

# A Reconsideration for Development: Shifting from Dominant Economic Perspective on Development to Embrace Alternative Approaches to Development

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the main underpinnings of the mainstream capitalist economic development discourse and considers alternatives such as, post-development and de-growth for remaking development. It becomes important to consider alternatives to development and not only depend on dominant notions of development. Alternatives including, post-development, degrowth, etc, that embraces pluralistic ideas and knowledge, local cultures are relevant for ensuring development. Development should therefore be people-centered, and consider innovations from the developing world in remaking development that is sustainable, inclusive, and all-encompassing.

**Keywords:** Alternatives, Degrowth, Development, Economic, Perspective, Post-Development

## INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the main underpinnings of the mainstream capitalist economic development discourse and considers alternatives including, post-development and de-growth for making and remaking development. In doing this, it uses relevant existing literature on the study topic. The paper is structured into six key sections. Following the introduction, the second section examines the main underpinnings of the mainstream capitalist economic discourse on development and its shortfalls. The third section examines alternatives to development and ways suggested by alternatives for development. The fourth section moves to discuss post-development and its underpinnings, and ways it suggest for development. The fifth section discusses degrowth and suggestions it contributes to making development. The final section concludes the paper. The paper argues that alternatives to development, including post-development, degrowth, etc, are relevant for making and remaking development, and therefore it becomes necessary to embrace them in rethinking development approaches and projects.

Development is "a multi-faceted and pragmatic concept and not just seen as an ideological discourse" (Sapkota and Tharu 2016: 13; Bernstein 2006). The concept of development is therefore questioned due to the fact that, there are no realities that are agreed upon universally as encompassing what development entails (Bernstein 2006). As such, development may be perceived differently by different people, places, and within different contexts (Sapkota and Tharu 2016: 13-14).

Notwithstanding all these differences, Sen has argued that, development should encompass substantial improvement in people's capabilities, freedoms, as well as improvement, and increase in choices that people have as humans and overall improvement and enhancement of existing social structure for humans (Sen 1999). In the next section, we discuss the main underpinnings of the mainstream capitalist economic discourse and its downsides.

## MAJOR TENETS OF THE DOMINANT ECONOMIC VIEW ON DEVELOPMENT

The mainstream economic discourse tends to be Euro-centric and considers growth as only possible through application of technology and science in ensuring development (Sapkota and Tharu 2016: 19-20; Shareia 2015). Within the mainstream economic narrative therefore, economic-growth that

encompasses increased production, technological advancement, increased exports, infrastructural development, etc, are viewed as critical for development of a country (Marglin 2009;Shareia 2015).

The market is seen as central to mainstream discourse in achieving development. Economic growth and advancement in per capital income of a country is therefore is seen as significant for a country's development (Chang and Nayyar, cited in Hershberg and Thornton 2000;Marglin 2009).

Furthermore, a rapid economic growth comes as much relevant for reaching development for both developed and developing world. Therefore, industrial development, higher flows of capital, as well as free market structures and technological transfers are viewed as essential for the mainstream discourse in embracing development (Haddad 2008; Sapkota and Tharu 2016: 19-20; Shareia 2015). Mainstream economic discourse has therefore dominated discourses of development. Despite all these, mainstream discourse has not eradicated poverty and ensured development in less-developed economies.

### **DOWNSIDES OF THE DOMINANT PERSPECTIVE ON DEVELOPMENT**

The mainstream economic discourse despite it promises, have not ensured development of less-developed economies. According to Sachs, "the notion of development has remained as ruin in an intellectual landscape" (Sachs 2009). "Poverty, inequality, crimes, disappointments, hunger have characterized development and as such, have not met its promises" (Sachs 2009). Ziai has also argued that mainstream development discourse tends to give less consideration for alternatives for development and hence, has been euro-centric in scope (Ziai 2007:98-9).

The individualistic notions of mainstream development have tended to downplay local ideas and cultures of developing economies (Sally 2017). This in turn has given less-attention to communal ideas and local innovations for making development inclusive (Sally 2017). This has made development western-driven and less of local alternatives.

In addition, markets as well as globalization have failed in reaching development for the developing world (Chang and Nayyar, cited in Hershberg and Thornton 2000; Marglin 2009). Unequal-development, inequality, and poverty have characterized numerous developing countries. Development has therefore been uneven with some countries left aside on the promises of development. The conventional focus of capitalism have to a large extent exacerbated this (Sally 2017; Ziai2007). This has exasperated high gaps of inequality among countries and individuals.

### **SHIFTING TO EMBRACE ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPMENT**

Alternatives to development encompasses a shift from mainstream development to consider approaches that are participatory, locally-driven, and people-centered (Sapkota and Tharu 2016:21-2). It therefore argues for "pluralistic ideas in development, and disregards a mono-centered framework to development" (Sally 2017). It further calls for a diversified development to embrace all cultures, ideas, and practices from the developing world (Sally 2017:2-3). This encompasses consideration for grassroots movement, NGOs, social movements in development, employment of small-scale and appropriate technologies for development (Sapkota and Tharu 2016: 21).The aim of alternative notion is to ensure development humanization, freedom, and wellbeing of people, as people are seen as the central focus of development (Sapkota and Tharu 2016: 21). Alternatives such as, post-development and degrowth are therefore seen as important for development.

### **HOW POST-DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE ON DEVELOPMENT IS RELEVANT**

Post-development appears as a critique to mainstream development (Sapkota and Tharu 2016: 23). It emerged in the 1980s and 90s (Sally 2017:1). Post-development calls for pluralistic knowledge and ideas in making development. It argues for locally-driven ideas and considers diversity of cultures

and innovations in remaking development. Post-development arose to popularity with the works of Escobar, Sachs, Latouche, Esteva, Rahnama, etc (Sally 2017:1-2; Sapkota and Tharu 2016:23).

Post-developmentalists argue that, "development has failed in its promise, as its ideas have not been just, and ignored local ideas for making development" (Sally 2017:2). The western discourse of development is therefore seen as not embracing cultures of developing countries in making development (Escobar 2001;1995).

In view of this, alternatives such as, "African-Ubuntu" are important for post-development. "Ubuntu" encompasses the idea that for development, there is the need for humanity, communal-living, cooperation and care for one another (Gathago 2008). With this, people live together within a communal structure; sharing and embracing ideas of each other in ensuring progress of everyone. Weaker persons are therefore assisted within a cooperation and communal living by more privileged ones in making development for all possible (Ubuntu Liberation Movement 2017).

In addition, embracement of local initiatives and ideas of local people within the developing world helps in ensuring ownership of development. Communal living and sharing of ideas ensures this, and facilitates the progress of the community within an enhanced development- and not necessarily depending on foreign-driven ideas of development (Sally 2017; Ubuntu Liberation Movement 2017; Mabovula 2011).

### **THE NOTIONS OF DEGROWTH FOR MEETING DEVELOPMENT NEEDS**

Degrowth encompasses the notion of slowing down the economy, emphasizing the aim of reaching equality, as well as downscaling environmental and ecological problems in achieving sustained community relations and a material-responsible society for development (Laufenberg 2014:1). Gerber and Raina (2018a:11), have argued that, degrowth in its desires for development characterizes the adherence to alternatives that employ elements of redistribution and downscaling, as well as ensuring stabilizing productive structures and consumption. Degrowth embraces construction of renewed structures of economic and social frames in which humans as agents of development are characterized as undertaking a living which is classified by simplicity, as well as friendliness and care (Gerber and Raina 2018b:353; Latouche 2004).

Therefore, in addressing problems of social inequality, as well as environmental problems such as, environmental degradation, which are seen as been caused by the current social and economic structures, the idea of degrowth becomes significant (Laufenberg 2014:1). In this sense, degrowth shares a lot with post-development on development. Degrowth comes against mainstream notions of capitalism and calls for transforming society in combating the idea of what an economy should be, and mainstream discourses that underpins the perception of what is the actuality (Laufenberg 2014:1-2;Kallis 2011).

Ideas such as, the "Buen vivir" which emerged in the 2000s within Latin America are significant for degrowth in ensuring development. Buen vivir comes as "alternative to mainstream development and encompasses the idea of the "good life" (true wellbeing), and argues that the good life can be achieved only through embracing the community" (Gudynas 2011;Mercado 2017:1).

The good of the community is seen as significant for achieving development of the individual. Through this, care is taken not only for humans within community but protection of plants, the earth, animals, etc. A protection of this will enhance protection of community, which will further lead to the development of individuals (Gudynas 2011).

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

It becomes important to consider alternatives to development and not only depend on dominant notions of development. Alternatives such as, post-development, degrowth, buen vivir, the African ubuntu, etc, that embraces communal living, pluralistic ideas and knowledge, local cultures are

relevant for ensuring development. Development should therefore be people-centered and consider innovations from the developing world in making and remaking development that is inclusive and all-encompassing.

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