



Michael Reder, Verena Risse, Katharina Hirschbrunn,
Georg Stoll (eds.)

GLOBAL COMMON GOOD

*Intercultural Perspectives on a Just and
Ecological Transformation*

campus

Global Common Good

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I. Systematic Introduction

Towards a Just and Ecological Transformation: Methodological Considerations for an Intercultural Research Project

Michael Reder, Verena Risse, Katharina Hirschbrunn, and Georg Stoll

1. Starting Point: Global Challenges and the Post-MDG-Agenda

The adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in September 2000 showed the joint commitment of the UN member states to alleviate poverty and inequality around the world. While several improvements can be noted today, new global challenges call for further action and inform the debate about a Post-MDG development agenda.

Two interwoven sets of challenging problems can be discerned: First, increasing social inequality that denies the satisfaction of basic human needs and a life in dignity to a large part of humanity; secondly, increasing environmental degradation resulting from the overuse of natural resources and the planet's depositing capacities. In the light of global challenges such as poverty, hunger and climate change, the contributions of this volume identify concrete ways towards a socially just and sustainable model of civilization.

The cause of the different global problems has generally been seen in a combination of structural determinants, in particular the exploitation of non-renewable resources, economic policies focusing narrowly on growth as well as deficient political institutions at the national and the international level. At the same time, the last few years were marked by the intention to integrate those concerned into the process of designing the relevant development policies. This has led to a focus on the way in which ideas and visions influence development. While alternative notions of social development—like 'bottom-up development' or approaches taking into account the 'limits to growth'—were niche topics of certain social milieus in the past, they have now become part of mainstream debates and of official political agendas. In Europe, this is visible for instance in the work of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi-Commission in France and the Enquete Commission

“Growth, Prosperity, and Quality of Life” in Germany, which both worked on the question of how to conceptualize welfare without relying on GDP only. In addition, numerous books and conferences deal with new ideas and models for societal prosperity and future development. This trend also shows that development is not a goal that is reserved for the Global South. Rather it is also the societies of the Global North that are defective in various respects and need to undergo processes of transformation.

The central question therefore is whether and in what way these discourses in which the norms and values are articulated can actually change social realities. Societies do not only bring forth a plurality of ideas regarding their own constitution and the norms and values that the legal and political institutions should be based on. At the same time, these ideas translate into social practices in diverse ways and yield different practical results.

2. Methodological perspective: Ethical Reflections on the Basis of Existing Social Values and Practices

Political strategies that are justified by reference to different values are not only accepted because of an abstract normative reason but because they are incorporated into social life and into heterogeneous cultural practices. Ethical reflections should therefore be closely connected to these practices, so that moral principles are related to social reality and can claim universal validity. Of course, there exist several social practices with different embedded moral norms. Therefore, theories in the tradition of Hegel are asking for complementary moral beliefs, because humans are realizing practical coherence between different moral beliefs in their everyday life.

This view is following Axel Honneth in his interpretation of Hegel. Honneth argues that our normative reflections should always be connected to a detailed analysis of society including its different social and normative practices. The aim of a critical analysis of society in the tradition of Hegel’s philosophy of rights should be “[to analyze] current institutions and practices according to their normative merit” and to show how “their importance for the social embodiment and realization of socially legitimate values.” (Honneth 2010, 711) By doing so, Honneth argues against a clear distinction between facts and values and against a focus on abstract moral

principles. Instead he emphasizes the concrete capability to mutual recognition in the Hegelian sphere of *Sittlichkeit*, which is meant to overcome the gap between individual subjective feelings on the one hand and the context of general rights on the other.

Axel Honneth argues that starting ethical reflection from social practices does not imply a necessity to accept all practices. Rather, a critical reconstruction has to analyze and discuss the ‘moral’ potential of such practices and to ask in what way these practices could be improved in light of the ideas that underlie them. More specifically, an analysis following this model has to focus on what practices can be determined from a view point of a pragmatic approach as theoretically described here. Of course, Honneth focuses on societies within their national borders. Yet it seems likewise possible to expand this focus to the global level and ask which social and normative practices are important in the global sphere of *Sittlichkeit*.

Human rights—understood as a global practice—play an important role as part of a global *Sittlichkeit*. They are accepted because they are incorporated in various global programs and institutions. Global discourses regarding issues such as the Millennium Development Goals or sustainable climate policy are both examples of this. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948—about which there is a broad consensus within the global community—seeks to provide answers to the multifaceted experience of injustice. From this standpoint, ethical measures are determined with reference to concrete political realities. Ethically speaking, it is about letting all people lead a dignified life. Human rights intend to protect the necessary foundations for such a life.

3. A Dialogue on the Global Common Good: Intercultural perspectives for Transformation

Notwithstanding the importance of human rights and the MDGs, the complexity of the current world order calls for a more-encompassing focus on the common good of all people. Following Honneth’s approach, the achievement of the global common good must start by investigating the norms and practices implied at both the national and the global level. This research project therefore deals with alternative practices and values of social development which are currently produced by multiple societal ac-

tors and with the actual and potential effects of these ideas on social practice. The intercultural perspective that results from including contributions from different world regions is the specific characteristic of this volume.

In a first step, the different contributions analyze which values and ideas can be found in their region with regard to a socially just and environmentally sustainable society and how they should ideally be implemented in the respective societies. The objective is an inventory of important visions and guiding ideas of societies with regard to their normative self-understanding and their models of development and prosperity. One main focus lies on exploring in what way the common good can serve as a normative guiding principle in the different cultural contexts. The studies assembled in this volume show that the notion of the common good can respond to the (cultural) plurality and heterogeneity of societies. This is reflected in different interpretations of the common good ranging from a stronger focus on human dignity over well-being to an account of biocivilization. Moreover, the studies show through which political institutions and structures normative ideas like the common good are realized. In this context, also ideas regarding global political institutions for securing a global common good are discussed.

In a second step, it is asked how these social values are actually implemented in practice and where discrepancies between normative ambitions and reality exist. In this context, it is being critically discussed in what way traditional development politics really lead to a fair and sustainable development. Especially in the face of current global crises (like, for example the financial crisis, the crisis of nutrition, crises of global resources) the different contributions outline in what way political and economic practices are directed towards a common good and on the other hand unveil discrepancies between the existing practices and the common good. Several lines of conflict can be detected, such as the conflicts between different values within one concept of the common good, the conflicts between the values of different actors within society, or the conflicts between local and global norms and values. Furthermore, there are contradictions between the normative ambitions and the existing institutions or social practices. In particular, several authors find that the dominant development paradigm does not respond to the visions and norms of the local societies, that it conflicts with the rights of indigenous people or peasant communities and that it leads to environmental abuses. Therefore, some papers suggest to give up the notion of development altogether. Other

trends that are considered to stand in tension with the achievement of the common good include increased consumption in rising middle classes as well as growing cities that become less manageable. Moreover, in particular the African contributors point to their countries' reliance on the exploitation of resources from which the local population does not benefit. This situation has become known as the 'development paradox'.

The third perspective that the different contributions offer are possible paths to transformation both at the local and the global level. There is agreement among the contributors that democratic structures of different kinds of communities play an important role to deal with current problems. Moreover, several authors stress the importance of human rights and a strong rule of law to achieve the implementation of the common good. Functioning democratic institutions and community organizations also allow reflecting on other pressing questions such as: Which perspectives are there with regard to the possibilities and limits of normative models to influence the actions of individuals, economy and politics? And which political suggestions exist for a global conception of the common good? With this third perspective, the volume is not only criticizing existing systems, but pointing out unrealized potentials for a just and sustainable transformation towards a global common good.

4. Research Project: "Development Serving the Global Common Good"

This volume constitutes one of the outcomes of the research project "Development serving the global common good" launched in 2012. The project brings together positions from different cultures as well as from various academic disciplines, such as philosophy, sociology, political science and economics. The research project was initiated by the Institute for Social and Development Studies which is affiliated as an independent body with the Munich School of Philosophy and by Misereor, the German Catholic Bishops' organization for development cooperation.

The project consists of three entwined parts. In the first part, academics from Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America reflect on different understandings of the (global) common good in their region, on existent implementations of these norms, on conflicts and on potentials for trans-

formation. This volume presents the results of this intercultural exchange process. In the second part of the project, regional dialogue forums are organized in Africa, Latin America and Asia with the aim to discuss concepts of the common good among representatives of diverse societal groups. Here regional problems and challenges are taken into account without, however, losing sight of the regions' reality as embedded in global economic and political processes. The main results of the regional dialogue forums are summarized at the end of this volume. The third part of the project consists of public relations and advocacy work in Germany and Europe that aims at positioning the results from the project in the political debate and at promoting the transformation towards a socially just and ecologically sustainable model of development.

At the level of scientific research, the aim of the project is to identify visions and norms of social development articulated and endorsed by a plurality of societal actors and to analyze the actual effects of these norms on political institutions, the economy and society. As a normative vision the notion of the global common good is introduced. On this basis, key conflicts that prevent the realization of the common good and potentials for transformation shall be sketched. At the practical-political level, this results in outlining common visions of a (globally) just and sustainable transformation and in building alliances to practically influence social processes in view of a global common good.

This being a dialogical research project, many different voices and views contributed to its richness and diversity. And even if we cannot list all these contributors here, they all deserve our thankfulness. In addition, the editors are especially grateful for the financial support offered by the Franz Xaver Foundation. Special thanks also go to Stephen Henderson, who helped finalize this volume.

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Honneth, Axel (2010). "A Theory of Justice as an Analysis of Society. Preliminary Remarks on a Research Program." In Hans-Georg Soeffner (ed.). *Unsichere Zeiten: Herausforderungen gesellschaftlicher Transformationen*, 707–717. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.

II. Perspectives on the Global Common Good from Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Europe

The Peasant Reserve Zones in Colombia as a Contribution to the Global Common Good

Olga-Lucía Castillo

Introduction

The aim of this text is to contribute to the task of “find[ing] conceptions of the global common good which can cope with the multiple global crises and challenges. In this context, the aim of this study is to identify visions and norms of social development which are currently produced by plural societal actors and to analyze the actual effects of these norms on political institutions, economy, and society, focus[ing] on the analysis of key conflicts and on the description of potentials for transformation.”¹

At the present moment, the Colombian state of affairs offers a number of possible case studies, which seem to include common good propositions with the potential for transformations in the middle of an armed conflict. It is unclear if the amount of such initiatives is fueled by the uncertainties of the armed conflict, or grows in spite of it. Among them we can mention Agrosolidaria (“Building a learning community on Economic Solidarity Circuits in the agricultural sector”); the Association Land and Life—The National Association of Victims for Restitution and Access To Land (“We did not inherit the land from our parents, it was loaned to us by our children”); Peace Communities (“A Humanizing Alternative”); The Cimitarra River Peasant Association (“For the comprehensive defense of Human Rights and the fight for the Land”); the Agricultural Producers Association APAVE; Nasa Project of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca (“Territory of the Great People”) or the National Association of Peasantry Reserve Zones (“Peasantry Peace is Social Justice”) among many others.² Through a different kind of social organizations, those experiences

1 Kick-Off-Letter of the Intercultural Research Project “Development serving the Global Common Good”, October, 29th, 2012.

2 See <http://www.agrosolidaria.org/>, <http://www.associaciontierrayvida.org/>; <http://www.odpsanjose.org/>, ACVC for its Spanish acronym—<http://www.prensarural.org/acvc/>,

are not only trying to deal with key conflicts, such as the defense of human rights, the access, distribution and property of the land, and the right to maintain their own way of living, but they also have consolidated consistent proposals for changing social realities. In this case, and from those experiences mentioned, the Peasantry Reserve Zones is the one chosen as a case study.

However, before going into the details of this Colombian case, in the first section of this paper some precisions about the concepts of ‘development’ and of the ‘global common good’ are set forth as the conceptual framework of this analysis. In the second part—and in the context of the complex Colombian political armed conflict—the evolution of the Peasantry Reserve Zones is briefly described, as an experience closely linked to the debate of the development model of a country like Colombia. The third and last section of this paper offers, as conclusion, some reflections on the relationship that exists among ‘development’, common good, and the Peasant Reserve Zones as a practical experience with potentials for transformation.

1. Development and Common Good: A Conceptual Framework

Some precisions about the present debates on the concepts of ‘development’ and the ‘global common good’ are briefly set forth in this section as the foundations of the conceptual framework of the analysis offered in this paper.

1.1. Development

While the concept of ‘development’—within the economic, political and social context we have today—has been present in the international agenda for the relatively short time of about sixty-five years, it has gained great power in terms of institutional discourses and practices at all levels.

APAVE for its Spanish acronym <http://www.apave.org.co/>, and <http://www.nasaa.cin.org/planes-de-vida/plan-de-vida-nasa/213-plan-de-vida> respectively.

From a rapid glance at some of the major conceptualizations of 'development' put forward by specialized literature, one can identify some general traits: while the definitions between the nineteen-forties and the nineteen-seventies had an economic bias, concepts developed since then have taken into account a whole array of dimensions of human societies that go far beyond economics. In this effort to integrate different dimensions, alternative development conceptualizations have emphasized and addressed multiple political, social, cultural, environmental and/or ethical issues related to human welfare. Regardless of their theoretical influences, many conceptualizations tend to present some patterns to be followed as universal; however, while undertaking a broader understanding of 'development', these proposals have led to comprehensive and therefore highly complex concepts which become nonviable as they are brought into practice.

These general characteristics in the evolution of the concept of 'development' allow us to distinguish three particular and main conceptual currents of thought: a) the conventional development understanding, strongly biased by the priority of economic growth; b) the wide set of alternative development proposals and practices, trying to integrate into the welfare debate all human concerns that were left out from the conventional (economic) point of view; and c) the post-development insight, which, among other arguments, claims that it is impossible that the conventional and the alternative high levels of 'development' promises can be fulfilled for the majority, so therefore they should be abandoned as the goal that drives human progress. Although these three perspectives have arrived into the development studies scene one after another, it does not mean that in the practice the previous ones have disappeared to give way to the next, but instead they remained all together struggling to gain primacy, depending on the global, regional or local circumstances.

a) Conventional Development

Though since the post-WWII period different development models have been implemented all over the world, at the end of the day all of them have been formed by the same principles of the successful model of society promoted by the Conventional (economic) Development understanding.

Going further back in time, and though the 'development' concept as we know it today was not yet in the daily economic, social, or political

agenda, it is possible to trace the industrial revolution as the era that set up a particular dynamic that meant the beginning of an unrelenting and urgent need for the materials that nature offers to humans in order to produce at a higher speed and in higher quantities. The colonization process was key to the industrialization, and through it a few countries appropriated, exploited and plundered nature (including flora, fauna, minerals and people) and also the cultural ways of living of a number of other countries.

The end of World War II marked a milestone into the evolving concept and practice of 'development', not only because the economic and political power had shifted, bringing about major changes in global power relationships, but also because, as stated by post-development scholars, "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 the arrogant interventionism from the North and pathetic self-pity in the South." (Sachs 1997, 2)

Chasing a higher level of economic growth, which implies further acceleration and increase of the production processes, all countries in the world, to a greater or lesser extent, have gone through the implementation of 'development' models such as the industrialization and imports substitution (inwards economy), welfare state, neo-liberalism (outwards economy) and good governance scheme, to mention the main ones. In spite of the fact that they have been implemented through different processes (and therefore understood as different 'development' models) they are supported by the same conceptual argument. We refer to the trickle down strategy, which states that the profits of the individuals that make up the upper layers of society eventually will reach wider and lower sections, thanks to the virtuous circle of the economy. It consists of the first and wealthier layers of society investing in demanded products and machinery to produce goods that will generate employment, and hence income and therefore 'development'; then this revenue will increase the demand for these or other goods and services promoting their production, which will generate employment, and hence income and therefore 'development'... and so on. However, some of the main criticism towards these arguments came from those scholars who endorsed the dependency theory; they saw in the trickle down a strategy that ended supporting the concentration of wealth and power at the national level in the hands of the country's economic elites, and at the global level in the hands of the industrialized elite countries. They also raised their concerns on the existing power relation-

ships, which lead to a world divided into central and peripheral countries. The dependency theory—that was mainly originated in a core group of the United Nations body named the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)—found an auspicious time, given that around the late nineteen-sixties and early nineteen-seventies the disapproval against the narrow view of the conventional economic development also successfully reached the international agendas.

b) Alternative Development

During the late nineteen-sixties and early nineteen-seventies, a number of alternative development proposals were put forward in the ‘development’ arena, offering new insights based on different theoretical and conceptual commitments. These new concepts, discourses, and practices—all of them excluded from the narrow economic conceptualization of ‘development’—purported a shift away from the economic emphasis of conventional development theories.

Among those issues excluded, it is worth mentioning the inequality in access, use, and distribution of multiple resources, veiled by promising national or regional economic growth indicators (Dollar and Kraay 2002; Fernández 2002; and Lübker, Smith and Weeks 2002). Other issues undermined by the econocentric lens belong to the political domain, such as the promotion of democratic pluralism, the rejection of authoritarian regimes, citizen participation, and giving a voice to vulnerable communities (Boff and Betto 1996; Chambers 1994; Blackburn and Holland, 1998 and Blackburn, Chambers and Gaventa 2000). The report on the ‘Limits to Growth’ was fundamental to spurring discussion and the inclusion of another critical issue, namely the recognition and growing concern about the rapid, and in some cases irreversible, changes to the natural environment (Meadows et al, 1972; Peet and Watts 1996; Adams 2001; Martinez-Alier 2006 and Wilson, Furniss and Kimbowa 2010). A more comprehensive understanding of ‘development’ and a renewed perception of what ‘development’ should be and how it could be reached was on the way.

Thus, under the wide blanket category of alternative development, extremely diverse proposals can be found, including explicit anti-capitalist schemes; Buddhist economic approaches; democratization policies; projects that challenge global institutions; alternative practices as basis for local ‘development’ as well as communitarian initiatives; green pressure groups;

feminist approaches; alternative consumption paths; and cultural criticisms, to name only a few.

However, important criticisms to alternative development have been raised, because: first, a wide variety of concerns have been grouped under this diffuse category; and also because, though it includes a mixture of judicious conceptual proposals on diverse topics, it also involves a range of varied scattered objectives on other issues, and a number of practical implementations of experiences as well, not interconnected at all. Another important critique was that its promoters did not offer a theoretical/conceptual, discursive, and practical body to support and arrange the alternativeness of new ways of achieving ‘development’.

Another important critique was whether some of these alternatives were really alternatives after all; this is the case, for instance, with the ‘Human Development’ model promoted by the United Nations Development Program since 1990. Indeed, several of those ‘development’ proposals categorized as alternative have been driven by the very same goals as conventional development, only chasing economic growth through different ways (trying to include new agents, attempting to integrate other concerns of human societies, or experimenting with different methodologies); it can be deduced then, that their goal was not to design and implement another kind of ‘development’, but to further the economic development, though through different paths.

Nevertheless—and despite some valid alternative development proposals which actually challenged the main assumptions of conventional mainstream ‘development’, offering sufficient elements to consolidate a coherent line of thought—, the most difficult obstacle that alternative Development had to deal with was that those of the structural transformations that were promoted through its concepts, narratives and practices, and which were useful to the conventional development, were co-opted with no intention whatsoever of implementing the structural transformation they were claiming, and thus, alternative development lost its momentum.

There is no shortage of examples of the co-optation process, but because they are closely related to the selected Colombian case, some reflections on sustainable development—as one of the many co-opted alternative development proposals—follow.

The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972 formalized the promotion of the concept of “sustainable development” as

a solution to the presumed environment vs. ‘development’ dilemma. Promoters of the Sustainable Development concept attempted to integrate in a comprehensive fashion the never-ending dilemma of increasing economic growth (which is fundamental to the ‘development’ notion) and the need for the conservation of finite elements of nature (which is opposed to economic growth). In others words, the advocacy of sustainable development tried to put together that which was not possible to be integrated, simply because while the natural source for growth is finite, the desire for unrelenting economic growth is infinite. A false dilemma emerges then, because despite the appearance of an irresolvable paradox, the solution had been envisaged even before the spread of the Sustainable Development concept: although Sustainable Development is now part of the mainstream ‘development’ narratives and is serving all and sundry to green-wash their ever-present agendas of unrelenting economic growth, the sustainability concept in fact emerged as a proposal that questioned the very foundations of how we understand ‘development’ as the equivalent to economic growth. As Kidd argues, “sustainability emerged as a critical discourse synonymous with the idea of a ‘steady-state economy’, endorsing a shift from continuous economic growth to low growth or even ‘decreasing economic growth’ of societies.” (Kidd 1992, 15)

What the original notion of “sustainable development” challenged, therefore, was the very understanding of ‘development’ that human societies should achieve, and by implication, it involved rethinking the way human societies should organize not only their production processes, but also their distribution and consumption patterns (Castillo 2014). “Today the good work done by the social economists needs to be expanded and deepened into a deeply ecological economics (...). Here lies real danger, as our limited knowledge of ecological systems seen through selfish human-centered lenses is the biggest threat to biodiversity and therefore sustainability.” (Whelan 2001, 3)

Still, the co-optation process continues; in the case of “Sustainable Development”, with the attempt of the mainstream discourses to reply to the increasing criticism on it through what has been presented as green economy or green growth. For example, regarding the topic of climate change, a reflection of a small international organization supporting food systems based on peasant common practices on biodiversity expresses it clearly: “So have we finally succeeded in awakening a consciousness among ordinary citizens, governments and investors? Yes, and at the same time, not at

all (...) it is clear that governments and businesses did not recognize this crisis because they somehow finally saw the light, but rather because they succeeded in devising ways to make money from a disaster that affects the very survival of the planet (...) All the big actors of global finance, as well as a growing number of investment funds in climate change (...) have drawn up documents emphasizing big business opportunities that have sprung up from changes in the climate and ecosystems.” (GRAIN 2012, 2)

Aware of the important failures in the evolution of the alternative Development current of thought as a way out of the conventional Development mainstream, since the early nineteen-nineties a growing group of scholars and analysts has put forward an “out of the box” way of thinking in terms of ‘development’; we refer to it as Post-Development.

c) *Post-Development*

Due not only to the constant and long lasting failure of the various ‘development’ models that have been implemented on a large scale during a great part of the last century—a failure that is expressed in the increasingly wider gap between the wealth and poverty of countries, regions, and individuals with high and low levels of ‘development’—but also to the progressively clearer evidence that the promise of economic development can only be possible for some countries, regions, or individuals, at the expense of the remaining countries, regions, and individuals, debates on ‘development’ have reached the point where the question is not on development alternatives, but on alternatives to development; this line of thought is known as post-development.

The rejection of the ‘development’ notion is not only related to its poor results; another of the main criticisms of post-development is about the imposition of a reductive and singular perspective, with a hegemonic character about the universal goal of human societies: reductionist, because the use of the notion of ‘development’ as a singular noun (the ‘development’) and never in plural, implies there is only one singular way of perceiving what the human world should address as its main goal. Also reductionist because the proposals on how to achieve higher levels of wellness promote goals and paths with a strong emphasis on economic growth, even ignoring other dimensions of society. (Escobar 1992, 1995, 2008 and 2010; Georg 1997; Rahnema 1997; Simmons 1997; Rapley 2004; Ziai 2007; Hamid and Arash 2013; Gudynas 2013; Lander 2013; Ulloa 2014; Toledo 2014)

As for the alternative proposals, as it has already been mentioned, some of them at the end of the day also underlined the focus on economic growth, while the others are so attached to the 'development' way of thinking that whatever its name, it is 'development' (the singular noun) plus an adjective, trying to highlight the characteristics that differentiate a particular alternative proposal from the rest of them. That is why there are a high number of types of alternative development proposals, including political 'development', social, environmental, bottom-up, systemic, community, gender-sensitive, humane, participatory, eco-development, ethno-development, rural development and sustainable development, and so on. However, from the post-development perspective, the crisis does not lie in the adjective, whatever it is, but in the noun 'development'.

The attachment to the notion of development with or without an adjective, even if there is enough evidence to demonstrate that it is not able to fulfill its aims and even if there is an increasing number of people around the world perceiving themselves as victims of development, is so powerful and paralyzing that it leads some to assert: "Sachs' metaphor of a crumbling lighthouse could be used by critics of post-development theory to argue that even a crumbling, malfunctioning lighthouse is better than having no guiding light at all!" (Matthews 2004, 373)³

Hence, the main criticism to post-development was the lack of specific alternatives it offered: "alternatives to development [...] [is] a misnomer because no such alternatives are offered" (Nederveen 2000, 188), despite the fact that its arguments are strong enough to deconstruct the concept of 'development'. A question, then, remains: if 'development' is not it, then what is it?

One answer to this question is the usually local but increasing number of experiences of ways of living that, all over the world, embrace respect of difference, of nature, of spirituality, of solidarity, and that try to behave in such a way that they look to pave the way to a 'good future'.

A complement to this answer is that 'not offering alternatives' has to be understood precisely as one of post-development's greatest strengths (and certainly one of its greatest temptations). If post-development offers the alternative, it will inevitably fall into the logic of deconstructing one way to

³ She refers to Sachs' statement: "For almost half a century good neighborliness on the planet was considered in the light of 'development'. Today, the light house shows cracks and it starting to crumble. The idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape." (Sachs 1997, 1)

offer another one, the one that it is, the right one, which will reduce its proposal and purpose to change one model for another. In fact, if post-development accepted the claim to have identified a new way to do things, a new model, the new model to advance, it would fall into the very same logic of the ‘development’ concept as we know it today. And if post-development were able to identify the new model, the next false step would be make it hegemonic in order to spread it, to promote it (or to impose it), to be embraced by the greatest possible number of people, communities, regions, countries, which would be contradicting the very core of its own principles.

To keep within its principles, post-development can only promote the idea (as in fact it has done) of respecting the multiple welfare goals that a variety of different ancient and newer cultures have tried to maintain or to restore, as well as acknowledging new and creative paths. If the post-development approach wishes to remain consistent with its own principles, it cannot support a single way to achieve or search for welfare.

By promoting respect for a diversity of goals and varied ways for achieving welfare, the post-development current of thought is shielded against the need to find the ‘true way’, becoming by definition inclusive, multiple, and heterogeneous, which is another step away from ‘development’ as it is currently understood and practiced.

Among the multiple ways to be implemented, post-development has included, then, ancient and creative lifestyles, such as “ways of living” (*modos de vida*), good living, life plans, ways of well-being, and other creative paths of identifying our own goals and our own ways for human societies to prosper as part of the universe.

1.2. The Global Common Good

The evolution of the global common good concept as part of political science, as well its evolution as a main component of the social doctrine of the Catholic Church, are closely related to one another. Those elements of the evolution of the global common good concept that are related to our case study are brought up in this section.

The origins of this concept go back to the ancient Greek civilization and are based in a Platonic dialogue with the Sophists (Plato, *The Republic*, Book IV). “In this analysis Plato argued that the common good, as the

main purpose of the State, transcended the particular goods, while global happiness was to be superior to the happiness of individuals.” (Gelardo 2005, 51) Later Aristotle, departing from the fact that the polis is an intrinsic characteristic of human beings, linked the notions of political justice and human good: “To Solon, Pericles, Socrates and Aristotle, equality becomes a synonym of justice, as it is considered a main concern of justice to regulate the distribution of equal or unequal parts [...] justice, in a distributive sense, identifies the idea of equality to the fair share.” It is thus a ‘good’ that refers to the whole political realm and was named by the Romans, the citizens’ common good (*bonum commune*). “Aristotle completed the Platonic approach by working out one of its key dimensions, the participation mode of the polis members in the common good. It was assumed that a society organized in a state must provide what each of its members needs for their welfare and happiness as citizens. Thus, the good of the whole was not such, if it did not have impact on the happiness of each.” (Gelardo 2005, 56—Author’s translation)

As expected, during its long journey, the common good has gone through a number of debates, gaining and losing importance and visibility within the international arena. Those of our interest are:

During the middle ages, the Catholic canon established God as the ultimate end of everything, and therefore in comparison with the political sciences’ point of view, the end is much further than the polis, reaching instead God Himself. Hence, while for Aristotle’s anthropology the identity of a human being was shaped by their status as a member of the polis, for the Catholic theology the identity of human beings and their inviolable rights (human dignity) are shaped by their reflection of man’s likeness to the person of Christ. Saint Thomas Aquinas, among other analysts of the common good notion, maintained that natural aims—those that concern the human societies –, spiritual goals, and the supreme end of the subject are not incompatible with the common good of society and, on the contrary, are called to integrate and complement each other.

This and other dogmas of the Catholic Church had strong influence on the Renaissance era and, particularly, on the European jurists that laid the foundations of a political theory of the common good; taking as their starting point the Christian belief of human being, they proposed a conception of society that, following the divine precepts, served to the people in such a way that their theory of the state as ultimate guarantor of the common good turned out into a political theory of the common good.