel-based triumphalism, undergirded by colonial perceptions and the legacy of Western rationalism. Cleansing the mind from development certainties, however, requires a conscious effort; therefore, the authors of this book have ventured to expose those key concepts that make up much of the mental furniture of ‘development’. As it emerges, just to name some examples in the book, ‘poverty’ incorporates a materialistic prejudice, ‘equality’ is transmogrified into sameness, ‘standard of living’ reduces the diversity of happiness, ‘needs’ make the dependency trap snap, ‘production’ brings forth disvalue next to value, and ‘population’ is nothing but a statistical artefact. Exposing the epoch-specific nature of key concepts liberates the mind and prompts it to find a language that is equal to tomorrow’s challenges. *The Development Dictionary* is meant to help in this endeavour.

In particular, it will not be possible to reconceptualize equity without recovering the diversity of prosperity. Linking the desire for equity to economic growth has been the conceptual cornerstone of the development age. Delinking the desire for equity from economic growth and relinking it to community- and culture-based notions of well-being will be the cornerstone of the post-development age. Indeed, today, to a much greater extent than when this book was written, initiatives are launched all over the world that, in a smaller or larger way, aim at transcending the conventional development idea. There is an upsurge of initiatives in the industrial world in both the northern and the southern hemisphere that edge away from the fossil-fuel economy and aim for a solar economy, which goes under the name of ‘green economy’ in Europe and the USA, and of ‘ecological civilization’ in China. Moreover, there is quite a bit of creativity at the margins of the mainstream, xxv

be it the search for a ‘sufficiency economy’ in Thailand, the call for ‘earth democracy’ in India, the rediscovery of the *cosmovisión Andina* in Peru, or the groping for ‘degrowth’ in France and Italy. And, last but not least, there are myriad communities – professional, local, digital – affirming in their specific contexts that resilience, beauty and meaning can be found outside of the logic of growth and expansion.

Looking at the multitude of post-development initiatives, two themes emerge. First, a transition from economies based on fossil-fuel resources to economies based on biodiversity is paramount. In contrast to the ever-expanding nature of ‘development’, the recognition of limits is at the root of numerous attempts to re-embed the economy in the biosphere. Examples abound in architecture, agriculture, energy production, forestry and even industry. What is more, opting for solar energies and materials is consonant with a certain amount of deglobalization. For decades, a lack of local fit and adaptation in those areas had to be compensated for by the import of fossil energies from far away, but without them a new appreciation of the land, habitat and seasons becomes essential. While the massive use of fossil-fuel-based resources allowed one to disregard the character of specific places, bioeconomic systems – be it in cultivation or in construction – find their strength in connecting with local ecosystems and energy flows. For this reason, decentralization and diversity will be guiding principles for solar economies.

Second, post-development initiatives attempt to push back the predominance of the economic world-view. They oppose the secular trend to functionalize work, education and the land in order to boost economic efficiency, insisting on the right to act according to values of culture, democracy and justice. In the global South, for instance, initiatives emphasize community rights to natural resources, self-governance and indigenous ways of knowing and acting. In the global North, post-development action instead centres on eco-fair businesses in manufacture, trade and banking, the rediscovery of the commons in nature and society, open-source collaboration, self-sufficiency in consumption and profit-making, and renewed attention to non-material values. At any rate, what appears to be the common denominator of those initiatives is the search for less material notions of prosperity that make room for the dimensions of self-reliance, community, art or spirituality. Their underlying conviction is that human well-being has many sources beyond money; drawing on them not only provides a base for different styles of prosperity, but makes people and communities more resilient against resource crises and economic shock.

xxvi In such a perspective, however, the conventional politics of justice is turned upside down. In the development age the rich world was able to

sidestep the hard issues of justice, because economic growth was seen as the main tool to bring greater equity to the world. Growth was a substitute for justice, and inequality was no problem as long as the have-nots were able to improve their position along the way. Indeed, for decades development experts defined equity primarily as a problem of the poor. They highlighted the lack of income, lack of technologies, and lack of market access of the poor, advocating all kinds of remedies for raising their living standard. In short, they worked at raising the floor, rather than lowering the ceiling. With the emergence of bio-physical constraints to economic growth, however, this approach has definitely turned out to be one-sided; it is not just the poor but also the rich, and their economy as well, that have to be called into question. At any rate, the quest for fairness in a finite world means in the first place changing the rich, not the poor. Poverty alleviation, in other words, cannot be separated from wealth alleviation.

It was in October 1926 that Mohandas Gandhi already sensed the impasse of development. In one of his columns for *Young India*, the mouthpiece of the Indian independence movement, he wrote:

God forbid that India should ever take to industrialisation after the manner of the West. The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom (England) is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 million took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts.

Nearly eighty years later this statement has lost none of its relevance. On the contrary, its significance has exploded since today there are, just between India and China, no longer 300 million but 2,000 million setting out to imitate Britain. What would Gandhi say if he met Hu Jintao at the inauguration of the 2010 World Expo?

Berlin, 2009

Introduction

WOLFGANG SACHS

The last forty years can be called the age of development. This epoch is coming to an end. The time is ripe to write its obituary.

Like a towering lighthouse guiding sailors towards the coast, ‘development’ stood as the idea which oriented emerging nations in their journey through post-war history. No matter whether democracies or dictatorships, the countries of the South proclaimed development as their primary aspiration, after they had been freed from colonial subordination. Four decades later, governments and citizens alike still have their eyes fixed on this light flashing just as far away as ever: every effort and every sacrifice is justified in reaching the goal, but the light keeps on receding into the dark.

The lighthouse of development was erected right after the Second World War. Following the breakdown of the European colonial powers, the United States found an opportunity to give worldwide dimensions to the mission their founding fathers had bequeathed to them: to be the ‘beacon on the hill’. They launched the idea of development with a call to every nation to follow in their footsteps. Since then, the relations between North and South have been cast in this mould: ‘development’ provided the fundamental frame of reference for that mixture of generosity, bribery and oppression which has characterized the policies toward the South. For almost half a century, good neighbourliness on the planet was conceived in the light of ‘development’.

Today, the lighthouse shows cracks and is starting to crumble. The idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape. Delusion and disappointment, failures and crimes, have been the steady companions of development and they tell a common story: it did not work. Moreover, the historical conditions which catapulted the idea into prominence have vanished: development has become outdated. But, above all, the hopes and desires which made the idea fly are now exhausted: development has grown obsolete.

Nevertheless, the ruin stands there and still dominates the scenery like a landmark. Though doubts are mounting and uneasiness is widely felt, development talk still pervades not only official declarations but even xxviii the language of grassroots movements. It is time to dismantle this mental

structure. The authors of this book consciously bid farewell to the defunct idea in order to clear our minds for fresh discoveries.

Over the years, piles of technical reports have been accumulated which show that development does not work; stacks of political studies have proven that development is unjust. The authors of this book deal neither with development as technical performance nor with development as class conflict, but with development as a particular cast of mind. For development is much more than just a socio-economic endeavour; it is a perception which models reality, a myth which comforts societies, and a fantasy which unleashes passions. Perceptions, myths and fantasies, however, rise and fall independent of empirical results and rational conclusions; they appear and vanish, not because they are proven right or wrong, but rather because they are pregnant with promise or become irrelevant. This book offers a critical inventory of development credos, their history and implications, in order to expose in the harsh glare of sunlight their perceptual bias, their historical inadequacy, and their imaginative sterility. It calls for apostasy from the faith in development in order to liberate the imagination for bold responses to the challenges humanity is facing before the turn of the millennium.

We propose to call the age of development that particular historical period which began on 20 January 1949, when Harry S. Truman for the first time declared, in his inauguration speech, the Southern hemisphere as 'underdeveloped areas'. The label stuck and subsequently provided the cognitive base for both arrogant interventionism from the North and pathetic self-pity in the South. However, what is born at a certain point in time can die again at a later point; the age of development is on the decline because its four founding premises have been outdated by history.

First of all, it was a matter of course for Truman that the United States – along with other industrialized nations – was at the top of the social evolutionary scale. Today, this premise of superiority has been fully and finally shattered by the ecological predicament. Granted the US may still feel it is running ahead of the other countries, but it is clear now that the race is leading towards an abyss. For more than a century, technology carried the promise of redeeming the human condition from sweat, toil and tears. Today, especially in the rich countries, it is everybody's best kept secret that this hope is nothing other than a flight of fancy.

After all, with the fruits of industrialism still scarcely distributed, we now consume in one year what it took the earth a million years to store up. Furthermore, much of the glorious productivity is fed by the gigantic throughput of fossil energy; on the one side, the earth is being excavated and permanently scarred, while on the other a continuous rain of harmful substances drizzles down – or filters up into the atmosphere. If all countries

‘successfully’ followed the industrial example, five or six planets would be needed to serve as mines and waste dumps. It is thus obvious that the ‘advanced’ societies are no model; rather they are most likely to be seen in the end as an aberration in the course of history. The arrow of progress is broken and the future has lost its brightness: it holds in store more threats than promises. How can one believe in development, if the sense of orientation has withered away?

Secondly, Truman launched the idea of development in order to provide a comforting vision of a world order where the US would naturally rank first. The rising influence of the Soviet Union – the first country which had industrialized outside of capitalism – forced him to come up with a vision that would engage the loyalty of the decolonizing countries in order to sustain his struggle against communism. For over forty years, development has been a weapon in the competition between political systems. Now that the East–West confrontation has come to a halt, Truman’s project of global development is bound to lose ideological steam and to remain without political fuel. And as the world becomes polycentric, the scrapyard of history now awaits the dumping of the category ‘Third World’, a category invented by the French in the early 1950s in order to designate the embattled territory between the two superpowers.

Nevertheless, new, albeit belated, calls for development may multiply, as the East–West division gets absorbed into the rich–poor division. In this light, however, the entire project fundamentally changes its character: prevention replaces progress as the objective of development; the redistribution of risk rather than the redistribution of wealth now dominates the international agenda. Development specialists shrug their shoulders about the long-promised industrial paradise, but rush to ward off the flood of immigrants, to contain regional wars, to undercut illicit trade, and to contain environmental disasters. They are still busy identifying deficits and filling gaps, but Truman’s promise of development has been turned upside down.

Thirdly, development has changed the face of the earth, but not in the way it had intended. Truman’s project now appears as a blunder of planetary proportions. In 1960, the Northern countries were twenty times richer than the Southern, in 1980 forty-six times richer. Is it an exaggeration to say that the illusion of ‘catching up’ rivals on a world scale Montezuma’s deadly illusion of receiving Cortez with open arms? Of course, most Southern countries stepped on the gas, but the North outpaced them by far. The reason is simple: in this kind of race, the rich countries will always move faster than the rest, for they are geared towards a continuous degradation of what they have to put forth: the most advanced technology. They are world champions in competitive obsolescence.

Social polarization prevails within countries as well; the stories about falling real income, misery and desperation are all too familiar. The campaign to turn traditional man into modern man has failed. The old ways have been smashed, the new ways are not viable. People are caught in the deadlock of development: the peasant who is dependent on buying seeds, yet finds no cash to do so; the mother who benefits neither from the care of her fellow women in the community nor from the assistance of a hospital; the clerk who had made it in the city, but is now laid off as a result of cost-cutting measures. They are all like refugees who have been rejected and have no place to go. Shunned by the 'advanced' sector and cut off from the old ways, they are expatriates in their own country; they are forced to get by in the no-man's-land between tradition and modernity.

Fourthly, suspicion grows that development was a misconceived enterprise from the beginning. Indeed, it is not the failure of development which has to be feared, but its success. What would a completely developed world look like? We don't know, but most certainly it would be both boring and fraught with danger. For development cannot be separated from the idea that all peoples of the planet are moving along one single track towards some state of maturity, exemplified by the nations 'running in front'. In this view, Tuaregs, Zapotecos or Rajasthanis are not seen as living diverse and non-comparable ways of human existence, but as somehow lacking in terms of what has been achieved by the advanced countries. Consequently, catching up was declared to be their historical task. From the start, development's hidden agenda was nothing else than the Westernization of the world.

The result has been a tremendous loss of diversity. The worldwide simplification of architecture, clothing and daily objects assaults the eye; the accompanying eclipse of variegated languages, customs and gestures is already less visible; and the standardization of desires and dreams occurs deep down in the subconscious of societies. Market, state and science have been the great universalizing powers; admen, experts and educators have relentlessly expanded their reign. Of course, as in Montezuma's time, conquerors have often been warmly welcomed, only to unveil their victory. The mental space in which people dream and act is largely occupied today by Western imagery. The vast furrows of cultural monoculture left behind are, as in all monocultures, both barren and dangerous. They have eliminated the innumerable varieties of being human and have turned the world into a place deprived of adventure and surprise; the 'Other' has vanished with development. Moreover, the spreading monoculture has eroded viable alternatives to the industrial, growth-oriented society and dangerously crippled humankind's capacity to meet an increasingly different future with creative responses. The last forty years have consider- xxxi

ably impoverished the potential for cultural evolution. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that whatever potential for cultural evolution remains is there in spite of development.

Four decades after Truman's invention of underdevelopment, the historical conditions which had given rise to the developmental perspective have largely disappeared. By now development has become an amoeba-like concept, shapeless but ineradicable. Its contours are so blurred that it denotes nothing – while it spreads everywhere because it connotes the best of intentions. The term is hailed by the IMF and the Vatican alike, by revolutionaries carrying their guns as well as field experts carrying their Samsonites. Though development has no content, it does possess one function: it allows any intervention to be sanctified in the name of a higher goal. Therefore even enemies feel united under the same banner. The term creates a common ground, a ground on which right and left, elites and grassroots, fight their battles.

It is our intention, as the authors of this book, to clear out of the way this self-defeating development discourse. On the one hand, we hope to disable the development professional by tearing apart the conceptual foundations of his routines; on the other hand, we would like to challenge those involved in grassroots initiatives to clarify their perspectives by discarding the crippling development talk towards which they are now leaning. Our essays on the central concepts in the development discourse intend to expose some of the unconscious structures that set boundaries on the thinking of our epoch. We believe that any imaginative effort to conceive a post-developmental era will have to overcome these constraints.

The development discourse is made up of a web of key concepts. It is impossible to talk about development without referring to concepts such as poverty, production, the notion of the state, or equality. These concepts first rose to prominence during modern Western history and only then have they been projected on the rest of the world. Each of them crystallizes a set of tacit assumptions which reinforce the Occidental world-view. Development has so pervasively spread these assumptions that people everywhere have been caught up in a Western perception of reality. Knowledge, however, wields power by directing people's attention; it carves out and highlights a certain reality, casting into oblivion other ways of relating to the world around us. At a time when development has evidently failed as a socio-economic endeavour, it has become of paramount importance to liberate ourselves from its dominion over our minds. This book is an invitation to review the developmental model of reality and to recognize that we all wear not merely tinted, but tainted, glasses if we take part in the prevailing

To facilitate this intellectual review, each chapter will dip into the archaeology of the key concept under examination and call attention to its ethnocentric and even violent nature. The chapters identify the shifting role each concept has played in the debate on development over the last forty years. They demonstrate how each concept filters perception, highlighting certain aspects of reality while excluding others, and they show how this bias is rooted in particular civilizational attitudes adopted during the course of European history. Finally, each chapter attempts to open a window onto other, and different, ways of looking at the world and to get a glimpse of the riches and blessings which survive in non-Western cultures in spite of development. Each chapter will be of worth if, after reading it, experts and citizens alike have to blush, stutter or burst out laughing when they dare to mouth the old word.

This book, it must be said, is the fruit of friendship. Above all, it is our gift to one another. Over the years, all of us authors, in various contexts and associations, have been involved in a continuous conversation, spending days or weeks together chatting, cooking, travelling, studying and celebrating. We shared our uncertainties and championed our convictions; we lived through confusion and hit upon sudden insights; we challenged our idiosyncrasies and enjoyed inspiration. Slowly and sometimes inadvertently, a common frame of reference emerged and informed, in turn, our individual work. Deprofessionalized intellectuals, in our experience, derive life from friendship and common commitment; otherwise, how could non-academic research be sustained? In our case, this would not have been possible without the personal and intellectual magnetism of Ivan Illich, in particular, who brought a number of us together and animated our thinking throughout the years. In the fall of 1988, sitting on the porch of Barbara Duden's wooden house at State College in Pennsylvania, we drew up the plan for this book after an intense week of debate interrupted by cutting onions and uncorking bottles.

I would like to thank Christoph Baker and Don Reneau for their help with translations. I gratefully acknowledge the institutional support of the Science, Technology and Society Programme at the Pennsylvania State University, where we convened several consultations, and of the Institute for Cultural Studies in Essen, Germany, where I carried out the editorial work.

Development

GUSTAVO ESTEVA

To say ‘yes’, to approve, to accept, the Brazilians say ‘no’ – *pois nao*. But no one gets confused. By culturally rooting their speech, by playing with the words to make them speak in their contexts, the Brazilians enrich their conversation.

In saying ‘development’, however, most people are now saying the opposite of what they want to convey. Everyone gets confused. By using uncritically such a loaded word, and one doomed to extinction, they are transforming its agony into a chronic condition. From the unburied corpse of development, every kind of pest has started to spread. The time has come to unveil the secret of development and see it in all its conceptual starkness.

THE INVENTION OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT

At the end of World War II, the United States was a formidable and incessant productive machine, unprecedented in history. It was undisputedly at the centre of the world. It was the master. All the institutions created in those years recognized that fact: even the United Nations Charter echoed the United States Constitution.

But the Americans wanted something more. They needed to make entirely explicit their new position in the world. And they wanted to consolidate that hegemony and make it permanent. For these purposes, they conceived a political campaign on a global scale that clearly bore their seal. They even conceived an appropriate emblem to identify the campaign. And they carefully chose the opportunity to launch both – 20 January 1949. That very day, the day on which President Truman took office, a new era was opened for the world – the era of development.

We must embark [President Truman said] 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.

The old imperialism – exploitation for foreign profit – has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing.¹

By using for the first time in such context the word 'underdeveloped', Truman changed the meaning of development and created the emblem, a euphemism, used ever since to allude either discreetly or inadvertently to the era of American hegemony.

Never before had a word been universally accepted on the very day of its political coinage. A new perception of one's own self, and of the other, was suddenly created. Two hundred years of social construction of the historical-political meaning of the term 'development' were successfully usurped and transmogrified. A political and philosophical proposition of Marx, packaged American-style as a struggle against communism and at the service of the hegemonic design of the United States, succeeded in permeating both the popular and the intellectual mind for the rest of the century.

Underdevelopment began, then, on 20 January 1949. On that day, 2 billion people became underdeveloped. In a real sense, from that time on, they ceased being what they were, in all their diversity, and were transmogrified into an inverted mirror of others' reality: a mirror that belittles them and sends them off to the end of the queue, a mirror that defines their identity, which is really that of a heterogeneous and diverse majority, simply in the terms of a homogenizing and narrow minority.

Truman was not the first to use the word. Wilfred Benson, a former member of the Secretariat of the International Labour Organization, was probably the person who invented it when he referred to the 'underdeveloped areas' while writing on the economic basis for peace in 1942.² But the expression found no further echo, either with the public or with the experts. Two years later, Rosenstein-Rodan continued to speak of 'economically backward areas'. Arthur Lewis, also in 1944, referred to the gap between the rich and the poor nations. Throughout the decade, the expression appeared occasionally in technical books or United Nations documents. But it only acquired relevance when Truman presented it as the emblem of his own policy. In this context, it took on an unsuspected colonizing virulence.

Since then, development has connoted at least one thing: to escape from the undignified condition called underdevelopment. When Nyerere proposed that development be the political mobilization of a people for attaining their own objectives, conscious as he was that it was madness to pursue the goals that others had set; when Rodolfo Stavenhagen proposes today ethno-development or development with self-confidence, conscious that we need to 'look within' and 'search for one's own culture' instead of using borrowed and foreign views; when Jimoh Omo-Fadaka suggests a development from the bottom up, conscious that all strategies based on a top-down design have failed to reach their explicitly stated objectives; when Orlando Fals Borda