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Post-Development: Revealing the Myth of Sustainable Development

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Abstract: Modern concepts of 'poverty' and 'development' have been constructed by Western governments to promote an 'ideal' way of living. 'Poverty', understood as being without money has been framed to prioritise consumerism and the neoliberal capitalist way of life that is predominantly shown in Western countries. Development has been the solution to poverty in nations that do not align with Western capitalist ideals. Rather than solve poverty, development has instead led to numerous consequences, especially when it comes to the environment. To further understand the consequences of development on the environment, this research identifies the legacy of U.S. President Truman's coining of the word development in politics, to modern day international institutions presenting development as the solution to environmental problems. In focusing on the wording of Western development in sustainability efforts, this research will employ dependency theory and post-structuralism to critique development and finds that sustainable solutions amidst the current capitalist framework are not worthwhile. An alternative framework is presented in post-development, which critiques the origins and impact from development and seeks to transition from the reliance on capitalist models of living. Turning to 'post-development' as an alternative, we see numerous grassroots organisations which take a 'bottom-up' approach pioneering the path to sustainability. Buen Vivir (the good life) for example, demonstrates ways to de-commodify the natural environment and to live outside the construct of development. Additionally, ecological swaraj - or radical ecological democracy - emphasises the need to work together as a community to prioritise the earth's limitations and needs. However, it is important to acknowledge that with the entrenched impacts of

development, rejecting all forms and identities of Western Development is unrealistic. Therefore, a probable solution would be to turn to 'degrowth' as well as exploring post-development critiques. Degrowth refers to an 'inside-out' approach of resisting the power dynamics created from development within the Western world. It emphasises how one can sustainably live within the current development model and challenge the dynamics of the model which harm the environment. In doing such, we find that environmental solutions must promote alternative ways of living outside of the current system whilst understanding ways of redistributing production and consumption within the current system through degrowth.

Keywords: Development, Sustainability, Post-development, Decolonial

1 Introduction

> For development is much more than a socio-economic endeavour; it is a perception which models reality, a myth which comforts societies, and a fantasy which unleashes passions- (Sachs, 1992, p. 1).

When faced with the growing issue of climate change, businesses and policymakers often refer to 'sustainable development' as the solution. This idea is rarely questioned in terms of whether the notion of 'development' as constructed by the West can coexist with 'sustainable' alternatives to mitigate climate change. Is there such thing as sustainable development? To understand this, one must first understand 'development' as it has shaped our world. This analysis seeks to examine the reality modelled by development by outlining the capitalist construct of 'poverty' in 'underdeveloped' nations. In understanding this, we can critique the comforting myth of mainstream development's attempt to intervene in resolving environmental issues. This leads to sustainable development strategies which cannot be sufficient as they were created in a system that prioritises methods which harm the environment, such as consumerism and growth. Therefore, this paper applies post-development theory, which presents alternative realities of poverty while rejecting the need for development to 'solve' poverty in underdeveloped nations. In doing so, it challenges the efficiency of mainstream development's role in addressing environmental issues.

As post-development falls within the realm of post-structuralist studies, this analysis critiques the knowledge and power created by development discourse, finding that post-development critiques are necessary to transition away from neoliberal capitalist assumptions. While post-development displays alternatives to development, it is currently best practiced in local communities, and there is room for improvement if it is to contribute to systemic change. Therefore, this examination provides critiques of post-development to further a potential synthesis between 'degrowth' and post-development as a practical alternative to mainstream development practices.

This analysis will first provide background to the concept of development. This includes a critical discussion of poverty as a justification for development and a brief historical overview of 'Western' development follows. This paper then provides the

theoretical frameworks behind post-development which provides the basis for the subsequent critique of sustainable development from a post-development perspective, focusing on myths of economic growth that result in the hegemony of Western assumptions. Having identified this problem, the paper then turns to solutions presented by post-development alternatives, along with further considerations. Finally, it concludes that mainstream concepts of development are not sustainable and while post-development alternatives have caveats, a combined approach of degrowth and decolonial perspectives in the Global North can be joined with grassroot movements from the Global South for a synthesis of approaches to counter the myth of sustainable development. In doing so, the analysis answers the question: Can 'post-development' offer a sustainable alternative to development? The results find that post-development is necessary to critique what is understood as development, but a synthesis of degrowth alongside post-development is necessary for a sustainable alternative to development.

2 Background to Development

It is necessary to present the underlying assumptions of poverty within the neoliberal system of economics that drive development. This is done as a precursor for the critiques from post-development theory, which not only addresses the physical issues of development, but also call for a reconfiguration of the system itself, as it is based on broad assumptions of poverty and underdeveloped countries.

'Neoliberalism' can be understood as a theory in which humans benefit economically from competitive markets and minimum interference from the state (Harvey, 2007, pp. 22-23). This belief articulates that wealth will 'trickle down' so long as the market operates freely. This was exacerbated further by US President Reagan and UK Prime minister Thatcher in the 1970s, through whom neoliberalism spread globally under the context of development (Harvey, 2007, p. 23). This framework operates on the assumption that more wealth will drive the world's economy, as opposed to better state infrastructure or welfare. This leads us to address the underlying assumptions of wealth versus poverty. To be 'poor' was not always associated with having no money. At times, it had to do with potentially "falling from one's station in life, being deprived of one's instruments of labour, the loss of one's status" (Rahnema, 1992, p. 158). Our modern

idea of poverty is a construct. In 1948, the World Bank understood global poverty alongside gross national product (GNP), stating that those with low GNP were therefore "poor and underdeveloped" with the "responsibility of the richer nations, the richest of them being the United States, to help the poor countries raise their living standards" (Rahnema, 1992, p. 161). This labels entire nations as poor since their income was less than those who were dominating the economy. The World Bank decided that it, alone, holds the knowledge about the needs of other communities by using a "money-metric," which relates "to a relatively arbitrary international poverty line (IPL) defined in abstract money units and to local currency amounts" (Reddy and Pogge, 2010, p. 44). However, Reddy and Pogge evaluate this measurement of poverty as being income based and inefficient:

> A new procedure is urgently needed. There are strong reasons to doubt the validity and meaningfulness of the estimates of the level, distribution and trend of global income poverty provided by the Bank in recent years (Reddy and Pogge, 2010, p. 79).

Measurements and understandings of poverty coincide with the approaches of development. As development is a political device which attempts to answer 'who gets what,' it relies on Western understandings of poverty to make decisions. This income-based approach to poverty requires dependency on capitalist systems to solve the poverty issue. As exemplified by Amartya Sen (1999), these income-based inventions of poverty, "can be rather poor indicators of important components of well-being and quality of life that people have reason to value" (Sen, 1999, p. 80; Schwittay, 2014, p. 509). Poverty is presented in terms of a financial problem which grants wealthier countries the opportunity to address it through development. What can be seen in recent years is a "new transnational middle class" in which the Global South and Global North are operating in the same neoliberal markets, with, "the only way out of poverty and powerlessness (being) a direct simultaneous entry into the ecological robber economy" (Sachs, 2017, p. 2577). Thus, the increase in living standards under the development model reflect owning and consuming more of the world in a way which is "an enormous success for the development industry, a success that has come not only at an enormous cultural cost, but an ecological cost as well." (Sachs, 2017, p. 2577). Development, in

reference to underdeveloped countries, is weaponised into a political term. In 1949, US president Truman coined the term underdeveloped countries in his presidential inauguration, and this label stuck (Sachs, 1992, p. 2). Gustavo Esteva outlines that labelling two-thirds of the world as underdeveloped in contrast to developed, gave a "global hegemony to a purely Western genealogy of history, robbing peoples of different cultures of the opportunity to define the forms of their social life" (Esteva, 1992, p. 9). This presents a universal truth which constructs those who are underdeveloped as behind or needing to achieve the development that the US exemplifies. Here we see new questions arise in politics – Who is underdeveloped? What do they need? And most importantly, who decides the answers to the previous two questions? The Global North took the lead in deciding who was underdeveloped and what they needed. There arose a:

> Perceived requirement for richer countries to resolve 'underdevelopment' and poverty in 'backward' areas to prevent them falling under the sway of communism. Development thus became the key principle upon which the USA would seek to build its own global empire after 1945. (McEwan, 2018, p. 117).

Emerging as a political tool to battle communism, development still operates to maintain a political agenda. This agenda is linked with international organisations that are based in the West including Bretton Woods institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the United Nations (UN), which stepped into the role of deciding what was best for countries under the justifications of minimising poverty through development (McEwan, 2018, p. 158). In doing so, this promoted a "self-contained version of the West" (Spivak, 1988, p. 291; McEwan, 2018, p. 158). This assumption provides that everyone benefits from development, when the truth is quite the opposite.

Development's projection of global poverty influences those in affected areas to believe they must strive after the West's growth based economic system. However, there is no evidence that "affluence has, anywhere, improved the poor's condition" (Rahnema, 1992, p. 166). Furthermore, a report from the UN General Assembly in 1976,

> Explicitly recognised that development would not eliminate hunger and misery, and that, on the contrary, it would surely worsen the levels of 'absolute

> poverty' of a fifth, and probably two-fifths of the population (Esteva, 1992, p. 15).

In 1960, the Global North was twenty times richer than the Global South. By the 1980s the North was forty-six times wealthier than the rest of the world (Sachs, 1992, p. 3). With the continued rise of Brazil, Russia, China, India, and South Africa (BRICS) the Global South is increasing in wealth and lessening the gap (Galan, 2025). Yet, as of August 2024, the Global North still contains "69% of the wealth worldwide and 74% of billionaire riches" (Sundaram and Zainurin, 2024, para. 5). This is due to increased markets and long lasting "neo-colonial relationships" which perpetuate "economic imbalances" (Sundaram and Zainurin, 2024, para. 6). While the North is perpetuating the idea of developing the rest of the world, they are simultaneously gaining resources and finances through increased markets. Hypocritically, it is typically only those in the small top percentage of the Global North who benefit, while other members of Western economies suffer, "the richest country in the world [USA], has to recognise that 30 million of its citizens live below the poverty line." (Rahnema, 1992, p. 166). Development emphasises economic growth for growth's sake, and an endless search for new markets. It rejects alternative understandings of being and imposes an economic structure which benefits the top percent of the Global North. Wolfgang Sachs sums up this notion, stating that "from the start, development's hidden agenda was nothing else than the Westernisation of the world" (Sachs, 1992, p. 4). This holds true today as seen in the globalisation of neoliberalism. As development expands, the Western neoliberal narrative follows:

> Furthermore, advocates of the neoliberal mindset now occupy positions of considerable influence in education [...] in the media, in corporate board rooms and financial institutions, in key state institutions [...], and also in those international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) that regulate global finance and commerce. (Harvey, 2007, p. 23).

The world order under neoliberal markets spread by development is a Western narrative of wealth. This conception of development as an increase in "production and per-capita income" has a legacy following post-war decades which has rooted itself in

discourse surrounding environmental strategies (Sachs, 2017, p. 2577). Rather than addressing the root causes of the environmental crisis, modern sustainability efforts are emphasising increased growth within the framework that increased financial markets and growth would lead to better human conditions.

3 Theoretical Backgrounds of Post-development

Development is structured as a universal truth which has engrained itself into modern society. We turn to dependency theories and post-structuralism, as presented in postcolonialism, to critique the discourse which has prevailed as the hegemonic truth throughout development. 'Hegemonic truth' refers to the dominant ideas portrayed by a powerful narrative that constructs a linear understanding of the world (Barker, 2010). Dependency theory allows us to critique the modern understanding of poverty based on the construction of a dependent and independent world, and post-structuralism critiques the language and creation of power presented through discourse (McEwan, 2018; Barker, 2010). This is done within postcolonialism, which analyses discourse operating within the legacies of the nation's colonial pasts. Post- development emerges from these theories and rejects the notion of 'one universal truth' and seeks to proactively transition beyond the system of development.

Dependency theory is one of the earliest critiques of development. In outlining the Global North's inclusion of the Global South, the theory criticises the use of development as a way for the Global North to create a system of dependence on the North from the South and further perpetuate the wealth of the North (McEwan, 2018, p. 125). This is seen:

> Particularly through US-based international financial organisations. Neoliberals advocated that in order for markets to work effectively, continued loans to the South were required but under strict conditions designed to align these economies to the North (2018, p. 127).

As this critiques dependency on the capitalist system, dependency theory draws on "Marx's writings about uneven development and exploitation" (McEwan, 2018, p. 125). Latin American countries were a focus of this theory as they were free and independent but somehow remained dependent on "promises of modernisation" and

limited as a result (McEqan, 2018, p. 125). This displays how "take off' was impossible because of unequal relations and histories of colonialism" (McEwan, 2018, p. 125).

Postcolonial theory uses a post-structuralist analysis relying on Foucault as well as later works from Edward Said (McEwan, 2018, p. 75). Post-structuralism, as the name suggests, follows structuralism which began the study of social and cultural relations as they are influenced by, and influence power (Barker, 2010, p. 3-4). However, going further than structuralism, post-structuralism embodies a critique of power and knowledge as it forms the social order (Barker, 2010, p. 4). Said (1978) emphasised that colonialism operates through military and economics as well as through "discourse" (McEwan: 2018, p. 75). The idea that discourse can be as strong as the military, displays the connection between knowledge and power. Whoever controls the narrative will determine the action. In this case, Western colonialism has controlled the knowledge of poverty and has acted through mainstream development. This analysis will focus on the wording of Western economic development within sustainability efforts. Branching from post-structuralism, post-development can interject and break away from the dominance of Western ideas that have "shaped post-war development" (McEwan, 2018, p. 134). Questioning wording in policies such as sustainable development and 'green economy' allows us to evaluate the actions taken.

4 Post-Development critiques of Sustainable Development

By establishing the theoretical background to post-development, we can interrupt the discourse perpetuating sustainable development. This section unravels examples of different discourses surrounding sustainable development as it prioritises the model of development and turns to "sustaining development" (Esteva, 1992, p. 16). Thus, resulting in further development rather than a sustainable effort to combat climate change. Ideas in post-development theory combat this by "defining limits to the economy while trying to renew politics at the grassroots level" (Esteva, 1992, p. 22). This section will outline the limits of the economy by interrogating mainstream development

discourse surrounding sustainability and how it reflects themes within development, such as economic growth, and implies a homogeneity of Western assumptions.

4.1 Economic Growth

The Brundtland report of 1983 called for the management of the environment:

> We have in the past been concerned about the impact of economic growth upon the environment. We are now forced [...] to concern ourselves with the impacts of ecological stress – the degradation of soils, water regimes, atmosphere, and forests – upon our economic prospects (Sachs, 1992, p. 28).

Whilst starting off with being concerned about economic growth on the environment removes economics from the solution, circling back and prioritising how the impacts relate to economics emphasises a necessary goal for further growth and development. The report merged concern for the environment into development by creating "sustainable development" (Sachs, 1992, p. 29). Sachs outlines this approach as one which justifies intervening in underdeveloped areas of environmental impact to boost gross national product (GNP) (Sachs, 1992, p. 29). Within this, "economic growth was reframed as a necessary step toward the revolution of the ecological crisis" (Rinaldi, 2021, p. 243). The environment has been one of the greatest victims of growth and development due to mass consumption of resources:

> "We now consume in one year what it took the earth millions of years to store up [...] if every country continued this 'successful' industrial model, we would need five or six planets for waste dumps [...] this makes it obvious that 'advanced' societies are no model" (Sachs, 1992, p 2).

Yet, we see advanced societies attempt to set the model for environmental movements in a way that benefits economic growth.

In 2012, the UN environmental program took this further with the wording of 'Green Economy'. Merging 'Green' with 'Economy' falsely places economic experts at the front of the solution. When many communities across the world do not need further intervention regarding environment, "the experts who used to look after economic growth now claim to be presiding over survival itself" (Sachs, 1992, p. 33). This was

"aimed at [enabling] economic growth and investment while increasing environmental quality and social inclusiveness" (Demaria and Kothari, 2017, p. 2591; Rinaldi, 2021, p. 243). This relates to the assumptions of poverty and the need to have more material wealth so as not to be poor. This overlooks environmental issues as well as structural roots of poverty and inequality and does not address the consumerism "that led to unsustainable patterns in the first place" (Rinaldi, 2021, p. 243). Post-development scholar Rahnema offers an alternative discourse which interrupts the assumption of poverty under the development model. One which posits that the earth can "only provide enough to satisfy all the needs of persons if they are liberated from greed" (Rahnema, 1992, p. 172). Societies should place emphasis on 'more being' rather than 'more having' (Rahnema, 1992, p. 172). Rahnema argues that:

> Voluntary or moral poverty – implies the ideal of a livelihood based on the age-old moral principles of simplicity, frugality, sufficiency and respect for every human being and all forms of life (1992, p 171).

By offering an alternative mindset to economic growth and investment - this focus emphasises less greed and exploitation.

4.2 Homogeneity of Western Assumptions

The idea of sustainable development being applicable to every nation and furthering development creates a "homogenisation of cultures" (Demaria and Kothari, 2017, p. 2592). Demaria and Kothari (2017) pose a non-capitalist discourse towards transition as being the key to holding a different conversation than that of the dominant Western ones. For instance, development is referred to as 'toxic' by Demaria and Kothari – therefore, sustainable development is an "oxymoron" (2017, p. 2592). Furthermore, Escobar (2011) is critical of attempts to achieve sustainability "under the current economic system" (2011, p. 138). Escobar instead promotes radical cultural and institutional transformations to the current system through 'transition discourses' (2011, p. 138; Rinaldi, 2021, p. 248). Additionally, the idea of manipulating the "survival of the planet is well on its way to becoming the wholesale justification for a new wave of state interventions in people's lives all over the world" (Sachs, 1992, p. 33). This effort

in transition discourses of post-development breaks from the narrative of Western legacies of "colonialism, development, and globalization" (Rinaldi, 2021, p. 248)

In 2015, an intergovernmental agreement on creating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was formed (Demaria and Kothari, 2017, p. 2588). With sustainable development, natural capital was seen as a "critical economic asset" which allowed for the commodification of the environment (Demaria and Kothari, 2017, p. 2591). However, the SDGs have "exhausted much of its credibility after three decades of nearly undisputed worldwide dominance with meagre results, at best" (Beling et al., 2018, p. 305). SDGs have been framed as the goal for many organisations and governments globally. Yet, contradictory to discourse from the West,

> Many rural communities in the third world do not need to wait until specialists from hastily founded research institutes on sustainable agriculture swarm out to deliver their recipes against, say, soil erosion. Provision for the coming generations has been party of their tribal and peasants' practices since time immemorial (Sachs, 1992, p. 33).

Instead, these schemes which have been designed by actors such as the world bank and the UN threaten existing schemes in place from grassroots organisations or Indigenous traditions. This reinforces the argument that there cannot be sufficient sustainability under development schemes.

5 Post-Development Alternatives

Through analysing the discourse presented in sustainable development, this examination has addressed a need for systemic change. Moving on, we should consider the "need for radical post-development practices, ideas, and worldviews to become an agenda for activists, policymakers and scholars, to help in truly 'transforming our world' (Demaria and Kothari, 2017, p. 2588). Post-development works toward a more radical transition from development. Unlike other forms of critique within postcolonialism, scholars of post-development note that it is "indeed possible to think about the end of development" (Escobar, 2015, p. 455). Post-development alternatives can be better understood when examined through the specific regional and cultural contexts from which they emerged. Examples of this will be discussed through the Latin American

conception of *Buen Vivir* (5.1), the Indian Ecological Swaraj (5.2), and Bangladesh's Ecovillage (5.3). Following which, this section acknowledges limitations to these approaches when applied globally (5.4).

5.1 Buen Vivir (BV)

Otherwise known as "*Sumak Kawsay* in *Quechua* and *Suma Qamana* in *Aymara*" (Albo, 2009; Rinaldi, 2021, p. 245), BV emphasises the:

> Decades-long indigenous struggles for cultural and material recognition, eventually converged with the disenchantment of the masses with the neoliberal order at the dawn of the century (McEwan, 2018, p. 307).

Long traditions operating outside of the Western development model display the availability for lasting alternatives to development. This is a call for regions to "know how to live well together" (Rinaldi, 2021, p. 234) rather than "better" (Beling et al., 2018, p. 309). BV holds the view that growth is a problem and there should be a de-commodification of the world (Beling et al., 2018, p. 309). This would prevent the emphasis on economic growth and tackle root issues within the environmental crisis. Eduardo Gudynas (2011) regards BV as a "dialogical platform rather than as a clear and precise concept" (Beling et al., 2018, p. 308). An example of BV in practice is within Ecuador and Peru. Here BV went beyond critical discourse and moved to a "theoretical basis of constituent processes" (Merino, 2016; Jimenez et al., 2022, p. 1637). In this, we see a 'Communitarian Economy' which operates separately from Western development and emphasises a:

> Bio-centric perspective where economic activities are subordinate to the environmental (and social) balance. [...] Moreover, it pursues the overall wellbeing of the community, where even marginalised groups can benefit (Ramirez-Cendrero et al., 2017; Ytrehus, 2019; Giovannini, 2012; Jimenez, A. et al., 2022, p. 1638).

This opposes development's unilinear approach by allowing multiple discourses and ways of knowing as opposed to a conceptual framework.

5.2 Ecological *Swaraj*

In India, we see ecological *swaraj* or radical ecological democracy emerging from grassroots organisations. This is an intersectional approach of respecting earths limits and human rights and collective participation in the decision-making process: "It puts collectives and communities at the centre of governance and the economy, an approach that is grounded in real-life initiatives across the Indian subcontinent" (Demaria and Kothari, 2017, p. 2594). This is inherently branching away from the neoliberal model as it offers an alternative to individualism presented by neoliberal capitalism. It is recognised as an evolving approach rather than a predetermined model. As it operates primarily as a bottom-up approach it holds new emphasis on diversity, difference and "the role of culture in development" (Demaria and Kothari, 2017, p. 2594; Ewan, 2019, p. 129).

5.3 Bangladesh's Eco-villages

Additional societies operating in a collective rather than the competitive neoliberal individualist model include 'eco-villages' in Bangladesh (Ireland and Mckinnon, 2013, p. 162). These villages are mainly self-sufficient and operate in a collaborative manner to support the environment while sustaining their own lives. Within this region, there is another local non-governmental organisation (NGO) working to save local crop varieties and reduce the vulnerability of the area to natural disasters which are exacerbated by climate change (Ireland and Mckinnon, 2013, p. 163). This includes collaborative efforts which draw upon local knowledge to develop "strategies in response to perceived environmental pressures, related to climate change" (Ireland and Mckinnon, 2013, p. 163). These areas are displaying a way to live better and improve one's condition in life without emphasising economic growth or the Western neoliberal model of development.

5.4 Limitations

These examples are not exhaustive of all grassroot approaches in post-development but provide examples of the localised efforts to move away from the mainstream development model. Unfortunately, a challenge to post-development grassroots organisations is that they are "seldom acknowledged to have impact beyond

the local level" (Ireland and Mckinnon, 2013, p. 158). Ireland and Mckinnon address post-development on the local level as not only difficult to apply globally, but it is also personal to the specific social structure it is operating in (2013, p. 164). Thus, the practical applicability for BV in the Global North for instance, does not seem likely. Additionally, we see struggles when post-development is being applied universally or done in a way that imposes itself onto others in a unilinear model.

6 Critiques of Post-Development

While post-development offers solutions to problematic discourse and actions from mainstream development, it can also be problematic and narrow in scope. We must turn to critiques of post-development to develop upon practical alternatives of development. Sally Matthews critiques Wolfgang Sachs' *The Development Dictionary* as it has "relatively little written on post-development theory from an African perspective" (Matthews 2017, p 2650). Matthews outlines the importance of understanding why the Global South could be considered as "the staunchest defender of development" (2017, p. 2650). With the case study of staff members of a local NGO who she worked with in Senegal, Matthews displays that within a post-development structure, there still exists poverty and destitution. Additionally, while the NGO questioned mainstream development theory it "did not reject development as robustly and comprehensively as the post-development theorists" (2017, p. 2652). For instance, the work done in this area was adaptive to finance skills and, in a sense, upholding the development model. Matthews also provides the example of South African "service delivery" protests which enlist demands related to housing, roads, and goods "that are typically associated with 'development'" (2017, p. 2653). Here she outlines that one can embrace, "goods associated with development [...] while also rejecting other aspects that might be associated with many development projects (such as privatisation)" (Matthews, 2017, p. 2653). This coincides with James Fergusons illustration of 'modern men' being told to denounce comforts of development and live in a rural village. In this sense he is,

> Sympathetic to post-development theorists concerns about the ethnocentrism at the heart of the idea of development and the human and environmental degradation caused by development, but he cannot share their

> enthusiasm for the supposed end of development (Ferguson, 2006; Matthews, 2017, p. 2653).

Demaria and Kothari outline the Western development model as a "mental construct adopted by the rest of the world that needs to be deconstructed" (2017, p. 2592). This is seen again in James Petras's idea of "cultural terrorism" in which those in the 'Third World' get preyed on by capitalism "making them abandon their old ways and reorient themselves towards the capitalist market and state" (Petras: 1996; Mattews, 2017, p. 2655). Aram Ziai outlines how this is problematic as it presents "passive 'victims of development'" (Ziai, 2006; Matthews, 2017, p. 2655). Additionally, the wording and imagery within these texts often present a society that blindly accepts ideas from other nations (Matthews, 2017, p. 2655). This is further presented in Rahnema comparing development to a virus infiltrating a "'cell' (presumably a person in some 'Third World' country)" (Matthews, 2017, p. 2655). Additionally, the idea of decolonising the mind can be potentially anti-democratic. Rahnema is presented again as an example when they state that, "even if the majority of a community openly express a desire for development, this desire ought not to be trusted" (Matthews, 2017, p. 2656). Here, it becomes too easy to dismiss the desires of the community. It is also problematic to conceive of decolonising the contemporary South which "bear little resemblance to those of their ancestors, whose way of living has been destroyed and cannot easily be revived" (Matthews, 2017, p. 2656). Therefore, post-development should be approached with nuance. Matthews proposes:

> Instead of focusing on getting those in the South to decolonise their minds so that they reject development, we might push those in the North to recognise the catastrophic environmental implications of continued economic growth in the North and the need for redress and redistribution to address global inequality (Mathews 2017, p. 2659).

Considering this critique, we now turn to another post-development approach: degrowth.

7 Potential Considerations Following Critiques

With critiques of post-development in mind, we can look to a synthesis between a bottom-up rejection of development, along with the inside-out approach of degrowth in the Global North. 'Degrowth' is prevalent in providing discourses of transition within the current economy, while post-development is more prevalent in the Global South and includes prevalent action outside of the system of development (Escobar, 2015, p. 455). Both advocate radical transformations in society. This synthesis stems from decolonial perspectives which find alternative ways of knowing outside of the colonial development model. Catherine Walsh (2013) demonstrates a shared responsibility to "confront the colonial-racist structures, systems, and institutions of society through a collective praxis that finds its meaning in the condition of the colonial difference" (Walsh, 2013, p. 86). This shared responsibility places pressure on the Global North as we see in degrowth initiatives. These perspectives articulate "diverse social movements that reject extractive models of development" (Rinaldi, 2021, p. 247). Degrowth calls for a redistribution of production and consumption to "achieve environmental sustainability, social justice and well-being" (Demaria et al, 2013, p. 209; Beling et al, 2018, p. 307). Similar to BV, degrowth promotes a non-capitalistic society to challenge the emphasis on material consumption and economic growth (Beling et al., 2018, p. 307). It is not just a critique but a pro-active "transformative aim of moving towards a model of (post-) development that can dispense with a structural growth-imperative" (Beling et al, 2018, p. 307). There is an emphasis on "interconnectedness, rejection of consumption for happiness, and communal and solidarity ethics as a basis for alternative global vision" (Rinaldi, 2021, p. 248). Degrowth works within the system to provide a systemic and cultural shift in the Global North. It works to limit the growth mindset but understands the potential upkeep of the nuanced development model as it is engrained in many societies. Degrowth applies to environmental discourse as the main message "is that infinite growth on a finite planet is ecologically unsustainable and socially undesirable" (Beling et al, 2018, p. 309). There is an emphasis on not just living with 'less' but with choosing different approaches to production and consumption to promote sustainability and social justice (Demaria and Kothari, 2017, p 2594). Within degrowth, we see this is not necessarily a loss of things but transforming social relations

and the nature of work that we already use to live within our means and within earth's limits. This especially means to be:

> Less concerned with the institutionalisation of programs [...] than with the building of spaces and places [...] for the generation and production of non-eurocentric and decolonial thought (Walsh, 2013, p. 88).

As we have noted, in the Global South, discourse surrounds the "rights of nature, communalisation, and transitions to postextractivism" (Escobar, 2018, p. 140). This can be partnered with discourse from the Global North to transition to "postgrowth, postmaterialist, posteconomic, postcapitalist, and posthuman" (Escobar, 2018, p. 140). This represents what is known as the "pluriverse" (Escobar, 2018, p. 137) in which we can turn to looking both within development and outside of development to find solutions that do not promote the current solutions under economic growth and Western institutions.

The synthesis of strategies across the Global South and Global North is key to post-development. Critiques of post-development show that rejecting modern development does not always align with what all parts of society's desire. Degrowth requires a rewiring of the minds of everyday consumers which would be a difficult feat, to say the least. However, if there was an emphasis on degrowth within governments and an increase in local efforts that are shaped by communities, degrowth in the Global North would be possible. By focusing on removing the assumptions instigating modern development through a degrowth of neoliberal economic structures and reimagining how the world order has been shaped because of development, we can apply an inside-out approach as well as a bottom-up approach.

8 Conclusion

By outlining the assumptions of development as shaped by perceptions of poverty and the underdeveloped, we see the invention of a developed and underdeveloped world which has created hierarchies of power. Through the institutions created following WWII, the Global North has benefited from this invention as evidenced by being forty-six times wealthier than the Global South after three decades of development. Post-development aims to challenge these hierarchies through critiquing these 'universal'

understandings of development that de-legitimise alternative perspectives. Thus, post-development encourages pluralistic thinking. Branching from dependency theories, post-development draws heavily from Foucauldian perspectives to understand the relation between 'knowledge' production and power.

This analysis has utilised post-development approaches to accentuate how development advertised as sustainable in practice results instead in "sustaining development" (Esteva, 1992, p. 16). As demonstrated, development cannot be said to be sustainable when it advocates for notions of perpetual economic growth which do not address the issue of consumption responsible for the exploitation of finite resources. Instead, post-development scholars emphasise grassroots movements in the Global South where Indigenous communities have worked with, rather than against, the environment for generations. This paper offers the examples of *Buen Vivir* and *Swaraj* but acknowledges that there is an extensive variety of other movements. Post-development does not place the burden entirely on communities of the Global South but also focuses on changing behaviours in the Global North by advocating degrowth strategies to reduce consumption and thereby exploitation of finite natural resources. The aim being to live well with less and within earth's limits.

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