

# Conflicting Paradigms in the Development Process: An Assessment and an Alternative

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## Introduction

There is a widespread belief now that the Western development model for the industrialisation of Third World countries not only failed to advance development, but has reinforced the "development of underdevelopment". Powerful critiques of this model have been written. While there are differences among them, the logic and evidence of the structuralists, the dependency school and the Marxists' critiques in the aggregate, are devastating to the validity of the Western model. Yet, it is not quite clear as to where these critiques will take us. Therefore, what is most urgently needed at this point in time is a means of translating the insights of the critiques of the Western economic development models into concrete development policy guides. If this is to be achieved, two basic concepts of development policy must be reconceived.

One is the meaning of development itself. By redefining the concept of development, new criteria are necessarily established against which the conditions within Third World countries can be judged in terms of their state of development. The second element concerns the role of urbanisation in national development. If it is to occur, development must be reconceived within a spatial framework which integrates and balances the urban and rural sectors rather than the parallel thinking of urban and rural problems that were common in the last development decades.

This paper argues for the redefinition of development so that it means a process of structural transformation that moves a society closer to conditions in which the basic needs of people are met. Hence, the concept of development must be expanded beyond simply considering growth in gross national product which fails to include such things as how the benefits are redistributed and social conditions are improved. Such development policy, however, will require that the concept of economic productivity be replaced by social productivity. Furthermore, any theoretical construct of development theory must have the specific objective conditions of underdeveloped countries as its parameter. Therefore, a theory of development ought to be a guide in the process of formulating a development strategy rather than a simple "philosophical" discourse that attempts to explain the historical development

of hitherto existing societies, particularly Western society whose historical experiences are radically different from most Third World countries.

This must be also true with urbanisation and national development. Historically the Western development model has assumed a causal relationship between industrialisation and urbanisation. They are to move together, each supporting and facilitating the other in the development of underdeveloped countries. The way in which cities organise space in the Third World, however, supports and maintains their further underdevelopment. In fact, the very assumption that urbanisation and industrialisation are in a causal relationship cannot be sustained even in the Western context. First, cities have existed in history, though smaller by today's standards, prior to the industrial revolution and the application of power-technology thereafter. Second, what is apparent, when one studies the historical development of cities, is that the precondition for the rise and growth of a city is not industrialisation *per se*, rather it is social surplus accumulation under varied and combined modes of production.

*Given this, it is plausible to state that there is a fundamental relationship between the development of the productive forces and the rate of increase in social surplus accumulation. In turn, there is a direct link between the geographic concentration of such accumulated social surplus and the formation and expansion of cities.* In other words, if surplus derived from earlier accumulation is invested in the existing structures, it would be logical to expect growth both in terms of urbanisation and other economic indicators. Therefore, the analysis in spatial formation and its implication for national development must necessarily focus on social surplus appropriation.

If these redefinitions of development and spatial orientation are used as starting points, it is possible to review what the Western model has contributed toward their achievement, consider alternative formulations for development policy and draw upon the experience of non-Western countries to consider issues in applying a non-Western development framework.

## **The Western Development Model**

In examining the problematics in the development of UDCs, it is necessary to briefly analyse the major Western economic growth theories. We find that their approach is positivist and attempts to discover universal "laws" of development. Unsurprisingly, the models advanced for the development of UDCs look very much like the history of Western industrialisation. The "growth stage theories", the diffusionist, modernization approaches and the "big-push" industrialisation theses are all premised on a similar set of assumptions.

The underlying assumption in all of them is that the process of development, which meant increases in gross national product, is to follow a series of successive stages through which all countries must pass. The development of underdeveloped countries, however, is assumed to have been impeded by such things as indigenous values such as traditionalism, a low level of technology,

rapid population growth, lack of capital and political instability. According to this view, development could occur with industrialisation. However, these "barriers" would have to be overcome to achieve it. This would require a number of transformations: industrialisation requires high capital investment, capital formation through savings (deferred consumption) and foreign assistance. It also requires the development of a labour force with higher skills. Creating such a work force means a massive transfer of workers from rural farming and primary industries into processing and manufacturing industries. Some industries are associated with urban centres, this process will lead to social and physical concentrations and allow major economies of scale to be achieved. The role of the industrialised countries in this process, for altruistic purposes or for "enlightened self-interest" is to extend assistance in the form of technical expertise, training of local entrepreneurs, technicians, industrial workers, and to provide capital for investment. Three decades later, however, we find that the flow of capital is in the reverse direction. As Lever and Huhne observed:

*Until 1982 it was understood that there had to be, for a prolonged period, a one-way flow of resources from the advanced countries to the Third World to promote its development. The view went unchallenged in either official or private-sector circles and was supported by every school of economic thought, albeit for differing reasons. Since the debt crisis which broke in 1982, those flows have been reversed for each important group of countries in the Third World. International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates imply that in 1985 there is to be a resource flow from the seven largest Third World borrowers to their more prosperous creditors worth \$32 billion, or nearly one-fifth of their entire earnings from the sales of their exports of goods and services (Lever and Huhne, 1985:3).*

The theoretical underpinning of the model nonetheless is that social and economic change takes place by a process of diffusion of innovation and technology transfer from the centre (industrialised countries) to the periphery (the Third World). Cultural (both material and social) artifacts are to be introduced into the cities of the Third World nations and from there diffused to the countryside. Therefore, according to the model, as Abu-Lughod and Hay observed: "... the cities of the less developed countries were to play an important creative role in integrating the country and in stimulating its parallel transformation." (Abu-Lughod and Hay, 1977:105).

## **The Record of Development Under Western-dominated Policies**

Development in Sub-Saharan Africa, (excluding the State of South Africa) the specific focus of this paper, and in the Third World generally, has not occurred after decades of guidance from theories generated by the industrialised West. Even if the conditions of the Third World are judged against the Western model's own definition of development, rather than the one argued for here, development has not occurred. The gross national product (GNP), gross

domestic product (GDP), or other economic development indicators, show no substantial growth for Third World nations. For instance, growth of GNP per capita for low income African countries between 1965-1985 was 1.8% per year, which is lower than the population growth rate for the region. The growth rate for all low income countries, (excluding China and India), between 1965-1985 was 0.4% per capita (*World Development Report*, 1987). For the low income countries of Africa, agricultural growth rate decreased on the average from 2.9% between 1965-1973 to 0.7% between 1973-1983 (*Financing Adjustment With Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 1986).

It must be re-emphasised, however, that even if there were recorded growth in these economic indicators, the development of underdeveloped countries would not have been assured. Because, as Samir Amin precisely put it:

*As economic growth progresses, each of the characteristics by which the structure of the periphery is defined is not attenuated, but on the contrary, is accentuated. So at the centre, growth is development – that is, it integrates; at the periphery, growth based on integration in the world market is the development of underdevelopment (Amin, 1976: 28-29).*

In effect, a simple look at what the main commodities of UDCs could buy in the 1980s as opposed to 1970s, (the decline is between 31-49%), substantiates Clive Thomas' observation about Tanzania,

*... whatever may be the need for foreign exchange, and whatever are the short-run pressures on employment and income, primary export production in this historical era does not contain enough dynamic demand potential to transform agriculture ... In addition, substitutes always exist to stifle any threat of significantly upward rising prices. Moreover, insofar as primary export production is uncoordinated among the Third World countries, their individual pursuit of national advantages will always lead to frustrating price movement in the world commodity markets (Thomas, 1974:167).*

It is interesting to note, however, that in the face of this reality, export production is the main incentive for the "overspecialised" sector of agricultural production in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The same predicament goes for other commodity production, such as base metals. It is true that Africa in general possesses significant proportions of the world's minerals, including 97% of chrome, 85% of platinum, 64% of manganese, 13% of copper, 75% of cobalt, 20% of the world's hydroelectric capacity as well as 20% of traded oil. These combined with 70% of cocoa, 50% of palm oil and 33% of coffee would suggest an excellent bargaining position for Africa. Reality, however, has dictated otherwise. For example, much of Africa's developed mineral and industrial production is controlled by non-Africans. It is estimated that at independence, 83% of Zimbabwe's mining and other industries were controlled and owned by transnationals from outside the country (Arnold, 1981). How much room for national development planning, such conditions allow is anyone's guess.

Even as national governments initiate plans for the exploitation of some of the known (but not foreign owned) minerals, there is serious doubt as to what

benefits these governments derive from such an enterprise. Perhaps nothing illustrates this dilemma better than the Mauritanian experience.

*In order to open up new iron ore deposits at Guelb during the mid-1970s, Mauritania had to seek \$500 million in capital. It obtained the money from Arab sources (\$290 million), the World Bank, the European Investment Bank (EIB), the African Development Bank (ADB), France and Japan, but the price it had to pay was very high. Thus, in 1974, debt servicing cost Mauritania 3.8% of foreign earnings; four years later, when the finances for the new ore developments had been arranged, the debt servicing was taking 20% of foreign earnings; the national debt had risen to \$805 million, equivalent to one and a half times the GNP; 49% of the state mineral prospecting enterprises (SNIM) was then owned by Arab financial interests; and effective control of the mining was no longer in Mauritanian hands. It is legitimate to ask how much real benefit will have occurred to Mauritania in 10 years time when the ore has been extracted (Arnold, 1981: 58-9).*

Africa's share of world output, in terms of industrial production, still remains inelastic and is dropping. For the low-income economies industrial production growth rate, between 1965-1973 was 5.7%. Between 1973-1983, however, the annual growth rate for these economies was 1.6%, a decline of 4.1%. The annual growth rate for all Sub-Saharan Africa is 14.6 between 1965-1973 and 1.4% between 1973-1983. Furthermore, such industrial production is only an aspect of enclave "development" which spatially manifests itself in what the dependency and the Marxist theorists call a dependent economy marked by an urban proto-proletariat and rural poverty. Despite these alarming facts, theorists of the Western economic development model insist that such use of economic space is a prerequisite, even if only as a prelude, to the eventual dynamically integrated social and spatial development.

According to theorists of this model urbanisation in the Third World is a "beach-head", acting as the centre of modernisation which is the catalyst for national economic growth and change in order to revitalise the assumedly stagnating rural sector. When the urbanisation processes deviate from this perspective, they are considered as anomalous, which the urbanisation literature describes as pseudo-urbanisation and hyper-urbanisation. This observed irregularity was in turn assumed to have resulted from the "dualistic" characteristic of traditional African societies.

This approach to the study of the role of urbanisation in socio-economic development fails to grasp the fundamental realities of spatial organisation in the Third World. The model points to urbanisation without industrialisation in the Third World without clearly identifying the loci from which the problems emanate: the historical forces that gave rise to the city and the modern composition of forces that are integral components of its *modus operandi*.

A historical examination of the consequences of the colonially imposed social and spatial formations in the Third World in general, and Africa in

particular, however, strongly suggests that the city has been an expression of the colonial economic and class structures (Magubane, 1980, Williams, 1973) Davidson, 1974, Fanon, 1965). In other words, the city in Sub-Saharan Africa developed into its present form and function as an aspect of the development of the capitalist mode of production at world scale. Given this, it is possible to make the following assertions. *First, spatial organisation has no neutral attributes.* It is subject to the political and economic organisation that called it into existence. *Second, there is an inseparable linkage or relationship between the development of the productive forces and spatial organisation.* Therefore, the thesis of Western urbanisation theory, that urbanisation processes in the Third World are a recapitulation of the earlier experience in the development of Western capitalism, is both theoretically and historically inaccurate.

The major impact of colonial capitalism on African social and spatial formations was the superimposition of the colonial system upon the precapitalist indigenous spatial organisation which then truncated the development of an integrated network of cities and towns. Hence, even if we were to accept the notion of universal "central place theory", as often advanced by the Western development model, the process by which it would have occurred in Africa has been distorted by the intrusion of European colonialists and a socio-political structure which was imposed for their own benefit. In concrete terms, when the capitalist mode of production was introduced and controlled by alien forces, and then the accumulated social surplus was expropriated for a purpose unconnected with the requirements of the societies invaded, the whole process of spatial and social transformation became deformed. Hence, functionally, space is organised in Africa south of the Sahara in the following manner:

- (1) a limited number of areas specialised in export production;
- (2) surrounding zones which supply the export-producing regions or sectors with food and other services; and
- (3) areas which we may call the peripheral zones of the peripheries which more often than not supply migrant labour and some agricultural products to the export-producing areas.

Such colonially imposed spatial organisation of production has led to further complications after independence. Even in those states, such as Tanzania, where there seems to be a political will to correct the disarticulation of the space economy, their efforts have been constrained by the colonial legacy of dependent spatial structures (Soja, 1976). This situation clearly points out the difficulty of shifting social and spatial infrastructures to suit changed objectives and altered ideologies.

The second most deleterious aspect of European colonisation of Africa is the acceptance of the Western development model within the dominated societies which then is internalised and becomes an intractable force. Consequently, it has become difficult to bring change in an orderly fashion even in the face of insurmountable evidence that a new strategy is called for.

As Marx purportedly said, "... the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living."

## Alternative Approaches

The current debate is not over whether or not there is poverty and general distress in the Third World. Virtually all contending schools of thought, from the most conservative to the most radical perspectives and a variety of others in between, acknowledge the pressing problems Third World countries in general and Africa in particular are facing. The difference between advocates of the Western model and their critics, rather is over perceptions of the underlying causes of these conditions and the appropriate steps to remedy them. For example, according to the conservative point of view, the problem of underdevelopment is inherent in the environments and cultures of the societies in question. Therefore, its policy prescription is a more co-operative interaction with the industrialised countries as the comparative advantages of underdeveloped countries dictate. The liberal version of the Western model, on the other hand, calls for changes in traditional institutions and values of underdeveloped countries. In their place "modern" values and social institutions, innovations and advances generated from the industrialised countries are to be instituted. The radical perspective, of course, contends that such approaches lead only to further underdevelopment of the Third World.

Indeed, a careful analysis of the former two viewpoints shows that there are only cosmetic differences between the liberal and the conservative assumptions. Nonetheless, these two development models have dominated all other approaches to socio-economic development in the Third World for the past thirty years.

There is little debate today about the general accuracy of the critiques of the Western development model. At the same time, however, the different versions of the socialist theoretical perspectives have problems of their own. Their view of history suggests "natural laws" of social development which act in such a manner as to require capitalism as a prerequisite to socialism. That is, proponents of this perspective see social development as following a rigid sequence of stages: primitive society, pastoral society, agricultural society, feudal society, capitalist society, socialist society, etc. Therefore, this view creates a paradox, perhaps even a paralysis, as to how universal socialism is to be achieved without going through capitalism, which the dependency theorists argue is impossible to have in the Third World (Palamg, 1978).

It seems reasonable to suggest at this point that part of the struggle towards a resolution of the development problems in the Third World in general and Sub-Saharan Africa specifically, requires, among other things, a consideration of a wide range of alternative development strategies as well as a move beyond present perceptions of reality. For it is obvious that as long as these nations remain within the colonially imposed spatial and social structures, their perceptions of the development problems and their resolutions are going to

be limited by these structures. This contention is best illustrated by adapting here Vogeler and De Souza's (1980: 5) simple straight line drawing problem, as shown below:



The idea is to connect the nine points drawn here with four continuous straight lines. It is obvious, however, that the task is impossible to accomplish to the extent that one stays within the area limited by these points.

In the quest for new options in development strategies, this study has critically examined and analysed the literature on development in different countries. Looking specifically at China and the supporting evidence from Cuba, two insights that have both cognitive and technical implications can be drawn. On the cognitive level, the formulation and implementation of development policy was premised upon the respective country's special conditions. This means the development strategy reflects on local conditions and attempts to improve the material base upon which the development policy is founded. Furthermore, the strategy takes advantage of existing local knowledge and technology of those who have been coping with lack of development and who are the beneficiaries of the ensuing development. The whole approach to development is conceived in a conceptual framework that recognizes the dynamic nature of social development and hence anticipates adaptability to changing circumstances. It is apparent that this approach to development is different from the static Western development model which assumes, among other things, stable environment, the availability of skilled manpower, advanced technology, and borrowed capital for investment.

The technical implications of the development strategy adopted by China and Cuba, notwithstanding their respective differences, are in the aggregate very instructive. Initially, the strategy stresses the importance of building an industrial base with a large part of the national budget devoted to heavy industry, even at the expense of social infrastructures and consumer goods. This was made possible in these countries only by socialist aid and trade (Gurley, 1976). In implementing this policy, a major attempt was made to minimise generating imbalances between urban and rural areas, between rich and poor and among deficient regions of the nation. The experience of other Third World countries in this regard, however, has been very disappointing because the limited industrialisation that had taken place has resulted in increased contradictions among the different regions. The pattern of industrialisation common to most Third World countries in general and Sub-Saharan Africa in particular is an agglomeration of a capital city that consumes three-fourths of the national money supply including the lion's share of health care and educational services (Schatzberg, 1979).



Despite current uncertainties as to the direction of development in China, more than any other nation in the Third World, the Chinese were able to overcome social, political and territorial inequalities between the city and the countryside by following an economic policy that was not necessarily new nor specifically Chinese. For example, initially, despite large resource allocations to heavy industry, these industries were too weak to absorb the Chinese surplus labour. Hence, the Chinese development policy stressed labour-intensive agricultural development. This policy, however, had been used by both Japan, for a long time, and by other Third World countries, including India. The crucial difference, as Mingione observed, is in the appropriation of economic surplus:

*If the agricultural surplus is systematically taken away from the agricultural sector in order to support the indiscriminate growth of capitalist industrial production, as was true in Japan, it is inevitable that things become the poorer peasants and eventually the process of abandonment of the countryside and the impoverishment of agriculture, typical of capitalist development, ... if on the other hand, the surplus is taken over systematically by a class of rich peasants and by the state in order to maintain a strong bureaucracy and substantial urban over-population, as is happening in India, without even starting a process of industrialisation, the weaker peasants are ruined and urban and rural poverty are constantly reinforced. These two examples show that an agricultural policy based on high labour intensity is not, in itself, sufficient to overcome social, political and territorial inequality between town and country (Mingione, 1977: 375).*

There are other insights as well in the development process of these two countries. First, in both countries productivity of peasants as well as workers increased when people were "motivated" or inspired and the work environment was altered. It is doubtful, however, that simple "motivation" leads to increased production, unless "motivation" is simultaneously reinforced by providing education, technical training, better nourishment and by placing social value on tasks accomplished. The second insight is how to adapt the national education system to the needs of an underdeveloped country. In the absence of a clear direction towards indigenously initiated and formulated policy of development, a social goal, currently education in the former colonies, has become an instrument of underdevelopment rather than development. It does this in at least two significant ways. Despite radical differences in the objective conditions between the industrialised and underdeveloped countries, current educational policies simply certify the necessity of replicating the Western model of development. Progress is measured by such things as the degree of urbanisation, the literacy rate, knowledge of international languages, consumption of goods and services that are foreign produced and acquiring the "latest" military hardware for the purpose of self-destruction. In addition, as Hull wrote "... it makes the basic objectives of underdevelopment – the rules of the capitalist game – that dictate

that most of the fruits of development be reserved for a privileged few, the strongest" (Hull, 1979: 139).

Finally, if one point is to be emphasised over others, the most important lesson that can be drawn from the experience of China and Cuba, is that their experimentation, particularly in territorial planning, is very far from its end. Nonetheless, as Professor Salter has written about China, the experiment of the two countries has truly broken, "... the Third World's infatuation with economies of scale and expansive concentrations of industrial plants so traditional to Western ... development" (Salter, 1974: 122). This is an important point to note in development planning because once an initial decision is made to locate a particular activity or institution at a specific point, a kind of self-generating momentum is established which continues to attract related enterprises and even multiplies the impact of a given social, economic and political investment. The experimental nature of planning in these societies needs stressing because neither China nor Cuba has found a "formula" or model for all times and all places. Perhaps how these lessons are learned and applied is just as decisive, because,

*... there are two different attitudes towards learning from others. One is the dogmatic attitude of transplanting everything whether or not it is suited to our conditions. This is no good. The other attitude is to use our heads and learn those things which suit our conditions, that is, to absorb whatever experience is useful to us. That is the attitude we should adopt (Mao, 1971: 15).*

## A New Perspective

What emanates from this brief presentation of the problems in the socio-economic development of Third World countries is a normative approach to development. As such, it is difficult to clearly chart the direction it ought to take. Nonetheless, the preceding analysis engenders the following options and constraints. Underdeveloped and dependent socio-economic structures are objectively marked by a low level of development of the productive forces; hence, they lack the capacity to transform the material base of production. Since such characteristics are to be found in the workings of an economic structure that divorces domestic production from domestic resource use, and domestic demand from domestic needs (Thomas, 1974, and Amin, 1976), the direction of a genuine development that is beyond meaningless slogans ought to be aimed at reversing this orientation. In other words, the specific policy issues are those strategies that attempt to formulate two types of convergence: resource use and local demand, and needs with demand.

This approach requires a break with a number of concepts and habits such as re-orientation of what is "optimum" volume of output and what should be produced and consumed. Two caveats are perhaps in order here: first, an economic system that attempts to forge resource use and internal demand, and internal demand and internal needs, does not necessarily lead to development in isolation. What is being advanced rather is the possibility of

creating a dynamic economy by adapting such methods. Second, in terms of what ought to be produced and consumed, the obvious limitations of prescriptions which are made outside of a specific cultural and historical situation must be noted; that is, such decisions are subject to given social and political culture.

Since development strategies, however pertinent, are not self-executing, these development approaches assume political infrastructures which are firmly grounded on worker/peasant and urban/rural alliances. Such political strategies have been very much in evidence in the development process of China and Cuba and their development clearly represents a successful departure from the Western development prescriptions and to a large extent even from the Soviet style of development. Furthermore, such development strategy must take into account the underdevelopment of the productive forces, the colonially imposed spatial structures and the lingering class alliances in the Third World. That is, careful considerations must be given to the economic base as well as the superstructures of the nations in question as determining factors in the development process. Hence a premium is placed on the internal dynamics because, while external conditions, such as geo-political relationships, the current debt burden and even the physical environment have significant impact on the development of Third World countries, they become effectively operative only through internal causes. Therefore, the political mobilization of the masses, both as a political base and as the most valuable resources in the development effort, is more important than to view the problem in development in terms of econometric nomenclature.

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