

HANDBOOK ON DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL CHANGE



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Edited by

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Preface

G. Honor Fagan and Ronaldo Munck

Development and social change is a broad optic from which to view human history. While contested in many ways, it is an inescapable problematic to evaluate the prospects for humanity. We now live in an era which can provide for the well-being of all. The forces of production are at the very peak of possibilities and they are only constrained by relations of production which prevent a consistent move towards greater equality for all and a continuous deepening of democracy. Social progress is only possible if these constraints are addressed and the unprecedented concentration of wealth and power since around 1990 is reversed. The second crisis looming is that of the environment, where climate change and the depletion of national resources lead to enrichment of a fear in the short term at the cost of the longer-term sustainability of humanity as a whole.

By many criteria, the period from 1990 to the present has been one of spectacular development and social change. The Human Development Index has increased steadily, for example in terms of longevity, and at least some of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been met. Long-standing inequalities and hierarchies in terms of gender, race and even sexual orientation have been reduced (overall) and made illegal. Global connectivity increased dramatically and no one should minimize the potential impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in terms of development and social change. Yet, over the same period, the proportion of people affected by climate change and global warming has increased dramatically. In terms of air pollution, the recurring smog of Mexico City, Beijing and Delhi point towards a bleak future, as do the inundations in Bangladesh and Jakarta. When the first great transformation of the industrial era elevated the market above society and nature, it posed the now urgent need to re-embed the market in society and its placing under social control.

The main impediment to development and socially beneficial social change today is undoubtedly global inequality. For all the hope around the folk tale that ‘a rising tide lifts all boats’ and the dramatic market expansion in China in particular, global inequality has not decreased with globalization even though absolute poverty levels have been reduced. Industrialization of what was called the Third World from the 1970s onwards did not lead to convergence with the afferent or ‘developed’

countries, but simply recast the North-South divide through a new international division of labour. Economic globalization from the 1990s onwards did lead to the incorporation into the global market of what was once called the Second World, and created the conditions for the rise of the semi-peripheral BRICS (bringing together the five major emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) to become industrial powers. But, after many attempts to show a reduction of global poverty and inequality (only plausible at all due to the inclusion of China), the latest data on global income distribution, based on household surveys, contradicts this optimistic scenario. The period from 1998 to 2008, from the collapse of the Berlin Wall to the Great Crash, was one of accelerated globalization and an optimistic outlook that the market would deliver greater equality. But Branko Milanovic and colleagues at the World Bank now find categorically that ‘the level of global inequality’ (combining between country and within country in dimension) and the Gini Index which measures it ‘might not have gone down at all’ due to an underestimation of the top of national income distributions in previous studies (Lakner and Milanovic, 2015, pp. 47–8).

The introductory chapter of this volume by Ronaldo Munck seeks to develop a genealogy of the various theories of development and social change. It addresses the contradictory nature of capitalist development within which it situates current debates around development and social change. It is an approach to these epistemological terrains which acknowledges global complexity and is open to ruptures and a move beyond the status quo.

Part I then addresses some of the main ‘economic’ aspects of development and social change, though the label is more one of convenience and is not intended to indicate an autonomous and self-continued domain. Philip McMichael (Chapter 2) addresses the urgent need for an ecology of development on the basis that the modern development paradigm is essentially ‘bankrupt’. The notion of ‘sustainable development’ is also questioned, given that it does not address the need to rehabilitate the world’s degraded ecosystems and sustain them with ecological development. In Chapter 3 Rowan Lubbock addresses a fundamental issue, namely the historical relationship between development and imperialism. There are key issues here – such as whether imperialism hinders or promotes development, which is highly relevant to the era of globalization. Furthermore, is imperialism still an organizing principle for the geographical distribution of poverty and plenty?

These opening chapters are followed by a set of interlocking treatments of development and the private sector (Laura Smith, Anne Tallontire and James Van Alstine), financialization (Cecilia Allami and Alan Cibils),

regionalism (Philippe De Lombaerde, Stephen Kingah, Liliana Lizarazo Rodríguez and Stefano Palestini) and the role of micro-credit (Milford Bateman).

In the last decade, many international development organizations have promoted the need for greater involvement by the private sector, especially from the Northern side. This fits with the critique of development as a national state-led process. As Chapter 4 shows, there is a big gap between the rhetoric and the practice of business engagement with development and a case study of the oil industry in Uganda shows the limitations of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) frame. The 1990s were also characterized by ‘financialization’, as finance capital assumed dominance over industrial capital in what seemed to augur a new phase of international development. Chapter 5 takes this broad concept and seeks to apply it in the global South (too often ignored in the relevant literature), and shows how it now plays a dominant role in development and underdevelopment today.

Regionalism, which has been a constant, if somewhat neglected, aspect of development is addressed in a systematic way in Chapter 6. It focuses on the role of regions and Regional Organizations (ROs) in the design and implementation of social development policies, broadly defined, including: regional redistributive policies, regional promotion and protection of democracy, and regional protection of human rights. Chapter 7, for its part, takes up the issue of micro-credit as a development policy tool, and situates it critically as part of the dominant neoliberal development paradigm. Rather than ushering in new bottom-up forms of development, it is seen to reproduce neoliberalism at the local level.

The final chapter in this section by Gareth Dale (Chapter 8) tackles the widespread view that ‘a rising tide lifts all boats’ in terms of economic growth and inequality. Dale questions whether we can even think of ‘the economy’ as an identifiable social sphere with an inherent propensity to grow, as both mainstream and critical development theories seem to believe. This reprise of classical themes is useful in reminding us about the genealogy of development.

Part II turns to some of the main ‘political’ aspects of development and social change, again understood in a political economy sense. Chapter 9 by Matthew Louis Bishop examines the troubled relationship between development and democracy from a global perspective. Does development lead to democracy? Does democracy require development to prosper? These are key questions as we enter another era of global turbulence. Su-ming Khoo in Chapter 10 offers a wide-ranging consideration of the international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and their leveraging political role. Are the development NGOs part of the dominant system

or allies of the poor and oppressed? In Chapter 11, Ben Fine and Gabriel Pollen turn to the origins of, and current debates around, the developmental state. Can, or should, the state be a driver of development and if so, how might it achieve its objectives? If not the market and not the state, what will drive development and social change now?

We then follow with three chapters on development issues in particular regions of the world: Latin America (Chapter 12 by Raúl Delgado Wise and Henry Veltmeyer); Sub-Saharan Africa (Chapter 13 by Patrick Bond); and China (Chapter 14 by Christopher A. McNally). They ask what development and social change means in the current era. They trace the development of capitalism and its contradictions in each region. They also show how social movements can construct another development, and how society always finds ways to contest the naked rule of the market. The global South has changed with globalization but it still sparks social transformation in different ways, insofar as development generates new social contradictions.

The final chapter of this section, Chapter 15 by Susanne Schech, takes up the complex and contested relationship between culture and development, effectively taking us into the terrain of cultural political economy. An appeal to culture by development practitioners can take a very ethnocentric direction, as in generalizing certain cultural requirements for development, but it also takes us into the radical perspective of post-colonialism.

Finally, in Part III of the volume we turn to the ‘social’ dimension of development, tackling some of the key issues of the day that will determine the direction of social change in the years to come. Chapter 16 by Tanja Bastia takes up the critical and topical issue of migration and development. The movement of people, nationally and transnationally, has been as crucial to the development of capitalism as the movement of goods and capital. What are its prospects in the decades to come? A. Haroon Akram-Lodhi in Chapter 17 critically evaluates the ‘sustainable livelihoods’ approach to development which, for a long time, prevailed as an action-oriented rural development paradigm. This chapter provides an account of why this approach has gone into decline over the last decade, providing us with valuable lessons for the future.

In Chapter 18 Ray Kiely tackles the absolutely central relationship between development and inequality. The proponents of free market globalization argued that this new model of development would reduce inequality between nations but that is not how it turned out. G. Honor Fagan, in Chapter 19, turns to the vital question of water and development from a critical perspective. Water is clearly a key component of social sustainability, as much as of economic development. It has also featured

prominently in the debate between those who consider it a human right and the advocates of water privatization. In Chapter 20, Fenella Porter returns to the topic of the international NGOs, but specifically their role in regard to gender equality. Deploying a discourse analysis approach, she shows the very real limitations of the NGO engagement with advancing gender equity within development. Alberto D. Cimadamore, in Chapter 21, turns our attention to what was, for a long time, the *raison d'être* of development, namely poverty eradication. He argues that the persistence of extreme poverty, after decades of high economic growth, undermines the legitimacy of current governance structures and makes urgent the search for an alternative.

As a fitting theme for a concluding chapter, we turn in Chapter 22 by Alberto Acosta to the post-development concept of *Buen Vivir* (living well) that has emerged out of a period of turbulent change in Latin America. Picking up on a pre-conquest philosophy of a nature-centred and harmonious form of existence, it may yet provide a viable utopia for our times. To imagine a better future for development and social change is a difficult task, and one that is somewhat neglected in the dominant literature, but one that is essential today.

The social sciences are loath to get into the prediction game, for good reasons, but should we not seek to develop methods to anticipate and shape the future of development and social change? We can certainly extrapolate from current tendencies to obtain the basic parameters of where development and social change are heading if those trends persist. Climate change science is, of course, based on just such extrapolations and these are taken seriously by the climate change deliverers, who can, of course, have the power to prevent the necessary measures being taken. Likewise, if we seek to address the likely future impact of gross inequality – such as 1 per cent of men holding 40 per cent of the global wealth – here again power concentration can prevent the necessary corrective measures being taken. Nevertheless, in a complex, interdependent and rapidly developing world we have no option but to explore alternative futures of social change if we are to be progressive and not regressive, which is always, of course, a possibility.

Many of the contributions to this volume show that, in many ways, the status quo is failing. The unregulated market will simply not deliver progressive development and social change. However, 'the old is dying but the new has not yet been born' (Gramsci) in terms of offering a viable and sustainable alternative future. In that context all sorts of morbid, back-ward looking, reactionary and isolationist tendencies will emerge. While aspects of the future are already with us – 'smart cities', 3D printing, the internet of things, and so on – futures thinking in the social sciences

is lagging behind. For the fear of being dubbed utopian – and thus not realistic – complex systems thinking has not been deployed sufficiently to democratize a future which is clearly being colonized by the big corporations. The next great transformation is about to commence and, if society is to benefit, the thinking reflected in this volume needs to be pushed forward to rethink, and thus impact, the future.

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