



ROUTLEDGE PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPMENT

THIRD EDITION

THEORIES AND PRACTICES OF DEVELOPMENT

KATIE WILLIS

ROUTLEDGE



Theories and Practices of Development

The newly updated third edition provides a clear and user-friendly introduction to the complex debates around how development has been understood and achieved. It has been fully updated and expanded to reflect global political and economic shifts, as well as new approaches to development.

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Katie Willis is Professor of Human Geography at Royal Holloway, University

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Acronyms

ACAP	Annapurna Conservation Area Project
AfCTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AFP	Alliance for Progress
AGRA	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
ALBA	Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (acronym in Spanish)
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
AQAP	Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BNA	Basic Needs Approach
BPO	Business Processing Outsourcing
BRIC	Brazil, Russia, India and China
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CACM	Central American Common Market
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CARIFTA	Caribbean Free Trade Association
CEPAL	UN Economic Commission for Latin America (acronym in Spanish)
CET	Common External Tariff
CFC	Chlorofluorocarbon
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CMEA	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon)
CPI	Corruption Perceptions Index

CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSR	Corporate social responsibility
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DDT	Dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane
ECLA	UN Economic Commission for Latin America (acronym in English)
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FBDO	Faith-based Development Organization
FBO	Faith-based Organization
FCS	Fragile and Conflict-affected States
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FLO	Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International
FPE	Feminist political ecology
G20	Group of 20
GAD	Gender and Development
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDI	Gender-related Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GM	Genetically modified
GNH	Gross National Happiness
GNI	Gross National Income
GNP	Gross National Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HPI	Happy Planet Index
HYV	High-yielding variety
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICSID	International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDA	International Development Association

IFC	International Financial Corporation
IFI	International Financial Institution
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ISI	Import-Substitution Industrialization
ITDG	Intermediate Technology Development Group
LEDC	Less Economically Developed Country
LECZ	Low Elevation Coastal Zone
MAS	Movement towards Socialism (acronym in Spanish)
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MEDC	More Economically Developed Country
MIGA	Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency
MINUSTAH	UN Stabilisation Mission in Haiti
MIPAA	Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing
MITI	Ministry of International Trade and Industry
MNC	Multinational corporation
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
MST	Rural Landless Workers Movement (acronym in Portuguese)
NAFC	North Atlantic Financial Crisis
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement or Area
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NEP	New Economic Policy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIC	Newly Industrializing Country
NIDL	New international division of labour
NIE	Newly Industrializing Economy
NTNC	National Trust for Nature Conservation
OAU	Organization for African Unity
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OEEC	Organization for European Economic Cooperation
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PDRY	People's Democratic Republic of Yemen
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services/Payment for Environmental Services
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PT	Workers' Party (in Portuguese)
PUA	Participatory Urban Appraisal
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries
RNGO	Religious Non-Governmental Organization
RSPO	Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDR	Special Drawing Right
SDSN	Sustainable Development Solutions Network
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
TNC	Transnational corporation
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNAMID	African Union and United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFICYP	United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNTSO	United Nations Truce Supervision Organization
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USMCA	United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement

USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
USTR	United States Trade Representative
VHC	Viviendas del Hogar de Cristo
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WHO	World Health Organization
WID	Women in Development
WTO	World Trade Organization
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council
YAR	Yemen Arab Republic

CHAPTER 1

Meanings of development

- Definitions of development
- Measuring development
- Colonialism
- Globalization and development
- Development actors
- Postcolonialism, Postmodernism, Post-development

In September 2015, United Nations (UN) members adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (see [Box 1.1](#)), replacing the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which had framed international development policies since 2000. While the SDGs cover a much wider range of environmental, social, political and economic issues than the MDGs, the very fact of having a set list of goals suggests that defining ‘development’ is easy and that what is important is the end point that a society gets to, not how those goals are achieved.

In this book, we will be considering theories about development and how these theories inform policy formulation and practices to achieve development goals. However, before we embark on this journey, we need to consider what ‘development’ means. Despite the seemingly ‘common sense’ nature of the SDG ‘development targets’, this chapter will highlight the contested nature of the term ‘development’. In particular, we will look at *how* ‘development’ has been defined, *who* has defined ‘development’ and at *what scale* ‘development’

has been examined. This will highlight how development definitions, theories and policies reflect power relations and that despite claims or appearances of objectivity, ideas about development are never neutral.

BOX 1.1 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

There are 17 goals, but for each goal there are a number of targets (169 in total) which must be met by 2030 and indicators that will be used to measure success against those targets. The 17 goals are:

- 1 End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- 2 End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- 3 Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- 4 Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning
- 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- 6 Ensure access to water and sanitation for all
- 7 Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- 8 Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all
- 9 Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- 10 Reduce inequality within and among countries
- 11 Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- 12 Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- 13 Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- 14 Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources
- 15 Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss
- 16 Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies
- 17 Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

The targets are much more specific and include:

SDG 1.1: By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere currently measured as living on less than US\$1.25 per day.

SDG 3.3: By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases

SDG 8.1: Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7% gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries

Source: adapted from United Nations (2020a)

MODERNITY

For many people, ideas of development are linked to concepts of modernity. ‘Modernity’ in its broadest sense means the condition of being modern, new or up-to-date, so ‘the idea of “modernity” situates people in time’ (Ogborn 2014: 480). Because of social, economic, political and cultural dynamism, what is ‘modern’ will change over time and also spatially. What is ‘modern’ in one place may be ‘old-fashioned’ elsewhere.

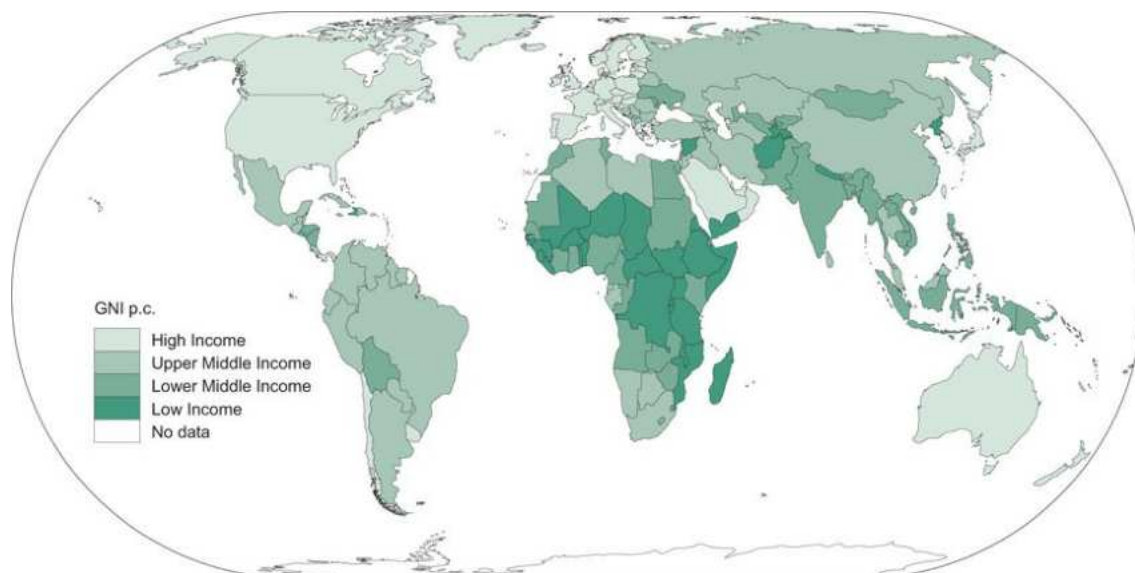
However, more specifically, ‘modernity’ has been used as a term to describe particular forms of economy and society based on the experiences of Western Europe and more recently, the USA. In economic terms, ‘modernity’ encompasses industrialization, urbanization and the increased use of technology within all sectors of the economy. This application of technology and scientific principles is also reflected within social and cultural spheres. What has been termed the ‘Enlightenment’ period in Western Europe in the late 17th and 18th centuries involved the growing importance of rational and scientific approaches to understanding the world and progress (Sheppard *et al.* 2009: 54–6). This was contrasted with previous understandings that were often rooted in religious explanations (Power 2003: 72–6). Approaches to medicine, the legal and political systems and economic development were all affected by this shift in perspective.

The spatial and temporal context of these ideas about modernity is important in this understanding of what ‘modern’ was, but as we shall see throughout the book, these ideas were taken out of their context and spread throughout the world (Brooks 2017). For some, this diffusion of modernity is

interpreted as ‘development’ and ‘progress’, while for others it is associated with the eradication of cultural practices, the destruction of natural environments and a decline in the quality of life. All these themes, and others, will be considered in the following chapters.

DEVELOPMENT AS AN ECONOMIC PROCESS

People defining development as ‘modernity’, look at development largely in economic terms. This conception of development underpins much of the work of international organizations such as the World Bank, and also many national governments in both the Global North and Global South. The World Bank, for example, uses Gross National Income per capita (GNI p.c.) to divide the countries of the world into development categories. Low-income countries are defined as those with a GNI p.c. figure in 2018 of US\$1,025 or less, lower middle-income countries have US\$1,026–3,995, upper middle-income countries US\$3,996–12,375 and high income countries are those with GNI p.c. over US\$12,375 (World Bank 2019d) ([Figure 1.1](#)). GNI is a purely economically based measure ([Box 1.2](#)). Because countries vary so greatly in population, the total GNI figure is divided by the number of people in the country, giving a per capita (p.c.) figure to indicate economic wealth. The use of an economic wealth measure to represent development is regarded as appropriate because it is assumed that with greater economic wealth come other benefits such as improved health, education and quality of life.



[Figure 1.1](#) [World Bank income classifications, 2019](#)

Source: based on data from World Bank (2019b)

Map data © Maps in MinutesTM (1996)

BOX 1.2 CALCULATIONS OF GDP, GNP AND GNI

Gross Domestic Product (GDP): This measures the value of all goods and services produced within a particular country. It does not matter whether the individuals or companies profiting from this production are national or foreign.

Gross National Product (GNP): This measures the value of all goods and services claimed by residents of a particular country regardless of where the production took place. It is, therefore, GDP plus the income accruing from abroad (such as repatriation of profits) minus the income claimed by people overseas.

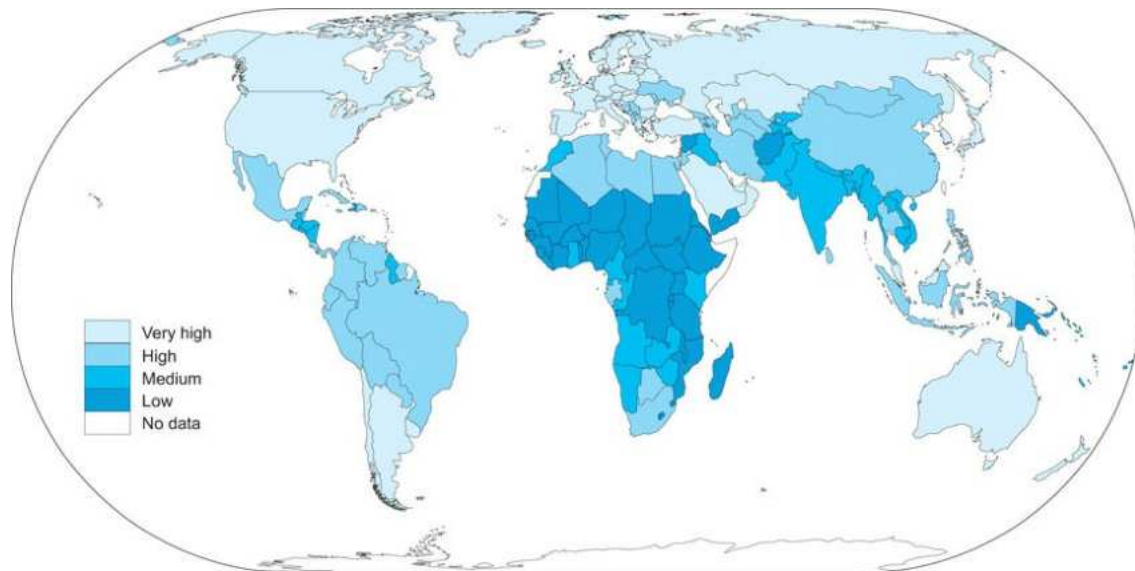
Gross National Income (GNI): This is an alternative name for GNP. The World Bank now refers to GNI.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The GNI p.c. or GNP p.c. indicator is still used widely, but this has increasingly been in conjunction with other broader indicators of ‘development’ which have highlighted non-economic dimensions of the concept. The most frequently used of these is the Human Development Index (HDI) which was devised by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the late 1980s, drawing particularly on Amartya Sen’s work, including the capabilities approach (see [Chapter 5](#)) which sees development as enhancing individual freedoms (Corbridge 2019; Sen 1999). The HDI was part of the promotion of human development, championed by Mahbub Ul Haq at the UNDP as a counterweight to economic development definitions and indicators (Power 2019b). The 2016 *Human Development Report* reviewed the concept of human development which had been introduced in the first *Human Development Report* published in 1990, stating:

The human development approach shifted the development discourse from pursuing material opulence to enhancing human well-being, from maximizing income to expanding capabilities, from optimizing growth to enlarging freedoms. It focused on the richness of human lives rather than on simply the richness of economies, and doing so changed the lens for viewing development results.

(UNDP 2016a: 2)



[Figure 1.2](#) [Human development classifications, 2019](#)

Source: based on data from UNDP (2019a: Table 1)

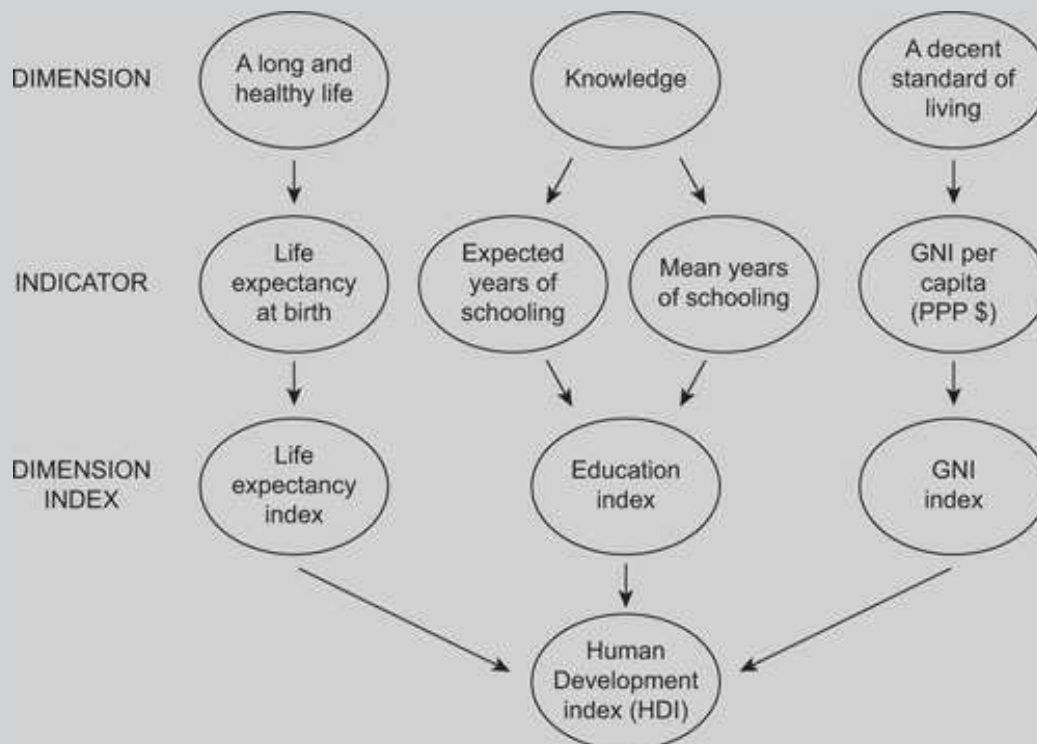
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The HDI still has an economic aspect, but it includes other indicators of development relating to well-being ([Box 1.3](#)). The HDI is used to divide the world's countries into those with very high, high, middle and low human development ([Figure 1.2](#)).

[BOX 1.3 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX](#)

In the late 1980s, increased awareness that the commonly used economic measures of development were far too limited led the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to devise the Human Development Index (HDI). This measure incorporates three dimensions of development in relation to human well-being: a long and healthy life, education and

knowledge, and a decent standard of living. The UNDP selected four quantitative indicators to measure these dimensions (see [Figure 1.3](#)). Before 2010, adult literacy rates and gross enrolment ratio were used for the education dimension, and GDP per capita was used for the standard of living.



[Figure 1.3](#) [Dimensions of the Human Development Index](#)

The indicators then have to be converted to an index from 0 to 1 to allow for equal weighting between each of the three dimensions. Once an index value has been calculated for each dimension, the geometric mean is calculated and the final figure is the HDI. The higher the value, the higher the level of human development.

Source: adapted from UNDP (2019b)

If you compare [Figures 1.1](#) and [1.2](#), you can see that there are great similarities in the patterns. The countries of Western Europe, the USA and Canada, Japan, Australia and New Zealand all rank highly on both GNI p.c. and HDI figures. Similarly, most Southern African countries are classified as upper middle-income countries with medium or high human development. Low GNI p.c. and low levels of human development at a national scale

coincide in much of Central and West Africa. If GNI p.c. seems to present us with the same results, does this mean that there is no real reason to use the more complex HDI measure? There are a number of reasons why this may not be appropriate. Firstly, there is not complete overlap. For example, while Malaysia and Russia are categorized as ‘upper middle-income countries’, their HDI scores put them in the category of ‘very high human development’. In contrast, the World Bank classifies Nigeria and Sudan as lower middle-income countries, but their HDI scores place them in the low human development group. In addition to the lack of complete overlap, by using the HDI you are asserting that ‘development’ is more than just economic progress measured at a national scale.

For some, however, these discussions of appropriate measures of national status are unimportant, because such measures do not consider inequalities in either spatial terms (see later) or in social terms. They also do not encompass how the vast majority of the people define development, or how they would like their lives to change (if at all) (Acosta 2017; Radcliffe 2015).

THE IMPORTANCE OF SCALE

Development can be considered at a number of spatial scales, including the individual, the local community, the regional, the national and the global (among others). How development is defined may differ by scale, and in addition the approaches to development may be similarly scale-dependent as we shall see in the next section.

Inequalities can be revealed at particular spatial scales. For example, if we consider national-level development figures we get no idea of whether there are differences between regions within the country. As we shall see throughout the book, spatial inequalities are a key factor in any discussion of development. Some forms of development may lead to increasing inequalities between places, while other development approaches may explicitly attempt to reduce spatial inequalities.

At the sub-national scale, it is also important to recognize distributional issues. The Gini coefficient and quintile ratios are measures of inequality (see [Box 1.4](#)). At a national level, while income per capita levels and HDI may be ‘satisfactory’ according to international norms, it is important to recognize that not everyone in the country will have access to that level of income or

standard of living (see [Table 1.1](#)). As this table shows, these issues of inequality are as important in the Global North as in the Global South – high levels of economic development do not necessarily mean great equality (see [Box 1.5](#)). Experiences of marginalization, poverty and disadvantage are also not restricted to certain parts of the world (Jones 2000; Dorling 2018). Reducing inequality is increasingly recognized as a goal for development interventions, and is the theme of the UNDP *Human Development Report 2019* (UNDP 2019a). For example, SDG 10 is ‘Reduce inequality within and among countries’. This is not just because extreme inequality is seen as ethically problematic, but also because inequality can act as an obstacle to economic and human development (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010). Since 2010, the UNDP has included inequality-adjusted HDI data alongside its standard HDI figures to stress that national figures for human development may hide significant diversity of experience.

[Table 1.1](#) [Measures of income inequality](#)

	<i>Income share held by (%)</i>			
	<i>HDI ranking</i>	<i>Poorest</i>	<i>Richest</i>	<i>Gini</i>
	<i>2018</i>	<i>40%</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>coefficient</i>
Australia	6	18.8	27.8	35.8
United States	15	15.2	30.6	41.5
Poland	32	21.3	24.6	30.8
Brazil	79	10.6	41.9	53.3
China	85	17.0	29.4	38.6
South Africa	113	28.4	50.5	63.0
Kyrgyzstan	122	23.6	23.3	27.3
India	129	19.8	30.1	35.7
Zimbabwe	150	15.3	33.8	43.2
Rwanda	157	15.8	35.6	43.7
Ethiopia	173	17.6	31.4	39.1
Niger	189	19.6	27.0	34.3

Note: Income share and Gini coefficient figures for the period 2010–2017.

Source: adapted from UNDP (2019a: 308–11)

BOX 1.4 MEASURES OF INEQUALITY

Quintile ratio

This is the ratio of the average income of the richest 20% of the population to the average income of the poorest 20% of the population. The larger the number, the more unequal the income distribution.

Gini coefficient and Gini index

Both of these are measures of inequality and are named after the Italian statistician who formulated the coefficient in 1912. They measure either income inequality or inequalities in consumption between individuals, households or groups.

Gini coefficient: This measure varies from 0, which means perfect equality, to 1, which represents perfect inequality. Thus, the nearer the coefficient is to 0 the more equal the income distribution. Countries with a Gini coefficient of between 0.50 and 0.70 could be described as having highly unequal income distributions, while those with Gini coefficients of 0.20 to 0.35 have relatively equitable distributions.

Gini index: This measure, used by the UNDP, ranges from 0 to 100. A figure of 0 means perfect equality, and 100 means perfect inequality.

Source: adapted from Todaro and Smith (2015); UNDP (2019b)

BOX 1.5 INEQUALITY IN THE USA

With a GNI p.c. figure of US\$54,941 in 2017, the USA is among the richest nations in the world. However, these average national figures hide massive inequalities in income and very different life experiences. With a

Gini coefficient for household income of 48 in 2017, it is clear that not all Americans have an equal share of the nation's riches. In 1929, the Gini coefficient was about 50, but then fell to between 35 and 40 until the late 1970s, when it increased to between 40 and 45. Spatially, household income also varies significantly, with the US Census Bureau reporting that in 2017 Loudoun County, Virginia had the highest median household income, with a figure of US\$129,588, while at the other end of the income spectrum McCreary County, Kentucky had a median household income of US\$19,264.

This economic inequality is also apparent in social indicators. In 2014, men in the bottom 1% of income distribution at the age of 40 had a life expectancy of 72.7 years, compared to the top 1% of male income earners, whose life expectancy was 87.3 years. Amartya Sen in his book *Development as Freedom* (1999) argues that comparing some groups within the US to societies in the Global South demonstrates that Americans can be in a worse position than their counterparts in poorer countries. In 2016, male life expectancy at birth was 78 years in Cuba and 75 years in China, both countries with far lower income levels than the USA.

Source: adapted from Atkinson (2015); Chetty *et al.* (2016); Sen (1999); UNDP (2018); US Census Bureau (2018); World Bank (2018a)

Table 1.2 [Rural–urban differences in poverty levels and access to an improved water source](#)

	<i>Urban population as % of total (2015)^a</i>	<i>Population with access to safe improved water (%) (2015)^a</i>		<i>Population living below national poverty line (%)^b</i>		
		Urban	Rural	Date	Urban	Rural
Mexico	79.0	100	94	2014	50.5	62.4
Botswana	57.0	95	58	2009	11.0	24.3
China	56.0	96	96	2014	n.d	7.2
Kazakhstan	53.0	97	84	2015	1.3	4.4
Sierra Leone	40.0	75	47	2011	31.2	66.1

Bangladesh	34.0	98	97	2010	21.3	35.2
India	33.0	93	85	2011	13.7	25.7
Tanzania	32.0	79	37	2011	15.5	33.3
Cambodia	21.0	96	70	2012	6.4	20.8

Source: ^a adapted from World Health Organization and UNICEF (2017), Annex 3;

^b adapted from World Bank (2018a)

A key sub-national pattern of spatial inequality is between rural and urban areas. If we consider indicators of economic and social well-being, there seems to be a clear trend of rural–urban inequality, with rural populations generally being worse off than their urban counterparts ([Table 1.2](#)). However, such distinctions must be treated with caution (Chibuye 2014; Tacoli *et al.* 2015; Wratten 1995). Firstly, poverty indicators are notoriously problematic. For example, in a rural area, monetary income may be lower than in the towns and cities, but the cost of living is lower and the availability of food from subsistence farming may help save on food costs. Secondly, the distinctions between rural and urban areas are never as distinct as statistics may imply. In most parts of the world, the linkages between rural and urban areas are multiple, with significant seasonal migration flows and food transfers between the countryside and the city (Andersson Djurfeldt 2015; Frayne 2010). As cities have grown, the role of the peri-urban area has also become more important for food production and employment opportunities (McGregor *et al.* 2006). Finally, it must be remembered that in some regions of the Global South, particularly Latin America and the Caribbean, the population is predominantly urban ([Figure 1.4](#)). Thus, while poverty levels may be higher in rural areas, poverty is increasingly an urban phenomenon; an estimated 54.8% of the world’s population lived in urban areas in 2017 (UNDP 2018).

As will be discussed in much more detail in [Chapter 6](#), inequalities are not just experienced in spatial terms: social inequalities are also very important. Throughout the world, women as a group have tended to be excluded from many of the benefits which development of certain forms brings (Momsen 2020). Particular ethnic groups in regional or national contexts may also be deprived of opportunities, or may be denied decision-making power in the framing of development projects. This can lead to destructions of cultural

practices and institutions, as well as a decline in self-respect and self-esteem. How to deal with social diversity is a key theme in development thought, not only in trying to implement development practice, but in actually defining what is meant by ‘development’. Social diversity is dealt with throughout the book, but particularly in [Chapter 6](#).

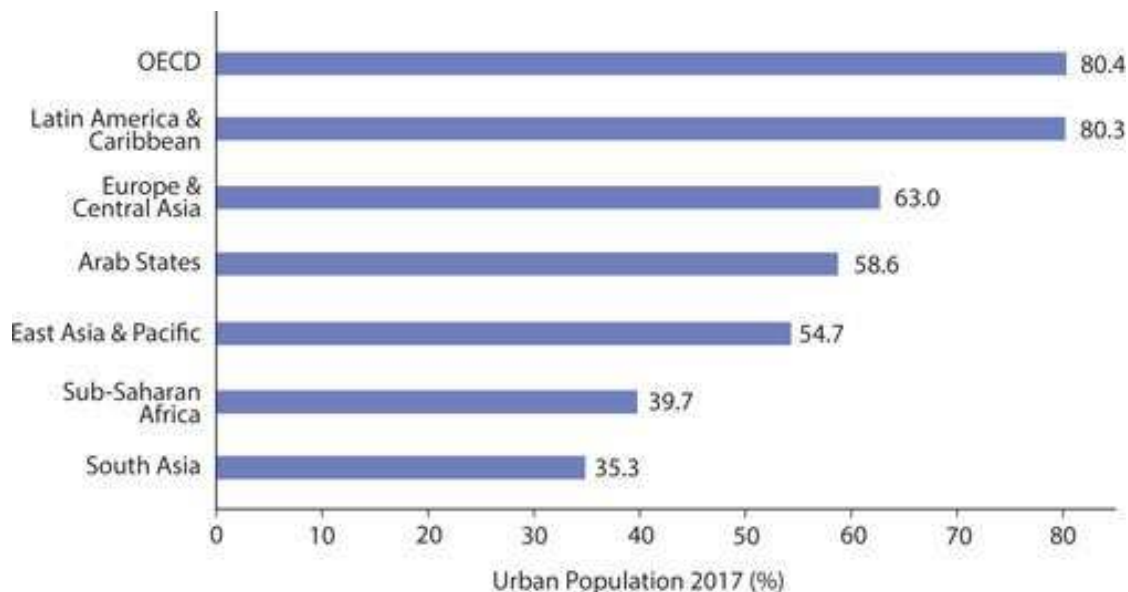


Figure 1.4 [Urbanization levels by region, 2017](#)

Source: based on data from UNDP (2018: Table 7)

MEASURING ‘DEVELOPMENT’

It is not only defining ‘development’ which is contested; the way that development, regardless of definition, is measured is also problematic. Of course, this assumes that ‘development’ is something which needs to be measured or assessed. For various actors in development (see later), measuring development could be important. For example, policy-makers may want to find out the social development position (as defined by the policy-makers) of a population in order to inform policy formulation. Governments or international agencies may want to assess the impact of a particular development initiative and therefore want to have measurements from both before and after the project. Communities may use measurements to lobby for state support or to hold governments to account. Finally, campaigning organizations seeking to improve living conditions for marginalized groups may want information about the nature of marginalization (Fioramonti 2014).

Because of the different conceptions of development and the range of scales at which it can be considered, measuring ‘development’ requires proxies (Morse 2004). For example, in the case of the World Bank’s focus on economic development, the indicator used is GNI per capita. This has now been widely adopted as a measure of economic development, but other indicators or proxies could be used, such as the contribution of non-agricultural activities to GDP. In the case of the HDI, the UNDP decided that its understanding of human development included three main features: health, education and economic status. To measure each of these, the UNDP needed to choose indicators ([Box 1.3](#)). This choice of indicators is certainly not straightforward. For example, Norman Hicks and Paul Streeten (1979) discuss the issues around trying to find proxy measures for ‘basic needs’ (see [Chapter 5](#)). While there may be agreement on what ‘basic needs’ are, including adequate shelter, food, clothing and employment, it is much more difficult to work out how these elements are to be measured. In the development of the SDGs, there have been significant debates about how to measure success against the 169 targets (Murray 2015; Simon *et al.* 2015). In 2017, 232 indicators were agreed upon (United Nations 2017).

Another problem with measuring development is comparability. This can be over time, or between different countries. Collecting large amounts of information, for example through national censuses, requires significant resources in terms of trained personnel and technology for analyzing the results. These are clearly not equally available to all national governments (Bulmer and Warwick 1993; Sustainable Development Solutions Network 2015). In addition, data collection can be disrupted by political unrest or war, and some communities or groups may be excluded from surveys and other studies because they are socially, economically or geographically marginal (Chambers 1997).

Finally, development measures are nearly always quantitative; i.e., they can be expressed in numerical form. This focus is understandable given the need to make comparisons across time and space, and also to deal with large amounts of information. However, by focusing on quantitative measurement, the subjective qualitative dimensions of development are excluded. This means excluding the feelings, experiences and opinions of individuals and groups. This approach also tends to reinforce outsiders’ ideas about ‘development’, rather than what local people think ‘development’ is, or should be ([Chapter 5](#)).

A good example of this debate is the definition of ‘poverty’ (White 2014). Poverty reduction was at the heart of the MDGs. While the SDGs are more expansive, poverty is still the focus of SDG 1. The definition of poverty used in these targets is an economic one, and the measurement used is a poverty line. The original MDG target used US\$1 per day as the international poverty line, but in 2008 this was revised to US\$1.25 per day to reflect cost-of-living increases (World Bank 2008). This daily target remains in the indicators for SDG 1 as a measure of extreme poverty. However, this economic view of poverty is very limited and assumes a clear relationship between income poverty and other measures of disadvantage.

A more recent attempt to measure poverty is the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). This identifies health, education and living standards as key equally weighted dimensions and uses ten indicators to measure household poverty (see [Table 1.3](#)). However, an additional feature of this measure is an assessment of the intensity of poverty, taking into account how many of the poverty indicators are found in a particular household. Because of the household-level data, the MPI can be used to assess differences within countries and also between different social groups (Alkire and Santos 2010). The MPI has been used by the UNDP in the *Human Development Report* since 2010. The indicators have changed over time based on data accessibility and alignment with the SDGs (Alkire and Jahan 2018).

Despite the growing complexity of poverty measures, they still exclude any qualitative examination of experiences of poverty. Cathy McIlwaine (2002: 82) uses quotations to exemplify how poverty can be experienced and understood in different ways:

[Table 1.3](#) [Global Multidimensional Poverty Index components, 2019](#)

<i>Classification of deprivation</i>	
Health	
<i>Nutrition</i>	Any adult under 70 and any child is undernourished
<i>Child mortality</i>	Any child in the household died in the five years prior to the survey
Education	
<i>Years of schooling</i>	No household member aged ten years or over has completed six years of schooling

<i>School attendance</i>	Any school-age child is not attending school up to the age at which they would complete class 8
Standard of living	
<i>Electricity</i>	The household has no electricity
<i>Sanitation</i>	The household has no access to improved sanitation which is not shared
<i>Drinking water</i>	The household does not have access to improved drinking water or safe drinking water is at least a 30-minute walk from home, roundtrip
<i>Housing</i>	The roof and/or floor and/or walls are made of inadequate materials
<i>Cooking fuel</i>	The household cooks with dung, wood, charcoal or coal
<i>Assets</i>	The household does not own a car or truck and does not own more than one of the following: radio, television, telephone, computer, animal cart, bicycle, motorbike or refrigerator

Source: adapted from UNDP (2019b: 10)

For me, being poor is having to wear trousers that are too big for me.
(José, eight years old, Guatemala City)

Poverty makes my children get sick and they get worse because we're too poor to buy medicines.
(Antonia, 30 years old, Guatemala)

It's poverty that makes me drink until I fall over, and drinking until I fall over makes me poor.
(Eduardo, 35 years old, Guatemala)

The qualitative examination of poverty puts the experiences of the people directly affected at the heart of the study. For some approaches to development, this people-centred approach is key (see [Chapter 5](#)) and represents a move away from national-level considerations. Although the

World Bank usually uses quantitative measures of development, in preparation for the 2000/2001 *World Development Report* which was on 'Attacking Poverty' (World Bank 2001), it commissioned a large study entitled 'Voices of Poor' which attempted to examine the experiences of poverty throughout the world (Parnwell 2003). While the information gathered in this study was incorporated into the 2000/2001 *World Development Report*, there seems to have been retreat back to quantitative measures since then (Williams and McIlwaine 2003). In the publication *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018: Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle*, there is an acknowledgement of the need to measure poverty in non-monetary ways, but the data remains quantitative (World Bank 2018b). This discussion of poverty measurements shows how even the most 'basic' of 'development' measures is difficult to assess.

TERMINOLOGY

The UNDP categorization of countries as having 'very high', 'high', 'medium' or 'low' human development based on HDI, and the World Bank use of GNI per capita to place countries into one of four classes, are two examples of how the world can be divided up according to levels of 'development'. There are, however, many other forms of classification and a range of terms to describe groups of countries. Rather than merely being a debate about terminology which has no bearing on real-life issues, it is important to realize that the way that different parts of the world are described can tell us a great deal about who has the power to decide what should be valued and what denigrated. There has been growing awareness of how visual and textual representations of peoples and places both reflect prevailing power relations and reinforce certain ways of perceiving the world (Williams *et al.* 2014: [Chapter 2](#)). Postcolonial and post-development approaches (discussed later in this chapter) are particularly engaged with examining how certain forms of knowledge are validated while others are ignored, and the real-life effects of these processes.

In this book, I will generally use the terms 'Global North' or 'North' to describe the countries of Europe, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Canada and the 'Global South' or 'South' to describe the remaining countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Pacific. While there are clearly problems with using these terms, not least the fact that not all 'Northern' countries are north of the equator and not all 'Southern' ones

south of the equator, I prefer to use these terms rather than other common distinctions discussed later. In addition, the North-South distinction was used by the Brandt Commission in its report on the nature of global interdependence (Brandt Commission 1980). The Commission, also known as the Independent Commission on International Development Issues, was set up in 1977 to consider issues of global inequality and poverty. It was chaired by the ex-Chancellor of West Germany, Willy Brandt.

The term 'Third World' has often been used to refer to the nations of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. It was originally used to describe those countries which were part of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM); i.e., they did not officially support either the capitalist USA or the communist USSR during the Cold War, instead preferring a 'third way'. Under this interpretation, the 'First World' consisted of the industrialized capitalist nations of Western Europe, the USA, Canada, Japan, New Zealand and Australia, while the 'Second World' was the communist bloc of the USSR and Eastern Europe. However, despite not originally having a sense of hierarchy, the idea of 'First', 'Second' and 'Third' was often interpreted as meaning the countries in the 'Third World' were in third place. The collapse of the 'Second World' in the late 1980s/early 1990s, with the transition from state socialism, has meant that the basis for the distinction has been removed (see [Chapter 3](#)) (Friedmann 1992b).

Another popular form of constructing categories is the 'developed'/'developing' binary. This was felt to be better than distinguishing between 'developed' and 'undeveloped', as the latter phrase implied being unable to escape from the condition of lack of development, rather than the more positive sentiment which 'developing' suggests. However, for some theorists (such as Frank 1967), the concept of being 'fixed' or unable to escape from a position of disadvantage because of global inequalities means that the term 'undeveloped' or 'underdeveloped' is crucial (see [Chapter 3](#)). In both 'developed'/'developing' and 'developed'/'undeveloped', the first term remains the same and seems to imply that 'development' is an end point; i.e., once a country reaches a certain standard of living or economic position, then it is 'developed'. Again, such notions are important in some theorizing (such as modernization approaches discussed in [Chapter 2](#)). However, this fails to recognize the dynamism of all societies and the continued desire by populations for improvements (not necessarily in material goods). It also fails to consider the experiences of social exclusion that are found within

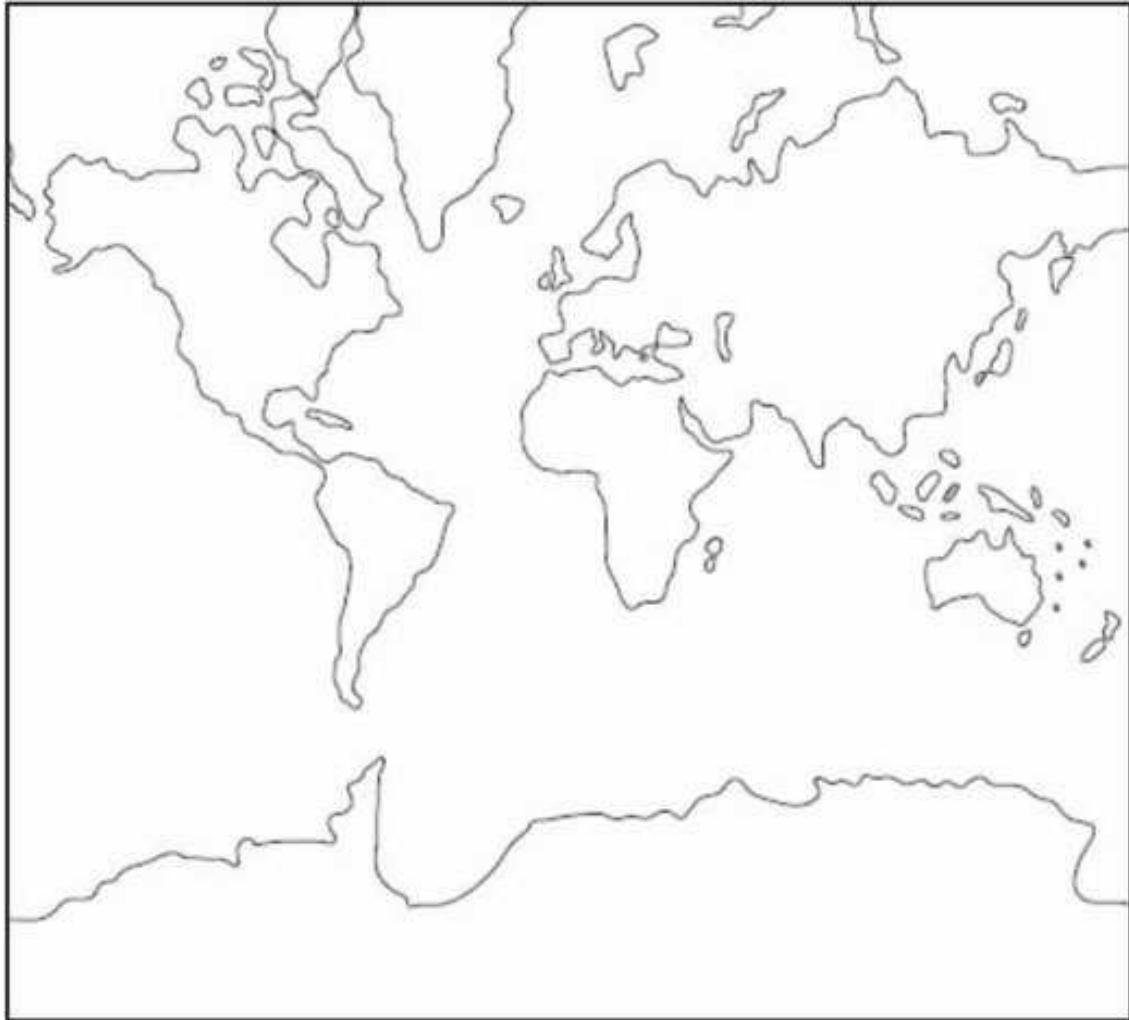
supposedly ‘developed’ countries or regions (Alston 2018; Jones 2000; McFarlane 2006). It is also important to note that unlike the MDGs, the SDGs are aimed at all countries, not just those categorized as low-income or with low human development (Willis 2017).

The terms ‘More Economically Developed Countries’ (MEDCs) and ‘Less Economically Developed Countries’ (LEDCs) have also gained in popularity. The explicit reference to economic development does not assume that development is automatically economic, or that economic development is necessarily associated with other forms of development. While this specificity is welcome, the emphasis on the economic, rather than other possible dimensions of development, could be regarded as implying that economic factors are the most important aspects of ‘development’. As with all the categories used, where the boundary between groupings is placed is highly contentious, not least because of the rise of certain countries including the Gulf States and Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (collectively known as the BRICS).

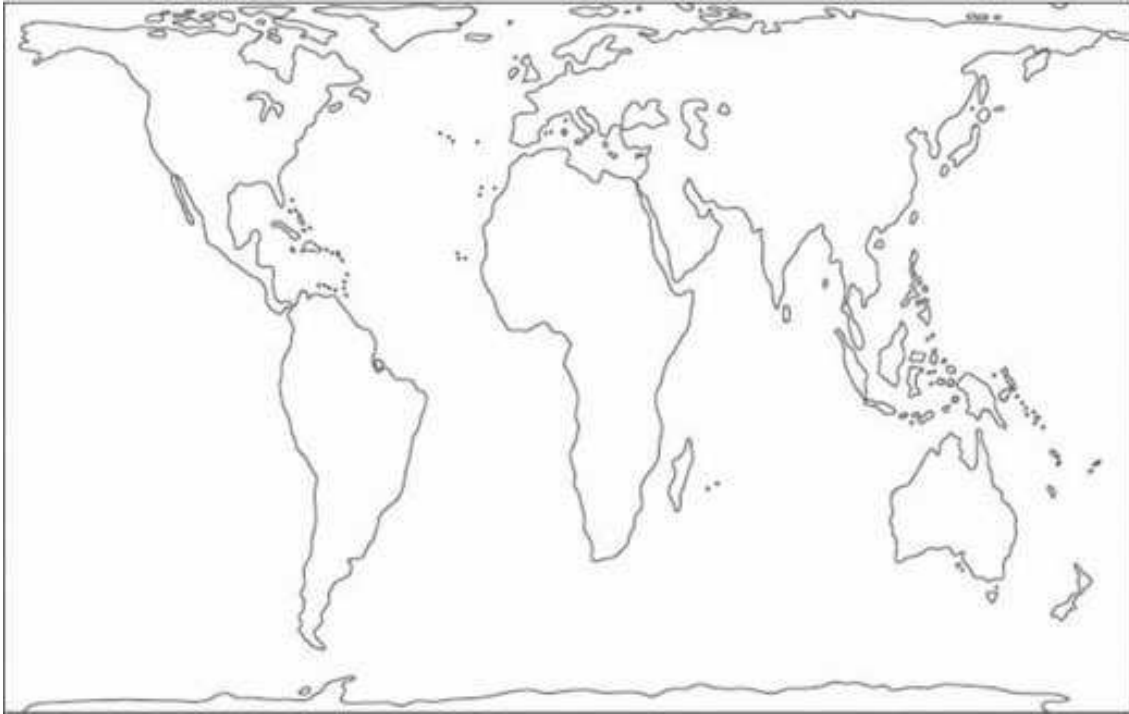
Finally, some political activists working for greater global justice refer to Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean as the ‘Majority World’ and the rest of the world as the ‘Minority World’. This is to stress the fact that in population terms, the majority of the world’s population (about 81% in 2017 according to UNDP 2018: 44–7) lives in the nations of what I have termed the ‘South’. This is an important point to make, as it stresses the Eurocentric assumptions which underlie many terms used.

The concept of ‘Eurocentrism’ will be important throughout the discussions of development theories. It refers to the assumption that European or Western ideas are the only ideas or approaches that are important. In some cases, this is because the theorist does not see that their approach is very context-specific and that there could be other interpretations, but in many other cases the Eurocentrism is based on ideas of Western/Northern superiority (Blaut 1993). Of course, the concept of ‘Eurocentrism’ is also based on the assumption that the ‘North’ is homogenous. This is clearly not true given the range of nations making up the ‘North’, but also because of distinctions based on gender, ethnicity, class and many other social characteristics. Eurocentrism implies having power over knowledge, and because of this is regarded as reflecting existing class, gender and ethnic power relations such that the opinions of ‘White’, middle-class or elite men in the North are privileged (see Kothari 2006; Pailey 2020 on race and development).

It is not only terminology which can reveal biases and assumptions; maps are also important bearers of ideas because they are representations of the world. Because we all have different views of the world, how we choose to present our world in a map can reveal a great deal about our own particular biases (Wood 2010). A map projection is a way of portraying a three-dimensional globe on a flat piece of paper. Eurocentric maps, such as those drawn using the Mercator projection, place Europe at the centre of the map and represent the continents in the same shapes as they are in reality ([Figure 1.5](#)). However, because the Earth is a sphere, this leads to the land masses nearer the poles appearing much larger relative to other continents nearer the equator. The Peters projection is an attempt to challenge this Eurocentric image. The Peters projection is an equal area projection, meaning that the land area represented on the map is correct in relation to other land areas. This means that Africa, Asia and Latin America are much more significant in the Peters projection, reflecting their importance in area terms in reality ([Figure 1.6](#)). Because of this, the Peters projection has often been used in development education schemes to try to counter Eurocentric bias (Vujakovic 1989). The Peters projection has, however, been criticized for making the continents appear long and thin, very unlike their shapes on the globe. In this book, the world maps are drawn using the Eckert IV projection. This is an equal-area projection which tries to minimize distortions to the shapes of the continents.



[Figure 1.5](#) [Mercator projection](#)



[Figure 1.6 Peters projection](#)

COLONIALISM

At the start of the 21st century, there are very few colonies left in the world following widespread decolonization processes after the Second World War (however, see McEwan 2019: 25 for a list of ‘overseas territories’). Despite this, any consideration of development theories and practices needs to include a discussion of the importance and nature of colonialism. Before elaborating on these reasons, a definition of ‘colonialism’ is required. Henry Bernstein (2000: 242) defines colonialism as ‘the political control of peoples and territories by foreign states, whether accompanied by significant permanent settlement ... or not’. This political control represents global power differentials and is associated with dominance in other spheres such as the economy and cultural practices.

Three main reasons for discussing colonialism in the context of development theory can be identified. Firstly, from the middle of the 16th century onwards, European colonialism created more and more linkages between different parts of the world. As we shall see throughout the remainder of the book, interactions at a global scale and the bonds between different regions and countries are referred to in a range of ways in a number

of development theories. While the linkages between different parts of the world cannot be solely attributed to the operation of colonialism, it was a key element in developing the basis for what we now call ‘globalization’ (see later in this chapter).

A second important reason for considering colonialism in a book on development theories is the nature of power relations embedded in colonial processes. The expansion of European political, economic and social control over other parts of the world represented the greater power held by these nations (see later). In some development theories, these power inequalities between North and South help explain differential development experiences, with colonialism bringing beneficial changes to Northern countries, at the expense of those in the South (see [Chapter 3](#)). It is argued that these inequalities also continue to limit the autonomy of Southern countries and peoples to determine their own futures through processes of what has been termed ‘neo-colonialism’. This term is used to describe global relationships which reflect the dominance of the North over the South, despite legal independence. It is used, for example, in relation to the influence of transnational corporations (TNCs) over the economies of the South, or the ability of Northern governments to intervene in Southern governments’ decision-making through the workings of multilateral organizations such as the World Bank (see [Chapters 2](#) and [4](#)).

Finally, the colonial experience varied across the world, depending on the colonial power, pre-existing social, economic and political structures in the colony, and the timing of the colonial encounter (Bernstein 2000). Whatever the experience, it is clear that colonialism changed the social structures, political and economic systems, and cultural norms in many places both North and South. The legacy of these changes continued into independence.

While colonialism is usually considered to be a European-led phenomenon, the dominance of some societies over others dates from before European excursions into Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean (Williams *et al.* 2014: [Chapter 3](#)). For example, in Latin America the Aztec and Inca empires, and urban centres such as Tikal (see [Plate 1.1](#)), were able to dominate other groups and territories and use them for resources. Similarly, the Mogul empire (1526–1761) in what is now northwest India was built on the gathering of tribute and taxes from peasants (Bujra 2000). Throughout Africa there were significant empires, such as the empire of the Kush in the Nile Valley and a number of Islamic empires in West Africa (Stock 2004). The expansion of

Western European influence had, however, much more widespread and long-standing effects.

The first main period of European colonial expansion was led by the Spanish and Portuguese in Latin America and the Caribbean following Columbus' arrival in the Americas in 1492. In the 18th century, Spanish influence also extended northwards to what are now the southern states of the USA. During the 16th and 17th centuries, the Spanish and Portuguese used what they called the 'New World' as a source of raw materials, silver in particular. There was some settlement, but overall the colonial project of both these nations was focused on mercantile activities (trade).

In the latter part of the 17th century, the Dutch and British came to the fore. While they did have some activities in Latin America and the Caribbean, much of their activity was focused in North America and South and East Asia. Trade in primary products was still important for these colonial endeavours, in particular tobacco from North America and spices and silks from Asia, but the provision of raw materials took on more significance as manufacturing grew in Britain. Imports of cotton from North America were transported to the burgeoning textile factories of Northern England, and tobacco and sugar were also processed. The slave trade was key in the expansion of cotton, tobacco and sugar production as slaves were the mainstay of the plantation workforce. Within Sub-Saharan Africa, European enclaves were found along the western coast where slave trading took place. For example, the British had bases in Gambia and Sierra Leone, and the French in Senegal. Europeans (British, Dutch, French and Germans) settled in South Africa in 1652 in what is now Cape Town (Stock 2004). This period of colonialism also differed from the earlier Spanish and Portuguese phase because there was greater settlement by Europeans and the colonies became important markets for European manufactured goods (Bernstein 2000).



[Plate 1.1](#) [Tikal, Guatemala](#)

Credit: Katie Willis

As industrial expansion took hold in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, colonies became increasingly important as sources of raw materials and

markets (see [Chapter 3](#) for a discussion of Marxist interpretations of colonialism at this time). Spain and Portugal were losing their positions as key colonial powers, and at the start of the 19th century wars of independence broke out in much of Latin America, leading to independence for many of the Latin American nations in the 1820s. Meanwhile, British and French colonies in South and East Asia continued to thrive. Within what became South Africa, the Cape was annexed by the British in 1795. This prompted what was known as the ‘Great Trek’ in the 1830s and 1840s when thousands of Boers (Dutch White settlers and descendants) moved north and established the Boer republics of Transvaal and Orange Free State (Stock 2004). European colonization of most of the African continent only really took place in the latter parts of the 19th century during what became known as the ‘scramble for Africa’. At the Berlin Conference of 1884–5, the European powers divided up the continent, agreeing that if countries could demonstrate ‘effective control’, then they could legally claim that territory (Stock 2004). Britain and France were again the key players, but Belgium, Portugal and Germany also gained territories ([Figure 1.7](#)).



[Plate 1.2](#) Portuguese-era Holy House of Mercy, Senado Square, Macau, China

Credit: Katie Willis

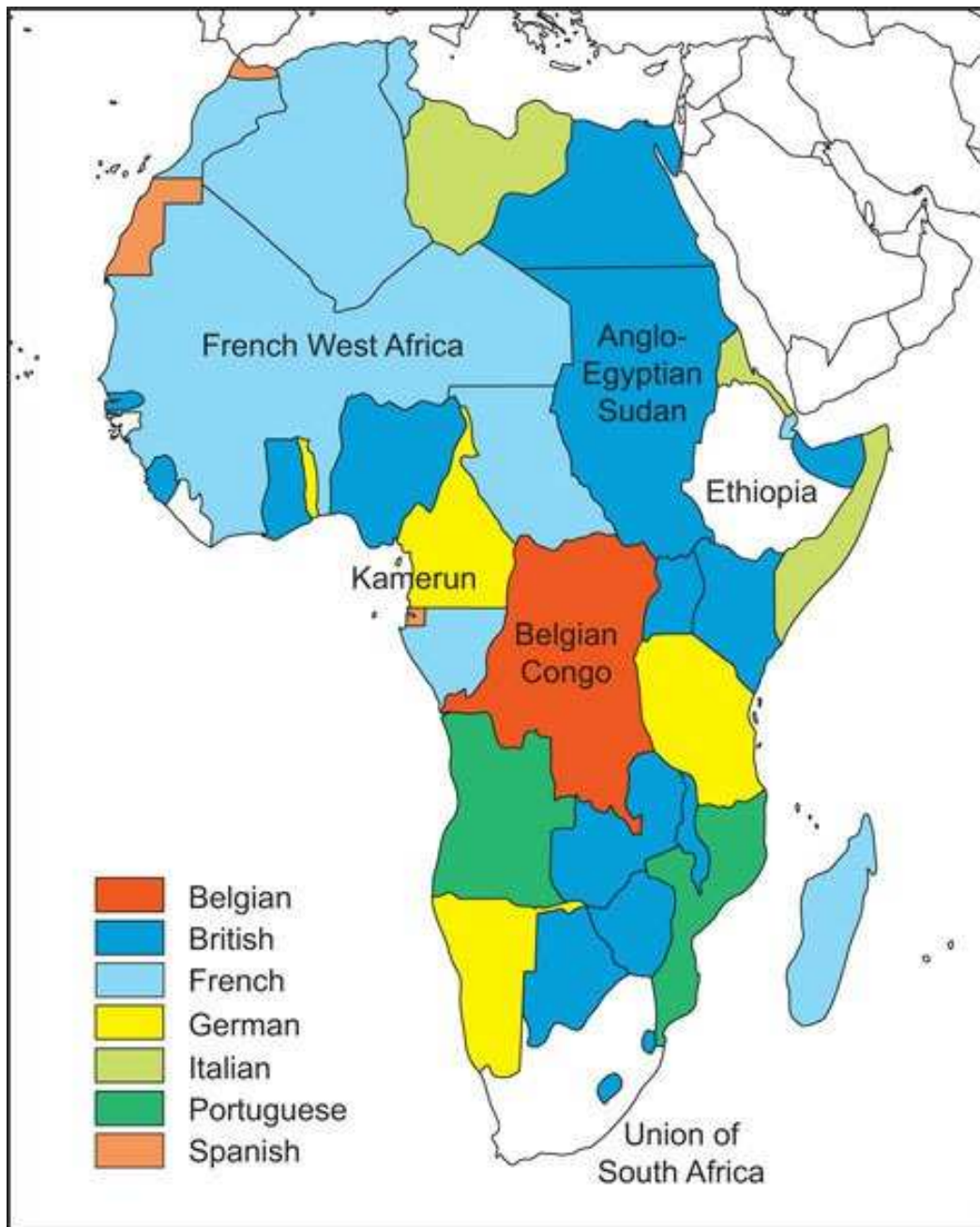


Figure 1.7 [The extent of European colonialism in Africa, 1914](#)

Source: adapted from Simon (1994)

Map data © Maps in MinutesTM (1996)

Following the Second World War, the pressure for decolonization in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean increased for a number of reasons. The war had caused major economic problems in Western Europe. The two main colonial powers, France and Britain, had to turn to the USA for assistance (see [Chapter 2](#)). In addition, the new global superpowers the USA and Soviet Union (USSR)

both advocated decolonization, not least because it would provide new opportunities for the spread of their own influences. These factors external to the colonies were complemented by the increasing calls for independence from the populations of the colonies themselves. Changing economic processes and the growing power of multinational corporations (MNCs) also helped. Direct political control was no longer necessary for goods to be traded between countries (Potter *et al.* 2018). The combination of these factors led to a gradual process of decolonization.

Despite the achievement of political independence, the autonomy of the newly independent states was certainly not achieved. Economic linkages, in particular, continued to keep the ex-colonies in a subservient or dependent position (see [Chapter 3](#)). It can also be argued that this process of neo-colonialism also extends to the continued representation of 'Western' or 'Northern' ways of doing things as 'better'. For Indigenous populations in countries which are classified as 'Global North' such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA, legacies of colonialism also resonate on a daily basis through racism and discrimination due to the dominance of economic, political, cultural and social structures which were introduced by European settlers (Gilbert 2013; Tuck and Yang 2012). [Plate 1.3](#) shows graffiti in Wellington, New Zealand protesting planned commemorations for the 250th anniversary of the arrival of Captain Cook in what became the British colony of New Zealand. Challenging Northern assumptions is a key concern of many development theories outlined in the book and also post-development and postcolonial approaches, which are discussed at the end of this chapter.

GLOBALIZATION

The drawing together of different parts of the world through the political and economic processes associated with colonialism was just the start of the flows of ideas, commodities and people across the globe. This increasing interconnectedness is now referred to as 'globalization' (Hirst *et al.* 2009). A spatial metaphor that is often used is the idea of a 'shrinking world', while others refer to 'time-space compression' (Allen 1995). Growing linkages between peoples and places have been made possible because of developments in technology, transport and communications. However, globalization is not experienced in the same way by all the world's peoples, and the opportunities

which certain forms of globalization can open up may not be available to all. It is vital to recognize what Doreen Massey (1993) calls 'power geometry'.



[Plate 1.3 Decolonization slogan, Wellington, New Zealand](#)

Credit: Katie Willis

For example, certain parts of the world are more 'connected' to other regions than others. Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, is markedly less connected to other regions through trade, investment flows and telecommunications (Dicken 2015). This, some have argued (see [Chapter 2](#)), leaves the region less able to benefit from foreign investment and industrialization which is associated with economic globalization. However, the relative lack of connectedness does not mean that the governments of Sub-Saharan Africa are necessarily able to adopt the development policies they feel are appropriate for their peoples. The importance of global institutions such as the World Bank ([Chapter 2](#)) and Northern governments, especially the USA, influences decisions at a national level ([Chapter 4](#)). The colonial period may be over in formal political terms, but the inequalities in power and influence remain.

While growing global connections are highly diverse, it is the economic aspects which have been particularly prominent in the literature and policy on development and globalization (Murray and Overton 2015). Changes in transport, communication and technology have meant that production processes can now take place in a range of locations that were previously not economically viable. This has contributed to what has been termed the ‘new international division of labour’ (NIDL) whereby manufacturing has increasingly moved from Northern countries to industrial production in the South where land and labour costs are cheaper. Peter Dicken (2015) argues that this is part of what he terms a ‘global shift’.

In terms of global manufacturing output, while the USA, Germany and Japan maintained their positions in the top five merchandise exporting countries from 1963 to 2018, there have been a number of significant shifts in the top 15 manufacturing export rankings ([Table 1.4](#)). While a number of countries have moved into the top 15 since the 1960s, it is China’s rise which has been particularly impressive. In percentage terms, the top two countries in 1963 (the USA and Germany) had 33.0% of the world total; in 2018, China and the USA at the top of the rankings had a 21.3% share.

This global shift is happening not just in manufacturing. With improvements in technology and increased educational levels in parts of the South, service-sector activities are also being transferred. These include data-processing operations and call centres (Dossani and Kenney 2007; Ravishankar *et al.* 2013). India has proved a very attractive location for what is sometimes called business processing outsourcing (BPO), with many companies moving customer service call centres and IT services from Western Europe and the USA to cities such as Hyderabad and Bangalore. The highly skilled English-speaking workforce are employed at a fraction of the cost of their European and American counterparts. In addition, telephone charges have fallen greatly since the late 1990s, so making this movement financially viable. While India has become a centre for this kind of outsourcing, the expansion of technology has given rise to plans for the BPO sector in some African countries. The connection of East African countries to international fibre-optic cables from 2009 onwards was anticipated to create significant opportunities for BPO jobs in the region, although this potential has not always been realized (Mann and Graham 2016).

[Table 1.4](#) [Changing patterns of global merchandise exports by value, 1963–2018](#)

	<i>2018^a</i>		<i>2000^b</i>		<i>1963^c</i>	
	<i>Rank</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>%</i>
China	1	12.8	7	3.9	NA	NA
USA	2	8.5	1	12.3	1	17.4
Germany	3	8.0	2	8.7	2	15.6
Japan	4	3.8	3	7.5	5	6.1
Netherlands	5	3.7	9	3.3	9	3.3
South Korea	6	3.1	12	2.7	NA	NA
France	7	3.0	4	4.7	4	7.0
Hong Kong	8	2.9	10	3.2	15	0.9
Italy	9	2.8	8	3.7	6	4.7
UK	10	2.5	5	4.5	3	11.4
Belgium	11	2.4	11	2.9	7	4.3
Canada	12	2.3	6	4.3	12	2.6
Mexico	12	2.3	13	2.6	NA	NA
Russia	12	2.3	NA	NA	NA	NA
Singapore	15	2.1	15	2.2	NA	NA
TOTAL		62.5		63.9		73.3

NA: Not in the top 15 in that year.

Source: adapted from ^a WTO (2019: 100); ^b WTO (2001: 19); ^c Dicken (2003: 40). Dicken used WTO figures for his calculations.

The NIDL has not just involved the transfer of some production from North to South, with the associated foreign direct investment (FDI) from Northern-based TNCs. There has also been significant South–South investment, not least from China and India, as well as Indian and Chinese investment in the North. For example, Tata Steel, a company originating in India, now has investments in every major global region, including plants in the UK and the Netherlands. Chinese investment in African countries experienced a rapid rise after the implementation of the ‘Go out’ policy by the Chinese government in 2001. This seeks to encourage Chinese companies to invest overseas by providing subsidies, reducing bureaucracy and cheap loans (Kragelund 2009). African countries have been viewed as important locations for FDI due to

their mineral and energy resources, which have been in increasing demand to fuel China’s economic growth, as well as the availability of a potentially large domestic market of African consumers (Power *et al.* 2012).

ACTORS IN DEVELOPMENT

A key theme of this book is to understand how different definitions of, and approaches to, ‘development’ are linked to particular policy approaches. While the academic debates about ‘development’ are fascinating, it is particularly important to consider how these debates link to actual policies ‘on the ground’ which affect millions of people throughout the world.

The variety of approaches involves a range of actors, with shifting emphases being placed on these actors depending on the approach adopted. The degree of agency which these actors are perceived to have will also be affected by a particular interpretation of power distributions. Having agency implies that an individual or group is able to make decisions and do things based on their own choices (Garikipati and Olsen 2008). The other extreme, having no agency, means that there is no free will, and individual behaviour is controlled by other actors.

There are a range of actors involved in development ([Table 1.5](#)). They vary from individuals to large-scale global organizations such as the United Nations. The scale differences are apparent, but it is important not to assume that there is an increase in influence as the scale increases. For example, individuals can be incredibly influential on a large scale because of their political or economic position, but individuals can also have very little influence even within their own households. The President of the United States of America and a woman farmer on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania are both individuals, but their ability to influence events and their life choices are very different in scope.

[Table 1.5](#) [Actors in development](#)

Actor	Activities
Individual	Depending on income, class, gender, ethnicity, age and other social variables can have a great deal of choice and influence, or be left with very little agency.

Household	Group of people who live together and share expenses. Not always members of the same family. Can operate as a unit to ensure that all household members have their basic needs met.
Community	Group of people with shared interests in some senses. Usually based on shared residential location, e.g. a village or urban district, but can also refer to a community based on shared social identity.
Government	Operates at a range of scales from local and municipal government to national government. Important in setting economic framework. Can be interventionist or can play a regulatory role in development.
Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)	Organizations which are neither run by the state or are profit-making companies. Can help local communities set up projects to provide services, create income-generating opportunities or improve social relations. Can be very small-scale organizations, or very large global organizations such as Oxfam or Médecins Sans Frontières.
Private companies	Representatives of the market. Can be very small businesses, or global corporations.
Multilateral organizations	Can set global agenda for economic policies; promote global peace; important sources of aid and technical assistance. Examples: International Monetary Fund, United Nations, World Bank.

APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT

While one of the aims of this book is to highlight the complexities of the debates about ‘development’, as a starting point it is useful to have some basic framework within which to locate our discussions. [Table 1.6](#) provides a chronology of ‘development’ approaches and understandings. The point of this table is not to suggest that theories of development have evolved in a unilinear way with no contestation or conflict. Instead, as the following

chapters will demonstrate, numerous ideas about ‘development’ can co-exist, although some theories will be adopted more widely, partly because they are advocated or supported by more powerful actors.

Table 1.6 [Main approaches to development 1950s onwards](#)

<i>Decade</i>	<i>Main development approaches</i>
1950s	Modernization theories: all countries should follow the European model.
	Structuralist theories: Southern countries needed to limit interaction with the global economy to allow for domestic economic growth.
1960s	Modernization theories
	Dependency theories: Southern countries poor because of exploitation by Northern countries.
1970s	Dependency theories
	Basic Needs approaches: focus of government and aid policies should be on providing for the basic needs of the world’s poorest.
	Neo-Malthusian theories: need to control economic growth, resource use and population growth to avoid economic and ecological disaster.
1980s	Women and development: recognition of the ways in which development has differential effects on women and men.
	Neoliberalism: Focus on the market. Governments should retreat from direct involvement in economic activities.
	Grassroots approaches: importance of considering local context and indigenous knowledge.
	Sustainable development: need to balance needs of current generation against environmental and other concerns of future populations.
	Gender and development: greater awareness of the ways in which gender is implicated in development.
	Neoliberalism
	Post-development: ideas about ‘development’ represent a form of colonialism and Eurocentrism. Should be challenged

1990s	from the grassroots. Sustainable development Culture and development: increased awareness of how different social and cultural groups affected by development processes.
2000s	Neoliberalism: increased engagement with concepts of globalization. Sustainable development Post-development and postcolonialism Grassroots approaches Rights-based development

The table only covers development theories in the period after the Second World War. This is not because there were no ideas about social and economic development before then, but because in the 1940s and 1950s there was increasing international discussion about how ‘development’, particularly in the Global South, was to take place. International organizations were set up to try and achieve ‘development’, and a number of strategies were adopted. These specific interventions as part of an international development endeavour is what Gillian Hart (2001) termed ‘“big D” Development’, in contrast to ‘“little d” development’, which she sees as the general progress of capitalism. However, despite the focus of this book on post-Second World War theories and practices, as you will see, many of the ideas about development in the second half of the 20th century and the start of the 21st had their roots in theorizing in the 19th century and earlier.

One feature of the chronological approach which should be highlighted is the concept of an ‘impasse’ in development theory (Schuurman 1993). In the 1980s, this idea of an impasse became increasingly common. In the 1960s and 1970s, the contrasting approaches of modernization theories (see [Chapter 2](#)) and dependency theories (see [Chapter 3](#)) represented differing perspectives on development. However, the global economic problems of the 1980s and the awareness that in many senses existing ‘development’ theories had not been translated into practical success led theorists to stop and think about what development was and how it could be achieved. While neoliberal thinking now dominates development policy-making (see [Chapter 2](#)), the post-1980s period has been associated with a recognition of much greater diversity within conceptions of development. This has included greater awareness of

environmental concerns, gender equity and grassroots approaches. All these will be discussed in later chapters.

POSTCOLONIALISM AND POSTMODERNISM

Engaging with social diversity and also recognizing the importance of power relations in the construction and diffusion of development ideas have been greatly associated with postcolonial and postmodernist approaches from the 1980s onwards. While the two approaches have similarities, they do not overlap completely. Postmodernism is difficult to define because it can be applied in a number of fields and in a variety of ways (Simon 1998). In the context of 'development', it has been particularly important in considering how previous understandings of 'development' assumed that the populations of the South were homogenous and that the European route to development was the only correct way.

The deconstruction of development categories is a key part of postmodern approaches to development. Rather than assuming that all 'peasants' are the same or all rural-urban migrants have the same experiences, postmodernism stresses diversity in social, spatial and temporal terms. For example, Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1991) focuses on the ways in which the term 'Third World Women' has been used to describe all women living in the Global South. In particular, she highlights how this term has been used to homogenize women's lives and is also used in a way which always implies victimhood; 'Each of these examples [in her chapter] illustrates the construction of "third world women" as a homogeneous "powerless" group often located as implicit *victims* of particular socioeconomic systems' (1991: 57, emphasis in the original). She argues that this approach not only denies the experiences of millions of women, but also reflects the power relations which frame understandings of the world, a key theme of postcolonial thought.

Postcolonial approaches seek to disrupt ways of thinking about the world based on Northern assumptions and also to recognize difference, but this is particularly within the context of places and peoples who have experienced colonialism from the perspective of being colonized. The term 'post-colonialism' is usually used to indicate a time period after colonialism, while 'postcolonialism' describes an approach to understanding social, economic, political and cultural processes (Loomba 1998). This includes both the material

legacies of colonialism, such as urban structures and social hierarchies, as well as the how particular forms of knowledge are valued at the expense of others (Radcliffe 2014). For example, Frantz Fanon's book *Black Skin, White Masks*, originally published in French in 1952, draws on his experience of growing up in the French Caribbean territory of Martinique and serving in the French army, to highlight the effects of European colonialism on the mentalities of colonized Black populations (Fanon 1986 [1952]). Postcolonialism therefore attempts to understand not only the observable legacies of colonialism, but also the ideas or discourses about 'development' which have been transferred as part of the colonial process (McEwan 2019).

Edward Said's book *Orientalism* (1991 [1978]) is a key text in postcolonial thought. The book is subtitled *Western Conceptions of the Orient* and deals with how 'the West' has constructed the peoples of 'the East' as being 'backward' and 'uncivilized'. This has been used as a justification for political interventions and colonial projects. *Orientalism* shows how these ideas are constructed by particular groups of people at particular times; i.e., they reflect global power relations. In addition, Said also demonstrates how the construction of the 'East' as 'Other' and 'different' to the 'West' not only gives the 'East' a particular identity, but also reflects on the identity of the 'West' (Mercer *et al.* 2003).

Postmodern and postcolonial approaches to development have received some criticisms; in particular, theorists are accused of 'playing academic games', rather than dealing with the day-to-day problems which millions of the world's poorest people face (Nederveen Pieterse 2000; Simon 1998; Sylvester 1999). These criticisms have also been levelled at the related 'post-development' ideas (see later). However, the importance of recognizing diversity in constructing development theories and practices is clearly of great importance, as is an awareness of the context in which theories are formulated. These themes will be developed throughout the rest of the book.

POST-DEVELOPMENT?

Alongside the debates about how 'development' can be achieved, since the 1990s, the concept of 'post-development' has come to the fore. One of the most well-known proponents of this approach is Arturo Escobar, who uses the case study of Colombia to discuss the development process (Escobar 1995). By

‘development’ he means the highly technocratic approach adopted by the World Bank, US government and other Northern institutions in the post-Second World War period (discussed in [Chapter 2](#)). His argument is that before ‘outsiders’ came into Colombia, there was no such thing as ‘poverty’ and therefore no need for ‘development’. While most people had what would be defined as low life expectancies, many children lacked access to formal education and houses lacked water and electricity, these factors were not usually regarded as problems. Escobar argues that by imposing external norms and expectations on Colombian society and economy, the country was interpreted as ‘lacking development’. This lack could only be addressed by adopting Northern forms of ‘development’, hence numerous types of intervention in the form of aid and technical assistance ([Chapter 2](#)).

What Escobar and other post-developmentalists (see Esteva 1992; Esteva and Escobar 2017; Rahnema and Bawtree 1997; Sachs 1992) argue is that the development process as it has been experienced by Southern countries is based on Eurocentric assumptions. ‘Development’ has helped incorporate large areas of the globe into a Northern-dominated economic and political system which has destroyed indigenous cultures, threatened the sustainability of natural environments and has created feelings of inferiority among people of the South ([Box 1.6](#)). Post-development theorists stress the importance of the discourse of development. This refers to the way that ‘development’ is defined and discussed. Rather than being neutral, these theorists argue that understandings of ‘development’ reflect prevailing power relations and enable some ideas of ‘development’ to be presented as ‘correct’, while others are dismissed. As Cheryl McEwan (2019: 182) states, in the context of postcolonialism, ‘Development discourse promotes and justifies very real interventions with very real consequences.’

While post-development perspectives (in common with postcolonial approaches) have been lauded for making visible the power relations which lie behind supposedly neutral development interventions, post-development has also been greatly criticized (Ziai 2017). Firstly, many have argued that the ‘development’ which post-development theorists criticize is a caricature of the diversity of development approaches which exist (Corbridge 1998; Rigg 2003; Simon 1998). Escobar’s highly influential study is based largely on development policies in Colombia in the 1950s and 1960s. Rather than recognizing the diversity and dynamism of development theorizing and practice, much post-development analysis has drawn on a stereotypical image

of how development has been defined and implemented. Secondly, post-development approaches have been accused of making substantial criticisms of current policies and theories without providing details of possible alternatives, other than general calls to focus on grassroots communities (see [Chapter 5](#)). Finally, while ‘development’ in many guises has not brought all the benefits it was purported to provide, there have been significant material improvements in life expectancy, health levels and education of some populations and regions (Rigg 2003; Rosling *et al.* 2018). These debates about the meanings, practices and impacts of development are the focus of the remaining chapters.

BOX 1.6 NANDA SHRESTHA’S PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPMENT IN NEPAL

Nanda Shrestha is now Professor in the School of Business and Industry at the Florida A&M University, but he grew up in the 1940s and 1950s in Pokhara in Central Nepal. His family survived by cultivating non-irrigated crops for subsistence and selling millet liquor. Hunger was common, and their small house let the rain in. According to present-day assessments, his family and the wider community would certainly be classified as very poor and disadvantaged.

However, for Shrestha, the perception of their situation was very different:

To my innocent mind, poverty looked natural, something that nobody could do anything about. I accepted poverty as a matter of fate.... I had no idea that poverty was largely a social creation, not a bad karmic product. Despite all this, it never seemed threatening or dehumanizing. So, poor and hungry I certainly was. But underdeveloped? I never thought – nor did anybody else – that being poor meant being ‘underdeveloped’ and lacking human dignity. True, there is no comfort and glory in poverty, but the whole concept of development (or underdevelopment) was totally alien to me.

(1995: 268)

In 1951, after a change of ruler in Nepal, Western-funded development

projects were introduced. The concept of development in Nepali is *bikas*. Shrestha describes how people were ‘seduced’ by this concept and saw everything that was associated with *bikas* as being good and of value, and everything else which was associated with existing ways of life as being inferior. This included forms of traditional medicine, manual labour, language and education. *Bikas* was regarded as desirable because it brought paved roads, school buildings and technology, even though hunger persisted and self-reliance and autonomy declined. Shrestha interprets this process as a form of colonialism, where European and American ideas and cultures are presented as being superior to indigenous ways of living.

Source: adapted from Shrestha (1995)

SUMMARY

- Development is a highly contested concept.
- Multilateral agencies often use economic measures such as GNI or GNP per capita to assess development.
- National-level measures hide important spatial and social inequalities.
- Despite widespread decolonization, it is important to consider the role of colonialism in understanding development today.
- Development as a process is not confined to Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Development can be understood as a Eurocentric idea which has been forced on the rest of the world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Outline the major patterns of Human Development Index scores and suggest reasons for the differences between global regions.
- 2 In a post-colonial world, why is it important to consider colonialism in the context of development?
- 3 How do definitions of development vary according to scale?

4 What are the advantages and disadvantages of using quantitative measures of development?

5 What are the main features of a postcolonial approach to development?

FURTHER READING

- Brooks, A. (2017) *The End of Development: A Global History of Poverty and Prosperity*, London: Zed Books. An engaging book showing how development is intertwined with colonialism and capitalism.
- Esteva, G. (1992) 'Development', in W. Sachs (ed) *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, London: Zed Books. An impassioned critique of 'development' as it has been defined in the 20th century by policy-makers, particularly in the North. A useful introduction to the ideas of post-development.
- McEwan, C. (2019) *Postcolonialism, Decoloniality and Development*, 2nd edition, London: Routledge. A clearly written introduction to postcolonial theory and engagement with development theory and practice.
- Pailey, R.N. (2020) 'De-centring the "white gaze" of development', *Development and Change* 51 (3): 729–45. A challenging and important article bringing considering the role of race in development theory and practice.
- Williams, G. *et al.* (2014) *Geographies of Developing Areas: The Global South in a Changing World*, 2nd edition, London: Routledge. An accessible introduction to globalization and development. Chapter 2 provides a clear introduction to debates around representations of the Global South.

Useful websites

- www.eldis.org Portal for development-related information run by the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex.
- www.gdn.int/en Global Development Network. Social science research network based in New Delhi.
- www.ophi.org.uk Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative. Provides information about the concept of human development and also the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).
- www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/ United Nations Sustainable Development Goals site.
- www.worldbank.org/poverty World Bank information and research on poverty reduction and equity.

CHAPTER 2

Modernization, Keynesianism and neoliberalism

- Adam Smith and the free market
- Keynesianism
- Modernization theories
- Development aid
- Neoliberalism
- Neo-Keynesianism and global economic crisis

This chapter deals largely with development theories that focus on the central role of the market in promoting economic progress. The role of other development actors, most notably the state, should not be ignored, but in most cases, the state is viewed as an enabler for more effective market operations.

CLASSICAL THEORIES

While the bulk of this book focuses on post-1945 development theories and policies, it is important to recognize that these ideas did not appear in an intellectual vacuum, but rather were rooted in the tradition of economic, political and sociological theorizing which developed in Europe from the 18th century onwards (Rist 2014).

One of the key theorists to influence later ideas about economic

development was Adam Smith. His book, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, was published in 1776 and was a response to the mercantile (trade) focus of economic policy at that time in Western Europe (Smith 1950 [1776]). In the 18th century, it was trade which was the major force for economic growth; merchants, and particularly the large trading companies (such as the East India Company) had great power in relation to national governments. In order to safeguard their interests, merchants supported protectionist measures which allowed them to carry out their activities without what they saw as unnecessary competition. Protectionism included high import tariffs for goods produced outside a country. This made it cheaper for customers to buy domestically produced goods.

Adam Smith viewed this form of regulation as detrimental to the economic growth of the country and greater wealth for all citizens, rather than just the merchant classes. He argued for greater attention to be paid to production, rather than trade in economic development. In addition, he claimed that divisions of labour would help improve productivity and therefore economic growth and wealth creation. ‘Divisions of labour’ describes the breaking up of the production process (for example making cloth) into a number of stages; rather than one person completing all stages, different people concentrate on one aspect of the process. They become greatly skilled at this and so more items can be produced in the same time.

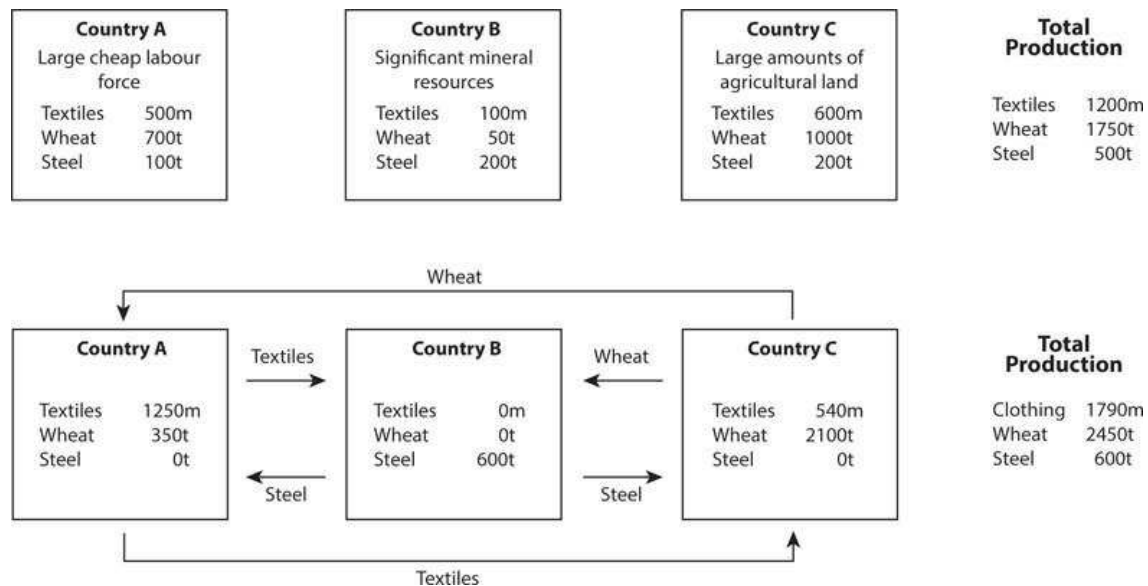
The operation of the proposed system, he argued, would be regulated by the ‘invisible hand of the market’ rather than by the state (see [Chapter 1](#) for a discussion of these actors). Smith believed that individuals would act in self-interest; thus if a product was too expensive then nobody would buy it, and the seller would either reduce the prices or change to selling something else. Similarly, if wages were too low, then workers would move to other jobs. Despite writing before the turmoil and ‘economic development’ of the Industrial Revolution, Smith’s work is still very influential today because of his theorizing about the role of the market in economic development. The market-centred approach to economic development has also been termed *laissez-faire* economics.

David Ricardo (1772–1823) was another highly influential classical economist who advocated free trade and developed the theory of ‘comparative advantage’ in his 1817 book *On the Principles of Political Economy and*

Taxation (Ricardo 1973 [1817]). According to this theory, countries should concentrate on producing and then selling the goods that they had an advantage in producing because of their assets, such as land, mineral resources, labour, technical or scientific expertise. This meant a global division of labour. Ricardo argued that it made more sense for countries to specialize in this way, rather than trying to produce everything, because through specializing, production would be more efficient, there would be greater capacity for growth and scarce resources could be used more effectively (see [Figure 2.1](#)).

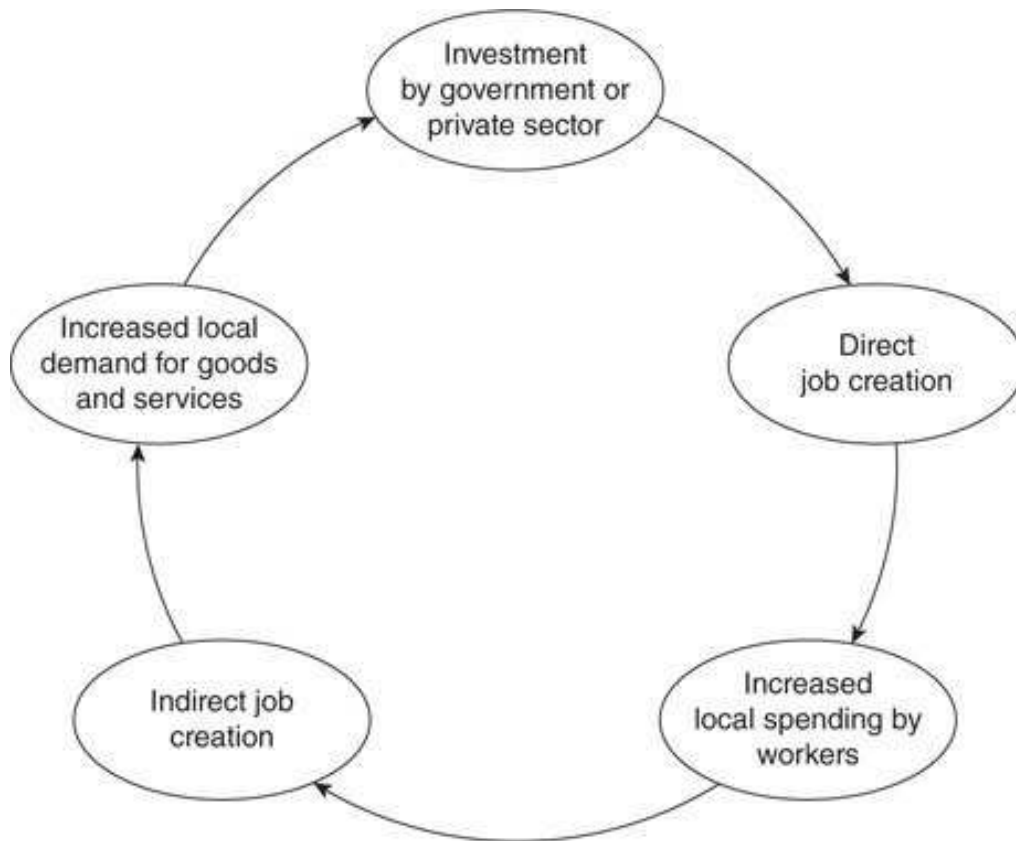
ECONOMIC GROWTH THEORY

Classical economists' belief in the market as a mechanism for maximizing efficient resource use and human well-being was challenged in the early 20th century by significant economic events, in particular the 1929 Wall Street Crash and the Great Depression of the 1930s in the USA. From this extreme failure of the free market to reach an equilibrium, economists began to develop new understandings of national economies. Foremost among these was the British economist John Maynard Keynes, who in 1936 published *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*. Keynes' argument was that the free market was not necessarily the positive force that many, following Adam Smith, believed. Keynes argued that the key to growth was real investment, i.e. investment in new (rather than replacement) infrastructure projects. This investment, he claimed, would have a positive effect on job creation and the further generation of wealth, through the multiplier effect (see [Figure 2.2](#)). This effect could, however, also work in reverse, so that declining levels of real investment would lead to a downward spiral into economic crisis.



[Figure 2.1](#) Comparative advantage

Unlike the classical economists, Keynes saw a key role for the government in promoting economic growth. Rather than letting the market operate alone, Keynes said that governments could intervene to promote investment either through monetary policies such as changing interest rates, or directly through government expenditure. For example, if a government funds a road-building scheme, this will create jobs not only for the road builders, but also for suppliers of road-building materials and tools. The workers will spend money so supporting other people's jobs, and companies will make profits which can be invested further in productive capital. Government expenditure was, therefore, viewed as a way of 'taming crises' (Preston 1996: 157). This approach was adopted by US President Franklin D. Roosevelt in his 'New Deal' policies of the 1930s in an attempt to boost the US economy and job creation in the aftermath of the Wall Street Crash.



[Figure 2.2 Multiplier effect](#)

While Keynes did not write specifically on the economic conditions of Southern countries, his ideas regarding government activities were drawn on in the post-war period of development interventions. Policy measures to address the effects of the global economic crisis from 2007 onwards sometimes drew on Keynesian ideas, and have therefore been termed ‘neo-Keynesianist’ (see later in this chapter).

POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION

The post-Second World War period gave Western nations the opportunity to consider the most appropriate forms of international organization and intervention to ensure that the economic crises of the 1930s could never happen again. In addition, they wanted to promote a more peaceful world where warfare could be replaced with diplomacy and negotiation. In the sphere of economics, the 1944 Bretton Woods Conference in New Hampshire, USA led to the creation of three key international institutions aimed at promoting stable economic growth within a capitalist system: the

International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) (see [Box 2.1](#)). There were 44 countries represented at Bretton Woods. Although decisions were made which were to influence the whole of the non-communist world, the countries represented were largely from the industrialized world. The nature of representation within global institutions will be discussed further in [Chapter 4](#).

The important role of government, or in the case of the Bretton Woods institutions, multilateral organizations, in economic intervention for development was clearly reflected in the Marshall Plan, officially titled the 'European Recovery Programme'. This was a programme through which aid was channelled from the USA to fund reconstruction in Europe (see [Box 2.2](#)). The programme ran from 1948–1952 and reflected Keynesian theory in that investment into infrastructure programmes was not just to recreate physical capital in Europe; it was also meant to contribute to kick-starting the national economies of the region. In addition, the US government felt that contributing to this reconstruction would reduce the possibilities of European nations 'succumbing' to communism.

BOX 2.1 BRETON WOODS INSTITUTIONS

All of the organizations are part, in theory, of the United Nations system, but in practice they are autonomous.

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

The original aim of the IMF was to maintain currency stability and develop world trade. It continues to do this largely through the provision of support and advice to countries in difficulty. For example, the IMF has been a key institution in the attempts to achieve economic stability after the debt crises of the 1980s and 1990s, the aftermath of the 1997 Asian economic crisis and the global economic crisis from 2007 onwards. As with many international agencies, support for poverty reduction has also

become part of its remit. As of May 2020, there were 189 members.

World Bank Group

The term World Bank is usually used to imply one organization, but in fact there are five institutions within the World Bank Group. Of these, the term 'World Bank' is most correctly applied only to the IBRD and the IDA. The Group's overall aims are poverty reduction, promotion of sustainable development and the sharing of prosperity.

International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)

The IBRD was founded in 1944. Its original aim was to assist in the rebuilding and development of Europe, but following the success of the Marshall Plan (see [Box 2.2](#)) the attention of the organization turned to the poorer regions of the world. The IBRD provides loans to national governments of middle-income and creditworthy poorer countries at below commercial interest rates. Most of its funds are generated through the world's financial markets. As of May 2020, it had 189 members.

International Development Association (IDA)

For the very poorest nations, even interest rates below commercial levels are too high. The IDA was set up in 1960 and provides interest-free loans to the world's 75 poorest countries. Countries have to pay some administration costs, but the IDA provides access to finance that would

otherwise be unavailable. Repayment periods are as long as 30–38 years. As of May 2020, it had 173 shareholder nations and had lent US\$391 billion since 1960. It raises most of its money from contributions from its richer country members, although it also receives funds from the IBRD and early repayments.

International Finance Corporation (IFC)

Since 1965, the IFC has worked with private sector companies in developing countries to help improve investment levels and business success. By providing loans, business advice and financial guarantees, the IFC helps reduce commercial risks for the private sector.

Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA)

Investment in the world's poorer countries is often regarded with suspicion by private sector companies, worried about political instability, restrictions on financial movements and the threat of government expropriation of property. To help the flow of private investment, since its establishment in 1988, the MIGA has provided a guarantees service. This means that if private sector companies do incur losses for non-commercial reasons, the MIGA will cover those losses. This encourages private sector investment. In 2019 MIGA funds guaranteed over US\$5.5 billion of investment.

The International Centre for Settlement of Investment

Disputes (ICSID)

The ICSID was set up in 1966 and, like the IFC and MIGA, it seeks to increase the flow of private capital into poorer countries of the world. The Centre provides arbitration in investment disputes and helps promote confidence in dealings between governments and foreign investors.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)

Set up in 1947, the role of GATT was to promote free trade between its members. Originally consisting of 23 members, by the time the World Trade Organization (WTO) replaced GATT in 1995 there were 124 members. GATT worked through a series of negotiations or 'rounds'. During each round, members sought to make agreements about reducing tariffs and extending free trade to new economic sectors. There were eight rounds during the life of GATT.

Source: adapted from IMF (2020a); Potter *et al.* (2018); Power (2003); Thomas and Allen (2000); World Bank (2020b)

[BOX 2.2 MARSHALL PLAN](#)

The Marshall Plan, also known as the European Recovery Program, was announced on 5 June 1947 by the US Secretary of State George C. Marshall. Under this programme, the US government provided financial assistance to the governments of Western Europe to assist in rebuilding their infrastructure and economies after the Second World War. US motivation for this assistance was more than goodwill. Restored European economies would provide markets for US products and would also contribute to the maintenance of a viable trading system. In addition, given the concerns about the communist threat, the US

administration felt that providing this assistance would reduce the likelihood of shifts towards communism within Western Europe.

Between 1948 and 1952, approximately US\$17 billion were transferred as part of the Program. At its peak, the transfers represented 2–3% of US GNP, a figure far higher than that for US government development assistance today. Most assistance went to the UK, France, West Germany and Italy. To administer the Program, the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) was set up. In 1961, this organization became the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Its membership now numbers 37 countries, the original Western European and North American members being joined by Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Finland, Mexico, South Korea, Chile and Israel. The Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia have also joined following their transition to market-oriented economies. Colombia became the 37th member, joining in 2020.

Source: adapted from Binns (2014); OECD (2020a); Preston (1996)

The role of the USA as a key actor in international reconstruction and development was also reinforced by US President Harry S. Truman in his inaugural speech in January 1949. The theme of the speech is similar to the philosophy underlying the Marshall Plan; poverty and low levels of economic development in other parts of the world are detrimental not only to people living in these conditions, but also to the peace and prosperity of the USA and other more economically developed countries. Truman argued that the USA should use its technological knowledge to assist poorer parts of the world to improve production levels and therefore the state of economic development and living conditions.

This speech is often held up as the starting point of ‘development planning’. For example, Arturo Escobar, in his influential 1995 book *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, stresses the importance of this speech to the development of a particular discourse and policy-making towards the non-industrialized world. Escobar quotes Truman’s perspective:

For the first time in history humanity possesses the knowledge and

the skill to relieve the suffering of these people [the world's poor]. ... I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life. ... What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing. ... Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. And the key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge.

(Truman 1949 in Escobar 1995: 3)

For some, as shall be demonstrated later in this chapter, this sharing of technical know-how from North to South was part of a single path of progress to development and modernization. However, for Escobar and other post-development theorists, it represents a Eurocentric approach which fails to recognize the range of societies in the South and also the needs and requirements of the local populations. The focus was on what populations and regions lacked in relation to Northern norms, rather than focusing on what people in the Global South had or an acknowledgement of their worldviews and beliefs.

LINEAR-STAGES THEORY

In 1960, Walt Rostow published *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*. Rostow wrote mainly about 'economic growth' rather than 'development' *per se*, but he did make distinctions between 'more developed' and 'less developed' areas (1960: 2), and his 'stages of economic growth' were the route to 'more developed' status. Under Rostow's thinking, there was one path to 'development', with the final stage being termed 'Age of High Mass Consumption'. Thus in goal terms, 'development' was conceived of as a state where the mass of the population could afford to spend large amounts on consumer products, the economy was largely non-agricultural and very much urban-based. Finally, the subtitle of Rostow's book, *A Non-Communist Manifesto*, stressed that development was to take place in a capitalist context, rather than a communist one. As a process, 'development' was defined in relation to modernity, and a move from agricultural societies with 'traditional' cultural practices, to a rational, industrial and service-

focused economy.

In the introduction to his book Rostow is careful to stress the heterogeneity of experiences:

I cannot emphasize too strongly at the outset, that the stages-of-growth are an arbitrary and limited way of looking at the sequence of modern history; and they are, in no absolute sense, a correct way. They are designed, in fact, to dramatize not merely the uniformities in the sequence of modernization but also – and equally – the uniqueness of each nation's experience.

(Rostow 1960: 1)

However, despite this claim, he starts [Chapter 2](#) with 'It is possible to identify all societies, in their economic dimensions, as lying within one of five categories' (1960: 4). To highlight the nature of 'development' as a process, Rostow used the analogy of an aeroplane moving along the runway until it reaches take-off and then soaring into the sky (see [Figure 2.3](#)). To demonstrate that this was a route that all countries could take, he provided information about when different countries of the world had reached certain stages (see [Table 2.1](#)). Rostow's work, therefore, fitted into the conception of development as being modernity to be achieved through following Western models of 'success'. It is probably the best example of what has been termed 'modernization theory'. The stages-of-growth model also conceived of development and policy-making taking place within state boundaries at a national scale, the assumption being that this was the appropriate scale at which to practise development.

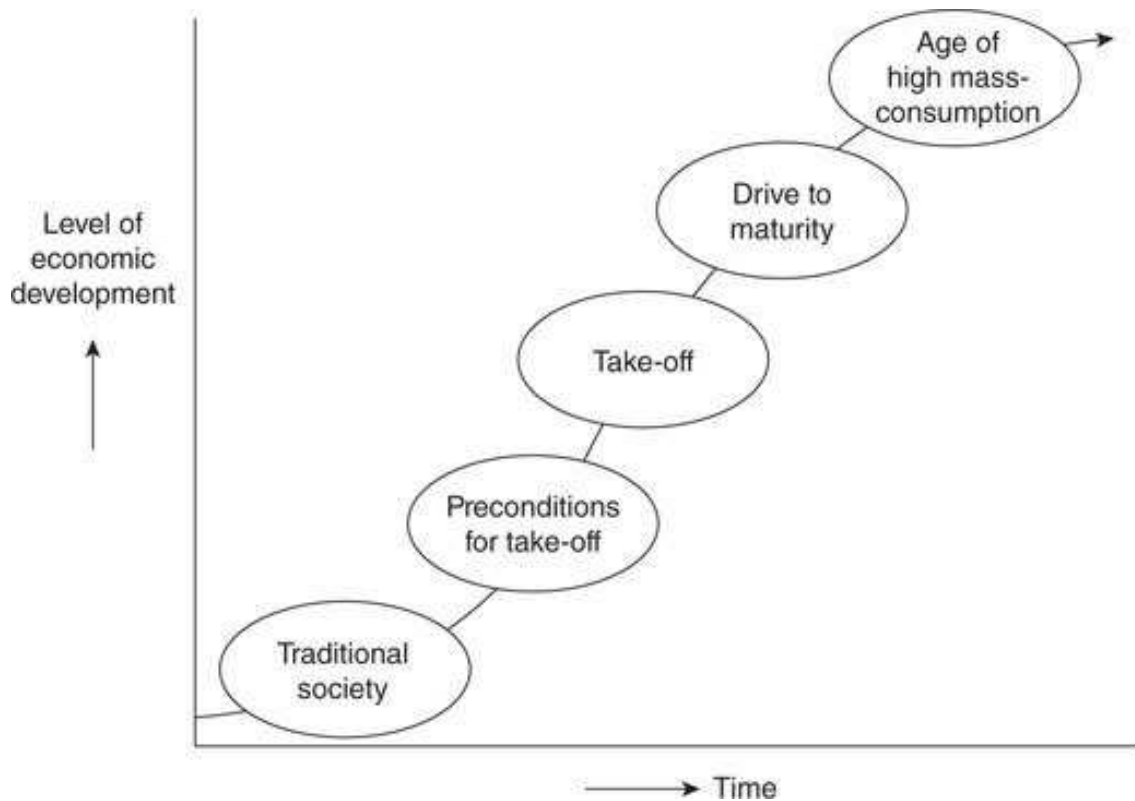


Figure 2.3 [Rostow's stages of economic growth](#)

STRUCTURAL CHANGE MODELS

The concept of gradual shifts over time along a particular path was also found within what Michael Todaro and Stephen Smith (2015) term 'structural change models'. The basic theme of these models of development was how national economies shifted from a rural, agricultural base to an urban, manufacturing one. Thus 'development' was conceived of as a largely economic phenomenon.

The key theorist was W. Arthur Lewis, who used his experiences of growing up in St. Lucia to examine the nature of economic development (Szeftel 2019). He conceived of the economy of 'underdeveloped countries' being dualistic, i.e. divided into two. The so-called 'traditional' sector consisted largely of subsistence agriculture, although some forms of urban self-employment could also come under this heading. The 'modern' sector, in contrast, was made up of commercial agriculture, plantations, manufacturing and mining (see [Plate 2.1](#)). For Lewis, 'development' took place as surplus labour moved from the non-profit-oriented traditional sector to the capitalist

modern sector. He argued that because there was so much ‘surplus’ labour, i.e. unemployed or underemployed people, in rural areas, the wages in the modern sector would not increase until the surplus labour has been absorbed (Lewis 1964). Because of the urban basis of much ‘modern’ economic activity, the Lewis model was based on large amounts of rural–urban migration.

Table 2.1 [Rostow’s stages of economic growth](#)

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>US example</i>
Traditional	Based on agriculture; pre-Newtonian science and technology; family and clan allegiances key; pre-nation-state	Pre-19th century Native American subsistence and hunter-gatherer societies; European settlers focus on trade of agricultural goods.
Preconditions for take-off	Savings and investment rates above population growth rates; national-level organization and institutions; new elites; changes often triggered by external intrusion.	1815–1840s Focus on economic activities after independence gained in 1776; higher productivity in agriculture, e.g. cotton production; large-scale infrastructure projects with government funding, e.g. Erie Canal, railway network.
Take-Off	Stimulus to take-off needed, e.g. political revolution, technical innovation, changing international economic environment; investment and savings rates 5–10% of national income; substantial manufacturing sector; appropriate institutional arrangements, e.g. banking system.	1843–1860 American North ‘took off’ during this period – American South did not ‘take off’ until the 1930s. Expansion of railways into Mid-West in 1850s associated with inflow of foreign capital; massive expansion in grain exports; growth of

		manufacturing in East.
Drive to maturity	Extended range of technology adopted; development of new sectors; investment and savings 10–20% of national income.	Maturity reached by 1900 Expansion of steel production; agricultural productivity increased; focused economic development policies.
		1900s onwards Rise of middle class as move into urban employment in manufacturing, transport, construction; massive increase in consumer purchases, e.g. cars and cigarettes; increased suburbanization; 1913–14: introduction of Ford assembly lines.
Age of high mass-consumption	Widespread consumption of durable consumer goods and services; increased spending on welfare services.	

Source: adapted from Rostow (1960)

Lewis was concerned with how countries could begin to develop the ‘modern’ sector. In particular, how countries could raise enough money for investment when the population was saving very little because there were high levels of poverty. As a way out of this trap, he advocated foreign investment. Governments should encourage foreign companies to invest their capital into domestic industrial development through a process termed ‘industrialization by invitation’ (Lewis 1955).

Lewis’ interpretation of development has been criticized from a number of perspectives. Deepak Lal (1985) claimed that his assumptions about non-changing wage rates in situations of surplus labour were untenable, although John Toye (1993: 104) used the Indian example to demonstrate that Indian wage rates had not risen greatly as they were kept low due to the continued availability of cheap labour from the ‘traditional’ sector. Other criticisms levelled at Lewis have included his failure to recognize the potential contributions that the subsistence agricultural sector can make to economic development (Binns 2014; Toye 1993). His promotion of ‘industrialization by

invitation' has also been criticized because it encourages dependence (see [Chapter 3](#)).



[Plate 2.1](#) [Banana plantation, St. Lucia](#)

Credit: Galina Savina/[Shutterstock.com](#)

SPATIAL DIMENSIONS

As highlighted in [Chapter 1](#), development has not only a social, but a spatial dimension. Just as the Keynesian forms of development policy were meant to lead to a process of trickle-down to the poorest people in society, so development benefits were meant to spread to different regions. For Albert Hirschman (1958), spatially unbalanced growth was a desirable part of the development process. Based on his own experiences in Latin America, he argued that rather than attempt to achieve equal rates of growth throughout a country, it makes sense to allow economic development, particularly industrialization, to be spatially concentrated. His argument was that these so-called 'growth poles' would act as foci for economic development, but that over time, the benefits of such processes would spread and the degree of polarization would reduce. The idea of a route of progression was therefore

clear in Hirschman's work. While he recognized that conditions in poorer countries might require different forms of development approach, the underlying commitment to modernization following the Western experience was evident. 'Behind the ideas of unbalanced growth and growth poles it is ... easy to recognise the conception of growth as a more or less natural and automatic but occasionally disturbed or interrupted process' (Hettne 1995: 43).

The Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal (1957) also highlighted the spatial inequalities inherent in free-market economic development in his book *Economic Theory and Underdeveloped Regions*. However, unlike Hirschman, Myrdal did not believe that spatial polarization would automatically be reversed once economic development reached a certain level. Using the concept of cumulative causation, he argued that once a region started to grow economically, people, resources and finance would be drawn to that area so contributing to further growth. These flows would leave other areas depleted of dynamic people and resources to contribute to development; this is what Myrdal called 'backwash effects'. He did recognize that some benefits of this spatial focus may extend to neighbouring regions through 'spread effects', but overall the vicious cycle of decline for areas outside the core areas would continue.

For Myrdal, the only way in which the exacerbation of spatial inequalities could be reduced was through state intervention. He argued that if state planning was efficient, there was no need for the regional variations in economic growth rates. However, he was aware that in many situations the government and state departments in many countries were not able to achieve this (Myrdal 1970). He termed such states 'soft states' and advocated a move to 'strong states' to ensure that the planning mechanisms could be implemented. However, he did not provide details on how this was to be achieved. Myrdal's faith in planning as a solution to 'development problems' fits with what the post-development theorists would call a Eurocentric technocratic approach. While Myrdal clearly criticized leaving 'development' to the free market, he remained within a development approach that focused on economic growth.

INTERNATIONAL AID

Flows of international aid from North to South were part of the development

policy responses to modernization theory in the post-war period. The poorer countries of the world were regarded as lagging behind on the path of economic development, being largely agricultural and lacking the autonomous capacity for investment and economic growth. Following this interpretation, large transfers of money, technology and expertise were expected to fill the gaps and help the economic development process. Truman's speech about technology transfer fits within this model.

'Aid' can be defined in a number of ways. 'At its broadest, it consists of all resources – physical goods, skills and technical know-how, financial grants (gifts), or loans (at concessional rates) – transferred by donors to recipients' (Riddell 2008: 17). These resources are usually transferred from one government to another directly (bilateral aid), or from one government through a multilateral agency or an NGO to governments or groups in poorer countries (Potter *et al.* 2018: 421–9).

In terms of official reporting of international aid flows, data from the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has often been used to assess the level of 'official development assistance' (ODA). To be classified as ODA, flows must be 'provided by official agencies, including state and local governments, or by their executive agencies', the main objective must be 'the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries' and it must be 'concessional (i.e. grants or soft loans)' (OECD 2018: 1). However, the growing importance of the so-called 'non-DAC donors', including China, India and oil-producing Gulf States, has radically changed the nature of international aid flows (see later in this chapter and [Chapter 4](#)) (Mawdsley 2012).

Aid can include grants and loans, but it can also cover technical advice, transfer of resources such as equipment or food, and debt cancellation. It is usual to distinguish between 'emergency aid', 'humanitarian aid' or 'relief aid', which is mobilized at times of natural disaster or war to meet immediate needs (see [Plate 2.2](#)), and long-term development aid. It is this development aid which forms the bulk of aid flows and which has been used to promote particular forms of development practice.

In the 1950s and 1960s, in particular, aid was channelled into industrial development and projects to improve agricultural efficiency through the use of technology. There was also a focus on large-scale infrastructure projects, such as dam construction (see [Plate 2.3](#)) and road building. This form of 'top-

down development' was advocated because policy-makers believed that this development path had worked in the North and so could work elsewhere. It did, however, have serious social ([Chapters 5](#) and [6](#)) and environmental ([Chapter 7](#)) impacts. The externally derived nature of this development approach is summed up by General Olusegun Obasanjo, President of Nigeria 1976–1979 and 1999 to 2007. He stated, 'In education and in industrialization, we have used borrowed ideas, utilized borrowed experiences and funds and engaged borrowed hands. In our development programmes and strategies, not much, if anything, is ours' (1987 in Lancaster 1999: 3).



[Plate 2.2](#) [HMS Illustrious picking up humanitarian aid for the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan, 2013](#)

Credit: Ray Jones. © Crown copyright. Contains public sector information licenced under the Open Government Licence v3.0



[Plate 2.3 Kariba Dam, Zambesi River between Zambia and Zimbabwe](#)

Credit: Knowledge Matombo/[Shutterstock.com](https://www.shutterstock.com)

A growing awareness of the constraints to the effective use of aid, as well as debates around the role of the market in development and the growing importance of aid donors outside the Global North, has resulted in new approaches to international development aid which will be discussed in [Chapter 4](#).

NEOLIBERALISM

From the previous sections, it is clear that for most governments in the Global North, as well as multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and IMF, 'development' in the post-war period was to be achieved through variations on Keynesian approaches. The approach was based on government intervention at a national level and foreign assistance in terms of aid on an international scale. This perspective changed during the 1970s when the role of the state was increasingly questioned.

In the 1970s, some theorists began to argue that the widespread involvement of the state in economic activities was leading to inefficiency and

slower rates of economic growth than would be achieved if the market were left to its own devices. These theorists, such as Deepak Lal (1983) and Bela Balassa (1971, 1981), were drawing on the classical economic theories of Adam Smith and others regarding the 'invisible hand of the market'. For such theorists, the route to greater economic growth and therefore greater levels of well-being for all was through reducing state intervention and letting the market set prices and wages. It was argued that this would ensure the most efficient allocation of resources, so optimizing growth rates with concomitant social benefits. Due to the links back to earlier theories promoting free trade and the importance of market forces, such approaches have been termed 'neoclassical economics' or more generally 'neoliberalism'.

Chile, during the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet (1973–1990), is often regarded as the first wholesale experimentation with neoliberal policies. Having come to power after a military coup which removed the democratically elected left-wing government led by Salvador Allende, Pinochet's government introduced major economic reforms including widespread privatization, a promotion of export-oriented industries and foreign investment. A group of Chilean economists trained at the University of Chicago in the 1950s and 1960s promoted these neoliberal economic policies, drawing on the ideas of Milton Friedman, who had been a key figure in the Chicago economics department (Harvey 2007; Silva 1991).

John Toye (1993) describes the shift in theorizing about development from Keynesianism to neoliberalism as a 'counter-revolution'. He summarizes the three main policy approaches which this counter-revolution wanted to challenge:

- The over-extension of the public sector;
- The over-emphasis of economic policies on investment in physical capital, i.e. infrastructure, rather than human capital such as education and health;
- The widespread use of economic controls, such as tariffs, subsidies and quotas, which distorted prices.

(Toye 1993: 70)

All three of these concerns focus on factors which are internal to a country. There is no consideration of external factors which might influence economic success.

For example, Balassa's work concentrated on the liberalization of trade. Using the cases of four Latin American countries and five Asian countries, Balassa (1971) examined the role of the state in promoting economic growth through industrialization behind tariff barriers. For the period 1950–1969, he argued that growth rates in Korea and Taiwan were much higher than in the other seven countries, largely because they adopted an outward-oriented manufacturing export strategy. They were adopting the non-protectionist approach that Smith had promoted in the 18th century (although see later in this chapter and [Chapter 3](#) for further discussion of East Asian development).

By 1983, it was clear that the World Bank had taken on this way of thinking about economic development. In the 1983 *World Development Report*, there was a focus on stressing the relationship between economic growth rates and the degree of state intervention in prices. The implication was that the most rapid growth rates were found in those countries which were most outward-oriented and where states were least involved in 'distorting the market'. However, as Toye (1993: 108) highlights, 'only one-third (or 34 per cent) of the economic performance of these countries is explained by policy-induced price distortions of all kinds. Two-thirds of their economic growth responds to other factors'. There is no consideration of the social and political situations and institutions in these countries which may have affected economic growth; rather, the World Bank, following a neoliberal interpretation, prefers to focus on government involvement in economy.

Focusing on the market, rather than the government to allocate resources, means that individuals' access to resources depends on their ability to pay for those resources. This could include basic necessities such as food and housing. Where there is no government support or safety net for the economically poor, civil society organizations, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), can be key actors in reducing the extent of starvation and homelessness (see [Chapter 5](#)). Access to income through market mechanisms also requires individuals to have particular qualities which are desired by employers, such as certain qualifications and skills, or to be entrepreneurial in being able to set up one's own business (de Soto 1989). This process is sometimes termed 'individualization', as rather than collective activities, competition and the 'survival of the fittest' are stressed. For neoliberal theorists and policy-makers, the role of the government is to enable the private sector to operate efficiently through, for example, ensuring the rule of law (see [Chapter 4](#)). Critics of neoliberalism highlight the limitations of the

market to support economically poor and marginal communities (see later and [Chapter 3](#)).

The move towards a celebration of the market as a neutral resource-allocating system was found not only in relation to the Global South, but also in the so-called ‘Second World’ with moves away from state socialism (see [Chapter 3](#)) and in the industrialized countries of Western Europe and North America. The United Kingdom under Margaret Thatcher, elected in 1979, and the USA under Ronald Reagan from 1981, are probably the best examples of this economic philosophy in action.

DEBT CRISIS AND STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT

The need for an alternative to Keynesian approaches was regarded by some as imperative as economies throughout the world experienced slowing rates of growth in the 1970s. Within many parts of the South, import-substitution policies (see [Chapter 3](#)) had been implemented with some success, but the limits of such policies were becoming apparent. These national limits, combined with falling commodity prices and a slowdown in the world economy, led to what has been termed the ‘debt crisis’ of the 1980s.

The relationship between income coming into a country and that going out is termed the ‘balance of payments’ (see [Table 2.2](#)). These are divided between the current account and the capital account. If there is a deficit in one of these accounts, this is not necessarily a problem, as a surplus on the other account may cover the amount. However, if it does not, or if there is a deficit on both accounts, then money must be found to deal with the deficit. This may be found in the cash account, which includes three forms of reserves: foreign ‘hard’ currencies, such as US dollars, gold and Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) at the IMF. SDRs give the holders the ability to claim currencies from IMF members in the form of loans (IMF 2019).

[Table 2.2](#) [Balance of payments accounts](#)

	<i>In Out</i>
Exports of goods and services	A
Imports of goods and services	B
Net investment income ^a	C

Debt-service payments	D
Net remittances and transfers ^b	E
Total current account balance ($A - B + C - D + E$)	F
Direct private investment ^c	G
Foreign loans (public and private), minus amortization ^d	H
Increase in foreign assets of domestic banking system	I
Resident capital outflow (capital flight) ^e	J
Total capital account balance ($G + H - I - J$)	K
Increase (or decrease) in cash reserve account	L
Errors and omissions ($L - F - K$)	M

^a The balance between the earnings on overseas investments (such as bank deposits and bonds) which are brought into the country and investment income and profits which are taken out of the country.

^b The balance between private transfers into and out of the country, e.g. money sent back home by nationals working overseas.

^c This is made up largely by investment by multinational corporations.

^d Foreign loans from private banks, governments and multilateral agencies minus the payments made to pay back part of the sum borrowed.

^e Movement of money out of the country to foreign bank accounts, property, stocks and shares purchases. Triggered by loss of confidence in the domestic economy.

Source: adapted from Todaro and Smith (2015: 542–3)

The debt crisis arose because many nations of the South were not able to cover their debt repayments (either the interest or the repayment of the amount borrowed). During the 1960s and particularly during the 1970s, many Southern governments borrowed large amounts of money to fund large infrastructure and development schemes. Before the 1970s, most of this borrowing was from Northern governments or from multilateral agencies, but in the 1970s there were increasing levels of borrowing from private banks who lent at market rates, rather than government and multilateral lending which was often on concessional terms (Todaro and Smith 2015: 691). This is part of what has been known as the recycling of petrodollars. Because of rising oil prices, countries that were part of OPEC (Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries) were amassing large amounts of money. This was

deposited in banks and was then lent to other countries, so accruing interest. Southern governments were happy to borrow this money to fund their development projects, and this action seemed sensible as interest rates were low and export earnings from commodities remained at a healthy level.

Unfortunately, in the late 1970s commodity prices fell. As Southern countries earned most of their export revenue from primary commodities, either agricultural products such as coffee or sugar, or minerals such as coal or iron ore, a decline in world commodity prices was catastrophic. This fall in commodity prices was exacerbated by global recession in the 1981–2 period, which led to industrialized countries implementing greater forms of protectionism such as increased import tariffs, again making it harder for Southern countries to export their goods. In addition, interest rates went up and millions of dollars of savings were moved by investors to what were regarded as ‘safer’ countries through the process of ‘capital flight’. These events meant that many Southern governments were no longer able to meet their debt repayments, ushering in the widespread implementation of neoliberal policies based on market-centred theories of development (Milward 2000).

In August 1982, the Mexican government announced that it would not be able to meet the repayments on its debt. This triggered the ‘debt crisis’ although the problems of debt had been increasing throughout the late 1970s. Debt is not necessarily a problem; being unable to repay the debt or meet interest payments is. In addition, having to spend large amounts of export earnings on debt servicing means there is less to spend on welfare programmes and national investment. Debt service payments for developing countries increased from US\$25 billion in 1975 to US\$75 billion in 1979 (Todaro and Smith 2015: 693).

National governments which could not meet debt repayments were unable to borrow further from commercial banks, but still needed funds to continue functioning. In return for continuing financial support from the IMF and the World Bank, governments adopted structural adjustment programmes (SAPs). The underpinning philosophy of SAPs reflected the market ideologies adopted by the Thatcher and Reagan administrations, and their implementation demonstrates the ways in which policies developed in the North could be imposed on Southern nations.

SAPs encompassed a series of government-led policies which aimed to reduce (not eliminate) the role of the state in the running of the national

economy. SAPs usually included two categories of policies which can be classified as stabilization measures and adjustment measures. The first group included policies such as freezing government-sector wages, cutting back on government expenditure and devaluing the currency. Once the economy has been ‘stabilized’, adjustment measures were introduced to make longer-term changes which would, it was argued, contribute to a more economically prosperous future. Such measures included opening up the national economy to foreign investment, reforms in the tax system and privatization (Conway 2014) (see [Table 2.3](#)). Through these policies, government income should be maximized, and there is much greater efficiency and economic growth. Given the debt burdens and the negative rates of economic growth that had been experienced, such policies appeared to hold some hope for development. These policy recommendations were sometimes referred to as reflecting the ‘Washington Consensus’, a term which was originally coined by John Williamson in 1990 to describe the neoliberal policy reforms in Latin America that institutions based in Washington DC, such as the IMF and World Bank, were proposing in the late 1980s. However, it was often used to describe the implementation of neoliberal policies by IFIs throughout the world and as ‘a synonym for market fundamentalism’ (Williamson 2000: 256).

[Table 2.3](#) [Main characteristics of structural adjustment programmes](#)

Internal policy reforms – to increase role of the market in the domestic economy

- Privatization of state firms – allows for greater competition, reduces drain on state resources if firms doing badly.
- Removal of state subsidies – increases competition and reduces state expenditure.
- Improvements in tax system – increases state income.
- Removal of wage controls, e.g. minimum wages – wage levels should be set by the market.
- Reduced government workforce – cuts back on bureaucracy and inefficiency and reduces state expenditure.

External policy reforms – to encourage foreign investment and increasing exports

- Currency devaluation – makes imports more expensive and exports

cheaper.

- Removal or reduction in tariffs – encourages international trade.
- Removal or reduction in quotas, e.g. legal minimum amount of domestically sourced inputs – encourages foreign investment and export.
- End state control of exports, e.g. for agricultural commodities – improves efficiency and encourages private investment.

Source: adapted from Milward (2000)

In the vast majority of cases, SAPs proved to have significant consequences. While economic stabilization was often achieved, the costs in terms of human welfare were severe (Simon *et al.* 1995). The rolling back of the state, the opening up of the national economy to foreign investment and currency devaluation were often associated with increased poverty levels as real wages went down, unemployment increased and the cost of living rose. The removal of state safety nets in some cases also left the most vulnerable and destitute with no form of assistance (Cornia *et al.* 1987) ([Box 2.3](#)).

BOX 2.3 STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT IN JAMAICA

During the 1970s, the Jamaican economy experienced severe economic problems, including negative levels of economic growth from 1974 onwards. These problems led the Jamaican government under Edward Seaga to sign an agreement with the IMF in 1977 for further funding dependent on Jamaica following adjustment policies. Further agreements with both the IMF and World Bank followed in the 1980s and 1990s.

Government expenditure fell dramatically as part of these policies. The budgeted expenditure for 1985/6 was 71% of the 1981/2 level. While government spending on social services was 641 million Jamaican dollars in 1979/80, this had fallen to 372 million in 1985/6 (based on 1979/80 prices). These declines in government social spending, combined with increased unemployment and falling real wages, led to declining standards of living. Levels of infant malnutrition increased, education levels fell and the supply of new housing for low-income groups shrank to almost zero. Between 1980 and 1985, O'Level pass rates fell from 62% to 34%, reflecting the declining investment in school infrastructure and

teachers' wages, as well as poor levels of health among children and pressures from families for children to enter paid work.

Overall poverty levels increased during the 1980s, with some annual fluctuations. Using US\$60 per month at 1989 prices as the poverty line, the poverty rate increased from 45.5% in 1989 to 54.5% in 1996. Some households were able to maintain living standards, especially those who had access to remittances from family members overseas. The role of women in addressing the effects of declining incomes and rising expenses was particularly important (see [Chapter 6](#) for a discussion of the gendered dimensions of SAPs). Beverley Mullings (2009) also identifies the importance of 'gang welfare' in providing support to residents of particular urban neighbourhoods. SAPs in Jamaica have had serious negative impacts on social development in the country, not only in health and education terms, but also with respect to social breakdown.

Source: adapted from Boyd (1987); Handa and King (1997, 2003); Mullings (2009)

Growing awareness of the detrimental social effects of SAPs and the move towards a global poverty reduction agenda led the World Bank and IMF to reshape SAPs in the late 1990s. Neoliberal adjustment policies are still a key part of the organizations' conditions for lending funds, but greater attention is paid to the needs of the poorest people in society. The diversity of national situations is also acknowledged, compared to the one-size-fits-all approach under SAPs. The changing nature of aid policies is discussed in [Chapter 4](#).

GLOBALIZATION AND TRADE

As Ricardo outlined in his discussion of comparative advantage, trade can bring great economic benefits. With the growing possibilities for rapid transportation, almost-instantaneous communications and improved technologies, production of many goods can be increasingly produced far away from markets. This, it can be argued, allows for new possibilities of participating in global trade and thus accessing greater opportunities for wealth generation.

Under a neoliberal agenda, the focus on free trade has been a key tenet. Rather than protecting national markets and producers, neoliberal theory

promotes openness. This, it is argued, allows for a more efficient use of resources, exchange of technology and greater opportunities for economic growth (Durongkaveroj and Ryu 2019). From this it follows that protectionism leads to inefficiency, higher prices and limits to economic growth. Global trade needs to operate according to particular rules. While Adam Smith's ideas of the guiding hand of the market is regarded as the appropriate mechanism, in reality it is clear that this free market does not exist. Because of this, in the post-war period there have been attempts at policing world trade through global organizations. Firstly, it was the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which was set up as part of the Bretton Woods Conference, and then, in 1995, this was replaced by the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The WTO is made up of 164 member states (as of May 2020), and its remit is to promote the freeing up of trade between members (WTO 2020). In contrast to the GATT, the WTO has the power to enforce trade sanctions. If a member is perceived to have broken rules about protectionism, then other members can force the WTO to investigate. As outlined earlier, free trade may sound as if there are no 'losers', but in practice removing protectionist measures may lead to the destruction of local industries because of competition, or environmental problems (see [Chapter 7](#)). The WTO has been viewed as the epitome of capitalist activity in a globalized world, and, as a result, WTO meetings, most notably the 1999 protests in Seattle, USA, became the focus of often vehement protest (Glassman 2001).

The WTO has been criticized for being too influenced by the views of Northern countries at the expense of those of the South, despite the numerical dominance of Southern nations. Constant calls for decreased protectionism have been directed at Southern nations, while the USA and the European Union, for example, continue with high tariff barriers against agricultural imports and provide subsidies to national producers (Trade Justice Movement 2020). In the second decade of the 21st century, the role of the WTO is increasingly being questioned. The international rules of trade which the WTO enforces are agreed through a series of multilateral discussions and meetings which are called 'rounds'. Since its establishment in 1995, there have been no successful WTO rounds; the Doha round started in 2001, but was abandoned in 2015. The inability of WTO members to come to agreements partly reflects the growing power of Global South countries such as China, India and Brazil (Goldstein 2017). There has also been a move towards

regional trade deals which go beyond the tariff reduction focus of the WTO and include issues such as labour and environmental standards (Bown 2017). Finally, the influence of domestic politics has led to increased protectionism, which goes against the WTO approach (Goldstein 2017). The China–US ‘trade war’ which started in 2018 and is ongoing in mid-2020 is the most high-profile example of this.

ECONOMIC CRISES AND CHALLENGES TO NEOLIBERALISM

Neoliberalism has dominated the development policies of the main multilateral institutions since the 1980s, but periodic crises have challenged this hegemonic thinking. This section considers the 1997 East Asian crisis and the global financial crisis of 2007–9 as examples of economic downturns which threatened neoliberalism’s dominance, as well as having devastating impacts on the lives of millions of people.

The experiences of the East Asian nations from the 1960s to the 1990s were regarded as evidence of how neoliberal policies could lead to development. Not only did these nations experience high levels of economic growth, but this was associated with improvements in living standards and did not result in increasing levels of economic and social inequality (Page 1994). The economic development of the region has been represented as a series of waves. Following the success of the Japanese economy in the post-war period, the Newly Industrializing Countries or Economies (NICs or NIEs) of Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea experienced rapid economic growth based largely on labour-intensive manufacturing industries. In the 1980s, this trajectory was also taken by Indonesia, Thailand (Durongkaveroj and Ryu 2019) and Malaysia, as well as China and Vietnam, which were starting to move away from a state-controlled economy (see [Chapter 3](#)).

In 1993, the World Bank published *The East Asian Miracle*. This book sought to highlight how economic and social development had been achieved by the East Asian nations by following a few key neoliberal tenets: notably, opening up the economy to foreign investment and trade; limited role of the state in the national economy; investment in human capital, especially education. The book presented this ‘East Asian model’ as a blueprint for economic development with equity in other regions of the world. As Chris

Dixon (1999: 206) highlights: 'the successful Pacific Asian economies have been presented as the living embodiment of neoliberal orthodoxy and examples to be followed by the Third World as a whole'.



[Plate 2.4 Marina Bay Sands Resort, Singapore](#)

Credit: Katie Willis

Following its publication, numerous commentators queried the validity of the interpretation that the World Bank had made of the post-war economic development in the East Asian countries. Four main criticisms were levelled at the World Bank interpretation. Firstly, rather than there being a coherent set of policies throughout the region, in fact there were a range of approaches adopted within individual countries (Rigg 2003). Secondly, and very importantly, many criticized the way in which the World Bank used the East Asian experience to promote the benefits of free trade and open economies. In fact, as numerous authors stressed, many of the East Asian countries had achieved their economic success through important government interventions, such as the protectionist policies around Hong Kong's textile industry (Amsden 1994). Thirdly, the World Bank report failed to acknowledge the

continued levels of poverty and inequality in the region's nations. Finally, the use of the term 'miracle' suggested an unexplainable process, whereas policies promoting capital accumulation, improving technology and investing in education and training could all be identified as contributing to economic growth (Garnaut 1998).

In 1997, this model of neoliberal economic development collapsed with what was termed the 'Asian Crisis'. The trigger for the economic crisis was the devaluation of the baht, the Thai currency, but there had been cracks appearing throughout the region's economies before this. The crisis was largely financial, in that the withdrawal of large amounts of foreign capital from the region meant that for many countries, the stability of their economies was severely threatened. In 1996, foreign investors' confidence in the Thai economy was shaken by declining export growth, and there were also concerns about the large size of the current account deficit. As financial capital was withdrawn from Thailand, investors also lost confidence in other regional economies, so capital flight spread (Poon and Perry 1999). This had devastating effects on the levels of economic growth, but also on the levels of poverty among the mass of the populations. Of course, while the crisis spread throughout the region, the experiences were different, and some countries weathered the storm much more effectively than others: Indonesia, Thailand and South Korea all experienced negative economic growth rates following the crash, while Taiwan and Japan experienced little change in GDP growth rates (Garnaut 1998).

For the World Bank and other institutions and governments which had held up East Asia as the model for successful development policies, the 1997 Asian crisis was certainly a blow. However, World Bank interpretations of the causes of the crisis focused on the failure of the region's governments to follow the neoliberal approach properly. State intervention in the economy, which had not been greatly acknowledged in the *East Asian Miracle*, was now recognized as a key element in the creation of the crisis (Dixon 1999). Throughout the region, IMF 'rescue packages' were implemented. These were very similar to structural adjustment policies and included conditions such as increased openness to foreign ownership in the banking and financial sectors.

Just as the Asian financial crisis of 1997 challenged prevailing ideas about neoliberalism, so the global economic crisis of 2007–9 generated much debate about the nature of neoliberalism and appropriate strategies to achieve sustained economic growth. The crisis was triggered by a collapse in the US

subprime mortgage market, but soon spread throughout the world because of the way in which financial products were sold and re-sold as part of global financial transactions (Aalbers 2009). Global trade fell as national economies contracted, leading to increases in unemployment and further reduction in demands for goods and services due to the multiplier effect. For example, in May 2009 an estimated 23 million migrant workers in China were unemployed, of whom 14 million had returned to their villages (Branigan 2009). Despite effects reaching across the globe, some scholars prefer to call these events the North Atlantic Financial Crisis (NAFC) to emphasize where it started and the most severely affected economies (Jessop 2015).

For Marxist theorists (see [Chapter 3](#)), this economic crisis was an inevitable outcome of the operation of neoliberal capitalism (Harvey 2010). However, for those supporting a pro-market approach, the crisis reflected poor regulation of the financial system, rather than an inherent problem with neoliberalism. The international response to the crisis focused on improving regulation, but also involved significant additional government expenditure intended to stimulate the economy ([Box 2.4](#)). This reflects a form of Keynesian economic policy, so has been termed ‘neo-Keynesianism’ or a ‘Keynesian revival’ (Luckhurst 2012).

BOX 2.4 ECONOMIC STIMULUS IN THE USA

While there had been problems in the housing markets in the US in previous years, it was in 2007 that the number of housing repossessions increased greatly. By the end of 2007, about 4 million people had lost their homes because they were unable to pay the mortgage. House prices fell throughout the country, and banks were increasingly under threat of collapse because they could not cover their financial liabilities.

The US government responded by launching a series of measures which involved pumping large amounts of federal money into the economy. By the end of 2010, it was estimated that the economic stimulus package amounted to US\$2.8 trillion. This included US\$600 billion to support the financial institutions. It was argued that the government could not allow all the Wall Street banks to collapse as this would be catastrophic for the US economy. Critics argued that the banks should be allowed to fail as the financial crisis was a result of bank misconduct.

In addition to the 'banking bailout', the Bush administration spent US\$168 billion in 2008 and the Obama administration spent US\$780 billion in 2009 in an attempt to encourage spending, job creation and overall economic growth. Policies included subsidies for homebuyers, tax refunds and support for some automotive companies, notably General Motors and Chrysler. A further US\$858 billion of tax cuts were introduced in 2010. Despite this spending, unemployment reached just under 10% in 2010, but it is not known what levels it would have reached without this additional money in the economy.

Source: adapted from CNN Money (2010); *The Guardian* (28 July 2010a, 30 July 2010b); Harvey (2010)

The G20 grouping (19 economically dominant countries and the EU) agreed at summits in Washington in 2008 and London in April 2009 to promote government spending and increased support for the IMF to help countries in difficulty. However, by the June 2010 Toronto G20 Summit, divisions within the G20 were apparent, with some countries continuing to support economic stimulus, while others promoting cutbacks in government spending to reduce deficits, reflecting different perspectives on the role of government in economic development (Luckhurst 2012). For some European countries, most notably Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain, the impact of the economic crisis was so severe that their governments requested financial support from external bodies. This support came with conditions, as with the SAPs of the 1980s and 1990s for countries of the Global South. In Ireland, for example, a 2010 85-billion-Euro bailout package from the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the IMF required the Irish government to slash public spending, including on welfare support, and to increase taxation. These austerity measures had significant negative effects on Ireland's population (Fraser *et al.* 2013).

CHANGING NEOLIBERAL POLICIES

Despite economic crises and acknowledgement of the limits of the market-led neoliberal model of development, it remains as the key approach to development in much of the world and within the multilateral organizations,

such as the World Bank and the United Nations. It is important to acknowledge that neoliberalism comes in many forms and that neoliberal policies and their impacts may be very diverse. While the market focus is key to neoliberal approaches, there have been changes over time, such as the shifts from SAPs in the 1990s, to an acknowledgement that government support could be vital for the poorest and a focus on poverty reduction.

Johnathan D. Ostry *et al.* (2016), working in the IMF Research Unit, examine two elements of neoliberal policy-making: deregulation to allow for the free movement of capital across international borders, and reduced state expenditure to manage debt, sometimes termed 'austerity'. Ostry *et al.* conclude that the benefits of such policies have been overstated and the costs have been underplayed, and that both lead to increases in inequality which can have knock-on effects for economic growth and social welfare (see [Chapter 1](#)). They conclude that there is 'a need for a more nuanced view of what the neoliberal approach is likely to achieve' (2016: 41). In relation to capital flows, for example, they suggest greater regulation of cross-border financial flows.

The private sector is identified as very important in the achievement of the SDGs, along with governments and civil society (Scheyvens *et al.* 2016), and a number of large transnational corporations were involved in the creation of the SDGs. Private businesses are seen as important not just for economic growth and job creation (SDG 8), but also in achieving environmental sustainability and social equality. However, as Regina Scheyvens *et al.* (2016) argue, the framing of the SDGs within neoliberal mechanisms (see also Alemany *et al.* 2019) where private companies operate based on self-interest and voluntary regulation means that their contributions to these wider development goals are significantly limited, or they could even undermine attempts to meet SDG targets (see [Chapter 7](#) on environmental sustainability).

SUMMARY

- Classical and neoclassical economic theories stress the importance of the free market for development.
- Modernization theories argue that development is largely economic and the same development path should be followed by all countries.

- Post-World War II, Northern countries focused on providing assistance to Southern countries to help them follow the same development path taken by the North.
- Neoliberal policies involving reduced state involvement and a greater role of for the market have dominated international development policy since the 1980s, albeit with some changes.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 According to classical economic theories, what are the benefits of free trade?
- 2 What are the stages of Rostow's linear stages theory and how do countries move from one stage to another?
- 3 What role did Keynes think the state had in promoting economic development?
- 4 How and why have neoliberal theories come to dominate international development practice?
- 5 Given the diversity of neoliberal policies, is the concept of 'neoliberalism' still useful?

SUGGESTED READING

Carmody, P. (2019) *Development Theory and Practice in a Changing World*, London: Routledge, pp. 49–85.

An excellent overview of the evolution of development ideas and how they have been implemented. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on neoliberalism and its impacts.

Harvey, D. (2007) *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

A very clear discussion of the rise of neoliberalism and its implementation in both Northern and Southern countries.

Ostry, J.D., P. Lougani and D. Furceri (2016) 'Neoliberalism: oversold?' *Finance & Development*, June 2016: 38–41.

A short article written by IMF researchers on some of the limits to neoliberal policies, www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2016/06/pdf/ostry.pdf.

Toye, J. (1993) *Dilemmas of Development*, 2nd edition, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

A very detailed examination of the shift from Keynesian approaches to economic development to neoliberal ones. Some students may find the economic content rather hard going at times, but the book is an excellent overview of these debates.

Useful websites

www.adamsmith.org The Adam Smith Institute, which aims to increase awareness of the work of Adam Smith and the role of market-led economic development.

www.brettonwoods.org Bretton Woods Committee. Provides information about international financial matters and the role of the IMF, World Bank and WTO in global economic policy.

www.g20.org Website of the G20. It includes information about G20 activities in relation to the global economic crisis.

www.imf.org International Monetary Fund. Provides information on the approaches and activities of the IMF.

www.oecd.org Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development. Provides information about the organization's activities, including official development assistance.

www.usaid.gov/ United States Agency for International Development.

www.worldbank.org World Bank. Details the activities of all members of the World Bank Group.

CHAPTER 3

Structuralism, neo-Marxism and socialism

- Marxist theories of development
- Structuralism and dependency theories
- Developmental states
- Socialism and the Soviet model
- Maoism and development in China
- African socialism and Afro-Marxism

The state has an important role to play in all approaches to ‘development’. This may be providing a system of regulation, law and order within which the market can operate efficiently, as the theories discussed in the previous chapter argued, or the state can be far more interventionist in the workings of the economy. In the previous chapter, we considered the role of the state within Keynesian approaches to development and economic growth. In this chapter, the focus will be on theories which have been used to justify much greater state involvement.

MARXIST THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT

Karl Marx’s theory of development or progress bore similarities to that of the linear stages models described in the previous chapter. For example, in the

introduction to the first volume of *Capital* he stated, ‘The country that is more developed industrially only shows to the less developed, the image of its own future’ (Marx 1909: xvii). However, the end point, while also having similarities in the focus on urban and industrial life, was very different in social and political terms. Capitalism was regarded as just one stage in a transition; pre-capitalist societies, which Marx differentiated as ‘Asiatic’, ‘ancient’ or ‘feudal’, would be replaced by capitalism, which would be usurped by socialism. Under a socialist or communist regime, there would be communal ownership rather than private property, and individuals would work according to their abilities and would be provided with according to their needs (Table 3.1). While Marx’s ideas have often been interpreted as describing the transition that would happen in all societies, he recognized the European bias of his work and accepted that the process may be different outside Europe (Sheppard *et al.* 2009: 61–3).

Table 3.1 [Marxist stages of social development](#)

Stage	Characteristics
Ancient/ primitive communism	Tribal societies. Communal ownership of land, tools and other basic economic resources.
Feudalism or Asiatic	Feudalism: Found in ‘Western’ societies. Based on agricultural production organized around large estates. Land owned by a few, but tenants able to keep their produce once they had paid the landlord. Asiatic: Found in ‘Eastern’ societies, e.g. India, China, Turkey, Persia. Different classes dominated the economy and the state apparatus. Needed to ensure centralized control of important technologies such as irrigation systems.
Capitalism	Society divided into those who own the means of production and those who do not. Those who do not have to earn a living by selling their labour. Key role of the market in allocating resources.
Socialism/ communism	Communal ownership of means of production by state (socialism) or the people (communism). Industrialization means that people no longer have to struggle for a living

communism and individual needs can be met by the distribution systems of the collective. Socialism viewed as a transitional stage to communism.

Source: adapted from Mitchell (2009); Watts (2009); Worsley (1990)

The central feature of Marx's analysis was the relationship between capital and labour. The stages previously outlined represented different 'modes of production', in that at each stage there was a different combination of 'means of production' and 'relations of production' ([Box 3.1](#)). Under pre-capitalist forms of production, individuals worked to provide for themselves and their families, often through subsistence agriculture. Thus, the amount of work or labour completed was just enough to provide food, shelter, clothing and other necessities.

Under capitalism, Marx argued that this relationship shifts. As technology advances and humans' abilities to exploit and use natural resources becomes more effective, more complex forms of organization are possible. For Marx, capitalism is characterized by two major divisions within society: the 'bourgeoisie' who own the means of production, and the 'proletariat' who do not. The only way that the proletariat can survive is to sell their labour, i.e. to work for a wage. This work, however, is not the same form of work as in a pre-capitalist system. Not only do workers labour so as to be able to provide the basics for their families, but they also work to provide for the bourgeoisie. This 'surplus' (the amount of work beyond that needed to meet basic needs) creates profit for the owners because workers are not paid the full value of the goods they produce. This profit can then be reinvested into more factories or land, so creating the conditions for further wealth-generation, but the wealth remains with the bourgeoisie.

BOX 3.1 DEFINITIONS OF MARXIST TERMS

Means of Production: The 'things' which are needed for people to produce goods. These include tools and equipment, as well as land, crops and mineral reserves.

Relations of Production: The division of labour, i.e. who does what in the production process. Also includes who decides what is produced and how it is produced, so includes the possibility of unequal

decision-making and power. This can be based on who owns the means of production.

Mode of Production: The system of social relations organizing production. This includes the relations of production, as well as the state apparatus and the legal system. It also includes cultural norms and ideologies about the way society should work.

Source: adapted from Peet and Hartwick (2015); Worsley (1990)

Marx viewed capitalism as a necessary stage in the progression towards socialism and also considered it much better than pre-capitalist societies, which he characterized as irrational and backward. He interpreted capitalism as being inherently unstable and vulnerable to crises. Eventually, he believed that capitalism would be overthrown and socialist forms of organization and production would prevail.

Marx's focus was European development in the 19th century. However, Marx's ideas were expanded and applied to other parts of the world. In relation to the growth of European empires and colonies in Africa and Asia, as well as continued relations of exploitation with independent Latin American countries, Marxist theories of imperialism focused on the way these different parts of the world helped defuse or delay crises in capitalist development in Europe (Peet and Hartwick 2015). For example, Lenin, the leader of the 1917 Revolution in Russia (see later), argued that imperialism was the 'highest stage of capitalism'. According to Marxist theory, capitalism needs ever-increasing opportunities to create profit in order to survive. Colonies provided excellent possibilities for further profit generation, through the creation of new markets, new sources of raw materials, and cheap labour (Webster 1990: 82). According to Lenin, once these possibilities had been exhausted capitalism would collapse.

NEO-MARXISM

Classical Marxist theories as previously described have been criticized for focusing on the experiences of the societies of Western Europe and assuming that all countries of the world would generally follow the same path of progress and development. However, in the 1950s and 1960s neo-Marxist

approaches began to question this interpretation. The experiences of newly independent states in the Caribbean, Africa and Asia showed that Lenin's ideas about imperialism being the highest stage of capitalism could be challenged. Despite decolonization, capitalism had not collapsed in these countries (Roxborough 1979).

Paul Baran (1960) drew on Marxist ideas, but applied them to world conditions in the mid-20th century, hence the label 'neo-Marxism'. He, along with Paul Sweezy, argued that capitalism was now in a period of 'monopoly capitalism' (Baran and Sweezy 1968). Large companies dominated the world economy and were able to exploit poorer parts of the world. Baran argued that the governments of these poorer economies should intervene and prevent funds that could be used for development being siphoned out of the country as profit. Unfortunately, these governments were either corrupt or lacked the power to prevent this exploitation. For Baran the only solution to this problem was for countries to leave the world capitalist system in favour of a state-socialist system. It was only by doing this that development would be possible. These ideas were similar to those adopted by the 'dependency theorists' (see later).

STRUCTURALISTS

So far in this book, there has been a focus on theories of development which originate from and are based on the European experience. These Eurocentric approaches have, however, been challenged by a number of theorists, from a wide range of perspectives. Latin American academics and writers have been an important source of these challenges, with the structuralists being a key group.

The structuralist approach to explaining the nature of Latin American economies and levels of development is associated with the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA or CEPAL in Spanish) which was set up in Santiago, Chile in 1948. While there were similar regional commissions in other parts of the South, the United States was rather reluctant to support a Latin American commission, fearing that this would lead to dissent from the US viewpoint regarding the future of the Americas.

The ECLA Executive Secretary, Raúl Prebisch, along with many others working in the organization, devised their arguments about development

theory and strategy based on the Latin American experience. Prebisch's argument was that the low levels of economic growth and standards of living would not be improved through following the free-trade arguments of modernization theorists and others (Prebisch 1959). This was because the global economic structure was very different from that which existed when the European countries experienced their processes of industrialization. According to Prebisch, the global trading system based on principles of free trade acted as an obstacle for Latin American development (Kay 2019).

An important dimension of Prebisch's argument revolved around the terms of trade, i.e. the relative prices of different types of goods. Prebisch and Hans Singer argued that over time, as some economies became economically wealthier, prices for manufactured goods and services would increase relative to those of primary commodities, such as food crops or minerals. This would exacerbate the economic gaps between industrialized countries and those reliant on primary production. These ideas are known as the Prebisch–Singer thesis (Shaw and Simon 2019; Toye and Toye 2003).

What is key here is that the ECLA structuralists were not arguing that 'development' as a goal was not represented by industry, urbanization and other symbols of European modernity. Rather, they argued that development as a process would be different from the path advocated by Eurocentric theorists. How could the path be the same if the global environment was different? This recognition of the importance of historical context for a consideration of development is similar to the neo-Marxist reworkings of Marxist theory in the light of experiences in the global periphery.

According to the ECLA interpretation, national development strategies should involve greater state intervention to protect national industries, so allowing them to establish themselves without competition from foreign firms. This approach built on the ideas of 'infant industry' developed by the 19th-century German economist, Friedrich List. What was termed 'import-substitution industrialization' (ISI) was adopted in a number of countries throughout the region with some initial success. This involved erecting tariff barriers, so that national manufacturing was protected from more-efficient foreign firms that would be able to sell their products more cheaply. The addition of a high import tariff meant that the foreign companies' prices were raised, so allowing domestic firms to compete (see [Box 3.2](#)). This approach was also part of the policies adopted by so-called 'developmental states' (see later).

BOX 3.2 IMPORT-SUBSTITUTION INDUSTRIALIZATION IN BRAZIL

Brazil adopted a policy of ISI from the 1940s onwards in an attempt to increase levels of economic growth by protecting domestic industry and promoting production for export. The Brazilian government used tariff barriers to reduce imports and encouraged production for export through the use of subsidies. State-owned companies played a significant role in the development of infrastructure (roads, railways and ports), the energy sector and steel production.

Between 1965 and 1973, the average annual growth in manufacturing production was 12%. The contribution of manufacturing to GDP grew from 20.8% in 1940 to 40.9% in 1980, with the share contributed by agriculture falling from about a quarter to just over 10%. Manufactured goods also increased from 8% of exports in 1965 to 39% in 1982. While government policy was important in this, it should also be remembered that Brazil is the most populous country in Latin America. The large population provided a market for the manufactured goods. For smaller Latin American countries, this option was not available.

While manufacturing provided some jobs, this was insufficient to meet the demands of the increasingly urban population, exacerbating the significant inequalities in Brazilian society. The reliance on foreign technology imports and foreign financing created balance of payments problems, and the state often lacked the ability to coordinate policy implementation effectively.

Source: adapted from Gwynne (1996); Saad Filho (2010)

Another element of the ECLA approach was land reform. Through much of Latin America and the Caribbean land-holding patterns during the colonial period and then into independence had been characterized by massive inequalities. A small number of landholders held vast swathes of land, often termed *latifundia*. This land was often used for plantations or large-scale cattle ranching depending on the location. The majority of agriculturalists were small-scale peasant producers, scraping a living on very small plots of marginal land, known as *minifundia* (Kay 2004; Thorpe and Bennett 2002).

Land reform usually involved redistributing land so that these small-scale farmers would have larger plots. This would enable them to increase their production and so contribute to poverty alleviation in their communities, but also to national economic development through increasing productivity.

The fact that the structuralists were arguing for a capitalist-based form of development suitable for Latin America meant that this approach was not regarded as challenging the capitalist industrialized nations. A key indicator of its acceptance was the incorporation of some of the ECLA policies into the Alliance for Progress programme of the 1960s, although ECLA was also critical of many aspects of the programme (Dunne 2013) (see [Box 3.3](#)). Land reform was a particularly important part of the Alliance for Progress agenda. However, in most countries – apart from Cuba and Nicaragua, where there was revolutionary change (see later this chapter) – agrarian reform was rather limited. Often peasants were given ‘new’ land within settlement projects, rather than land that had been expropriated from large landholders.

BOX 3.3 ALLIANCE FOR PROGRESS

The Alliance for Progress (AFP) was a US programme targeted at social and economic development in Latin America. While the basis for the programme had been developed under the Eisenhower administration, it was only implemented under President John F. Kennedy in 1961. Under the AFP, individual Latin American nations had to present a ‘development plan’ to a panel of US economic and technical experts. Latin American governments were expected to outline how they would achieve economic growth, improvements in health and education levels and better housing. Funding available for the entire scheme was up to US\$20 billion over ten years, with approximately 50% coming from US government sources, and the US was also committed to promoting multilateral and private investment in the region. The Kennedy administration also expected funding to come from Latin American governments and companies, and strongly encouraged Latin American states to build on nascent free-trade areas in the region.

Another strand to US Latin American policy during this time was an expanded counter-insurgency programme. Both this and the AFP were coordinated by the US Agency for International Development (USAID). The counter-insurgency projects were classified as being for ‘public

safety', but should be seen within the context of the Cold War and the possible demonstration effect of the 1959 Cuban Revolution.

While there were some successes under the AFP, by the end of the 1960s it was clear that its goals of social and economic progress following a US liberal model had failed. For example, in 1964 the Brazilian government was overthrown by the military, but Brazil continued to receive funding from the US.

Source: adapted from Dunne (2013); Smith and Green (2018)

Despite some successes, the influence of the structuralists on policy implementation declined. This was largely as a result of the perceived limits to ISI, agrarian reform and other forms of state intervention policies at a national level. Protecting domestic infant industries from foreign competition enabled large numbers of firms to be established, but obstacles to continued progress included limited national demand because of low incomes and the need to import machinery and high-tech equipment as the production process became more complex. These limits were becoming increasingly apparent in the late 1960s and with the oil crises of the 1970s it was clear that some changes had to be made to the national development strategy. As discussed in [Chapter 2](#), these changes were very radical and involved a shift to export-oriented industrialization, less state involvement and opening up to foreign investment. ISI was interpreted as fostering inefficiencies in the operation of the economy and stifling growth and development.

DEVELOPMENTAL STATES

The term 'developmental state' has been applied largely to countries of East Asia and refers to states where the state and the private sector have a shared role in the economy, working together so that the market works for economic developmental goals (Johnson 1982). Chalmers Johnson, who first used the term, identified this approach to development from his research on Japanese industrial policy 1925–1975, contrasting the Japanese experience with that of the state-dominated communist systems, the Western market economies and the economies of newly independent nations in the Global South (Johnson 1982: viii).

Key characteristics of a developmental state is that development priorities are politically determined, and that there is a supporting bureaucratic structure based on meritocracy, led by a 'pilot agency'. In the case of Japan, this was the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) (Johnson 1982). The legislative and judicial branches of the state are coordinated, and there is also significant coordination between the bureaucratic and business elites. This means that while policy-making is pro-business, and state intervention can be seen as 'market-conforming', there is much greater state direction than in many Western market economies. It means that incentives, such as favourable tariff policies, are targeted at effective and efficient industries which contribute to economic growth and productivity (Nem Singh and Ovadia 2018; Payne and Phillips 2010).

The Japanese model was adopted by other East Asian countries such as South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan, underpinning the lauded East Asian 'miracle'. However, while the World Bank (1993) saw the East Asian success as an indication of export-oriented, free-trade, neoliberal approaches to development (see [Chapter 2](#)), the reality was very different given the level and type of state intervention.

Given the success of the East Asian countries in achieving high levels of economic growth, while also improving the living standards of their populations, there is continued interest in whether a 'developmental state' model could work elsewhere. Jewellord Nem Singh and Jesse Salah Ovadia (2018) stress the importance of the political conditions and institutions (see [Chapter 4](#)), stating that the developmental state is not just about the policies. For them, there are three necessary political conditions: the transformation of the state bureaucracy, a pro-business orientation in policy-making, and the ability to make claims about security and legitimacy. In discussing the East Asian case, they stress the importance of the wider geopolitical context of the Cold War, which included direct US support and an export market for East Asian goods. This suggests that for both internal and external factors, the transferability of the developmental state model is a challenge.



Plate 3.1 [Busan port, South Korea](#)

Credit: Panwasin Seemala/[Shutterstock.com](#)

DEPENDENCY THEORIES

Alongside structuralism, another key Latin American theoretical development was ‘dependency theory’. Despite the name, the approaches to ‘dependency’ were rather diverse, so ‘dependency theories’ in the plural is more appropriate. In addition, some critics of the dependency school (see later) claimed that it was not really a theory.

The key argument of dependency theorists, or *dependistas* as they were known, was that Latin American countries found themselves in positions of ‘underdevelopment’ because of the operation of the capitalist system. In particular, the core industrialized countries were experiencing growth and economic development through the exploitation of the non-industrialized peripheral countries. The argument differed greatly, therefore, from that of modernization theorists and classical Marxist theorists who saw non-industrialized countries as merely being further behind on the development ladder. According to the dependency theorists, Latin America’s development situation was a result of capitalist development, just as industrialization in the North was a result of this process. André Gunder Frank (1967) termed this the ‘development of underdevelopment’.

Frank used the examples of Chile and Brazil to demonstrate the chains of dependency that had existed since the colonial period beginning in the 16th century. He argued that with capitalist development (he defined capitalism as being production for market exchange) Latin America was caught up in a global system of dependence consisting of relationships of exploitation from the global scale to the inter-personal (see [Figure 3.1](#)). Thus, individual peasants were exploited by local land-owners who did not pay them the full value of the commodities they produced. These land-owners then sold the goods to merchants in the urban areas at a higher price than that paid to the peasants so generating a profit. This chain of exchange and exploitation continued until the surplus generated through these exchanges was taken out of the country to the core. Periods when Latin America was less engaged with the global economy, for example during the Second World War, were, Frank argued, periods when development was most likely to take place within the region. Celso Furtado presented a similar argument in his book *Economic Development in Latin America* (1976).

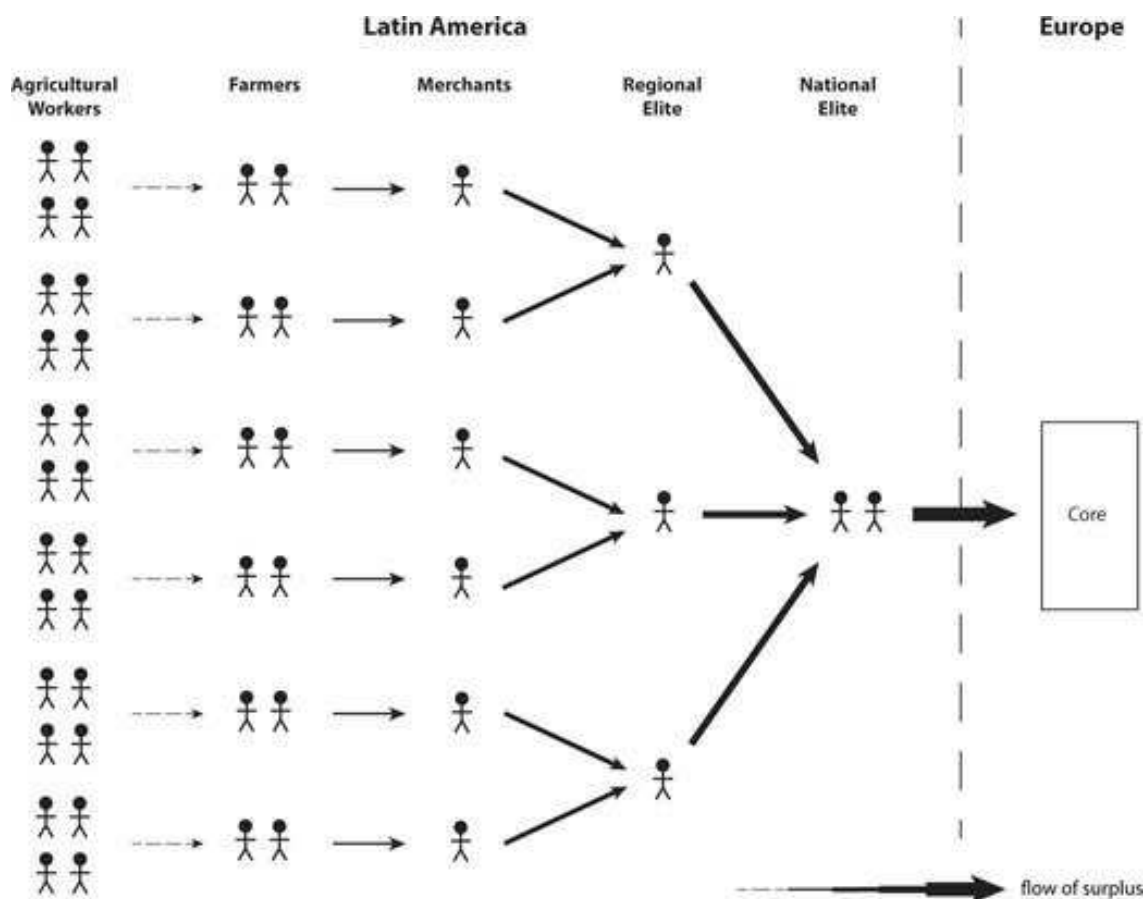


Figure 3.1 [Core-periphery relationships under dependency](#)

While dependency theorists would agree with the claims that exogenous (i.e. outside the country) factors were key in explaining the low levels of economic development in Latin America, the solution to this limiting situation differed. Some, such as Furtado (1976) argued, like the ECLA structuralists, that what was needed was reform of the capitalist trade system, perhaps with greater state intervention. Others, who followed a Marxist (or more accurately neo-Marxist) interpretation, saw the overthrow of the capitalist system as the only solution. Frank was one of the most vociferous advocates of this approach, believing that within capitalism the peripheral regions of the world would always be exploited and marginalized.

Although dependency theory emerged from and was largely applied to Latin America, the concepts of dependency were also mobilized in the study of other parts of the world. For example, Walter Rodney's book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1981 [1972]) argued that the intervention of European powers in African social, economic and political processes throughout the 19th century created a situation of dependency and led to the impoverishment of African peoples. Samir Amin (1974) makes a similar argument in the African case, focusing on economic processes, particularly the extraction of primary products.

The fact that the dependency ideas came from the experiences of the Global South was certainly a welcome change from the dominance of Northern voices in theories of development. However, despite the dependency approach's popularity in some circles in the 1970s, its influence on policy-making was limited and it has been increasingly criticized. These criticisms come both from empirical evidence which challenges the claims of the dependency theorists, and also from those who query the assumptions on which the dependency approach is grounded.

In relation to empirical support, while the interpretations of Frank, Furtado and others may have had significant basis on Latin American historical experiences, the conclusions that capitalist-style development was impossible for peripheral countries within the existing system was challenged by the economic success of the newly industrializing countries of Asia during the 1970s (see [Chapter 2](#) and the discussion of the developmental state earlier in this chapter). The existence of such evidence refuting the basic claims of the dependency approach undermined the dependency interpretations.

In addition, dependency theories were criticized for being overly concerned with economic factors, without any consideration of the social, cultural or

political contexts within which development (or underdevelopment) took place. While dependency theorists had, unlike the modernization theorists, taken a historical view of development by considering when processes were taking place, they did not consider the wider contexts within which development occurred. David Booth (1985) also criticizes the dependency school, particularly Frank, for the definition of capitalism used. In Frank's work, capitalist development was defined as 'autonomous industrial growth'. Booth stresses that if this definition is used, then it is inevitable that capitalist development will be viewed to have taken place most successfully when ties to the global economy are weaker. According to Booth, this form of circular argument discredits the dependency approach.

WORLD-SYSTEMS THEORY

The importance of the global economic system and hierarchies within it was also a key factor in world-systems theory. This was developed by Immanuel Wallerstein (1974) and shares many characteristics with the dependency school. For example, both approaches stress the importance of considering national economic development within a global context, rather than just concentrating on individual countries. The relative strength of states within this global system helps influence levels of development. Both also have a strong historical basis.

However, Wallerstein was keen to move beyond the static dualism of the dependency models. Rather than viewing the world in terms of 'core' and 'periphery', Wallerstein identified three groupings of countries: 'core', 'semi-periphery' and 'periphery'. In addition, the members of these categories were not fixed; over time countries were able to move in and out of categories depending on their economic situation. The inclusion of the 'semi-periphery' was a reflection of global events in the late 1960s and early 1970s. While dependency theorists were arguing that countries in the global periphery were doomed to be forever exploited and marginal, some countries of the world were experiencing economic development in terms of industrialization. These newly industrializing countries (NICs) included the 'Asian Tigers' of South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan, as well as Latin American nations such as Brazil.

As with Frank, Wallerstein considered the global capitalist system to date

from the 15th and 16th centuries, when European influence, both economic and political, was expanding beyond the European heartland. Before the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century, European powers competed for dominance, with some countries losing prominence and becoming semi-peripheral (such as Spain) while the countries of Northwest Europe became the core. Peripheral regions at this time included those of South and Central America. With industrial expansion in Europe and later in the USA, the core expanded, some nations in the periphery became semi-peripheral and the periphery grew as parts of Asia and Africa were incorporated into the global economic system through processes of colonialism (Peet and Hartwick 2015). In the first decade of the 21st century, Eric Sheppard *et al.* (2009) classified the core countries as mainly Western European states, Russia and some Eastern European states, the United States and Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Israel. The semi-periphery included some Latin American states, China, India, Malaysia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Within Africa, only South Africa was part of the semi-periphery, while the rest of the continent was classified as being peripheral in the global economic system ([Figure 3.2](#)).

The fluidity of categories and the potential movement from one category to another differs from the classical Marxist developmentalist viewpoint outlined at the start of this chapter. Countries do not follow a linear pathway of progress; rather, at different times as the global economy changes, certain countries may be able to make economic advances, while others lose out. This historical approach has great benefits, but, as Thomas Klak (2014) points out, the possibilities of testing the world-systems theory are very limited. Rather than helping us explain changing patterns of economic development, the world-systems theory can be used to describe certain patterns, and would perhaps be better described as ‘a world-system *approach, analysis or perspective*’ (Klak 2014: 125, emphasis in the original). As with dependency approaches, Wallerstein’s ideas can also be criticized for their focus on state-level action, so excluding the local-level processes.

SOCIALIST APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT

For some theorists, the only way for development to be achieved was to break from the capitalist-led path of development to an alternative route, albeit with

a similar conception of modernity. As stated in the earlier discussion of Marxist interpretations of the workings of society, under capitalism society is divided into two classes: those who own the means of production and those who do not. Under a socialist system, the means of production are owned by the state. Because of this, it is argued that profit is no longer the driving force of the economy; rather, the needs of the population are prioritized. Because of state ownership of land, factories etc., decisions can be made about resource allocation that are made on the basis of need, rather than ability to pay. The role of the state in all aspects of economic, social and political life means that this form of approach is sometimes called ‘centrally planned’.

While socialism has been implemented and experienced in a variety of different ways, there are some common characteristics ([Box 3.4](#)). In the mid-1980s, a significant number of countries were experimenting with a socialist form of development. As well as the Soviet bloc countries of the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) and the states of Eastern Europe, there were large numbers of Global South countries that could be classed as ‘socialist’ ([Table 3.2](#)). In the early 21st century, the numbers are far fewer and include most notably China, Vietnam, Cuba and North Korea. However, in all but the North Korean case, economic reform processes are well advanced, including opening up to foreign investment and the loosening of restrictions on private property. Despite the declining popularity of socialist models of development in many parts of the world, in the early part of the 21st century a number of Latin American countries moved towards more state-led development strategies in opposition to the neoliberal policies advocated by IFIs and Northern governments (see later).

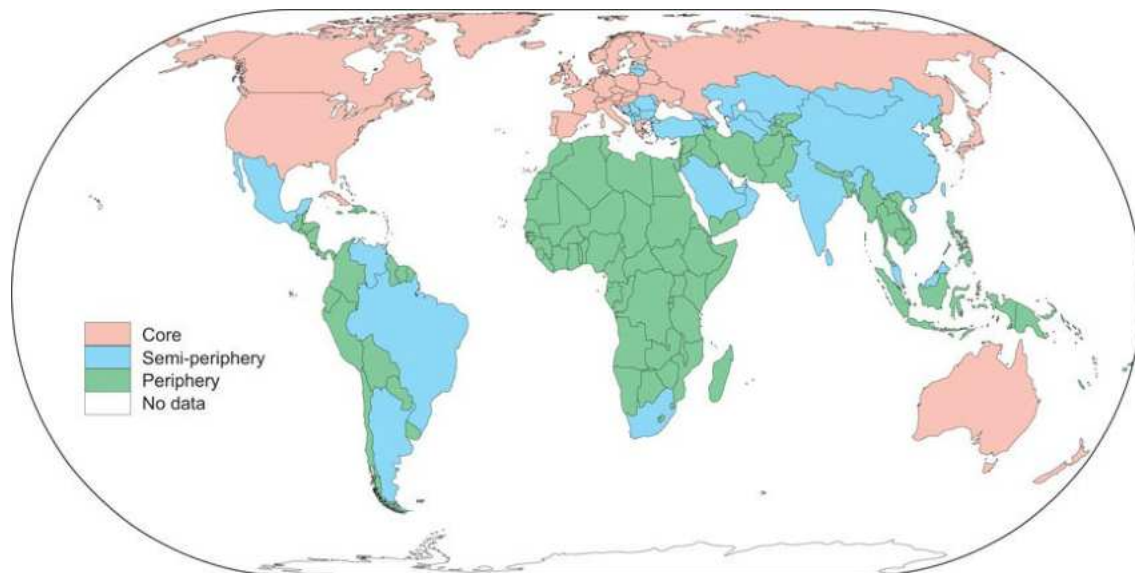


Figure 3.2 [Core, semi-periphery and periphery, 2009](#)

Source: adapted from Sheppard *et al.* (2009: [Plate 2.1](#))

Map data © Maps in MinutesTM (1996)

BOX 3.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF A SOCIALIST MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT

Economic

- 1 State ownership of major industrial enterprises.
- 2 Industrial and infrastructure decisions made according to central government plans, rather than operating through the market.
- 3 Extensive state control over foreign trade and investment.
- 4 State intervention in the labour market. Employment decisions are made according to central plans, rather than market forces.
- 5 State control of prices.
- 6 State intervention in agriculture and rural–urban relationships.

Political

- 1 Generally ruled by one party. Organized political opposition and many civil society organizations are not tolerated.

Source: adapted from Kilmister (2000: 309)

While the basic tenets of the socialist model can be stated, the actual realities of what have been termed ‘socialist experiments’ very greatly throughout the world. As Andy Kilmister (2000) highlights, socialist forms of political and economic organizing are not introduced into a vacuum. The nature of previous societies and economies will influence outcomes, as will the form of socialist model which is followed. Kilmister also stresses the diversity of routes into socialism. While in the 19th century Marx and Engels believed that socialism would be a stage in a linear model coming after the collapse of capitalism, this has proved not to be the case in any of the societies which have followed a socialist path. In the post-Second World War period, Kilmister identifies three main categories of countries which have followed a socialist model:

[Table 3.2](#) [Socialist countries, 1985](#)

<i>Full member of Comecon</i>	<i>Non-Comecon</i>	<i>Marxist-Leninist</i>	<i>Marginal cases</i>
			Afghanistan
			Algeria
			Benin
			Burkina Faso
			Cape Verde
			Congo
Bulgaria			Guinea
Cuba	Albania	Angola	Guinea-
Czechoslovakia	(member 1949–	Burma (Myanmar)	Bissau
East Germany	61)	Kampuchea	Guyana
Hungary	China	(Cambodia)	Iraq
Mongolia	North Korea	Ethiopia	Libya
Poland	Yugoslavia	Mozambique	Madagascar
Romania	(associated	Laos	Nicaragua
USSR	member)	Yemen	São Tomé &
Vietnam			Príncipe Seychelles

Somalia
Suriname
Syria
Tanzania
Zimbabwe

Notes: Comecon (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance/CMEA): Set up in 1949 as a response to the Marshall Plan (see [Chapter 2](#)). Organization of socialist states aimed at providing financial and technical assistance (including military help) to members.

Non-Comecon: Well-established socialist or communist states, but they remain outside the strong influence of the USSR.

Marxist-Leninist: Hard-line socialist governments closely allied to the Soviet bloc, but not Comecon members.

Marginal cases: Largely one-party socialist states, but not deeply entrenched socialist systems.

Source: adapted from Forbes and Thrift (1987: [Figure 1.1](#)) using Wiles (1982) classification system

- Countries where the state was the only actor strong enough to direct development: States such as Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Mongolia remained largely separate from the colonial struggles of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
- Countries where socialist ideas were key in struggles for national liberation from colonial rule: In many societies seeking to break from colonial rule, socialism provided a key ideology around which to organize. After decades of control from outside forces with policies which created great inequalities in wealth and opportunity, liberation, it was argued, would result in opportunities for all and the nation's resources being owned by the people in the form of state ownership. Countries which adopted this approach included Angola and Mozambique. Kilmister also stresses that the links between socialism and national liberation were also used in response to external forces other than colonial rulers, as in Korea and Vietnam. The Central American and Caribbean nations, in particular Nicaragua and Cuba, adopted a socialist route not to overthrow colonial rulers, but to escape from the tyranny of US-supported authoritarian rule.
- States adopting strong forms of state central planning, but not formally adopting a socialist route. These governments chose to promote economic growth and development in their countries through a very

state-centred process which overlaps with the developmental states discussed earlier in this chapter. Policy instruments such as five-year plans were often adopted. Good examples include India under Jawaharlal Nehru 1947–1964, and what has been termed ‘African socialism’ (see later).

Strong state involvement in welfare services is certainly not only found in countries adopting a socialist model of development, but a commitment to widespread access to health and education services which is part of the socialist model, has had very positive results in a number of countries and regions (see [Box 3.5](#)).

BOX 3.5 SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN KERALA, INDIA

In 1957, a Communist government was elected to the southern Indian state of Kerala. Since then, the state has experienced great improvements in social development indicators. Investment in health and education, as well as policies of land distribution and measures to improve women’s participation in economic and political activities, have created what some have interpreted as a ‘model’ for equitable development. This has continued even when the ruling coalition has not included communist parties.

Social indicators are on a par with those for much richer countries. For example, in 2010–14 the life expectancy at birth was 74.9 years for women and 72.0 for men, compared to 67.9 and 66.4 respectively for India as a whole (NITI Aayog 2019). In the 1950s the crude birth rate was 44 per 1,000 (Sen 1999: 221), but this had fallen to 14.3 per 1,000 in 2016 (NITI Aayog 2019). While the average fertility rate for India as a whole is 2.3 children per woman of child-bearing age, the figure for Kerala is 1.8. This can be explained by improved access to contraception, better healthcare so that infant mortality rates are now about 10 per 1,000 live births (NITI Aayog 2019), and improvements in women’s literacy levels. Rather than enforcing controls on fertility as in China, the government of Kerala has examined the causes of higher fertility levels and implemented appropriate social policies. Kerala’s Human Development Index score of 0.784 in 2017 was the highest of all India’s states and well above the 0.639 for the country as a whole (Global_Data_Lab 2019).

These development policies, while being very successful in social terms, were not always economically successful with levels of GDP per capita and economic growth tending to lag behind those of other Indian states. However, since the early 1990s, economic growth rates have increased significantly associated with growth in the IT industry, and the state continues to attract large numbers of tourists. Many criticisms of the Kerala 'development model' highlight the role of remittances. Thousands of workers migrate from Kerala every year, largely going to the Gulf states. They send back large amounts of money much of which is spent on land, houses, gold or consumer goods. These remittance flows, as well as the ownership structures in the tourist and IT industries, have led to growing levels of inequality in the state. There are also serious concerns about the environmental impacts of uncontrolled development. Since the early 1990s, there has been a growing liberalization of the economy even when the Communists are in power.

Source: adapted from Menon (2008); Sen (1999); Sreeraj and Vakulabharanam (2016); Tsai (2006); Véron (2001)

In addition, state control of resources, in particular land, factories and infrastructure, can lead to impressive levels of economic development. As both Keynes and Rostow argued within a capitalist setting, for economic growth to take place at certain times there needs to be significant government involvement, perhaps because of the scale of the project, or because of the risks involved. However, as both the Chinese and Soviet examples discussed next demonstrate, these rapid leaps in economic performance may be achieved at great cost to the natural environment (see also [Chapter 7](#)), individuals' quality of life, and long-term economic stability.

State control of the means of production, trade and prices means that in theory the economy works for the benefit of the people. As well as providing basic health and education services, socialist practices of development should reduce levels of inequality which can arise when market forces are left to their own devices. In general, inequality levels are low in socialist societies, with Gini coefficients of low to mid-20s. However, it must be noted that in many cases, this is usually within a situation of low levels of per capita income. With the transition to capitalist economies, many ex-socialist states have increased levels of inequality. For example, after transition Russia's Gini index

increased 24 points and Lithuania's rose by 14 points between 1987–8 and 1993–5 (Milanovic 1998: 41). There were also increasing levels of unemployment, declines in real income and falling school enrolments (Hörschmann 2004). While China remains a one-party state, the opening up of the economy and expansion of private sector involvement since the late 1970s has been associated with a significant increase in inequality (see later).

The map of the world's socialist countries today looks very different from the situation in 1985. The collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1989 represented the most extreme version of what was happening to states adopting socialist models, but throughout the world, economic reforms and in some cases political reforms led to the questioning of state socialism as a viable development approach. Francis Fukuyama (1989) has termed this 'the end of history'. He states:

the century that began full of self-confidence in the ultimate triumph of Western liberal democracy seems at its close to be returning full circle to where it started: not to an 'end of ideology' or a convergence between capitalism and socialism, as earlier predicted, but to an unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism. The triumph of the West, of the Western *idea*, is evident first of all in the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western Liberalism.

(Fukuyama 1989: 3, emphasis in the original)

However, events in the early part of the 21st century have suggested that the disappearance of socialism as an alternative development approach has not occurred. The election of left-wing parties in parts of Latin America provided challenges to the market-led neoliberal hegemony, and the global financial crisis also resulted in questions about the neoliberal capitalist model (see [Chapter 2](#)).

SOVIET MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT

The transformation of the USSR from a predominantly peasant society in the 1920s to one of two global superpowers with an extensive industrial sector and urban population by the 1960s is a process which attracted a great deal of

attention in other parts of the world. The ‘socialist experiments’ in the Global South drew lessons and inspiration from what went on in the USSR.

On the eve of World War I, agriculture provided over 50% of the national income and about three-quarters of the employment in what was then the Russian Tsarist empire (Davies 1998: 10). Agriculture was dominated by very small-scale peasant production. The October Revolution of 1917 led to the Tsars being overthrown by the Bolsheviks led by Lenin. In Marx’s theorizing about the route to socialist societies (see earlier), the revolution to bring about such a society was meant to be led by an urban industrial working class overthrowing a capitalist regime. This was clearly not the situation in the Russian example, so challenging the linear transition ideas of classical Marxism.

The socialist model adopted under Lenin focused on creating an urban industrial economy. These policies were introduced under the New Economic Policy (NEP) in the 1920s ([Box 3.6](#)). The industrial focus of this policy reflected Leninist ideas of modernity and a move away from ‘traditional’ peasant and agriculturally focused economic policies. Within the economic sphere, the state apparatus made decisions regarding what was to be produced, how and where. In addition, in political terms, opposition to the Communist Party which formed the government was increasingly clamped down upon.

BOX 3.6 NEW ECONOMIC POLICY IN THE USSR

During the 1920s, the New Economic Policy (NEP) was adopted under Lenin. This policy was focused on economic development through industrialization. Large-scale industry was state-owned, and the state also controlled foreign trade. Imports had to be licensed and export earnings were also channelled through the central state. The focus on industrial policy was on capital goods such as machinery and materials such as iron and steel. Concentrating on this form of industrial production, rather than on consumer goods such as clothing, was justified because capital goods contribute directly to increases in production and productivity. Workers in industry benefited greatly from these trends, with improved wages and working conditions. In contrast, during the NEP, agriculture was organized largely through peasant households in village groupings, and peasants were able to sell any produce remaining after they had met state targets. Agricultural

production remained limited, and peasants' standards of living did not improve. A devastating famine in 1927–8 partly reflected this marginalization of the agricultural sector in economic policy.

Source: adapted from Davies (1998); Kilmister (2000)

In 1929, Josef Stalin came to power, and the Soviet project of the social ownership of production intensified. While following the same broad socialist principles as Lenin, Stalinism included the extension of collective ownership, particularly in agriculture, where peasant households were forcibly organized into collective farms. State control of economic processes increased, as did the exercise of state power, through imprisonment and execution, which was particularly vehement under Stalin. While in the 1920s the one-party Communist state was consolidated and opposition voices were increasingly silenced, under Stalin this intensified; millions of people were imprisoned in a variety of labour camps and prisons, and thousands were executed for supposedly being an enemy of the state. Wheatcroft and Davies (1994 in Davies 1998: 51) estimate that about 682,000 people were executed at the height of Stalin's terror in 1937–38. In January 1953, just before Stalin's death, about 5,223,000 people were interned in camps (Davies 1998: 70).



[Plate 3.2 Stalinist-era Moscow State University building, Russia](#)

Credit: Kostin SS/ [Shutterstock.com](#)

Under a socialist system, not only does the state have great direct influence on the economy, it can also plan social provision based on need, rather than market-led criteria. From the 1920s onwards, there was increased state expenditure on health and education, with very positive results in these dimensions of human development. For example, literacy rates for people aged nine years and over rose from 51% in 1926 to 81% in 1939 (Davies 1998: 46). This reflected both the increase in school enrolment for children, and the success of adult literacy schemes (see also [Box 3.5](#) for similar examples from the Indian state of Kerala).

The centrally planned economic model with significant investment in social provision continued until the breakup of the USSR in 1991. By the late 1970s, it had become clear that the economic growth rates achieved under the Stalinist industrialization policies were slowing down. Just as with the limits to ISI described earlier, it was argued that without significant inputs of technology and investment that an opening up the economy could bring, the Soviet economy would stagnate. In addition, social problems such as alcoholism and crime were increasing as the state was unable to continue supporting the population as it had in the past (Kilmister 2000).

In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev was elected as the General Secretary of the Communist Party and therefore the leader of the USSR. He implemented reform measures termed *perestroika*, which included an enhanced role for the market within resource allocation. For example, enterprises were allowed to make decisions about what and how they produced goods, rather than following centrally decided targets. This economic reform was also associated with greater political freedom throughout the country and also an attempt at greater openness towards the non-communist world through the *glasnost* approach. Attempts to contain these reforms within the communist USSR system failed. The country broke up, and 15 republics became independent, although in 1992 11 of them (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine did not join) formed the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Georgia left the CIS in 2008, so there are now ten members. The shift to market-oriented economic systems is prevalent throughout the newly independent republics, and most now operate a form of liberal democracy with regular elections, although there is evidence of increased authoritarianism in some.

In terms of the nature of 'development' during the Soviet period, it is clear that economically, the drive to modernization was impressive. From a society dominated by peasant agriculture to a highly industrialized economy, the Soviet experiment provided some examples of how central planning could be used to promote such economic changes, rather than relying on the market. While there are numerous problems with using Soviet economic statistics from this period (see Davies 1998), Western estimates of industrial output suggest rates of increase of about 10% per annum in the period 1928–40, and later rates of approximately 7% were not uncommon. In addition, state provision of education, housing and healthcare benefited millions of Soviet citizens.

However, a centrally planned economy, especially within a territory of approximately 22 million km², led to a range of inefficiencies and problems. For example, factories were given production targets to meet. As long as the quantity was produced, the target was met; little if any attention was given to quality. The focus on industry meant that agriculture was neglected with serious consequences for food supply. In addition, the Soviet project did not include any recognition of the environmental consequences, leading to very serious environmental damage (see [Chapter 7](#)). Finally, limitations on human freedom through the extreme brutality of the Stalinist period, political repression and the outlawing of opposition voices throughout must be recognized.

MAOISM

The Communists led by Mao Zedong came to power in China in 1949. However, while the USSR provided some economic support in the following years, the development strategies adopted by Mao were rather different from those adopted by Lenin and later Stalin. The Chinese Revolution was largely a peasant revolution, and the focus on rural development was paramount during the Maoist period (Kilmister 2000).



[Plate 3.3 Statue at Mao Mausoleum, Beijing, China](#)

Credit: Katie Willis

Central state planning was key to the system, and a series of five-year plans were implemented. During the first Five Year Plan (1953–1957), widespread collectivization of agriculture took place, with peasants grouped into agricultural settlements for communal production. Despite the rural focus of many policies, the bulk of state investment went into heavy industry as under the Stalinist model in the USSR (Hodder 2000). This investment was geared largely towards the iron and steel industries and also the energy sector in the inland regions away from the eastern coastal regions (Wu 1987). This geographic focus was an attempt to spread the benefits of the revolution and to reduce spatial inequalities. The inland focus was also because of the perceived need to protect important infrastructure projects from possible foreign military attack (Wei and Ma 1996).

In the ‘Great Leap Forward’ of 1958–1961, rural development became a key element to Chinese economic progress. People’s communes were expected to produce agricultural goods, but also some industrial goods, particularly those, such as machinery and chemical fertilizers, that would contribute to

increasing agricultural productivity. Mao termed this dual focus as ‘walking on two legs’. This vigorous attempt at rapid economic development experienced many difficulties. The quality of industrial products was often poor, and the disruption to agriculture caused by the need to spread rural labour efforts contributed to a famine in 1961. This, in turn, prompted widespread rural–urban migration which eventually led to increased state controls on cityward migration. These problems resulted in the abandonment of the ‘Great Leap Forward’ in the early 1960s.

By the time of Mao’s death in 1976, industrial growth rates were declining and agricultural production was not keeping pace with population growth. Peasants were increasingly allowed to produce and sell their own crops, rather than working within a communal system. The Chinese government also decided to move towards market mechanisms in some sectors by opening up parts of the economy to foreign investment. This was part of what the government termed ‘market socialism’.

The first steps towards opening up were concentrated in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) located in the eastern coastal provinces of Guangdong and Fujian ([Figure 3.3](#)). Foreign investors were allowed to invest in these SEZs, and the government offered tax concessions and preferable land rents. The availability of a cheap and educated workforce was also attractive (Howell 1993). At first, foreigners were not allowed to have complete ownership of these factories, so partnerships with Chinese state firms were set up, but by the late 1980s wholly foreign-owned enterprises were allowed in some circumstances (UNCTAD 2020).

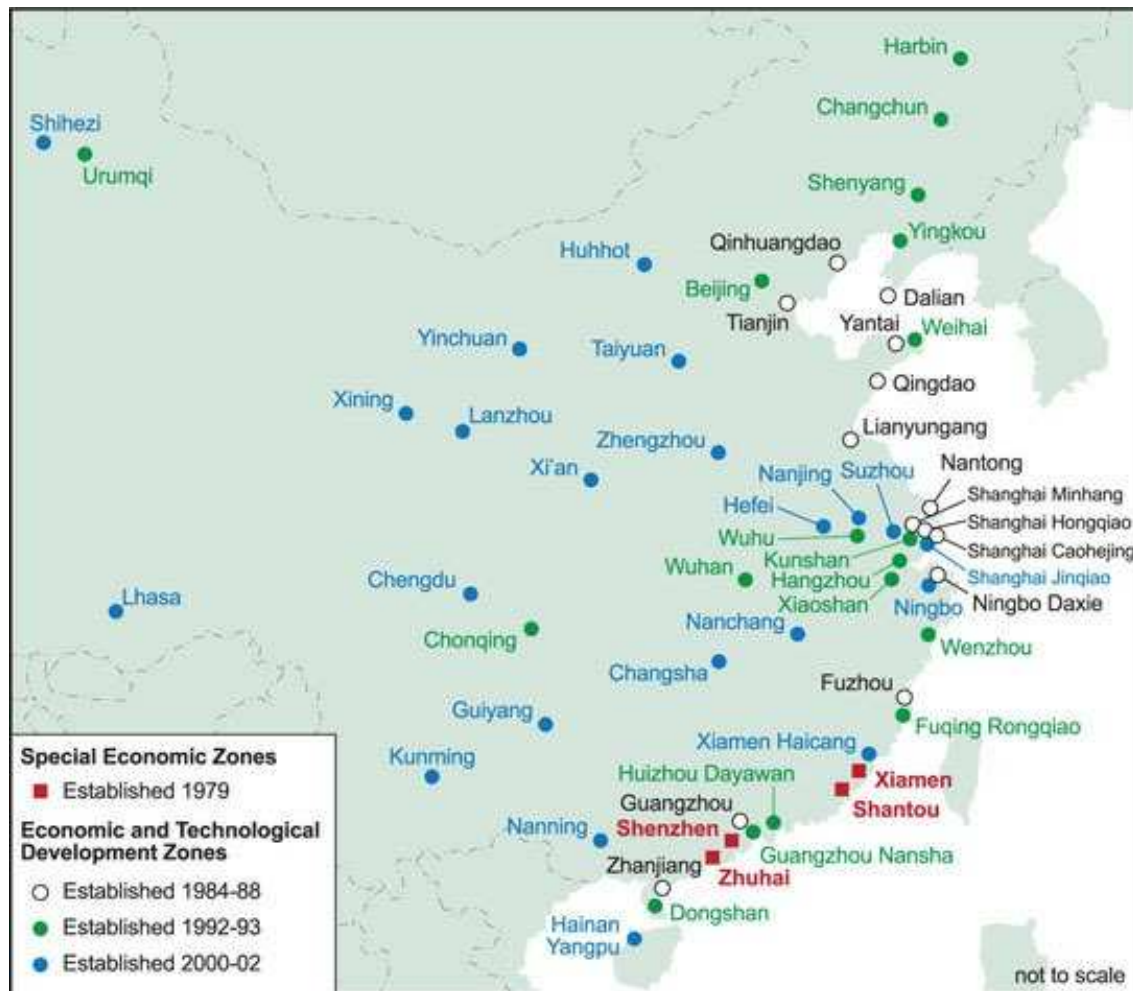


Figure 3.3 China's Special Economic Zones

Source: adapted from Dicken (2015: Figure 6.15, p. 205).

In 1999, the Chinese government introduced the 'Open Up the West' campaign, seeking to bring economic growth and development to provinces away from the coastal zone and to address the increasing regional inequalities between coastal and inland provinces (Zhang and Han 2009). This was also part of the government's nation-building project as most of China's ethnic minorities live in these provinces. Opening up the West involved significant investment in infrastructure, such as the Qinghai-Tibet Railway. While there have been some notable successes, such as the growth of Chengdu and Chongqing, FDI remains concentrated in the East, and the inland provinces are still largely sources of energy and raw materials (Yeh and Wharton 2016). However, the One Belt One Road Initiative, announced in 2015, builds on the 'Go West' strategy and, as Emily T. Yeh and Elizabeth Wharton (2016) argue, demonstrates connections between the Chinese government's domestic

economic policy and its international development endeavours (see [Chapter 4](#)).

China's economic transformation in the post-Mao period has resulted in its rise as a significant global actor in both economic and political terms (Jacques 2012) (see [Chapters 1, 4 and 7](#)). In terms of international development indicators, the achievement of the MDG 1 target of halving the percentage of people living in extreme poverty (less than US\$1.25 a day), was achieved largely because of the poverty reduction seen in China (United Nations 2014). Millions of Chinese people still live in economic poverty; in 2018, 4.1% lived on less than US\$1.9 a day (World Bank 2019c), but while this is a small percentage, as Andy Sumner (2012) argues, we need to take into account population size when assessing such figures. As with other countries which have gone through a transition from a state-led to a more market-led economy, inequality has also increased: in 1978, the top 10% earned 27% of national income, and the lowest 50% earned 27%. By 2015, the top 10% were earning 41% of national income, and the bottom 50% just 15% (Piketty *et al.* 2019).

There have been debates as to how to define China's transformation, including to what extent it can be seen as a process of neoliberalization (Harvey 2007). Over 95% of China's housing stock is now privately owned, a massive increase from 1978, when it was about half. However, Chinese corporations are mainly government-owned. This has led Thomas Piketty, Li Yang and Gabriel Zucman to conclude, 'China has ceased to be communist, but it is not entirely capitalist; it should rather be viewed as a mixed economy with strong public ownership' (2019: 2471).

The political system still remains controlled by the Communist Party. Opposition voices are suppressed through controls on television, radio and newspapers. Policing of the internet also takes place, with websites or chatrooms including anti-government sentiments being blocked or closed. Public displays of anti-government feeling are also restricted. The most well-known of these is the 1989 suppression of the pro-democracy demonstrations in Tiananmen Square, Beijing. Over 1,000 people were killed during the violent police and army response, and many more were imprisoned. More recently, the role of the Beijing government in the suppression of pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong, the detention of members of the ethnic-minority Uyghur population in camps, and the silencing of voices querying the Chinese government's approach to the coronavirus have been among the

human rights issues raised both domestically and internationally.

Mao's rural development focus within a socialist framework has influenced government approaches to development in other parts of the world, for example Julius Nyerere's policies in post-independence Tanzania (see later). In addition, some revolutionary groups in the South, such as Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) in Peru, have adopted Maoist principles (Alexander 1999).

AFRICAN SOCIALISM OR SOCIALISM IN AFRICA

Ghana's independence from Great Britain in 1957 heralded a period of decolonization throughout the African continent. Many newly independent nations drew on socialist ideas of development and progress in their focus on the role of the state in organizing and moulding economic activities. However, most did not fully embrace a socialist ideology in policy-making, not wanting to become too closely aligned with the Soviet bloc countries of the USSR and Eastern Europe, but also not wanting to remain too politically linked to previous Western colonial powers. Crawford Young (1982: 11) identifies three main ideologies that were adopted by the newly independent African states: capitalist development (see [Chapter 2](#)), Marxist-Leninism (what Young refers to as 'Afro-Marxism') and 'populist socialism' (which is sometimes referred to as 'African socialism'). As with all such typologies, in some cases the classification process is very difficult. In this case, there are particular difficulties because of common disjunctures between the ideology a government espoused and the actual policies implemented.

Populist socialism was an attempt by a number of African nations to draw on the ideas of communal ownership of land and natural resources, and the traditional importance of collective working on the land. According to Africa's new leaders, such as Julius Nyerere in Tanzania (Nabudere and Simon 2019) and Leopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal, capitalism and class divisions were not part of African culture, but had been introduced by European colonialists. An 'African socialism' would, therefore, draw on the 'real' African roots, rather than following a Soviet-style model based on class struggle. The predominantly rural population of the African nations also led governments adopting this path to focus on rural development strategies, rather like Mao had done in China ([Box 3.7](#)). The key role of the state in directing development and in owning the means of production, such as

factories and plantations, was similar to socialist models elsewhere, but African nations sought to adapt these models to African realities. Countries adopting these policies included Tanzania, Algeria, Ghana, Mali and Guinea.

In practice, the concept of African socialism came under increasing attacks in the late 1960s and early 1970s from both advocates of capitalist development and those following a more Soviet-style socialism (Young 1982: 100). Despite the claims to African 'authenticity', it was clear that ideals of a 'classless society' and the African communal way of life were not always as evident as had been claimed. These internal divisions, along with external pressures, resulted in the gradual disintegration of the African populist socialist projects.

Afro-Marxism reflects an ideological approach drawing on the class analysis of Marx and focusing on the policies adopted in the USSR and associated states. This became more popular in the late 1960s and was a response to the perceived limitations of the African socialism model. Rather than trying to build development solutions based on the specific African context, the argument was that the Soviet model of economic development and social welfare was applicable in all geographical locations. The 1959 Cuban Revolution was held up as an example of how countries in the South could successfully adopt a Soviet-style development path. Young (1982: 3) sums up the criticisms of African socialism as follows: 'The stress upon the communitarian heritage of African society was held to be naïve and the rejection of the class struggle mischievous and wrong.'

Marxist-Leninism was adopted in diverse ways among the African nations, but the importance of central state planning and state ownership of key units of production was at the heart of the policies. In reality, however, the state bureaucracy was too weak to implement planning systems following a Soviet model, and there were few companies which could be taken into state ownership. The role of the 'working classes' in the move to Marxist-Leninism was also limited because of the predominantly rural population (Young 1982). States adopting an Afro-Marxist approach included Congo-Brazzaville (Republic of the Congo), Mozambique, Angola, Benin, Somalia and Ethiopia.

The collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1989 meant a severe cut in the assistance that could be provided to African socialist nations. However, even before this, socialist projects throughout the continent were experiencing problems, created both internally to the country, but also exacerbated by external forces. Limitations to economic growth were experienced as countries were unable to

increase productivity through existing levels of education, skills and technology. In addition, opposition military activity (often supported by foreign governments) meant that conditions for stable economic growth were limited. For example, in Mozambique the opposition Renamo organization received funding from South Africa (Hanlon 1991). Increasing debt and economic problems forced many countries to accept restructuring packages associated with IMF loans and adopt neoliberal market-led policies.

BOX 3.7 UJAMAA IN TANZANIA

In 1961, Tanganyika became independent from Britain, and in 1964 the Republic of Tanzania was created from the merging of Tanganyika and Zanzibar. The President of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, wanted to promote development within Tanzania based on African traditions and values, rather than following a Western model.

In 1967, with the Arusha Declaration the policy of *ujamaa* was declared. *Ujamaa* is a Swahili word meaning ‘familyhood’, and the basis of this development approach was rural development around communal farming in villages. As most of Tanzania’s population was based in rural areas, Nyerere felt that the focus on rural development was appropriate. In addition, there was a tradition of communal activities, albeit on a much more limited scale than that envisaged under *ujamaa*.

Initially the policy encouraged peasants to move into *ujamaa* villages, or for those already resident in villages to increased communal, rather than private production. The government invested in water supplies, primary education and health provision in these villages. However, by 1970 progress was not regarded as sufficiently advanced, and the government made more interventions to make peasants move. As a result, the number of *ujamaa* villages increased from 1,956 in 1970 to 5,010 in 1974.

These shifts encouraged many White capitalist farmers to leave the country. There was also a policy of nationalization of the plantations producing crops such as sisal and coffee. While assistance was given to peasants in the form of fertilizer and some machinery, overall production remained rather low. Production targets were rarely met. Peasants spent the majority of their time working on their own private plots, rather than

on communal village lands. This fitted within their own understandings of their lives and how they wanted to live. This was not, however, compatible with government plans for national development.

In 1973, a policy of compulsory villagization was announced. In some cases, this involved extreme forms of coercion and violence. About five million Tanzanians were moved as part of this process, which was seen as key to development. The *Daily News* newspaper reported:

Mwalimu [Nyerere] has frequently reiterated during the last ten years the importance of people congregating in villages. Such proximity is a necessity of development. For when people abandon their isolation and come together in well-planned and laid out villages, they can be reached by social services, and they can effectively operate in co-operation. Only then can they begin to develop.

(*Daily News*, 15 November 1974, in Hyden 1980: 131)

Because of production problems, the focus on communal village production was subsequently reduced, and peasants were allowed to produce independently.

Source: adapted from Hyden (1980)



THE RISE (AND FALL) OF THE LATIN AMERICAN LEFT

From the late 1990s, left-of-centre governments were increasingly elected to power in many parts of Latin America. The election of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela in 1998 was followed by a wave of electoral success across the region, including Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (often just known as Lula) in Brazil in 2002 and Evo Morales in Bolivia in 2005. However, as Francisco Panizza (2009) outlines, this cannot be seen as a homogenous rise of socialist governments; rather there was a diversity of approaches. It has therefore been characterized as a ‘pink tide’ rather than a ‘red tide’, which socialism would imply.

The rise of the left in Latin America in the 2000s has been viewed as a response to the failures of the neoliberal model in the region and has therefore sometimes been termed ‘post-neoliberal’. Periodic economic crises in the 1990s, for example in Mexico 1994/5 and a rise in poverty in the period 1998–2002, created disillusionment among electorates about market-led development. Panizza (2009) also attributes the leftward trend to the opening up of democratic spaces in many countries, after decades of military rule. This provided opportunities for civil society organizations to flourish, such as the Brazilian Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST in Portuguese). Such organizations tend to support left-leaning candidates.

Ecuador, Bolivia and Venezuela were most prominent in adopting what could be identified as socialist policies, including nationalization of productive resources and attempts to redistribute wealth ([Box 3.8](#)). However, there were also attempts at regional cooperation through the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA in its Spanish acronym). This is part of what Chávez termed a ‘Bolivarian Revolution’ named after Simón Bolívar, a leader in the wars of independence against Spanish colonialism in the early 19th century. It was set up as a counterpoint to free-trade areas promoting neoliberal policies in the region.

The support for left-wing parties has receded significantly since the early 21st century, with electoral success for right-wing, populist leaders such as

Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil in 2018 and the resignation of Evo Morales in 2019 (see [Box 3.8](#)). Reasons given for the failure of the 'pink tide' include the inability of governments to capitalize on the commodity price boom of the 2000s, opposition from vested interests both within the country and externally (most notably the USA), corruption and lack of state capacity (Antunes de Oliveira 2019; Reid 2017; Rojas 2017). However, the election of the left-wing populist candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador as President of Mexico in 2018 and Alberto Fernández in Argentina in October 2019 demonstrate that the shift to the right is not continent-wide.

BOX 3.8 EVO MORALES AND THE MAS GOVERNMENT IN BOLIVIA

Evo Morales was elected as president of Bolivia in 2005 and was re-elected in 2009 and 2014. He resigned in November 2019 following disputed election results and pressure from the military. He was granted political asylum in Mexico. Over 60% of Bolivia's population belongs to an Indigenous group, and Morales himself comes from an Aymara background. Prior to his election, he was leader of the coca workers' union.

Morales' electoral success came after over two decades of market-led reforms in the country, including widespread privatization and increased foreign investment, particularly in infrastructure and oil and gas exploitation. This had led to widespread protests, including the so-called 'Water Wars' in Cochabamba, against the privatization of urban water supplies. There was also limited economic growth, and the Bolivian economy was severely affected by regional economic crises such as that experienced by Argentina in 2001/2. US-backed plans to eradicate coca production as part of the 'war on drugs' were also unpopular for both undermining livelihoods in rural areas and representing American interference in domestic affairs.

Morales' party was the Movement towards Socialism (MAS in Spanish), and he has made his views about neoliberalism very apparent. For example, he is quoted as saying: 'Neoliberalism is the reproduction of savage and inhuman capitalism that continues to allow for the concentration of capital in few hands and which does not provide

solutions for the majorities of the world' (quoted in and translated by Panizza 2009: 183).

In power, Morales and the MAS government nationalized oil and gas reserves and used the additional revenue for greater public expenditure in social programmes. There was legislation to promote the rights of Indigenous peoples, including incorporating indigenous concepts of living in harmony with the environment (*'buen vivir'*), into the 2009 Constitution (see [Chapter 6](#)). However, land redistribution did not occur, due largely to opposition from agribusiness and cattle-ranching elites in the eastern lowlands in departments such as Santa Cruz. Transnational companies remain significant players in the natural gas and mining sectors. The national development strategy focuses on extractive industries (in 2017, over 70% of the value of Bolivia's exports came from gas, zinc ores, gold and silver). As a result of this strategy, the rights of indigenous people and the protection of the environment have often been sidelined and resulted in significant public protests, including those in summer 2019 around the destruction of over 4 million hectares of forest due to fires. The end of Morales' government has been interpreted as a military coup by his supporters, while his rivals heralded his resignation as a victory for democracy.

Source: adapted from Andreucci (2017); Andreucci and Radhuber (2017); BBC News (2019a); Panizza (2009); Ranta (2017); Reid (2017); World Integrated Trade Solution (2019)

SUMMARY

- Marxist definitions of 'development' are based on ideas of 'modernity'.
- Structuralist and dependency theories stress the importance of looking at the global economic system.
- Dependency theories argue that 'underdevelopment' is caused by unequal global power relations.
- State-socialist development models involve the primary role of the state and decision-maker.
- There have been attempts to introduce 'African socialism' with limited success.
- While state-led socialist models of development have been losing favour

since the 1990s, in some countries, most notably in Latin America, state-led development has become more common.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What were the main features of Marx's evolutionary approach to social development?
- 2 How do dependency theories challenge modernization approaches to development?
- 3 Why was import-substitution industrialization a key policy for structuralist theorists?
- 4 Why are state-led socialist development models less popular at the start of the 21st century compared to the post-Second World War period?

FURTHER READING

- Forbes, D. and N. Thrift (eds) (1987) *The Socialist Third World: Urban Development and Territorial Planning*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. Although this book is rather dated, it provides a very useful overview of the economic and regional development policies of a number of socialist regimes in the South. While most have now moved away from this form of development, there are many useful examples of how a socialist perspective has been put into development practice.
- Nem Singh, J. and J.S. Ovadia (2018) 'The theory and practice of building developmental states in the Global South', *Third World Quarterly* 39 (6): 1033–55. A useful overview of work on developmental states and the relevance of the concept for current development practice. It is the introduction to a special issue on developmental states.
- Rodney, W. (1981) *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Washington, DC: Howard University Press. A very important publication drawing on dependency approaches and the role of colonialism in development in Africa.
- Simon, D. (ed) (2019) *Key Thinkers on Development*, 2nd edition, London: Routledge. Provides concise summaries of the key development thinkers, including many mentioned in this chapter.

Useful websites

- www.marxists.org Marxists Internet Archive. Includes information about key Marxist writers and their publications, as well as discussions of the role of Marxism in anti-imperialist struggles in regions of the Global South.
- www.nacla.org North American Congress on Latin America. A non-profit organization which provides information about social, political and economic issues from Latin America.

www.socialistinternational.org The Socialist International. Worldwide organization of socialist, social democratic and labour parties.

www.tol.org Transitions Online. News and information about the post-communist states of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

CHAPTER 4

Politics and development

- Development, democracy and good governance
- Fragile states and securitization
- Civil society
- Global governance
- Politics of aid

The definitions, theories and practices of development are inherently political, as outlined in [Chapter 1](#), in that they reflect the exercise of power. This chapter focuses on a narrower definition of politics: ‘activities surrounding the process and institutions of government or the state’ (Rakner and Randall 2017: 4). This is similar to Joe Painter and Alex Jeffrey’s definition of ‘formal politics’ (2009: 7). The actions of government and state institutions appear throughout the book, as key actors in development, but in this chapter the nature of these institutions and how they fit into different development theories and approaches will be covered.

MODERNIZATION AND DEPENDENCY APPROACHES

Modernization approaches to political development use the Global North as the model of how political institutions should evolve. For example, Rostow’s

1960 book *The Stages of Economic Growth* includes discussions of how forms of politics around clan or ethnic allegiance would be replaced by state institutions which would support economic growth, including banking and law (see [Chapter 2](#)). Gabriel Almond developed a structural functional approach to comparative politics, which sought to engage with the different political contexts across the world, rather than using a simple Western/non-Western, or traditional/modern distinction. He considered the nature of the political system, defined as 'the legitimate order-maintaining or transforming system in the society' (Almond 1960: 7). This political system was responsible for certain functions, such as rule-making and application, but how this was done would vary depending on the structures, or institutions, of that society. This framework was adapted by Almond and G. Bingham Powell through an identification of five 'output capabilities' of a political system (extractive, regulative, distributive, symbolic and responsive). As a society moved from traditional to modern, these capabilities would improve (Randall 2017).

Modernization approaches, including Almond's structural functionalist political development, were strongly criticized for a number of reasons. While there was an assumption that modern political systems (as exemplified by the Western state), were positive, there was no real engagement with how change would come about (Huntington 1971). Dependency approaches also critiqued the assumptions about development given the operation of the global capitalist system (Hagopian 2000). There was also empirical evidence which challenged the modernization theory's assumptions that liberal democracy and economic growth were linked. For example, Samuel Huntington (1971) argued that economic growth could destabilize political systems. He stressed the importance of the capacity of government institutions, regardless of the form of government, similar to the more recent good governance debates (see later) (Randall 2017).

Dependency approaches did not engage very much with the nature of formal political institutions, other than identifying how states and elites in peripheral countries benefitted from the surplus generated by peasants and workers (see [Chapter 3](#)). Neo-Marxist theorists, inspired by socialist revolutions in the Global South, in countries such as China and Cuba, moved away from assuming states lacked autonomy to operate separately from the economic elite (Randall 2017).

DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT

Francis Fukuyama's claims of the 'end of history' when the Soviet bloc collapsed in 1989 were not just about the perceived victory of the Western capitalist economic model, but also of liberal democracy (Fukuyama 1989) (see [Chapter 3](#)). Some forms of modernization theory see a unilinear process from political authoritarianism to democracy, arguing that economic growth and prosperity are linked to democratization. However, the relationship between economic development and democracy is not straightforward (Leftwich 2005), and, as is discussed at various points in this book, the notion of a single development path does not reflect real-world experiences.

Democracy is sometimes seen as purely relating to an electoral system whereby citizens are able to choose their representations through regular, competitive elections. Using this definition of democracy, about 90% of countries are democratic (Rakner 2017a). However, Larry Diamond (2015) makes a distinction between electoral democracy and liberal democracy, an expanded concept which includes wider political rights and civil liberties, and has some overlap with the concept of 'governance' discussed later. According to this definition, far fewer countries can be classified as liberal democracies.

State-centred development approaches (see [Chapter 3](#)) have sometimes included a political system with some or significant authoritarian dimensions. Many of the developmental states of East Asia achieved high levels of economic growth and poverty reduction without liberal democratic political systems, and the Chinese development model suggests that authoritarian regimes can effectively deliver economic success. However, poverty reduction and economic growth are possible without authoritarianism, so challenging some ideas that 'democracy is a luxury that poor countries can ill afford' (Rakner 2017a: 218).

There are also debates around whether industrialization and economic growth provide pressures on political regimes towards democratization. Following a modernization theory argument would suggest that increases in prosperity and changes in social structure due to industrialization would disrupt existing social hierarchies and forms of power. While economic changes may create new social formations, their desire or ability to challenge the political status quo will depend on both the existing political regime, institutional legacies of colonialism and external pressures (see discussion of geopolitics later) (Gyimah-Boadi 2015).

GOVERNANCE

The role of political institutions in development involves more than forms of democracy and government. Since the 1980s, there has been a growing focus on forms of governance. While governance as a concept can refer to any forms of rule-making and implementation, such as global governance discussed later, or corporate governance, international development policy has paid particular attention to governance in relation to the state. A wide variety of definitions are used, some of which overlap with the discussions in the previous section on democracy. For Francis Fukuyama, governance is ‘a government’s ability to make and enforce rules, and to deliver services, regardless of whether that government is democratic or not’ (2013: 350). Within this definition, Fukuyama is making a distinction between governance and democracy, arguing that while some theorists and the current international development institutions often see good governance and democracy as mutually supportive, the relationship is not clear (see also Rakner 2017b).

Governance relates to the exercise of power, rather than how power is accessed in the first place. This will include themes such as the size, quality and autonomy of the state bureaucracy, corruption and transparency, and tax-raising processes.

In the 1990s, what has become known as the ‘good governance’ agenda came to the forefront of international development practice (Grindle 2004), and became part of the conditions for development aid from many institutions (see later). It originally focused on the operation of the public sector and fitted very well within the neoliberal policies of reducing state involvement in the economy. This still remains important and includes processes such as civil service reform, improvements in budgetary management and building capacity of government staff. It also attempted to make the accounting process as transparent as possible to reduce corruption and the misappropriation of aid funds. Corruption is seen as increasing income inequalities and reducing the amount of funding that can be spent on projects that will benefit the country as a whole, particularly those targeted at the poor (Rose-Ackerman 2014). High levels of corruption are also associated with low investor confidence, so discouraging foreign direct investment. This can contribute to a vicious cycle where corruption and bribery are seen as the only way to get by, or large-scale corruption is possible because there is insufficient monitoring

(Rakner 2017b).

While the good governance agenda's focus on transparency was primarily part of making governments accountable to donors, IFIs argued that governments should also be more accountable to their populations. Thus good governance reforms would, it was argued, make government bodies more accessible and responsive to the population's demands. This is part of the growing focus on participatory development (see [Chapter 5](#)).

From an original focus on reforming government activities as part of neoliberal economic restructuring, 'good governance' has expanded to include broader themes such as multiparty elections, freedom of the press and respect for human rights. This significantly blurs the boundary between governance and democracy that Fukuyama advocated. Following the end of the Cold War (see [Chapter 3](#)), Northern governments no longer felt the need to support 'undemocratic' governments on geopolitical grounds, although the growth of the securitization agenda has changed the development landscape (see later). The World Bank has six governance indicators, with longitudinal data produced by Daniel Kaufmann and Aart Kraay, including: voice and accountability, political stability and the absence of violence and government effectiveness (World Bank 2020d).

Assumptions about the link between good governance and development outcomes depends significantly on the definitions of 'development' that are used; definitions which focus on economic growth or improved standards of living may see development success in countries where there is limited government accountability or political freedoms. Transparency International was set up in 1993 to research and expose corruption throughout the world, in order to reduce its incidence and therefore improve the lives of individual citizens. As part of its work, it publishes an annual Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). This draws on 13 different data sources from 12 different institutions and ranks 180 countries and territories on a scale from 0 to 100, where the higher the number the less perceived corruption. The focus is on public sector corruption, and the information is drawn from the perceptions of experts and business people. This does not include input from ordinary citizens (Transparency International 2020). The average score in 2019 was 43 out of 100, and while Global North countries are more likely than Global South countries to be perceived as 'cleaner', this is certainly not a perfect correlation (see [Figure 4.1](#)). The 2019 CPI report also highlighted how some Northern companies in sectors such as construction and telecommunications

are involved in forms of corruption and bribery in the Global South (Transparency International 2020).



[Plate 4.1](#) [Election information poster, Mulanje, Malawi](#)

Credit: Katie Willis

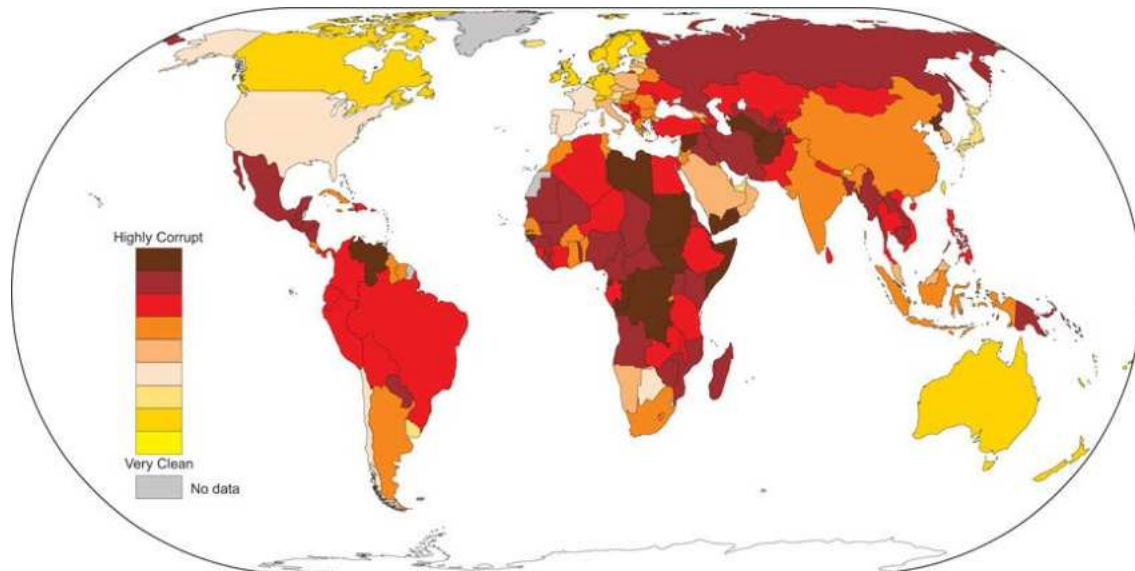
Merilee S. Grindle (2004, 2011) highlights some of the issues arising from the implementation of the good governance agenda. In her 2004 article, she introduced the concept of 'good enough governance' in the context of poverty-reduction policies in the Global South. This was a response to the long lists of what constituted good governance and the scale of institutional change that seemed to be required, with no real indication of how and in what order reform was to happen. She continues with this critique in her 2011 article, but expands on how any interventions need to acknowledge what institutions and policies already exist and how these can be built on. 'Getting institutions right' remains at the heart of the international development agenda, with SDG 16 including 'build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels'. Targets include addressing corruption and bribery, representative decision-making, and transparency and accountability.

FAILED/FRAGILE STATES

In the early 1990s, alongside the good governance agenda, what was described as a new phenomenon of 'the failed nation-state' (Helman and Ratner 1992) was identified. This was 'a polity that is no longer able or willing to perform the fundamental tasks of a nation-state in the modern world' (Rotberg 2004: 6). What these tasks consist of could be contested, but the security of citizens was seen as key. Therefore, failed states are associated with enduring violence committed by actors other than the central government (Goodfellow 2014). The emergence of failed states in the early 1990s reflected the end of the Cold War. The removal of economic and military aid which had been used by both the USSR and the USA to garner support from foreign governments meant that 'states imploded in places as diverse as Yugoslavia to Somalia' (Goodfellow 2014: 499).

As well as a lack of security, Robert I. Rotberg (2004) identifies a range of political goods which nation-states should provide. These include freedom of political participation, clear regulation and adjudication systems including the rule of law and property rights, and the provision of services such as healthcare, education, transport and communications infrastructure, and currency and banking systems. Rotberg acknowledges that there is a continuum including strong states, weak states, failed states and what he

terms ‘collapsed states’, and that any one state may perform to different levels across the range of activities. The classification of a ‘failed state’ is therefore debated (Di John 2010).



[Figure 4.1](#) [Corruption Perceptions Index, 2019](#)

Source: adapted from Transparency International (2020: 2–3)

Map data © Maps in MinutesTM (1996)

The benchmark against which state success is measured is clearly not neutral (Di John 2010), being based on normative ideas of good governance and state action drawn from the Global North. The acknowledgement of the stigmatizing nature of the ‘failed state’ identification means that the terminology of ‘fragile states’ is more commonly used today (Goodfellow 2014). ‘Failed’ could also suggest that this is an end point, but as Rotberg (2004) stresses there is nothing inevitable about failure and failure is not terminal, as states can also improve. The World Bank (2020a) uses the term ‘fragile and conflict-affected situations’ (FCS) and divides countries into categories depending on whether the fragility comes from conflict or from institutional or social weakness. In February 2020, the World Bank classified seven countries as being in the high-intensity conflict situation, including Afghanistan, Central African Republic, South Sudan and Yemen (see [Box 4.1](#)), nine more were classified as medium-intensity conflict situations, and a further 21 were highly institutionally and socially fragile. This classification is used to inform World Bank development policies.

Fragile states have become key recipients of international aid (see later).

This is for two main reasons: a humanitarian drive to help people living in dire situations, and a belief that violence is unlikely to remain constrained within national borders and presents a threat to other countries, including those in the Global North (Rotberg 2004). As well as humanitarian assistance to provide food aid, shelter and healthcare, aid has tended to focus on capacity-building projects to promote transparency, uphold the rule of law and improve security. This might involve training police or armed forces, and the provision of military equipment. In some cases, foreign governments become directly involved in conflict as in the ongoing Syrian civil war, where US, Russian and Turkish troops, among others, have been mobilized in support of the Syrian government or rebel forces. In other conflicts, United Nations peacekeeping forces, drawn from a range of countries, have been part of international policies towards fragile states (see later).

SECURITIZATION

Living without violence and fear can be seen as an important human right, and has also been included in definitions of development. For example, the 1994 *Human Development Report* focused on human security, stressing that security was more than an absence of war; instead, human security included dimensions such as job security, health security and environmental security, as well as security from crime and violence (UNDP 1994). This approach fits very clearly into the way in which the UNDP draws on Amartya Sen's vision of development as freedom (see [Chapter 1](#)). The UNDP stressed that human security was important for all people, regardless of where they lived in the world.

BOX 4.1 CIVIL WAR IN YEMEN

The Republic of Yemen was formed in May 1990 through the unification of the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), the latter having been a Marxist-Leninist state and experiencing reduced international support with the collapse of the USSR (see [Chapter 3](#)). Under the new constitution, Yemen was a presidential democracy with an independent judiciary and bicameral legislature. Ali Abdullah Saleh (previously president of the YAR) was elected as the first

president of the unified country.

Despite formal unification, the separate institutions (including the military) of the previously independent YAR (North) and PDRY (South) remained. Civil war between the two in 1994 resulted in victory for the North, but divisions and tensions remained and as President Saleh sought to retain power, the independence of the judiciary and legislature was reduced. In addition to secessionist movements in the south, Yemen also became a key site for al-Qaeda, the militant Islamist movement, and the regional Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). The Yemeni government was given substantial financial support by other countries, most notably the USA, as part of counter-terrorism efforts. Since 2004, challenges to the Yemeni government have also come from the Houthis in northern Yemen.

As in many parts of North Africa and the Middle East, Yemen experienced popular uprisings in 2011 in what was known as the 'Arab Spring'. This, combined with the existing forms of opposition, led President Saleh to step down in 2012 to be replaced by Abd Rabbuh Mansur Al Hadi, who had previously been vice-president. However, his unopposed election did not lead to peace; instead, the Houthis led a challenge to the government, leading to the civil war which is ongoing. They took control of the capital Sanaa, and President Hadi fled the country.

The complexity of alliances involved in civil war and conflict in Yemen builds on existing forms of patronage around tribal or regional affiliations, but these intersect with state institutions and wider geopolitical interests. The Houthis are Shi'ites, observing the Shia branch of Islam. This branch of Islam is followed in Iran, and the Iranian government has been providing military support to the Houthis. Because of this, other regional and international powers have intervened in the conflict. From March 2015, a coalition of Gulf states led by Saudi Arabia implemented economic sanctions and air strikes against the Houthis. These actions were supported by the USA as it sees the Saudi regime as a key ally in the region, and part of its global counter-terrorism operations. Yemen's location alongside key oil shipping routes is also important. Other Western powers, including France, Germany and the UK, have also supported the coalition. There have been a number of peace agreements brokered during the civil war, but as of June 2020, these have not been

successfully implemented. In April 2020, the southern part of Yemen, in the form of the Southern Transitional Council, declared self-rule. Hadi's government continues to be recognized by the UN.

Since 2015, more than 100,000 people have been killed in the fighting, and thousands more have died as an indirect result of the war due to starvation or disease (Moyer *et al.* 2019). As of June 2020, approximately 4 million Yemenis had been displaced and 24 million people (out of a population of 28.5 million) needed assistance (Council on Foreign Relations 2020). According to analysis done by the UNDP, the civil war in Yemen has set back development (according to SDG indicators) by about 21 years (Moyer *et al.* 2019). Given the high economic poverty levels and low standards of living for most Yemenis before the civil war, this analysis demonstrates the devastating individual and collective impacts of the war.

The categorization of Yemen as a 'failing' or 'failed state' highlights how certain forms of state or political organization are identified as normal or desirable. For researchers such as Sophia Dingli (2013), the language used to describe and explain the political situation in Yemen could be seen as Orientalist, as it implies inferiority and an inability to change (see [Chapter 1](#)). This is not to deny the very real suffering of Yemeni people in the face of civil war, but rather to challenge the assumptions made about the causes and potential solutions.

Source: adapted from Amnesty International (2020); Council on Foreign Relations (2020); Dingli (2013); Moyer *et al.* (2019).



[Plate 4.2 Destroyed buildings, Sana'a, Yemen, June 2019](#)

Credit: Mohammed Mohammed/Xinhua/Alamy Live News

The notion of security has also been incorporated into international development aid policies through the concept of ‘securitization’ or the ‘development-security nexus’ (Power 2019a). According to Jennifer Hyndman (2009: 869) securitization in the context of aid is, ‘the tying of aid provision to the security agendas of the global North.’ This has increased in the post-Cold War period as governments of the Global North see threats as coming not from other states, but from the people within them, particularly from the Global South (Duffield 2010). Issues such as terrorism, disease and large flows of immigrants and refugees are constructed as threats to the Global North, and development interventions are therefore seen as vital to the security of citizens in the North.

The development interventions associated with the securitization agenda cover a wide range of activities, including income-generating projects aiming to reduce poverty, and support for civil society organizations, but there is also a major focus on improving the capacity of the military and police. Marcus Power (2019a) uses the example of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to demonstrate the increasing connections between development and security. While the links existed before then, after the 11

September 2001 attacks on the USA development became an increasing part of US national security. This was because it was felt that poor and unstable parts of the Global South were ‘breeding grounds’ for terrorists. This agenda led to economic and military aid being directed to countries that were seen as allies in the ‘War on Terror’. For Power, it seems as if USAID ‘has increasingly become a quasi-security agency’ (2019a: 214). In the name of development, military personnel and civilian contractors have been involved in the training of military and police recruits in the Global South, as well as participating in the building of infrastructure projects to gain the ‘hearts and minds’ of local populations. There has also been significant investment in the building of military facilities, such as a US\$110 million military air base in Agadez, Niger which can be used for drone surveillance and attacks across West Africa (Power 2019a: 242).

The securitization agenda is another example of the role of power in definitions of development and the design of interventions. Such a top-down and externally framed approach to development may have benefits to certain groups ‘on the ground’, particularly as the victims of ‘terrorist’ or ‘extremist’ violence have largely been in the Global South (Noxolo 2017), but it is important to acknowledge the tensions involved in explicitly bringing together military and development concerns.

DECENTRALIZATION

In most countries, governments have a number of tiers of operation from national to regional or provincial, municipal and local government, with different areas of responsibility or decision-making power in each tier. Since the 1980s, in market-led economies, there has been a tendency to move away from central government activities and decision-making to a more decentralized approach. The rationale for adopting decentralization was both economic and political. In economic terms, it was argued that decentralizing government activities would lead to greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness. This clearly resonates with the neoliberal agenda. In political terms, by transferring decision-making to the more local level, people would be able to have a greater say in the decisions made about their services (Mohmand and Loureiro 2017). This fitted in with the growth of ‘good governance’ as a key element of development policies and interventions, but could also be seen as a

route to legitimacy for the state and greater state accountability (Faguet 2014; Grindle 2007).

This process of decentralization has been a major feature of policy-making in most countries, both North and South. Even in countries with an existing federal system where federal state governments have always had power to make significant decisions, such as Mexico, there has been a process of further decentralization. Within a neoliberal agenda, decentralization is regarded as a way of reducing state control, albeit in some cases just moving policy-making from central government to regional or local government.

Processes of decentralization may also involve much more explicit forms of citizen participation through, for example, participatory budgeting (see [Box 4.2](#)). The involvement of local people in these forms of decentralized decision-making, while being very admirable in theoretical terms, does not always have the desired practical outcomes. As described in more detail in [Chapter 5](#), participation has become a key element of development theories and practice, but meaningful and widespread participation is much harder to achieve than predicted.

Decentralization or devolution may provide better services to local populations, be more cost-effective and lead to greater transparency and state accountability. However, as Shandana Khan Mohmand and Miguel Loureiro (2017) observe, there are frequent barriers to these positive outcomes, including the availability of funds, which may not be redistributed from the centre or allocated equitably from central government, or local authorities may not have sufficient tax-raising powers. Effective decentralization also involves significant coordination between local government and other actors, both private sector and civil society. Finally, decentralization requires the relinquishing of power from national or provincial government. While this may happen on paper, it may not be put into practice. In fact, decentralization may also be seen as a form of dividing opposition forces and maintaining central government control, as Aamer Taj and Keith Baker (2018) argue in relation to Pakistan's governance reforms since the 1960s.

BOX 4.2 PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

Participatory budgeting describes the involvement of local residents in decision-making about local government expenditure. Since its introduction in Brazilian urban municipalities in the 1990s, it has spread

to many parts of the world, both North and South. While the specific organization of the process varies, the principle of citizen participation is key. This is for three main reasons: enhancing democracy and the role of citizens; improving accountability; and greater efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery. For some activists and scholars, the original radical ambitions for enhancing democracy have been replaced by a system which fits within neoliberal technocratic approaches to development, indicated by World Bank promotion of participatory budgeting (see also [Chapter 5](#)).

The Brazilian city of Porto Alegre is seen as the birthplace of participatory budgeting. When the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores or PT) won the local elections in 1989, they introduced a process of participatory democracy, including financial decision-making. The principle of the participatory budgeting process they introduced was 'the creation of a new public sphere where citizens can gather to directly debate a political problem concerned with determining expenditure' (Ganuza *et al.* 2014: 2274–5). Citizens were to be involved directly, not through associations. Neighbourhood meetings were set up to discuss what local residents identified as priorities in their area in a form of collective decision-making.

In Belo Horizonte, Sérgio H. Rocha Franco and Wendell Ficher Teixeira Assis (2019) state that in the 20 years following the start of participatory budgeting in the city, between 15,000 and 44,000 citizens had participated in each cycle. This had involved decisions about a budget of about US\$790 million and over 1,500 projects. They highlight improvements in the quality of life in neighbourhoods which had ranked among the worst. Sonia Gonçalves (2014) finds similar positive results across Brazil between 1990 and 2004; as municipalities spent a greater percentage of their budget on sanitation services following participatory budgeting, the infant mortality rate declined.

However, it is important to acknowledge that most public works take place outside the participatory budgeting process; in Belo Horizonte only 4–10% of the local government expenditure was covered. Significant infrastructure investment was also undertaken by private companies. While living conditions improved for the poorest districts, inequalities between districts grew. There were also issues about neighbourhood improvement sometimes leading to the displacement of the poorest

residents (see also Desai and Loftus 2012 on speculation and slum upgrading in the Global South).

The implementation of participatory budgeting relies on political will. With changes of government, approaches to the process changes. For example, after the PT lost the local government elections in Porto Alegre in 2004, the new municipal government continued with participatory budgeting, but rather than individual citizens deliberating on financial priorities, participation was extended to include a wide range of organizations such as private companies, churches and foundations (Chavez 2008).

Source: adapted from Chavez (2008); Ganuza *et al.* (2014, 2016); Gonçalves (2014); Rocha Franco and Assis (2019)

RIGHTS-BASED DEVELOPMENT

Despite the ratification of the UN Declaration on Universal Human Rights in 1948, the concept of human rights had, until the 1990s, remained outside most constructions of development theory and practice (Broberg and Sano 2017). Within rights-based approaches, human rights are not just seen as channel through which development can be facilitated, e.g. the right to a job provides income, but rather, the achievement of human rights in themselves is an objective of development (Maxwell 1999).

Rights are often divided into so-called ‘civil and political’ rights, such as the right to vote, freedom of expression and organization, and ‘economic, social and cultural’ rights, including the right to food, shelter and a job (Maxwell 1999). However, this distinction has led to a range of problems with implementation. For example, it could be argued that there is a hierarchy of rights, with some rights being more important than others. Is freedom of expression really that important when people do not have enough food to live? However, a rights-based approach would argue that this dichotomy is not useful ‘because only if people are empowered to determine their genuine needs will development occur. This ... simultaneously promotes sustainable democracy and well-being’ (Mohan and Holland 2001: 185). Rather than prioritizing particular rights, this rights-based development argues for a holistic, people-centred approach.

Different groups have increasingly drawn on the discourse of rights to make claims for the kind of development they want to occur, and there is an expanding list of international agreements laying out the rights of particular groups (OHCHR 2020). While talk of women's rights and indigenous rights have become commonplace, within the sphere of development, other groups have also made claims including rights based on disability and on issues around sexuality, as well as the rights of children, young people and older people (see [Chapter 6](#)). However, a problem with this form of 'identity politics' is that it can lead to rigid boundary drawing between groups and a tendency to essentialize identities, rather than recognizing them as fluid over time and space (Cornwall *et al.* 2008).

As part of the rights-based development agenda, NGOs and other development actors have increasingly focused on working with communities to explain the concept of rights and how to go about lobbying for their rights (Nelson and Dorsey 2018). This can be seen as a form of 'empowerment' process (see [Chapter 5](#)). However, a knowledge of rights does not mean that these rights can be achieved; as Amartya Sen (1999) argued in his book *Development as Freedom*, people have to have the ability to exercise their rights.

The role of the state as guarantor of these rights is crucial, but given the economic poverty of many countries, how can governments be expected to guarantee these rights, particularly those relating to provision of basic material needs? In addition, neoliberal policies have promoted reduced direct state involvement and growing private sector and NGO activity in the fields of economic and social development. Authoritarian governments may also want to limit certain rights that may challenge their authority. However, as rights are conceived, only states are responsible for guaranteeing them, 'even if it is non-state actors (and their neo-liberal policies) that caused those rights to be violated in the first place' (Manzo 2003: 437). Thus, while the focus on rights may be regarded as important for promoting opportunities for greater well-being and empowerment at the grassroots level, the implementation of such approaches is problematic. Michael Freeman (2017) stresses the need for effective states and civil society, and the balance between them, for the achievement of human rights (see also Acemoglu and Robinson 2019).

ETHNOPOLITICS

The relationship between ethnicity and development has a number of different strands, including an engagement with the rights of different ethnic groups, as part of rights-based development approaches (see previously). Practices associated with particular ethnic groups, including religious beliefs or forms of social organization, may be seen as facilitating or obstructing certain forms of development (see later and [Chapter 6](#)). In relation to formal politics, the concept of ‘ethnopolitics’ has been used to describe how ethnicity may be politicized in certain contexts (Scarritt and Birnir 2017).

The ethnic diversity of many present-day states dates from the European colonial period and its aftermath. Colonialism involved the movements of millions of people around the globe as slaves, indentured labourers or settlers, and the creation of the boundaries of independent states was driven largely by European decisions, rather than a reflection of the identities and networks among local populations.

In multi-ethnic states, there may be strong ethnic identities, but this is not associated with political engagement (Scarritt and Birnir 2017). In others, ethnicity may be politicized through formal political institutions such as political parties. Within liberal conceptions of the state, the state apparatus is neutral, but such an approach does not acknowledge how the state can represent the interests of particular groups, distinguished by class or ethnicity for example (Venugopal 2014). The idea of a nation suggests a shared identity, or in Benedict Anderson’s work an ‘imagined community’ where citizens feel a connection with others whom they have never met (Anderson 2006). National identity may be ethnonational, in a merging of ethnic and national identity. This may be possible in a monoethnic state, or where one ethnic group imposes an idea of the nation on a population and those from an ethnic minority are not viewed as part of the nation. ‘Civic national identities involve unity among citizens of an autonomous state’ (Scarritt and Birnir 2017: 107). This may include an acknowledgement of ethnopolitical identities, but national unity is key. In multi-ethnic or multicultural national identities, a variety of ethnopolitical identities are recognized and celebrated, but within the overarching framework of the state apparatus. This may include tools to ensure diverse ethnic representation, such as parliamentary quotas.

Ethnic diversity is sometimes seen as a cause of conflict and violence, so undermining development. However, while ethnicity may be seen as part of political struggles and civil war, ethnic differences and tensions are not the primary cause of conflict. Rather, in situations of resource scarcity, inequality

and poverty, ethnicity may be mobilized (Forsberg *et al.* 2017; Hale 2017).

RELIGION

Religion may be part of an ethnic identity, but should also be considered separately. From the perspective of development and formal political institutions, the relationship between the state and religious bodies is important because it may influence the development approach followed and individuals’ freedom to practise their religion (see also [Chapter 6](#)). Jeff Haynes (2017) provides a typology of church–state relations (see [Table 4.1](#)), while also recognizing the Christian-based notion of ‘church’ and the impossibility in some religious interpretations of separating ‘matters of piety from those of the policy [as] both are divinely ordained’ (2017: 123). The typology ranges from ‘confessional’ church–state relations, where ‘ecclesiastical activity is pre-eminent over secular power’ (2017: 123) in states which might be termed ‘theocracies’ (see [Box 4.3](#)), to Marxist secular states where the practising of religion may be officially banned, or at least strongly discouraged.

In liberal secular states, while religion may be officially excluded from state activities, political parties based on particular faith traditions may participate in elections and achieve power. For example, in India in 2014 the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) achieved electoral success, with an outright majority in the Indian parliament and Narendra Modi becoming prime minister. As with ethnicity, religious differences do not inherently lead to conflict, but they can be mobilized by political parties, opposition groups or social movements in times of uncertainty and inequality. In Myanmar, whose population is predominantly Buddhist, violence by civilians and state security forces against the largely Muslim Rohingya population has led over a million people (a large proportion of the Rohingya population within Myanmar) to flee the country, largely since 2017 (UNHCR 2020).

Table 4.1 [A typology of church–state relations](#)

<i>Confessional</i>	<i>‘Generally religious’</i>	<i>Established faith</i>	<i>Liberal secular</i>	<i>Marxist secular</i>
Iran				China
Saudi Arabia				North
Sudan	Indonesia	England	Ghana	Korea

Afghanistan under the Taliban (1996–2001) ‘Islamic state’/ Daesh in parts of Iraq & Syria (2014–19)	United States of America	Norway (until 2014)	India Netherlands Turkey	Albania (1946–91) Russia (1917–91)

Source: adapted from Haynes (2017: Box 8.2)

BOX 4.3 THEOCRACY IN IRAN

The 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran involved the overthrow of a monarchy and its replacement with a theocratic form of government where religion (in this case Shia Islam) and the state came together. The revolution was a response to what was seen as an increasingly autocratic and unequal system, led by Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. His attempts at economic and social ‘modernization’ were interpreted by many as a form of westernization and a decline in morals. This was reinforced by the support that the Shah received from the USA.

Following the revolution, the constitution was changed so that the Supreme Leader of the country was a religious leader. Ayatollah Khomeini, who had been so prominent in the revolution, was appointed to this role in 1979. The Supreme Leader controls the armed forces and also nominates half the members of the Guardian Council, which oversees all legislation passed by parliament to ensure that it conforms to Islamic law. The Guardian Council also approves parliamentary candidates. The president and members of parliament are elected through universal suffrage, with men and women aged 18 and over entitled to vote.

The introduction of Islamic rule following the 1979 revolution involved strict laws which were viewed as promoting morality. For example, Haleh Afshar argues that for many women from poor socio-economic groups, as well as highly religious women, the revolution was viewed as a possible liberation from periods of labour exploitation and what they saw as the promotion of women as sex objects. However, new legislation and the policing of public morality meant that after the revolution, women’s freedoms were increasingly restricted. This included legalization about dress, movement and also legal shifts which resulted in

women's evidence being ignored unless it could be corroborated by a man. Since the revolution, women's freedoms under the law have experienced periods of increased restrictions and greater freedoms, depending on the political situation; however, many social attitudes have changed. Women have been involved in protests for political change, and in 2003 Shirin Ebadi became the first Muslim woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. She received it for her work as a human rights lawyer and activist. In 2019, 6% of seats in the Iranian national parliament were held by women (World Bank 2020c).

Ali M. Ansari (2019) criticizes how foreign commentators often repeat Orientalist perspectives of the country's political system as an example of authoritarian and dogmatic Islam. Instead, Ansari stresses the complexity of Iran's political institutions and the need to understand the diversity of political perspectives within the political elite, but also among the religious leaders, business class and wider civil society.

Source: adapted from Afshar (1985); Ansari (2019); Keddie (2007); Salehi-Isfahani (2009).

CIVIL SOCIETY

The concept of civil society has received increasing attention since the 1990s, particularly in relation to the move from authoritarian forms of government, such as military regimes in South America or communist governments in the 'Second World' to multiparty democracies. However, the concept is also applied to other forms of national politics, and the concept of 'global civil society' has also gained popularity.

The idea of 'civil society' is certainly not new, having its roots in 17th- and 18th-century social and political philosophy. However, during the 1990s it became a 'buzzword' in development circles, and the strengthening of 'civil society' has become a key element of many development approaches (Ottaway 2017; Van Rooy 2014). As with many concepts gaining great popularity, there are a wide variety of definitions of 'civil society'. Broadly, it covers activities and organizations that are separate from the state and from the market, but the debates rage about the precise boundaries (Edwards 2014). However, as Cathy McIlwaine states in her overview of civil society and development geography:

While there is little precise agreement as to which activities should be included within civil society, particularly in terms of political and economic associations, ... they generally refer to voluntary organizations, community groups, trade unions, church groups, co-operatives, business, professional, and philanthropic organizations, and a range of other NGOs.

(McIlwaine 1998: 416)

She goes on to highlight how NGOs have been seen as particularly important civil society actors in the context of development (see [Chapter 5](#)). For Alison van Rooy (2014), civil society refers both to the associations and organizations that make up a third sector alongside the state and the private sector, as well as a space for action, having ‘a crucial check-and-balance role in relation to The State and The Marketplace’ (2014: 561). For Daron Acemoglu and James A Robinson (2019), civil society is a key element in the creation of what they term the ‘narrow corridor’ between despotic states and the undesirable anarchy that comes from an absent state. The expansive nature of the concept meant that it gained importance as part of both the neoliberal ‘good governance’ agenda (see earlier) and radical grassroots approaches to development (see [Chapter 5](#)).

The focus on civil society as an important contributor to good governance has led to donor funding being directed to civil society organizations. However, Marina Ottaway (2017) highlights some of the limitations of this approach. Firstly, the donor-driven funding agenda will mean that only certain kinds of organization will be supported, those focusing on citizen education for example (see [Chapter 5](#) for more discussion of donor dependency). Secondly, the need for audit trails, financial transparency and record-keeping often results in only formally registered, professionalized NGOs being funded, excluding long-standing forms of community organizing. For example, Ottaway points out how in many communities in the Global South, there is a long history of rotating credit associations, where participants contribute a small amount per week, and take it in turns to receive a lump sum. Despite these practices being well embedded in communities, donor funding is more likely to support newly established microfinance schemes. Thirdly, worries about funding going to civil society organizations that are viewed as harmful has led to significant clampdowns in the flow of funds to some associations. Concerns about the funding of

terrorism have interrupted international financial flows from institutions and family members for example. Here Ottaway is not suggesting that all civil society organizations are benign, but that there are potential wider negative consequences for interruptions to financial flows.

Civil society organizations are often run by volunteers, and more generally volunteering has been identified as an increasingly important dimension of development practice. UN Volunteers (2018: 11) estimated that globally there are 109 million full-time equivalent volunteers, with about 50% of these being in the Global South. The vast majority of volunteers are working in their local communities.

Just under one-third of volunteering is through formal organizations, although the figure is higher in the Global North. The remaining 70% consists of unpaid activities often on a personal basis with individual neighbours and community members. This informal volunteering can be seen as part of reciprocal relationships involving social capital (see [Chapter 5](#)), whereas formal volunteering is often unidirectional with no expectation of assistance in return. The 2018 *State of the World's Volunteerism Report* (UN Volunteers 2018) stresses the importance of volunteering in creating resilient communities, able to withstand large shocks, such as natural disasters or economic crises. However, the report also highlights that volunteering can reinforce existing inequalities, particularly through adding to women's unpaid work (57% of the volunteering is done by women), and volunteer projects not always focusing on the needs of the poorest or most marginal. It is also important to recognize that volunteering is no longer always within the space of civil society, separate from the market and state (Georgeou and Haas 2019). As outlined in [Chapter 5](#)'s discussion of international volunteering, governments and commercial organizations have become increasingly involved in creating volunteering opportunities.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

While civil society has increasingly been seen as an important contributor to development, the activities associated with social movements should also be acknowledged. A social movement is, 'a loosely organized, but sustained, collective campaign in support of a social goal – typically for or against a change in society's structures or values – that (mainly) acts outside

institutional and conventional channels’ (Gloppen 2017: 166). Social movements are usually distinguished from some other forms of political action because of their largely non-violent actions, such as advocacy, demonstrations, occupations and consumer boycotts. The collective nature of social movements means that civil society organizations may be a part of the campaign, but usually there is no formal membership. As with most definitions, there is some blurring of boundaries; for example, the Trade Justice Movement is a coalition of civil society bodies including trade unions, consumer groups and human rights organizations that is campaigning to make global trading rules and practices fairer and more sustainable (Trade Justice Movement 2020).



[Plate 4.3 Garment workers rally, Dhaka, Bangladesh, International Women's Day 2016](#)

Credit: Rehman Asad/Alamy Live News

Social movements have a long history, including nationalist liberation movements and anti-slavery campaigns. There is sometimes a distinction between ‘old’ and ‘new’ social movements, with the former associated with economic and social justice, and the latter dating from the 1960s onwards, focusing more on rights. However, that distinction is often unclear (Gloppen 2017).

In the Global South, Siri Gloppen (2017) identifies three main categories of social movement at the start of the 21st century: those focusing on democratization, including regime change; movements seeking social justice, such as access to housing and urban services; and those organized on the basis of identity politics and the rights of particular groups, including women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and indigenous populations (see [Chapter 6](#)). While the fluidity of these organizations, facilitated by new technologies, can help rapid mobilization, the non-institutionalized nature of social movements can make it difficult to maintain pressure and achieve change. Gloppen also stresses that social movements are created from across the political spectrum and include religious fundamentalist and populist groups.

The increasingly complex networks of communication that have helped the processes of economic globalization (see [Chapter 1](#)) have also been used for purposes of political organizing. As Robin Cohen and Shirin Rai (2000: 8) state ‘a global age needs global responses’. They argue that as decisions that affect people’s lives are increasingly being made at the supra-national level, it is important for responses to take place at this level as well. Fund-raising and awareness-raising have taken on a different character within the globalizing world. The use of online petitions and blogs has also transformed the way in which information can be distributed and how individuals contact their elected representatives, while social networking sites, such as Facebook, have helped to create online communities of activists and supporters.

At a smaller scale, the activities of local groups can be promoted and publicized through the use of global-scale technology. Whereas in the past, local-level activities would only be known about at the local scale unless international organizations publicized them through books or leaflets, organizations can now use the technology available to ‘talk to the world’. There are clearly obstacles to involvement, such as access to the technology and the reliability of telephone, electricity and satellite communication in remote areas. However, there are numerous examples of organizations based in the South using such approaches to communicate with similar groups elsewhere, key players in global development decisions or the wider global public. This helps overcome some of the scale limitations sometimes found in bottom-up, grassroots activities (see [Chapter 5](#)).

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Development approaches, policies and interventions are often shaped by international organizations such as the UN, the World Bank and the IMF. These are sometimes called global governance institutions or organizations because of their role in setting out and monitoring rules and regulations which members should abide by. Most of the global governance architecture was set up in the post-Second World War period, including the Bretton Woods institutions (see [Chapter 2](#)) and the UN, which was founded in October 1945. At their inauguration, the main aims of these institutions were global cooperation, economic security and peace. These remain fundamental, but a specific development agenda has evolved over the decades, currently represented by the SDGs, and there is a growing focus on global cooperation to address environmental challenges (see [Chapter 7](#)).

Global governance organizations do not constitute a global government. Instead, they provide an institutional framework within which member nation-states can negotiate and cooperate. In such settings, however, the power held by individual states means that even if voting rights are one member one vote, geopolitical concerns unrelated to the content of the specific vote may shape voting decisions. Global governance organizations have monitoring and reporting mechanisms, but they often have little power to enforce decisions. An exception to this would be through development finance, and the conditions associated with development support (see later and [Chapter 2](#)). Within the UN system, for example, member states ratify human rights treaties, but implementation requires interpretation through national law-making and policy. National law makers may be unwilling or unable to meet the requirements of conventions that their governments have signed (see Willis 2018 on gender and human rights and [Chapter 7](#) on the challenges of implementing environmental agreements).

Some global governance institutions have voting systems which differ from one member one vote. For example, voting on IMF policy reflects the financial contributions of individual countries (see [Table 4.2](#)) and therefore the development approaches preferred by those governments. Given this voting system, it is easy to see how the imposition of neoliberal policies through structural adjustment loans took place in the 1980s and 1990s (see [Chapter 2](#)). The growing economic importance of some states, most notably China, Brazil and India, means that there is the potential for more diverse perspectives and therefore more conflict within the global governance institutions.

The contested politics of global governance institutions can be clearly seen

at the United Nations Security Council, which takes the lead on the UN's goal of maintaining international peace and security. It can implement sanctions against states, and can authorize military interventions. It was set up when the UN was founded. The Security Council has 15 members: five permanent members and ten rotating members. While each member has one vote, the permanent members have the right of veto, so that if a permanent member votes against a resolution, the resolution does not pass, even if there is a majority vote. The permanent members are China, France, Russia, the UK and USA, reflecting the geopolitics of the post-war period (United Nations 2020b). Over 70 years since its founding, the changing nature of global economic power has led to increased lobbying for other countries to become permanent members, particularly India and Brazil. Throughout the Cold War, the political divisions between France, the UK and USA on one side and China and what was then the Soviet Union on the other meant that agreement was rare. These divisions have continued into the post-Cold War period.

[Table 4.2](#) IMF members' voting power, May 2020

	% votes		% votes
USA	16.52	India	2.63
Japan	6.15	Russia	2.59
China	6.08	Brazil	2.22
Germany	5.32	Canada	2.22
France	4.03	Saudi Arabia	2.01
UK	4.03	Spain	1.92
Italy	3.02	Mexico	1.80

Source: adapted from IMF (2020b)

As part of its role in maintaining international peace and security, the UN Security Council can authorize the use of peacekeeping forces. Because the UN does not have its own army or police force, troops and civilians are mobilized from UN member states. As of May 2020, there were 13 UN peacekeeping operations, mostly in the Middle East and Africa (see [Figure 4.2](#)). The presence of UN peacekeepers can help maintain security to allow for national political institutions to be formulated, elections to be held or economic reconstruction to take place. The ultimate aim is for the

peacekeepers to withdraw, leaving national governments to take on the role of maintaining security. For example, the African Union and United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) has been winding down since 2017, with the aim of complete withdrawal in 2020. However, some of the UN peacekeeping missions have a long history; the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) has been in operation in the Middle East since 1948 and the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) since 1964 (UN Peacekeeping 2020).



[Figure 4.2 UN Peacekeeping operations, 2020](#)

Source: adapted from United Nations Peacekeeping (2020)

The presence of UN peacekeeping forces either by themselves, or in cooperation with other multilateral organization forces, such as the African Union in Darfur, has been crucial in reducing violence. However, there have also been failed missions. Additionally, the arrival of UN peacekeepers has sometimes brought additional problems. The UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) ran from 2004–17. Some of the peacekeeping forces were infected with cholera and brought this disease with them. The poor living standards and health facilities in Haiti led to thousands of cholera deaths. Following the departure of UN troops, it became clear that some had been involved in sexual abuse, including of children, and that some had left without taking responsibility for children they had fathered (Lee and Bartels 2019).

INTERNATIONAL AID SYSTEM

International flows of aid in the form of ODA (see [Chapter 2](#)) totalled about US\$165 billion in 2018 (World Bank 2020c). For some countries, ODA constitutes a vital part of their national income (see [Table 4.3](#)). An increasing focus of ODA has been on good governance and particularly support for fragile states. Of the ten recipients of the largest absolute amount of ODA in 2018, five are classified by the World Bank as states with high- or medium-intensity conflict: Afghanistan, the DRC, Nigeria, Yemen and the Syrian Arab Republic (World Bank 2020a). Small states classified as being institutionally and socially fragile also appear in the table, notably the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu. This helps demonstrate how particular international development agendas are driving the flows of ODA.

A key argument of this book is that international development agendas are not neutral, but reflect the development ideologies of the powerful. Aid can therefore be used to promote particular approaches and policies. President Truman's speech (see [Chapter 2](#)) makes this very explicit, and throughout the Cold War, aid was used by both the USA and the USSR to garner support for either the capitalist or communist cause (Power 2019a). Aid usually comes with conditions as part of what is often termed 'aid conditionality' (Temple

2014). These conditions may be political, as during the Cold War, or economic with specifications as to the purchase of goods and services from the donor country – so-called ‘tied aid’. Conditions may also include reforming government practices, as with the conditions associated with IMF and World Bank loans in the 1980s and 1990s (see [Chapter 2](#)), and the ongoing good governance agenda. As Jonathan R.W. Temple (2014) stresses, however, unconditional aid could be highly problematic; conditions relating to budgeting, reporting and transparency of how the aid resources are used can be important in reducing the potential misuse of aid.

Table 4.3 [Net official development assistance received, 2018](#)

<i>ODA received as % GNI</i>		<i>ODA received p.c. (US\$)</i>		<i>ODA received (US\$ millions)</i>	
Somalia	33.6	Palau	4712	Syrian Arab Republic	9,991
Tuvalu	29.3	Nauru	2483	Yemen	7,985
Yemen	29.0	Tuvalu	1635	Ethiopia	4,930
Palau	28.2	Marshall Islands	922	Afghanistan	3,789
Central African Republic	27.5	Micronesia, Federated States	877	Nigeria	3,302
Micronesia, Federated States	24.0	Tonga	847	Bangladesh	3,040
Kiribati	20.5	Kiribati	640	Jordan	2,524
Liberia	20.2	St Kitts & Nevis	597	Democratic Republic of Congo	2,510
Afghanistan	19.4	Syrian Arab Republic	591	Kenya	2,488
Marshall Islands	19.1	Samoa	587	India	2,454

Source: adapted from World Bank (2020c)

At the second High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Paris in 2005, there was an agreement on five principles which would inform the international aid process (see [Box 4.4](#)). The principles were underpinned by a shared commitment to make aid more effective by focusing on the results of aid, and

by trying to streamline processes to make aid delivery more efficient, for example by harmonizing reporting mechanisms, so that recipients did not have to report using multiple formats and systems. Additionally, to try and respond to criticisms about the top-down imposition of development agendas, recipient countries were given the freedom to develop their own strategies, including through consultation with citizens, perhaps through civil society organizations. Recipients were also able to hold donors to account. While such principles could be seen as positive, putting them into operation is much more challenging, not least given the power imbalances between donors and recipients (Glennie 2014). The Paris principles continue to inform international discussions of aid effectiveness, including at the third and fourth High Level Fora on Aid Effectiveness in Accra (2008) and Busan (2011).

BOX 4.4 PARIS DECLARATION PRINCIPLES FOR AID EFFECTIVENESS

- 1 Ownership: Recipient countries take ownership of the development strategy and policies for their country. Recipient governments should coordinate development actions in conjunction with other actors, e.g. private sector and civil society.
- 2 Alignment: Donors align their activities with national strategies. Donor support can include activities to increase the capacity of recipient governments to develop, implement and monitor aid-related projects.
- 3 Harmonization: donors move to harmonize their systems and processes to improve efficiency.
- 4 Managing for results: recipients and donors focus on achieving and monitoring the results of aid activities.
- 5 Mutual accountability: both donors and recipients are accountable for development results.

Source: adapted from Glennie (2014); OECD (2008, 2020b)

International aid has often been presented as flowing from the Global North to the Global South, reflecting the emergence of development as a global project in the post-Second World War period (see [Chapter 2](#)). This is still the

dominant view, particularly if the OECD DAC definitions and statistics are used. However, there is a long history of cooperation between countries of the Global South, including financial flows, technology transfer and the sharing of expertise (Mawdsley 2012). Since the start of the new millennium, there has been increasing focus on development assistance provided by the non-DAC donors, sometimes termed 'emerging donors', particularly the role of China and India (Mawdsley 2019; Woods 2008).

China presents its international development activities, not as aid which flows from a donor to a recipient, but as international cooperation between equal partners where both parties can benefit. The focus of China's development activities is on enhancing economic growth and productivity, particularly through large infrastructure projects. As Emma Mawdsley (2014) observes, there is an assumption that the benefits of these large projects will trickle down to economically poor households and communities, reminiscent of modernization approaches to development. Chinese companies, both state-owned enterprises and private companies, are a significant part of China's international development activities. While China and other emerging donors have endorsed the Declarations on Aid Effectiveness, there are certain elements, such as a commitment to reduce the use of tied aid, to which they do not want to be bound (Brown 2014).



[Plate 4.4 Mombasa Terminal of the Chinese-financed Nairobi-Mombasa Railway, Kenya](#)

Credit: Sun Ruibo/Xinhua/Alamy Live News

For Southern governments, a diversification of development assistance sources is welcomed, particularly if it frees them from aid conditions that were seen as restrictive. Chinese investment has transformed parts of Africa and Asia, sometimes with very positive results. Alongside indicators of success are ongoing concerns about the role of such investment in maintaining regimes with very poor human rights records, environmental destruction and exclusion of economically poor communities. The history of aid from Northern governments has many examples of similar outcomes, but current discourses and approaches to development seek to challenge them, not least through a more expansive definition of development.

The rise of non-DAC donors with their often different approaches to development assistance has added to long-standing debates about the role and impact of aid. Criticisms of aid may come from politicians and citizens in the Global North who argue that money should not be spent on people in other countries, when there are people in need ‘at home’ (Power 2019a: 211–2). Such calls are particularly strong at times of austerity. For others, aid creates systems of dependence and contributes to corruption which prevent recipient countries from being able to develop on their own terms. Dambisa Moyo (2010) made this argument in her book *Dead Aid*. The subtitle of the book, *Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is Another Way for Africa*, makes her views on aid clear. She advocated ending most aid (humanitarian assistance at times of war or natural disasters should continue), promoting the private sector, and enhancing government’s transparency and efficiency. Criticisms of anti-aid perspectives include the failure to acknowledge positive outcomes of interventions, such as improved health, and the changes that have been made in aid delivery mechanisms to reduce the potential for corruption (see earlier). Another significant criticism has been to highlight the role of the international economic and political system, where there are significant power imbalances which can contribute to maintaining inequalities (Carmody 2019: 131–3).

REGIONAL COOPERATION

Inter-relationships between different countries, peoples and organizations may

have increased, but this does not necessarily mean that everything now operates at a global scale. In the economic and political sphere, regional groupings have become increasingly important. Most notable in influence terms are the European Union (EU), the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum. These are not, however, the only regional groupings.

Regional groupings can be seen as a way to overcome some of the limitations of operating as an individual nation-state in a globalizing world, and to take advantage of the supposed benefits of globalization (see [Chapter 1](#)). According to Björn Hettne (1995), this is particularly important for less economically powerful Southern countries which may lack political influence on the global stage (see also Krapohl and van Huut 2019). There are also opportunities to share expertise and institutions, which may be particularly important for countries with limited population or other resources.

The EU, USMCA and APEC are some of the most obvious examples of these groupings and enable their members to benefit from being part of a supra-national organization. However, the benefits vary from organization to organization and between member states. The arguments behind regional groupings of this type are that they provide greater bargaining power compared with acting as individual nations.

Regional groupings are not a new entity within development debates. During the import-substitution industrialization (ISI) period of the 1960s and 1970s (see [Chapter 3](#)), a number of countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean were involved in attempts to create regional trading agreements or common markets. The economic rationale behind such activities was to try and expand the markets for domestically produced goods. However, just as ISI reached certain limits, so attempts at regional cooperation often faced difficulties, particularly if there were significant inequalities between members. For example, the Central American Common Market (CACM) was set up in 1960 by Costa Rica, Guatemala and Nicaragua, with El Salvador and Honduras joining soon after. Intra-regional trade increased from 6.5% of the total trading of the five member nations in 1960 to 26.1% in 1971, probably boosting domestic production. However, political unrest, limits to ISI, followed by the debt crisis and SAPs led to a stagnation in CACM activities (Bulmer-Thomas 1988, 1998; Grugel 1995).

The development of regional free-trade groupings and institutions for cross-border economic cooperation has continued to the present day. The global

situation may be different, but there is a perceived need for organizing at a level above that of the nation-state. There are a plethora of regional cooperation organizations ([Table 4.4](#)) with varying purposes. The Southern African Customs Union ([Box 4.5](#)) is an important example of how poorer countries may work together to seek advantages. There are, however, limitations regarding what such groupings may do. In trade terms, if countries are all producing the same types of goods, then the advantages of trading between each other may be limited. Within the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA), there was a division of labour between the USA and Canada on one side, and Mexico on the other. The comparative advantages of the different countries meant that there were significant flows of goods across the borders. In September 2018, the NAFTA signatories agreed to replace NAFTA with the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA) from 1 July 2020. The free trade area principle remains, but there have been changes in regulations relating to key sectors, such as the automotive industry and agriculture, which particularly reflect the Trump administration’s desire to protect US manufacturing (*The Guardian* 2019b).

As well as free-trading zones or similar trade liberalization measures within a grouping, such regional organizations may play a role in maintaining political stability and security in the region. For example, the African Union is involved in peacekeeping operations in Somalia through the AMISOM (African Union Mission in Somalia), as well as being part of the joint peacekeeping force with the United Nations in Darfur, Sudan (see earlier).

[Table 4.4](#) [Examples of regional cooperation organizations](#)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Members</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Activities</i>
African Union	55 African nations	1999 (1963–1999) Organization for African Unity OAU)	Coordination of cooperation for development
APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation)	21 members, including Australia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Singapore and USA	1989	Trade liberalization

ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)	Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand (1967 members); Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam joined later	1967	Political cooperation on security; trade & investment liberalization
CARICOM (Caribbean Community)	15 members	1965 CARIFTA (Caribbean Free Trade Association) CARIFTA) 1973 CARICOM	Common market
EU (European Union)	27 members	1957 (European Common Market) 1992 (European Union)	Free trade area; freedom of movement; some centralized political decision-making
MERCOSUR (Southern Cone Common Market)	Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay (Venezuela suspended)	1991	Common market
Pacific Islands Forum	18 members including Australia, New Zealand	1971	Cooperation on security & development
SACU (Southern African Customs Union)	Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa	1910, although later renegotiations	Common external tariff; finance redistribution

USMCA (United States– Mexico– Canada Agreement)	Canada, Mexico, USA	2020	Free-trade area. Some limitations on movements of goods and services. NAFTA 1994– 2020

Source: adapted from African Union (2019); APEC (2019); ASEAN (2019); CARICOM (2019); European Union (2020); MERCOSUR (2019); NAFTA Secretariat (2019); Pacific Islands Forum (2019); SACU (2019)

BOX 4.5 SOUTHERN AFRICAN CUSTOMS UNION (SACU)

The Southern African Customs Union (SACU) is made up of five countries: Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Eswatini (previously known as Swaziland). It is the oldest customs union in the world, dating back to 1910, but the terms of the agreement have been renegotiated on three occasions since then to reflect changing economic and political circumstances.

The economic power of the five members is very unbalanced (see Table for [Box 4.5](#)). While Botswana has the highest GNI per capita figures, it is South Africa which has the most power. Within SACU there is free movement of goods, capital and services. There are, however, controls on labour mobility. The countries share a common external tariff (CET), so that it costs the same to import and export goods to and from all five countries for non-SACU members. This tariff system encourages intra-regional trade. Under the CET system, the tariff revenues are pooled and then shared among the member states. This has provided very important state revenues for Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho and Namibia who receive a disproportionate share of the pool. In some years, SACU revenue constitutes over half of the government revenue in Eswatini and Lesotho.

<i>GNI p.c.</i> (US\$) 2018	<i>FDI net inflow (US\$</i> <i>millions) 2018</i>	<i>Population</i> (millions) 2018

Botswana	18,000	228.7	2.3
Eswatini	10,640	31.3	1.1
Lesotho	3,680	39.6	2.1
Namibia	10,870	199.6	2.4
South Africa	13,250	5,471.7	57.8

Source: World Bank (2020c)

The future of SACU has come under increasing pressure due to the differences in economic power within the Union, as well as tensions caused by trade negotiations with external bodies. For example, the SACU member states took contrasting positions in the negotiations for an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the EU based on different national economic development approaches, existing bilateral agreements, and EU favourable trade policies towards 'Least Developed Countries' (which included Lesotho due to its GNI p.c. figure). However, following pressure from South Africa, an EPA was agreed in 2014 between the SACU members plus Mozambique, and the EU.

Source: adapted from Chidede (2018); Gibb (2004); Murray-Evans (2015); SACU (2019)



[Plate 4.5 Rwandan soldiers in an African Union peacekeeping force travelling to the Central African Republic, January 2014](#)

Credit: US Air Force/Alamy Stock Photo

SUMMARY

- Attempts to create linear models of political development have proved unsuccessful.
- Good governance has become an increasingly important condition of international development assistance and explanation for successful development policies.
- Civil society has been seen as a key dimension of democratization and effective development, but these processes are not automatic.
- International aid policies reflect the perspectives of powerful nations. Aid can be used to further the interests of donor nations.
- The rise of the BRICS, especially China, has challenged the existing operation of global governance institutions and aid infrastructure.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What is 'good governance' and what role does it play in development theory and policy?
- 2 What is a 'rights-based approach' to development, and what are the potential limitations to using 'human rights' as a focus for development policy?
- 3 How is international aid politicized?
- 4 What are the challenges social movements face in changing economic and political systems?
- 5 Why has development been increasingly linked with debates around security?

FURTHER READING

Acemoglu, D. and J.A. Robinson (2019) *The Narrow Corridor: States, Societies and the Fate of Liberty*,

London: Viking. A wide-ranging book drawing on historical and contemporary examples to explore state-society relations and what that means for the liberty of citizens.

Broberg, M. and H.-O. Sano (2017) 'Strengths and weaknesses of a human rights-based approach to international development – an analysis of a rights-based approach to development assistance based on practical experiences', *International Journal of Human Rights* 22 (5): 664–80. A clear overview of rights-based approaches to development.

Burnell, P., V. Randall and L. Rakner (eds) (2017) *Politics in the Developing World*, 5th edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press. An excellent collection of chapters which provide an introduction to debates around politics in the Global South.

IDS Bulletin (2017) Special issue on 'Interrogating decentralisation in Africa', *IDS Bulletin* 48 (2). A collection of articles focusing on the relationship between decentralization and service provision.

Power, M. (2019) *Geopolitics and Development*, London: Routledge. A clear and engaging book which provides an overview of how geopolitics and development are intertwined.

Useful websites

<https://freedomhouse.org/> Freedom House.

www.crisisgroup.org/ International Crisis Group.

<https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/> Mo Ibrahim Foundation.

www.oecd.org/dac/ Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD.

www.tjm.org.uk/ Trade Justice Movement.

www.transparency.org/ Transparency International.

<https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/> World Bank governance indicators.

CHAPTER 5

Grassroots development

- Basic needs
- Capabilities approach
- The role and increasing importance of NGOs
- Concepts of participation and empowerment
- Globalization and grassroots development
- Grassroots development and post-development

[Chapters 2](#) and [3](#) discussed theories that are based on activities at a national scale and involve decisions being made by governments without the direct involvement of the people. In the previous chapter, how and why citizens are engaged in development decisions was introduced as part of the discussion of democratization, civil society and social movements. In this chapter, the focus is explicitly on what have been termed ‘bottom-up’ or ‘grassroots’ approaches.

BASIC NEEDS

During the 1970s, the top-down approaches as described in the previous chapters were increasingly recognized as having limited success in reducing the extent of poverty in large areas of world. Rather than ‘trickling down’ to help the poorest, the benefits of economic development were being experienced largely by the richer countries and groups (Hettne 1995). This led to some rethinking of how development in terms of improving standards and

quality of life was to be achieved.

Among large multilateral organizations, most notably the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Bank under the presidency of Robert McNamara, the concept of 'basic needs' was promoted. Under this approach, development policies were to be focused on the poorest people in society, rather than implemented at a macro-level which would indirectly help the poor. The approach became known as the Basic Needs Approach (BNA). At the ILO's World Employment Conference in 1976, the nature of 'basic needs' was outlined (see [Box 5.1](#)). These basic needs included not only the essentials for physical survival, but also access to services, employment and decision-making to provide a real basis for participation. While it was never acknowledged by the ILO, Colin Leys (1996: 11–12) argues that the move towards basic needs was influenced by dependency theories ([Chapter 3](#)) in its premise that the perceived benefits of 'development' would not automatically trickle down to the poorest.

BOX 5.1 ILO CATEGORIES OF BASIC NEEDS

- 1 Basics of personal consumption – food, shelter, clothing.
- 2 Access to essential services – clean water, sanitation, education, transport, healthcare.
- 3 Access to paid employment.
- 4 Qualitative needs – healthy and safe environment, ability to participate in decision-making.

Source: adapted from Hunt (1989: 265–6)

In policy terms, this approach advocated a focus on agricultural development and support for the urban informal sector, including greater research on labour-intensive production techniques that were appropriate for small-scale activities. In addition, a basic-needs approach required public service provision to be expanded and developed to meet the needs of the poor. As Diana Hunt (1989) stresses, most advocates of 'basic needs' were not calling for an end to the modernization project, rather that greater attention should be paid to smaller-scale activities and poorer sectors of society, alongside continued investment in large-scale infrastructure. Meeting the

needs of the poor would not only help reduce poverty levels, but would also improve the education and skill levels of the population, with the concomitant potential to contribute to greater economic growth. In addition, as the poor get richer, their purchasing power rises, so benefiting domestic firms.

Despite the widespread support for such an approach from many organizations and governments, there were a range of criticisms and implementation problems. Among these criticisms were the cost implications – improving public services is financially demanding, and in many cases governments were unwilling or unable to afford such expenditure. In addition, the ‘basic needs’ approach with its focus on small-scale agricultural production and informal sector activities was regarded by many as acting as a brake to rapid economic growth and continuing to trap Southern countries in primary production and low value-added manufacturing. For many Southern governments, it was yet another example of a development approach following a Northern agenda (Payne and Phillips 2010). As outlined in [Chapter 1](#), there were also debates about how improvements in basic needs were going to be assessed (Hicks and Streeten 1979). John Friedmann (1992a: 59–66) outlines how the basic needs approach could have represented a real alternative to previous development approaches and policies, particularly with its focus on grassroots participation and wealth redistribution. However, he stresses that the application of the approach was generally very technocratic and focused on production and that by the 1980s the idea of ‘basic needs’ was losing its appeal.



Plate 5.1 [Central market, Kota Bharu, Malaysia](#)

Credit: Dudarev Mikhail/[Shutterstock.com](#)

CAPABILITIES APPROACH

What has become known as the capabilities approach has as its starting point a focus on the kind of life that individuals have reason to value and how far they are able to achieve this. It could, therefore, be seen as the ultimate grassroots approach to development, considering the scale of the individual, rather than the nation-state. The language of ‘capabilities’ and its associated term ‘functionings’ comes from Amartya Sen (1987, 1999). According to Sen, ‘A functioning is an achievement of a person; what he or she manages to do

or be' (1987: 7), and 'capabilities' relate to the different combinations of functionings that an individual can achieve given the material and non-material resources at their command. Following this logic, 'The point of development is to expand the portfolio of the capabilities that form the shape of individual's freedom of choice' (Kleine 2013: 23). This is what Amartya Sen (1999) means when he talks about 'development as freedom'.

Marta Nussbaum (2000) has also made significant contributions to the capabilities approach, but her work differs in a number of ways. Most significantly, she has produced a list of central capabilities which can then be used to identify a threshold which citizens can use as the basis of demands from governments (Nussbaum 2000: 12).

The capabilities approach, with its holistic perspectives on development and an expansion of individual choice at its heart, has been adopted in some form by a number of development actors, most notably the UNDP in the creation of the Human Development Index (see [Chapter 1](#)). Improvements in the three dimensions of the HDI – education, health and standard of living – can be seen as expanding the 'portfolio of capabilities' available to populations. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) (see [Chapter 1](#)) also draws on the capabilities approach.

Sen's focus on the individual has been criticized because of its resonance with neoliberal processes of individualization (see [Chapter 2](#)), and it does not engage with broader issues of class power and vested interests (Carmody 2019: 79). Benjamin Selwyn (2014) in his critique of mainstream approaches to development agrees with Sen that development is more than economic growth and should be about increasing freedoms, but he fundamentally disagrees with Sen's assumption that such freedoms can be achieved within a capitalist system. This is because in Selwyn's view, capitalism 'is founded upon the systematic exploitation and repression of the majority (the world's labouring classes) by the minority (the world's capitalist classes and states)' (Selwyn 2014: 5). Here Selwyn is clearly coming from a particular theoretical position, informed by Marxist analysis, but critiques of Sen's approach to power and politics come from a range of perspectives (Corbridge 2019).

PARTICIPATION

Grassroots development is often termed 'participatory', but it is important to

recognize what this means. Participation is usually used as an umbrella term to refer to the involvement of local people in development activities, often NGO-based. However, this participation varies in nature ([Table 5.1](#)). In 1969, Sherry R. Arnstein highlighted how US citizens were involved in different forms of participation in the design and planning of their cities. For her, much of the participation was tokenistic, involving a community representative on an advisory committee, or a consultation process. For her, meaningful participation required a redistribution of power. Without this redistribution, ‘participation ... is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless’ (Arnstein 1969: 216). To represent this, she used the concept of a ‘ladder of citizen participation’ with manipulation at the bottom and citizen control at the top. Despite being written over 50 years ago and in a different context, Arnstein’s insights into the diversity of participation practices are still relevant for development today.

Participation can take place in a number of ways and at different stages in the setting up of development projects or initiatives. With a growing awareness of the power relations involved in development, in the 1980s some practitioners and researchers began to use a range of different methods in order to find out more about the understandings local people have of a range of topics. These approaches have often been termed ‘participatory’ and encompass approaches such as participatory rural appraisal (PRA) (Chambers 1997) and participatory urban appraisal (PUA) (Moser and McIlwaine 1999). The basic premise of PRA is that villagers in the Global South have a knowledge and awareness of their environment which should be taken into account, rather than using ‘outsider’ forms of knowledge and understandings. For example, when trying to assess economic status within a village, a purely income-based approach would ask questions about earnings from wages and market activities. In contrast, PRA approaches to wealth ranking would ask villagers to come up with their own indicators of wealth in the area and then use these to rank household wealth (Hargreaves *et al.* 2007). Technological developments have also been incorporated into participatory approaches, such as participatory video which can be a way of community members narrating and sharing their views of their lives (Milne *et al.* 2012).

[Table 5.1](#) [Dimensions of participation](#)

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Meaning</i>

Appraisal	Way of understanding the local community and their understandings of wider processes, e.g. PRA, PUA.
Agenda setting	Involvement of local community in decisions about development policies. Consulted and listened to from the start, not brought in once policy has been decided upon.
Efficiency	Involvement of local community in projects, e.g. building schools.
Empowerment	Participation leads to greater self-awareness and confidence. Contributions to development of democracy.

Participation can also be used to refer to the involvement of local people in the actual agenda setting of development organizations. As Arnstein (1969) warned, however, meaningful participation will often require the agenda to be set by the communities involved, rather than outside agencies deciding on the priorities to be addressed and then working with local people to achieve them.

The two previous interpretations of participation can contribute to addressing power inequalities in development and also attempting to focus more on grassroots forms of knowledge than external, particularly Northern ones. In the 1990s, the importance of community participation in development interventions became much more widespread, including those financed by the World Bank (Francis 2001). While this could be seen as a positive move, for Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari (2001), participation was the ‘new tyranny’ in development work. They argued that the notion of participation had become a requirement of development policy, but that this failed to acknowledge:

- The time and energy requirements for local people to participate.
- The heterogeneity of local populations meaning that ‘community participation’ does not always involve all sectors of population.
- Involvement does not necessarily lead to ‘empowerment’.
- Focusing at a micro-level can often lead to a failure to recognize much wider structures of disadvantage and oppression.

For David Mosse, reflecting on the incorporation of participation across the development sector in the 1990s, ‘participatory approaches have proved

compatible with top-down planning systems, and have not heralded changes in prevailing institutional practices of development' (2001: 17).

While such challenges to simplistic assumptions about participation are important, the involvement of community members in decisions about their lives is crucial, and in some settings can be transformative (Hickey and Mohan 2004). This may be done through NGOs (see later), or as part of government activities (see [Chapter 4](#)). Community members may also take the lead in framing their visions for a better life through civil society organizations and social movements (see [Chapter 4](#)).

EMPOWERMENT

The popularity of participatory approaches to development has been partly because of their association with the empowerment of individuals and communities. As Jo Rowlands (1997, 1998) has highlighted, 'empowerment' has become one of the key buzzwords in development policy since the early 1990s, but it is a term with diverse and contested meanings. At the heart of the concept is the idea of having greater power and therefore more control over your own life, but as Rowlands stresses, this does not recognize the different ways in which 'power' can be defined.

The kind of power that we often think about is the power to be able to get other people to do what we want, or the power that other people have to make us do something. This can be termed 'power over' and is often regarded as the most important form of power because it is associated with processes of marginalization and exclusion through which groups are portrayed as 'powerless'. However, there are other dimensions of power which can be identified and which should be considered as part of the development process. Rowlands terms these 'power to', 'power with' and 'power within' (see [Box 5.2](#)). All of these forms of power are linked, but a recognition of the diversity of power beyond 'power over' helps in the construction of policies and programmes to assist the 'powerless'.

BOX 5.2 DIMENSIONS OF POWER

Power over: The ability to dominate. This form of power is finite, so that

if someone obtains more power then it automatically leads to someone else having less power.

Power to: The ability to see possibilities for change.

Power with: The power that comes from individuals working together collectively to achieve common goals.

Power within: Feelings of self-worth and self-esteem that come from within individuals.

Source: adapted from Rowlands (1997, 1998)

A key element of ‘empowerment’ as a development outcome is what forms of intervention can lead to ‘empowerment’. It is often claimed that development actors such as NGOs can ‘empower’ communities through providing access to resources such as income, material goods or education. However, empowerment through access to resources is not automatic. This is partly because empowerment is something which comes from within (Townsend *et al.* 1999). While organizations may be able to provide a context within which a process of empowerment is possible, it is only individuals who can choose to take those opportunities and to use them. For example, illiteracy is often regarded as an obstacle to participation in waged work and political life. NGOs or governments may be able to provide facilities and teachers to help individuals develop their literacy skills, but individuals themselves have to want to participate and to use their newly acquired skills. Additionally, wider structural factors may limit the capacity individuals or communities have to make the most of those resources. A good example of this has been facilitating women’s access to income to help reduce gender inequalities and empower women (see [Box 5.3](#) on microcredit and [Chapter 6](#) for a discussion on gender and development). Development organizations cannot be viewed as direct channels for empowerment; rather they can help set up conditions within which individuals and groups can empower themselves.

BOX 5.3 MICROCREDIT AND WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT

Access to income is often seen as empowering because income can enhance the choices that individuals can make about their lives. One way

of accessing income is through credit which can be used to invest in a business to provide sustainable livelihoods. Formal banking systems discriminate against the very poorest people in society. A lack of land or property means that these people do not have any collateral to use to gain credit. Their low and irregular earnings also make repayment difficult. In response to such situations, microcredit schemes have been set up, whereby very small amounts of money are lent to individuals or groups. Where money is lent to groups, there is both group support, but also peer pressure to repay on time. Repayment schedules are more realistic than those set by the formal banks.

While not originally targeted at women, microcredit schemes often have become a key route for women to access finance. This is because women are often particularly marginalized within the formal banking system because of low earnings and the tendency for household property to be held in the husband's name. For example, since the early 1980s, the Grameen Bank has provided financial credit to the poorest households in rural Bangladesh. As of November 2019, there were 9.6 million members in Bangladesh, of which 97% were women.

It is often assumed that access to income is empowering for women as it allows them a greater say in household decisions. While there is evidence that access to microcredit can enhance women's position in the household, this is not always the case as male relatives may take the money, so reinforcing power relations within the home. There may also be tensions if women are seen as able to access finance, while men are not. Credit is meant to be used to invest in small businesses, so generating funds to repay the loan and help create sustainable forms of income generation. However, loans may be used to cover household expenses, so leading to problems with repayment. Borrowers may also lack training and skills in running a business, so investments may not be successful. Some microcredit organizations, such as the Grameen Bank, run training sessions as part of their activities to support borrowers in making their businesses a success.

Microcredit as a route to empowerment and sustainable income generation became very popular in the early 2000s, with a massive expansion of services provided by NGOs, but also through formal banking. This incursion of formal banks into the sector was increasingly associated with predatory lending practices, whereby very poor people

were lent money that they would have no chance of repaying, as with the subprime mortgage lending in the USA which contributed to the 2007–9 economic crisis (see [Chapter 2](#)).

The discussion of microcredit demonstrates some of the structural limits within which processes of empowerment work. Empowerment requires an ability to challenge and change existing power relations. The provision of resources, in this case credit, may be insufficient to achieve this.

Source: adapted from Ahmed *et al.* (2013); Garikipati (2008); Grameen Bank (2020); Kabeer (2001); Roy (2010)

NGOS AS THE DEVELOPMENT SOLUTION

The move away from the central state as the key player in ‘development’ has always been debated, but became increasingly challenged from the 1980s onwards. This has been associated with the move towards neoliberal, market-led approaches as outlined in [Chapter 2](#). As well as the devolution of elements of power and decision-making to the local state as described in [Chapter 4](#), the move away from the top-down approaches has been associated in particular with the growth of NGOs.

NGOs came to be seen as the panacea for ‘development problems’ by individuals from many different perspectives. Firstly, however, it is important to realize the range of organizations which can fall under the NGO heading (Vakil 1997) (see [Table 5.2](#)). There are a number of axes along which NGOs can be divided. For example, NGOs can be very small-scale and operate in only one region or country. At the other extreme would be the very large organizations such as Oxfam and Save the Children Fund, which are Northern-based but have partner organizations throughout the world. Different NGOs will also have different forms of approach, either in terms of the overall development philosophy, or through the types of activities in which they get involved.

NGOs are often regarded as the answer to the perceived limitations of the state or the market in facilitating ‘development’ for a range of reasons (Lewis and Kanji 2009). Nicola Banks *et al.* (2015: 710) separate these into ‘service delivery functions’ and ‘civil society functions’. Firstly, it is argued that NGOs

can provide services that are much more appropriate to local communities. This is because they work with populations at the grassroots to find out what facilities are required. In addition, they are able to provide such services more efficiently and effectively through drawing on local people's knowledge, and also using local materials. Because of the scale of operation and the linkages with local people, they are also able to react more quickly to local demands (Green and Matthias 1995). Finally, it is believed that NGOs are beneficial to non-material aspects of 'development', in particular processes of empowerment, participation and democratization. Because of the ways in which NGOs are embedded in local communities, it is argued that they have to be accountable to the local people. This means that local people have a greater say in what activities are carried out, and also that their participation in such activities creates an environment where empowerment is more likely. If such participation is expanded, these activities can help develop stronger civil society and contribute to processes of democratization (see [Chapter 4](#)).

[Table 5.2](#) [Dimensions of NGO diversity](#)

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Diversity</i>
Location	North
	North in the South
Level of operation	South
	International
	Regional
	National
Orientation	Community
	Welfare activities & service provision
	Emergency relief
	Development education
	Participation & empowerment
	Self-sufficiency
	Advocacy
Ownership	Networking
	Non-membership support organizations
	Membership support organizations

Source: adapted from Farrington and Bebbington (1993); Vakil (1997)

NGOs have, therefore, been interpreted by some as being the answer to all development issues, or what has been termed 'the magic bullet' (Edwards and Hulme 1995). While some of the optimistic claims about NGOs have been tempered since the 1990s as their limitations have been acknowledged (see later), significant amounts of multilateral and bilateral aid are channelled through NGOs. For example, of the £14.6 billion UK ODA spend in 2018, £782 million went through NGOs in either the UK or the recipient country (National Statistics 2019).

The budgets of international NGOs (INGOs) such as those mentioned here, as well as philanthropic organizations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, means that these non-governmental actors are becoming increasingly important players in the development aid field. For example, in 2017, World Vision International's income was US\$2.76 billion (World Vision 2017), which was equal to the ODA spending of Australia and more than that of a number of Northern countries, including Denmark, Ireland and Spain (OECD 2019).



[Plate 5.2 Worker for the NGO SOIL \(Sustainable Organic Integrated Livelihoods\), Cap
Haitien, Haiti](#)

Credit: Vic Hinterlang/[Shutterstock.com](#)

The number of NGOs throughout the world has increased very rapidly, partly because of the availability of funding, but also because of the lack of alternative support mechanisms for communities in need. This has been particularly the case as governments have reduced spending as part of their adoption of neoliberal policies, but may also be because of the weakness of state structures due to war or civil unrest (see [Chapter 4](#)). However, assessing the number of NGOs is very difficult. This is partly because of definitional difficulties, but it also reflects differing registration practices across the globe.

There are numerous examples of how NGOs have been able to provide services for communities when government assistance is not forthcoming or appropriate, and market-provided services are too expensive. Such NGO activities may include social welfare provision such as housing ([Box 5.4](#)), healthcare and education. In many cases, it is clear that without NGO involvement many people's living conditions and quality of life would not be improved. However, the claims regarding NGOs have been revealed as being somewhat overstated (Makuwira 2018). While many improvements can be made, NGOs alone cannot achieve everything which is expected of them.

DONOR DEPENDENCY AND NGO AUTONOMY

NGOs rely on donations of money, time and other resources in order to operate. This reliance means that their autonomy may not be as significant as sometimes assumed. Particular activities or approaches may be more favourably regarded by funders, or there may be a focus on particular regions of the world or population groups (Brass 2012). For example, Khaldoun AbouAssi (2012) investigates how four medium-sized environmental NGOs in Lebanon have adapted their activities in response to changing donor priorities. In some cases, NGOs shifted their focus, while other organizations sought funding from new donors, rather than changing their core mission. The widespread adoption of the SDG agenda among funders has influenced the shaping of NGOs' funding bids and plans (Arhin 2016).

Additionally, funding is often reliant on being able to demonstrate success. The need for rapid, quantifiable results encourages project managers to focus

on certain forms of project with tangible outcomes, rather than addressing deep-rooted inequalities which cannot be easily measured (Banks *et al.* 2015).

This donor reliance threatens the ‘non-governmental’ nature of NGOs as their capacity for autonomous action is reduced. This can be seen throughout the world. For example, in the Global North, some NGOs are increasingly acting as service providers for local and national governments. In New Zealand, the emergency ambulance service for almost the entire country is provided by the St John Ambulance Service (St John New Zealand 2020), and the Red Cross is the main provider of refugee resettlement support (New Zealand Red Cross 2020). In the UK, in 2018 only 19% of children’s care homes were run by local authorities; the remainder were run by private chains or charities (Bradbury 2018). While this can have very beneficial effects in terms of the quality of the service provided and the involvement of local people, it can result in NGO activities being framed primarily by the state funders, rather than by the supposed beneficiaries on the ground.

BOX 5.4 HOGAR DE CRISTO, GUAYAQUIL, ECUADOR

Guayaquil (population about 2.5 million), like many Latin American cities, has experienced rapid growth due to rural–urban migration flows. As the government has been unable to provide sufficient appropriate housing for many residents, and individual households cannot afford to buy houses constructed by private sector companies, hundreds of thousands of people have resorted to building their own dwellings. An estimated 60% of the city’s area is covered in such informal settlements (Sanchez 2014 in Delgado and De Troyer 2017: 115). These have often been of poor quality and have lacked access to basic services, such as water and sanitation.

In 1971, the NGO Viviendas del Hogar de Cristo (VHC) was set up by a Catholic priest to help address housing need in the city. VHC housing used to be made largely of bamboo, and participants constructed the houses themselves. The simple design of a house made of a wood frame with bamboo panels on a platform meant that the houses could be constructed in a day. In addition, jobs are created in panel-manufacturing plants, and the bamboo is cultivated on sustainable plantations. In 1996, VHC won the World Habitat Awards. Bamboo housing continues to be an important part of VHC’s provision, but it also provides houses built of

more durable materials. Between 1971 and 2015, VHC provided over 200,000 houses for households on low income in coastal Ecuador.

Financially, participants pay much less for these houses than equivalent state provision, and have access to credit through the NGO. For those households unable to afford even low levels of repayment, the NGO has funds from donations allowing them to provide housing for free. Services such as water and electricity are not provided as part of the scheme; residents must work together to lobby local authorities to supply basic urban services. Housing can only be sold or provided to households who have legal title to the land.

Since 2001, VHC has expanded its operations to include microcredit, health, food security and education services. Because of the expansion into other services, the organization has been renamed 'Hogar de Cristo' ('Viviendas' means 'dwellings' in Spanish). Some of the new services have been in collaboration with the Ecuadorian government. For example, in 2007, VHC worked with the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion to build and run a refuge for women and children fleeing domestic violence. This refuge is still functioning and is run and maintained by Hogar de Cristo.

Source: adapted from Diacon (1998); Hogar de Cristo (2019)

The undermining of supposed NGO neutrality is particularly evident in conflict zones (Duffield 2007). Róisín Shannon (2009) examined the role of NGOs providing humanitarian and development assistance in Afghanistan following the US-led invasion in 2001. She concluded that NGOs, by accepting funding from foreign governments involved in the invasion and working alongside the Afghan government, had been seen to take sides (see also Goodhand 2013). The perceived lack of impartiality of some NGOs has an impact on their ability to work with vulnerable populations in many parts of the country (Shannon 2009) and has exposed NGO workers to increased danger, including kidnap and physical attack (Duffield 2010). David F. Mitchell (2017) outlines trends in NGO activity in Afghanistan, demonstrating how the activity of both foreign and local NGOs is framed by national and international political decisions.

As Michael Edwards and David Hulme (1995: 9) argue, NGOs have multiple accountabilities; “downwards” to their partners, beneficiaries, staff and

supporters; and “upwards” to their trustees, donors and host governments’. Managing these tensions is a difficult endeavour and one in which the long-term participatory strategy of projects is likely to suffer (Makuwira 2018).

SOCIAL CAPITAL

The increasing focus on civil society and particular NGOs in development policy was strongly associated with the focus on ideas of ‘social capital’ as a key asset for individuals and communities in the ‘development’ process (Bebbington 2007; Fine 2010). As with ‘civil society’ (see [Chapter 4](#)), ‘social capital’ is a highly contested concept, but at its roots is the idea of social relations between individuals and groups. These relations are based on trust, and there are expectations regarding how you should behave in these social interactions.

Social capital is regarded as another asset which can be used by individuals or groups to contribute to their economic and social advancement, just as economic capital (such as money and property) or human capital (education and health) can. Thus individuals without sufficient or suitable social capital can be marginalized or vulnerable. Social capital is usually identified as being either ‘bonding capital’, describing links between individuals and groups of similar backgrounds or from the local community, and ‘bridging capital’, which are links outside the immediate group or locality (Pelling 2002). ‘Linking capital’ is sometimes used to refer to connections to individuals in positions of authority, such as local government officials, politicians or financial institution representatives (Grootaert *et al.* 2004).

While the concept of links between people that can be mobilized to meet certain individual or group needs is certainly not restricted to a particular development approach, the term ‘social capital’ was adopted as part of the neoliberal agenda of the international financial institutions (IFIs). For example, the World Bank began using the term widely during the 1990s and declared that ‘social capital’ was the ‘missing link’ in development (Grootaert 1998), meaning that it was the final piece in the development jigsaw; the generation of social capital along with improvements in social well-being and economic advancement would be a mutually reinforcing process.

Networks of friends, kin and acquaintances are clearly important in helping individuals throughout the world meet their basic needs, as well as forming

the basis for community organizations that make up civil society (Bebbington 1997). Social capital can also be important in communities' responses to emergencies. For example, Mark Pelling (2002) used the concept to understand how the residents of the urban district of Los Manguitos in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic responded to the damage caused by Hurricane Georges in 1998. However, the way in which the concept has been used by IFIs and many governments, for example, has stressed the role of the individual and the local community in developing these networks, and has left out considerations of larger structural issues about access to finance and opportunities (Bebbington 2007). In the case of Santo Domingo, the residents of Los Manguitos organized evacuation and helped clean up the debris and carry out repairs without the assistance of the government or international aid. However, the problem is how to help this community in the longer term. For this, there need to be greater links outside the community to people and organizations (including government) that have financial and technical resources to help. Processes of exclusion on the basis of ethnicity, gender and class (among other things) also need to be addressed (see [Chapter 6](#)).

Despite the continued use of the term 'social capital', many organizations, including the World Bank, no longer focus on it within their policy-making and interpretations of development issues. Ben Fine (2008, 2010), who has been a long-standing critic of social capital, argues that this reflects the concept's lack of utility as a tool for both theory and policy.

GLOBALIZATION AND GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENT

The improvements in transport and communications technologies which have contributed to globalization processes (see [Chapter 1](#)), neoliberal export-oriented economic development (see [Chapter 2](#)) and forms of global governance (see [Chapter 4](#)), have also been important in the growth of new forms of grassroots development policies and practice. This is because links between communities and people in very distant parts of the world have become much easier. In the following sections, three different sectors will be considered: the growth of ethical trade and corporate social responsibility (CSR); diaspora and hometown associations; and volunteer tourism, sometimes termed 'voluntourism'.

ETHICAL TRADING

International trade has been seen as a key route to development by some theorists (see [Chapter 2](#)). However, the nature of trading relations and the terms on which trade is conducted can be seen as benefiting some countries or corporations at the expense of other countries or communities. Since the 1990s, increasing attention has been paid to the power of consumers to make decisions about their consumption based on environmental sustainability, workers' rights, and community impact, rather than just on price or convenience. While companies such as The Body Shop had been pioneering ethical approaches to production and trade for some time, it was only towards the end of the 20th century that mainstream companies were forced to take notice and develop strategies to highlight how they addressed environmental and social issues in their corporate practices.

Corporations in many parts of the world have developed CSR strategies, and may be publicly called to account through social media campaigns or through shareholder meetings, if they do not meet their responsibilities. Consumers can also choose not to buy certain products if they do not agree with how, where and by whom they are produced. Similarly, consumers can make positive choices to purchase goods and services from suppliers whose policies they support. Of course, corporate social responsibility laws and policies do not exist everywhere in the world, and not all consumers have the ability or desire to take factors other than price into account when they are shopping.

'Fairtrade' has been seen as one route through which to achieve economic growth and improved standards of living. This is not the same as 'ethical trade', but is part of the same movement concerned with examining how goods are produced and traded and what the impacts of these processes are on producers, the environment etc. (see [Box 5.5](#)).

In 1989, the Netherlands was the first country to introduce a Fairtrade labelling scheme. While free market advocates seek to promote the easy movement of goods and services around the world with prices determined by the intersection of supply and demand, within the fair trade movement, the price charged to the consumer reflects a 'fair' price based on what it cost the producer. Fairtrade certification requires producers to be paid a guaranteed minimum price for their products as well as a premium which is spent on the wider community. Certain environmental and social standards must be met as

well. Consumers are willing to pay the higher price because this means the producer will get a reasonable return on their effort (Fairtrade Foundation 2019b).

BOX 5.5 DEFINITIONS OF TRADE

Free trade: Trade where there are no obstacles to the free movement of goods and services. These obstacles could include policies such as tariffs, quotas and preferential treatment for domestic over foreign companies.

Ethical trade: There is no single meaning, but it generally refers to trade within which attention is paid to environmental issues, human rights concerns, animal welfare and other social issues. Blowfield (1999: 754) states, 'ethical trade is best thought of in terms of scope – as a term that brings together a variety of approaches affecting trade in goods and services produced under conditions that are socially and/or environmentally as well as financially responsible'.

Fair trade: A general term which is used to describe trade which provides disadvantaged producers with access to markets and a fair price for their goods. It is often used in relation to perceived unfair international trading rules which exclude Global South producers from Northern markets, or allows Northern producers to receive subsidies when Southern governments are penalized for providing such support (Stiglitz and Charlton 2005).

Fairtrade: A certification system which ensures producers are paid a 'fair price' for their goods and a premium is also paid for community projects. Producers within the Fairtrade system need to meet a number of criteria relating to environmental sustainability and governance.

The main areas in which Fairtrade operates are in foodstuffs, particularly bananas, cocoa, coffee and tea, although the accreditation also now works with other producers of products such as cotton, gold, wine and flowers. There are also Fairtrade carbon credits which can be purchased as part of carbon-offsetting strategies (see [Chapter 7](#)) (Fairtrade International 2019b).

Globally, there are Fairtrade labelling initiatives in 25 countries, purchasing products from over 1.66 million producers in 73 countries (Fairtrade Foundation 2019a). In 2017, approximately £8.5 billion of Fairtrade-certified products were sold worldwide (Fairtrade International 2019a).

While Fairtrade products still represent a small but growing part of the global market, where the fair trade process has been introduced, there have been very positive outcomes (see [Box 5.6](#)). Some large retailers have switched their suppliers for particular products to Fairtrade-certified goods, while others use other certification systems, such as the Rainforest Alliance. The Fairtrade example demonstrates how global linkages between and within North and South can be used to promote processes of development, not only in terms of economic growth, but also in improved quality of life within communities.



BOX 5.6 KUAPA KOKOO COOPERATIVE, GHANA

Since the colonial period, cocoa production has constituted an important income-generating activity in rural Ghana with thousands of small-scale farmers growing the crop to sell to ‘middlemen’ for sale on the global market. In the 1930s, the then-colonial government took over the trading of the cocoa crops, and this continued following Ghanaian independence from Britain in 1957. By doing this, the government was supposed to be able to cushion the producers from price fluctuations on the world markets. However, in the late 1970s, world cocoa prices fell by two-thirds and during the 1980s as Ghana adopted SAPs, this support was no longer possible.

In 1993, a small group of farmers set up the Kuapa Kokoo Cooperative. Rather than rely on middlemen who were known for their exploitative practices, such as weighing products incorrectly so as to underpay the producers, the Cooperative decided to sell their produce directly. Some of the crop was sold to a Fairtrade company. This proved to be a successful arrangement, and in 1997 the farmers decided to produce their own chocolate bar. The Day Chocolate Company was formed, with assistance from UK-based organizations. The Cooperative owns 44% of the shares, and the board of the company includes farmers’ representatives. The company (called Divine Chocolate Ltd since 2007) now produces a range of Divine Chocolate bars, as well as selling Fairtrade cocoa to other companies. In 2018, Divine Chocolate started sourcing organic cocoa from the CECAQ-11 Cooperative from the island São Tomé (part of the Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe) to meet growing consumer demand for organic products.

The benefits of being involved in this Cooperative have led to an expansion, and there are now over 100,000 farmer members. Not only does the Cooperative help income generation, but there are also important programmes of member participation and a recognition of the role of women in cocoa production. Over one-third of the members are women. The Fairtrade system means that the Cooperative receives a ‘social premium’ which is spent on community projects such as schools,

mobile clinics, drinking water and sanitation facilities, as well as agricultural advice and support. Because of its shareholder status, the Cooperative also receives 44% of the profits of Divine Chocolate Ltd, which are also spent on community projects.

Source: adapted from Divine Chocolate (2019); Doherty (2018); Kuapa Kokoo (2019)

For neoliberals, however, Fairtrade policies represent an unwelcome intervention into the workings of the free market. For example, Marc Sidwell, in his Adam Smith Institute report *Unfair Trade* (Sidwell 2008), argues that Fairtrade just encourages inefficient production rather than supporting farmers to mechanize and intensify production and diversify their activities. He also highlights the difficulties often faced by agricultural labourers who are often the poorest rural residents. Chris Cramer *et al.* (2017) found that Fairtrade certification did not lead to higher wages or better working conditions for waged workers in coffee, tea and flower farms in Uganda and Ethiopia. Rued Ruben and Ricardo Fort (2012) in a study of coffee production in Peru found diverse impacts of Fairtrade accreditation; there was no significant difference in income between accredited and non-accredited farmers, but in some cases there were positive impacts on community facilities. One of the challenges faced by Fairtrade farmers is that they are often unable to sell all their produce as Fairtrade, so they do not receive the guaranteed price or community premium. There is also an increasing range of certification schemes and buyers in some parts of the world, giving non-Fairtrade producers options that may provide a better return. The potential of diversification and the development of value-added activities is clear from the example of Divine Chocolate (see [Box 5.6](#)), but this requires an investment of capital and expertise.

Sidwell calls for Northern countries to continue to reduce agricultural subsidies for domestic farmers and to reduce tariff barriers to help Southern producers access the Northern markets. In this latter point, he is in agreement with organizations campaigning for fairer trade systems which are not biased against Southern producers, such as the Trade Justice Movement.

VOLUNTEERING AND VOLUNTEER TOURISM

International volunteering has attracted increasing attention in the 21st century, but there is nothing new about individuals travelling to work without pay on development projects overseas. For example, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has developed a network of volunteer health professionals since it was established in 1971. These health workers work alongside local staff and can be deployed to work in the immediate aftermath of natural disasters or in conflict zones, as well as part of ongoing medical support for populations living without access to health facilities (MSF 2019). Governments have also set up volunteer schemes as part of development assistance programmes, with the USA's Peace Corps set up in 1961 being the earliest (Schech 2017). As with all government aid programmes ([Chapter 4](#)), it is important to acknowledge the geopolitical underpinnings of volunteer schemes.

Susanne Schech (2017) highlights two main strands of volunteering in the Global South by people from the Global North; volunteering associated with tourism, which is sometimes called 'volunteer tourism' or 'voluntourism', and volunteering for development. The former tends to be short-term, involving volunteering for a few weeks, possibly combined with adventure travel or other forms of tourism. The volunteering tends to involve low-level skills, and volunteer tourists tend to be younger individuals, often university students, or taking a gap year before or after university. Voluntourists pay for their participation, and there has been a massive increase in the number of commercial providers of volunteer tourism in the early 21st century. There is no systematic data collection on the numbers involved in volunteer tourism, but in 2015 volunteer figures were estimated to be about 10 million people, spending up to US\$2 billion (Popham 2015). Placements as part of volunteering for development tend to be for anything from a few months to two years. Development volunteers in these contexts tend to have higher levels of education and professional experience. Schech argues, however, that the distinction between the two strands is increasingly blurred.

Volunteering in the Global South has often attracted negative attention because it has been seen as reinforcing constructions of the people of the Global South as needing to be rescued by people from the Global North. Such interpretations fit into postcolonial approaches to understanding development and the work of networks such as No White Saviors (No White Saviors 2019). These criticisms have been especially targeted at volunteer tourism due to the short-term nature of placements and volunteers' perceived lack of relevant skills. There is also a tendency to address the symptoms of inequality and

discrimination, rather than the root causes (Georgeou and Haas 2019). The expansion of commercial volunteer tourism opportunities has also created income-generating opportunities which have sometimes had very negative effects. This has included high-profile scandals around 'orphanage tourism' where children who were not orphans were used to generate funds from well-meaning volunteers (Guiney and Mostafanezhad 2015). As a result, many companies have now stopped offering such opportunities.

Discussions of international volunteering have also been interpreted as part of neoliberalization processes as volunteers are providing services that many would argue should be provided by the state, and in some cases volunteering is a commodity that is bought from commercial companies. Additionally, volunteering can be seen as benefitting the individual volunteers, and their future career plans, rather than the communities where they are working (Baillie Smith and Laurie 2011).

However, the diversity of international volunteering and its outcomes should be acknowledged (Georgeou and Haas 2019). Volunteering organizations can provide vital services and support where the state or market-providers are absent. There are also suggestions that for some international volunteers, their volunteer experience not only benefits them, but creates a long-term ethical commitment to challenging inequality (Schech 2017). The rise of South-South volunteering may challenge interpretations of international volunteering as a continuation of colonial power relations. However, Matt Baillie Smith *et al.* (2018) caution against such celebratory interpretations, as power hierarchies may still be in operation. For Stephen Wearing *et al.* (2017), positive impacts of international volunteering need to go beyond a development aid model to be seen as a form of intercultural exchange and mutuality.

TRANSNATIONALISM AND DIASPORA ORGANIZATIONS

Ethical trading and overseas volunteering are often presented as ways in which people from the Global North can contribute to grassroots development in the Global South, although in both cases there are increasing South-South relationships (Baillie Smith *et al.* 2018; Gregson and Ferdous 2015).

Remittances and the activities of diaspora organizations are very clear examples of how transnationalism may facilitate grassroots development through flows within the Global South or between migrants from Africa, Asia and Latin America who are living in the Global North.

Transnational processes refer to sustained activities backwards and forwards across national borders (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1992). For example, transnational corporations consist of complex networks of research, production and marketing processes which take place in more than one country at any one time. For these corporations, the transnationality of their activities is a way of maximizing profits. Production processes are often located where there is a suitably skilled and cheap workforce, as well as favourable government assistance (see [Chapter 1](#)).

Studies of transnationalism have focused particularly on migration (Vertovec 2009). While international migration has been a feature of human activities since the world was divided into nation-states, levels of migration have increased since World War II partly because mobility is facilitated through advances in transport and communication technology. As of mid-2019, there were an estimated 272 million international migrants, making up 3.5% of the world's population (IOM 2019: 10). Technological changes also make it easier for migrants to continue links backwards and forwards between the host society and 'home' (Vertovec 1999). In addition, there is increasing demand for labour for work in agriculture, export-processing manufacturing and domestic service, among other sectors. When domestic labour is insufficient to meet this demand, either due to lack of numbers, or because the work is regarded as too poorly paid, migrant labour will often be used (Samers and Collyer 2017).

Governments of countries with large amounts of out-migration have increasingly realized the importance of using the possibilities of transnationalism to enable migrants to contribute to national development. Remittances (the money sent to family members back home) are obviously important to the individual families and communities concerned and can result in significant improvements in standards of living (de Haas 2006). However, these flows of remittances can also represent large flows of capital into the national economy; global remittances are estimated by the World Bank to have totalled US\$689 billion in 2018, with over three-quarters going to developing countries (KNOMAD 2019). Since the mid-1990s, remittance flows have been at least three times as large as flows of official development aid

(Ratha *et al.* 2019). Governments may therefore introduce a range of policies to help ease the outflow of labour, even if this represents a loss of skilled workers to the domestic economy. Such policies may include government overseas recruitment agencies, the possibilities of dual citizenship and tax concessions for returning migrants (McKenzie and Yang 2015).



[Plate 5.4](#) [Remittance services, Blantyre, Malawi](#)

Credit: Katie Willis

‘Hometown’ associations or diaspora organizations consist of international migrants or descendants of migrants. They may send financial and other

support back to their ‘home villages’ or communities. As with remittances, these flows can make significant contributions to infrastructural improvements such as community halls, basketball courts and health centres (Mercer *et al.* 2008), albeit in communities which are not necessarily the poorest in economic terms (Bada 2016). The increasing significance of such flows and other transnational migrant processes needs to be incorporated into our understandings of approaches to development (Dickinson 2015).

However, while economically remittances and other flows may be important for improvements in standards of living, it must also be recognized that there can be severe social implications of emigration. These include the breaking up of households, with parents leaving children ‘at home’ while they move away to work (Pratt 2012). In addition, the working conditions which migrants face may be dangerous, unhealthy or expose them to extreme forms of exploitation (Waite *et al.* 2015). Labour migration often requires significant expenditure in the form of fees to recruitment agencies, which leaves migrants and their families with large amounts of debt. In some countries, domestic servants can only enter the country to work with a named family. This system is, therefore, like a bonded labour system whereby employees are at the mercy of their employers, unable to leave their employment because this would mean deportation (Silvey and Parreñas 2019).

GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS AND POST-DEVELOPMENT

In this chapter, we have seen how a focus on the local level or small scale has been advocated at different times and for different reasons in the search for ‘development’. For ‘post-development’ theorists (see [Chapter 1](#)), this scale is also important. Rather than imposing ideas of ‘progress’ and ‘development’ on individuals and communities throughout the world, people themselves should be able to choose the way they want to live without being made to feel that they are somehow ‘inferior’ or ‘backward’ by not following a pattern that has been adopted elsewhere.

Concepts of grassroots activities and participation have become very much part of the lexicon of development, even within large-scale multilateral organizations. However, as was argued earlier, these shifts in scale remain firmly focused on Northern-based neoliberal concepts of ‘development’ and

‘progress’. Peet and Hartwick (2015: 243) summarize the arguments of Majid Rahnema in relation to this process:

Rahnema noted that governments and development institutions became interested ... because participation was no longer perceived as a threat, was politically and economically attractive, was a good fundraising device, and was part of a move toward the privatization of development as part of neoliberalism.

For post-development theorists and practitioners like Rahnema (who has been a UN Representative in Mali), the key is to make the act of participation actually mean something. Rather than incorporating individual and community views into programmes and projects just ‘for appearance’, local views should be prioritized in the development of any policies. However, while it is clear that in many policy arenas the importance of real grassroots activity and participation is not really grasped, post-development theorists have been criticized for making what are seen as vast generalizations to say that all development fits into this category (Corbridge 1998; Nederveen Pieterse 2000).

Rather than attempting to consider and act at a ‘global scale’, for post-development advocates the focus should be on local views and actions (Esteva and Prakash 1997). This does not rule out alliances and transnational networks as part of social movements (see [Chapter 4](#)). In their call to ‘think and act locally’, Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash (1997: 282) argue:

[W]hat is needed is exactly the opposite [of acting globally]: people thinking and acting locally, while forging solidarity with other forces that share this *opposition* to the ‘global thinking’ and ‘global forces’ threatening local spaces. For its strength, the struggle against Goliath enemies demands that there be no deviation from local inspirations and firmly rooted local thought. When local movements or initiatives lose the ground under their feet, moving their struggle into the enemy’s territory – global arena constructed by global thinking – they become minor players in the global game, doomed to lose their battles.

(emphasis in the original)

The concept of ‘post-development’ has been hotly debated, with many development theorists challenging the way in which authors such as Arturo Escobar and Gustavo Esteva have talked about ‘development’ (see [Chapter 1](#)). In their article reflecting on development 25 years after the publication of *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (Sachs 1992), to which they both contributed chapters, Esteva and Escobar (2017) address some of the criticisms of post-development, including a perceived romanticism about grassroots communities. For both authors, their focus on this scale and forms of organization is not due to a desire to ‘go back to the Stone Age’ (p. 2566) or an assumption that communities are inherently harmonious or lacking in internal power divisions. Instead, they are responding to what they see as the ‘social and ecological devastation of patriarchal capitalist modernity’ (p. 2562) and the potential of alternatives for greater social justice and autonomy (see [Chapter 8](#)).

SUMMARY

- From the 1970s onwards, growing attention was paid to bottom-up or grassroots development.
- Non-governmental organizations have become key actors in the grassroots approaches.
- NGOs are often thought to be highly participatory and contribute to empowerment, but this is not always the case because of existing social relations and the limits on NGO activity.
- Grassroots development does not inherently challenge Eurocentric or top-down approaches to development.
- Globalization processes can link individuals and communities across the world creating development possibilities.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Why have NGOs been regarded as the solution to development problems?
- 2 How do grassroots approaches and neoliberalism fit together?
- 3 What limits are there on the effectiveness of NGOs?

4 How do globalization processes create new development opportunities for communities in the Global South?

FURTHER READING

- Banks, N., D. Hulme and M. Edwards (2015) 'NGOs, states and donors revisited: still too close for comfort?' *World Development* 66: 707–18. Excellent overview article on the role of NGOs, obstacles to their success and suggestions for future NGO directions.
- Cooke, B. and U. Kothari (eds) (2001) *Participation: The New Tyranny?* London: Zed Books. Excellent collection of chapters on what participation means and how it has been adopted as a standard aim of all development projects.
- Hickey, S. and G. Mohan (eds) (2004) *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation*, London: Zed Books. A response to the Cooke and Kothari collection which seeks to examine the potential for development policies to fulfil their participatory ambitions.
- Lewis, D. and N. Kanji (2009) *Non-Governmental Organizations and Development*, London: Routledge. A clear introduction to the changing role of NGOs in development theory and practice.
- Makuwira, J. (2018) 'Power and development in practice: NGOs and the development agenda setting', *Development in Practice* 28 (3): 422–31. Powerful paper using post-development and postcolonial theory to examine the power that NGOs have to frame development interventions.
- Schech, S. (2017) 'International volunteering in a changing aidland', *Geography Compass* 11: e12351, <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12351>. Useful overview of diversity of volunteering practices in international development, and their potential impacts.

Useful websites

- <https://dfat.gov.au/aid/Pages/australias-aid-program.aspx> Australian government's development aid programme. Includes information about NGO policies.
- www.donortracker.org Overview website providing information about major ODA donors.
- www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/participation Collection of up-to-date resources on participation run by the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex.
- www.fairtrade.org.uk Fairtrade Foundation.
- www.fairtrade.net/ Fairtrade International.
- www.knomad.org/ KNOMAD: the Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development. A good source of data on the impact of migration on development.
- www.oecd.org OECD. Provides up-to-date information about aid flows.
- www.unv.org/ UN Volunteers. Provides information about the UN Volunteers programme. Includes links to the State of the World's Volunteerism Reports which are published every three years.
- www.vsointernational.org/ Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO). A leading international NGO based on mobilizing volunteers to work in Africa and Asia, including recruiting volunteers in-country and from other countries in the Global South.

CHAPTER 6

Social and cultural dimensions of development

- Development as social evolution
- Weber, rationality and the Protestant work ethic
- Ethnodevelopment and postcolonialism
- Gender and development
- Intersectionality

The previous chapters have focused more directly on economic and political aspects of ‘development’; however, it is crucial to recognize social and cultural elements. Of course, as discussed in [Chapter 1](#), particularly in relation to postcolonialism, the economic and political-focused discussions of the previous chapters are framed by the social and cultural norms of the people and institutions involved. However, in this chapter we pay explicit attention to social and cultural dimensions of development. This is not just because social and cultural variables affect economic growth, but also that social and cultural norms and expectations need to be considered in their own right (McEwan 2019; Schech 2018). The chapter considers how culture has been framed as an obstacle to development; how social and cultural diversity has been recognized and attempts made to incorporate difference into development practices; and how fundamental notions of development are framed and sometimes challenged by different social and cultural groups.

SOCIAL EVOLUTION

‘Modernity’ as a development goal, has more than just economic elements. As Rostow discussed in relation to the linear model of economic growth, switches from one stage to another may be assessed through economic output, but many of the driving forces of a shift from subsistence agricultural societies to urban industrial ones relate mainly to social structures. As Peter Worsley (1999) points out, this element of Rostow’s thinking is often excluded from the characterizations of his work. In Rostow’s argument, for take-off to be achieved, there need to be shifts in the nature of national elites. Rather than elite groups using their money for family and clan purposes, for industrial development to take place there needs to be a move to investment in new infrastructure and means of production (see [Chapter 2](#) for more details). Thus, modernization theories refer not only to economic changes, but to social transformations as well.

The social evolutionary ideas which form part of Rostow’s model have a basis in the 19th-century theories about social change based on the capitalist experience in Western Europe. During this period, many social theorists, in particular Herbert Spencer (1975 [1876–9]), drew on Charles Darwin’s Theory of Evolution to examine and explain the shifting patterns of social organization. Just as biological organisms become increasingly complex through processes of competition and natural selection, so, such theorists suggested, did societies. This approach, which was termed ‘naturalism’, conceived of societies as being like organisms. Thus, societies which were best able to adapt to environmental and other conditions became ‘winners’, and those which did not were doomed to remain ‘traditional’ (see discussion of environmental determinism in [Chapter 7](#)). Such theories were used to justify colonial expansion through which dominant groups were able to impose their will on those societies which had been ‘less successful’ (see [Chapter 1](#)). In addition, ‘[t]he Darwinian notion of survival of the fittest, applied to human societies, was used to legitimate laissez-faire economics, market systems, the private ownership of productive resources, and social inequality’ (Peet and Hartwick 2015: 122).

Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist (1858–1917), looked at the transition from ‘traditional’ to ‘modern’ societies in Western Europe, and while he adopted some forms of naturalism in his approach, he did not imply that humans were unable to exercise agency. In his view, societies were

constructed of a set of moral and ethical norms into which individuals were born. Societies would have different forms of punishment or control to ensure that the society remained in equilibrium. In this sense, therefore, Durkheim adopted the ideas of natural systems in assuming that harmony and equilibrium were constantly striven for.

In his 1893 book, *The Division of Labour in Society*, Durkheim argued that within 'traditional societies' individuals were part of tight-knit communities, often consisting of kin and clan. Attempts to break from this mould were punished through severe forms of retribution. In contrast, in 'modern societies', there was much greater individualism because of the need for a division of labour. As societies become more complex, it is impossible for one person to do everything to ensure daily survival and the creation of profit, so people take on particular roles within the economy, allowing for expansion. Despite the individualism in this sense, society's members are, according to Durkheim, still part of a highly integrated whole. However, Durkheim did recognize that this form of integration was not always present; where individuals became disengaged from one another, particularly when change was too quick or not regulated, a state of 'anomie' was created. 'Anomie' was understood by Durkheim to be

a feeling of rootlessness and aimlessness which, furthermore, was characterised by a lack of moral guidelines. The breakdown of the traditional orders, which were supported by religion, would result in many people feeling that their lives had lost meaning; they would feel isolated without guidelines for moral behaviour.

(Martinussen 1997: 26)

This was regarded as detrimental to the continued functioning of the society, so various institutions should be set up to encourage social interaction. In certain situations, anomie could be associated with conflict.

The concept of a harmonious society acting as an organism was also used by Talcott Parsons (1902–1979), an American sociologist who built on the work of Durkheim in his analysis of social development (1951). His understandings of society were very technocratic, in that he saw the harmony and continued flourishing of society to be ensured through appropriate institutions (see also discussion of political development theory in [Chapter 4](#)). He argued (1966) that over time, societies adapted and evolved to become

complex. These changes could be triggered either by external influence introducing new technologies or cultural forms, or internally. He viewed societies, as Durkheim did, as moving from 'traditional' to 'modern' and identified a number of 'pattern variables' to distinguish between the two. For example, in 'traditional' societies status was gained through kinship, ethnicity or gender; i.e., it was ascribed. In contrast, in 'modern' societies, individuals earned status through what they did, such as gaining formal qualifications or different forms of paid work (Brohman 1996: 19–21).

Parsons' structural functionalist approach to explaining development has been criticized from a number of perspectives (see Peet and Hartwick 2015: 135–8; Preston 1996 for more detailed discussions). Firstly, the approach is based on the idea that a society's codes are 'pre-given' and that individuals just have to fit into these structures. There is no recognition of how these codes and norms are, in fact, socially constructed and reflect power relations. In addition, the approach is a very conservative one, stressing the need for harmony and dismissing conflict as undesirable. In some senses, however, conflict could be a key factor in creating conditions for more radical change which could bring greater social benefits to a larger number of people. For example, independence struggles throughout the world were based on challenging existing structures and ways of doing things. Finally, and linked to the previous point, the approach is Eurocentric and sets up the 'Western experience' as the model which all other parts of the world should follow.

WEBER, RATIONALISM AND THE PROTESTANT ETHIC

Explanations for differences in 'development' that are based at the level of societies have been criticized for having little or no recognition of agency (see [Chapter 1](#)) on the part of individuals and groups making up these societies. Instead, humans are viewed as other animals, acting purely on instinct (in the case of naturalism), or subsumed within the operation of wider society (as in structural functionalism). The 19th-century German theorist Max Weber approached social change from a different perspective. In contrast to Durkheim's focus on society as an organic whole, Weber used the individual as the starting point (Preston 1996).

Based on his analysis of German society in the late 19th century, he argued

that over time, different elements of social, political and economic life would be brought under the control of rational thought (Peet and Hartwick 2015: 123–7). This means that rather than relying on ‘superstition’ or ‘tradition’ in making decisions, individuals would base their choices on logical analyses of the situation. This does not mean that Weber saw no role for religion in social change and the development of capitalism. In his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber described how Calvinist Protestantism was associated with the growth of industry in Germany. Within Calvinism, there is a focus on the relationship of the individual with God and an emphasis on delayed gratification. According to Weber, this individualism and the work ethic associated with the requirement to delay personal rewards led to rapid economic growth. Rather than lavish spending on conspicuous consumption, there were high rates of savings and investment in businesses and public works such as libraries, schools and hospitals (Peet and Hartwick 2015: 127).

This interpretation of a religious grounding for economic development was used by some to justify Eurocentric ideas about the social bases of modernization. ‘Calvinistic Protestant ethics, which promoted economic growth, was contrasted with other religions which impeded such development. Other religions often operated as a barrier to economic growth, a psychological impediment to development’ (Raghuram 1999: 235). The use of Weber’s work in this way fails to recognize that he stressed the importance of the context in which he developed his ideas. He did not claim to provide a universal explanation for capitalist economic development, choosing instead to consider the nature of German society in the 19th century (Preston 1996).

ETHNICITY AND DEVELOPMENT

In 1996, Björn Hettne claimed that ‘ethnicity has been a neglected dimension in development theory’ (Hettne 1996: 15), arguing that both modernization theories and classical Marxist theories fail to consider ethnic diversity in great detail. Hettne’s arguments were part of the broader acknowledgement of the importance of culture in definitions and experiences of development that came with the growth of post-structuralist and postcolonial theoretical approaches from the 1990s onwards. ‘Ethnicity’ is a highly complex concept, but simply stated:

ethnicity is seen as both a way in which individuals define their personal identity and a type of social stratification that emerges when people form groups based on their real or perceived origins. Members of ethnic groups believe that their specific ancestry and culture mark them as different from others.

(Johnston 2009: 214)

For modernization theory, many forms of cultural practice are regarded as an obstacle to development (see earlier) because they are considered to represent non-rational, collective, traditional ways of life, unsuited to individualistic capitalist development. For classical Marxists, identification by ethnicity is viewed as 'pre-modern' and a barrier to development because of the perceived irrationality of allegiance to an ethnic group, rather than a class grouping.

Regardless of ideology, the focus on development at a national scale means that any diversity within the population needs to be incorporated into a national project (see [Chapter 4](#)). Ethnic diversity can represent a challenge to this national approach. For example, Rodolfo Stavenhagen (1996: 2) states,

From the perspective of the modern nation-state, the existence of ethnically distinct 'sub-national' groups, particularly when they are politically organized, always represents a potential threat, a destabilizing force. This is especially the case when power in the state rests principally with a dominant or majority ethnic group, or when the national society constitutes an ethnically stratified system.

The term 'ethnodevelopment' has been used by Stavenhagen (1986) to describe development which takes into account the need to maintain ethnic diversity as development takes place. According to Björn Hettne (1995, 1996), there are four main aspects of ethnodevelopment:

- Territorialism: The spatial concentration of ethnic groups, such that decisions about 'development' are made within a particular territory based on the resources of that particular area.
- Internal Self-Determination: The ability for a particular ethnic group to control collectively its destiny within the context of a nation-state.
- Cultural Pluralism: The existence of and mutual respect for a number of cultures within one society (see [Chapter 4](#) and [Box 6.1](#))
- Ecological Sustainability: Development should progress with no

significant destruction of the natural environment which would threaten future livelihoods (see [Chapter 7](#)).

These ideals are, however, much more difficult to achieve in practice for a number of reasons. For example, Stavenhagen's original concept was developed within the Mexican context, in particular the ways in which the rights of Indigenous people living in rural environments were being disregarded by the urban-based *mestizo* (mixed race) majority. Within this context, the spatial concentration of groups enables a construction of ethnic identity linked to a particular territory, making the notion of ethnodevelopment through self-determination a logistical possibility, if not a politically favoured one.

Throughout the world, ethnic self-determination or autonomy within a national territory has seen a variety of forms, although the nature of the self-determination is usually highly constrained due to government worries about state disintegration. Decentralization (see [Chapter 4](#)) has sometimes been used to allow for local culturally appropriate forms of justice, law and elections to be implemented, such as the ability to elect municipal officials in Mexico through decisions of a communal assembly, rather than individual secret ballot (Díaz-Cayeros *et al.* 2014).

The growth in 'sustainable tourism' or 'ecotourism' (see [Chapter 7](#)) has also been used by some governments and indigenous groups to create income-generating opportunities over which group members have control, and that do not involve the eradication of Indigenous cultural practices. Heather Zeppel (1998) provides an overview of what she terms 'indigenous tourism', using examples from throughout the world. The key to successful projects in both economic and cultural terms is that the 'host community' of Indigenous peoples is able to set limits on what is done, how it is done and when it is done ([Table 6.1](#)). For example, for many years the Anangu Aboriginal groups in the Northern Territories of Australia encouraged tourists not to climb Uluru (also known as Ayers Rock) because of its sacred significance. There were also concerns about the environmental impacts and visitor safety. Finally in October 2019, the climb was officially closed by the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park authorities. The park authority was set up in 1985 when the Australian national government gave the title deeds back to the Aboriginal groups who were the traditional owners. This recognition of ownership was only done on condition that the land became a national park jointly managed

between government and Anangu, who make up the majority of the board (Allam and Bowers 2019). The park remains an important site for tourism and makes vital contributions to local livelihoods.

Table 6.1 [Dimensions of sustainable indigenous tourism](#)

<i>Controls</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Spatial limitation	Host community decides who can enter indigenous land and which areas, in particular sacred sites, are ‘off limits’.
Activity limitation	Host community establishes what activities tourists can engage in. For example, photography may not be allowed.
Temporal limitation	Host community can set limits on when tourists can enter the territory. During particular religious or cultural ceremonies ‘outsiders’ may be excluded.
Cultural limitation	Host community decides what information about cultural practices and rituals can be provided for tourists.

Source: adapted from Zeppel (1998: 73)

The role of ethnicity in framing understandings of development and contributing to development policies has grown since the 1980s, not least because of postcolonial and postmodern approaches in theoretical terms, but also the rise of campaigning groups, particularly around the rights of Indigenous people. Mobilization of a rights discourse (see [Chapter 4](#)) has achieved some successes, but it should be noted that ethnic diversity is more that an Indigenous/non-Indigenous distinction, with ethnic minority groups throughout the world often experiencing disadvantage and marginalization.



[Plate 6.1](#) [Sign at Uluru, Northern Territory, Australia, January 2018](#)

Credit: Anurat Imaree/[Shutterstock.com](#)

Just because there is no territorial basis does not mean that a recognition of ethnic and cultural diversity is not possible. Ideas of cultural pluralism are applicable to a range of societies and are predicated on the ideas of diversity but a lack of hierarchy. The multicultural approaches adopted in a range of countries throughout the world demonstrate a desire to embrace ethnic and cultural diversity within one nation-state, but in reality again this is not always easy. One of the countries which has been very vociferous in its attempts to recognize, rather than ignore or attempt to eradicate ethnic diversity, is Singapore ([Box 6.1](#)).

[BOX 6.1 ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN SINGAPORE](#)

The historical development of Singapore as a key port and trading post in South-East Asia has led to a very diverse ethnic population. In June 2018, Singapore citizens (i.e. excluding residents with permanent residency or work visas) numbered 3.47 million. This population was made up of

76.1% Chinese, 15.0% Malay and 7.5% Indian (largely Tamil), with a mixture of other groups making up the remaining 1.5%. At the time of independence in 1965, Singapore experienced severe racial conflicts between the three main ethnic groups. The post-colonial government of Lee Kuan Yew recognized that such divisions were not conducive to economic growth and improved standards of living, and placed ethnic harmony and constructions of national, rather than ethnic, identity at the heart of its policies.

Throughout the post-1965 period, there has been a focus on promoting a Singaporean identity regardless of ethnic allegiance. This has been done through National Day celebrations, songs and advertisements (Kong 1995). In addition, the successful policies to promote economic growth have meant that there are fewer reasons for antagonism than in economic crisis situations. Since 1965, Singapore has moved from a GDP p.c. of US\$450 to US\$101,352 in 2018. In addition, Singapore is now ranked ninth out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index and is classified as having very high human development. Attempts to promote inter-ethnic awareness and understanding include celebrating a range of religious and cultural festivals, such as Chinese New Year, Ramadan and Hari Raya, with public holidays on the main feast days. The government is also able to use its control of a large part of the island's housing stock to prevent large clusters of a particular ethnic group. It is argued that if people from different ethnic groups live in close proximity, this will help develop understanding, friendship and harmony.

These government efforts have certainly helped the development of a society where overt inter-ethnic violence is very rare. However, it is clear that not all ethnic groups have benefited equally from Singapore's economic success. In terms of household income and education levels, it is the Malays who have tended to do less well out of Singapore's post-independence economic growth. There is also ongoing tension between Singapore citizens and permanent residents, and non-Singaporean residents (numbering approximately 1.65 million) who come to the city-state to work.

Source: Barr and Skrbis (2008); Department of Statistics Singapore (2019); Kong (1995); Perry *et al.* (1997); Thompson (2014); UNDP (2019a); World Bank (2019c)



[Plate 6.2 Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple, Little India, Singapore](#)

Credit: Katie Willis

Increased levels of autonomy and forms of multiculturalism can be seen as a clear acknowledgement of social diversity; however, they could also be

criticized for their limited scope and the need to fit into a broader state project. Postcolonial approaches would also stress that the incorporation of difference is often based on concepts, such as land ownership, which clash with the worldviews of indigenous groups, or people of other ethnicities (Enns *et al.* 2014; Escobar 2008; Ziai 2017). There has been a growing engagement with ‘non-Western’ worldviews in considering alternatives to development. In most cases, these ideas have not been adopted by state actors, but in some Latin American countries, indigenous concepts of ‘living well’ and human relationships with the natural world have been incorporated into national development strategies, although they have been significantly modified in the process (see [Box 6.2](#)). Alternatives to development will be discussed in more detail in [Chapter 8](#).

[BOX 6.2 BUEN VIVIR](#)

The concept of ‘buen vivir’, roughly translated as ‘living well’ in Spanish, has been adopted as a focus of national development in Ecuador and Bolivia. It draws on concepts of living in harmony with the natural environment with a focus on a collective, rather than an individual, approach to life. For example, Eduardo Gudynas describes the kichwa (sometimes spelled Quechua) notion of ‘sumak kawsay’ as ‘a fullness of life in a community; together with other persons and nature’ (2011: 418). Within the worldview of many Indigenous populations in the Andean region and elsewhere, humans are not superior to other elements of nature (both living, such as animals and plants, and non-living, such as rivers and mountains).

The 2008 Ecuadorian Constitution and the 2009 Bolivian Constitutions both drew on ideas of buen vivir and an engagement with ideas of diversity and plurality within the national boundaries. The 2009 Constitution changed the formal name of the country to the Plurinational State of Bolivia in a very public acknowledgement of the Indigenous groups, such as Aymara and Guaraní, as part of the country.

The institutionalization of buen vivir within the Ecuadorian Constitution involved a commitment to ‘an economic system that promotes equality through social and territorial redistribution of the benefits of development’ (Ecuadorian Constitution 2008, Article 276, in Radcliffe 2018: 421). This involved a significant element of top-down,

central planning, including increased social security coverage and an increase in the minimum wage, as well as affirmative action to address the disadvantages faced by Indigenous people and Afro-Ecuadorians (Radcliffe 2018). This approach of ‘equality in diversity’ has resulted in reduced poverty levels and declines in some forms of inequality. However, the approach has tended to ignore intersections of disadvantage and the environmental dimensions of buen vivir have been given less attention, even though the 2008 Constitution grants rights to Nature (as does the 2010 Bolivian Law of the Rights of Mother Earth).

While buen vivir has been seen as a potential route to alternative development or post-development (see also [Chapter 8](#)), its implementation by governments has often reproduced existing forms of development practice and the experiences of discrimination and exclusion for indigenous populations. In both Ecuador and Bolivia, for example, the continued reliance on the energy and mining sectors has continued to threaten the natural environment.

Source: adapted from Acosta (2017); Gudynas (2011); Horn (2018); Radcliffe (2018); Ranta (2017); Vanhulst and Beling (2014)

RELIGION AND DEVELOPMENT

The role of religion in development has received increasing attention since the start of the 21st century, particularly in relation to development practice (Bompani 2019; Tomalin 2013). As highlighted earlier in this chapter, religion has sometimes been viewed as an obstacle to progress and modernization, and a set of beliefs and practices that would disappear over time. This has clearly not been the case. The growth of postcolonial approaches which recognize the cultural specificity of development definitions, combined with a growing realization of social diversity and the need for development policies to acknowledge this diversity, has led to religion and development assuming a more prominent role in development theory and practice.

The way in which concepts of development or progress are influenced by religion is demonstrated by Weber’s work on Calvinist Protestantism (see earlier). Theocracies are the most extreme examples of how national development is framed by religion (see [Chapter 4](#)). While there are very few

theocracies in the world today, with Iran being the most obvious example ([Box 4.3](#)), religion plays an important role in framing national development visions in many countries. For example, the United Arab Emirates (Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm al-Quwain) have experienced rapid economic growth since the 1970s, due to the discovery of large oil and gas reserves. However, not all of the emirates have these reserves, so they have sought to achieve economic growth through tourism and other service industries. This has been particularly important for Dubai. The economic growth of the UAE is reflected within the landscape, as apartment complexes, shopping malls and office blocks are constructed, as in other regions seeking to 'modernize' ([Plate 6.3](#)). However, socially and culturally, legislation reflects the fact that Islam is the official religion. While there are variations between the emirates, this means that legislation regarding, for example, 'public modesty', marriage and the role of women is framed by particular interpretations of Islamic teaching (Bristol-Rhys 2010).

In Bhutan, where Buddhism is widely practised, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck suggested the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH) in 1972. Based on Buddhist principles of holistic well-being and harmony with the natural environment, this concept has been adopted by the country. It encompasses the desire to improve living standards through modernization, without destroying the environment or viewing people purely as economic actors (Gross National Happiness 2018). The principal components of the GNH have been adapted in the creation of the Happy Planet Index discussed in [Chapter 7](#).



[Plate 6.3 Sharjah skyline](#)

Credit: Zohaib Anjum/[Shutterstock.com](#)

At a sub-national level, faith-based organizations (FBOs) (sometimes termed religious non-governmental organizations, RNGOs) have increasingly been the object of research and policy attention. This links to the debates around NGOs highlighted in the previous chapter. Firstly, such organizations are seen as working effectively with local populations for whom faith is a key element of their lives (Bradley 2009). This means that they will be able to implement programmes which are appropriate to local needs. Secondly, FBOs are also seen as being efficient providers of services and support because of their social capital (see [Chapter 5](#)). Rather than having to set up new networks, it is argued that FBOs and RNGOs can mobilize existing contacts. However, as Tamsin Bradley (2009) stresses, not all FBOs are the same; for example, some organizations have missionary or proselytizing goals, which may also involve restricting services to members of that faith and denigrating non-believers and followers of other religions. Caution also needs to be taken in suggesting that a strict division between secular NGOs and religious NGOs can be made (Bolotta *et al.* 2019).

GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

Modernization approaches to 'development' often did not deal with gender differences in the populations under consideration. The assumption was that as economic growth took place, the benefits of such 'development' would trickle down to benefit all sectors of society. However, this did not recognize social structures which created and exacerbated inequalities and meant that the free-flowing 'trickle-down' was blocked.

'Gender' refers to the categories of 'male' and 'female', but as well as the biological characteristics which are associated with these categories, 'gender' includes the norms and expectations regarding behaviour that are associated with men and women in particular societies at particular times. 'Gender' is therefore a socially constructed category, and as such, changes over time and space. While gender is often seen as a binary division between male and female, in some cultures other forms of gender identity have long been acknowledged, such as hijras in South Asia (Nanda 2015) and two-spirit people among some Native American groups (Jacobs *et al.* 1997). The imposition of rigid binaries, along with heteronormativity, may have been part of European colonial practice, embedded in legal systems and religion (Kapoor 2015). While there is growing engagement with the concept of gender as fluid, development theories and interventions have tended to maintain a gender binary, albeit with greater awareness of the heterogeneity of the categories of 'women' and 'men'.

Within the 'development process', one of the first people to focus on how women were affected differently from men through the modernization project was Ester Boserup (2007 [1970]). She argued that as societies and economies moved from a rural, subsistence base to an industrial urban core, women were increasingly excluded, leaving them on the margins of capitalist development and its perceived benefits. This was because of the association of women with the domestic and reproductive sphere of childcare and housework, while men's roles in society were constructed as involving non-domestic activities. While production was concentrated in the home and communal land, women could combine the two, but once production was moved to a different sphere of factories and workshops, women were unable to maintain their involvement in both sets of activities. While Boserup's analysis has received a great deal of criticism, not least for her generalizations (Benería and Sen 1981), her work was key in highlighting how supposedly 'neutral' development

processes did in fact have very different influences depending on gender.

The increasing gender awareness led to development organizations and governments implementing policies which they hoped would involve women to a greater degree in 'development'. For example, the United Nations declared 1975–85 the UN Decade for Women. These initiatives recognized that 'development' which excluded women could not really be termed 'development', but in many cases the approaches did not really address the root issues of gender inequality and disadvantage, or involve women in making decisions about their lives.

Caroline Moser (1993), drawing on the work of Mayra Buvinic (1983), identifies five main approaches that have been adopted in relation to women and development ([Table 6.2](#)). While she stresses that some of the categories are overlapping and the chronological description does not mean that the approaches followed one another in a clear manner, the categorization is useful for examining how an awareness of gender has been incorporated in existing development theories, or has contributed to the emergence of new ones.

Moser builds on Maxine Molyneux's work (1987) regarding practical and strategic gender interests. 'Practical' interests, or in Moser's terms 'practical needs', refer to women's needs to fulfil their current socially constructed roles. For example, if women are responsible for housework, then practical gender needs may include access to drinking water because this would help their current day-to-day activities. In contrast, 'strategic' needs are those which involve a change in the present state of gender relations, such as changes in legislation about women's right to own land. Different approaches will focus on combinations of practical or strategic needs.

[Table 6.2 Approaches to gender and development](#)

<i>Approach</i>	<i>Date</i>	
Welfare	1950s onwards	Targeted women in their domestic role. Women viewed as passive. Projects addressed women's practical gender needs, such as food aid, health and nutrition advice.
Equity	1970s	Prompted by the UN Decade for Women. Aimed to address strategic gender needs by eradicating obstacles to women's advancement in public sphere. Strong focus

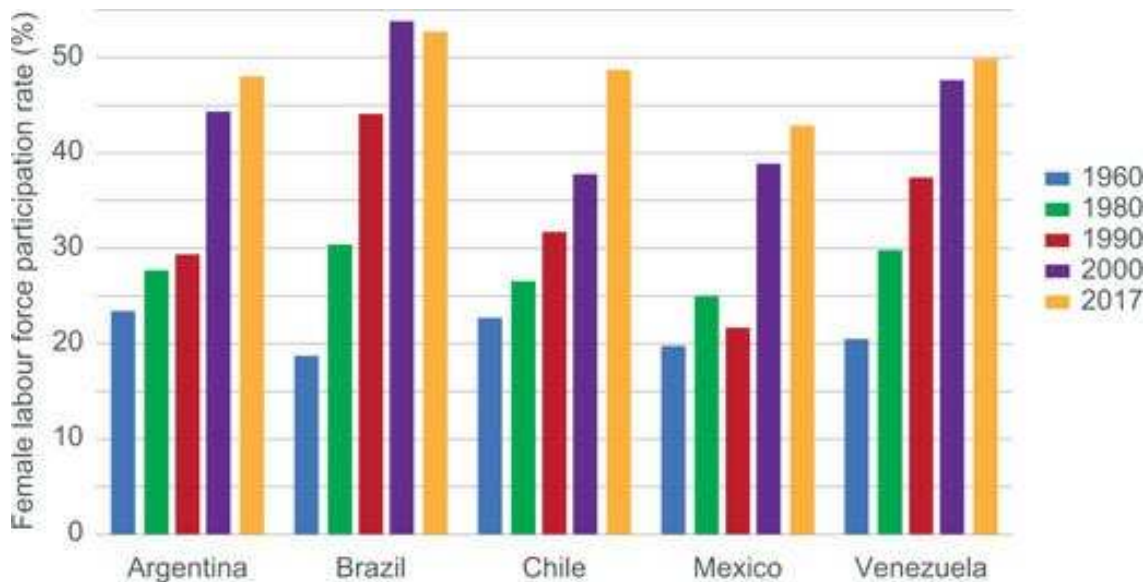
		on legislative changes.
Anti-Poverty	1970s	Women's low status interpreted as being caused by income poverty. Focus of projects on income-generating opportunities for women. No consideration of patriarchal structures of oppression.
Efficiency	1980s onwards	Focus on women as channels of development. During SAPs, women's paid work and domestic work intensified.
Empowerment	1990s onwards	Aims to lead to significant shifts in gender relations. Original focus on projects devised and run by groups of women from the South. Approach increasingly adopted by Northern organizations. Increased focus on incorporating men into gender and development projects.

Source: adapted from Moser (1993)

Moser's 'Efficiency Approach' is a good example of how a gender dimension was incorporated into existing development theories, particularly its association with neoliberal policies ([Chapter 2](#)). For example, during the implementation of SAPs in the 1980s and early 1990s, increasing numbers of women went into paid employment ([Figure 6.1](#)). While the links between SAPs and women's increased paid employment are contested, much micro-level evidence suggests that the increased cost of living and reduced state support of this period forced women to look for paid work (Dalla Costa 1995; Elson 1995). The focus of the development policies, therefore, was not on improving women's position in society and achieving greater gender equality, but rather seeing women as channels for economic development.

In the 21st century, there is a much clearer international development policy engagement with gender equality as a development objective. For example, both the MDGs and SDGs have specific gender equality goals. However, what gender equality means, why it is a development objective and how it should be achieved is more contested. For the World Bank (2011: 3), there are both intrinsic and instrumental reasons for gender equality. Intrinsically, it is argued that gender equality is a moral requirement based on

shared humanity; i.e., it is about rights (see [Chapter 4](#)). Instrumentally, gender equality is seen as providing benefits to the economy and society through women's contribution to the labour force, and improvements in children's health through educating women. The World Bank terms this 'smart economics'. The instrumental view fits within Moser's idea of 'efficiency'.



[Figure 6.1](#) Female labour force participation rate, 1960–2017

Source: adapted from World Bank (2020c)

Naila Kabeer (2005) examined Millennium Development Goal 3, 'Promote gender equality and empower women', with its three targets relating to education, non-agricultural employment and seats in national parliament. While increasing gender equality in these spheres can be transformative, Kabeer critiqued the assumptions underpinning MDG3, most notably that access to education, employment and political representation would automatically be empowering. Wider social and cultural norms and expectations may limit how women experience or are able to use economic, educational and political resources.

SDG 5 has a much broader scope; while women's access to income, political representation and education is still important, there is also mention of freedom from violence, and a sharing of domestic responsibilities (Esquivel 2016). Within this context, the instrumental reasons for focusing on gender equality have raised significant concern (Cornwall and Rivas 2015). Smart economics may make sense for certain forms of national development, but there is the danger that seeing women as instruments of development will

reinforce existing gender norms and will also lead to greater workloads for women (Calkin 2015; Chant 2016b; Chant and Sweetman 2012). The incorporation of girls as potential agents of development within the discourse of 'empowerment' has also been critiqued, particularly when this involves links to the corporate sector, as with the Nike Foundation's 'Girl Effect' (Chant 2016a; Moeller 2018). A focus on girls and young women could be seen as important given experiences of exclusion and marginalization, but both Sylvia Chant (2016a) and Kathryn Moeller (2018) critique the homogenizing of the experiences of girls in the Global South, empowerment being framed in relation to participation in the capitalist economy, and the non-engagement of this approach with wider systems of gender inequality and the role of men and boys (see also Caron 2018).

Economic-based understandings of gender inequality can also be seen in the ways in which socialist and communist governments have dealt with gender. Under classical Marxist theory, male privilege over women (patriarchy) is rooted in the capitalist system. According to Friedrich Engels (1940 [1884]) in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, as societies move from pre-capitalist to capitalist forms, a gender division of labour becomes more apparent, with women staying in the home and dealing with domestic tasks, and men engaging in paid work outside the home. This is very similar to Boserup's arguments outlined earlier. However, Engels' arguments emphasize that capitalism and patriarchy are strongly interlinked. With women working at home providing food, shelter, clothing and childcare, the employers do not have to provide these services for their workers, so saving money. In Marxist terms, this is called the 'reproduction of the labour force'. Following this analysis, gender equality is not possible under capitalism. In order for gender equality to be achieved, therefore, capitalism needs to be replaced.

Socialist and communist governments have tended to promote gender equality, at least in their policy approaches. For example, focuses on women's education and labour force participation have been important elements of the development process in many socialist countries. Women's labour force participation has also been encouraged and facilitated by the state provision of communal services, in particular childcare provision. In some cases, communal kitchens and washing facilities have been set up to allow some women to be freed from the constraints of domestic responsibilities. Incorporating women into the paid labour force sits within socialist ideals

about equality, but it can also be seen to contribute to greater efficiency within the economic system and therefore greater opportunities for economic growth (so similar to Moser's 'efficiency' approach).

Overall, women's labour force participation in socialist or communist countries is higher than in their non-socialist counterparts ([Table 6.3](#)). However, it is certainly not the case that gender inequalities are eradicated in these countries. While some women experienced a reduction in their domestic burden, the majority of women found that paid work added to an existing heavy workload in the home. State provision of communal facilities was never able to match the demand (Ashwin 2000). In addition, changing attitudes is a very difficult and long-term project. While some governments have implemented legislation to promote gender equality, such as the 1975 Family Law in Cuba, which stated that housework should be shared equally between men and women, in practice understandings of male power and dominance remain ingrained (Smith and Padulla 1996).

[Table 6.3](#) *Women's labour force participation as a percentage of men's, 1970, 1992 and 2017*

	1970	1992	2017
Non-communist countries			
Sweden	61	92	93
Norway	38	83	93
USA	59	82	83
UK	55	75	85
Australia	42	71	85
Japan	64	69	72
Switzerland	52	62	84
Ireland	36	47	81
Ex-communist countries			
Czechoslovakia	80	89	n/a
Czech Republic	n/a	n/a	76
Slovak Republic	n/a	n/a	78
Hungary	70	85	74
Bulgaria	79	85	80
Poland	85	82	74

Romania	83	85	71

Source: adapted from UNDP (1994: Table 34) and World Bank (2018a)

One of the key shortcomings of many gender and development projects has been the lack of engagement with men. Far too often, men were regarded as ‘the problem’, but rather than dealing with ‘the problem’, projects continued to deal with the role of women in society and tried to help women’s empowerment. This is clearly important, and there are numerous examples of success throughout the world to support this. However, since the early 1990s there has been an increasing focus on incorporating men into gender and development projects and a consideration of the ways in which men’s roles and positions in society are socially constructed (Chant and Gutmann 2002; Sweetman 2013). This can be seen as part of the move from Women in Development (WID) approaches to Gender and Development (GAD) approaches (Rai 2011).

These schemes have focused both on men’s issues such as men’s health, but also the ways in which men’s behaviour has an impact on their female partners and children. It is only by allowing men the opportunity to reflect on their behaviour that they are able to change it to the benefit of both themselves and also the people around them. While in theory a gendered approach to development interventions that includes both men and women could be the most appropriate approach in a particular context, there are significant obstacles to successful implementation and outcome. These include men’s unwillingness to be involved in ‘women’s projects’ (Caron 2018), the fear of funding being lost from projects aimed at women (Sweetman 2013) or men reasserting authority in mixed-gender spaces (Wanner and Wadham 2015).

As international organizations have become increasingly aware of how gender and development are linked, how ‘development’ is measured (see [Chapter 1](#)) has become more gender-sensitive. In 1995, UNDP introduced two new development measures as part of the gender and development themed *Human Development Report*: the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). In 2010, the GEM was replaced with the Gender Inequality Index (GII) ([Box 6.3](#)). When the GDI ranking is compared with the HDI ranking, some interesting differences can emerge, reflecting different degrees of gender inequality ([Table 6.4](#)). While this recognition of the importance of gender in development experiences is

significant, it should be noted that the measures used are based on ‘top-down’ perspectives of ‘development’ and also focus on the public sphere of paid employment and formal politics.

BOX 6.3 MEASURING GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

Gender-related Development Index (GDI): Uses the same three elements of human development as the HDI, i.e. life expectancy at birth, years of schooling, and income per capita, but looks at men and women separately to calculate whether one gender has better human development levels than the other. The life expectancy figures are calculated to take into account women’s higher average life expectancy due to biological factors. A higher GDI represents greater gender equality. It does not necessarily mean higher levels of human development.

Gender Inequality Index (GII): This composite measure considers inequality in three dimensions:

- 1 reproductive health – measured using the maternal mortality rate and the adolescent birth rate
- 2 empowerment – measured using the share of national parliamentary seats which are held by women and the share of the population aged 25 and over with secondary education of some sort
- 3 labour market participation – measured using the share of the population aged 15 and over participating the labour market by gender

Dimensions 2 and 3 include comparisons between men and women, while dimension 1 is a broader indicator of women’s status in society. The lower the GII, the greater the equality between women and men.

Source: adapted from UNDP (2019b)

DISABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT

Globally there are about 1 billion people living with some form of disability

(WHO and World Bank 2011: 29). Accurate figures are difficult to assess, not least because of definitional disagreements and data collection problems. For example, Arlette Simo Fotso *et al.* (2019) highlight how disability prevalence varies from 1.5% to 4.7% of the Cameroonian population depending on the dataset used. In the 2011 *World Report on Disability*, '[d]isability is the umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions, referring to the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and that individual's contextual factors (environmental and personal factors)' (WHO and World Bank 2011: 4). This definition recognizes that the broader social, economic and political context within which a person lives can affect their disability; i.e., it is more than an individual impairment. It reflects the coming together of a medical model and a social model of disability.

[Table 6.4](#) *GDI and HDI comparisons, 2018*

	<i>HDI rank 2018</i>	<i>GDI value</i>	<i>HDI value, female</i>	<i>HDI value, male</i>	<i>GDI Group^a</i>
Norway	1	0.990	0.946	0.955	1
Jamaica	96	0.986	0.719	0.729	1
Burundi	185	1.003	0.422	0.420	1
United Kingdom	15	0.967	0.904	0.935	2
El Salvador	124	0.969	0.654	0.675	2
Lesotho	164	1.026	0.522	0.509	2
Republic of Korea	22	0.934	0.870	0.932	3
Sri Lanka	71	0.938	0.749	0.799	3
Malawi	172	0.930	0.466	0.501	3
Turkey	59	0.924	0.771	0.834	4
Ghana	142	0.912	0.567	0.622	4
Mozambique	180	0.901	0.422	0.468	4
Saudi Arabia	36	0.879	0.784	0.892	5
India	129	0.829	0.574	0.692	5

Liberia	176	0.899	0.438	0.487	5

^a Countries are categorized into one of five groups based on absolute deviation from gender parity in HDI values, ranging from Group 1, which has high equality in HDI between men and women, to Group 5, which has low equality in HDI between men and women.

Source: adapted from UNDP (2019a: 312–5)

Disability is both an outcome of poverty, for example disabilities caused by malnutrition or infectious diseases, and also a cause of poverty: people with disabilities are disproportionately found among the economically poor (Humanity and Inclusion 2019; WHO and World Bank 2011). Limited access to education (Mizunoya *et al.* 2018) and employment due to inappropriate facilities or discrimination means that people with disabilities may not be able to improve their income-generating opportunities. In 2008, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) came into force. As of September 2019, the Convention had been ratified by 180 states, and another ten states were signatories (OHCHR 2019a). While the MDGs had no mention of disability, the SDGs have considered people with disabilities within the targets of a number of goals, including education, employment and reducing inequality (UNDESA 2019a). Despite widespread ratification of the CRPD and the greater visibility of disability within the SDGs, this does not guarantee that the rights are fulfilled.

SEXUALITY

In 2008 Andrea Cornwall *et al.* (2008) stated that development policy had tended to ignore sexuality, apart from considering sexual and reproductive health. They explained this absence in a number of ways: sexuality is seen as private, but as Emma Tomalin (2006) argues in relation to religion, concepts of privacy have not stopped development practitioners engaging with other aspects of people's lives; secondly, Cornwall *et al.* commented that discussing sexuality can be embarrassing so it is easier to leave it off the agenda; finally, they suggested that 'sexuality and sexual pleasure [has been seen as] ... a kind of frivolous add-on rather than something that is intimately entwined with core development concerns of poverty and marginalization' (2008: 5). Ten years later, Pauline Oosterhoff and Caroline Sweetman (2018: 1) highlight how there has been some progress, but sex and sexuality are still seen as irrelevant

to development by many policy-makers.

Jaya Sharma (2008) points out that the notion of 'sexual rights' refers to more than sexual minority groups, such as gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender individuals, or to sex workers, but rather that the concept encompasses the sexual rights of all people. For example, the parade depicted in [Plate 6.4](#) was a celebration of sexual diversity in Oaxaca City, Mexico. While the use of items such as rainbow flags echoed 'gay pride' marches, the organizers explicitly wanted to include heterosexuals and people unhappy with fixed sexual identity labels. While sexual minority groups and sex workers may experience legalized forms of oppression and discrimination which heterosexuals may not, the concept of 'sexual rights' recognizes how sexual behaviour may be policed by the state, by religious institutions or by dominant groups in society. An inclusive person-centred idea of development needs to understand 'how sexual fulfilment and autonomy can contribute to wellbeing' (Cornwall *et al.* 2008: 6).



[Plate 6.4](#) Sexual diversity march, Oaxaca City, Mexico

Credit: Katie Willis

Susie Jolly (2011) in her article 'Why is development work so straight?' alerts development researchers and practitioners to the need to challenge heteronormative assumptions such as the idea that households are headed by a couple consisting of a man and a woman (see also Kapoor 2015). Within development practice there is increasing engagement with addressing the perceived needs of 'sexual minorities', but this often relates to health (Moscheta *et al.* 2016) or political rights (Matthijsen 2018), rather than a more general challenge to how policy development is based on assumptions about family and household structure, gender and sexuality.

LIFE STAGE

Another important social dimension of development is that of life stage, in particular how the needs of children, young people and the elderly are met as part of development. Just as with gender, ethnicity, sexuality and disability, there has been increasing attention paid to these social dimensions in the past 30 years. Rather than spawning new theories about development, explicit consideration of the impact of age and stage in the life course on development experiences represents part of the deconstruction of 'development' as a 'one size fits all' concept and process.

Caroline Sweetman (2000: 2) sums up the focus of much development policy when she says:

The overemphasis of mainstream development on young and middle-aged adults is understandable to some extent, since it is at this stage of life that both women and men are physically and mentally mature, become parents, and are most capable of work.... However ... an enormous contribution including both paid and unpaid work is made to our societies by the young and the old. If these groups were better represented in civil service, government and development funding agencies (all institutions that replicate the age and gender biases of surrounding society), policy might reflect reality more accurately.

The increasing focus on both young and old people by development practitioners and theorists reflects the desire to make 'development'

appropriate to the needs and lives of all people. Under modernization ideas about development, not only was the route to 'development' unilinear, but there was little recognition of the diversity of the population. This tendency to homogenize populations included ignoring large sectors of the population, in particular children, young people and the elderly.

Children and young people

Children as a group have not necessarily been ignored in development policies in both North and South. For example, Save the Children Fund was set up in 1919, and UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, was set up in 1946. Both these organizations were set up to help children in post-war Europe, but now work throughout the world, and particularly in the Global South. What has changed is the way in which children are considered within policy-making. Whereas children were often defined as being vulnerable and in need of protection by adults, there is a growing recognition that this should not neglect the fact that children have agency and have opinions about their lives which should be listened to.

The concept of 'childhood' has been increasingly questioned. Just as the way in which societies' understandings about women's roles affects the policies implemented, so the way childhood is defined has an impact on child-related policy. Thinking of 'childhood' as being the carefree period of your life and the time that you spend in school fails to recognize the actual experiences of millions of people under the age of 18 throughout the world. For millions of children, day-to-day life involves paid work, housework and caring for younger siblings, sick or elderly relatives. While the 'carefree' model of childhood has been criticized for being Eurocentric, as it is based on Western ideas of what children's lives should be like, it must be stressed that many children and young people in the North have lives which are very different from the childhood idyll that is often presented. For example, over one-quarter of children in the UK were living in absolute income poverty in 2017–18 (Bourquin *et al.* 2019: 32). While the nature of 'poverty' in this case is very different from that in the South (see [Chapter 1](#)), issues of social exclusion and paid work as an economic necessity are apparent.

The issue of child labour is a particularly complicated one in development policies and is a good example of how policies need to be designed in particular contexts and based on the participation of groups that will be

affected. Not all work done by children is defined as ‘child labour’; the definition usually excludes small amounts of light work conducted by children over 12. In 2016, the ILO estimated that around the world 152 million children between 5 and 17 were in child labour, a fall of 16 million in the period 2012–16. However, there were significant regional differences in the prevalence of child labour, with the highest figures found in Africa (19.6%) and the lowest in Arab States (2.9%) and Europe and Central Asia (4.1%). The ILO identifies particularly hazardous work which is threatening to physical and mental health, safety and moral development. In 2016, there were 73 million children aged 5–17 who were classified as working in such jobs (ILO 2017: 5).

For many people in the North, the image of young children working in sweatshop conditions is particularly distressing, and a number of high-profile campaigns targeting multinational clothes manufacturers have highlighted the use of child labour, leading companies such as Gap and Nike to agree not to source clothing from factories using child labour. While such campaigns are laudable, they do not necessarily have the desired effect, i.e. children being able to go to school or stay at home, rather than earn a small amount of money working (Pierik and Houwerzijl 2006; White 1996). In addition, this form of employment represents a very small percentage of total child labour; the majority of child workers are engaged in agricultural and urban informal activities, and most child labour takes place within families (ILO 2017: 13).

In 1989, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted and has been ratified by all UN members except the USA ([Table 6.5](#)). In relation to work, the Convention does not outlaw children (defined by the Convention as being aged under 18) from working, but rather recognizes children’s

right to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

(CRC Article 32)

[Table 6.5](#) [Summary of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

<i>Children have the right to:</i>
• Life
• A name

• A nationality
• Know and be cared for by parents as far as possible
• Live without discrimination
• Education
• Health
• Benefits from social security
• Have his/her views taken into account in decisions that affect him/her
• Freedom of expression
• Freedom of thought, conscience and religion
• Freedom of association and peaceful assembly
• Protection from abuse and exploitation
• An adequate standard of living
• Rest and leisure
• Be protected from work that is harmful to their health and development

Source: adapted from CRC in OHCHR (2019b)

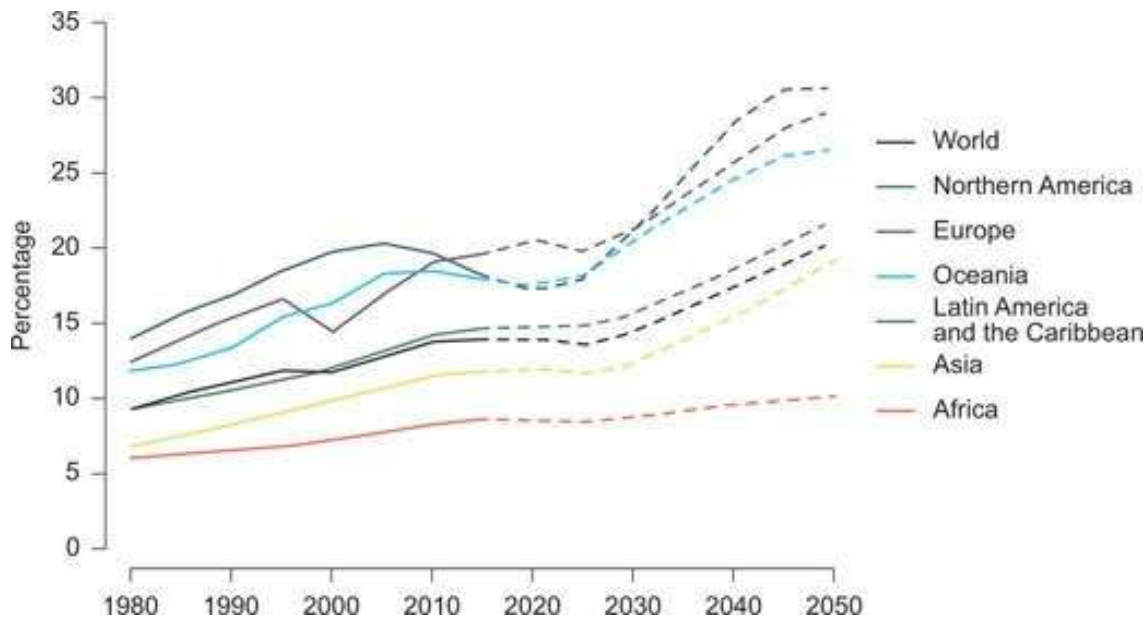
The importance of listening to children and young people is a significant part of the Convention, and this principle has been increasingly incorporated into government and NGO policy. For example, the 2016 *Arab Human Development Report* has the subtitle ‘Youth and the Prospect for Human Development in a Changing Reality’ (UNDP 2016b). As well as including information about young people, it also focuses on the problems identified by young people themselves and identifies them as key agents of change. However, in the Middle East and North Africa as elsewhere, how this information will be used and how participation can go beyond a limited form of consultation is much harder to determine (Wyness 2013) (see also [Chapter 5](#)).

Older People

Although the elderly, being adults, are not viewed like children as unable to make decisions because of a lack of maturity, in many cases, as Sweetman’s

earlier quotation highlighted, the needs of older people have often not been considered. This is largely because they are viewed as being too old to participate in work activities (both paid and unpaid). This clearly ignores the significant contributions made by people over 60. Discussions of ageing populations tend to focus on the Global North. While in percentage terms, older people make up larger proportions of the population in Europe, Northern America and Oceania, over two-thirds of those over 60 live in the Global South, and this is predicted to reach nearly 80% by 2050 (UNDESA 2017: 9). Over time, these groups of older people will become more significant, and the very old (aged 80 and over) will make up a larger share of the elderly. In 2017, people aged 80 and above made up 14% of the 60 and over aged group, but this is predicted to rise to 20% by 2050 ([Figure 6.2](#)).

Older people often experience higher levels of poverty than younger people, due to retirement or reduced ability to undertake paid work. Attempts to address poverty among the elderly have become more of a focus in recent years, reflected in the introduction of pension schemes. Over 100 countries now have some form of social pension scheme which is funded through taxation, rather than direct contributions by individuals, and about 30% of these have been set up since the year 2000 (HelpAge International 2014: 11). However, pension income may be very low and provide very limited opportunities for older individuals to thrive ([Box 6.4](#)). In addition, deteriorating health is often associated with the ageing process, but access to appropriate healthcare may not be forthcoming if health policies focus on other health issues that are regarded as more pressing (HelpAge International 2018). The role of older people in caring for grandchildren and others is also key and can help promote feelings of usefulness and status. However, in some cases, the support, both financial and emotional, that older people may be able to provide can result in excessive demands on their time, energy and money.



[Figure 6.2](#) Population aged 80 years or over among the population aged 60 years or over for the world and regions, 1980–2050

Source: adapted from UNDESA (2017: 20)

Given the particular needs of older people, but also their contributions to the maintenance of households and communities, and to their countries more broadly, it is important that their opinions are considered in development policy. While the inclusion of older people in these processes has been slow, at least in terms of development rhetoric, there has been some progress. For example, UN declarations and conferences have increasingly incorporated ideas of older people's participation and rights. In April 2002, the Second World Assembly on Ageing was held in Madrid and agreed on a 16,000 word 'Plan of Action on Ageing' (Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, MIPAA). However, while there have been changes in legislation and welfare policies in a number of countries, progress on implementing the Plan at either the national-government or multilateral-organization level has been limited (Sibai *et al.* 2018). There is also little evidence of monitoring or evaluating the effectiveness of new policies (Padmadas *et al.* 2018), and even less involvement of older people in this monitoring process (Sidorenko and Zaidi 2018). Thus, older people remain marginal to international development policy, while other groups are more readily incorporated.

INTERSECTIONALITY

This chapter has focused on how different development approaches have dealt with social diversity, but also how perspectives on development as both a concept and a set of policies vary between social groups. The chapter has been organized in sections which isolate particular social dimensions, but this is clearly not how real societies work. An individual's identity is made up of many different aspects, and in any one community, there may be a shared collective identity, such as religion or ethnicity, but there will also be significant diversity in terms of other aspects of identity.

BOX 6.4 OLDER PEOPLE, WORK AND SOCIAL PROTECTION IN VIETNAM

In 2016, 11% of the Vietnamese population were aged 60 and over, and by 2040 this figure is predicted to be 31%, compared with a lower prediction of 24.2% for Asia as a whole by 2050.

About one-third of people aged 60 and above were in work in 2014, either in salaried employment or self-employed, although there were gender differences (45% of men and 32% of women). Work was more likely to be in the informal sector and in agriculture than for people in the 15–59 age category, and older people worked fewer hours than their counterparts in the younger age groups. In rural areas, involvement in work was more likely among those from the majority Kinh group, while members of ethnic minority groups had lower employment participation rates. This reflected lower levels of education and limited employment opportunities, not least because of their concentration in isolated mountainous regions.

For those people aged 60 and over, health and family responsibilities were major reasons given for not being in employment, but the availability of other income sources was also important for some older people. However, for about one-third of people aged 60 and over, employment was the main source of income, often reflecting the limited support provided by family members or a pension (52% have no pension income). Since 2000, Vietnam has operated a tax-financed pension scheme which provides almost universal coverage to those aged 80 and above, and provides a small income to those aged 60–79 who are seen as particularly vulnerable because they are living alone, in poverty and

without other support. However, it should be stressed that the pension provided through this scheme is less than the US\$1.25 per day SDG target. Some older people receive pension income due to contributions they have made as workers in the public or private sector.

About one-third of those aged 60+ cite adult children as their main source of income. These may be children that they live with, but funds may also come from children who live in a separate household. It is important to stress that older people are not just recipients of support. They may also provide income to family members, as well as providing emotional support and reproductive labour, particularly in the form of childcare. This can include looking after children aged under 10 while one or both of their parents are working overseas.

Source: adapted from Giang and Nguyen (2016); Giang and Pfau (2009); Giang *et al.* (2019); HelpAge International (2016)



[Plate 6.5 Elderly people playing draughts in park, Hanoi, Vietnam](#)

Credit: Dino Geremella/Alamy Stock Photo

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) developed the concept of ‘intersectionality’ to highlight how experiences of marginalization and oppression do not just

reflect one dimension of difference, or a number of dimensions added together. Instead, it is the intersection of these dimensions that is key. In her original work, this focused on the experiences of African American women, whose experiences of discrimination reflected not just racism and sexism, but how these intersected for Black women in the USA. Leslie McCall defines intersectionality as 'the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations' (2005: 1771).

In the specific context of development theory and practice, intersectionality has been less explicitly incorporated. As Tania Bastia (2014) highlights, a number of scholars, particularly those working in gender and development, have stressed the heterogeneity of particular groups, e.g. 'women', but have not used the lens of intersectionality in their discussion (see also Cho *et al.* 2013). For Bastia, an intersectional approach has great potential for understanding the experiences of individuals and groups, but there are obstacles, not least issues of scale; acknowledging the intersecting dimensions of oppression is easier at a micro- than a macro-level of analysis. While small-scale development projects may be able to engage with social differences in a particular context, how would this work at a national level? Additionally, there is the worry that an intersectional approach could become a 'tick-box' exercise that removes engagement with power and privilege, which was so important to Crenshaw's original concept. Bastia also mentions the politics of using a concept which was developed in the Global North to explore the lives of people living elsewhere.

The SDGs specifically identify a range of different axes of inequality, particularly in SDG 10, 'Reduce inequality within and among countries', where Goal 10.2 is 'By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status' (United Nations 2020a). There is no mention of how these different dimensions might intersect and what this would mean for the sustainable development experiences of individuals or groups. However, UN Women in its 2018 Sustainable Development Goal monitoring report has a chapter which considers 'intersecting forms of discrimination and clustered deprivation' (UN Women 2018: 134), highlighting the diversity of women's experiences, albeit within a particular definition of development.

SUMMARY

- Modernization theories and Marxist theories view development as involving social evolution into more complex forms of social organization.
- Incorporating 'culture' into development means questioning what 'development' is and recognizing that definitions are never neutral.
- Any form of social, economic and political change will have differential impacts on individuals depending on different aspects of their identity and the interactions between dimensions of identity.
- Some approaches to development have explicitly embraced social diversity, but there are challenges in implementation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What are the links between social and economic change in modernization theories?
- 2 Why are some cultural practices regarded as being obstacles to development?
- 3 Why should gender be included in a consideration of development?
- 4 How does an engagement with social diversity affect approaches to development?

FURTHER READING

- Ansell, N. (2016) *Children, Youth and Development*, 2nd edition, London: Routledge. Introductory textbook providing excellent grounding in debates around children and development.
- Enns, C., B. Bersaglio and T. Kepe (2014) 'Indigenous voices and the post-2015 development agenda: the recurring tyranny of participation', *Third World Quarterly* 35 (3): 358–75. Useful overview of how the perspectives of Indigenous people have been brought into mainstream development practice, and the limitations of such approaches.
- Gender and Development* (2018) Volume 26, No. 1. Special issue on 'Sexualities'. An excellent collection of articles considering how and why sexuality has been incorporated into development practice.
- Momsen, J. (2020) *Gender and Development*, 3rd edition, London: Routledge. A wide-ranging introductory textbook with excellent case studies.

WEBSITES

www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/ Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex gateway to resources on gender and development.

www.grossnationalhappiness.com Gross National Happiness site of the Centre for Bhutan Studies.

www.helpage.org HelpAge International. A network of NGOs throughout the world working with older people.

<https://humanity-inclusion.org.uk/en/index> Humanity & Inclusion. Previously known as Handicap International, this organization works with disabled and vulnerable people. Website includes information about disability rights.

www.iddcconsortium.net/joomla/ International Disability and Development Consortium.

www.ids.ac.uk/programme-and-centre/ids-sexuality-and-development-programme/ Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex research on sexuality and development.

www.ilo.org/ipec/lang-en/index.htm ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour.

www.ucl.ac.uk/iehc/research/epidemiology-public-health/research/leonard-cheshire-research Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre, University College London.

www.pathwaysofempowerment.org/ Pathways of Women's Empowerment site.

www.savethechildren.org Save the Children Fund, USA.

www.savethechildren.org.uk Save the Children Fund UK.

www.unicef.org UN Children's Fund.

www.worldbank.org/gender/ GenderNet. World Bank site which highlights how gender is dealt with in World Bank policies.

CHAPTER 7

Environment and development

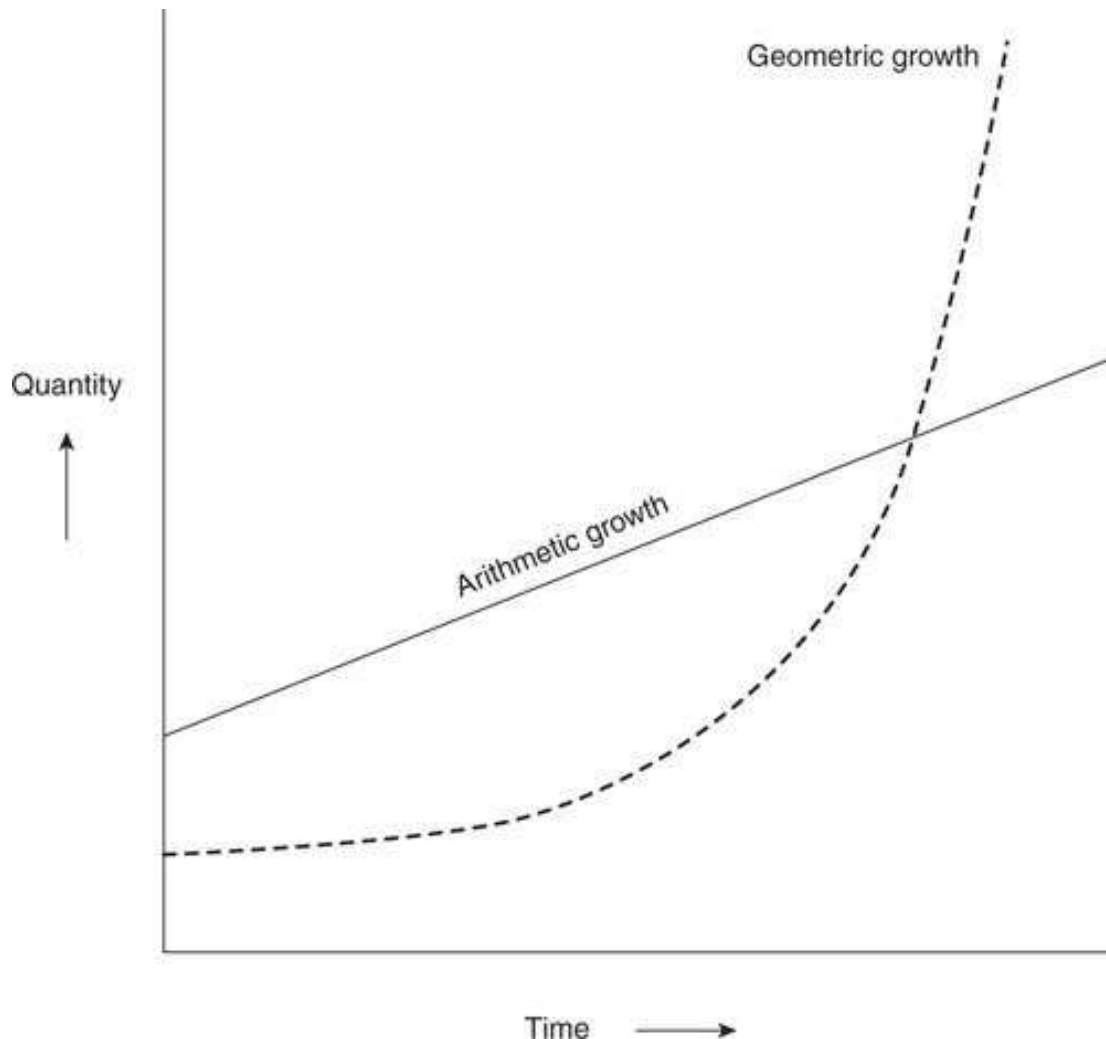
- Relationships between population and environment
- Modernization theory and environment
- Socialist development and the natural environment
- Sustainable development
- Political ecology

Many of the theories and approaches addressed so far in the book have included implicit reference to the natural environment, but in this chapter, the ways in which 'development' and 'environment' have been considered will be at the centre of the discussion. Theories of economic growth are related to questions of resource use and distribution. Many of these resources come from the natural environment, and in many cases development processes can lead to the destruction of significant parts of this natural environment. However, other development definitions and approaches see environmental protection as important for human survival and well-being, while others argue that humans are part of the natural environment and should not be prioritized above other living organisms.

THOMAS MALTHUS' PERSPECTIVES ON POPULATION AND RESOURCES

One of the earliest elaborations in the Global North on the relationship between people and natural resources was that of Thomas Malthus. In his 1798 *Essay on the Principle of Population*, he wrote about the effect of rising population on the natural resource base (Malthus 1985 [1798]). While he did not talk specifically about ‘development’, his arguments are important for later development debates on this topic. According to Malthus, populations and food supply expand in different ways. Food supply increases arithmetically; with every generation food supply increases the same amount due to bringing new land into cultivation for example. This leads to a linear pattern of growth. In contrast, even if the number of children per family remains the same, the population will grow geometrically because in each generation there will be more people to have children (see [Figure 7.1](#)). As a result of these different growth rates, Malthus argued that the human population was doomed unless limits were put on population growth rates. Eventually, population would outstrip the food supply, and there would be mass starvation and famine, and so the population would be reduced. For Malthus, therefore, if humans did not control their reproduction, there would be disastrous consequences. In development terms, these ideas (as we shall see later) have been used to shape later development approaches in the Global South.

Malthus’ work has been greatly criticized, not least because of his assumptions regarding the growth of food supply. He did not consider the ways in which new technologies may develop to increase food supply at a much greater rate. Ester Boserup (1965) highlighted how new methods and technologies can be developed to address crises such as limited food supplies in response to increasing population densities. Later technological developments, including fertilizers and new forms of seeds, have been important in increasing agricultural productivity. However, just because sufficient food is produced to feed a population does not mean that everyone has access to this food. Issues of distribution are also important.



[Figure 7.1 Arithmetic and geometric growth](#)

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINISM

In Malthus' approach, the natural environment acted as an obstacle to population growth. In the environmental determinism approach, the natural environment acts not just as an obstacle, but actually shapes the nature of human society and activity. It is a form of naturalist theory as outlined in [Chapter 6](#). Environmental determinism was popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and stressed the ways in which human behaviour was conditioned or determined by the physical environment.

Following this form of argument, some argued that the differing levels of prosperity, economic development or what some called 'civilization' could be explained with reference to the differences in natural environment

(Huntington 1915; Semple 1911). By rooting these explanations in the natural world, some theorists argued that people from the temperate parts of the world were naturally ‘better’ than those from the tropical zones, and so justified the domination of Europeans over the inhabitants of other places.

As we shall see in the rest of the chapter, there is wide-ranging evidence of the ways in which human behaviour is influenced by the natural environment, but the crude theories adopted by environmental determinists are certainly out of place. They lost favour in the mid-20th century, not least because of the ways in which the ideas were used by certain political groups in Europe to justify racial domination. They have also been criticized because they do not consider the role of individuals, communities and governments, among others, to deal with perceived environmental constraints (Peet and Hartwick 2015: 121–3).

MODERNIZATION

The modernization approach outlined in [Chapter 2](#) was built on the ideas of mobilizing technology to use resources more efficiently, not least through industrialization and the mechanization of agriculture. The basic attitude to the natural environment was one of seeing natural resources as inputs into a human-devised system. Very little, if any, attention was paid to the potential environmental damage or the long-term sustainability of such an approach.

During the Industrial Revolution in England, the environmental impacts of rapid urbanization and industrialization were clear. For example, in his descriptions of England’s northern towns during the 1840s, Friedrich Engels in his book *The Condition of the Working Class in England* describes the results of over-crowding, poverty and unregulated industrial processes:

Bradford, which, but seven miles from Leeds, at the junction of several valleys, lies upon the banks of a small, coal-black, foul-smelling stream. On week-days the town is enveloped in a grey cloud of coal smoke, but on a fine Sunday, it offers a superb picture when viewed from the surrounding heights. Yet within reigns the same filth and discomfort as in Leeds.... In the lanes, alleys and courts lie filth and *debris* in heaps; the houses are ruinous, dirty, and miserable.

(1984: 74 [original German publication 1845])

Not only were these ‘development’ processes affecting the natural environment, they were also indirectly affecting the health of the urban populations.

Modernization and the attempts to use ever-increasing areas of land for agriculture have also had severe environmental impacts. The ‘Dust Bowl’ of the US mid-west in the 1930s is often used as an example of how modern technology was used to push for increased agricultural production in environmentally marginal zones. With the extension of the railways westwards in the mid-19th century (see [Chapter 2](#)), large swathes of prairie land were cultivated using horse-drawn ploughs. Drought-resistant varieties of wheat were planted, and farmers were able to make significant profits. However, the agricultural processes meant that during periods of drought there was often insufficient vegetation cover to protect the fine soils, and high winds eroded large amounts of topsoil, creating severe dust storms. With the Great Depression of the 1930s, farmers tried to increase their yields, leading to further damage (Barrow 1995; Worster 2004). Approximately 80 million hectares of grain-producing land were destroyed (Kassas 1987 in Barrow 1995). This environmental tragedy also contributed to furthering the misery of the farmers, leading many to flee the area, seeking their fortunes in other parts of the USA. It did, however, trigger government action to improve policies to reduce soil erosion and help farmers use appropriate techniques.

Despite the known environmental impacts of such approaches to development, similar patterns were encouraged in the Global South, both by donor governments and agencies, and by national governments themselves. The long-term environmental problems were disregarded in favour of the goals of economic growth and development. Top-down large-scale projects such as dam building, mining, industrialization and rapid mechanization of agriculture were all promoted as suitable routes to development. The approach was very much one of ‘grow now, clean up later’. Unfortunately the ‘cleaning up’ process is often very long and costly, if it is possible at all. Much environmental damage involves the destruction of ecosystems beyond repair. This is despite growing environmental awareness and nature conservation campaigns ([Box 7.1](#)).

BOX 7.1 PALM OIL PRODUCTION AND DEFORESTATION IN INDONESIA

Palm oil has been used as a cooking oil for centuries in tropical regions of Africa, but in recent decades its use in processed food across the globe has increased as it is seen as healthier and cheaper than other forms of vegetable oil. Demand for palm oil for food, as well as in cosmetics and as a biofuel, has led to a significant expansion in its cultivation, largely in commercial palm oil plantations. This has resulted in widespread deforestation with concomitant impacts on biodiversity and local livelihoods, as well as wider environmental impacts, not least on the release of greenhouse gases.

Indonesia produced about 60% of the world's palm oil in 2018. Production had increased from approximately 150,000 tonnes in 1964 to 43 million tonnes in 2019 (IndexMundi 2019). In 2016, palm oil contributed 1.54% of the country's GDP (Meijaard *et al.* 2018) and provides significant tax income both nationally and locally. Within the country, production is concentrated in Sumatra and Kalimantan.

Oil palm plantations have less biodiversity than the tropical forests they replace. The impact of this deforestation on mammals such as orangutans and tigers has attracted global attention, but the loss of tree species, birds and insects should also cause concern. Deforestation and replacement with palm oil plantations also increase water and air pollution, and soil erosion due to the removal of vegetation and the use of pesticides and herbicides. Removing forests increases greenhouse gas emissions, and this is exacerbated when on peatland.

In social terms, the expansion of palm oil production has led to an increase in land prices and increased conflict due to land scarcity. Food insecurity among local Dayak communities has also increased as their shifting cultivation practices are disrupted. Burning the forest to clear it for plantation production has contributed to significant health problems well beyond the sites of the fires. Some jobs are created, both in the plantations and among small-scale palm oil cultivators, but the social benefits of expanded production are not distributed equally.

Due to consumer lobbying and environmental activism, the palm oil industry responded by establishing certification schemes for 'sustainable

palm oil' and setting up the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) in 2004. However, the RSPO is dominated by industry representatives, and producers can be RSPO members without certification. Additionally, there are issues around the credibility of the certification schemes due to the diversity of schemes and the limited capacity to review production on the ground. For Tania Murray Li, the promises about sustainable palm oil ring hollow. She argues that 'violence is built into Indonesia's plantation zones' (2018: 330).

It is important to note that not all deforestation in Indonesia is due to palm oil production. In the period 1972–2015, an estimated 16% can be attributed to palm oil (Meijaard *et al.* 2018), with deforestation also occurring for purposes such as logging, mining and fibre production. Since 2011, there has been a moratorium on clearing peatland and primary forest for palm oil plantation development and logging. In August 2019, the moratorium on deforestation became permanent in an area covering more than 60 million hectares. However, environmental groups are concerned that there are loopholes in the regulations and limited power to sanction companies that break the ban.

Source: adapted from Abood *et al.* (2015); IndexMundi (2019); Li (2018); McCarthy (2012); Meijaard *et al.* (2018); Mongabay (2019); Obidzinski *et al.* (2012); Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (2019)

The so-called 'Green Revolution' of the 1950s and 1960s was a perfect example of modernization approaches to agriculture. The term was used to describe how scientific principles were applied to agricultural processes to improve yields in the South. It was clearly an attempt to escape from Malthusian limits on food supply. The main elements of the 'revolution' were high-yielding varieties (HYVs) of maize, wheat, rice and barley, as well as developments in fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides. There were some very positive results, including India achieving self-sufficiency in wheat by 1980 and Indonesia moving from being a rice importer to a rice exporter (Willis 2019). However, environmentally there were problems. These included reductions in genetic diversity, increased demand for water because of irrigation needs and pollution from agrochemicals (Barrow 1995). In addition, the Green Revolution resulted in increased inequality as those farmers who could afford to participate reaped the benefits, while others were often forced to abandon their own land and become agricultural labourers (Shiva 1991;

Yapa 1993). Current debates about genetically modified (GM) crops reflect similar positions. For some, GM crops represent a technical solution to food shortages (Smyth *et al.* 2015), while for others, they are an environmental threat and will contribute to the growing dominance of the agrochemical companies and reduced autonomy for small farmers (see Vercillo *et al.* 2015 for a review).



[Plate 7.1 Workers on an oil palm plantation, East Kalimantan, Indonesia](#)

Credit: First Resources/[Shutterstock.com](#)

The original Green Revolution techniques were adopted mainly within Latin American and Asian countries. However, the language of the ‘Green Revolution’ in terms of using science and technology to improve agricultural production remains, for example in the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA). Boaz Keizire, Head of Policy and Advocacy at AGRA noted:

One of the biggest challenges for the farmers in the continent has been poor access to quality farm inputs. For example, just 20 percent of Africa’s farmers can access improved varieties of seeds. Other threats to Africa’s agricultural productivity include poor storage systems, lack of transportation services, inadequate processing tools and weak marketing structures, all of which lead to significant wastage.

(Keizire 2019)

This technocratic approach to improving food security also includes working with governments to improve regulations in the food sector. In contrast to earlier Green Revolution schemes, however, there is a strong commitment to environmental protection and maintenance of crop diversity, rather than the monocropping which was often found in the earlier period (AGRA 2019). The wider economic and political context of AGRA's activities is highlighted by researchers and activists concerned about the power of transnational corporations and governments. For example, Carol B. Thompson (2012) sees AGRA's approach as facilitating the influence of transnational agribusiness interests and the privatization of genetic material from the continent's seeds.

SOCIALIST APPROACHES TO THE ENVIRONMENT

The modernist aims of many communist or socialist governments have also resulted in the implementation of development strategies which are extremely environmentally destructive. The control or taming of nature has often been a key element in the development strategies of centrally planned economies, with rhetoric regarding the superiority of such societies being reflected in the domination of nature. According to Marx, development involved human ability to transform nature to increase standards of living. In *Capital*, Marx's perspectives on humans' dominance of nature is reflected in this description: 'He [sic] develops the potentialities slumbering within nature, and subjects the play of its forces to his own sovereign power' (1909: 283).

Some of the largest individual development projects have been implemented within centrally planned economies. This is partly a reflection of the desire to be seen to be achieving greater infrastructure successes, but also because of the ability of governments in such economies to marshal resources to achieve these aims. The USSR provides us with a number of examples of such mega-projects, the environmental effects of which are still evident today. For example, in the 1950s the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev sought to increase agricultural production by bringing new lands into cultivation. The so-called 'Virgin Lands Scheme' was launched with the intention of bringing in 250,000 km² of land into wheat cultivation in Northern Kazakhstan and Western Siberia. While cultivation was expanded and production went up, the

environmental damage was enormous. Massive areas were exposed to soil erosion, leaving vast swathes unusable for any purpose. Soviet attempts to increase cotton production in Central Asia also had disastrous effects, not least on the Aral Sea ([Box 7.2](#) and [Plate 7.2](#)).

The environmental impacts of such mega-projects are still ongoing, and these have not prevented the continued use of such projects in some centrally planned countries, such as the Three Gorges Dam across the Yangtze River in China. Despite significant evidence suggesting the potential environmental damage resulting from the project (Tullos 2009), not to mention the social problems arising from the mass relocation of an estimated 1.13 million people (Wilmsen 2016), the project progressed and the dam became fully operational in 2012. The building of the dam has been associated with declines in biodiversity, including the likely extinction of some species. There has also been a significant impact on sediment flow in the river, with sediment build-up behind the dam leading to much greater erosion downstream (Fu *et al.* 2010). While human activities had led to changes in the Yangtze Valley environment for many decades before the dam was built, the scale and rate of these changes has increased greatly. The dam has resulted in economic growth in the surrounding counties, but the challenges of sustainability remain significant (Fu *et al.* 2010; Yang and Liu 2013). Electricity generation through hydro-electric power is much cleaner than coal-burning power stations. In December 2018, *China Daily* reported that the Three Gorges Dam hydropower plant had generated over 100 billion kilowatt hours of electricity since the start of 2018, saving the burning of 31.9 million tons of coal and 85.8 million tons of CO₂ emissions (*China Daily* 2018).

LIMITS TO GROWTH

Modernist projects with their focus on technological solutions to perceived limitations of the natural environment were challenged by the increasing environmental movements in many parts of the world during the 1960s. A number of high-profile environmental cases in the North drew attention to the possible environmental problems which could accrue from particular forms of development. For example, in 1962, Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* was highly significant in drawing the attention of a Northern, most notably US audience, to the environmental side effects of certain forms of modernization.

Her book dealt with the environmental impacts of the insecticide DDT, in particular the way that it was stored in organisms that ingested it, and so was passed up the food chain in larger and larger quantities, leading to the deaths of mammals and birds.

BOX 7.2 THE ARAL SEA BASIN CRISIS

Since the early 1960s, the Aral Sea in former Soviet Central Asia has been shrinking. In 1960, it was the world's fourth largest inland water body and covered about 67,000 km² but by 2006 it had shrunk to 17,382km² and had split into two. This is having a devastating impact on both the natural and human environments. As water levels fall and the lake bed is exposed, salt and dust are blown into rivers and irrigation systems, leading to increases in pollution and a deterioration in human health. In addition, populations earning a living from the Aral Sea are suffering as it shrinks, leaving fishing boats high and dry ([Plate 7.2](#)). The two smaller seas have increased levels of salinity, making them unsuitable for many forms of aquatic life.

The roots of this crisis lie in the Soviet period (see [Chapter 3](#)). The Soviet ideology stressed the power of humans over nature, and many large-scale environmentally damaging schemes were adopted to further economic growth. Vast quantities of water were diverted from the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers to irrigate cotton. As these rivers were the main source of water for the Aral Sea, this diversion meant far lower inputs into the Aral Sea and a subsequent shrinking. Cotton acreage in Uzbekistan increased from 1.3 million hectares to 2.1 million hectares in the period 1960–1980. This increase and improved yields because of irrigation led to rising Soviet cotton yields from 2.2 million tons in 1940 to 9.1 million tons in 1980. However, yields in Uzbekistan are now falling because of land degradation and salinity problems with irrigation waters.

With the collapse of the USSR, the problem has become increasingly recognized, but attempts at coordinating a strategy are limited by the fact that there are now a number of national governments involved. While Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan border the Aral Sea, the other Central Asian states of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan also need to be involved as the two main rivers run through their territory. The five

Central Asian countries set up the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) in 1993 both to coordinate policies to protect the Aral Sea, as well as to channel funds from external donors such as the World Bank. However, over 90% of the water taken out of the Aral Sea basin continues to be used for irrigation. Despite the importance of agriculture to the economies of all five Central Asian countries, it is vital that changes are made. These could include more efficient irrigation systems as well as a move towards crops which are less irrigation-dependent. However, cotton provides important foreign exchange earnings; Uzbekistan is the world's fifth largest cotton producer.

Externally funded projects have begun to have an impact. Phase I of the Syr Darya Control and Northern Aral Sea Project (2001–2012) established a programme to reduce water loss. The construction and operation of the Kok-Aral Dam since 2005 was key to the rise in water levels in the northern part of the basin. The number and diversity of flora and fauna increased, and fishing-based livelihoods were greatly enhanced as a result. Phase I was funded largely through a US\$64.5 million loan from the World Bank to the Government of Kazakhstan. A second phase had been planned, with the World Bank committing to funding of about US\$165 million, but as of September 2019 this project had been dropped. Future attempts to increase water levels in the Aral Sea will be made more difficult due to predicted declines in the inflow of water from glaciers due to climate change.

Source: adapted from Abdullaev and Rakhmatullaev (2015); Chen (2018); Micklin (2007, 2016); Spoor (1998); World Bank (2019a)



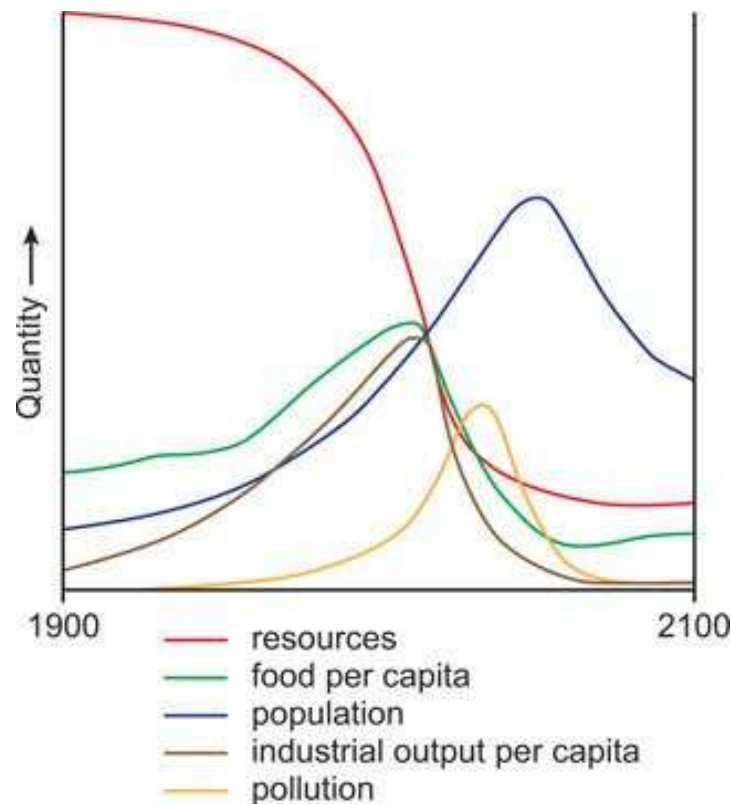
[Plate 7.2](#) [Abandoned boats, Moynaq, Uzbekistan](#)

Credit: Milosz Maslanka/[Shutterstock.com](#)

In 1972, Donella H. Meadows *et al.* published *The Limits to Growth* commissioned by the Club of Rome, a non-governmental research organization dealing with ‘global problems’. The report placed the relationships between economic growth and the natural environment at the centre of the debate. However, unlike the environmental movement, which stressed the issue of environmental destruction as a problem in its own right, the Club of Rome’s focus was much more on how current development methods would lead to catastrophe for the human population in terms of both rapidly declining populations (as predicted by Malthus) and huge decreases in rates of industrial growth. Meadows *et al.* stated, ‘we can thus say with some confidence that, under the assumption of no major change in the present system, population and industrial growth will certainly stop within the next century, at the latest’ (1972: 126).

The basis for these doom-laden predications were the results of a complex systems model which looked at five main processes: population growth, non-renewable resource use, pollution, food supply and industrialization. The relationships between these different factors and the current and predicted levels were also included in the model. By running the model with changes in

the levels of the different factors, estimates could be made of when the 'limits to growth' would be reached (see [Figure 7.2](#)). The authors stressed that while the predicted levels may not be completely accurate, the overall trends were correct. These predictions about future catastrophe led these researchers and others with similar views to be categorized as 'neo-Malthusian'.



[Figure 7.2](#) [Limits-to-growth model](#)

Source: adapted from Meadows *et al.* (1972: 124)

As we saw earlier, Malthus has been criticized for not considering the ways in which technological advances could increase the food supply. Meadows *et al.* ran their model to include a range of technological advances, such as improved mining techniques to increase access to minerals, but they still came to the same conclusion – if current rates of consumption and economic development continued, disaster would strike before 2100. The model does not include the social dimensions of life because they are so complicated and difficult to assess. The authors were very explicit about their exclusion of these factors, but did state that decisions about income distribution, for example, could have significant impacts on when the 'limits' would be reached. In their final chapter, they stated that it was crucial that decisions

were made immediately about the trade-offs needed to achieve global equilibrium, i.e. not to reach the limits to growth.

The concluding commentary from the Club of Rome executive stated that it was crucial for the 'developed countries' to take a lead in this process as they were the major users of resources. Rather than stopping development in the South, resource use must be cut back in the North and attempts must be made to promote more effective and sustainable development throughout the world.

They did not make any specific suggestions as to the nature of policies which should be introduced, although they clearly did not suggest leaving this to market forces. Governments throughout the world were considered key in implementing policies to help reduce birth rates, conserve non-renewable resources and control pollution.

The predications of a Malthusian catastrophic collapse of global population was widely seen as too dramatic and therefore unlikely when the original Club of Rome publication came out. Since the early 1970s, the growing pressures on natural resources and the inability of the world's population to live within environmental constraints has been increasingly recognized (see later in the discussion on sustainable development and climate change). In their assessment of the limits to growth 30 years on, Meadows *et al.* (2005) highlighted the growing evidence of economic growth limits being reached and environmental sustainability becoming much harder. While they remained optimistic, they commented on a widespread lack of awareness and willingness to act on what they term the 'ecological overshoot'.

Most recently Jorgen Randers, one of the authors of the original *Limits to Growth* report, published a book which forecast the state of the world in 2052 if resource consumption and technological change continue in their current form (Randers 2012). Using the same basic model as that used in the 1972 report, but with the most recent data, Randers predicts that there won't be a global collapse in economic growth or well-being, but rather significant regional differences; the current economically rich countries of the world will be particularly hard hit by declines in economic growth and well-being. There will also continue to be significant inequalities in resource access, whereby levels of starvation will increase despite there being sufficient food to feed the world's population. For Randers, the solution includes having fewer children (especially in the Global North), moving to a low-emission world to address climate change, and replacing short-term planning and policy with longer time horizons. Such solutions fit with current international debates around

sustainable development (see later). He also proposes a refocusing of aspirations in economically richer societies towards increasing well-being, rather than economic growth. The idea of this reorientation of development aspirations chimes with postcolonial debates and recent discussions of degrowth approaches (see [Chapter 8](#)).

INTERMEDIATE TECHNOLOGY

The concept of intermediate technology was developed by E.F. Schumacher and is outlined in his book *Small Is Beautiful* (1974). The subtitle to the book is *A Study of Economics as if People Mattered* and demonstrates what he felt the focus of economics should be. Rather than concentrating on maximizing flows of money and economic growth, Schumacher argued that economic policies everywhere in the world should be people-centred (see also [Chapter 5](#)). This was not only to allow individuals to be creative and experience the full range of what it was to be human, rather than merely a cog in a large economic machine; it was also in recognition of the environmental destruction that was occurring through the use of existing economic approaches. This environmental destruction was not only in terms of resource depletion, in particular the use of energy reserves, but it would also lead to the reduced carrying capacity of the world, i.e. the maximum number of people who could be supported using the world's natural resources.

For Schumacher, the answer was not to return to a pre-industrial, 'primitive' stage; rather it was to implement policies which were appropriate to the needs of particular groups of people. In countries where there were large numbers of people without formal employment, Schumacher stated that it was bad practice to implement policies using high-tech equipment which could do the work of hundreds of people. Such an approach would result in a dual economy with the majority of the population scraping a living, while a few gained from being part of the modern capitalist economy. In contrast, Schumacher stressed the use of technology that would employ large numbers of people in productive activities, particularly in rural areas. This form of technology he termed 'intermediate technology' to highlight its position between the 'primitive' forms of tools used in the past and the very advanced high-technology equipment that had been introduced into many parts of the South in the process of development ([Box 7.3](#) and [Plate 7.3](#)).

BOX 7.3 RENEWABLE ENERGY: SOLAR MINI-GRIDS IN ZIMBABWE

Electrification rates in Zimbabwe are 41.5%, but in rural areas the figure is currently below 19%. Consequently, rural villagers rely on alternative resources such as wood and charcoal for daily activities such as cooking and lighting. These sources are non-renewable and much less effective than electricity; although they provide a short-term solution, long-term impacts must be considered. The use of wood and charcoal also contributes to deforestation and can have detrimental health effects due to smoke inhalation.

Due to the abundance of solar energy throughout the year in Zimbabwe, solar power has significant potential to address rural energy needs in a sustainable way. Practical Action created a 99kW solar power plant in Gwanda, Matebeleland South Province as part of Practical Action's Sustainable Energy for Rural Communities (SE4RC) scheme, which is funded by international donors for work in Zimbabwe and Malawi. The power plant consists of 400 solar panels and provides the local community with energy for three irrigation schemes, two business centres, a clinic and a primary school.

The scheme means that crops can be irrigated effectively, so potentially increasing yields, and therefore food security and income. Providing an electricity supply to Mashaba Primary School gives children a place to study after dark and enables computer use (although see Heeks 2017, for discussion of ICT and development). Delight Ncube, a 12-year-old pupil at the school, is quoted as saying,

I am very happy that we now have electricity at our school because I can now come to school in the evening to study. I have never used a computer before and have only seen them in books. Now we will be able to use computers to learn and it will help me with my education.

While such results are very positive, it is important to consider the ongoing sustainability of such schemes, particularly in relation to technical support and funding.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Many of the debates outlined so far in this chapter became subsumed under what has become known as ‘sustainable development’. During the 1960s and 1970s, the environmental impacts of various development processes were increasingly recognized by a range of groups. In 1983, the United Nations set up an independent organization, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), chaired by the then-Prime Minister of Norway, Gro Harlem Brundtland. The aim of the WCED was to examine the problems of environment and development facing the world and to consider possible solutions. These solutions should be considered not just for current generations, but with an awareness of long-term issues.



[Plate 7.3 Bondo micro-hydro power station, Mulanje, Malawi](#)

Credit: Katie Willis

In 1987, the WCED published its findings in a report entitled *Our Common Future* (although it is also known as *The Brundtland Report* after the WCED Chair). The Report laid out the environmental challenges facing the world, and examined how environmental destruction would limit forms of economic growth, but also how poverty and disadvantage contribute to environmental destruction. The Report stressed the importance of ‘sustainable development’ as a goal towards which the international community should work. According to the WCED, ‘sustainable development’ is ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (WCED 1987: 43).

Building on this environmental focus, the United Nations held an international conference in Rio in 1992 to consider how sustainable development could be achieved. Since then, ‘sustainable development’ has become a key element in development theorizing and policy-making, with Rio + 10 and Rio + 20 Conferences on Sustainable Development, and the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, the term’s meanings are highly debated, with some seeing the diversity of definitions as rendering it useless, while others see that flexibility as enabling it to be used for positive change (Elliott 2013: 15).

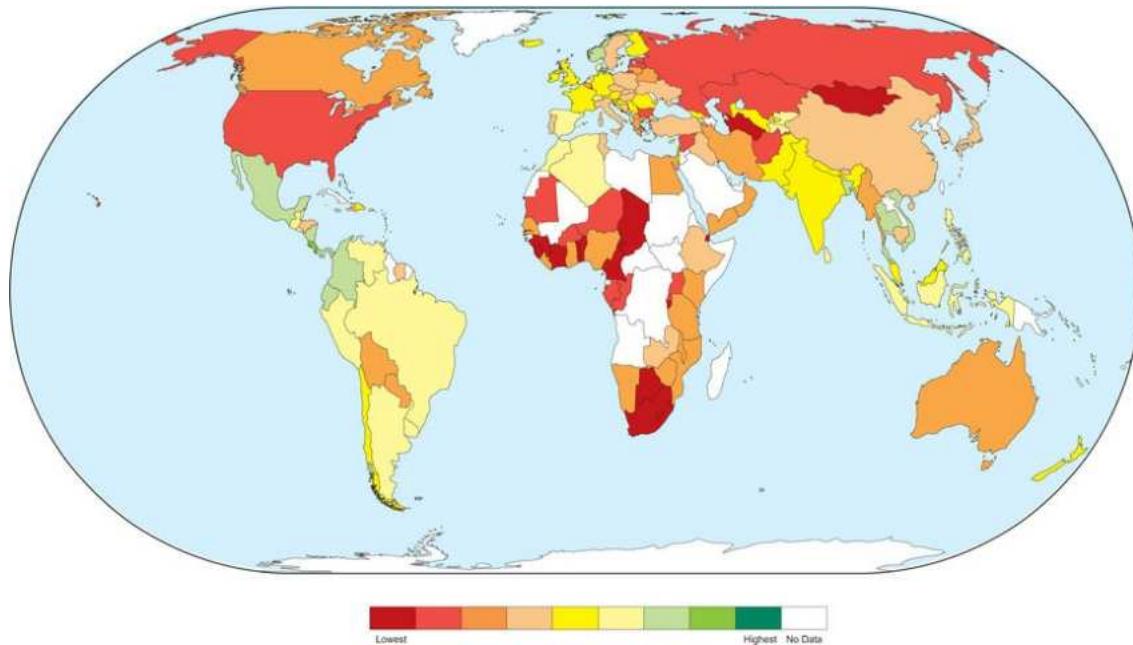
A broad distinction can be made between ‘light green’ or ‘technocentric’ approaches to the relationship between humans and nature, and ‘dark green’ or ‘ecocentric’ approaches, although the boundaries between the two are certainly not clearly defined (O’Riordan 1981; Pepper 1996). In technocratic approaches, the focus is on humankind and the improvements in human standards of living and quality of life. In general, these approaches do not involve radical changes in the current economic and political systems; rather, a technical approach is adopted. This may be in the form of improved industrial or energy-generating systems which reduce pollution for example. Other technocratic solutions would include changing resource management procedures, for example by using market mechanisms to regulate human-induced environmental problems (see later). The term ‘anthropocentric’ is also sometimes used to refer to this approach, stressing the central position of humans. Sophia Imran *et al.* (2014) highlight the anthropocentric nature of the Brundtland Commission definition of sustainable development as it focuses on the meeting of human needs.

In contrast, dark green or ecocentric approaches start with the premise that it is the Earth which is much more important than ideas about human

progress and rapid economic growth. Because of this, the approaches are much more radical and call for massive shifts in the economic and political structures. In particular, there is a focus on much smaller-scale, local forms of organization similar to Schumacher's ideas of 'small is beautiful'. For economically richer countries and groups, the ecocentric approach would involve a huge reduction in consumption.

The Happy Planet Index (HPI) is an attempt to evaluate the balance between environmental destruction and human development at a global scale. It uses measures of life expectancy at birth, life satisfaction and ecological footprint. The latter is the 'the ecological assets that a given population requires to produce the natural resources it consumes ... and to absorb its waste, especially carbon emissions' (Global Footprint Network 2019). Calculating the HPI gives an indication of the ecological cost of long and happy lives. National figures provide a different perspective on global development than that provided by more conventional measures ([Figure 7.3](#)). While the HPI is presented by country, since 2016 the HPI has been adjusted to reflect inequality in life satisfaction and life expectancy, so recognizing that national-level data often masks significant internal differences (Happy Planet Index 2019).

The concept of 'sustainable development' as presented in the SDGs brings together environmental protection, economic growth and inclusion, reflected in the commitment to 'leave no one behind' (UN 2020a). The environment features much more strongly in the SDGs than it did in the MDGs, where all environmental issues were encompassed in MDG7, 'Ensure environmental sustainability' (Willis 2017). There are three SDGs focusing directly on the environment: SDG 13 on climate action, SDG 14 on marine ecosystems and SDG 15 on terrestrial ecosystems. Other SDGs engage with environmental issues more indirectly through targets for clean energy (SDG 7), clean water (SDG 6) and responsible production and consumption (SDG 12). Despite this increased focus on the environment, the underlying approach of the SDGs is anthropocentric; the environment matters because of its importance to human survival and well-being. The SDGs have been criticized for being too wide ranging and contradictory. There are also concerns that the SDG agenda (sometimes termed the '2030 Agenda') relies on a continued model of neoliberal development policies which will not achieve the desired equitable and environmentally sustainable outcomes (Scheyvens *et al.* 2016).



[Figure 7.3](#) [Happy Planet Index, 2016](#)

Source: adapted from Happy Planet Index (2019)

CLIMATE CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

Since the rise of sustainable development as a focus of development policy, the agenda has been increasingly dominated by the challenges that climate change poses to development, particularly in relation to poverty alleviation in the Global South. Thomas Tanner and Leo Horn-Phathanothai term climate change ‘the mother of all development challenges’ (2014: 2). While the impacts of climate change are impossible to predict exactly, due to the complexities of the global climate system, there is widespread agreement that countries of the Global South will be disproportionately affected. For example, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2019: [Chapter 5](#): 5) concluded that crop yields have already been negatively affected in dryland areas of Africa and high mountain regions of South Asia and South America due to rising temperatures, more irregular rainfall and more extreme weather events. This has, and will continue to have, detrimental impacts on food security (FAO 2016). More frequent and ferocious events, such as tropical storms and hurricanes, will also lead to disruption of economic activities, destruction of infrastructure and loss of life.

Sea-level rise also represents a threat, with estimates of global mean sea-

level rise ranging from 21–71 cm by 2070 from the early 21st-century level (IPCC 2010: 278). Thus, areas currently at risk from coastal flooding would increase, as would the areas at risk during storm surges (Neumann *et al.* 2015). The survival of some countries, most notably low-lying island states in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, such as the Maldives and Kiribati, is under threat even from moderate sea-level rise, while large sections of the population in many countries are found in the low-elevation coastal zone (LECZ) which is less than 5 m above sea level ([Table 7.1](#)).

Table 7.1 [Population in the low-elevation coastal zone \(five metres\), 2010](#)

<i>Top ten by total population in LECZ</i>			<i>Territories with over 25% population in LECZ</i>		
	Number (000s)	% of total population		Number (000s)	% of total population
China	88,310.4	6.6	Netherlands	9,749.9	58.5
India	33,085.3	2.7	Suriname	297.4	56.2
Vietnam	32,828.0	37.0	Turks and Caicos	18.9	48.4
Egypt	17,765.0	21.5	Maldives	154.4	48.2
Indonesia	17,851.9	7.4	Tuvalu	4.7	47.5
Japan	15,997.7	12.6	Greenland	26.6	46.5
Bangladesh	13,418.2	8.9	Macao SAR, China	220.3	39.6
USA	7866.4	2.5	Vietnam	32,828.0	37.0
Thailand	7,189.5	10.3	Marshall Islands	19.7	35.9
Philippines	5,360.4	5.7	Bahrain	453.7	34.3
			Gibraltar	8.5	29.0
			Guyana	210.7	27.9
			Tokelau	0.29	25.7
			Monaco	8.9	25.3

Source: Center for International Earth Science Information Network (2013)

Responses to climate change have been classified as mitigation, which is attempting to limit future climate change through measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while adaptation is adjusting to current or expected climate change (Ayers and Dodman 2010). In both cases, the peoples most affected by climate change are the least able to do anything about it. While mitigation has tended to focus on international negotiations (see next section on global governance), it does also include measures to adopt clean technologies, such as solar power (see [Box 7.3](#)). Adaptation measures include early warning systems, the use of drought and pest-resistant seeds and the strengthening of coastal defences. However, as Jessica Ayers and David Dodman (2010) argue, these tend to be technocratic solutions which do not take into account the social, political and economic causes of vulnerability, which means that certain groups are more likely to be affected than others (Wisner *et al.* 2003; Leichenko and Silva 2014 and see discussion later on political ecology). As the pervasive impacts of climate change have been acknowledged, there has been a move towards ‘mainstreaming’ adaptation to climate change, so that it is considered in all government policies, rather than being considered separately (Ayers *et al.* 2014).

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Climate change is an obvious example of an environmental problem which is not restricted within national borders. Similarly, the source of water and air pollution can be in one country, but the effects can be experienced elsewhere. Because of the global nature of many environmental problems, attempts have been made to organize responses on a global scale. The idea of ‘global governance’ has been used to describe political decision-making at a global level. Organizations such as the UN can be described as ‘global governance organizations’, consisting of nation-state representatives (see [Chapter 4](#) for further discussion).

In terms of global governance and environmental protection, the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm is often held up as a key moment, and in the following year the UN Environment Program (UNEP) was established (Barrow 1995). Since then, there have been numerous attempts to produce global agreements on issues around pollution, whaling

and biodiversity among others. *The Brundtland Report*, the 1992 Rio Conference and its successors in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002 and back in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2012 brought these issues to even greater public attention and also highlighted the potential conflicts between North and South regarding the environmental agenda. For many Southern nations, the concept of controls on economic growth because of environmental concerns has been interpreted as a way of limiting development progress in the South by denying access to methods that were used by Northern countries in their industrialization processes.

When the global distribution of greenhouse gas emissions is examined, it is clear that emissions are disproportionately concentrated in high- and upper-middle-income countries ([Table 7.2](#)). For example, while the USA makes up about 4.3% of the world’s population, it contributes 14.5% of global carbon dioxide emissions. China’s role as a major carbon dioxide emitter from the Global South needs to be recognized; it also contributes nearly 28.5% of the global figure, but with a significantly larger population, meaning that China and the USA have very different per capita emission figures; 7.54 metric tons p.c. in China and 16.5 metric tons p.c. in the USA (World Bank 2019c). Attempts to control future emissions are challenging, not least because of these distribution patterns and demands from countries in the Global South to be able to develop and achieve economic growth as Global North countries did. [Table 7.2](#) shows how per capita carbon dioxide emissions declined between 2000 and 2014 in the European Union and North America, partly because of policies to address greenhouse gas emissions, while figures went up for most regions of the Global South. Such tensions have undermined many attempts at global binding agreements to address climate change, but the 2015 Paris Agreement provided hope for global cooperation (see [Box 7.4](#)).

The challenges faced in implementing the Paris Agreement and achieving the global temperature rise targets should not, however, hide the fact that international agreements on environmental protection can be successfully implemented. For example, the 1987 Montreal Protocol led to reductions in the manufacture and use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), which were implicated in the development of holes in the ozone layer that protects the Earth’s surface from particular forms of ultra-violet radiation (Barrow 1995).

[Table 7.2](#) [Carbon dioxide emissions by region](#)

<i>Carbon dioxide emissions per</i>	<i>% Global</i>

	<i>capita (metric tons)</i>				<i>emissions</i>
	<i>1960</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2014</i>
East Asia & Pacific	1.2	2.1	3.2	6.3	39.5
European Union	5.8	9.7	8.0	6.4	9.0
Latin America & Caribbean	1.3	2.4	2.6	3.1	5.3
Middle East & North Africa	1.0	3.5	4.7	6.2	7.2
North America	15.5	20.5	19.9	16.4	16.0
South Asia	0.2	0.4	0.8	1.5	7.0
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.5	1.0	0.9	0.9	2.3
UN income groups					
High income	7.5	11.9	12.2	10.9	35.8
Upper-middle income	1.7	2.8	3.5	6.5	46.6
Lower-middle income	0.4	0.8	1.1	1.5	11.6
Low income	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.54
WORLD	3.1	4.2	4.0	5.0	100 ^a

Note: Carbon dioxide emissions are those stemming from the burning of fossil fuels and the manufacture of cement. They include carbon dioxide produced during consumption of solid, liquid and gas fuels and gas flaring.

^a Regional totals and income group totals do not add up to 100% as they do not include all countries/territories

Source: adapted from World Bank (2019c)

POLITICAL ECOLOGY

The debates around how to achieve sustainable development highlight how environmental processes have political dimensions. A political ecology approach has become adopted by many development researchers working on what could be defined as ‘environmental problems’. For Paul Robbins, political ecology is ‘a field that seeks to unravel the political forces at work in

environmental access, management and transformation’ (Robbins 2020: 3). Here Robbins is referring to ‘political’ not just in terms of formal political institutions, but more broadly to the exercise of power by different actors (see [Chapter 4](#)).

Piers Blaikie is one of the key researchers who developed the political ecology approach in a development context (Rigg 2019), through his work on soil erosion (Blaikie 1985) and land degradation (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987). Blaikie argues that rather than being just an environmental problem, soil erosion is a social problem as well. Biological and physical processes are not inherently problematic unless they are identified as having a negative effect on humans. Thus, the concept of ‘environmental problem’ is socially constructed (Eden 2014). This construction, as well as the explanations of and solutions for the problem, will depend on different worldviews and reflects inequalities in power (Blaikie 1995).

BOX 7.4 THE 2015 PARIS CLIMATE CHANGE AGREEMENT

The agreement drawn up at the UN Climate Change conference in Paris in December 2015 was hailed as a significant achievement in global actions to address climate change. Rather than including specific emissions targets, there was consensus on keeping global temperature increases below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, with an aspiration to keep the increase to 1.5°C. The different circumstances of signatory countries were acknowledged, but all countries are to play their part in meeting these targets through nationally determined contributions. This is different from previous agreements where emissions targets were imposed from the top down and the focus was on high-income countries. Countries will need to report on their contributions and actions every five years.

Additional elements of the agreement include continued support to Global South countries (‘developing countries’ in UN classification) in adopting clean technologies and increased resilience to climate change. There was also a commitment to enhance climate change education and public awareness. This is in line with SDG 13, Target 13A. Alongside the national governmental representatives, there was a significant presence

of non-state actors at the Paris Conference, including city and regional governments, private sector companies, investors and civil society organizations.

In the four Climate Change conferences since Paris (2016 Marakesh, 2017 Bonn, 2018 Katowice and 2019 Madrid), the focus has been on developing the reporting mechanisms. There has been some progress, but the final details remain to be agreed. One of the challenges is in providing some flexibility to individual countries based on their own circumstances and capacity, while ensuring that there is some coherence to the mechanism. In addition, the agreed climate finance of US\$100 billion per annum has not yet been provided.

Achieving the agreement in 2015 required bottom-up elements whereby individual countries would set their own greenhouse gas emissions targets and plans to achieve them. However, both the IPCC and UNEP reported in 2018 that without a significant scaling up of ambitions from individual countries, the Paris target would not be met. An additional blow to the potential success of the Paris Agreement was President Trump's announcement in June 2017 that the United States, a significant greenhouse gas emitter, would withdraw from the Agreement as it would have negative impacts on the US economy. In response, many US cities and regions committed to continuing with the Paris Agreement process, and the EU, China and Canada reaffirmed their commitment at the Bonn Conference.

Robert Falkner (2016: 1119) states that it is unrealistic to expect one agreement to achieve everything. While this is clearly the case, the Paris Agreement and the associated negotiations demonstrate the challenges for global cooperation on environmental issues.

Source: adapted from Falkner (2016); IPCC (2018); UNEP (2018); UNFCCC (2019)

People living in poverty in the Global South are often blamed for environmental degradation (Bryant 1997). For example, mismanagement by pastoralist communities of environmental resources through overpopulation and overgrazing may be identified as reasons for soil erosion. However, a political ecology approach considers the political and economic structures within which people live and work, not just at a local level, but at national and global level as well. Issues around access to land, unequal trading

relationships, and state development policies may be among the factors which should also be considered. While political ecological approaches originally focused on rural settings, there has been growing use of political ecology to understand urban lives (see [Box 7.5](#)).

The development of feminist political ecology (FPE) has highlighted the importance of gender inequalities in understanding the relationships between nature and society. FPE calls for an engagement with gendered power relations, and the scales of communities and households, alongside more well-established foci such as class relations and inequalities within the global economic system (Rocheleau *et al.* 1996). This work has developed further with the new post-structural approaches to gender which challenge homogenous categories of ‘women’ and men’ (see [Chapter 6](#)) (Elmhirst 2011).

PRICING THE EARTH

Despite the overall acceptance that the natural environment needs to be considered as part of development policies, the section on sustainable development shows us that there are very different ways in which sustainable development is conceived. This is reflected in the range of policy suggestions. Given the challenges of implementing radical ‘ecocentric’ approaches, it is not surprising that governments throughout the world have focused on technocratic solutions to perceived environmental problems (Barrow 2006). However, as insights from political ecology have suggested, approaches which do not address fundamental issues of power inequalities are doomed to failure (Robbins 2020).

Within a free market system, environmental controls may be regarded as limits to free trade, or provide too great a brake on potential economic growth. This does not mean that controls or restrictions are not applied as in the case of CFCs and the Montreal Protocol. For example, there are international agreements on the trade in hardwoods and endangered species because of the recognition that allowing free trade in these goods would result in reduced biodiversity and other potentially damaging environmental impacts. In practice, while these restrictions work to some extent, there are still significant examples of these rules being flouted. The case of deforestation in Indonesia is one such example ([Box 7.1](#)). In some cases, the rule-breakers are individuals who operate without the knowledge of the law enforcement

authorities, but in others, rule breaking may be ignored by the authorities, who see the need for foreign currency as being much more important than the environmental protection agenda (see the earlier discussion about different perspectives on environmental resources within political ecology).

BOX 7.5 HOUSEHOLD ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS IN LAGOS, NIGERIA

Lagos is one of the largest cities in Africa, with a population of 13.9 million in 2019 (UNDESA 2019b), although some estimates place the population of the Lagos metropolitan area nearer to 20 million (Daramola and Olawuni 2019). Due to the rapid growth of the city and the inability and unwillingness of successive city governments from the period of British colonialism through independence in 1960 to the present day, about 70% of Lagos' residents live in slum settlements (Ajibade and McBean 2014). Modern urban infrastructural services are concentrated in the commercial district and the wealthier residential areas.

In Greater Lagos, only 5.4% of the population has access to piped water (UN-Habitat 2014: 119), leaving the vast majority of the population to rely on purchasing water at high costs. Over two-thirds of cases of childhood illness have been attributed to the lack of access to safe drinking water, exacerbated by the lack of access to a closed sewer system, which means that large amounts of human waste are disposed of in water courses and on waste ground. Given its coastal location and its expansion on a series of islands, many parts of the city are vulnerable to flooding, including low-income houses which are built on stilts on the Lagos lagoon. The lack of an adequate drainage system means that during heavy rain over 50% of houses are flooded. Climate change is likely to increase vulnerability to flooding. A sea-level rise of 0.3 m could lead to the displacement of up to 2 million people in the city (French *et al.* 1995 in Ajibade and McBean 2014).

Idowu Ajibade and Gordon McBean conducted a study in three communities in the Badia district of the city to explore vulnerability to climate change. The study was conducted in 2011 just after a significant flooding event which had resulted in loss of property, reduced income due to disruption of economic activities, and health problems for most of

the residents. While there had been significant rainfall, many government officials blamed the residents for blocking the drainage channels with rubbish. However, Ajibade and McBean use a political ecology approach to demonstrate that the dumping of waste reflected the lack of rubbish collection and sanitation services, households often used rubbish as construction materials for their homes and the sorting of garbage was also a source of income for some families. Most households had not heard the government messages to evacuate the area due to predicted flooding as they did not have a radio or television. Even if they had received the messages, most did not have anywhere to go. The political ecology approach highlighted how the vulnerability of the Badia residents was due not just to the high rainfall, but reflects the structural conditions in which they live as low-income residents with no formal housing rights.

Since 2013, residents from part of Badia have been forcibly evicted and their homes destroyed to make way for private residential developments (Akinwotu 2015).

Source: adapted from Ajibade and McBean (2014); Akinwotu (2015); Daramola and Olawuni (2019); Gandy (2006); Kofoworola (2007); UNDESA (2019b) UN-Habitat (2014)



Plate 7.4 [Makoko informal settlement, Lagos, Nigeria](#)

Credit: Dan Ikpoyi/[Shutterstock.com](#)

Another approach to environmental protection within a free market model is the attempt to put a price on nature, or on environmental destruction, so creating a market for these goods. Under this approach, price reflects the cost in market terms, rather than a less tangible idea of value for example in spiritual terms. The introduction of market price mechanisms into environmental protection has been part of what James McCarthy and Scott Prudham have termed 'neoliberalizing nature' (2004). However, many environmental pricing schemes retain significant government involvement, and market forces may not operate in the way that neoliberalism implies (McElwee *et al.* 2014).

The pricing of ecosystem services has expanded greatly with market-focused 'solutions' to environmental problems. Rather than seeing aspects of the natural environment purely in terms of the commodities, e.g. wood, water, animal products, and the prices that could be obtained for them, the concept of ecosystem services recognizes the wider benefits of the environment, e.g. as carbon sinks in the case of forests, or as protection against coastal flooding for some mangroves and coral reefs (Grima *et al.* 2017; Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005). The price which is charged for protecting the environment, should therefore include these broader services that nature provides well beyond the specific locality.

Payment for ecosystem services (PES) (also called payment for environmental services) has been introduced as a way of promoting environmental protection while also providing local communities with a source of income (Pagiola *et al.* 2005). Such an approach acknowledges that attitudes towards a particular environmental resource may vary between actors. PES is based on the assumption that a lack of income drives environmentally destructive practices at a local level, so making the resource more economically valuable if it is protected than exploited is seen as a logical technical fix. However, the outcomes of PES schemes are highly variable reflecting the diversity of environments, land-holding systems, government institutions and the design of the scheme (Grima *et al.* 2017). Pamela McElwee *et al.* (2014) investigated the impacts of PES pilot schemes in Lam Dong and Son La provinces in Vietnam. The schemes focused on forest protection and the role of forests in water supply and preventing soil erosion. While there were reported environmental benefits, there was significant confusion among community members about how the scheme worked and the funding they

received. The projects tended to exacerbate existing inequalities as households that did not own land, and/or did not have sufficient labour power to contribute to forest monitoring (and therefore the funds), were excluded.

International cooperation to protect biodiversity and to mitigate climate change has also drawn on this market-led approach. The Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD+) approach has been established as part of the deliberations of the countries involved in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This is due to the contributions that deforestation has on the emission of greenhouse gas emissions. As part of REDD+, national governments need to present carbon accounts and information about their actions to achieve forest protection. These actions can be supported through international funding. For Esteve Corbera (2012: 612), REDD+ represents 'the world's largest PES experiment'. While the provision of funding to protect forest resources can reduce deforestation, there are concerns that the livelihoods of local communities may be ignored (although see UN-REDD 2019 for discussion of REDD+ in wider context of sustainable development). Issues around a reinforcement of inequality at local and national scales are also a concern. Putting a market value on forest protection also ignores other ways of thinking about the value of these environments (Corbera 2012; Kull *et al.* 2015). Finally, geopolitical concerns may intervene in such an approach. For example, in September 2019, Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro challenged representations of the Brazilian Amazon as being a global resource, instead insisting on Brazilian sovereignty over that territory and decisions about how to manage its resources. This was in response to criticisms of his government for allowing forest clearance and exploitation for mining, logging and cattle ranching (BBC News 2019b). As a result of growing evidence of deforestation and President Bolsonaro's dissolution of the Amazon Fund committees (Amazon Fund 2019), Norway and Germany suspended their contributions to the Amazon Fund, which was part of the REDD+ framework (*The Guardian* 2019a).

SUSTAINABILITY AND BUSINESS

The private sector, from small businesses to large corporations, has been identified as a key actor in the drive to sustainable development, including the

achievement of the SDGs (Scheyvens *et al.* 2016). It is also clear that companies have seen opportunities to gain market share in promoting their sustainability credentials, innovating new products to meet the demand for environmentally friendly goods, as well as acknowledging that adopting sustainable practices could save money on their operating costs.

‘Corporate social responsibility’ (CSR) is an umbrella term which broadly means ‘a firm’s voluntary contribution to social goods beyond production for profit’ (Kaplan 2015: 125). This might include activities such as events for the local community, efforts to improve energy efficiency in the company, and staff volunteering, but could also include monitoring of the environmental and labour conditions involved in supply chains, such as the use of palm oil (see [Box 7.1](#)) or child labour. Large companies will have CSR divisions and may have a separate charitable corporate foundations through which money is spent on ‘good causes’.

The wider responsibilities of companies have become much more visible since the 1980s, although they have a much longer history (Kaplan 2015). The rise of neoliberalism in the 1980s (see [Chapter 2](#)) led to reduced state regulation of companies, but it was assumed that consumer choice would be a direct form of governance. If companies were engaged with practices that consumers did not approve of, they would suffer as shoppers took their custom elsewhere, or there were organized boycotts. The use of social media today means that customer power can have a significant and rapid impact on corporate activities (see [Chapter 5](#) for a discussion of ethical consumption).

The environmental impacts of a company’s activities and products are an important dimension of CSR, and some governments require companies above a certain size to conduct and report on an environmental audit. However, most governments do not require this, but companies may still stress their environmental credentials to potential customers. While this can be seen as positive in changing potentially environmentally destructive practices, there is a danger of ‘greenwashing’: ‘misleading consumers about firm environmental performance or the environmental benefits of a product or service’ (Delmas and Burbano 2011: 64).

The concept of the ‘circular economy’ (Stahel 2016) has gained increasing attention as a route to sustainable development across social, economic and environmental domains, with private sector participation as vital. The circular economy views the life cycle of a product or service in a holistic way and seeks to minimize waste and pollution, and keep products and materials in use

for as long as possible (Ellen MacArthur Foundation 2019). When the economy is viewed as linear, something is produced, consumed and discarded (which might include recycling, but could just mean going to landfill or incineration). A circular economy perspective would include environmentally efficient production methods, but also product design that built in plans for recycling and reuse of component materials. The circular economy could also include a move from ownership to leasing goods which would then be returned to the manufacturers (Trebeck and Williams, 2019). The circular economy is presented as a win-win-win scenario as it promises job creation and economic opportunities for businesses, environmental protection and a greater sense of social solidarity and sharing (Korhonen *et al.* 2018).

Despite these promises and increasing interest from governments, multilateral organizations (most notably the EU) and environmental groups, the circular economy remains largely as a set of ideas, rather than a coherent policy agenda (Stahel 2016). The Chinese government adopted a circular economy strategy in 2002 and has piloted the approach in some cities (Su *et al.* 2013). For Jouni Korhonen *et al.* (2018), while they see great promise within a circular economy approach, they see significant limitations to its successful implementation, including the existing industrial and business infrastructures, the lack of effective global environmental governance, and the challenges of changing current consumer behaviour.

ECOTOURISM

Tourism represents one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world and can provide significant income for many nations (WTTC 2019). However, tourism is also associated with severe environmental destruction as unregulated infrastructure development takes place and an area's population increases much faster than the services, such as sewage systems and local water supplies, can cope with. In addition, large numbers of visitors in environmentally sensitive areas such as mountain regions can lead to soil degradation, pollution and the disruption of local ecosystems (Holden 2016; Sharpley and Telfer 2016). At a global scale, air travel (including that for tourism) is a significant contributor to climate change.



[Plate 7.5](#) [Tourist stalls, Ollantaytambo, Peru](#)

Credit: cge2010/[Shutterstock.com](#)

The sustainable development agenda has led to attempts to make tourism development more environmentally friendly, and this has led to the phenomenon of 'ecotourism'. Sustainable tourism in its broadest sense encompasses more than environmental protection, incorporating issues around economic sustainability, supply chains, workers' pay and conditions, community involvement and cultural diversity (Epler Wood 2017). As with 'sustainable development', 'ecotourism' can cover a multitude of activities. It may be used to refer to tourism to areas of outstanding natural beauty or interest. In other words, the 'eco' refers not to the way in which the tourism is being organized, but the purpose of the visit, such as wildlife-watching. However, even within 'ecotourist' projects that are set up to reduce the environmental impact of the activities, there are wide variations. Requiring little adaptation to the 'traditional' form of mass tourism, hotels increasingly give guests the opportunity to reduce water and energy use and pollution from detergents by using towels for more than one day. This can have positive environmental impacts, and also save the hotel money, while also helping public relations and increasingly attract customers (Howard 2014). However, there are concerns that while important, such changes are too small-scale to

deal with larger sustainability issues associated with mass tourism.

‘Ecotourism’ projects which really get to grips with the concept of minimizing the environmental impacts of tourism need to look at limiting numbers to control pressure on resources, what form of accommodation is provided and where it is located, and the sourcing of building materials, food and other inputs. Ecotourism projects are often very small-scale and involve community-based and -owned enterprises, sometimes run with support from NGOs (see [Chapter 5](#)). Making the tourism experience more expensive can be a way of limiting the number of visitors and can also create a fund which can be used for local environmental projects. However, such schemes do not always result in the desired outcomes in environmental terms ([Box 7.6](#)). Once projects grow beyond a very small scale, it is almost impossible to prevent environmental impacts. The question is, how much environmental damage is allowable in the quest for tourist income?

BOX 7.6 ECOTOURISM IN NEPAL

Every year, thousands of tourists travel to Nepal, attracted by the potential for mountain trekking. In an attempt to protect the natural environment, while also allowing for an important source of income for economic and social development, the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) was set up in 1986. The ACA receives over 150,000 visitors a year to the 7,629km² covered by the project, and there are over 100,000 residents in the ACA. Some of the visitors come on religious pilgrimages to the Muktinath temple, but most are attracted to the region for trekking.

In environmental terms, tourists contribute to deforestation through their use of fuelwood, and they generate a significant amount of waste. The ACAP charges entrance fees to tourists trekking in the area. As of mid-2019, the entrance fee of 3,000 Nepalese rupees was worth about US\$27. These fees are then used to benefit local residents and promote environmentally sustainable activities. Within the ACAP, Conservation Area Management Committees in communities are the main institutions for promoting local participation in decision-making. Other committees include Tourism Management Sub-Committees and specific groups for women and young people. To help reduce the use of timber for fuel, the

ACAP has provided subsidies for solar panels and supported communities in the development of micro-hydro and biogas schemes. Safe water-drinking stations have been set up along the main trekking routes to minimize the use of plastic bottles. Rubbish bins and incinerators have also been installed. All facilities are managed by the communities.

The integrated conservation and development approach adopted by the ACAP seeks to improve the livelihoods of local populations, while protecting the natural environment. Road-building programmes which help communities access goods, healthcare and education, as well as bringing in tourists, have also had detrimental impacts on the environment through erosion and air pollution, and also deter trekkers who are seeking the tranquillity of what they may see as an authentic Nepalese rural experience. The ACAP has worked with local communities to develop new trails to attract tourists, but this may redirect tourists away from villages that had relied on tourist income. The reliance on tourist income to fund conservation as tourist flows can be greatly affected by natural disasters (such as the 2015 Nepal earthquake), terrorism and civil war.

Source: adapted from Baral and Dhungana (2014) K.C. *et al.* (2015); NTNC (2018); Practical Action (1994)

LOCAL PRODUCTION FOR LOCAL MARKETS

An alternative approach to sustainable development is to focus much more on local-level activities. Rather than expending energy on transporting large amounts of goods, in particular agricultural products, around the world, for some theorists, a more locally based self-sufficiency approach is advocated as being much more environmentally friendly and socially sustainable (Gibson-Graham 2006). This approach clearly goes against ideas of comparative advantage and the need for specialism in production and trade to allow for greater efficiency in production. The comparative advantage arguments do not, however, consider other factors such as environmental destruction.

For many producers in the Global South, the drive is to break out of the limitations of local markets to sell products on a national or international

stage. Patterns in some parts of the world, particularly among middle-class consumers the Global North, however, have moved towards more local consumption with short supply chains between producer and consumer (Kneafsey *et al.* 2013). This may not be purely to reduce the environmental impacts of transportation, but they are an important part.

A good example of such an approach is the increase in farmers' markets. While local produce markets have been very important in some parts of Western Europe, in the UK for example, consumers have often been unable to buy locally produced goods. Instead, they purchase foodstuffs from the local supermarket, which have often been imported from all over the world. Farmers' markets are set up to allow local producers to sell their produce directly to the public, rather than through large supermarket chains. Consumers may choose to purchase fruit, vegetables, meat, bread, cheese and other products from these markets for a range of reasons. They may want to support local producers, rather than the shareholders of large supermarket chains; they may feel that the quality of the food is better, particularly as they can ask questions about production processes. Finally, a local focus may be regarded as reducing harmful environmental impacts caused by what could be interpreted as unnecessary transportation of goods thousands of miles (Schupp 2017).

While such reasons are clearly important and often have a solid environmental grounding, this 'retreat' to more local production and consumption could have harmful effects on producers elsewhere in the world, particularly in poorer countries. If these poorer countries have adopted outward-oriented trade-focused development policies to increase economic wealth and contribute to improvements in standards of living, what would happen if their overseas markets shrank? Currently, farmers' markets and similar locally oriented forms of trade are limited, and there are no signs that such approaches will have a serious impact on world trade patterns. However, this is a small-scale example of some of the complex debates around the scale of development. The discussion of fair trade in [Chapter 5](#) also engages with some of these debates around the geographies of consumption decisions.

SUMMARY

- All development theories include reference to the natural environment.

- Many development approaches have used the natural environment as a source of wealth.
- Sustainable development has become a key element of many development policies, but meanings can vary widely.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What were Malthus' arguments about the relationship between human populations and the natural environment, and why have they been criticized?
- 2 Given the debate about the definitions of 'sustainable development', is it still worth using the term?
- 3 How can market-led approaches be used to protect the natural environment?
- 4 Why is local production regarded as a solution to many environmental problems?
- 5 Can global-level agreements about the environment ever work in practice?

FURTHER READING

- Elliott, J. (2013) *An Introduction to Sustainable Development*, 4th edition, London: Routledge. An excellent introduction to sustainable development debates in the Global South.
- Journal of Ecotourism* (2015) Special issue on 'Ecotourism in Africa thirty years later', 14 (2–3).
- Robbins, P. (2020) *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*, 3rd edition, Chichester: Wiley. A clearly written introduction to the field of political ecology.
- Trebeck, K. and J. Williams (2019) *The Economics of Arrival: Ideas for a Grown Up Economy*, Bristol: Policy Press. Sets out an agenda for development which focuses on human well-being and environmental sustainability in an unequal world where millions are people struggle for everyday survival.

Useful websites

- www.2052.info/ Website accompanying Jorgen Randers' Club of Rome book *2052: A Global Forecast for the Next Forty Years*. The site includes graphs, datasheets and presentations.
- <https://agra.org/> Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa website.
- www.clubofrome.org/ Club of Rome website.

www.devalt.org/Home.aspx Development Alternatives. A social enterprise based in India focused on sustainable development.

www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/ Ellen MacArthur Foundation. Good source of information about circular economy ideas.

www.happyplanetindex.org Happy Planet Index homepage.

www.internationalrivers.org/ International Rivers Network. Works with local communities around the world to campaign for sustainable water and energy supplies, as well as flood management. Much of their work deals with campaigning against the construction of large dams.

www.practicalaction.org Practical Action previously known as the Intermediate Technology Development Group. Founded by E.M. Schumacher, the organization works with poor communities in the South to find appropriate technologies to meet their needs. The website includes many examples of small-scale technological approaches which have had an enormous benefit.

www.unhabitat.org United Nations Habitat homepage. Provides information about UN programmes in relation to human settlements with a strong focus on sustainable cities.

www.un-redd.org/ United Nations REDD Programme. Good source of information about global attempts at forest protection and its role in supporting sustainable development.

<https://redd.unfccc.int/> REDD+ web platform of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusions

- Summary of development theories
- South-South Cooperation
- The SDGs and global development
- Degrowth
- Post-development and alternatives to development

In the previous seven chapters, the diversity of development theories and practices has been very apparent. This diversity starts with the definitions of ‘development’. While some theorists view economic growth and increases in economic wealth as the key definition of ‘development’, others consider ‘development’ to encompass ideas of greater autonomy and choice about how individuals live their lives ([Table 8.1](#)). In addition, ‘development’ can be seen as an end point to which particular societies aspire, and/or a process of change and what some have called ‘progress’.

As well as the definitional differences, theories differ in the main actors called on to achieve ‘development’. The key actors involved are governments or the state (at national or local levels), the market represented by private sector companies, and non-governmental organizations and civil society institutions. However, as outlined in [Chapter 1](#), the role of individuals and communities are also important in both defining and achieving ‘development’, although the importance of their involvement will vary depending on the theory.

The scale of development theorizing also differs. Most development theories

and many official development measures are based on the nation-state. However, in some cases, the focus on more local, grassroots activities and actors becomes key. In addition, the influence of global processes is implicated in a number of theories, most noticeably the structuralism and dependency theories of Latin American derivation. However, as outlined in [Chapter 1](#), processes of globalization have increasingly challenged the ability of nation-states to manage and direct development within their own boundaries.

[Table 8.1](#) [Summary of development theories and approaches](#)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Main actors</i>	<i>Scale</i>	<i>Definition of development</i>	<i>Description</i>
Classical economic theory	Private sector (the market)	National	Economic growth.	Focus on market for as the most efficient way of organizing economic
Classical Marxism	State	National	Economic growth, industrialization, urbanization, increased complexity of societies.	State as key actor in organizing resource distribution and use
Keynesianism	State and market	National	Economic growth, in particular full employment.	State intervention in the economy help regions and groups that are disadvantaged
			Economic growth and increased	Eurocentric assumption that all

Modernization theory	State and market	National	complexity in social and economic organization.	countries should follow the path of Northern nations. National governments need to protect domestic production from global markets and competition because of global economic inequalities.
Structural approaches	State	National	Economic growth.	Economic disadvantage in the global periphery is the result of exploitation from the North. Need to withdraw from global economic system. State involvement regarded as being detrimental to development.
Dependency theories	State	National	Economic growth.	
	Private	National &	Economic	

Neoliberalism	sector, NGOs & individuals	sub-national	growth, liberal democracy.	State should provide regulatory framework within which companies and NGOs operate.
Sustainable development	Depends on perspective	Depends on perspective	Protection of the natural environment.	Diversity approaches sustainable development. Some are very market-led and involve pricing natural resources while others involve putting environmental protection at the heart of policy and reducing consumption.
Ethnodevelopment	State & ethnic groups	National & sub-national	Recognition of ethnic diversity. Definitions may vary by ethnic group.	Development decision balance the requirements of different ethnic groups.
Gender and development	Depends on perspective	National & sub-national	Moves towards greater gender equity.	Approaches vary, but increasing there is a focus on

				grassroot participati
				Approach vary from very small scale awareness raising activities large-scale transnational campaign
Rights-based development	State, NGOs & individuals	Varies	Individuals & groups able to live fulfilled lives.	
Post-development	Grassroots organizations & individuals	Very small-scale	A dangerous, Eurocentric concept which destroys local cultures and environments.	Focus on grassroots activities local-level participati

Finally, the location of development must be recognized. ‘Development’ is often regarded as something which only now happens in the Global South, as it has been achieved in the North. In fact, many development theories are based on the Northern experience, which is then transposed to other parts of the world as the only correct way to develop. However, it is clear that regardless of definition, ‘development’ is an ongoing process throughout the world, often with similar debates about appropriate policies. This is particularly obvious in the application of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to all countries of the world (see next).

In terms of development practices, the post-Second World War development agenda epitomized by Truman’s inaugural speech has led to a range of interventions by multilateral agencies and Northern governments in the South. While there have clearly been successes (Horner and Hulme 2019a), the fact remains that the Sustainable Development Goals are a reflection of the relative failure of development practices to provide even the most basic levels of food, shelter, healthcare and education for millions of the world’s people. For neoliberals, failure can be partly attributed to limited openness to

trade, as well as the corruption and dependency which aid flows can provide (Collier 2007; Moyo 2010). For theorists from a Marxist perspective, the inequality of global power structures and the exploitative nature of capitalism will be blamed (Selwyn 2014).

The fate of Sub-Saharan Africa is of particular concern, and in many ways 'development' has failed. As the United Nations states in its 2019 *Sustainable Development Goals Report*:

Extreme poverty remains stubbornly high in low-income countries and countries affected by conflict and political upheaval, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Among the 736 million people who lived on less than \$1.90 a day in 2015, 413 million were in sub-Saharan Africa. This figure has been climbing in recent years and is higher than the number of poor people in the rest of the world combined. Forecasts suggest that without significant shifts in policy, extreme poverty will still be in the double digits in sub-Saharan Africa by 2030.

(United Nations 2019: 22)

I do not want to reinforce the common representations of the whole continent as poverty-stricken and in need of assistance, and it must be remembered that the MDGs were an example of a top-down development definition, but millions of African people are living in conditions where their life choices are highly limited. For example, over one-fifth (an estimated 22.8%) of the Sub-Saharan population was undernourished in 2018, with a figure of 30.8% for Eastern African states (FAO *et al.* 2019: 8). It is important to acknowledge that in absolute numbers there was more than double the number of undernourished people in Asia than in Africa in 2018 (FAO *et al.* 2019: 14), but that the prevalence of food insecurity was much higher in the latter region.

Despite the perceived limits of previous and current policies, development remains an ambition of many people across the African continent (Andreasson 2017; Matthews 2017). What has been sometimes characterized as the post-development romantic vision of pre-industrial community life is seen as ignoring the very real hardships of individuals and communities who lack basic services such as clear water, sanitation, safe housing and healthcare, and see the potential to achieve a better life. For many, development could enable this to happen. While millions of people still do not have their rights to basic services met, many others are experiencing better living conditions than did

previous generations. For example, the infant mortality rate in Malawi fell from 211 deaths per 1,000 live births, i.e. more than one in five children died before they were one year old, in 1966 to 35.3 in 2018 (World Bank 2020c). This fall reflects improvements in living conditions and healthcare over that period.

There has also been significant economic growth in many African countries in recent decades. This has often been linked to booms in commodity prices, particularly in the mineral and energy sectors, so exposing national economies to the risks of commodity price fluctuations (Andreasson 2017; Carmody 2011). Significant foreign investment, particularly from China (see [Chapter 4](#) and later), has also contributed to the economic boom in some countries. This can be seen in the landscape of the continent's cities (see [Plate 8.1](#)) and the growth of an urban middle class. Representations of the continent as a site of economic potential is reflected in titles of books, such as Vijay Mahajan's 2009 publication *Africa Rising: How 900 Million African Consumers Offer More Than You Think*.



[Plate 8.1](#) [Central business district, Lagos Island, Lagos, Nigeria](#)

Credit: Tayvay/[Shutterstock.com](#)

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCTA) also draws on these ideas of economic potential (African Union 2020), but in addition seeks to create a stronger voice for the continent's countries in international trade

negotiations (see [Chapter 4](#)). This helps highlight some of the debates covered in this book regarding power in development and who benefits from particular development paths. The growth of high-rise office and apartment blocks, increased availability of consumer goods and investment opportunities may benefit many, both within and outside the continent, but the potential exclusion of millions of others cannot be ignored.

SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION

One of the major shifts in development research and policy concerns since the late 20th century has been the challenges and opportunities that result from the rise of Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRICs), and other countries of the Global South. The *Human Development Report 2013* was subtitled ‘The Rise of the South’ (UNDP 2013). This is likely to continue in the future, and will have an impact on development, both within these particular countries, but also globally (Klinger and Muldavin 2019).

There are three main areas which can be highlighted at this point. The first relates to economic flows, particularly foreign direct investment and trade (Horner 2016). The rapidly growing importance of China as a global trading partner was discussed in [Chapter 1](#), as was the importance of Chinese and Indian FDI in parts of Africa. However, as well as the current and potential importance of these FDI flows on African economies and possible job creation, Raphael Kaplinsky (2008) highlights another potential economic impact of the ‘Asian Drivers’ of China and India. This includes both undermining domestic industrial production due to cheaper Chinese imports, but also possibly usurping African clothing, textile and furniture sales to other parts of the world. For example, while Chinese investment in Zambia has boosted the copper and tourism industries, benefits have not necessarily spread to local businesses. Rather, profits have flowed to international companies, including those in South Africa and China (Kragelund and Carmody 2016).

In [Chapters 2](#) and [4](#), the growth of the non-DAC donors in global aid flows was discussed. The BRIC economies, as well as the oil-rich Gulf States, are all examples of participants in forms of international aid which fall outside the North-South patterns which were dominant in the past. Because of this, they can frame their overseas assistance in terms of collaboration and a partnership of equals (although in reality this is often not the case) (Gu and Kitano 2018;

Mawdsley 2019). In relation to Africa, China provides (among other things) loans and grants for infrastructure construction, as well as training, technical assistance and debt relief. The rise of these non-DAC donors has required the ‘traditional’ donors of the Global North and multilateral institutions to reconsider the support they provide when recipient countries have greater choice (Mawdsley 2018). However, Emma Mawdsley (2019) highlights how the continued expansion of South-South cooperation will make it harder for clear distinctions to be made between North and South forms of development support based on discourses around shared experiences.

Finally, the rising economic might of a number of Southern countries and Russia also has implications for global governance institutions and the balance of power. As was outlined in [Chapter 4](#), international institutions supposedly operating in a neutral way have sometimes been accused of following a Northern agenda. The failures of successive trade discussions within the WTO, as well as the power struggles evident in climate change discussions ([Chapter 7](#)), indicate that future development policy and international governance structures may reflect these shifts in global power. What is harder to assess is whether this will lead to a better and more inclusive global system for the world’s poorest people, or whether it will just mean different faces around the main table (Ghosh 2019).

THE SDGS AND GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

A key difference between the SDGs and the preceding MDGs is the framing of sustainable development, and the individual goals and targets, as applying to all countries of the world (Longhurst 2017; Willis 2017). This is part of wider debates on the location of development. Many of the development theories discussed in the book are derived from the experiences of countries or regions of the Global North, which have then been applied to the people and places of the Global South, through colonialism and later through the international development system. In the post-Second World War period, ‘development’ has increasingly been seen as something which happens in the Global South. The move away from the MDG focus on things that economically poor countries were seen to lack, to a more holistic idea of sustainable development, along with the growing economic and political power of some Southern countries, has led to broader discussions of ‘global’ or ‘universal’ development (Horner

and Hulme 2019b; Longhurst 2017).

Rory Horner and David Hulme (2019a) argue that focusing on the Global South as the target for development ignores economic changes over recent decades, particularly 1990–2015, including a reduction in the number of countries classified by the World Bank as low-income, and a decline in economic inequalities between countries, while at the same time inequalities within many countries have increased. They see some key development issues, such as vulnerability and precarious livelihoods not being limited to the Global South, although they are very clear that the Global South is still where the most pressing issues, such as food insecurity, are experienced. The authors received some criticisms for failing to acknowledge the distorting role of China in the patterns of global economic convergence (Sumner 2019), and for their limited engagement in exploring wider structural processes of uneven development and inequalities of power (Alemany *et al.* 2019; Bangura 2019; Ghosh 2019).

In a response paper, Horner and Hulme (2019b) expand on their global development approach, arguing for an approach which acknowledges global interconnections, but which recognizes the importance of multiple scales and the operation of power, both globally and within countries. This means that development is not defined or experienced in the same way across the globe, but that framing development as a Global South issue does not reflect reality. Issues such as climate change (see [Chapter 7](#)) and pandemics require global collaboration and an understanding of the heterogeneity of impacts. As Johan A. Oldekop *et al.* (2020) argue in the context of COVID-19, a multi-scalar global development perspective which sees the Global South as a source of learning rather than purely a site for development intervention, has significant potential for addressing the challenges facing humanity in the 21st century.

DEGROWTH

Economic growth has been at the forefront of most development theories and practices outlined in this book. However, there are increasing debates about the prioritization of economic growth. In some cases, this is because of the unequal distribution of benefits of economic growth, sometimes seen as the failure of trickle-down economics (see [Chapter 2](#)), but definitions of

development which encompass environmental sustainability and social justice are also linked to a reorientation away from economic growth. For example, Hadyn Washington (2015: 36) argues, 'In a finite world, we need to accept once and for all that sustainability cannot be about further growth. This challenge remains critical, though still denied'.

The concept of 'degrowth' has been increasingly used to describe this move away from a focus on economic growth. It can be defined as 'a downscaling of production and consumption that increases human well-being and enhances ecological conditions and equity on the planet' (Research and Degrowth 2020). Debates about degrowth have been particularly prominent in Western Europe, most notably Germany, France and Spain. This means that the 'development gaze' is shifted to the limitations of the Global North, both for the well-being of the people and environment of the economically richer countries, and those of the Global South due to historical and contemporary global interconnections (Bendix 2017).

In May 2019, the New Zealand government led by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern launched a 'wellbeing budget'. This reflected a shift in priorities from economic growth in and of itself to a focus on improving well-being and happiness around five key priorities including improved mental health, reductions in child poverty, and declining disadvantages experienced by a Maori and Pacific Islander populations. This goal is not new; Bhutan's Gross National Happiness approach ([Chapter 5](#)) and policies relating to improving a population's perceptions of well-being had been introduced in France and the UK, among others. However, the New Zealand well-being budget represents a step change in encompassing and measuring such factors in national economic strategy (Anderson and Mossialos 2019; Graham-McLay 2019).

POST-DEVELOPMENT AND ALTERNATIVES TO DEVELOPMENT

The post-development approach has been very important in highlighting the ways in which 'development' as a concept is always a product of a particular set of power relations at any one time. It has also been crucial in stressing the importance of discourse, or the language that we use to describe particular processes (Sachs 1992). However, as Gustavo Esteva and Arturo Escobar (2017) acknowledge, if development is interpreted as a set of discourses and practices

of domination and oppression, which is what post-development theorists would argue, it is also important to provide alternatives to the development agenda, rather than just giving a critique.

Degrowth can be seen as an alternative to development, although clearly there is a difference between a decentring of economic growth within a capitalist economy such as New Zealand, and more radical degrowth perspectives. For post-development theorists, there has been an increasing engagement with Indigenous and Southern concepts such as ‘buen vivir’ from the Andes (see [Chapter 5](#)), ‘ubuntu’ from Southern Africa and ‘swaraj’ from India (Ziai 2017). While these concepts have their own particular roots, they share a focus on collective well-being, rather than individual lives and economic wealth. Sarah Radcliffe (2015) stresses the need to explore who is included in the knowledge production about alternatives, and drawing on her work on the incorporation of buen vivir into Ecuadorian national policy (2018), warns against assuming that concepts can be easily transferred across contexts.

This book has highlighted how both the definitions of development, development theories and policies have been formed over time and at a range of scales. Given the dynamic nature of 21st-century societies and economies, this diversity will continue as governments, NGOs and local communities continue to find ways to improve people’s lives.

Neoliberalism remains the broad theoretical context which shapes so much of international development policy today despite the devastating impacts of global economic crises and austerity, as well as the growing inequalities and unsustainable environmental destruction. Since the late 1990s, IFIs have addressed social development and poverty alleviation more explicitly, and sustainable development has become a key element of international development activity, but this change of focus has not meant a shift in the underlying philosophies about the route to development. While the increased importance of grassroots initiatives and a focus on rights could be interpreted as positive steps towards people-centred processes and definitions of ‘development’, far too often these trends have been shaped by a continued faith in the market as the key actor in development. Given current global inequalities in economic and political power and relationships of dependence, the scope for autonomous development decisions by the peoples of the South remains a distant dream. This does not mean that positive changes cannot come about, rather that the scope of ‘people-centred development’ will remain

limited by broader structural factors, particularly at a global scale.

SUMMARY

- Development theories differ by definitions of ‘development’, key actors and the approaches.
- Over time, what is regarded as ‘development’ has become more complex and diverse.
- Neoliberalism has become the key theory informing global development policy, but it can be implemented in a number of ways at a range of scales.
- The rise of emerging powers such as China and India is creating new opportunities and challenges for development theory and practice.
- The SDGs are based on the idea of development occurring everywhere in the world. This has led to debates around global development, rather than international development.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What are the impacts of the rise of Chinese and Indian investment, trade and aid flows to Africa?
- 2 What contributions have post-development approaches made to our understandings of ‘development’?
- 3 What are degrowth approaches, and what role could they play in achieving sustainable development?
- 4 Is the concept of ‘development’ useful?

FURTHER READING

Horner, R. and D. Hulme (2019) ‘From international to global development: new geographies of 21st century development’, *Development and Change* 50 (2): 347–78. Article outlining arguments for development to be considered beyond the Global South. Is accompanied by a series of responses from a range of development scholars and practitioners.

IDS Bulletin (2018) Themed issue on ‘Emerging economies and the changing dynamics of development cooperation’, *IDS Bulletin* 49 (3). Collection of papers on development cooperation, with a focus on

non-traditional donors such as China, India, Indonesia and Mexico.

Klinger, J.M. and J.S.S. Muldavin (2019) 'New geographies of development: grounding China's global integration', *Territory, Politics, Governance* 7 (1): 1–21. Overview of China's domestic and international economic policies and the links between foreign investment and development assistance.

Longhurst, R. (2017) 'Introduction: universal development – research and practice', *IDS Bulletin* 48 (1A): 1–24. Introduction to a collection of previously published articles on the theme of development definitions and policies, and the location of development.

Ziai, A. (2017) 'Post-development 25 years after *The Development Dictionary*', *Third World Quarterly* 38 (12): 2547–58. Introduction to a special issue focusing on post-development, providing reflections from key authors and activists about 25 years of 'post-development' work.

Useful websites

<https://degrowth.org/> Research and Degrowth. Provides blogposts and links to research on degrowth and development alternatives.

www.iukdpf.com/knowledge-sharing-platform/ India-UK Development Partnership Forum website.

www.resilience.org/ An excellent source of short articles and videos on community-led initiatives and environmental sustainability.

<https://wellbeingeconomy.org/> Wellbeing Economy Alliance. A global collective of individuals and organizations focusing on achieving well-being and environmental sustainability rather than economic growth.

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