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# My Paradigm or Yours? Alternative Development, Post-Development, Reflexive Development

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## ABSTRACT

Alternative development has been concerned with alternative practices of development — participatory and people-centred — and with redefining the goals of development. Mainstream development has gradually been moving away from the preoccupation with economic growth toward a people-centred definition of development, for instance in human development. This raises the question in what way alternative development remains distinguishable from mainstream development — as a roving criticism, a development style, a profile of alternative positions regarding development agency, methodology, epistemology? Increasingly the claim is that alternative development represents an alternative paradigm. This is a problematic idea for four reasons: because whether paradigms apply to social science is questionable; because in development the concern is with policy frameworks rather than explanatory frameworks; because there are different views on whether a paradigm break with conventional development is desirable; and finally because the actual divergence in approaches to development is in some respects narrowing. There is a meaningful alternative development profile or package but there is no alternative development paradigm — nor should there be. Mainstream development is not what it used to be and it may be argued that the key question is rather whether growth and production are considered within or outside the people-centred development approach and whether this can rhyme with the structural adjustment programmes followed by the international financial institutions. Post-development may be interpreted as a neo-traditionalist reaction against modernity. More enabling as a perspective is reflexive development, in which a critique of science is viewed as part of development politics.

Human nature being what it is, while everyone likes to be a social engineer, few like to be the objects of social engineering. (Ashis Nandy, 1989: 271)

This is an inquiry into critical currents in development thinking. The objective is to go beyond the fraternity of rhetorical consensus in criticizing mainstream development and to hold the claims and aspirations of these critical positions themselves against the light. The focus is not only on the

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critical but also on the affirmative part of these positions. This exercise is not meant as a critique for critique's sake; the question is what these positions tell us analytically and where they lead us in terms of policy.

From an initial impression that alternative development presented a loose profile of critical sensibilities and alternative practices, which left so many areas open that its claim to present an alternative model or paradigm to mainstream development thinking was exaggerated and misplaced, my own views on alternative development have been changing over the years. Further delving and enthusiastic accounts (such as Carmen, 1996; Korten, 1990; Max-Neef, 1991; Rahman, 1993) persuaded me that there is a profound and principled challenge to mainstream developmentalism, which can possibly take the form of an alternative development paradigm. However, closer reflection on this position raises further questions: not only about how such an alternative development paradigm should be conceived, but whether thinking in terms of paradigms is appropriate at all.

The structure of this article roughly follows the logic of these three positions: alternative development as a loose profile, a paradigm, and a post-paradigmatic way of thinking about alternative development. Each is a different way of constructing alternative development, the field of which it is part, and the relationship between it and mainstream development. Each has its chemistry, reasoning and limitations. During this stroll past alternative development positions, my own views shift from critical to supportive to revisionist. Advancing three arguments allows more scope than just presenting one; nevertheless, the third position is the one I arrive at by travelling through the others.

The argument runs as follows. Alternative development has been concerned with introducing alternative practices and redefining the goals of development. Arguably this has been successful, in the sense that key elements have been adopted in mainstream development. It is now widely accepted that development efforts are more successful when there is participation from the community. NGOs now play key roles on the ground and in development co-operation. This success reflects not simply the strength of NGOs and grassroots politics but also the 1980s' roll-back of the state, the advance of market forces and the breakdown of regulation. All the same, the goals of 'development' have been generally redefined. Development is no longer simply viewed as GDP growth, and human development is seen as a more appropriate goal and measure of development. By the same token this means that alternative development has become less distinct from conventional development discourse and practice, since alternatives have been absorbed into mainstream development. In the context of alternative development several pertinent positions and methodologies have been developed, but arguably alternative development has failed to develop a clear perspective on micro–macro relations, an alternative macro approach, and a coherent theoretical position. It is often claimed that there is an 'alternative development' paradigm, but is formulating the relationship between alternative and

mainstream development in terms of a paradigm break substantively tenable and politically sensible?

These reflections are followed by queries on mainstream development, post-development and alternatives to development. Mainstream development is increasingly caught on the horns of a dilemma between the aims of human and social development, and the constraints of structural adjustment and global monetarism represented by the international financial institutions. It could be argued that in the 1990s, unlike the 1970s, the big hiatus no longer runs between mainstream and alternative development, but between human development and structural adjustment or, in other words, between two forms of mainstream development — ‘New York’ (UN) and the ‘Washington consensus’. Post-development articulates meaningful sensibilities but does not have a future programme. The core problem posed in post-development is the question of modernity: to be ‘for’ or ‘against’ modernity, however, is too simple a position. This article concludes with an argument on reflexive development, a position developed as a corollary of reflexive modernity. There are different stages and arguably different kinds of modernity, and reflexive development offers a critical negotiation of development, short of rejectionism.

#### ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

There are different ways of conceiving what alternative development is about and its role. It can be viewed as a roving critique of mainstream development, shifting in position as the latter shifts; as a loosely interconnected series of alternative proposals and methodologies; or as an alternative development paradigm, implying a definite theoretical break with mainstream development. It can be viewed as concerned with *local* development, with alternative practices on the ground, or as an overall institutional challenge, and part of a global alternative. In many discussions this question of the status and scope of alternative development remains unsettled.

An elementary distinction, following Sheth (1987), runs between structuralist and normative approaches to development alternatives. Structuralist approaches, such as dependency theory and the global Keynesian reformism of the new international economic order, emphasize macroeconomic change, whereas alternative development emphasizes agency, in the sense of people’s capacity to effect social change. In addition, dependency critiques of mainstream development do not usually question development per se but only *dependent* development (or underdevelopment).

A basic question is whether alternative development is an alternative way of achieving development, broadly sharing the same *goals* as mainstream development but using different *means*, participatory and people-centred. It would seem this way if we consider the enormous increase of development funds being channelled or rechannelled through NGOs during the past two

decades (which now exceed the total annual disbursements through the IMF and World Bank). This suggests ample peaceful coexistence and continuity between mainstream and alternative development. Yet the usual claim is that 'alternative development' refers to an alternative *model* of development. Let us consider how this claim runs.

In the 1970s dissatisfaction with mainstream development crystallized into an alternative, people-centred approach. According to the 1975 report of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 'What Now? Another Development', development should be: 'geared to the satisfaction of needs', 'endogenous and self-reliant' and 'in harmony with the environment'. Whether this was meant to be an alternative practice of development apart from the mainstream or whether it was also to change mainstream development was not quite settled. This approach has been carried further both under the heading of basic needs and of alternative development. Over the years it has been reinforced by and associated with virtually any form of criticism of mainstream developmentalism, such as anti-capitalism, green thinking, feminism, eco-feminism, democratization, new social movements, Buddhist economics, cultural critiques, and poststructuralist analysis of development discourse.

'Alternative' generally refers to three spheres — agents, methods and objectives or values of development. According to Nerfin (1977), alternative development is the terrain of citizen, or 'Third System' politics, the importance of which is apparent in view of the failed development efforts of government (the prince or first system) and economic power (the merchant or second system). Often this seems to be the key point: alternative development is development *from below*. In this context 'below' refers both to 'community' and NGOs. In some respects alternative development revisits Community Development of the 1950s and 1960s. Community Development goes back to American social work which, via British colonialism, entered colonial development and in the 1950s supplemented modernization efforts (Carmen, 1996). This genealogy accounts for the ambiguity of some terms such as 'participation'.

Alternative development is frequently identified with development-by-NGOs; but given the wide variety of NGOs, the equation 'alternative development is what NGOs do' would obviously be inadequate. NGO ideology is organization-led and too limited to account for alternative development, which involves distinctive elements with respect to development methodology (participatory, endogenous, self-reliant) and objectives (geared to basic needs). Is saying that development must be undertaken from within and geared to basic needs an adequate way of redefining development, or is it only a polemical position? The alternative referred to is alternative in relation to state and market, but not necessarily in relation to the general discourse of developmentalism. It would be difficult to maintain that alternative development has developed a theory, although Hettne (1990), among others, has tried to make such a case, arguing that it represents a counterpoint to mainstream development.

Reviewing early sources, several features run through alternative development thinking.

- The tendency to represent alternative development as a counterpoint that unites all dissident social forces critical of development, which in turn reflects an underlying desire to forge a Grand Coalition of opposition forces.
- The tendency to equate development with modernization and alternative development with de-modernization, premised on the ‘incompatibility between modernization and human development’ (Friberg and Hettne, 1985: 235). (In later formulations Hettne, 1990, abandoned the de-modernization/anti-development perspective.)
- The tendency to view and represent alternative development as an alternative *external* to the mainstream, a counter-utopia carried by different social actors in the interstices of the mainstream and in countries supposedly outside the thrust of western developmentalism; in other words, an enclave or ‘liberated zone’ approach to alternative development.
- All forms of criticism of mainstream development are arraigned together as if they form a cohesive alternative, but all good things put together do not necessarily make a great thing.

In some respects this resembles the post-development perspective that has taken shape in the 1990s. Some of the weaknesses of this kind of position (anticipating the further discussion of post-development) are the following:

- ‘Mainstream development’ is simplified as a single, homogeneous thrust toward modernization and its diversity, complexity and adaptability are underestimated.
- While the theoretical claim is for a dialectical relationship between mainstream and alternatives, the actual argument takes the form of a simple dualistic opposition and the dialectics, the ways in which mainstream and alternatives shape and influence one another, slip out of view.
- In order to maximize the opposition between mainstream and alternative, the appeal of the mainstream to various constituencies is underestimated.

Several of these features resemble and replay the narrative of anti-capitalist opposition. The tendency to transpose forms of struggle opposing early industrial capitalism to late capitalism indicates a failure of oppositional imagination. It recycles a struggle scenario under different circumstances and envisions no path but that of rejectionism. This may be one of the problems of alternative development: postconventional ideas and approaches are straitjacketed in conventional political imaginaries. In the process, alternative development is loaded with aspirations beyond its scope. Subsequent

claims for alternative development have been more modest, while this kind of grandstanding has now taken the form of post-development. Broadly speaking, then, the development terrain seems to be marked out in three overall positions: mainstream development (which is by no means a coherent position), alternative development (which itself involves a range of perspectives), and post-development.

At this point, a hostile criticism would be that inflated to 'alternative development' this approach is pretentious because it suggests more than it can deliver, unclear because the difference between what is alternative and what is not is not clarified, and fuzzy to the point of hypocrisy because it sustains the overall rhetoric of development while suggesting the ability to generate something really different within its general aura. Alternative development has been fashionable because it came upon a crisis in development thinking, because it matched general doubts about the role of the state, both among neoliberals and from the point of view of human rights. The 'alternative' discourse was a way of being progressive without being overly radical and without endorsing a clear ideology; it could be embraced by progressives and conservatives who both had axes to grind with the role of states. It was a low-risk way of being progressive and its structural unclarity ensured broad endorsement. It was a postmodern way of being post-ideological. It was everyone's way out except that of the last bureaucrat.

Hettne (1990) presents 'Another Development' as a combination of basic needs, self-reliance, sustainable and endogenous development. Appealing as this *mélange* looks, it also presents a problem: attractive features put together do not necessarily add up to a paradigm. Part of this is the problem of articulation. To the extent that each of these discourses has its own logic, there is no guarantee that they blend well together. Their actual course depends on their articulation with other discourses, which may turn out to be progressive or conservative. There is no preordained outcome to the politics of hegemony. At best this gives us an unstable articulation, which is too weak a basis to constitute an 'alternative model'. Ethnodevelopment may clash with ecodevelopment, or may take an ethnonationalist turn. Self-reliance may require economies of scale which clash with ethnodevelopment. Feminism may clash with indigenous culture — and so on. Running the risk of flippancy, one might say that the kind of world in which alternative development works is a world that does not need it. Thus, while pertinent as an orientation, it is too unstable and narrow to serve as a 'model'.

Hettne seeks to establish a sharp boundary between mainstream and alternative development but fails to do so. Hettne's schematic representation of mainstream development theory *versus* counterpoint theory overrates the coherence and consistency of 'development'. Besides if alternative development is defined as a counterpoint to mainstream development, it is reduced to a reactive position: if the mainstream shifts, so would the alternative. Furthermore, the elements of alternative development mentioned by Hettne are now no longer distinctive: basic needs, participation, sustainability have long been

adopted in mainstream development.<sup>1</sup> The problem is that there is no clear line of demarcation between mainstream and alternative — alternatives are co-opted and yesterday's alternatives are today's institutions. The difference between mainstream and alternative, then, is a conjunctural difference, not a difference in principle, although it tends to be presented as such. In itself, 'alternative' has no more meaning than 'new' in advertising. We might term this the problem of the 'standardization of dissent' (Nandy, 1989). As such, alternative development replicates 'the value of the new', which is a pathos intrinsic to modernity (Vattimo, 1988); alternative development partakes of the momentum of modernity and the everlasting hope that the future will redeem the present.

So far it would be difficult to claim that alternative development represents a paradigm break in development for it lacks sufficient theoretical cohesion. It reflects certain normative orientations, follows disparate theoretical strands, is in flux. Part of the polemics of development, situated on its cutting edge, it remains intrinsically controversial and unsettled. Understandings of alternative development vary widely — whichever aspect of mainstream development is under the spotlight, alternative development is held up as its counterpoint. If the mainstream variant is viewed, as it has been through most modern developmentalism, as state-led, then the alternative is associated with the informal sector, grassroots organizations. If on the other hand mainstream development is viewed under the sign of liberalization, as has been the case since the 1980s wave of neoliberalism, then the alternative becomes ... the state. Thus, under the heading of *Alternative Development Strategies in sub-Saharan Africa*, Stewart, Lall and Wangwe (1993) argue for import-substitution industrialization and state protection for industry, a strategy which, in other contexts, was part of mainstream repertoires.

This variability is not simply anecdotal but is intrinsic to alternative development to the extent that it is reactive, contrapuntal. At a time when there is widespread admission that several development decades have brought many failures, while on the other hand the development industry continues unabated, there is continuous and heightened self-criticism in development circles, a constant search for alternatives, a tendency towards self-correction and a persistent pattern of co-optation of whatever attractive alternatives present themselves. Accordingly the turn-over of alternatives

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1. In the 1995 edition of his book, Hettne fine-tunes his position on alternative development in terms of three principles: 'The principle of territorialism as a counterpoint to functionalism. The principle of cultural pluralism as a counterpoint to standardized modernization. The principle of ecological sustainability as a counterpoint to "growth" and consumerism' (Hettne, 1995: 199). These reformulations are hardly improvements. Territorialism involves a spatial demarcation which is as problematic as the ideas on ethnodevelopment (discussed below). Cultural pluralism is now widely accepted and thematized in the culture and development approach. Contrasting sustainability to growth is crude; ul Haq's (1995) point that what matters is not growth but the quality of growth is more to the point. I owe these quotes to a review by Des Gasper (1996).

becoming mainstream has speeded up; the dialectics of alternative development and mainstream development have accelerated.

Green thinking about sustainability, a radical position fifteen or so years ago, has long been institutionalized as 'sustainable development'. The informal sector, a twilight zone unnoticed by mainstream developers mesmerized by the state, has been embraced by development agencies. The accompanying message of deregulation and government roll-back beautifully dovetailed with the prevailing neoliberal outlook. NGOs, after decades of marginality, have become major channels of development co-operation. Governments go non-governmental by setting up Government Organized NGOs. In countries such as Mozambique and Bangladesh the resources of NGOs, domestic and international, exceed those at the disposal of government. Women's concerns, once an outsider criticism, have been institutionalized by making women and gender preferential parts of the development package. Capacity-building, which used to be missing in conventional development support, is now built in as a major objective. Global conferences — in Rio, Vienna, Cairo, Copenhagen, Beijing, Istanbul — have been fora for the alignment of official and unofficial discourses. In other words, forms of alternative development have become institutionalized as part of mainstream development, and under some circumstances, have become or overtaken mainstream development, to the point that mainstream alternative development (or MAD), might not be an odd notion. This turn of affairs is not incidental but a logical function of the way the overall development process is developing.

We can regard alternative development either as an open-ended poser, or as a set of ideas and practices which in time have themselves been institutionalized, and while critically scrutinizing the latter we can keep open the former. The advantage of alternative development as an open-ended poser is that it provides a flexible position of critique. Of course this principle can be adopted without any reference to 'alternative development', rather development itself can be defined as 'constant consideration of alternatives' (for example, Coetzee, 1989: 11). The disadvantage is that without a theory, alternative development is like a ship without a rudder.

### **Alternative Development Paradigm**

While much alternative development thinking makes a diffuse impression, this has gradually been making room for a sharper and more assertive positioning as a result of several trends: (1) the enormous growth of NGOs in numbers and influence generates a growing demand for strategy and therefore theory; (2) the importance of environmental concerns and sustainability has weakened the economic growth paradigm and given a boost to alternative and ecological economics; (3) the glaring failures of several development decades contribute to unsettling the mainstream paradigm of growth; (4) the growing challenges to the Bretton Woods institutions lead to the question



whether these criticisms are merely procedural and institutional (for more participation and democratization) or whether they involve fundamentally different principles.

These diverse trends generate various lines of tension. One line of friction runs between the general alternative development preoccupation with local and endogenous development and, on the other hand, the growing demand for *global* alternatives. Globalization under the sign of the unfettered market is denounced because it clashes with endogenous development, while the mushrooming of NGOs itself is a manifestation of the growing momentum of global civil society — in other words, represents another arm of globalization. Another line of friction runs between diffuse ‘alternative development’ and an alternative development paradigm, the former implying a soft and the latter a hard boundary with mainstream development, and theoretical openness or closure. These tensions find expression in more or less subtle differences among alternative development positions.

In view of its holistic aspirations, it would be desirable for disparate alternative development knowledge pools to be grouped together; yet in view of the different functions that alternative development fulfils — animating local development, guiding international NGO strategy, informing global alternatives — this will not necessarily happen. Alternative development serves dispersed discourse communities. International NGOs tend to look both ways, at local grassroots development *and* at global alternatives. These different functions overlap and intersperse and are not necessarily incompatible, but rhyming them requires making them explicit — which is not often done in the first place — and an effort at synthesis, which requires more reflection on local/global and micro/mega interconnections than is common in most alternative development literature.

Oddly, in view of the claim to an alternative development paradigm and its growing appeal, attempts to theoretically develop alternative development have been relatively few.<sup>2</sup> There may be several reasons for this. Alternative development tends to be practice oriented rather than theoretically inclined. The world of alternative development is not a ‘library world’. Part of its logic is that, as development is people-centred, genuine development knowledge is also people’s knowledge and what counts is local rather than abstract expert knowledge. With the local orientation comes a certain regional dispersion in the literature, which looks like a scattered archipelago of primary local knowledges, with little overarching reflection. Besides, alternative development travels under many aliases — appropriate development, participatory

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2. Sources include, among others: Carmen (1996); Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation (1975); Drabek (1987); Friedmann (1992); Hettne (1990); Klauss and Korten (1984); Korten (1990); Max-Neef (1991); Nerfin (1977); Rahman (1993); Wolfe (1981); and a wide array of articles in books and in journals (such as *International Foundation for Development Alternatives*, which dissolved in the early 1990s, and *Alternatives*). For critiques of alternative development, see: Brohman (1996); Cowen and Shenton (1996: 457–72); Sanyal (1994).

development, people-centred development, human scale development, people's self-development, autonomous development, holistic development; and many elements relevant to alternative development are developed, not under its own banner, but under specific headings, such as participation, participatory action research, grassroots movements, NGOs, empowerment, conscientization, liberation theology, democratization, citizenship, human rights, development ethics, ecofeminism, cultural diversity, and so forth. Such dispersion does not facilitate the generation of a coherent body of theory. Many alternative development sources do not refer in any methodical way to one another, but keep on generating alternatives from the ground up, in the process reinventing the wheel without zeroing in on fundamentals or generating 'expert opinion' and debate. In part this may be a matter of its 'alternative' character, in the sense of a habitus of subversion, an intuitive aversion to method, to systematization and codification, which implies a distrust of experts and even of theory itself. By the same token, this weakens the claim to deliver a different paradigm.

Alternative development is not necessarily anti-theoretical but it is intellectually segmented. The work of several alternative development authors can be contextualized in terms of their social location. Thus, David Korten is an NGO strategist who contributes both to local development and global alternatives; John Friedmann is primarily concerned with local and regional planning; Anisur Rahman mainly addresses local and grassroots development; Manfred Max-Neef and Hazel Henderson are alternative economists, the former engaged with local development and the latter with global alternatives. Training, teaching and research are other contexts in which alternative development is being articulated, across a wide spectrum from small local institutes to university programmes.

While alternative development is often referred to as a model or paradigm, which implies an emphatic theoretical claim, what is delivered on this score is quite uneven. Critics of the Bretton Woods institutions as bulwarks of mainstream developmentalism increasingly claim to present a paradigm shift in development. The same elements keep coming back: 'equitable, participatory and sustainable human development' (Arruda, 1994: 139). 'The new approach to development includes the values of equity, participation and environmental sustainability, as well as improving physical well-being' (Griesgraber and Gunter, 1996: xiv). Is this sufficient as the basis of a new paradigm? It concerns the 'how to's of development rather than the nature of development as such. It identifies aspirations rather than attributes of development. As such it can easily be 'added on' to mainstream development discourse and indeed often is. Since mainstream development nowadays embraces and advertises the same values, the outcome is a rhetorical consensus rather than a paradigm break.

Rahman (1993) contrasts a *consumerist* view of development, which treats people as passive recipients of growth, with a *creativist* view, according to which people are the creative forces of development, the means as well as the

end of development, for development is defined as *people's self-development*. This refers to a set of normative orientations, rather than to a different explanatory framework. Such elements may add up to a distinctive alternative development *profile* but not to a paradigm. The distinguishing element of alternative development should be found in the *redefinition* of development itself and not merely in its agency, modalities, procedures or aspirations.

Dissatisfaction with development-as-growth is an increasingly common position, not merely since the Club of Rome's report. Yet if development is not about growth, what is it? One option is to redefine development as *social transformation* (see, for example, Addo et al., 1985). In itself, development as transformation is vague because it is like saying that development is change — change from what to what, what kind of change? 'Good change' according to Robert Chambers. Institutional transformation adds some concreteness but still needs context. Korten (1990) defines development as transformation towards justice, inclusiveness and sustainability. Again these are normative clauses, but ethics of development does not necessarily add up to redefining development. Alternatively, might the character of alternative development be found in a distinctive *development style*? Max-Neef (1991: 86) mentions 'avoiding bureaucratization' and for Korten the surest way to kill a social movement is to throw money at it. The downside of this position, however, is the romanticization of social movements (as in post-development).

It may be argued that theory is a central concern of alternative development, for it is about the redefinition of development. Korten (1990: 113) notes that 'it is impossible to be a true development agency without a theory that directs action to the underlying causes of underdevelopment. In the absence of a theory, the aspiring development agency almost inevitably becomes instead merely an *assistance* agency engaged in relieving the more visible symptoms of underdevelopment through relief and welfare measures'. Indeed, 'an organization cannot have a meaningful development *strategy* without a development theory' (ibid: 114). Korten defines development as follows: 'Development is a process by which the members of a society increase their personal and institutional capacities to mobilize and manage resources to produce sustainable and justly distributed improvements in their quality of life consistent with their own aspirations' (ibid: 67). In different wording: 'The heart of development is institutions and politics, not money and technology, though the latter are undeniably important' (ibid: 144). 'The most fundamental issues of development are, at their core, issues of power' (ibid: 214). The issues Gunnar Myrdal raised years ago in *An Asian Drama* (1968), issues of land ownership and distribution of power, which during decades of development have been papered over by community development and other fads, which made little or no difference in relation to poverty, are now put centre-stage as fundamentals.

This position may be distinctive enough to establish a break with conventional development. For Korten it constitutes a break with the various approaches that co-opt alternative values by 'adding them on' to the growth

Table 1. Development models

Models	Growth	Social transformation
Objectives	Accumulation	Capacitation. Human development
Resources	Capital, technology, trade, foreign investment, external expertise	Human skills, local resources, social capital, local knowledge
Features	Growth-led	Equity-led
Agency	State-led. Or market-led. Development banks	People, community. Synergies society, government, business
Epistemology	Science	Critique of science and indigenous knowledge
Modalities	Exogenous examples, demonstration effect, technology transfer. Modernity vs. tradition	Endogenous development, modernization from within. Modernization of tradition
Methods	Import substitution industrialization, export-led growth, growth poles, innovation, SAP	Participation, micro credit, sustainability, democratization
Social policy	Trickle-down. Safety net	Trickle-up. Social capacitation through redistribution
Development co-operation	Aid, assistance.	Partnership, mutual obligation.
Indicators	GDP	Green GDP. HDI. Institutional densities

model. 'The basic needs strategies that gained prominence during the 1970s, and are still advocated by organizations such as UNICEF, are a variant of, usually an add-on to, a classical growth-centered development strategy' (Korten, 1990: 44). The same applies to the approaches that have been concerned with giving structural adjustment a 'human face'. 'The basic services for which they pleaded were best characterized as a façade, putting a more palatable face on actions that are based on flawed analysis and theory, rather than coming forward in support of more basic, but politically controversial reforms' (ibid: 45). The Brundtland report is also criticized for combining sustainability and growth in the notion of 'sustainable growth' (ibid: 166).

If we would group the elements discussed above as an alternative development model, in contrast to a conventional development model centred on growth, the result might be as in Table 1. Leaving aside the question of an alternative development paradigm or profile, for now the slightly more neutral terminology of models is adopted. Since profiles differ over time, multiple options are indicated in several boxes. Accepting these as the contours of an alternative development paradigm would have several attractions. Alternative development ceases to be *any* alternative in relation

to mainstream development. Alternative development as a diffuse position might be effective as critique but not as a programme to be implemented. An alternative development paradigm might help its chances to gain recognition and institutional support, which is necessary if alternative development is no longer about marginal local initiatives supported by NGOs but aims to be a large-scale overhaul of development as such. If alternative development is about wide-ranging synergies between communities, government agencies, international institutions and business, then its profile must be both distinct and acceptable enough to generate support in institutional circles and diverse interest communities. By the same token, this raises different questions. A serious discussion of alternative development as a paradigm would involve its negotiation and fine-tuning in wide circles. This treatment cannot prejudge such a broad discussion; but what does arise is a more fundamental question: whether the notion of paradigm is applicable at all.

### **Paradigm Politics**

The world is tired of grand solutions. (Manfred Max-Neef, 1991: 110)

To match Kuhn's concept, a paradigm shift in development would have to meet three conditions: it must provide a metatheory, be accepted by a community of practitioners, and have a body of successful practice, including exemplars that can be held up as paradigms in practice (Sato and Smith, 1996: 90). In my view more fundamental questions need to be asked. What is the status of a paradigm and is this concept — and that of paradigm shift — relevant to social science? A paradigm in the sense of Thomas Kuhn (1962) refers to the explanatory power of a theoretical model and its institutional ramifications for the structure and organization of science. The point of Kuhn's analysis is a critique of positivism, particularly in the natural sciences. Kuhn's position was that social science is 'pre-paradigmatic' because a scholarly consensus such as exists in physics or biology is not available in social science.

If we consider this more closely, in the social sciences positivism is largely a past station, except in some forms of economics. The interpretative character of social science has become widely accepted since phenomenology, hermeneutics and more recently the 'linguistic turn'. Also, if one does not accept discourse analysis and deconstruction as analytic instruments, at least the time of blind faith in models and grand theories is left behind. It is generally understood that social sciences are of an extraordinary complexity because they involve political processes which are reflexive in nature, in the sense that social actors will act upon any theory itself, which is thus modified in action. Constructivism is widely accepted as a theoretical framework in relation to social phenomena as well as in relation to social science theories, which of course are also social phenomena. In constructivism, notions of paradigm

and paradigm shift are built-in. Pierre Bourdieu's (1988) analyses of social science in action are an example and so is his notion of reflexive sociology (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). It follows that in relation to reflexive social science the concept of paradigm does not hold and that social science is basically 'post-paradigmatic' or, at least, non-paradigmatic. In social science 'paradigm' may be used in a loose sense but it neither serves the same function of critique of positivism as in natural sciences, nor does it adequately describe the organization of science.

Yet recent years have witnessed an outburst of claims for new paradigms in social science, development studies included — a kind of new paradigm epidemic. Alain Lipietz (1995) presents political ecology as a new paradigm. Paradigm transition beyond modernism is the framework of de Sousa Santos's work (1996). In development studies ul Haq (1995) proposes a human development paradigm. Norman Long (1994) advances an 'actor-oriented paradigm' of development, which refers to a critique of structuralist approaches and a return to anthropological sensibilities. Hazel Henderson's work centres on paradigms (1991, 1996a, 1996b).

What is the point of these exercises in a general context of reflexive, constructivist social science? It does signal a watershed, at minimum a more reflexive mentality in social science. But is borrowing from the natural sciences an appropriate move? One impression is that the claims to paradigm shifts primarily serve a political purpose. What is at issue is a claim for political unity and convergence: by emphasizing the *intellectual convergence* of diverse elements, the chances for *political cohesion* of diverse constituencies may be enhanced. Part of the appeal of Kuhn's paradigm shift is the element of *revolution* or a drastic break in intellectual and therefore political practice. In current usage, however, paradigm is used in a broad and loose sense of an 'intellectual framework', similar to discourse and *epistème*, and not in Kuhn's specific sense of an explanatory framework that defines the practice of 'normal science'. More often it concerns normative values rather than explanatory and metatheoretical frameworks.

Development, even though it hinges on theory as the beacon of policy, is more concerned with policy than explanatory frameworks. In development, the claim of a paradigm shift means that a policy framework changes. Thus, ul Haq's human development paradigm refers to a set of normative orientations — equity, sustainability, productivity, empowerment — rather than to a different explanatory framework. There are still further reasons why the notion of a paradigm shift may not apply to development or alternative development.

The first consideration is diversity in the South. If conventional developmentalism (growth, modernization, neoclassical economics) is no longer acceptable because of its linear logic and universalist pretension, why would an alternative development paradigm hold? There are now 'five Souths' (Group of Lisbon, 1995: 47) and a wide range of local variations within each of these: how could a single paradigm encompass such a diversity

of development paths, needs and circumstances? Besides, would a new orthodoxy really be desirable? Is it not, rather, a post-paradigmatic perspective that is needed? The diffuseness of alternative development may also be an analytical advantage. Alternative development as a loosely interconnected ensemble of sensibilities and practices is more flexible in resonating with diverse situations than an alternative development paradigm. While a paradigm shift implies a revolution in relation to past work it means normalization in relation to future work. It would fix a practice of 'normal development'. In view of the diversity and flux of the development field such routinization may be precisely *not* what is desirable. In other words, the urge toward paradigm renewal may itself be inappropriate.

Further considerations in relation to an alternative development paradigm are the following.

- The various elements of the alternative development package are each meaningful but none of them can be turned into a firm, hard principle: it follows that alternative development as a paradigm cannot stand up either. The strength of alternative development positions is critical, rather than programmatic.
- The elements of the alternative development paradigm are contradictory. In effect endogenism as a principle annuls any general formulation of alternative development. 'If the people are the principal actors in the alternative development paradigm, *the relevant reality must be the people's own, constructed by them only*' (Rahman, 1993: 220, emphasis in original). By this logic, how can there be a general alternative development theory, let alone a paradigm? There can only be an archipelago of local alternative perspectives.
- The valorization of indigenous knowledge has similar implications. Giving the alternative development paradigm the status of a metatheory — the usual way out of 'Zeno's paradox' ('the Cretan says all Cretans are liars') — does not work in this case because it establishes outsiders as experts over insiders.
- An institutional dimension is that there are political advantages as well as disadvantages to a sharp break with mainstream development. Sanyal (1994) argues that alternative development has withered because it has not found institutional support, because agencies, bureaucracies and ministries cannot handle sharp discontinuities in principles and practices.

The above considerations apply to the *broad* alternative development paradigm (*à la* Rahman, Carmen and others) while the Bretton Woods challengers propose a much narrower alternative development paradigm of equitable, sustainable and participatory development. Here a different problem applies: the distinction between the *narrow* alternative development paradigm and mainstream development exists as a rhetorical claim only,

for the sole distinctive feature is the insistence that development be equitable. This implies a critique of the trickle-down principle of neoclassical economics; but that too is nowadays hardly controversial, even in the mainstream.

## MAINSTREAM DEVELOPMENT

Mainstream development here refers to everyday development talk in developing countries, international institutions and development co-operation. It now seems a long time since development was defined as growth and simply measured by means of per capita GNP. Gradually, starting with basic needs and other heterodox approaches in the 1970s, development has been redefined as enlargement of people's choices and human capacitation (Sen, 1985) and as if people, basic needs, health, literacy, education, housing matter. The Human Development Index (HDI) has become an influential standard. People-centred development is becoming a mainstream position.

This means that there is now considerable overlap between mainstream and alternative development, which share much the same rhetoric, ideals and definition of development: participation, work with the poor and vulnerable groups, local action. This overlap is not always apparent from alternative development discourses. 'Alternative' approaches often stereotype and fix mainstream approaches. This may be a matter of ignorance about changes in the mainstream; or a proclivity to antagonistic posturing in terms of 'us' and 'them', building up alternative appeal by emphasizing the backwardness of the mainstream. Adherents of alternative development hold different views on the nature of the relationship between alternative and mainstream development. Two extreme positions are that alternative development is to be as distinct and separate from mainstream development as possible (for example, most Bretton Woods challengers; Kothari; in some respects Korten); or that continuity between mainstream and alternative development both exists and is desirable (for instance, Wignaraja, 1992). Most proponents of an alternative development paradigm posit a contradiction between growth and structural reform on the one hand and alternative development on the other. Ul Haq, as a proponent of human development, does not see a contradiction between human development and structural reform. His human development paradigm is identical to the alternative development paradigm except that, characteristically, it includes *production* as a core value.

This also implies a tension between alternative development and human development. The limitation of the latter, according to some, is that critical concerns are being instrumentalized short of the overhaul of the development-as-growth model, so that in effect development business-as-usual can carry on under a different umbrella. What we see is still a 'fetishism of numbers' (Max-Neef, 1991). Friedmann (1992) mentions, besides human rights and citizen rights, 'human flourishing' as the value orientation of



alternative development, precisely to counteract its operationalization in indices such as the Human Development Index. This affirms that alternative development is about something beyond just another set of measuring standards, which is a point worth making — but only if we *also* consider the importance of indices such as the Human Development Index in influencing policy frameworks (Henderson, 1996: 122). Implementation is desirable, practicalities are prosaic, institutions need measurements. Human flourishing exceeds but also requires human development. In analogy with Moser's (1991) argument on gender needs, one could perhaps say that alternative development is not only about practical but also about strategic needs, that is, a profound redistribution of resources within societies and on a world scale — except that the alternative development paradigm stakes an even larger claim: the total overhaul of development.

According to Rajni Kothari (1993) alternatives have been co-opted, resulting in 'The yawning vacuum: a world without alternatives'. Kothari complains of 'deep co-optation': not only organizations but mentalities have changed, a critical edge has been lost. He observes 'the consumerism and commercialisation of diverse human enterprise, the basic crisis of vision — in a sense, an end of "alternatives" in the real and comprehensive sense of the term' (Kothari, 1993: 136). This kind of pessimism, while understandable, seems somehow illogical: what reason is there to assume, short of a fundamental shift in human nature, that the creativity that has given rise to alternatives in one context will not find different avenues of expression, no matter the circumstances and indeed prompted by them? That emancipation can be successful should not be held against it — although it often is, as if a Sisyphus task were a seal of purity. Of course, Kothari views co-optation not as success but as capitulation, but doesn't the record look much more varied? Co-optation, besides being logical in view of the way the development field is structured, may be desirable if it means a greater chance that once-marginal views are implemented. There is cause to regret co-optation mainly if one regards alternative development as a position external-to-the-system; but this kind of island mentality is as sterile as delinking, as a national development strategy. Governments and NGOs are factually interdependent in terms of agenda setting and funding. The entire field is changing including government organizations.

An intermediate option is the 'growth plus' approach: growth *plus* redistribution, participation, human development, or 'sustainable growth'. 'Redistribution with growth' was a prominent position in the 1970s (Chenery et al., 1974). Structural adjustment with a human face has been an in-between position (Jolly, 1986). Korten (1990) views 'adding on' as a weakness of alternatives and he seeks therefore to establish as sharp a break as possible with conventional positions. However, from the point of view of policy implementation and institutional acceptance, 'adding on' may rather be a source of strength, because for bureaucracies in welfare ministries and international agencies, total breaks are much more difficult to handle than additional

policy options (Sanyal, 1994). In view of such political ramifications, is it necessary or wise to formulate alternative development as *anti-growth*? Ul Haq (1995) argues for continuity, rather than plain contradiction, between growth and human development. In his view the key issue is the *quality* of growth. Ul Haq builds on the 1970s' redistribution with growth position; yet, while arguing for theoretical continuity and policy refinement, he *also* claims the status of a new paradigm and a 'revolutionary' role for human development. A different kind of consideration is that substantively the nature of economic growth itself is undergoing a rethinking, also in the North. An increasingly prominent line of research concerns the links between growth and social development and the idea that social capital is crucial to economic development (Nederveen Pieterse, 1997).

Development is not what it used to be. Arguably the big hiatus in development now no longer runs between mainstream and alternative development, but *within* mainstream development. The latter now incorporates many alternative elements and practices. It is the vast stretch of contemporary mainstream development, from Bretton Woods institutions to grassroots empowerment, that makes for its cacophonous, schizophrenic character. Broadly speaking, the divide now runs between mainstream and alternative development grouped under a general umbrella of social development, on the one hand, and the number crunching approach to development, the positivism of growth, on the other. Institutionally this rift runs between the UN agencies and the IMF, with the World Bank — precariously — straddled somewhere in the middle.

## POST-DEVELOPMENT

The idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape. Delusion and disappointment, failures and crime have been the steady companions of development and they tell a common story: it did not work. Moreover, the historical conditions which catapulted the idea into prominence have vanished: development has become outdated (Sachs, 1992: 1).

Also referred to as 'anti-development' and 'beyond development', this is a radical reaction to the impasse of development theory and policy. Perplexity and extreme disaffection with business-as-usual and standard development rhetoric and practice, and disillusionment with alternative development, are keynotes of this position. Development theory and practice are rejected because it is the 'new religion of the West' (Rist, 1990), because it is the imposition of science as power (Nandy, 1988), giving rise to 'laboratory states' (Vishvanathan, 1988), because it does not work (Kothari, 1988), because it means cultural westernization and homogenization (Constantino, 1985), because it brings environmental destruction.

'Post-development' starts out from a simple realization: that attaining a middle-class life style for the majority of the world population is impossible

(Dasgupta, 1985). It has taken the form of a position of total rejection of development, crystallizing in the 1980s around the journal *Development: Seeds for Change* and among intellectuals in Latin America (Esteva, Escobar), India (Nandy, Vishvanathan, Rahnema, Shiva, Alvares), Malaysia, France (Latouche, Vachon), Switzerland (Rist), Germany (Sachs), England (Seabrook; for example, Seabrook, 1994). It has become prominent since it coalesces with ecological critiques, in books such as Sachs' *Development Dictionary*, and has since become a postmodern development genre (for example Crush, 1995).

Post-development is by no means a homogeneous current. It shows many affinities and overlaps with western critiques of modernity, the Enlightenment and techno-scientific progress, such as critical theory, post structuralism, ecological movements. It stands to development as 'deep ecology' does to environmentalism. It overlaps with cultural critiques of development and with alternative development. To post-development there are romantic and nostalgic strands: reverence for community, *Gemeinschaft*, the traditional. There is an element of neo-Luddism in the attitudes toward science and technology (for example Alvares, 1992). There is a strand of equating of poverty with purity and the indigenous and local with the original and authentic. It shows affinity with the lineage of the Franciscans, liberation theology and Gandhian politics, but the methodology, theoretical framework and politics of post-development are Foucauldian. Its methodological premise is discourse analysis of development. Post-development's programme is one of resistance rather than emancipation. Its horizon is made up of local resistance, local struggles à la Foucault, disavowing a universal agenda. Post-development generally belongs to the era of the 'post' — poststructuralism, postmodernism. It is premised on an awareness of endings, on 'the end of modernity'. It involves, in Vattimo's words, 'the crisis of the future'. Post-development parallels postmodernism both in its acute intuitions and in being directionless in the end, as a consequence of the refusal to, or lack of interest in translating critique into construction.

According to Gustavo Esteva (1985: 78), 'If you live in Mexico City today, you are either rich or numb if you fail to notice that development stinks . . . The time has come to recognize development itself as the malignant myth whose pursuit threatens these among whom I live in Mexico . . . the "three development decades" were a huge, irresponsible experiment that, in the experience of a world-majority, failed miserably'. Escobar concurs that development is a 'Frankenstein-type dream', an 'alien model of exploitation', and reflects urban bias (Escobar, 1992: 419). 'The dream of Development is over' and what is needed is 'Not more Development but a different regime of truth and perception' (ibid: 412–4). Escobar refers to a 'group of scholars engaging in the most radical critique of Development' viewed as the 'ideological expression of postwar capital expansion'. The 'discourse of Development', like the Orientalism analysed by Edward Said, has been a 'mechanism for the production and management of the Third World',

‘organizing the production of truth about the Third World’ (ibid: 413–4). World Bank studies and documents ‘all repeat the same story’. ‘Development colonized reality, it became reality’. It ‘may be now a past era’. To ‘establish a discontinuity, a new discursive practice’ it is appropriate to ‘undertake an archaeology of Development’ (ibid: 414–5). To effect change means to effect a ‘change in the order of discourse’, to open up the ‘possibility to think reality differently’. Recognizing the nexus between knowledge and power in discourse and the ‘politics of truth’, Escobar proposes ‘the formation of nuclei around which new forms of power and knowledge can converge’. Scanning ‘the present landscape of Development alternatives’ looking for ‘a new reality’, Escobar is ‘not interested in Development alternatives, but rather in alternatives to Development’. Basic to Escobar’s approach is the ‘nexus with grassroots movements’. He evokes a ‘we’ which comprises ‘peasants, urban marginals, deprofessionalized intellectuals’. What they share is an ‘interest in culture, local knowledge’, ‘critique of science’ and ‘promotion of localized, pluralistic grassroots movements’. Their common features are that they are ‘essentially local’, pluralistic, and distrust organized politics and the Development establishment (ibid: 421–2). The grassroots orientation disrupts the link between development, capital and science and thus destabilizes the ‘grid of the Development apparatus’ (ibid: 424).

The problem with ‘Development’, according to Escobar, is that it is external, based on the model of the industrialized world. What is needed instead are ‘more endogenous discourses’. As nodal points he mentions three major discourses — democratization, difference and anti-Development — which can serve as the ‘basis for radical anti-capitalist struggles’. What is ‘needed is the expansion and *articulation* of anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, anti-productivist, anti-market struggles’ (ibid: 431). Again this is the aspiration toward the construction of a grand coalition of opposition forces, combined with a Foucauldian search ‘toward new power-knowledge regimes’ (ibid: 432).

Strip away the exaggerated claims, the anti-positioning, and there is an uneven landscape. Post-development does make positive claims and is associated with several counterpoints, such as Ivan Illich’s conviviality, indigenous knowledge, cultural diversity, new politics. It shares sensibilities with alternative development and with trends in mainstream development. Post-development differs from Marxist positions: the focus is no longer on class interests, yet Escobar also reinvokes radical anti-capitalist struggles. Post-development parallels dependency theory in seeking to disengage the local from external dependency, taking it further to development as a power/knowledge regime. While dependency theory privileges the nation state, post-development privileges the local, the grassroots. Post-development’s faith in the endogenous resembles strands in modernization and dependency theory — witness the recurrent invocation of self-reliance. Like some forms of alternative development, post-development involves populism, seasoned by an awareness of the articulation effect; yet striving for a new

articulation of great movements: anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, and so forth.

Escobar's perspective involves a *mélange* of vocabularies: discourse analysis, poststructuralism, social movement theory, development. This mix is both rich and uneven, with exaggerated claims sustained by weak examples. Rich in that it introduces Foucault, goes beyond class analysis and surveys relevant tendencies; uneven in that it centres on the argument of anti-development but gives no clear delineation between anti-development and alternative development. Exaggerated in that his position hinges on a discursive trick, a rhetorical ploy of equating development with 'Development'. This itself militates against discourse analysis, conceals differences within development, homogenizes and essentializes development. His perspective on actual development is flimsy and confused, with more rhetoric than logic. For instance, the claim that the World Bank stories 'are all the same' ignores the tremendous discontinuities in the Bank's discourse over time (for instance, from redistribution with growth in the 1970s to structural adjustment in the 1980s). While Escobar and Esteva associate 'Development' with urban bias, World Bank and structural adjustment policies in the 1980s have been precisely aimed at correcting 'urban parasitism', which for some time had been a standard criticism of nationalist development policies (the classic source is Lipton, 1977). Even though particular constellations of thinking and policy at given points in time seem to present a solid, whole and consistent façade — such as the 'Washington consensus' — there are inconsistencies underneath, and the actual course of development theory and policy shows numerous improvisations and constant changes of direction. Trainer (1989: 177) speaks of 'the chaotic history of development theory' (cf. Nederveen Pieterse, 1996).

Again, as in 1980s' alternative development discourse, there is the desire for the grand oppositional coalition and the evocation of a 'we' that, in the desire for rupture, claims to capture all social movements in the 'Third World' under the heading of anti-Development. 'Many of today's social movements in the Third World are in one way or another mediated by anti-Development discourses ... although this often takes place in an implicit manner' (Escobar, 1992: 431). In the Third World social movements are 'against bureaucratization achieved by Development institutions (e.g. peasants against rural development packages, squatters against public housing programmes), commodification, capitalist rationality brought by Development technologies' (ibid: 431). This is clearly a narrow representation: social movements in the South are much too diverse to be simply captured under a single heading. Many popular organizations are concerned with *access* to development, with inclusion and participation, while others are concerned with renegotiating development, or with devolution and decentralization. 'Anti-Development' is much too simple and rhetorical a description.

Dichotomic thinking, pro and anti development, underrates the dialectics, complexity of motives and motions in modernity and development. In

relation to post-development, alternative development occupies an in-between position: it shares the radical critiques of mainstream development while retaining belief in development and redefining it. Post-development's take on really-existing development is quite narrow. The instances cited in post-development literature concern mainly Africa, Latin America and India; or reflections are general and no cases are discussed. The experience of NIEs in East Asia is typically *not* discussed.

Post-development takes critique of development to the point of retreat. Retreat from business-as-usual can be a creative position from which an alternative practice may grow. Thus, critical theory and its negation of the negation, though pessimistic in outlook, has served as a point of reference and inspiration, for instance to social movements of the 1960s. If we read critiques of development dirigisme, such as Deepak Lal's critique of state-centred development economics — which helped set the stage for the neoconservative turn in development — side by side with post-development critiques of development power, such as Escobar's critique of planning, the parallels are striking.<sup>3</sup> Both agree on state failure, although for different reasons. Lal argues that states fail because of rent-seeking; Escobar's criticisms arise from a radical democratic and anti-authoritarian questioning of social engineering and the faith in progress. Arguably the net political effect turns out to be much the same. In other words, there is an elective affinity between neoliberalism and the development agnosticism of post-development.

The quasi-revolutionary posturing in post-development reflects both a hunger for a new era and a nostalgia politics of romanticism, glorification of the local, grassroots, community with conservative overtones. There are conservative elements to the communitarians. Post-development reflects anti-intellectualism in its reliance on deprofessionalized intellectuals and distrust of experts, while on the other hand it relies on and calls for 'complex discursive operations'.

### **Alternatives to Development**

Alternative development is rejected because 'most of the efforts are also products of the same world view which has produced the mainstream concept of science, liberation and development' (Nandy, 1989: 270). Serge Latouche (1993: 161) goes further: 'The most dangerous solicitations, the sirens with the most insidious song, are not those of the "true blue" and "hard" development, but rather those of what is called "alternative" development. This term can in effect encompass any hope or ideal that one might wish to project into the harsh realities of existence. The fact that it presents a friendly

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3. Both papers are reproduced side by side in Corbridge (1995).

exterior makes “alternative” development all the more dangerous’. This echoes Esteva’s fulminating against those who ‘want to cover the stench of “Development” with “Alternative Development” as a deodorant’ (Esteva, 1985: 78).

Latouche (1993: 161) examines ‘three principal planks of alternative development: food self-sufficiency; basic needs; and appropriate technologies’ and finds each wanting. As noted earlier, these were part of the 1970s’ package but are no longer specific to alternative development in the 1990s because they have entered mainstream discourse. Latouche (ibid: 159) maintains that ‘The opposition between “alternative development” and *alternative to development* is radical, irreconcilable and one of essence, both in the abstract and in theoretical analysis’. ‘The debate over the word “development”’, according to Latouche (ibid: 160), ‘is not merely a question of words. Whether one likes it or not, one can’t make development different from what it has been. Development has been and still is the *Westernisation of the world*’. This might be rhetorically satisfying but it is also one-sided and old fashioned. What about Japanization (as in the ‘Japanese challenge’, Japanese management techniques, Toyotaism) and Easternization (as in the East Asian model)? Latouche uses the bulky historical category ‘the West’, which in view of steep historical differences between Europe and North America is untenable. He overlooks more complex assessments of globalization.

Forming a position in relation to post-development might proceed as follows. Let’s not quibble about details and take your points on board and work with them. What do you have to offer? This varies considerably: Sachs (1992) is a reasonable refresher course in critiques of development. A common-sense reaction may be, your points are well taken, now what do we do? The response of, for instance, Gilbert Rist is that alternatives are not his affair. The trend in several sources is to stop at critique. What to do? Emery Roe’s response, in a discussion of sustainable development as a form of alternative managerialism, is: ‘Nothing’ (Roe, 1995: 160). What this means is an endorsement of the status quo and in effect, more of the same, and this is the core weakness of post-development.

Post-development is based on a paradox. While it is clearly part of the broad critical stream in development, it shows no regard for the progressive implications and dialectics of modernity — for democratization, soft power technologies, network structures, reflexivity. Thus, it is not difficult to argue that the three nodal discourses uncovered by Escobar — democratization, difference, anti-Development — *themselves* arise out of modernization. Democratization continues the democratic impetus of the Enlightenment; difference is a function of the world ‘becoming smaller’ and societies multicultural; and anti-Development echoes and elaborates the dialectics of Enlightenment of critical theory. More generally, the rise of social movements and civil society activism, North and South, are also expressions of the richness of overall development, and cannot be simply captured

under the label 'anti'. Post-development's backbone is an anti-authoritarian sensibility, an aversion to control, and hence a suspicion of alternative development as 'alternative managerialism' — which probably makes sense in view of the record of many NGOs. Since it fails to translate this sensibility into a constructive position, however, what remains is whistling in the dark. The *Development Dictionary* critiques of the market, state, production, needs, and so on are historically informed but overstate their case and offer no alternatives, and thus fall flat. What is the point of declaring development a 'hoax' (Norberg-Hodge, 1995) without proposing an alternative?

In my view post-development and 'alternatives to development' are flawed premises — flawed not as sensibilities but as positions. The problem is not the critiques, with which one can easily enough sympathize, but the accompanying rhetoric and posturing, which intimate a politically correct position. 'Alternatives to development' is a misnomer because no alternatives to development are offered. There is no positive programme; there is critique but no construction. 'Post-development' is misconceived because in the prefix it reinstates the linear concept of time, which is being rejected in 'development'. It attributes to 'development' a single and narrow meaning, a consistency which does not match either theory or policy, and thus replicates the rhetoric of developmentalism, rather than penetrating and exposing its polysemic realities. It echoes the 'myth of development' rather than leaving it behind. While the shift toward cultural sensibilities that accompanies this perspective is a welcome move, the plea for 'people's culture', indigenous culture, local knowledge and culture, can lead, if not to ethnoc Chauvinism, to reification of both culture and locality or people. It also evinces a one-dimensional view of globalization which is equated with homogenization. On a philosophical level we may wonder whether there are alternatives to development for homo sapiens, as the 'unfinished animal', that is, to development writ large, in the wide sense of evolution. The only alternative to development, then, remains alternative development.

Alternative development primarily looks at development from the point of view of the local and grassroots; it looks at development along a vertical axis, from a bottom-up point of view. On the whole, post-development adopts a wider angle in looking at development through the lens of the broad problematic of modernity. Yet, although the angle is wide, the optics are not sophisticated. Its representation of modernity itself is one-dimensional and ignores different options for problematizing modernity — such as dialectics, as in critical theory, 'reworking modernity' (Pred and Watts, 1992), or exploring modernities in the plural. Reactions to modernity that are commonly distinguished are neo-traditionalism, modernization and postmodernism. Post-development generally fits the profile of the neo-traditionalist reaction to modernity. More interesting and enabling as a position is reflexive modernity. A corollary in relation to development would be the notion of reflexive development.



**REFLEXIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Some time ago, modernity resurfaced as a central theme in social science and has been reproblemized from various angles — witness terms such as high, late, advanced, neo, reflexive, radical, post modernities. A strand that runs through these forms of questioning is that modernity has become its own problem and theme. Ulrich Beck (1992) contrasts ‘simple modernity’ concerned with ‘mastering nature’ with reflexive modernity, the condition in which the moderns are increasingly concerned with managing the problems created by modernity. Reflexivity also figures in social theory, social movement literature (new social movements are said to be reflexive in the sense of information oriented, present oriented and concerned with feedback), and in political economy.

Beck refers to the ‘new modernity’ as risk society, emerging in conditions in which scarcity no longer dominates as a consequence of the growth of productive forces. Risk distribution society, which emerged in Germany in the early 1970s, is contrasted to ‘scarcity society’, which still predominates in the South, where the primary concern is with modernization through technoscientific development. All the same, scarcity society and risk society also interact and overlap in various ways:

1. Through the globalization of risk: through generalized effects such as the erosion of the ozone layer; through the commonality of anxiety; and boomerang effects of crisis in developing countries on developed countries.
2. Through the export of risk to scarcity society. The relocation of traditional industries is affected by different trade-offs between accumulation and risk in scarcity societies (witness the Bhopal disaster). The Third World serves as an ecological waste dump, also on account of rural naïvety in relation to industrial risk. Beck concludes that extreme poverty and extreme risk attract one another.
3. In addition there is a North–South transfer of risk awareness, among others as mobilization arguments for social movements. Critique of science and of corporate policies and public relations, for instance of oil companies and pharmaceuticals, are increasingly being transnationalized (witness the Nestlé baby formula campaign, campaigns concerning Shell in Ogoniland in Nigeria).

These forms of interaction are reflected in ongoing debates. Can we understand these debates better in light of the notion of reflexive development? Is there an emerging pattern of reflexive development and how does it relate to alternative development? Arguably, after several development decades, development thinking and policy have become increasingly reflexive in relation to the failures and crises of development. New policies are

increasingly concerned with managing the hazards, risks, unintended consequences and side-effects brought about by development itself.

This questioning is also reflected in development theory: for instance, in the rejection of developmentalism and linear progress. Critiques of the role of science and techno-scientific development lead to appeals to indigenous technical knowledge and local knowledge. These turns are logical also in view of the crisis of 'western' models.

In an analytical sense development has been reflexive all along in that development ideas and policies have been reactions to and reflections on the failures and limitations of previous development practices. In the currently emerging pattern of reflexive development a feedback mode is taking shape in which development policy increasingly becomes concerned with the management of development interventions itself. Features of this feedback include:

- The crisis of techno-scientific progress translates into a crisis of development. 'Progress is a blank check to be honoured beyond consent and legitimation' (Beck, 1992: 203). There is a breakdown of faith that technical progress = social progress. It is no longer being taken for granted that the negative effects of technical progress can be treated separately, as social consequences of technological change. A parallel questioning in development concerns the equations growth = development and economic growth = social development.
- The 'anti-development' position parallels western critiques of progress and is in part inspired by it. Post-development resembles the a-programmatic, directionless, extreme scepticism of (most forms of) post-modernism. Risk society, according to Beck, is a 'catastrophic society', replete with dystopias and subject to apocalyptic mood swings. In the South expressions of extreme pessimism are not uncommon — on the grounds of negative growth, the failure of trickle-down and the consequences of development.

With regard to the politics of reflexive modernity, Beck observes a 'role reversal behind unchanged façades': 'The political becomes non-political and the non-political political'. A 'revolution under the cloak of normality' is taking place. The political system is being eroded while the democratic constitution remains intact. In risk societies key decisions are being taken in boardrooms and laboratories, and the state has but limited capacity to intervene in industrial modernization, research and technological change; yet the political system politically legitimates the decisions taken in industry and the corporate sector, and assumes responsibility for the side-effects of technological and industrial change. The declining role of parliament, the growing proportion of swing voters and the rising influence of corporate interest groups are symptoms of this political transformation. A new political culture is taking shape in which the separation between politics and nonpolitics becomes fragile and nonpolitics gives rise to subpolitics.

How does this relate to alternative development? Alternative development may be viewed as the tip of the iceberg of a larger change that is imperceptibly taking place in political systems and cultures. It reflects a refiguration of states in relation to development and technological change, a depoliticization which is partly made up for by technocracy. As both cause and effect of democratization, civil societies are empowered and the boundaries between political and nonpolitical, public and private spheres have become fluid. A repoliticization is taking place through the emergence of subpolitics, in manifestations such as special interests, social movements and localization. In the South religious resurgence and ethnic mobilization are part of this. These changes form part of the larger context of informalization, liberalization and a gradual transfer of some responsibilities from GOs to NGOs. This involves the emergence of parallel structures in welfare and public health. The only things not being replaced are the procedures of accountability, inadequate as they have been. Hence the new democratic culture, of which alternative development is part, also involves new democratic deficits. Alternative development, then, is one of the spearpoints of reflexive development. Here reflexive development takes on a programmatic meaning: development may become reflexive in a social and political sense, as a *participatory, popular reflexivity*, which can take the form of broad social debates and fora on development goals and methods.

## CONCLUSION

A fundamental change that has taken place in the 'modern history of development' is that agency has become more important. Development is now more anchored in people's subjectivity, rather than in overarching structures and institutions — the state or international bodies such as the IFIs or UN agencies. Development is becoming more oriented towards local actors. Participation is increasingly a threshold condition for local development. Democratization is increasingly a condition for national-scale development. Democratization is participation on a macro level. Democratic deficits at local and national levels are often discussed. All these represent forms of reflexivity: local, community, national. What is less often discussed are the democratic deficits at the international level, that is, the accountability of world-scale mega policies, on the part of the World Trade Organization, the IMF, or international financial markets. These are questions of transnational reflexivity.

It follows that as a heading 'alternative development' no longer makes much sense. It made sense in the 1970s and 1980s when there was a clear break between mainstream development and 'another development'. 'Alternative' as a heading made sense when the relationship between mainstream and alternative was more or less static, not fluid as it is now. Now mainstream development has opened up and several features of alternative

development — the commitment to participation, sustainability, equity — are being widely shared (and unevenly practised), not merely in the world of NGOs but from UN agencies all the way to the World Bank.

Alternative development should be renamed, should be given a more substantive name, such as participatory development or popular development. Naming is not easy; it involves the play of perceptions and politics of representation. Names make most sense when they grow out of practice. *Participatory development* may be taken in a narrow sense as a method only, rather than as an overall approach or outlook — and a method, moreover, that can be easily embraced, so that an approach under this heading would rapidly lose distinctiveness. *Popular development* may be a more attractive heading, substantive and distinctive enough to mark a terrain different from human development, at least in the way John Brohman (1996) develops and defines it. Human development is better positioned institutionally, from the UN system to economics and social welfare ministries in the South; on the other hand, it is more bureaucratic in outlook. Human development, while it endorses some of the same principles as popular development, remains on the whole state-centred, top-down social engineering, in which the state is viewed as the main agent for implementing human development policies. Popular development, on the other hand, is firmly centred on civil society — though not as militantly and exclusively as ‘alternative development’.

No matter the label, there will always be a place for alternative, participatory or popular development. As long as there is a future for development, participatory development will be a major part of it. In addition, as long as there is development, there will be room for critical development and for ground-up, street views of development — but no longer necessarily in opposition to mainstream development, no longer necessarily as local, micro approaches contrary to and apart from macro policies. In the end, what matters most is the direction and character of overall development. In comparison to this question the differences between popular development and human development, though significant, are minor. The key issue is the wide gap between social development, in the sense of both popular and human development, and the policies adopted by the World Trade Organization and the Bretton Woods institutions.

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