

## A BACKGROUND TO DEVELOPMENT AND DIFFERENTIAL PERSPECTIVES

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**Abstract:** *The perception of development as a panacea to underdevelopment due to its prescription by rich and developed nations demands a rethink. Hence, this paper restates the development agenda in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to inspire the sense of self-reliance as a better option for developing countries.<sup>1</sup> There has emerged varieties of forms through which Third World people resist development interventions, and how they struggle to create alternative ways of being and doing.<sup>2</sup> This has long signalled the disillusionment in the idea of development and its process which has provoked in this paper a background review to 'development' and differential perspectives, an explication of development, and its teleology. The theoretical formulations of Cowen and Shenton, and Escobar, and their disparate approaches are examined to clarify the implications, and impact on developing countries.*

**Key words:** Development, Differential Perspectives, Cowen and Shenton, Escobar

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Turner and David Hulme. *Governance, Administration and Development: Making the State Work*, (London; MacMillan Press, 1997), 272.

<sup>2</sup> Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 5.

## Introduction

Development is encompassing in meaning and necessitates the understanding of related terms of growth, modernization and socio-economic progress. Fundamentally, it implies growth, maturation and advancement. In a broad sense the term is a reference to "the process by which poor countries get richer, or try to do so, and the process by which rich countries still get richer."<sup>3</sup> Deemed as not recent, it is held to have been in existence as a providential act. The growth of science and belief in human progress integrated it with Western Culture to project it as superseding the providential incidence.<sup>4</sup> Since European renaissance, development has been consonant to anthropological agency, trustees.<sup>5</sup> Hence, at the time Karl Max submitted a critique of capitalism, the belief in human progress was an already ingrained ethic in European culture; this supported the conclusion and perception of progress as a law of human history.<sup>6</sup>

## The Institutionalization of Development

The institutionalization of development dove-tails the rise of industrialization and capitalism in modern times, but on the backdrop of shifting war discourse and rife poverty in Latin America, African and South East Asia. The shift resulting also from fast globalization privileged America's hegemonization leading to a war on poverty in the undeveloped world. The Speech of Harry Truman<sup>7</sup> on January 20<sup>th</sup> 1949 has been credited with mainstreaming development in new political economies and spiralling development agency in the West, the likes of United Nations Development Fund, World Bank and subsequent others.<sup>8</sup> From an initial backdrop of trusteeship in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Truman's speech, he problematized development, calling the world's attention to the poverty of the two-third world and its dangers both to the undeveloped and the developed. He also offered hope to the problem by proposing scientific and technological transfer as means of greater production with the view to curing the effects of lack of development e.g., underdevelopment, poverty, 'disease etc. Truman's speech came on the heels of post-World War II Europe; obviously, the coincidence of capitalism and industrialization at the time altered the dynamics of European and American life and led to the need to resolve the socio-economic fallout.<sup>9</sup> Development has posed as a mirage warranting a debate by proponents in developing and developed countries, with the proposal of theories for alternative development.

## Perspectives

The recognition of development in academia came about in the post-war period of 1945 in association with poor countries. Cowen and Shenton align with the sustained academic curiosity, investigation and analyses of development, and frames it as a study whose aims and achievements require probing. Their views framed Escobar's 'development studies,' which gained prominence from the 1950s and by the 1980s the deconstructivist notions, reconstruction of rural development, and depoliticization of problems were factored into development studies. As a result, the perspectives of various discussants on development such as Chandra Mohanty's feminist analogy and Timothy Mitchel's 'order and truth

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<sup>3</sup> Berger. P. L. *Pyramid of Sacrifice: Politics and Social Change*. New York: Anchor Books, (1976), 34.

<sup>4</sup> Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origin to Global Faith*. London: Zed Books (1977), 288.

<sup>5</sup> Cohen, M. P., and Shenton, R. W. *Doctrines of Development*, (1996), 2.

<sup>6</sup> Richard. B. Norgaard, *Development Betrayed: The End of Progress and a Co-evolutionary Revisioning of Future*. London: Routledge, (1994), 176.

<sup>7</sup> Truman, Harry, (1949), *Harry S. Truman's Inaugural Address - 1949*. (Available online) <http://www.request.net/history/inaugurals/truman1>

<sup>8</sup> Turner, Mark and David Hulme (1997), *Governance, Administration and Development: Making the State Work*. London: Macmillan.

<sup>9</sup> Arturo Escobar, (1995), *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of The Third World*. Princeton University Press Princeton, New Jersey.

trajectories' were examined by Escobar who shared Foucauldian notions of discourse in his exposé on development.<sup>10, 11</sup>

### **Cowen and Shenton's Approach**

For the multiplicity of definitions and confusion of development, Cowen and Shenton desisted from casting a definition for it. They attempted to untangle its salient issues from confusion, opened its scope,<sup>12</sup> and proposed a reductionist approach with emphasis on the synthesis of the concept of development. They conceded the idea of development as a double-ended means of 'the transitive action and intransitive end of action'<sup>13</sup> linked to state policy and empowerment of citizens in a facilitatory framework, the state being independent nonetheless.<sup>14</sup> They assume the State as having a pivotal role in triggering and galvanizing development to be achieved through accessible policies, programmes and coordinated governmental effort. Hence, government should be seen both at the centre and periphery, and as a tacit interested participant in development. Their understanding of development presented it as a processual effort with the undercurrents of enhancing the promotion of economic growth, equity and nationalistic self-reliance.<sup>15</sup>

They debated the notions of immanence and subjectivity to expose them as imbuing the process of development beginning from decisions and choice of developers, including the confusion that arises from an old utilitarian repetitiveness of both means and goal. They opined that the goal is mostly assumed to be present at the start of the developmental process. In this connection, they cited Staudt's text as corroborative of choice enlargement principle which implies a connection between the desire and capacity to choose, in addition to knowledge of possible choices. In their view the explanation of the problem of development in the 19<sup>th</sup> century provoked the concept of trusteeship which instituted the practice of the developed deciding and acting for the development needy. The practice has ceased to be persuasive since the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to its Eurocentric, colonial and imperialist stranglehold on developing countries. Cowen and Shenton view those components of choice as routinely assumptive preconditions of the developmental process i.e., they are goals in which the process itself culminates. A gap hence results in the absence of any of the preconditions which necessitate an intervention or development. To their mind, therefore, empowerment is synonymous with replication of development, so, it should be a matter of people having the power to exercise choice. In that way, empowerment is obviated to render it unnecessary or it becomes repetitive as a logical problem of development.

### **Escobar's Approach**

Escobar takes a pedagogical approach to explain what development entails including the processes and resources that are required to achieve it as for example capital but, the inability to source it locally necessitates a foreign bailout. Critical among the requirements is

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<sup>10</sup> Arturo Escobar, (1995), 11.

<sup>11</sup> Foucault, Michel (1980), *Power / Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972 - 1977* (ed. Colin Gordon). Brighton: Harvester Press.

<sup>12</sup> Cowen, M. P. and Shenton, R. W. *Doctrines of Development*, (1996), 5.

<sup>13</sup> Cowen and Shenton, R. W. *Doctrines of Development*, (1996), 2.

<sup>14</sup> Here, and typically, the well-taken distinction between development as the means of transitive action and that of an intransitive end of action is conflated with a distinction between the state policy of development and the attempt to empower people, independently of the state, in the name of development. Thus, development is construed as 'a process of enlarging people's choices'; of enhancing 'participatory democratic processes' and the 'ability of people to have a say in the decisions that shape their lives'; of providing 'human beings with the opportunity to develop their fullest potential'; of enabling the poor, women, and 'free independent peasants' to organise for themselves and work together. Simultaneously, however, development is defined as the means to 'carry out a nation's development goals' and of promoting 'economic growth', 'equity' and 'national self-reliance' (Cowen and Shenton, (1996), 2.

<sup>15</sup> Cowen, and Shenton, p. 2

intervention-planning to determine needed expertise which invokes technocracy to demand technology transfer; implementation which requires monitoring and timelines, as well as programming of specific interventions in the form of rural electrification or nutrition and health, for example, to alleviate poverty.

Escobar explains development as 'a top-down Eurocentric approach that treats people and cultures as abstract concepts, or statistical figures to be moved up and down in the charts of progress.'<sup>16</sup> He implies several issues that construct development, first and foremost is that it is an outsider or external formulation, secondly, it depersonalizes the supposed beneficiaries of the intended development. It also configures development discourse in power and managerial structures resulting in rich/poor or powerful/vulnerable debate that translates to the imposition of reconstruction paradigms to subvert or obliterate indigenous culture. This is a matter of high anthropological concern, the reason being that, for development to be experienced by any people they need the basis of culture as an anchor. In the end, measures leading to the expropriation of surpluses of the beneficiaries of development are instituted. Development is supposed to wean from dependency but the theory is rather entrenched and the cycle of poverty perpetuates: Inequality and Eurocentrism are rather accentuated. Given this, Escobar observed that 'it comes as no surprise that development became a force destructive to third world countries, ironically in the name of people's interest.'<sup>17</sup> Escobar hence conceived development in perceptive terms. To him, development is touted, accompanied by a marshalling of resources, expertise, professionalism, plans and programmes but in the end, nothing is achieved in real terms of poverty and unemployment alleviation including the inequality gap abridgement.<sup>18</sup> He viewed it as a sham catering to the interest of imperialistic, political and colonialist ends. Development is nonetheless justified in its ordering of society despite its failings as it leads to the initiation of programmes that are progress focused.

## Conclusion

Cohen and Shenton are praxis focused laying emphasis on the interplay of individual and state partnership. Escobar rather adopts a theoretical approach taking the trajectory of a reductionist focus and emphasis of the development epistemology. They converge on the anthropocentric centre of development, to demand the benefit of the development needy.

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<sup>16</sup> Arturo Escobar, *History of Invention in Current History*, November 1999; 98, 62.

<sup>17</sup> Arturo Escobar, *The Intervention of Development*, 382-387.

<sup>18</sup> Farzana Naz. *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 64-84, July - September 2006.